An Integrated Life: Catholic Education of Girls for Motherhood

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Abstract

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This dissertation studies how Catholic schools in a post-feminist world approach the topic of educating women both with a professional mindset but also with a Catholic understanding of the importance of motherhood. The theoretical framework of the dissertation draws on second-wave feminism as well as Catholic scholars on feminism, with a special focus on scholars using Pope John Paul II’s Theology of the Body. The study aims to reveal specifically how four faithfully Catholic high schools in geographically different areas of the United States are united in a mission to educate students to live an integrated life, through a personal faith based on reason, virtue ethics, vocation, and exemplars. Through interviews with alumnae, teachers, and administrators, the study concludes that the schools’ vision of a fully integrated virtuous life is a prerequisite for the girls to peacefully make vocational decisions about balancing professional life and motherhood. The alumnae and the school administrators show that while the mission is clear, the execution of the mission in all four schools is fraught with tensions because of the conflicts between the integrated life view and mainstream cultural views regarding happiness and fulfillment.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Motivation

Betty Friedan (1963) was one of the first feminist writers to speak out against the all-too-frequent role of women in the family as the ones who sacrifice their own wholeness and fulfillment for the sake of the satisfaction of the other family members. She appropriately pointed out that this was not fair to women and encouraged women to do whatever it is that they found enriching, which might require them to step away from tasks involving care of dependents and of households. Jumping ahead many decades until today, women comprise 46.8 percent of the labor force in the United States (Tossi & Morisi, 2017). It seems that, in many ways, Friedan’s dream for women has become the norm, and many women have embraced the need for them to find happiness in the terms she set forth. Sheryl Sandberg’s (2013) bestseller book Lean In shows a popular approach to these questions today. In this she counsels women on how to “lean in” to their careers while also advocating for themselves in the workplace so that they can “lean out” to be present for their family and especially their children. Sandberg thinks women should pursue their professional interests and that they can do so while maintaining their family and relationship goals. She argues that with that in many ways women can ‘have it all’ if they want.

Yet, in this era of modern feminism, many women still feel intensely the pull between children and career goals. Studies have shown that mothers who have the financial ability to do so choose more often to work part time or not at all (Bachiochi, 2021, p.162). This uncertainty women feel has interested me from as early as my first year in college. I remember my good friend, who was 17, a sophomore, and biology major, trying to decide if she should study for the MCAT that year so that she could apply for medical school during her junior year. She felt a
deep desire to attend medical school, but she knew that she was committing to four additional years of schooling, many loans, four years of residency, and then the necessity of practicing medicine so that she could pay off her loans. She wanted to marry young and have children, but she knew that putting herself on the path to medical school meant she would not be as available as she would like to be for her young children. While we did not have the intellectual resources at the time to explain her quandary, my friends and I intuited that motherhood would impact her career path and her whole life in a very different way from how fatherhood impacts men.

Looking back on my friend’s dilemma from my perspective today, I ask myself, was there a way in which our Catholic education could have better prepared us to discern and address these questions? There is disagreement and confusion among Catholics about how girls should be educated. On the one hand, teachers and educators are very supportive of the societal shifts since the feminist movement, especially with regard to educating boys and girls in the same way for every type of professional job. On the other hand, teachers and educators appreciate the Catholic Church’s deep emphasis on the family as the foundation of society and the importance of motherhood and fatherhood as distinct from each other, and each crucial to the health and wellbeing of a child. Catholic educators are supportive of educating women for the workplace, but while also recognizing their unique contributions to family life which very well may draw them away from professional life. While these two views should not be in conflict, they often have strained relations with each other. Thus, teachers and educators struggle to model and to articulate to students, specifically to female students, how one should choose to live with these tensions. Seeing my friends’ personal struggles and knowing that the Catholic Church and Catholic education have also faced difficulties with these questions led me to develop my research questions for my dissertation.
1.2 Research Questions

My research question for my dissertation is “Using insights both from feminist and from Catholic thinkers, how is Catholic education encouraging women to live integrated lives?”

Defining an integrated life is part of the project of the dissertation, but in short, it means living a fulfilling life in accord with a particular understanding of human nature. Beginning with this question, my dissertation relies both on philosophy and on qualitative research. Thus, I have underlying questions both for the philosophical work and for the empirical work. The main philosophical questions I address throughout my writing are

• What guidance does second-wave feminism and mainstream culture today give women to achieve fulfilling lives?

• What additional resources does the Catholic understanding of the differences between men and women provide for an integrated life for women?

In my empirical work, I ask

• What is happening currently in Catholic high schools to help students understand the concept of an integrated life?

• How does Catholic education provide guidance to young women who feel tension in choosing a career path and making their broader vocational\(^1\) decisions?

1.3 Significance

The research questions I ask and the empirical research I do for this dissertation bears significance for many different scholars and teachers. The understanding of an integrated life that emerges through the schools I study is one that will interest many in education and especially in

\(^1\) I will define vocation in detail in my 2\(^{nd}\) chapter. In general, in a Catholic context, vocation means what one is called to do in life.
philosophy and education. Although there is a large body of literature on Catholic education, I see this research as filling a gap in scholarly work on Catholic education specifically. Here I will briefly summarize the current state of research on Catholic education regarding academics, culture, formation for democracy, and vocational preparation.

Some of the most well-known studies on Catholic education are those that show academic gains for minority students at Catholic schools (Coleman, 1982, Marsh, 1991, Lee & Bryk, 1993). The original data used in these books is from the 1970s or 1980s showing that minority students in particular benefit academically from Catholic education. While these data are quite outdated today, it was the starting point for a great deal of study into culture, character development, and academics in Catholics schools. Much of this work was conducted through quantitative studies later supplemented by qualitative work. Cornelius Riordan’s (1985, 1990, 2002) quantitative work from the 1980s into the early 2000s showed academic benefits not only for minority students but specifically for minority students in single-sex Catholic schools. Irvine and Foster (1996), using qualitative analysis, explored the personal stories of minorities in Catholic schools. Many of their findings agreed with the quantitative studies, showing that students benefited from the overall culture, which emphasized strict discipline (though sometimes too strict), families supporting the schools, and the idea that all students are capable of high achievement. The picture of Catholic schools of the 1970s and 1980s in these studies, painted largely in rosy colors, especially with regard to academic gains for minority students, have changed quite drastically in more recent decades.

There exists a collection of studies about Catholic education discussing students’ lack of inheritance of cultural and religious traditions. For example, some articles discuss the decline in religious vocations leading to fewer priests and nuns working in the schools (Bernauer, J., 2015,
Franchi, L., & Rymarz, R., 2017, Tamir E., 2013). One result of this trend is that schools struggle to transmit the charism\(^2\) with which they were founded because the vast majority of today’s Catholic school teachers are lay persons rather than religious with training in that particular charism (Lydon, 2009). These charisms, many of which emphasized discipline, moral education, academic achievement for everyone, were arguably what created the environment that made Catholic schools stand apart from other schools in earlier decades.

In recent years, among the philosophy and education community, many papers and books have been written expressing concern over the indoctrination of students in religious education classes or in other aspects of the curriculum at Catholic schools (Burke, K., 2012, 2016, Feinberg, W., 2006, Whittle, S., 2015). Walter Feinberg (2006) illustrates the moral education happening at many religious schools, with a particular focus on Catholic schools. His conclusion is that many of the teachers in Catholic schools either indoctrinate students to the Catholic viewpoint on moral issues or are themselves unsure about the Catholic positions on morality. Feinberg discusses the tension between the morality taught in religious education classes and the values students need to learn to be prepared for a democratic life. Kevin Burke’s research (2012, 2016) shows concern about sexist and racist views found among the students and teachers in Catholic schools. Burke conducted a yearlong ethnographic study at a boys’ Catholic high school highlighting the sexist nature of the boys’ school. Whittle (2015) discusses the particular role philosophy for children can play in Catholics schools because of the danger of indoctrination in these schools.

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\(^2\) In Theological studies the term charism refers to a particular gift one receives which is to be given to others. I use the term charism less formally here. In colloquial terms a charism is the style of Catholicism one sees in various orders of nuns or priests, or in Catholic lay movements. For example, the Dominicans teach, the Jesuits preach and do missionary work, and the Franciscans model poverty and detachment.
Reading the summaries above of the research, it can be confusing to understand what one can expect from a Catholic education today. Some of the Catholic schools today might be indoctrinating students, others might be struggling to maintain their identity as a Catholic school, while still others may have found ways to keep their charism and strength as a school alive.

Garcia-Huidobro’s (2017) study categorizes Catholic schools today in four different ways. The “identity schools” (p. 69) are those schools that harken back to pre-Vatican II days and espouse a sense of Catholicism that is not open to the modern world. The “open” (p. 69) and “secular” (p. 69) schools have lost much of their Catholic identity and have become elite private schools like many others perhaps with additional religious education classes. His fourth category, the “dialogical schools,” (p. 69) are those that are most faithfully Catholic. Garcia-Huidobro defines dialogical in this way,

This perspective supposed that Catholic schools were part of the Church’s cultural and religious dialogue within the world, so they should both have an explicit Catholic identity and be open to share and learn from other traditions. This stance stressed that Catholic identity should permeate the whole curriculum as a principle of curriculum integration, which did not necessarily depend upon Religious Education as a subject. From this perspective, academic excellence expressed Catholic identity, but there was also a tension between the Catholic and the secular-market rationales for academic excellence. (p.69)

I emphasize points in his definition that were particularly relevant when I was looking for faithfully Catholic schools to study. The Catholic identity permeates the whole curriculum. There is an openness to dialogue with the culture, but at the same time, a tension between the culture and the Catholic identity that can never be fully resolved. Garcia concludes that,

Only these dialogical stances can assure that future Catholic schools will neither be gated communities focused on preserving a narrow identity nor secularized institutions with excellent academic results but an unrecognizable Catholic distinctiveness. (p 92).

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3 Pope John XXIII called the Second Vatican Council to convene in 1962 to address the question of the role of the Catholic Church in the modern world. Following Vatican II many changes took place in the Church, some of which were intended by the Council and others which were a result of deep confusion. There are still some disagreements among Catholics about how documents from Vatican II should be lived out.
I will connect his definition of dialogical schools to the schools I study.

I end this brief literature review with a look at two papers that relate most closely to my own proposed study with regards to research questions and methodology. The first paper looks at the empowerment of girls at Catholic girls’ schools in Malta. Darmanin (2009) studies the Catholic girls’ schools in Malta reflecting that “every dimension of school life is lived by pupils and teachers in girls’ single-sex schools as if there should be no difference between the future aspirations of women and men” (p. 97). She praises the schools for overcoming earlier ideas that boys and girls should be educated differently. This older view always meant less for the girls in terms of academics and career preparation; thus, education today in Maltese single-sex Catholic schools is the same and thus equal. The second paper I found that was similar to my own study was by James Bernauer (2015). He interviewed 10 alumni from Catholic schools, two each from five decades. While his goal was simply to collect memories and reflections, I modeled some of my study on his interview process, including the use of snowball sampling. This is a method in which qualitative researchers find participants beginning by asking those with whom they are in contact. Then those people asking others they know and so on.

Nowhere in the current Catholic school research is my concern, the tension between Catholic teaching on the family and a modern sense of women’s fulfillment through the professional world, addressed. Specifically, there is a tension between the understanding that women have an important role to play as fully present mothers to their children and educating women for fulfilling careers. With this gap in mind, I designed my empirical research using examples of previous studies, a philosophical awareness of feminist philosophy, and a Catholic view of an integrated life.
1.4 Research Methodology, Data Collection, and Analysis

I began my dissertation research during my undergraduate years. As I mentioned above, my friends and I faced these questions ourselves as we decided what to major in, what clubs and activities to get involved in, and whether to date and consider marriage. We started reading together writings from Catholic scholars to understand better how the Catholic Church understands what it means to be woman and man. We also asked women in the university community whom we admired, women who seemed to be living integrated lives, to talk to us about their own discernment process. When I left college, I had a strong foundation in the Catholic metaphysical understanding of the person, the specific understanding of differences between men and women as the Catholic Church teaches it, and many role models of women in mind.

When I started graduate school, I did not have a clear idea of my dissertation questions, but I felt it was important for me to read feminist writings and philosophy about gender. I took every class I could on those topics and, throughout my studies, was constantly trying to see the similarities and differences between Catholic scholars writing about women and feminist philosophers addressing cultural issues of women. Often, Catholic scholars target aspects of feminism as being detrimental to the family. Likewise, feminist writers often speak of religion as restrictive of women’s fulfillment. I found that by centering my attention on an understanding of happiness and of a fulfilling life, which is the goal of an integrated life as I will define it, it was easier to see the points of agreement and contradiction between these very different types of thinkers. This focus, on an understanding of happiness and a fulfilling life, is the backbone of my theoretical work in my dissertation.
I kept these philosophical themes and thinkers in mind as I designed my qualitative research. In my literature review, I mentioned Garcia-Huidobro’s (2017) four categories of Catholic schools. The “identity schools” that hearken back to pre-Vatican II days are generally more closed to the modern world and tend to have more stereotypical views of the differences between men and women. These schools are less faithfully Catholic because the Church has progressed in its own understanding about women and these schools are holding onto an outdated understanding. The “open” and “secular” schools have lost much of their Catholic identity and hardly differ from elite private schools. They tend to agree more fully with feminist thinking and focus on developing professionalism and careerism in women, at the expense of properly teaching what the Church teaches about the family. I wanted to find Catholic schools that were “dialogical schools,” those that are most faithfully Catholic and appreciate the tensions of forming girls to think about themselves as Catholic women in the modern world.

I used snowball sampling, word of mouth and networking, to find my schools⁴. When I contacted people for advice on which schools to study, I used these rough criteria to describe the type of school I was hoping to reach:

1) Students are taught that one’s intrinsic value comes from who one is in relation to God and to others (rather than coming from grades, activities, or work).
2) Students are taught what it means to be a person and then are encouraged to develop all their unique gifts and to care for others.
3) There are teachers and staff who are examples for the students of 1 and 2.
4) A high percentage of the students appreciate their faith and want to learn more about it.

⁴ Throughout my dissertation I will refer to the four schools I studied as “my schools.” I do not in any way mean this as a possessive term. I found myself using this term partly to unite four very different schools that in many ways share in each other’s mission. I also found myself using this term simply because I studied these schools for over a year and a half. After extensive time in the schools, as well as talking to alumnae, teachers, and administrators, I feel a sense that I know these schools personally.
These criteria were based largely on my own experience of Catholic schools striving to form students to live integrated lives in the way I was beginning to think about that term. These criteria seemed an appropriate way to start identifying “dialogical” Catholic high schools. I started with a few schools with which I was familiar and then, through various networks, generally of Catholics in influential positions, I sought to find other schools to study.

Another goal I had in finding schools was that the schools would have a variety of charisms. The term “Catholic school” encompasses many different types of schools, both with regard to Garcia-Huidobro’s categories of faithfulness to the Catholic Church, but also with regard to the charism and leadership. Some are founded by different orders, for example, the Dominicans, the Jesuits, or the Sacred Heart Sisters. Others are funded by the parish or diocese and run by lay persons. Still others are independent schools designed and operated by parents or various other groups. The four schools I studied do have a variety of charisms. Two of my schools are independent, private Catholic schools. One is an all-girls’ school operated by lay persons, many of whom are involved in a Catholic organization called Opus Dei. The other is a classical Catholic school founded by a married couple and run by lay persons. The other two schools are diocesan schools, one of which is run by Dominican nuns while the other has lay leadership. The four schools are geographically spread over the United States. Each of the schools draws students from middle-class and upper-middle-class families and most of the students at each school are white. For further demographic context, each of the alumnae I interviewed was college educated. While my schools are diverse in terms of their Catholic charisms, the students at the schools come from similar socio-economic backgrounds. I ended up interviewing 35 members of the various school communities.
At each school I first contacted the Head of the school for permission to study the school. We arranged a time for me to do a site visit and planned the administration and teacher interviews. Each site visit was different, but they all included a campus tour and conducting some interviews on site. At some schools I also visited classes and attended daily Mass. At each school, I interviewed the Head of school, as well as two other faculty or staff members, usually a teacher who also had administrative responsibilities and another teacher. Following up after my site visit, the alumnae coordinators and I organized a system, different at every school, for me to contact alumnae. I chose to interview only female graduates of the school and aimed for young women 10 to 15 years after their high school graduation. Because I was hoping to learn how their high school impacted their own vocational decisions, I felt they needed both a certain distance from their graduation to be able to reflect on the school and also to be somewhat settled in their adult life. The number of alumnae participants varied from three to ten at the different schools. While my plan was to conduct focus groups with the alumnae, logistically it was simpler to conduct one-on-one interviews. I did a few focus groups, but most alumnae interviews were one-on-one. Each interview and focus group was recorded, and then the recording was transcribed.

The goal of my interviews with administrators and teachers was to see their vision for the educational philosophy of the school. From their words I constructed a picture of an integrated life from a Catholic perspective, which is at the heart of this dissertation. We also spoke about the formation of the girls in particular and what type of messages the girls receive through the curriculum, the community, and the school ethos about motherhood and professional life. When I interviewed the alumnae, we spoke about all the same topics. I was interested to see how the experiences of the students compared to the vision of the administrators, and also what the young women felt was the most influential aspects of their high school experience. When I did have
focus groups, I had the opportunity of hearing multiple alumnae reflect on the same experience. For example, three alumnae spoke to one another about the impact of the service opportunities at the school, and two alumnae discussed their senior-year philosophy course.

After conducting the interviews and transcribing them, I analyzed my data in various ways. I listened to the audios of my interviews and read them multiple times, noting four themes in my data: virtue, vocation, an orientation toward motherhood, and role models. These themes have remained central throughout my dissertation, but when I began to write about them, I found they did not fit with my data from all my schools perfectly. This led me to follow-up interviews and emails with many of the Heads of schools and the alumnae. For example, at one school, I felt I was missing some data because I did not have any stories on a particular theme. I spoke again with one of the administrators whom I interviewed and realized that I was not missing data but rather that this school’s strengths lay elsewhere. Through this process, I came to better articulate the key concepts I address: an integrated life and an orientation toward motherhood.

1.5 Assumptions, Limitations, and Biases

I am committed to connecting my theoretical work to practical application because of my own experiences as a student and as a teacher. The three years that I taught in urban public schools had a profound impact on my understanding of the privileged education I had received in the liberal arts compared to the education of the vast majority of children in the country. When I was a second-year doctoral student, I worked in the mornings at a charter school, boarded the train, and fifteen minutes later, attended philosophy classes and colloquiums. All too often I felt a disconnect between the ‘big ideas’ I was studying and the day-to-day grind of the school which was obsessively concerned with test scores. My mind struggled to switch from the harried activity of the morning to the reflection of the afternoon. In graduate school I was participating
in discussions on the goals of education, but it was difficult to grasp how these ideas could come to life in an educational setting.

Yet, underlying my ponderings is an assumption. Because of my own upbringing, liberal arts education, and graduate school, I believe that the humanities and a liberal arts education are of greater importance than test scores or preparing students for college. Those are the primary goals of the schools in which I taught. I prioritize the holistic formation of the human person over preparation for professional life. I know I am in a privileged position in that I can have that priority. In the low-income schools where I worked, the dedicated educators are most concerned with the safety of the students. College and career readiness is often the main focus to protect the students and give them the resources to avoid cyclical poverty. I chose to study Catholic high schools in which the student body is composed of students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds. My data would likely be quite different if I studied schools in which the students were from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.

Another bias is that I am Catholic and was brought up with a view of an integrated life that I will explain in my dissertation. This was an advantage for me in some ways because I had an ‘inside’ perspective with which to comprehend why the schools do what they do. Yet, this also prejudiced me toward a certain educational approach with which I was familiar. I understand best the schools with strong philosophy curriculums and liberal arts classes which teach a view of an integrated life in ways with which I am familiar. I have greater difficulty appreciating the less intellectual and more emotional approach some schools take toward teaching the Catholic faith. I hope that I have done justice in my writing to all my schools by listening to the voices of my participants, but I did write more about the schools that emphasize
teaching students how to live a fulfilling life in a philosophical sense because those are the schools that I understand best.

Additionally, because I am Catholic and formed intellectually in similar ways to my participants, I also share an understanding of motherhood with many of my participants. I am a mother and in my own life have thought a great deal about the questions addressed in my dissertation. Once again, this gave me an ‘insider’ perspective but also biases me towards the way my participants and I think about motherhood. Yet, I believe that through my reading and ongoing conversations with those who think differently than myself, I am able to present the view that I share with my participants holistically, showing both the negative and the positive.

I feel that my unique perspective, as a Catholic educated in the liberal arts tradition, allows me to explain to academics, educators, and parents what is happening in Catholic schools that are highly sought after, not solely for academics, but for the specifically Catholic formation. I believe these are the “dialogical” Catholic schools. These schools hire and retain teachers who believe and live out the Church’s teaching, not blindly, but with sincere search for truth and delight in discussion. I hope to show in my dissertation that these are the Catholic schools from which students are leaving with a better grasp of their vocational choices and peace in making those decisions.

1.6 Chapters

In Chapters 2 and 3 I have blended my theoretical framework with my empirical data. By illustrating recurring themes from my schools, I begin an inductive process toward an understanding of what the schools teach about the human person, virtue, happiness, sexual ethics, and motherhood. In Chapters 4, 5, and 6 I study three schools in depth emphasizing how very different schools aim toward the same goals in their own unique ways. Chapter 4 focuses on
Logos⁵, the classical independent school and its approach to beauty, freedom, and community. Chapter 5 studies Fernbrook, the all-girls’ independent school, and their habits of mind, hearts, and character as well as their multilayered mentoring program. Chapter 6 centers on Cardinal Newman, the diocesan school run by Dominican nuns, and their philosophy-based Bioethics curriculum. I bring my fourth school, St. John’s, into various chapters to add more context and alternate examples. I did not focus on St. John’s as much as the other three schools, because I saw, and they acknowledged, that they are still working to develop a more complete formation in an integrated life. I conclude this dissertation with reflections on what common areas of formation impact the young women the most in their growth toward an integrated life.

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⁵ Each of my schools has been given a pseudonym and all my participants will be identified with pseudonyms as well.
Chapter 2: An Integrated Life

Whereas the problems for Christian institutions in the early 20th century might be described as having been a crisis in the understanding of God—could he become incarnate, rise from the dead and reveal himself to his creatures?—the problems of the early 21st century are different in kind. They can be characterized as a crisis in what it means to be human.

- Carl Trueman, The Church of the Sexual Revolution

I began my dissertation research with the question, “Using insights both from feminist and from Catholic thinkers, how is Catholic education encouraging women to live integrated lives?” After completing my research, I found that my schools, keenly aware of this “crisis in what it means to be human” form students to live integrated lives deeply convinced of what it means to be human. This idea is so foundational to the Catholic education happening at my schools that it is only from the concept of an integrated life that I can begin to theorize about an orientation toward motherhood. Early on in my study, I found myself trying repeatedly to articulate what my four, very different Catholic schools shared. While I had criteria in mind that “dialogical” (Garcia-Huidobro, 2017) schools share, I still felt that the schools shared so much and yet were so diverse. In this chapter, using the concept of an integrated life, I will explain certain shared ideas of personhood that unite these schools in a common goal.

The term integration comes from the Latin word integritas meaning wholeness. When I consider the idea of a whole or integrated life, it conjures an image of a unity of all the aspects of one’s personhood. While this is the essence of my schools’ shared identity, I do not think it is fair to the individuality of the schools to attempt to define an integrated life in a tight, inflexible way. These are simply my observations of commonalities in the goals of education at my schools. I hope these ideas will evoke an image of what an integrated life would look like when one has internalized the understanding of the person shared by these schools. While my examples are particular to each school, the aspects are those that I see shared by all my schools.
Using scholarly research and words from the school administrators and teachers, I hope to shed some light on what I mean by an integrated life, and I will revisit this concept repeatedly in my discussion of each school in further chapters.

2.1 The Cultural Needs that the Founders Sought to Meet

I aim to present the concept of an integrated life in a positive light, but to do so I will briefly look at the words of the school administrators to explain what they see as problematic in the philosophical perspective of the culture today. Many in education point to problems such as careerism, technology, and anxiety as the key difficulties faced in schools today. The educators I spoke to had much to say about those topics as well, but they also had the philosophical training to point to the underlying concept of personhood from which they saw many of today’s problems emerge. Parents and educators opened these four Catholic schools recently, in the past four decades, to provide what they believe is a different type of education from what is available in mainstream schools and even in mainstream Catholic schools. They saw a need to form new schools where their beliefs were upheld and reinforced by the education offered at the schools. The best way I can explain what they saw is in their own words.

Cardinal Newman, a co-ed diocesan school run by the Dominican nuns, was founded by Bishop Templeton because he felt there were too many “unthinking Catholics” (CN.20). By this he meant that too many Catholics upon reaching adulthood and graduating from Catholic schools are still unable to articulate why the Catholic Church teaches what it does about the human person and morality. He felt there was a need for a new high school that focused particularly on

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6 The scope of my cultural context is the mainstream culture students encounter at four American Catholic schools. I am citing work from Catholic scholars writing in the American academy in the past 40 years as well as from some writings from popes.

7 Whenever I cite from my interview transcripts, I will use these abbreviations: Cardinal Newman (CN), Logos (L), Fernbrook (F), and St. John’s (SJ). Thus CN.20 is a citation from my Cardinal Newman School Interview Transcripts, page 20.
forming young Catholics intellectually in their faith and in the moral teachings of the Catholic Church. Cardinal Newman, as I will explain in a later chapter, through its Bioethics curriculum aims to fill the gap Bishop Templeton saw. While Cardinal Newman explicitly focuses on an intellectual grasp of the Catholic faith through reason, my other schools do so as well. One of the aspects of an integrated life that I will address in this chapter is it must involve a personal faith based on reason.

At Fernbrook, an independent all girls’ school, they also saw a need for a different type of intellectual formation, but they have a particular interest in forming young women to embrace the “intelligibility and beauty of the Catholic faith” (F.16) and bring it into the secular world. Mrs. Corwin, the headmistress, told me that even if there had been strong Catholic schools in their geographic area, they would still have seen a need for Fernbrook. Their particular focus is on finding the good in modernity and, through individual character formation, forming students to be Christians in an increasingly anti-Christian society. My schools generally see the culture as moving in a direction that is anti-Christian, but they also see their own responsibility as preparing Christians to live in the present society. They are not trying to form Christians to start their own closed community, but neither are they embracing the culture as it is. Fernbrook strives to teach the girls to live an integrated life through growth in virtue and in practical wisdom so that they can personally retain their Christian values in society and slowly help to bring them back into the culture.

Logos, a co-ed classical independent school, was founded by a married couple who wanted their children to learn in the liberal arts tradition in a Catholic school, a possibility which did not exist before they formed Logos (though many Catholic schools have followed in their footsteps). They were particularly interested in the liberal arts tradition stemming from an Aristotelian and
Thomistic understanding of the person. The educational approach of Logos shares intellectual commitments with that of Cardinal Newman and Fernbrook, but their contribution to my explanation of what an integrated life has to do with their community focus. This school, by giving the students responsibilities toward the school and the broader community, brings to life the virtues of “acknowledged dependence” (Macintyre, 1999, p.133). An integrated life demands that each person use their talents for the good, not just of society in general, but for particular others with whom one is in relationship.

Finally, my fourth school, St. John’s, a large co-ed diocesan school, was founded to provide students with witnesses to the Catholic faith and to form students to be witnesses. Bishop Wellington said that he felt uncomfortable in all the Catholic high schools in his diocese because they had lost their own way as witnesses to the faith. He felt careerism and enthusiasm for the football team, a symbol of the secular culture, had taken over the Catholicity of the schools. When planning St. John’s there was talk of forming a Catholic school with rigorous theology classes and a strong focus on campus ministry but without the sports teams that seemed to take away from the mission of the school. Yet ultimately it was decided that St. John’s would be a very “normal” Catholic high school with sports, clubs, AP courses, etc. This hearkens back to Fernbrook—these students will be prepared for the secular world. The “St. John’s difference” is that every teacher, administrator, and coach is hired to be a witness to the Catholic faith first and foremost. Mr. O’Doyle, the headmaster, told me that it is “much easier to teach somebody how to teach, (which is not easy)…than to facilitate a conversion of heart” (SJ.7). The school is filled with role models for the students. In all my interviews with alumnae from all four schools, I asked about their role models from high school. The alumnae had an overwhelming gratitude and respect for various teachers and peers from high school, all of whom were living out their
personal faith in very different vocational circumstances. Alumnae told me about different teachers, coaches, administrators, or parents of their friends that they admired. Some of their role models were married, some single, and some others were nuns or priests. Thus, an alumna from my schools has the resources to live an integrated life because she has seen many examples of others living integrated lives in accord with their own personalities, capacities, and circumstances.

While these stories of the impetus for the founding of these Catholic schools tend toward a negative view of the culture, there is a positive view of an integrated life that comes from their collective goals. What are the common points that founders of these schools recognized as essential for the school to provide so that the students can embark on a path to an integrated life?

- An integrated life originates in a personal faith based on reason.
- An integrated life involves a growth in virtue.
- An integrated life entails responsibilities toward others in one’s particular community.
- An integrated life emerges from an environment of persons modeling lives of faith in different vocational circumstances.

These points are not a checklist for schools, and they do not encompass every aspect of an integrated life that I will be discussing. However, they are a helpful place to start in thinking about the concept. These educators strive to provide an education that brings unity and purpose to the lives of persons facing a culture in which, as the educators perceive, there is a great deal of disunity. In the remainder of this chapter, I will explore the following aspects of an integrated life in greater depth: a personal faith based on reason, growth in virtue, inter-dependency, and a vocational sense of life. Throughout my discussion of all the aspects, I will intertwine a
discussion of role models. Exemplars are essential in all aspects of this idea of an integrated life, so it seems more natural to discuss them throughout the whole chapter rather than on their own.

2.2 A Personal Faith Based on Reason

One Logos alumna recalled a moment in her Physical Science class when her teacher took the class on a walk in the woods. They spent a long time studying a fern plant and the symmetry found in the leaves.

![Illustration 1](image)

Illustration 1

Each fern has one long stem up the middle and leaves symmetrically on either side. Then each leaf had its own stem up the middle with smaller petals symmetric on the sides. Her teacher spoke about the internal order of the fern and from there talked about order seen in nature. From observation, much as Aristotle began his philosophy, the class began to see the order in nature for the purpose of nutrition, reproduction, and growth. This alumna recalls this as being a moment where she came to understand order as leading toward a telos, a final end. This idea is a core concept for my schools with regard to faith and reason.

Sr. Beatrice at Cardinal Newman told me of story of a student’s appreciation of learning about the concept of truth. Sr. Beatrice was impressed but also amused because truth is the very first lesson from which the whole Bioethics curriculum at the school is built. Yet it was the most impactful lesson for this graduate. She said to Sr. Beatrice that “knowing there is such a thing as
truth was life-changing” (CN.22). In the Bioethics curriculum textbook, of which I will write much more later, Chapter 1 is on truth and much of what it says aligns with the Logos Physical Science lesson. The textbook says,

That in creating the world, God established an order to it, an order that can be known. For example, the sun and the planets do not act randomly…The order in the whole of creation is what we mean by the term ‘objective reality’…Objective reality does not depend on my thinking; it depends on the will of the One [God] who created things to be the way they are. (The Human Person, 2020, p. 11)

These are two examples of different schools which have classes that are not theology classes addressing an order to reality and the connection of this order to truth and to final ends.

St. John Paul II in his Encyclical Fides et Ratio [Faith and Reason] argues that knowledge of reality is the foundation to knowledge about personhood and faith. He says,

In both East and West, we may trace a journey which has led humanity down the centuries to meet and engage truth more and more deeply. It is a journey which has unfolded—as it must—within the horizon of personal self-consciousness: the more human beings know reality and the world, the more they know themselves in their uniqueness, with the question of the meaning of things and of their very existence becoming ever more pressing. (John Paul II, 1998, p.1)

Knowledge of reality, such as the lessons taught at my schools about order in nature, are a basis for understanding personhood and understanding God’s design. St. John Paul II continues “That every truth attained is but a step toward that fullness of truth which will appear with the final Revelation of God” (p. 2). Philosophy, defined as using one’s reason to understand truths, is the

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8 My schools are not creationist schools; that is, they do not believe that the creation stories in the Bible are factual. Catholics, such as those in my schools, who believe in the connection of faith and reason, claim that God created the world but what scientists have discovered about the beginning of the world is also true. God chose to bring the world into being in the way that scientists have discovered. The Big Bang Theory, in this view, could be the way that God chose for the world to begin. Fr. Joseph Thomas articulates this view in Theology of Creation (2020, Scepter Publishers).
foundation to understanding both the person and the “fullness of truth” in God; thus, it is “an indispensable help for a deeper understanding of faith and for communicating the truth of the Gospel to those who do not yet know it” (p. 3). St. John Paul II voices concern that modern philosophical research

Rather than voicing the human orientation towards truth, has wilted under the weight of so much knowledge and little by little has lost the capacity to lift its gaze to the heights, not daring to rise to the truth of being. (p. 4)

It seems, from the stories I shared above and others I will tell throughout my dissertation, that the type of philosophy happening in my schools aligns with his view of philosophy exploring the truth of being.

All of the alumnae from Logos spoke of their Intellectual History course as a transformational academic class largely because it was teaching them the truth of being. I heard similar comments about philosophy courses at Fernbrook and Bioethics courses at Cardinal Newman. My schools generally lean on aspects of Greek philosophy to explain nature as ordered toward a telos, to explain how one can live virtue, and attain practical wisdom. There are certainly areas of Greek thought that disagree with Christian thinking. From what I have seen, the schools study excerpts or summarized versions of Aristotle and Plato. Even when they do read books, such as the Republic, in full, they focus on the more relevant aspects of Greek thought, having debates about final ends, virtue, friendship, music, and poetry. There is not time in high school courses, nor do the students have the philosophical and theological foundation, to engage rigorously with questions of disagreement between Greek thought and Catholic thinking. Nevertheless, scholars certainly have these debates and ideally, the teachers are aware of those debates.
Teleology is one of the most important concepts studied. In the Greek tradition one’s final end might be called happiness or fulfillment achieved through living a good life. In Catholic thinking one’s final end is everlasting beatitude with God (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1995, p.478). Regardless of what one calls this final end, the path to this end looks similar. One must grow in virtue and live a good life if one wants to become holy or live a fulfilling life. As I continue to describe an integrated life in Catholic thinking, this telos of happiness/fulfillment/holiness will be increasingly important.

These schools lay a foundation for faith with philosophy and then aim to teach students to have a personal faith. Transmitting the faith involves teaching doctrine, but it is much greater than simply teaching doctrine. I rarely talked to the administrators about Theology classes. The alumnae sometimes recalled what they learned in Theology classes but when they did, it was always one of many influential aspects of the school. No one told me that they are still Catholic because of their Theology classes. What the students learn in the Theology classes at these schools is almost viewed as secondary to what they learn about philosophy and how they grow in their own personal faith. Trueman’s quote about the crisis in what it means to be human speaks directly to this idea. The current debates in the culture are not theological debates. The culture is focused on debates about personhood. If the students are going to become Catholics who live integrated lives in accord with their faith, they will need to be convinced first and foremost of the Catholic Church’s understanding of personhood, much of which is based on the understanding of objective reality. The transmission of the faith comes through seeing examples of people living it in all aspects of their life. Pope Paul VI said, “Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses” (Paul VI, 1975, p.15). Reflecting on my data, I believe transmission of the faith happens in my schools
because of witnesses who are living integrated lives much more so than because of Theology classes. One aspect of this witness for the alumnae was seeing teachers and peers frequenting the sacraments, making time for personal prayer, and treating others with love. I have many stories from the alumnae about this type of witness which I will bring into future chapters. Teaching the faith in Theology classes is important, but the faith is transmitted first through convincing the students that the Catholic Church’s teachings on personhood will lead to happiness and second that there are many, very different people, living integrated lives in accord with their faith.

The final aspect of faith and reason I will mention in relationship to my schools is the connection between music, art, literature, nature learning, and drama and the ability for the students to see the order in nature. Most of the administrators I spoke to emphasize the different ways they expose the students to the fine arts as well as to the natural world. The interest of these educators in the fine arts and the natural world evokes images of the education of the guardians in Plato’s Republic. If learning, as Aristotle believed, comes through the senses, then how one is exposed to beauty will impact one’s learning. This idea gestures to an epistemological connection in the educational approach of my schools to Greek thinking. Both Greek thought and Christian thinking share commitments to a sensory epistemology and to teleology. The order in nature can be known through the senses, and thus one should encounter nature and beauty as much as possible. A life of faith built on reason will be one in which the path toward happiness and holiness is accessible by reason and which is revealed through observation of nature and beauty. This type of faith is not simply a recitation of doctrine but rather a lived faith grounded on an appreciation of nature and transmitted and exemplified by others in the community.

2.3 Virtue
I explore virtue as the next aspect of an integrated life because virtue, as understood by my schools, is intimately connected to their teleological view of the person. In this section I will show that my schools believe it is only through growth in virtue that one can move oneself toward a final end, that one can live the faith, and that one has the ability to serve others. The teachers and administrators at my schools knew virtuous students would be capable of working toward integrated lives. Mrs. Corwin, the headmistress of Fernbrook, said that they teach students that “you can learn what to do when you don’t know what to do, and that you can do it through the acquisition of habits of mind, heart and character” (F.1).

Kevin Ryan and Karen Bohlin in their book *Teaching Character in Schools* define virtue as the ability to know the good, love the good, and do the good. Knowing requires that one has the intellectual understanding to see “what a situation calls for” (Ryan & Bohlin, 1999, p. 6). This includes “knowing priorities, choosing well, knowledge of the good, and intelligent judgement” (p. 46). Ryan and Bohlin posit knowing the good means acknowledging the existence of universal principles that are accessible from reason, which overlaps with the idea of order and final ends discussed above.

Loving the good involves “a capacity to empathize with others…respect and love people even if their actions are wrong” (p. 6) and “concern for the needs of others, fidelity to one’s commitments, a job well done, and true friendship” (p. 46). One must love the good before they will want to do it. This is the education of desires. One of the alumnae I interviewed illustrated the importance of loving the good and her high school’s role in this formation. She learned in high school that grades do not matter. What matters is one’s genuine desire to learn and to use one’s education to serve others. She went on to nursing school and found herself set apart from
her peers because she had learned to love the good. While her peers competed for top grades, she reminded herself that the grades in and of themselves do not matter but that she needed to study the material so that she could serve her future patients to the best of her ability.

Doing the good requires the will to act. It is this action that is usually thought of as virtue, but in Ryan and Bohlin’s thinking it is the final step after the first two. Yet the three steps are not always linear. Some know the good but do not educate their desires or do the good. Others might know the good and desire the good but not do the good because of peer pressure. Still others are habituated to do the good yet do not know the good or desire it. All three steps together will allow one to have a more integrated life.

While the teaching of virtue should come from many areas in society, schools have a significant role to play in teaching students to know, love, and do the good. Ryan and Bohlin compare learning virtue to becoming an artist. The choice to become an artist is an individual decision and an individual’s responsibility. But very few artists are self-taught. Most artists have years of guidance from masters. This guidance is a combination of instruction and modeling. Certainly, the best “masters” of virtue are those people one sees most often, usually family members. But children, especially adolescents, need to see other adults and peers who will model growth in virtue and give advice in how to grow in virtue. In different ways, in some schools more explicitly than others, the schools also teach what virtue is and how to grow in virtue. The alumnae I interviewed, from all the different schools, testified to the fact that they had role models in their schools and through the wider school community. This points to the immense influence the schools have on students’ growth in virtue through their hiring practices, the ways in which they promote community among the families at the school, and the priority and space they give to explicit instruction about virtues.
Knowing the good, loving the good, and doing the good connect to the teleological view of personhood discussed above. Happiness, Ryan and Bohlin argue, is not a result of having a good time, following our desires and passions. While these things may provide some temporary pleasure, they will not produce long-term happiness, and thus they will not bring us closer to a living a fulfilling life. Happiness comes from knowing, loving, and doing the good; that is, happiness comes from a virtuous life. Mary Wollstonecraft connected virtues and happiness to an ordering of priorities in one’s life. Erika Bachiochi summarized Wollstonecraft’s position. She said,

It is only with lived practice in the virtues and with wisdom as guide that one will be able to properly order obligations…The acquisition, development and practice of human excellences in and through work broadly understood can bring about human happiness. (Bachiochi, 2021, p.166)

Virtue is being taught in each of my schools in different ways. However, at each of the schools there is a focus on teaching students to understand the good intellectually and to practice it in the daily life of the school.

Dr. Todd, the Headmaster of Logos, said, “The whole idea is the common good. Everything is about the common good. It’s not about you. It’s about the school” (L. 3). He used the senior theses as an example of the common good and growth in virtue. Each senior student researches, writes, presents, and defends a thesis to the public. “Senior Thesis Night” is a community event for the younger students, the parents, and anyone who wants to attend. The audience asks questions of the presenters, which they answer from the podium for the full room to hear. After the presentations, the whole community enjoys a potluck reception. While the seniors each receive a grade at a much later time in private, there is no public display of rankings for those presentations. Dr. Todd explained,
It is much more important that they [the seniors] are happy together than that this person beat the other person. …Even if someone did poorly, they got across the finish line. It’s that which in turn leads to virtue ethics.⁹ (L. 3)

Interestingly, when I spoke to the alumnae at Logos the topic of the senior thesis came up quite frequently without me bringing it up. The alumnae spoke to the growth in virtue they each individually experienced in having to write, present, and defend this paper. Depending on the personality of each person, the effects were different. Some students grew in courage to speak publicly, while others became more diligent students by researching and writing their thesis. By focusing on the common good of all at the school, the administration developed an event that impacted individual growth in virtue. The emphasis was on not on the individual students but rather on the service that these individuals could do for the larger community. Dr. Todd’s argument was that if the students study diligently, learn to write eloquently, and defend their theses for the sake of a good grade or a college recommendation, they have not learned true virtue. It is only when the students’ efforts served the greater good of the community that they grew in true virtue.

As I write about virtue, I find myself beginning to write about one’s responsibilities to the community. Each of the different aspects of an integrated life are intertwined, which makes complete sense. If there is a unity in one’s life, then the different dimensions of one’s life cannot be siloed from one another. This reflection on the role of service to the community as the means for growth in virtue leads me naturally to the next aspect of an integrated life that I want to examine, namely how dependency entails responsibilities toward others in one’s community.

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⁹ Throughout this dissertation I have edited, when necessary, my long quotations from my participants for readability.
2.4 Dependency

Aristotle’s teleological view of reality and morality provide the basis for the view of an integrated life that I am articulating in this chapter. Building on this teleological perspective, one trying to live an integrated life will understand oneself as dependent rather than as an expressive individualist. In this section, I will lean on Carter Snead’s (2020) description of Charles Taylor’s (1985), Robert Bellah’s (1985), and Alasdair MacIntyre’s (1981, 1999) writings to explain an expressive individualist view of the self as opposed to a dependent view of the self. Many care feminist writers, especially Eva Kittay (1999), Sara Ruddick (1982), and Nel Noddings (2018) write in depth about individualism as opposed to dependency and relationality. I found that in trying to explain an integrated life from the view of my schools, it was more helpful to work with the Catholic perspective of Taylor and MacIntyre than with care feminism. The teleological view of the person, morality, and happiness that underlies Taylor’s and MacIntyre’s reflections on modern society and dependency aligns with the views of my schools. There is work to be done articulating the similarities and differences in the perspectives on dependency written about in care feminism and in Catholic scholarship, but this is not the space for that discussion.

Bellah, Taylor, MacIntyre, and Snead all use the term expressive individualism to explain a modern understanding of the self. While my schools attempt to form students to live with a different understanding of the self, it is important to note that all these scholars believe that we all are expressive individualists. Snead (2020) traces the term expressive individualism to Robert Bellah’s study in the early 1980s in which

Across a variety of contexts, both public and private, people interviewed by Bellah affirmed the view that the individual person considered in isolation is the fundamental and defining normative reality. Bellah found that human flourishing consists in the expression of one’s innermost identity through freely choosing and configuring life in accordance with his or her own distinctive core intuitions, feelings, and preferences. (p. 69)
While human flourishing from a teleological perspective involves growth in virtue and human excellences, from an expressive individualistic perspective, Snead argues “individuals thrive insofar as they are able to freely create and pursue the unique projects and future directed plans that reflect their deeply held values and self-understanding” (p. 70). These projects and plans need not have any connection to an understanding of one’s nature, thus, at its root, expressive individualism is anti- or at any rate non-teleological. If one wants to live in accord with a teleological perspective, one needs different understanding of the self from what expressive individualism offers.

Snead, using MacInyre, points out two other difficulties that the expressive individualistic view of the self presents when one considers moral responsibilities. The first is how this mindset impacts relationships with others, and the second is how it is “forgetful of the body” (MacIntyre, 1999, p.5). Because the individual will and the formation of one’s identity through projects are so central to the modern conception of the self, then “human relationships and social arrangements are judged in light of how well or poorly they serve the self-defining projects of the individual will” (Snead, p. 70). Yet, Snead and Macintyre argue, this view of human relationships is impoverished because it can only exist when one is fully formed physically and has the capacity to imagine what a fulfilling life means. Snead says,

[Expressive individualism’s] vision of the human person…cannot make sense of the full lived reality of human embodiment, with all that it entails…Due to the very nature of living as bodies, in MacIntyre’s words, all human beings exist on a ‘scale of disability.’ (p. 88-89)

If one can shift one’s focus away from the projects and plans that are central to the modern understanding of the self toward one’s final end, which I address in more detail in the following section on vocation, then one’s relationships take on a different meaning.
The cultivation of an embodied teleological view of the self depends on formation in virtues of “acknowledged dependence.” (MacIntyre, 1999, p.133) One cannot grow in true virtue, as I addressed above, siloed from others. Using Dr. Todd’s example of Senior theses again, a student who works diligently to write and present a good Senior thesis, but whose main concern is his grade is not growing in true virtue. The student’s main concern should be to do well for the sake of the community. Dr. Todd’s argument is made even stronger by Snead’s, MacIntyre’s, and Taylor’s reflection on dependency. In Snead’s words

It requires the selfless and sustained work of countless others to build an individual’s capacities for freedom and flourishing, such as the abilities to defer gratification, to imagine and choose from alternative futures, to obtain useful knowledge about the world, to cooperate with and care for others, and to come to know yourself…Charles Taylor noted that even the traits required for thriving under the ambit of expressive individualism depend on social structures and conditions that nurture the development of such capacities (p. 91).

Because each person owes many others so much, one has a responsibility to develop virtues which facilitate “uncalculated giving and graceful receiving” (MacIntyre, 1999, p.119). It is important to note that most feminist writers push back on such ideas of gift of self because all too often it seems women are giving of themselves (especially in the care of children and the elderly) while men are doing less of this work. Yet Snead and MacIntyre argue, along with many others, including care feminists, that through education all persons can learn to care for others.

One final point Snead makes about a dependency view of the self is particularly relevant to my research on the schools. He argues that one of the virtues of “acknowledged dependence” is gratitude toward those to whom one owes so much. Gratitude is a virtue by which one acknowledges human interdependence and from this “grows a sense of human dignity.” (p. 101) He says,

While ‘dignity’ is a famously contested concept, the sense here is one of the intrinsic equal worth of all human beings who are alike in vulnerability, neediness, and subject to natural limits. All human beings stand in the vast and particular networks of giving and receiving
necessary for human flourishing. All human beings are created and embodied, unrepeatable, precious, and fundamentally equal. (p. 101)

Upholding and forming students to appreciate the intrinsic value of each person was one of the criteria with which I started my search for schools to study. In my criteria I listed that the schools I study must teach students that “one’s intrinsic value comes from who one is in relation to God and to others (rather than coming from grades, activities, or work).” I knew that human dignity and one’s intrinsic value was important in the Catholic tradition and that it would be at the root of the schools’ understanding of the person. Snead’s articulation of the problems of expressive individualism and the need for a dependency view of the self, gave me the language to connect human dignity to the holistic view of an integrated life that my schools share.

All the philosophers I cite who write about expressive individualism believe that we all are formed in this modern conception of the self. Yet, they offer the dependency view of the self as an antidote to some of the negative aspects of expressive individualism. Their concepts offer a helpful lens through which to understand what the school administrators are doing with regard to the school environment and community. Fernbrook takes seriously the task of teaching the girls what true friendship is. Logos brings the families and community into events such as dances, senior theses, and family hikes throughout the year so that all the families know one another. Cardinal Newman and St. Johns use a house system to facilitate friendships, mentoring, leadership opportunities, and events. Each school has a unique approach to developing community, but all the schools expect the students to serve, to give, and to receive. Each member of the school community must have responsibilities to the others so that service becomes habitual. An integrated life embraces dependency as a means by which one integrates oneself within a particular community with particular needs and as a path toward happiness.
2.5 Modeling Virtue

The cultivation of a dependency view of the self imposes positive limits on one’s life because one has responsibilities toward others, yet there are usually many needs within one’s community. Even if one theoretically assents to live a life of “uncalculated giving and receiving” (MacIntyre, 1999, p.119) it may not be clear to whom one has responsibilities. In this final section I look at vocation as a concept which helps one think about how one spends one’s time and what needs should be prioritized. This last concept is not one that is discussed by my schools explicitly in the same way as virtue but rather is one that is felt within the environment of the school. St. John’s and Cardinal Newman address the concept in a senior elective course called Vocations, but only a fraction of the students take those classes. Yet when I look over the stories of all the different teachers and mentors whom the alumnae look up to, it seems that the teachers and mentors are united in their diversity by having a sense of their own vocation. A vocation is personal. Each of the previous aspects of an integrated life apply to everyone equally. A vocation is a specific calling one has to use one’s capacities for the good of others in particular ways. Here I will explain different uses of the word vocation in Christian thinking and how embracing the idea can help one grow in virtue in one’s particular situation with one’s particular talents.

In A Catholic Christian Meta-Model of the Person (2020), psychologist Paul Vitz summarizes the Catholic perspective on vocation. He identifies the connection between virtues and vocations saying, “Virtues and vocations inform each other…Virtues find roots in vocations and vocations find expression in virtues” (Vitz, 2020, p. 211). He quotes St. John Paul II who said that when one questions what one’s vocation is, he should ask, “in what direction should my personality develop, considering what I have in me, what I have to offer, and what others – other people and God – expect of me?” (p. 212) All vocations involve a call, a response, and a change.
The call is evident in that one is attracted to something or someone. The response is one’s answer to the call. Finally, a vocation involves a change. There will be a positive impact on a person who responds to a call. This final aspect of a vocation, the positive change, is closely tied to the growth in virtue one sees in one living out one’s vocation. “The response to one’s callings enriches the very structures of human nature by both perfecting and healing the person through the qualities of courage, fidelity, patience, self-control, friendliness, and the other virtues” (p. 219). All of the above apply to all types of vocation.

Vitz discusses three levels of vocation, which I am going to call the three concentric circles\textsuperscript{10} (illustrated in Figure 1 below). The first is that of becoming a good person. This can be called the vocation to holiness, to happiness, or to human flourishing. This goal is shared by all, and the mark of the level, on Vitz’s account, is growth in charity. Another way of saying this, is that this is a Christian way of viewing the teleology articulated above. Everyone has the vocation of “not being selfish but being ready to sacrifice and be communal” (p. 224). The second circle, and the one that is most unique to Catholicism, is that of vocational states. The three traditional states are marriage, celibacy, or single life. The final circle is that of work, service, or meaningful leisure.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure1.png}
\caption{Figure 1}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{10} I am borrowing this term from a conversation with Deborah Savage
With regard to this third circle, Vitz says that for work, service, or leisure to truly be a vocation it must include three dimensions. It must involve commitment, use of talents, and self-gift. His definition of this final circle is very helpful because so often one’s worth seems to be based on the paid work one does. Including work, service, and meaningful leisure in the third circle broadens the scope of worthwhile ways one should be using one’s time. Vitz’s claim is that each person has received a call in all these concentric circles. For example, a woman, we will call her Betty, is called because she is human to the vocation of goodness. Betty is married and has children so that family life is her vocation in the second circle. Finally, she has the talents need to do editing work. She has discerned that at this stage in her life she will work from home, part-time, doing editing work so that she is more available to her family. These are her vocations in the three circles and her understanding of the best way for her to use her capacities currently.

In Vitz’s model the first circle of vocation is universal but the second and especially the third are personal. One’s vocation can change throughout the years and discovering what it is is always a process of discernment. The impact my schools have on the students’ discernment of vocation is not something easily identifiable, but it is a tangible presence. I think this is largely because of the way adults in the community model are living their own particular vocations in an integrated way. Mrs. Corwin at Fernbrook said that the girls see different female teachers in all stages of life, so they naturally notice the seasons of work in a mother’s life. The girls see single teachers discerning marriage, they see teachers having babies and deciding to work part-time or not at all, and they see older women returning to the workforce after being home with their children. No alumna said to me that this particular teacher influenced my vocational decisions. Yet every alumna talked about teachers or staff members they admired. I cannot draw any
definite connection between admiration for a person’s life and one’s own vocational decisions, yet it is so natural to want to imitate those one admires. While no one ever fully attains an integrated life, it is much easier for the students to imagine what that might be for themselves because they have so many role models striving toward an integrated life in their personal vocations.

2.6 Conclusion

From the beginning of my dissertation research, I have been interested in the question of work-life balance, especially for women. I think that my schools are suggesting that growth toward an integrated life, which no one will ever fully attain, is the first step toward having peace in making vocational decisions. I use the word peace to mean a sense of ‘rightness’ in one’s world that comes because one has a confidence in one’s choices. The opposite of peace would be a sense of unease, an anxiety arising not from external circumstances, but rather from an internal lack of order. Peace does not mean that life is easy or that one is always happy. The peace I refer to is a type is an internal peace that does not depend on external factors. One who views the world through the integrated life framework has a sense of having a vocation—in fact, multiple vocations—, that true happiness or holiness is the ultimate goal of life, and that virtue is the path toward this goal. Thus, the framework provides some guidance in discerning what one should be doing right now which will lead to peace in one’s choices.

This integrated life framework offered by these schools is foundational to understanding how the girls at the school and the alumnae think about balancing professional life and motherhood. From the perspective of these schools, the principles within the framework work for everyone, yet the understanding of vocation contains within it elements that are particular to each person and can help an individual appreciate her own circumstances. It is important to note that
one’s virtue are the key to integrating one’s life. If, as I defined virtue above, one knows the good, loves the good, and does the good, then at different stages or cycles in life one will be able to grasp both what one should be doing in each phase and who should become within one’s lifetime.

While the integrated life framework offers an ideal, my schools and the people inside the schools are by no means perfect, and I will explain some of their failings in future chapters. Yet, for the purpose of understanding what the ideal form of an integrated life entails, I found it helpful to look in this chapter at some of their stronger aspects. All of my schools talk of themselves as being “mission-oriented.” I think this means that even though the school community is made up of imperfect human beings, they strive to live fulfilling lives in accord with their faith and to actualize their talents for the purpose of serving others. In the chapters that follow I will explain in greater detail how the schools in their own individuality teach the students to live integrated lives and how this will then influence how young women conceive of their lives with an orientation toward motherhood.
Chapter 3: An Integrated Life with an Orientation towards Motherhood

In the previous chapter I looked at both scholarly writing and data from my four schools to explain the view of an integrated life, one that is based on an understanding of teleology, order, truth, vocation, and virtue present in my schools. In this chapter, I will further explore how this integrated life view impacts one’s understanding of motherhood. I aim to present two ideas: first, that this view of an integrated life encompasses an understanding of sexual ethics and of the body that influences one’s view of motherhood and fatherhood and, second, that the role models the alumnae had of women in the school community formed them most in thinking about their own vocational choices. I am focusing on these themes partly because they came up in my data repeatedly but also because they helped me see the insights that Catholic scholarship on women and second-wave feminists share, as well as the areas they diverge. When I began my dissertation research, I saw that Catholic schools struggled to straddle the line between Catholic teachings on morality and the importance of family while also embracing a more modern understanding of women’s role in society. I hope in this chapter to show what is happening at my schools, much of which is alive with these tensions. I will also explain the theoretical concepts from feminist writing and from Catholic writing that shed light on the roots of these agreements and disagreements.

When I interviewed administrators, teachers, and alumnae about the idea of motherhood and how it is represented in the school, I did not actually hear many examples of this idea being discussed. I heard much more about how the schools form students to think about sexual ethics and, especially with the girls, how school rules about dress code impacted their body image. These ideas are intimately connected with the view of the person, motherhood, and fatherhood, so I will begin my chapter looking at these concepts in detail.
3.1 Sexual Ethics

My schools are not comfortable with the cultural approach to sex and, relatedly, the fashion trends of the day. Each school communicates this message differently to the students, but ultimately the schools try to send the message, ‘You are made for more than this.’ Because of the view of an integrated life that is foundational to all my schools, the administrators and teachers are personally convinced that happiness is much deeper than pleasure, beauty comes from the inside of a person rather than the outside, and the language of the body communicated through dress and sexuality is deeply tied to happiness. Interestingly, while the alumnae I interviewed are appreciative, at least in retrospect, of the messages about sexuality, there is still much resentment and confusion about the message with regard to the body and dress.

Before giving specific examples of what my schools are doing, I will provide a theoretical framework by which to understand the different views of sexuality expressed by the Catholic vision of an integrated life and the mainstream culture. Recently, two Catholic scholars, Abigail Favale (2022) and John Cavadini (2022), have, independently, written accounts which compare a mainstream cultural view of sex with the utopian culture in Aldous Huxley’s _Brave New World_. Both scholars’ writings are relevant to my research because they take Huxley’s "deeply teleological" (Favale, 2022, p.115) view of the person and of sexuality as a starting point to show how anti-Christian the mainstream view of sexuality is. Much of the view of an integrated life that I articulated in the previous chapter comes from a teleological view of the person, which underlies the Catholic view of the person. Thus, it is consistent with the views of my schools to also look at sexuality from a teleological view of the person, which Huxley depicts in his novel.

_A Brave New World_ is in a novel in the utopian genre, yet
Huxley inverts the genre, so that what he depicts, though it is a society that has eliminated war, hunger, disease, and old age, is intended to appear to the reader as the opposite of an ideal society, an anti-utopia, because it has also eliminated history, literature, art, religion, and scientific inquiry for its own sake, and yet it has not eliminated death. (Cavadini, 2022, p. 2)

Immediately upon reading these words, I think of my schools and their effort to give students an appreciation of the humanities in order to live an integrated life. Huxley’s view is a perfect counterpoint for what the schools are doing. He creates a world that is entirely opposed to the teleological view of the schools. There is a lack of faith, beauty, and the humanities in his utopia, a strategic move by the leaders of the society which further promotes their priorities. It is no coincidence that the schools I studied are emphasizing faith, art, and the humanities as a path to bring students to a more human way of living. Huxley does not stop there.

The most conspicuous feature of Huxley’s imaginary utopia, or better, anti-utopia, is the complete severing of the relationship between sex and procreation, two things that are, of course, intimately linked in Catholic thinking. This severing of the relationship between sex and procreation is the most fundamental feature of Huxley’s anti-utopia, and therefore of his vision of a possible future. We are introduced, on the very first page of the very first chapter, to the Central London Hatchery and Conditioning Centre [where production of children takes place]. (p. 2)

Neither Huxley, nor my schools, spell out explicitly what the connection is between a life surrounded by the pursuit of truth through different subjects and one’s understanding of sexuality, yet the connection has been felt by many throughout history.

Cavadini, using Huxley’s teleological view, takes this connection a step further and argues that sex not only must be linked to beauty but also to procreation for those within a society to have a chance to be truly happy. If not, the concepts of family, mother and father, and even, woman and man, are put into question. In Huxley’s utopia procreation has been replaced with factories in which children are produced. Sex is a common form of entertainment but is completely removed from any exclusive relationships or procreation. The words “mother” and
“father” are considered obscenities (Favale, 2022, p. 116), and no one can imagine what a family or a home is.

Favale and Cavadini argue that much of what Huxley imagined has come to pass at least in part or will be realistic soon. Contraception and abortion are mainstream in the current culture, so sex can be a form of recreation without connection to marriage or children. In Huxley’s world, pleasure, in the form of immediate gratification, is the telos chosen for the people by the government. Today, certainly, the technology does not exist such that all children can come to be technologically, and the majority of children still are born within a family structure. Yet in-vitro fertilization is on the rise as well as other technologies that bring about babies in other ways than sexual intercourse between a man and a woman. Neither Favale nor Cavadini claim that we are in Huxley’s world. But just as Huxley severs sex from procreation in his society, so too does the current society. “Safe sex” or “consensual sex” are the most important norms around sex with little regard to the possible connection between sex and procreation. My schools have an entirely different approach to sexuality from most of the culture. Their view is one that is linked to marriage, procreation, family, and home, and thus also to the concepts of man, woman, mother, and father.

One of the most basic ways I can show that my schools believe in the link between marriage, family, sex, and procreation is the witness of all the faculty and staff at the schools. Each of my schools prioritizes hiring faculty and staff who believe in “the intelligibility and beauty of the Catholic faith” (F. 16). While some schools hire non-Catholics, everyone hired must be willing to support Catholic moral teachings. This means that all the faculty and staff believe in a connection between marriage, sexuality, procreation, and family. It also was apparent that the majority of the staff and faculty had a vocational sense of their own life, a sense
that they were called to live a life of holiness in their own personal circumstances. Of course, I did not interview every single faculty or staff member, so I cannot speak for everyone, but the overwhelming sense I received from those I did interview was that the faculty and staff believed and lived their life in accord with these views. Some examples include the fact that each school had celibate persons teaching there. At some schools these were nuns, in others they were priests, and still others were celibate lay persons who belonged to organizations within the Catholic Church. There were at least eleven or twelve celibate faculty or staff members that I interviewed or heard about from the alumnae, all of whom they spoke of very highly as examples of this way of life. I can only think of one problematic example. A few alumnae mentioned a nun teaching briefly at St. John’s. They did not feel she was living an integrated life because of some of her teachings and actions, but they also said she was let go during their time there. With her as the exception, the alumnae all saw positive examples of celibate persons living out their vocational calls in the schools, witnesses to their belief in the Catholic Church’s teachings on marriage and sexuality by renouncing that for themselves.

Of even more relevance to my question is the impact on the alumnae of the families of the faculty and staff as well as the families of other students attending the schools. Many of the students come from large families, with four or more children. Many of the faculty and staff also have large families. In general, the families in the school community are “open to life” meaning welcoming of many children, and many live in accord with Catholic Church teachings against contraception and abortion. Yet, it is not that the number of children in the families matters so much as the attitude of the families toward having and raising children in the Catholic faith. Sara, an alumna from Logos, and now herself the mother of three children, spoke to the impact her peers had on her, many of whom, she mentioned, were from large families. She was an only
child, and her mother always encouraged her take on leadership roles. Sara indicated that her personality tended toward bossiness, and with her mother’s encouragement Sara’s “take charge” attitude had become a bit excessive in high school. She said,

I learned a lot from other people. Many kids in my class were one of many siblings. They showed me that if someone says, ‘What should we do?’ I didn’t always have to make the choice. It’s a lot better to sit back and maybe somebody else could have their way instead of being in the forefront. (L. 64)

She learned from her peers to have a broader horizon. Of course, she realized, everyone has opinions, but for the sake of companionship and for everyone’s enjoyment, it is not necessary to always express one’s opinions and “take charge.” Sara felt that her peers knew this because of their experience growing up in families with siblings. She felt she had missed learning this lesson in her own home. The faculty, staff, and parents at my schools did not have to preach about the connection between their faith, marriage, family, procreation, and sexuality. They live their beliefs out in their daily life. The majority of these families believed the Catholic Church’s teachings on the family and were trying to raise their children to be faithful Christians. Sara told me this story, of a small way she grew in virtue because of her peers, in the context of our conversation about the families and the way they lived their faith.

Janet, an alumna from Fernbrook, had a similar experience to Sara. She never heard anyone preach about the connection between marriage and sexuality. She just saw it lived in the community of the school. She said,

I don’t remember anyone in school ever saying, as a Catholic woman, you have a duty to be a good mother to bring children into the world, or anything that was specific, but I remember seeing through the families of my friends, seeing in action, this is what a family that is really living the faith looks like and how positive that experience can be (F. 44).
Janet, like Sara, did not come from a family that was living the faith in the same way as the majority of families she saw in the school community. Yet, Sara and Janet saw many families living in accord with the faith, and they both found the examples attractive.

Finally, many of the alumnae spoke to the example of the female staff and faculty members and their choices on how to balance children and careers. The story of Mrs. McPherson at Logos is a particularly poignant example. Many of the Logos alumnae mentioned her to me. She was married, she and her spouse were struggling with infertility, and she was teaching full-time at Logos during the alumnae’s time there. The alumnae all looked up to her and spoke to her excellence as an English teacher. Everyone knew that she wanted to have children. She left Logos for a time when she and her husband decided to bring foster children into their home, and they are now adoptive parents of a baby with Down Syndrome. Dr. Todd, the headmaster of Logos, told me that just this year he begged her to return part time¹¹ (she wanted to be home full time) because the school was over-enrolled and desperate for teachers. Mrs. McPherson is back teaching at Logos but returned with the agreement that her baby would come to school, be babysat by a staff member there, and, if necessary, could come to class with her. Jane, one of the alumnae, said,

[Mrs. McPherson] was really inspiring because she’s such a mother even though she didn’t have kids for so long. She knew she had a vocation to be a mother in a lot of differences situations. She really gave herself to other people…She took hardships and let them purify her. She is strong and I know she gets that through her marriage. You can tell it’s coming from God too. (L. 96)

¹¹ Throughout this chapter I offer many stories of mothers teaching part time at my schools. I do not mean to suggest that the only way women can live integrated lives as mothers of young children is by working part time. I am simply drawing from my data and the examples I have in my schools. Interestingly, there were very few full-time female teachers with young children at my schools. Also, of the alumnae that I interviewed, none of those with young children were working full time. About half of my alumnae who had children were stay-at-home mothers. The other half were working part time.
Many of the alumnae mentioned admiring her marriage and appreciating her teaching ability (which clearly Dr. Todd did as well). She felt strongly that her adopted daughter should be with her as much as possible. If she was going to teach, she was going to ensure that the conditions of her working were the best possible for her child. From what I heard about Mrs. McPherson, marriage, family, home, and motherhood were of primary importance, but she clearly has a gift for teaching that she is using. This idea, of using one’s gifts, is a concept I will dwell on later in the chapter but which I will try to draw on in all my stories from my data.

While Mrs. McPherson’s story is unique among the stories I heard, many of the women I interviewed or heard about share her convictions. These women feel so certain of the importance of family life and home to children, that, if they were married and had young children, they felt a vocational call to be present for their children. At all my schools there are many young, unmarried female teachers or married teachers who do not yet have children. They then tend to leave the profession or work part time when they have small children.12 There are also many older women who return to teaching when their children are older. There are very few women who have young children and teach full time at the schools. It seems important to note also that there were no unmarried mothers teaching at any of the schools. The women at my schools rarely spoke about their commitment to the Church’s teaching about marriage, family, procreation, and sexuality. Yet all were striving to live integrated lives in accord with the Church’s teaching on marriage and sexuality. One could, of course, argue that they are living their life this way.

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12 At these schools, women tend to leave the profession or work part time when they have children, so that they can spend more time with their children. There were more married men with young children than married women with young children working at the schools. But it is not uncommon for men to either leave the profession completely when they have children or take on school leadership roles which allow for a family wage. At Cardinal Newman the administrators I spoke with talked about their desire to fundraise more so that they can pay a family wage to the married teachers. They said it is very difficult to pay the salaries families need in the Catholic schools as well as to provide good family insurance. This dynamic, of men and women with young families leaving, is at play in all the Catholic schools.
because they feel pressure, because they have been mis-educated in some way, or that the
schools would not hire unmarried mothers. My only response is to offer more stories from my
data of intelligent women with excellent professional opportunities who are living lives
committed to the Catholic Church’s teachings, love being mothers, and have found ways to
develop their talents throughout their life.

3.2 Case Study – Teresa: A Journey There and Back Again

When Teresa and I spoke, I felt an immediate connection with her and her story. She
voluntarily discussed the very questions with which I started my dissertation research because
she has struggled to find answers to these questions herself. A graduate of Cardinal Newman
High School, Teresa completed her undergraduate nursing degree and received a scholarship to
continue immediately into a nursing PhD program. When we spoke, she had completed her PhD,
was married, had a child, and was teaching part time at her Alma Mater, Cardinal Newman. Her
story of how she ended up back there as a teacher was a testimony both to the preparation
Cardinal Newman gave her in thinking carefully about vocation, sexuality, marriage, and family
and to the current supportive environment of the high school for mothers.

Teresa spoke most about the impact of the Bioethics curriculum, the theology classes,
and about one particular friend, Naomi, whose friendship has helped her grow in her faith
throughout the years. The classes at Cardinal Newman gave her an ethical foundation for her
personal life, and her friendship gave her a support in living that ethical lifestyle. This ethical
foundation also helped Teresa navigate her professional life and decisions about marriage. When
she took courses in college, she was able to see the contrast between her Catholic education and
the nursing education she was receiving. She said,

Going to nursing school after Cardinal Newman and hearing them talk—especially at a
public university—about abortion and contraception so matter of fact, as completely
normal, shocked me. I didn’t really know how to be a nurse but also be Catholic. It encouraged me to kind of stay away… either go to a private hospital or unfortunately stay away from those areas of medicine where it would be tricky to be a Catholic and to be a nurse, and my values would be compromised, or my job would be compromised. (CN. 49)

At the same time, Teresa was dating her future spouse and was putting off marriage until after she finished her PhD. Yet, because of her education at Cardinal Newman, she was comfortable with a notion of vocation. A priest said to her, “Why are you putting off your vocation just to find the right time or finish your next accomplishment?” (CN. 43). His words brought her back to her values, and she and her boyfriend decided to get married at the beginning of her final year in her doctoral program. She was expecting her first child when she defended her dissertation.

When she told her adviser and her funders that she was pregnant, they asked her if that was good news. Teresa said,

   After that, it clicked, I realized, ‘This culture is not something I want to be a part of.’ I want people to support my vocation and support my family. And I felt in that culture your family life was at home—you keep it at home, don’t talk about it. And then you have your work life. (CN.43)

Soon after her son was born, Teresa was offered a full-time job teaching science at Cardinal Newman. She found teaching deeply fulfilling and also found at Cardinal Newman a supportive community among the teachers during an unexpectedly difficult first year. She suffered two miscarriages during her first year as a teacher. She said,

   They’ve been so wonderful. Even valuing motherhood through the miscarriages has been just incredible. The chaplain here has been so supportive. And so many people have reached out to me and sent me things which was so sweet. I can’t imagine being anywhere else going through both miscarriages. I don’t think it would be valued as much or I would feel comfortable even sharing. (CN. 45)

Not only did the faculty and staff support Teresa through her miscarriages, but they also worked out a part-time position for her moving forward. They knew that she wanted to grow her family and returning full time would not be realistic for long. Teresa started teaching part time this fall
and was thrilled to be doing so. Her friend Naomi, who has been with her through everything since their high school days, says that it is her dream to return to Cardinal Newman to teach as well.

Teresa’s story stood out to me as another clear example of a woman who had thought very carefully about her beliefs, her professional path, and her family life. Teresa decided to get married before finishing her PhD, and she was pregnant when she defended her dissertation the following semester. Teresa’s choices to marry young, to be open to children right away, and to find a job where her beliefs against abortion and contraception were respected are all intertwined with her Catholic view of an integrated life. What also struck me in Teresa’s story is that she is aware of her own strengths and talents and is finding a way to bring them into her work environment as a teacher. She told me that with her medical field expertise she has studied evidence-based Fertility Awareness Methods (FABMs)\(^{13}\) both for personal and professional knowledge. She felt empowered by an understanding of her own body and had a deep conviction that girls should be learning this in high school. Teresa hopes to find a way to teach to her female high school students about FABMs in the near future. Teresa’s story is just one of many that show that the sexual ethics of the Catholic Church regarding marriage, family, procreation, and sexuality are fully embraced by those working at my four schools.

Cavadini, in his article on *Brave New World*, sums up the importance of sexual ethics for my project on an orientation toward motherhood. He says,

> To the extent that you tend to separate procreation and sex, you render the words “man” and “woman” empty of any objective content and they become filled, instead, with cultural stereotypes. If procreation can be detached from the personal, sexual union of man and woman...then what is left of man as man or woman? (p. 9)

\(^{13}\) Evidence-based Fertility Awareness Methods (FABMs) are promoted by the Catholic Church as a way for women to understand the health of their bodies through awareness of their monthly hormonal fluctuations. FABMs also help couples understand when sexual intercourse can result in pregnancy. More reading on Fertility Awareness Methods can be found at https://www.factsaboutfertility.org/about/.
Both Mrs. McPherson and Teresa believe in a sexual ethics that has consequences for their understanding of their life as woman. Both want to be present to their young children and both are talented teachers. The stories I heard of Mrs. McPherson, admired by many at Logos, and my own impression of Teresa offer examples of women who strive to live in accord with a Catholic view of an integrated life and to use their gifts in professional capacities for others. The respect these women have from their school communities is a testimony to their integrity, talent, and peace with their vocational decisions.

3.3 Integral Complementarity and an Orientation towards Motherhood

Very much tied to sexual ethics and the concepts of man and woman is an understanding of woman and man as integrally complementary. This phrase, integral complementarity, coined by Sr. Prudence Allen, author of a three-part history of philosophical thinking regarding gender, explains both male-female equality and difference. The first principle of integral complementarity, one in which second-wave feminism and Catholic thinking find common ground, is that man and woman are “equal as human beings and equal as persons” (Allen, 2014, p. 97). The second principle is that there are complementary biological differences between men and women, namely, that the “female corporeal structure is oriented toward supporting new life within the mother while the male corporeal structure is oriented toward reproducing by detachment of seed as father” (Allen, 2014, p. 29). In this section I will focus on the philosophical importance of the biological differences and the lived experience of the alumnae on account of these differences. Later in this chapter, when I look at the development of one’s capacities, I will return to the first principle, that of equality between men and women.

Most Catholic scholars writing about sex and gender today turn to Pope John Paul II’s writings, both his philosophical writings as Karol Wojtyla and his Theology of the Body lectures
that he gave as pope. At each of my schools, the term Theology of the Body came up. There has been extensive work done to transmit Pope John Paul II’s philosophical and theological teaching on the person, the language of the body, sexuality, and the “genius of women” (Pope John Paul II, 1995, p. 6)14 to Catholics everywhere. Many of my schools use a curriculum designed by the Ruah Woods Institute15 which provides materials explaining Theology of the Body in an age-appropriate way for every grade level.

Pope John Paul II’s thorough writings on the person and the sexes use biological, philosophical, theological, and phenomenological approaches. While biology is an important basis for understanding distinctions between the sexes, biology alone does not determine anything. Allen (2006) says,

In *Love and Responsibility* Wojtyla considered a biological foundation for woman’s unique approach to another person, namely that by a woman’s ovulation from puberty to menopause she has a monthly rhythm that disposes her to welcome new life, even if she never becomes pregnant. Man has a different biological foundation for his unique identity as a father. [280] It is important to note that for Wojtyla, nature does not determine identity, which must also include acts of will and intelligence. (p. 96)

Moschella (2008) and Fortin (2017), using psychological and scientific data, argue that one’s biological sex influences the formation of the self. As early as eight weeks in utero a baby is exposed to sex hormones which impact the growth of their reproductive organs but also their brains. (Fortin, 2017, p. 412) Boys’ exposure to testosterone in the womb has been linked to

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14 Pope John Paul II used this term in his *Letter to Women* (1995). He was especially concerned with explaining the genius of women because he felt women were particularly in need of clarity about their feminine gifts. Recent scholars, such as Christian Raab, have used his work to explain what the corresponding masculine genius is. See Raab, Christian. “In Search of the Masculine Genius: The Contribution of Walter J. Ong.” *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture* 21.1 (2017): 83-117.

15 Ruah Woods Institute has created a K-12 Theology of the Body Curriculum. They have taken Pope John Paul II’s work and made the themes and his words accessible at age-appropriate levels. It is being used in many Catholic middle and high schools now to teach a basic understanding of the dignity of the human person and of sexuality. The courses focus on transmitting to students that it is good they exist, they are not alone, they are called to great things, and their authentic identity comes from God. https://www.ruahwoods institute.org/theology-of-the-body-curriculum/
infant boys’ preference for mechanical objects while infant girls, who are exposed to much less testosterone, show a preference for human faces (Moschella, 2008, p. 103). Moschella claims that the aggregate differences one sees between women and men, while certainly due in part to social construction, can also be attributed to differing levels of sex hormones. Yet, just as Pope John Paul II wrote, Moschella says this does not indicate some sort of biological determinism but rather gestures toward the role one’s sex can play in the acquisition of “accurate self-knowledge” (p. 105). One’s free will is very much involved in how one chooses to live out one’s biological sex. The argument Pope John Paul II presents posits that one trying to live an integrated life will choose to encompass one’s orientation toward motherhood or fatherhood in some way.

While biological differences are not deterministic, one’s femininity or masculinity can have deep ramifications on one’s lived experience. I will explain below how many of the alumnae experienced their own female body negatively at their schools, but Pope John Paul II presents a positive way of viewing the female experience. I think that even the negative experiences of the alumnae can in part be explained by Pope John Paul’s understanding of the feminine genius. Allen (2006), quoting Pope John Paul II, says, “masculinity and femininity express the dual aspect of man’s somatic constitution…This consciousness [of who one is as a man or a woman] is deeper than his very somatic structure as male and female” (p. 98). With regard to women in particular, Pope John Paul II used the term the feminine genius to explain women’s special connection to persons on account of their capacity for motherhood. He argued that “women have a particular role to play in this task [of transforming the world]” (Shiltz, 2007, p. 431). Elizabeth Schiltz summarized the Pope’s view saying,

That role arises out of [women’s] innate and special sensitivity to the fact that humans exist to be loved and their special awareness that each and every human is entrusted to all other human beings. Both men and women have the same responsibility to live their lives in accordance with this truth, but Pope John Paul II argued that God gives women a
special ability to understand this truth. Pope John Paul II spoke of this talent as a predisposition of women that can be developed more fully through the experience of motherhood. This talent, though, does not spring out of, or require, physical motherhood for its full development. (p. 431)

While not all women become biological mothers, each woman can cultivate an orientation toward motherhood, which is her feminine genius. “This genius consists of a special ability to appreciate each human being’s obligation to love every other human being” (Shiltz, p. 430). In what follows I will show the experience of the alumnae with their own bodies in school.

3.4 Uniforms, Dress codes, and Body Image

I was surprised at how familiar my alumnae were with the Pope John Paul II’s writings on the dignity of women and on the Theology of the Body. Many phrases learned in high school theology classes are memorized for a test and promptly forgotten. Yet the term Theology of the Body was used quite frequently by the alumnae in our interviews without my prompting. One of the alumnae, Caitlin, in describing her school’s attitude toward women and sexuality, said, “It was a very non-Theology of the Body outlook” (L. 70). The alumnae’s familiarity with Pope John Paul II’s work and often negative experience with regard to all things related to dress code and uniforms speaks much to what the schools are doing intellectually but also to the struggles that the schools have in communicating the dignity and beauty of women on a practical level. An integrated life for women incorporates in some way, even if not through biological motherhood, one’s capacity to be able to nurture new life within herself. This idea can seem very abstract or irrelevant to high school students, but I found a related topic, that of uniforms and “appropriate dress”, to be a minefield of strong opinions and memories with female high school students and administrators. When I asked the alumnae what they learned about motherhood in high school, they often were slow to articulate specific examples. When I asked them about uniforms, dress
code, and rules about attire for dances, I received so many opinions and stories that I cannot even write about them all here.

I asked these questions because each of my schools has strict rules for school attire. Three of the schools have uniforms and one has a “dress code.” Additionally, all the schools have different, but equally strict, rules regarding appropriate attire for dances. The daily uniforms and attire for dances is traditional; girls generally wear skirts and dresses (even in the schools where they are allowed to wear pants), and boys wear pants, dress shirts, and ties. Thus, anything related to uniforms and attire varies for boys and girls and shows the school’s approach to the female and male body and the girls’ perception of their bodies.

When I asked the teachers and administrators about uniforms and dress-code related issues, their body language in responding to me spoke volumes. Everyone working in co-ed schools reacted similarly – eye rolls, sighs, slightly bemused or frustrated looks.\(^\text{16}\) It was clear from their body language that the topic of girls and how to dress “appropriately” was complicated, often discussed, and rarely ended satisfactorily. Mrs. Corwin at Fernbrook was the exception. I spoke with her in a follow-up conversation and told her how complicated it seems that questions of girls and dress are. She completely understood the complexity and felt that Fernbrook, rather than being strict like some of the co-ed schools, was being too laid-back about this question. She said they were trying to raise their own standards with regard to dress. She continued, reflecting on why this was particularly difficult for girls,

\(^{16}\) When I looked back at my data on this question at Fernbrook, I could not find anything. I followed up with one of the alumnae on the question of dress and uniform. She said that she had very few memories of it being a point of tension. It seems that uniform and dress code for dances caused less conflict at Fernbrook than at the co-ed schools. I did not get to the bottom of this difference, but it makes sense that simply being in an environment without the opposite sex explains much of it. Among everyone I interviewed there was a belief that boys are more interested in the sexual and will be distracted and even tempted to sin by “immodestly” dressed women. They all know that Jesus spoke directly to men about this, “Whoever looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matthew 5:28). There also is an assumption at the schools that girls will dress to receive attention from boys. In single-sex schools, these issues are not relevant in the same way.
My son is in a boys’ school. The way they talk to them about the uniform is very simple and direct because there’s no question. There are no issues around modesty and shaming and everything like that. It’s very different. Our bodies [female bodies] are built, designed, to nurture new life whether we do or not. There’s something different about that and so that requires a lot more nuance and flexibility. (F. 108)

I am not sure whether it was the single-sex environment of Fernbrook or her own training that helped Mrs. Corwin to have a more understanding view of these issues, but ultimately all the co-ed school administrators seemed flustered or ‘done’ with anything regarding attire. I got the sense that the topic had been discussed and revisited repeatedly with no clear resolution. All the administrators want is for the students to dress in such a way that the whole school could focus on what is really important, i.e., the academics. Yet there is continually a problem that the girls are “out of uniform” or “out of dress code” or dressing “inappropriately” both during the school day and at special school events.

What does appropriate dress mean for girls in these schools? The word modesty came up a great deal, but often it was the alumnae using it in frustration. From the administration I heard appropriate dress defined as that which creates a professional environment for studying. On a day-to-day basis the main issues were around girls “rolling their skirts” (SJ. 9), making them much shorter, or wearing clothing that was considered too tight, see-through, or generally distracting (such as loud jewelry). With dances the issues were much more complicated, but generally all the schools had some variation on the 4 “Bs” rule (no breasts, bottom, belly, or back showing). The schools also had different approaches to monitoring dress at dances. Cardinal Newman had the students sign an agreement before the dance that they understood what they were allowed to wear. St. John’s has a “fabric room” (SJ. 10) where the teachers send the girls dressed “inappropriately” to get shawls or material to cover up dresses before the dances. None
of the schools would allow students, but specifically girls, into dances if they were not following the dress rules.

There seemed to be mixed messages everywhere regarding why the way the students dressed mattered so much. I heard it explained differently from different administrators. One thing was clear, what the current culture puts forth as fashionable for girls’ attire is not accepted in any of these schools. Dr. Todd said that dress code at Logos was a part of their approach to virtue ethics and was mainly about obedience. The students “out of dress code” (L.118) were often also the ones who forget their gym clothes. He saw these as connected – this student has a lack of prudence or temperance with regard to order and material goods. Often this student is the one sleeping in and rushing to school unprepared. Mrs. Follette at St. John’s told me that it is “really dicey to pick the proper language” (SJ. 7) to explain to the girls and the mothers (who are generally helping the girls shop) what motivates the school to uphold these rules. One aspect they certainly talk about with the girls is that boys are generally more visual than girls and the sight of exposed female bodies can lead these boys to sin. Mrs. Follette said, “We are brothers and sisters in Christ. And there are things we need to know about how we are both wired. We are each other’s keepers” (SJ. 7).17 This message was clearly heard by the alumnae. Some took it to heart, whereas others were very frustrated by it.

Everything related to the female body and attire in my schools, especially the co-ed schools, was complex and fraught with tensions. These questions of the body are a microcosm of the conflict between my schools’ view of an integrated life and mainstream society’s view of happiness. The girls go to the mall and see fashion marketed to them as a path to being beautiful,

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17 Mrs. Follette is referring to the Bible when Cain kills his brother Abel. God asks Cain where his brother is and Cain responds, “I don’t know. Am I my brother’s keeper?” (Genesis 4:9). Cain does not want to admit to any personal responsibility for his brother. Mrs. Follette references this story to show that the students have responsibility for each other.
attractive, and happy in the way the world perceives happiness. The schools are trying to send the message, though it seems often in convoluted or confusing ways, that dressing in the style of the day, usually showing a great deal of one’s body, is not going to bring happiness. As I said at the beginning of this chapter, they are trying to tell the girls, ‘You are made for more than this.’ From the view of the administrators and teachers, who generally have a theoretical understanding of the feminine genius, the goal was to uphold the dignity of the girls, showing them that their worth is much deeper than the clothing they wear. One alumna from Logos remembers being told by her friend’s mother that the goal of dress and fashion is to bring attention to the face, not to the body. However, this message was either not effectively communicated or not able to heard clearly because of the influence of the culture on the girls.

In the first place, anything regarding dress and attire was not perceived as a simple rule that the girls had to follow. Both Mrs. Corwin and Dr. Todd indicated that boys seem to view uniform guidelines as simple rules. “Tuck in your shirt.” “Put on your tie.” “No yelling in the hallways.” While they might not like the rules, they were just a part of the school’s policies to allow for an academic environment. The girls seem much less able to have an emotionless attitude toward dress code. One of my alumnae, Gabriella at Logos, was able to see the rules in a more emotionless light, but she stated that she did not have a body type that made it difficult to follow the rules. She recognized that her friends with curvy bodies had a much more difficult time dressing in accord with the rules, and they felt that “their body was not really valued or seen as beautiful” (L. 82). Marianne at Cardinal Newman said that was true of her.

I am a chestier person and so I used to get in trouble sometimes, if I was wearing a dress where, even if it didn’t show anything, I could have it all the way up to my neck, but because I had a chest I would get in trouble! I was required to wear shawls and sweaters over all of my prom dresses, dance dresses, whatever. That was a consistent issue back then. They were like, ‘you have to hide your body.’ I said, ‘there’s nothing wrong with, it’s totally covered!’ (CN. 60)
When I asked her how the message was communicated, she said, “I know there were times when they would try to talk about the beauty and dignity of women before they would give us the wardrobe talks” (CN. 61). From Marianne’s experience, I gathered that what could have been valuable lessons for the girls about their dignity were lost because they were poorly timed, usually as a precursor to telling the girls how not to dress.

In some ways it seems tangential to my dissertation question to focus on dress-code rules at these schools, but the tensions alive within the questions of dress are at the root of my dissertation question. For girls the freedom to dress in whatever way they choose was tied up with their understanding of freedom more broadly. Some wanted to dress in fashionable styles that were very revealing of the body, as an expression of their freedom. Yet, Marianne’s story and the experiences of Gabriella’s friends show a different perspective. They felt that what was considered immodest was unfair to girls with certain body types, and it was extremely difficult to shop for clothing that fit the “modesty” expectations of the schools. The schools struggle to articulate why they cannot allow the girls to dress in many of the fashions of the day. Some of the alumnae experienced a sense of shame at their own bodies, and others still feel that the girls were unjustly expected to uphold the norms of modesty and chastity.

Yet despite the often-negative messages, two alumnae from Logos spoke gratefully to the effect that the dress-code rules had on their relationships with the boys in the school. Sara said,

I felt that the administration promoted healthier relationships between boys and girls, because dress code was a thing. I didn’t know that dressing provocatively would do anything to a guy. I didn’t really put that together. But I did definitely get a sense that it was my job to try to look nice but be covered at the same time, be modest about it. And I think that that probably helped keep relationships healthier and more respectful. (L. 56)

Caitlin agreed with Sara. She said,

I think that a lot of girls had this feeling of frustration that they were inherently dangerous for boys. But it was a two-sided coin. This is the negative side of it…. But on the flip
side, and kind of coming from that more chivalric time period, there were a lot of
benefits. I think that I experienced as a girl going through high school something that I
know full-grown women have never experienced. Men treating women respectfully.
There was a lot of emphasis put on the boys being very respectful toward the girls. And
obviously that is such an issue in our culture today. (L. 70-71)

The girls appreciated what they saw as effects of the strict dress-code rules, respect from the
boys. While the alumnae knew this was not due only to the dress-code rules, they did see a link
between the two.

When I was writing earlier of Pope John Paul II’s understanding of the feminine genius
and the orientation of women’s bodies to produce new life, I emphasized the role of the will and
freedom in one’s choice to orient oneself toward motherhood. It seems that the schools are
emphasizing dressing appropriately as a way of directing the freedom of the girls toward what
they see as good. Yet despite their best efforts to form the girls in this area, they are constantly
fighting an uphill battle because the message they want the girls to hear is the opposite of what
the girls hear from the culture. The difficulties the schools face and the miscommunications
between the schools and the girls on this topic are a sign that this is a predicament rather than a
problem. Whereas a problem can be solved, a predicament cannot be. The schools still have
work to do in how they communicate their message, but, even if the message is clarified, the
predicament will not disappear. Caitlin’s and Sara’s reflections above indicate that despite all the
tensions around dress, with some distance, many of the alumnae were able to see good from the
conflicts.

3.5 An Integrated Life and the Development of One’s Capacities

Up to this point in this chapter I have focused on the role of sexual ethics and the
understanding of the body in the Catholic view of an integrated life. In this last section, I will
look at the philosophical arguments second-wave feminists\textsuperscript{18} made against what seemed to them an overly biological understanding of women’s identity. In second-wave feminist thinking, the family and the home are often at odds with the development of a woman’s capacities. Catholic scholars, using a view of an integrated life, respond to this idea finding common ground but also offering a different perspective based on the teleological view of reality that I have shown throughout my writing. I will conclude this chapter with a final case study which illustrates how a woman striving to live an integrated life is using her talents both as a mother and teacher.

One of the premises of second-wave feminist thought is that many women have not found life at home raising children satisfactory and they should have opportunities to develop their talents in other ways. Every person should live a full life, and biology should not “form a fixed destiny” (Beauvoir, 1949/2011, p. 44) for women. This does not deny that satisfaction can come from family life, but Friedan and Beauvoir saw the opportunity for equal careers with men as essential to women’s fulfillment. Friedan (1963) said that “the mystique holds out “feminine fulfillment” as the prize for being only a wife and mother” (p. 438) but she argues that “if that occupation [housewife] does not demand, or permit, realization of women’s full abilities, it cannot provide adequate self-esteem” (p. 435).

While Friedan emphasized the need for middle-class women to pursue other projects outside of the home and their family, Simone de Beauvoir focused on the need for transcendence for women as opposed to immanence. Men are the standard and women are other because of their position of passivity in the home and society. Men have transcendence and women have immanence. Personal fulfillment in Beauvoir’s view comes through a pursuit of the “transcendent” which comes when a “subject posits itself as a transcendence concretely, through

\textsuperscript{18} By second-wave feminists I mean those writing from 1940 -1960s. Primarily my work will refer to Simone de Beauvoir and Betty Friedan.
projects” (p. 17) and when a subject “posits itself as essential” (p. 17). Beauvoir says that, when women desire to deprive men of their transcendence, they are in fact desiring “to have this transcendence” (p. 754) which can only come when women avoid the inequities of marriage and family life and pursue economic and professional equality with men. She argues that, by accepting the “gallantry” of men, women are in fact allowing themselves to be considered weaker than men which perpetuates their role as the second sex (p. 756).

In a culture such as ours’s today, it seems that in many ways, Beauvoir’s and Friedan’s dream for women has become the norm. Many women have embraced the need for their own fulfillment in the terms they set forth. However, popular reading on women balancing work and family indicate otherwise. I use second-wave feminist writing here because many of the issues they address decades ago are still being discussed today by non-academic women. While the content of contemporary feminist theory in the academy addresses many deep issues, the topics tend towards more nuanced discussion of feminism that are less relatable to non-academic women. My participants are not reading second-wave feminism nor are they reading contemporary feminist scholarship. But they are reading popular pieces on feminist issues, two of which show that many of the concerns of second-wave feminism are still relevant to women today. I mentioned Sheryl Sandberg’s (2013) best-selling book Lean In in my introduction. When she counsels women to lean into their careers, she discusses many traits that tend to be more masculine, such as ambition, aggression, risk-taking, etc., that women need to take on in the workplace. She encourages women to take on these traits in the workplace. She discourages women’s tendency to foresee potential conflicts between family and work and lean out prematurely. Anne-Marie Slaughter’s 2012 article in the Atlantic, Why Women Still Can’t Have

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19 It is interesting to note that just a few paragraphs earlier I quoted one of my alumnae who was grateful for the school upholding standards of male gallantry and for the respect she felt on account of these expectations.
*It All*, writes honestly about how “unexpectedly hard it was to do the kind of job I wanted to do as a high government official and be the kind of parent I wanted to be, at a demanding time for my children” (Slaughter, 2012). Slaughter had achieved transcendence, in Beauvoir’s terms, through her profession, yet did not find fulfillment in the work because she felt needed at home.

The second-wave feminist writers and the more recent writings reflecting on work-life balance are concerned with multiple factors in a woman’s life. First, family and home must not inhibit a woman from developing her full abilities. Second, women must have educational and professional opportunities so that they can have equal careers with men (though for the more recent writers, this is a given). Finally, though I only briefly touched on this, there is a concern for the independent financial security of women apart from men or others. Looking at these three ideas, I see two main areas of agreement and one area of disagreement between second-wave feminist thinking and Catholic scholars with a view of an integrated life.

I mentioned above that Sr. Prudence Allen identifies two key principles to integral complementarity, her phrase to explain how men and women are equal, yet different. Her principles are (1) each person is equal in dignity and (2) women and men are significantly different. When the second-wave feminists emphasized the need for women to have equal careers with men or, as Beauvoir (1949/2011) said, to “posit itself as essential” (p.17), they are arguing for women’s equal dignity with men to be acknowledged. The more “pop-culture” writers I mention above agree with the concept of equal dignity and equality in the workforce but are also pointing out how tricky it is to be a mother and achieve this equality in the workforce. From a Catholic integrated life view, there is agreement that women’s equal dignity with men should be recognized, but the difference comes when one considers that an integrated life means
both having equal dignity with men and accepting that man and women are significantly different.

Likewise, both Friedan and a Catholic integrated life view would argue that women, and all persons, need to ensure that they are developing their capacities. To this point, MacIntyre (2016) says,

> Flourishing human beings have those qualities of mind and character that enable them, in the company of others and through their relationships with others, to develop their powers, so that they achieve those goods that complete and perfect their lives.” (p. 30)

Sarah Borden Sharkey (2016) speaks of an integrated life as an ordering of priorities in terms of one’s telos. All persons share the same form and the same telos or final end. Sharkey claims that the final end of each person is to develop each of one’s capacities (p. 138). Betty Friedan, like Sharkey, urges women to develop the capacities required for them to live a fulfilling life. She emphasizes “the need for knowledge, for self-realization” (Friedan, 1963, p. 434). Sharkey, MacIntyre, and Friedan have the same underlying goal. But Sharkey, because of her teleological perspective, adds that each person also has constraints on account of their material differences as men and women.

One could argue that it is overly simplistic to place MacIntyre’s and Sharkey’s teleological understanding of capacities alongside Freidan’s concept of self-realization or Beauvoir’s understanding of projects. Certainly, these concepts emerge from a holistic understanding of personhood which is different for different thinkers. A teleological understanding of nature and human nature, aligning with MacIntyre’s and Sharkey’s thinking, is at the root of the integrated life concept. This leads to an understanding of personhood from which Beauvoir departs. Her understanding of projects is one that arises from her understanding of a radical freedom, a freedom that cannot really exist for mothers caring for children. Freidan’s
writing arises from a particular post-World War II context. She was writing for women like herself, prosperous suburban housewives in an era in which the work of the home was being taken over by appliances. The most productive work had moved to the professional sphere, leaving women home feeling unfulfilled. Without a doubt these disparate philosophical and cultural contexts of the different writers lead to more difference than similarities in what they argue. Yet, they are all a part of conversation about human fulfillment, the development of capacities, and, specifically, for Sharkey, Friedan, and de Beauvoir, fulfillment of women and mothers. I do not claim that they share a vision of women’s fulfillment, but they do share a concern that women be fulfilled through developing themselves according to their abilities.

The question of women’s financial independence from others is one where I see a deep disagreement between an integrated life view and the second-wave feminists. Feminist thinking is concerned with power dynamics, motivated by clear cultural issues that are not belittled by the integrated life view. Yet the response from a teleological perspective is that all persons, men and women alike, should be striving to live a flourishing life, and the corrective to unequal power dynamics is a return to a different understanding of happiness. The feminist perspective often focuses on the need for change at a macro level, such as state and federal support for women and children. While much good work can and should be done with policy initiatives, the Catholic solution offered to unequal power dynamics is a change in heart, which begins with formation of persons from a very young age. Thus, my schools emphasize the need for personal formation as a remedy to many of the injustices that feminists fight against. Pope John Paul II

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20 The emphasis of Pope Francis’s entire ministry as pope has been to open the eyes of Catholics the needs of the ‘those at the margins.’ Pope Francis is acutely aware of political and social structures that lead to inequities. His focus is not new within the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church began hospitals as we know them today, an institution that did not exist prior to Christianity (https://www.catholicculture.org/commentary/healing-imperative-how-christians-invented-hospital/). The Church traditionally and today is very aware of their responsibility toward those in need. While the solutions offered may look different, there are shared concerns between feminism and Catholic thinking.
said, “Being a person means striving towards self-realization which can only be achieved ‘through a sincere gift of self’” (Mulieris Dignitatem, p. 25). Using Pope John Paul II’s understanding of personhood, Catholic thinking emphasizes the development of one’s capacities for the sake of serving others to the best of one’s ability. One’s identity is shaped through a gift of self. The second-wave feminist desire is to see more women shape their identity, develop their capacities through professional work, and, at the same time, free themselves financially from unequal power dynamics. All the scholars, both Catholic and feminist, that I look at here agree that all persons should be developing those capacities that will allow them to live a fulfilling life. Ultimately their differences have to do with goals and what makes one happy.

From an integrated life view, there is a multiplicity of ways women could organize their lives so that they both have an orientation toward motherhood and the development of their capacities. Paul Vitz (2020), whose understanding of vocation I wrote about in the previous chapter, says each area of vocation as he defines it (the call to happiness, to a state in life, and to work, service, or meaningful leisure) is a path for the development of one’s capacities. Simone de Beauvoir emphasizes women’s need for a project to truly develop oneself. One’s “project” would correlate with Vitz’s category of work, service, or meaningful leisure, but Vitz’s category is broader. With his definition there is space, for example, for a retired person to find ways to continue to live a fulfilling life even if their professional work has ended. Or perhaps a woman home with her children full time could be involved in service work or a club outside of her home that might be a path to a fulfilling life in which she develops capacities. There is a special type of development that comes when one pursues particular interests in either professional or personal life, distinct from one’s family life. Much of Beauvoir’s and Freidan’s concerns are that women too often do service work which does not fulfill them. Vitz is claiming that everyone, whether
working professionally or not, can integrate different aspects of themselves while also developing their capacities. Many of the stories I have shared from my data are of mothers who prioritize their availability to their children but also find use their special talents outside of their home in various ways. I conclude this chapter with one final example – that of Mrs. Jones.

### 3.6 Case Study – Mrs. Jones: An Integrated Life at Home and at School

The relationships that I had outside of school living at the Jones’ home [impacted me] more than the relationships at school. For a few years, we lived like sisters. The conversations we were able to have living together and going to school together were so meaningful. (Ruth, L. 76)

My mom can pull beautiful things out of people, especially in drama, get them out of themselves, out of their head, and bring out their potential. (Jane, L. 99)

Mrs. Jones embodied being so open and loving to everyone, saying, ‘Just come be one of my kids. My house is always open. You can eat my food. You can sleep anywhere you want. I will drive you to school.’ She had a cheerful disposition and was just very happy all the time. (Sara, L. 60)

She was someone you could go to with any problem. And she would just be there to listen. (Regina, L. 60)

Each of the quotations above are from Logos alumnae about Mrs. Jones and the Jones’ home. I did not ask any of the alumnae specifically about Mrs. Jones, but they offered these comments in answer to other questions. The number of times she came up in our conversation was remarkable. The Jones family has seven children, and they lived about a mile from Logos. While their children attended the school, Mrs. Jones was a part-time drama teacher. Jane Jones and her younger sister were only a few years apart and were attending Logos during the time that all of my alumnae were there. The small environment of the school, the proximity of the Jones’ house, and Mrs. Jones’ position as a drama teacher meant that all of my alumnae knew the sisters and Mrs. Jones very well. I also interviewed Jane Jones for my project. Ruth, quoted above, was a boarder at the Jones’ house for three years. She lived far from the school and spent weeknights
at the Jones’ house while her parents paid her room and board there. Ruth was the only one of
my alumnae who boarded with the Jones, but many of the alumnae spoke of going to the Jones’
house at different points.

I was struck by how often the alumnae spoke of the Jones’ home. Both Mr. and Mrs.
Jones and the Jones girls opened their home and their kitchen to these students. Their family
made a concerted effort to be generous to the whole Logos community but especially to the girl
friends of their daughters. Ruth said that the Jones’ gave them space to “sit around the fire, not
really doing that much homework, but talking a lot” (Ruth, L.76). Kelly said that despite her
overall negative experience at Logos, her happiest moments were with other Logos students
outside of school. Here she developed friendships who opened her horizons to different passions
and interests. Kelly never baked growing up, and she watched Ruth make Rice Krispie treats at
the Jones’ house. Kelly appreciated Ruth’s enthusiasm for cooking which she saw in that house.

Mrs. Jones developed a relationship with these girls that they never forgot. She gave them
literal space, by her fire, in her kitchen, to be with one another. Additionally, she made herself
available to listen to the girls, and her cheerfulness and generosity prompted them to open up to
her. It seems from the alumnae’s comments that both the physical space and her own availability
were very important. Within the physical space of the Jones’ home, the girls learned from one
another. Ruth said that she learned that “It is okay to talk to your friends about the things that are
scary or embarrassing” (Ruth, L.76). Regina said that she always felt she could go to Mrs. Jones
with any problem.

Jane, Ruth, and Kelly were all in the same class, which had a difficult peer dynamic.
Each of these alumnae spoke in depth to me about the boys in their class who travelled in a
“pack” (L. 98) together and took on a “macho” (L. 111) male persona. This dynamic led to many
of these alumnae expressing frustration with their experience at Logos and emphasizing the
Jones’ house, where generally only the girls would go, as a “safe haven outside of school” (L.
111). Yet, while Mrs. Jones was at home with her daughters and their friends and listened to their
struggles, she also was a teacher at the school and used her talents to help the class in some of
their difficulties. Logos requires every student to act in a play during each year with all the
members of their class. For example, all the 9th grade students would perform together annually.
One year when Mrs. Jones was teaching drama to Jane’s (difficult) class, Jane told me of their
performance of a skit of The Ugly Duckling.

Mrs. Jones cast Kevin, a boy who the girls found particularly frustrating, as the Ugly
Duckling. From Jane’s description, Kevin was a smart, athletic boy who generally completely
ignored the girls or just made fun of them with the other boys. The other two characters cast in
the skit were girls, and thus Kevin was taken out of his comfort zone with the other boys. Jane
said,

It really brought Kevin out of his shell a little bit. It took him away from the big scary
group of guys. My mom can pull beautiful things out of people, especially in drama, get
them out of themselves, out of their head, and bring out their potential. (L. 99)
I noted many important details in Jane’s words. First, Mrs. Jones is using her capacity, as a gifted
drama teacher, to bring out the best in others. She had an awareness of the social dynamic in the
class and was able to see a hidden acting talent in an adolescent boy who tended toward sports
and “hanging out with the guys.” She used, and I would presume to say, planned, the skit as an
opportunity to both break up some of the class tension and to bring something beautiful out in a
student. It seems very important to note that Jane was able to tell me that her own mother had
this gift. For Jane, now an adult looking back on a difficult high school journey, to pick out a
joyful moment prompted by her mother’s skill as a teacher is a testimony to her relationship with her mother.

The alumnae presented Mrs. Jones to me as an example of a woman living an integrated life with an orientation toward motherhood. They did not say that they admired her specifically for her mothering or particularly as a drama teacher. They admired her. They looked up to her for the way she was living her whole life. They appreciated her cheerfulness, her care for her home, which she opened to them, her skill as a drama teacher, and her ability to listen to them. It also seems significant to me that the physical space of her family’s home was so important. The family home was a space that the girls remembered because it allowed them to talk, think, and laugh.

3.7 Conclusion

Throughout this chapter I have tried to offer models of what an integrated life with an orientation toward motherhood can look like. Because exemplars have had the greatest impact on the alumnae at my schools, they are the best way for me to illustrate my concepts. All the schools in some ways, whether through Theology of the Body classes or through rules and expectations about dress, teach girls ways to understand themselves as women. However, the alumnae remember the implicit teaching, the examples of women they admire with much greater fondness than any of the explicit teachings. Of course, none of my examples are perfect because no one is perfect, but these women have thought deeply about their priorities with regard to motherhood and their own talents. They are women who grasp what Beauvoir and Freidan urge for women – to ensure that they develop themselves fully as persons. But these women also have a sense that because they are women, because they are mothers, they should also develop their capacities as mothers as well. They perceive that by integrating both motherhood and work, service, or
meaningful leisure, they will develop their capacities in all spheres of their life. Every life is a complicated blend of home, work, projects, community, sicknesses, etc. Yet, despite the inevitable messiness of trying to integrate one’s life, a defining characteristic I saw in an integrated life for these women was peace within the juggling. These women have an attractive self-possession and a confidence in their own dignity and capacities. I hope in my next chapters to unpack in greater detail what is happening in my schools that is aiding women and girls to have this type of confidence and peace.
Chapter 4: Logos: An Integrated Life through Beauty, Freedom,
and Community

4.1 Overview of Logos

In my previous chapters I have told some stories from Logos, an independent Catholic classical school, but in this chapter, I will fill in many details of the school. My hope in the next three chapters of my dissertation is to bring to life the individual ways that three of my schools form students to live an integrated life, and, specifically for the girls, how the schools form them to think about their vocation as women. Logos was founded in 1979 as a family school, in a family home, and currently has 102 students grades 7-12. Mr. and Mrs. Todd started the school with a few other families because they could not find a Catholic school which they felt would form their children to live integrated lives. Mr. Todd was an educator with many years of experience in boarding schools, in private liberal arts preparatory schools in the Northeast, and in Catholic colleges. He appreciated the focus of the preparatory schools on virtue ethics, but he and Mrs. Todd felt their children needed a high school with both the Catholic faith and a classical, virtue-based curriculum.²¹ They started Logos using the Dorothy Sayers’ essay “The Lost Tools of Learning”²² (1947) as their guiding document. They bought a mansion, moved into it the with their family, and opened the doors as a school. Now, over forty years later, the school still operates in the mansion. Mr. and Mrs. Todd passed away recently, but they spent the last

²¹ Logos was the first of many Catholic classical schools founded in the United States and was a model for many. In my discussion with Dr. Todd, he told me that he has letters written between his father, Mr. Todd, and the founders of the Chesterton Academies and the Trinity schools, two classical networks now comprising almost 100 schools. There is clear evidence that Mr. Todd and Logos had an influence of the founding of many of these schools. This article lists chronologically the founding of these schools https://www.catholicschoolplaybook.com/post/the-unworthy-instruments-who-are-saving-catholic-education.

²² This article by Dorothy Sayers written in 1947 discusses the classical Trivium, grammar, logic, and rhetoric, and Quadrivium, arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music. She argues that these tools of learning need to be brought back into education. https://www.pccs.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/LostToolsOfLearning-DorothySayers.pdf
years of their life living on the grounds on Logos in a separate home. In their ‘retirement,’ Mrs. Todd was the school librarian. Mr. Todd occasionally taught art and Latin, but most often he would be seen working as the school custodian. When the alumnae I interviewed were students, they saw Mr. Todd daily in his overalls with a wrench or paintbrush in his hands puttering on the grounds, mending a broken door, or painting something chipped from decades of students use. The life of the Todds lived in service to the students and to the school exemplifies the type of integrated life for which they aimed to educate their own children and many other students.

I hope in this chapter to help my readers step with me into this very unique Catholic school which, though far from perfect, strives to form students in an integrated life with a special focus on beauty, freedom, and community. I know Logos and the Todd family personally. In fact, the structure of my dissertation research, looking at an integrated life as encompassing a personal faith based on reason, virtue ethics, role models, vocation, and community largely comes from my understanding of Logos. As I mentioned in my introduction, I strive to be fair in my writing, showing each of my schools’ strengths and weaknesses honestly, but I know that my affection for the type of education Logos provides will be apparent in this chapter. My personal knowledge of the school helped while writing this because I am familiar with many details of the school. But I was also privy to more negative feedback here than at my other schools. At my three other schools, all my alumnae look back with appreciation on their time at the school. At Logos, I was able to reach more alumnae, so I heard a greater variety of positive and negative experiences.

I was able to interview the greatest number of alumnae at Logos compared to my other schools. I formally interviewed seven alumnae, graduates from 2007-2011, all now between the ages of 28-34. I informally interviewed three more alumnae. They were my first interviews of
my whole dissertation research, and I asked them to be a part of a pilot study. I will refer to the comments from the pilot study occasionally but not rely as heavily on them because none of them were at Logos for their whole high school experience, which, as they themselves noted, meant they did not have the complete experience. I put together a graph of the alumnae and information I had about them to help me visualize who they are a little more. I will include this graph in my appendices, but these are the main points I noticed:

1) Three of the alumnae are married to alumni.
2) Two of the alumnae went back to teach or coach at Logos.
3) All are married. All, except one, have children. Most have multiple children.
4) Five of the nine alumnae with children are working part time. The other four with children are home full time.
5) The negative and positive experiences of the alumnae correlate with the small class dynamic. For example, the alumnae who all had negative overall experiences at the school were all in the same class with a very difficult class dynamic.
6) Almost all of the alumnae have a good friend or multiple good friends from high school with whom they stay in touch today.

In addition to my alumnae interviews, I interviewed three administrators and teachers: Dr. Todd, Mr. Crawley, and Dr. Chan. Dr. Todd, Mr. and Mrs. Todd’s son, was the first graduate of Logos, did his PhD in theological anthropology, found his vocation as a celibate layperson, and returned to the school to become the headmaster, which he still is today. Mr. Crawley is the Dean of Students, famous among the alumni for his Intellectual History course and his passionate basketball coaching. Dr. Chan is the mother of Logos students who have now graduated and in recent years has put her PhD in Microbiology to use in improving the Biology and Chemistry courses at Logos. In what follows I hope to bring alive my concepts of an integrated life and of an orientation toward motherhood by looking at Logos’s particular love of beauty, freedom, and community.
4.2 Formation for an Integrated Life

4.2.1 Beauty and Freedom in the Physical Environment

Mr. Weiss, an early graduate of Logos, later a teacher at Logos, and then a founder of his own classical Catholic school, wrote a reflection on Mr. Todd and beauty. He said that Mr. Todd spoke constantly of the good, the true, and the beautiful, and that his “particular love of these three goods was founded on the notion of the unity of the three”23 (Weiss, p. 10). He remembers Mr. Todd telling students incessantly that “Truth and goodness live in a home, and that home is beauty” (Weiss, p. 10). All the alumnae remember Mr. Todd’s art classes where he taught about lines, proportions, and symmetry as integral to beauty and they also remember how much he cared about the school building and maintaining its beauty. Weiss, from his perspective now as an educator, said that Mr. Todd’s “profound insight” (Weiss, p.10) as an educator was that while goodness, truth, and beauty are all equally important in the formation of persons, they have a particular order in appeal especially to young people. Weiss said that Mr. Todd knew that the souls of the young are not receptive to every good equally…Authentic beauty, true beauty, is something irresistible to the souls of the young. When they are presented with beauty, when the young become habituated to beauty, they will concomitantly develop an aptitude and a disposition to truth and goodness. (Weiss, p. 10-11)

While all my schools had a common goal of teaching the students to have a faith based on reason, Logos’s particular emphasis is teaching the students to see an order in reality by exposing them to beauty and to the fine arts.

It is fitting that the school exists in a beautiful mansion. None of the various aspect of the school, the curriculum, the fine arts, etc., would make sense without first explaining the physical

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23 Throughout this chapter I include quotations from a private publication of the school. In the book are published articles and talks given by the founders as well as writings by others, such as Mr. Weiss, about the founders. To maintain the anonymity of the school I will cite the book simply with the pseudonyms of the writer and the page number.
environment of the school. If Logos uprooted and moved to a traditional school building, the school would not be the same place. The beauty of the mansion and the grounds are integral to what Logos is. The appreciation of this beauty comes both through the student’s freedom to enjoy it and their responsibility with regard to those physical spaces.

When I drove to Logos to interview Dr. Todd one warm July day, I took a windy back road in a historic town about 45 minutes away from the nearest city. While the area is not rural, it is also not a suburb of a large city like all of my other schools. I turned from the windy road onto a long curvy uphill driveway that led to a mansion set back from the road (altered only by the addition of a gym and a few other classrooms).

I walked into the main entryway of the mansion, a beautiful room with marble floors and directly ahead of me was a room surrounded by glass windows called the Lucy. Almost all the classrooms are named after saints, chosen as role models for the students. At Logos the teachers move classrooms, and the students stay in one room for their majority of their classes. Thus, each class has a patron saint for the year based on their classroom for the year. The Cecilia, named for St. Cecilia, the patron of music, is the home classroom of the 7th grade students and is also used for music classes. The Aquinas, the largest, most elegant room in the building, is generally the room given to the seniors. This is symbolic because St. Thomas Aquinas is highly respected at Logos, so the best room, as they see it, would have his name. The senior theses, which I mentioned in a previous chapter, are written in the style of one of St. Thomas Aquinas’s questions in the *Summa Theologica*. Ideally, the seniors, studying in this room, should aspire to his pursuit of wisdom and pray to him for help.

The Lucy, aptly named after St. Lucy because Lucy means “light,” the glass-enclosed room directly ahead of me upon entrance, would have been used as a porch or garden room when
the house was a family home. The decorations are a light green and the glass windows and doors allow in abundant light. In the center of the room is a large oval wooden table which fits about ten to twelve chairs around it. All the classrooms are set up for seminar-style discussion, a key component of the educational philosophy. The Lucy overlooks beautiful marble steps leading down to what once was the front yard of the house but are now the sports fields. When I asked the alumnae about the aesthetics of the building, Sara said, “I had a study hall in the Lucy. It was the best. I didn’t study anything. I just looked out the window the whole time” (L. 54). From the context of our conversation, I understood she often was distracted from studying because she was observing the beauty of the room and of nature that she could view from the windows.

While I cannot spend too much time on the aesthetic details of the school, a few last points are relevant here. First, in the main hallway, under a curved staircase with a well-worn red rug, is a grand piano. The students can play the piano at any point that they are not supposed to be in academic classes. Before or after school, during lunch, or “ten-minute break,” the piano can be heard. Sara mentioned that when she and her mother came to Logos for her interview, before she started as a student, she heard someone playing the piano during 10-minute break. She remembers that as a distinct moment when she felt the desire to attend the school. She wanted to be in this atmosphere of beauty where students used their freedom to create something beautiful such as music that others could hear and enjoy.

The final point I will make about the physical environment of the school is that it is set on large fields and surrounded by woods. Again, during the non-academic times of the day, the students are free to use these grounds with few rules, but clear boundaries for appropriate behavior. Some of the alumnae laughed remembering a group of young men who were suspended for going into the woods during lunch to smoke cigarettes. The alumnae were
laughing because the offense was so slight. The alumnae felt that there were more problematic behaviors that the students could have been participating in in the woods, but they were smoking cigarettes. This story seemed to me to reflect a great deal about the character, the size of the school, and the persons in the school. Most students choose to use their free time to play a sport, play the piano, walk the driveway, chat with a friend, or even explore a stream in the woods. The students have freedom within the physical space, but this is only possible because the school is so small, and the teachers can be aware of where everyone is. If anything happens, such as a group of teenagers smoking in the woods, consequences quickly follow. Also, the school is quite selective about the “type” of family that sends their children there. Dr. Todd said to me,

It’s in a small school that [freedom] can happen. I think none of this could happen if we were bigger than 90 people. It also can only happen because we are selective in the families that are here. Everybody’s already supported by their families. (L. 19)

By admitting students from families who “fit” with the mission of the school, the teachers and administration can give the students greater freedom around the school. One of my other schools, Fernbrook, told me proudly about their “open campus” policy. At Logos they did not even have a name for this ability to use the campus freely. It was so much a part of who they are that it went without saying.

Yet with freedom comes responsibility. I mentioned that Mr. Todd, in his retirement, was the unofficial custodian. There is no hired person who does the regular cleaning or routine maintenance of the building. The building is open to everyone in the community, including the families and is looked after by everyone who uses it. Families participate in Logos Cleanup days a few times a year. The students have Logos Service every day for ten minutes before dismissal.

Dr. Todd said this in an interview in July 2021. In September 2022 their enrollment exceeded 100 students for the first time ever. I followed-up with Dr. Todd at the beginning of the 2022-2023 academic year and he said he had to turn multiple families away that year. He was concerned they already were going to be too large to maintain the community that is so important to the school.
Each teacher is assigned an area inside or outside the building and has a team of students to help them maintain that area. The teacher gives them jobs within the assigned area and monitors that the jobs are done. The alumnae all looked back on Logos Service with great appreciation and fondness. Regina graduated from Logos, taught there after college, and then taught at another school for a while. She is teaching part time at Logos again. She reflected that at the other school where she worked the students did not take care of the building in the same way. Coming back to Logos, she said, “I hear kids grumble about Logos Service and I just hope that someday they understand that when you take care of something, you really learn to care for it” (L. 54). Sara agreed that she learned to care for it more but added also that cleaning made her “pay more attention to things that would go unseen” (L. 54). She said,

Have you tried dusting the ornate, wooden frame in the library? It’s very hard but other kids might not even notice that frame if they don’t have to deal with it. I think that having even the Logos Cleanup Days, getting ready for parties, it all just helps the kids get more involved and have more responsibility and care more about the environment of their learning. (L. 54)

This comment ties back to the idea of the building aesthetics. The students attend school in a beautiful, albeit well-worn, mansion, but Sara proposes that they might not appreciate the beauty if they did not have responsibility toward it. I suspect, because she used the ornate wooden frame in the library as an example, that it was her job to dust it one year. She must know every curve of the carvings in the frame from dusting it daily over the course of nine months. Sara came to appreciate the frame because she slowed down to care for it.

Lucy, one of the alumnae, reflected that she saw in the rooms and the beauty of the school the same elements that she learned in Mr. Todd’s art classes. She commented,

High schoolers can be focused on material things, having this or having that. That wasn’t the vibe at Logos at all. And there was something that maybe we didn’t understand at the time, but there’s something beautiful in the simplicity of it. And the rooms, there was a few beautiful paintings, but I think overall, there was symmetry to the rooms. And it’s all
[what we learned in] Mr. Todd’s art classes. It’s everything he taught us about what’s beautiful and being symmetrical and all these things. It was there present in different rooms, simple beauty. (L. 54)

Dr. Todd, the current headmaster, wrote up his own reflections on the founding of Logos and what his parents brought to the school that made it different from any other schools at the time. Dr. Todd asked many people what they remembered about Mr. Todd, and they said that he tirelessly observed that “Beauty is not in the eye of the beholder, but in the ‘res,’ the thing in front of us – if only we had eyes to see” (Todd, p.19). Although Mr. Todd is no longer alive, his appreciation of beauty is still present in the school. The building remains the same, with updates only to retain the same beauty, the students still have responsibility for maintaining the school, and everyone still has the freedom to enjoy the beauty.

4.2.2 Freedom in the Spiritual Life

The location of the chapel off the library is another testament to how the physical environment is an integral part of what Logos is. There is a door to the chapel from the parking lot and another door that opens out into the library. Both doors are always unlocked, so some students and teachers enter and exit school through the chapel door daily. In this way, their first and last moments at school are spent in the chapel. Kelly, one of the alumnae said, “I really loved how certain friends of mine would go and sit in the chapel” (L. 112). She did not quite understand why they did it but admired them for it. Many of my alumnae mentioned watching people stop by the chapel and doing so themselves. The chapel is another destination for the students during their free time. Every day at the beginning of lunch there is a student-led Angelus25 and brief time of prayer in the chapel. Dr. Todd told me that he is very careful that this

25 A traditional Catholic prayer that helps one meditate on the Incarnation, when Jesus become man. It was traditionally said at 6am, noon, and 6pm daily. The noon recitation of the Angelus is said most often today.
remains a student-initiative, usually organically organized by a junior or senior girl. He commented,

I make sure that it’s not a school event. And the reason is that you want the students to have an opportunity to come or not come. To remember [that the time of prayer is happening]. Then it is an expression of their faith and not simply obligation. (L. 20)

Dr. Todd said he does not even know when the tradition started, and the leadership passes on annually without his involvement.

The chapel is tiny, only built to fit a few people. In my other three schools the chapel is much larger. At Logos, when larger groups pray or the whole school attends Mass together, the double doors of the chapel are opened, and the group stands, kneels, or sits in the library. Every morning the school day begins with a whole school Assembly and morning prayer. The students file in, girls on one side and boys on the other (surrounding the seminar tables) to facilitate singing in four-part harmony during the prayer time. Senior boys are asked to open the door of the chapel, and everyone turns to face the Tabernacle, containing the Blessed Sacrament. School Mass is also celebrated, every other week, in the same space. The students help move out the tables, and benches are brought into the library. This task is always given to a group of boys. Again, during Mass, girls sit on one side and boys on the other so that they can sing the songs in four-part harmony together. Dr. Todd told me that even if the school had the financial means to build a big chapel, they would not do it. Prayer is happening in the library, showing the students that prayer should happens in the midst of study, in the midst of learning. It is a natural part of one’s daily life, not something set aside for one particular place and time.

There is a weekly school Mass but, unlike at my other schools, non-Catholic students are not required to attend weekly Mass. Once again, this reflects the freedom of Logos and, as Dr. Todd says, that the school respects the faith of each student. A student who does not believe in
the Catholic faith is not required to be there for Mass. Whenever Mass is at school it occurs in
the library and chapel as explained above, but on alternate weeks the school day actually begins
at an Abbey close by Logos. Students and faculty attend Mass there, celebrated in Latin with
Gregorian chant hymns by Benedictine monks. They then pile into cars together, stop for donuts
at a local bakery, and head to school for first period. This unique experience was remembered
with deep fondness by the alumnae. In my pilot study focus group Melanie, Cristina, and
Gabriella spoke in depth about their experience going to the Abbey. Melanie reflected that so
much of high school education is about exposure to different things and, in the case of Logos,
trying to expose students to a culture very different from the mainstream culture. Melanie said
that going to the Abbey regularly exposed her to religious vocations and Cristina said

    I loved going to the Abbey. That was the first time I’d ever learned the Latin responses
    and then in college learning more Latin and really appreciating ecclesiastical Latin. [To
    Melanie] I guess that that’s right, that exposure is so important. You read a lot of things
    in high school and then in college you read it again. (L. 93)

Cristina connected her exposure to the Latin Mass in high school to exposure to certain works of
literature such as the *Aeneid* in high school. While she could not appreciate either experience
fully in high school, she came to know both in a deeper way in college because of her high
school experience.

    Gabriella mentioned that no one checks if the students are all at Mass, but most people
still went. Dr. Todd told me the same thing in our conversation. He said he would never sit
outside of church and take roll. But Gabriella pointed out that

    It was understood that everybody would stop at the bakery and get treats before coming
to school. And it was almost special because school started later. I think that that’s healthy. It
wasn’t a rule that you have to wake up early, go to this Mass, and then get punished if
you don’t. But it became a fun day, because you’d wake up, go to the Mass, which is
beautiful. But then you’d stop and go to bakery and school would start later. (L. 93)
Dr. Todd’s discipline approach regarding Mass certainly mirrored Gabriella’s reflection. He takes a mental note of the students, usually those old enough to drive themselves, who skip Mass and takes them aside at some point to reprimand them, but he said it is “usually a matter of discouragement rather than the rule” (L. 23).

While freedom is embedded in the structure of the Logos education, it is a particular understanding of freedom. It is not a freedom to choose to do whatever one wants. Rather, emerging from the Aristotelian/Thomistic view of a good life, on account of free will one has the ability to choose the means to the end. One can also choose to not go toward the end. But Servais Pinckaers (1995), using Thomas Aquinas, says, “True freedom is the power to act in truth, in quest of the highest good.” (p. 397) One can choose to do other than act in truth or in accord with the highest good, but one is actually limiting one’s freedom by this choice.

Because my schools teach about and live with a teleological understanding of the world, they also have a corresponding teleological understanding of freedom. For example, from Logos’ perspective of a good life, taking part in the sacramental life of the Catholic Church, attending Mass, and going to confession are a means toward holiness, the end, the good. The students are encouraged to join the community in choosing the sacramental life, but they are not obliged. Likewise, the students at Logos are free to be anywhere within the campus if they take seriously their responsibility toward the campus and others within it. The goal is that the students learn to use their freedom for the good and learn this largely through role models, certainly not by forced participation in anything.

There are so many other aspects of Logos’s curriculum that I could include in this section on an integrated life. All the Logos alumnae remember either the literature courses, Ethics, Intellectual History, or their senior thesis with great fondness and appreciation, but I will save
them to elaborate on at another time. I will share one last thought here on the formation of the students at Logos for an integrated life. The exposure to beauty, in the building, in the fine arts, and in literature and the emphasis on freedom are all for the purpose of growth in virtue. While I did not write specifically about virtue ethics at Logos, it is part and parcel of their educational approach. Previously, I defined virtue as knowing the good, desiring the good, and doing the good. Logos aims to inspire students to the good through surrounding them with beauty but also gives them space to do the good by giving them freedom. Their radical approach is only possible because the school is so small, and the students are generally from families that agree with the school’s mission. Using this brief illustration of Logos’ approach toward educating students for an integrated life, I will go on to look how Logos educates the students, specifically the girls, to think about sexuality, marriage, and family life.

4.3 Formation for an Orientation Towards Motherhood

4.3.1 Separation of Girls and Boys

In the previous section I illustrate how Logos works to form students to live integrated lives. I mentioned in passing some ways that boys and girls are treated differently throughout the school day, but a deeper look at these areas would be fitting to introduce this section on an orientation toward motherhood. I noted that the senior girls are traditionally responsible for organizing and leading the Angelus, the daily lunch-time prayer, and that the senior boys open the chapel doors every morning for morning prayer. These leadership roles for boys and girls seem to be a school custom which has no clear origin. If Mr. Todd was still living, I am sure he could explain when these started and why, but for the community today they are simply traditions for which no one seeks an explanation. In fact, Dr. Todd said specifically that he has
never been involved in the organization of the Angelus. The girls have passed on the task to each other largely without teacher involvement.

There are other areas where the Logos administration separates the sexes purposefully based on common biological or psychological differences. These are sports and anything relating to music. The separation of boys and girls during sports is, in part, because of their bodily differences but is also for deeper perceived psychological differences as well. Dr. Todd reflected on his observations of the boys’ and girls’ soccer teams when they are warming up at the beginning of soccer practices. He said,

The boys are doing suicides at the beginning. The girls are waiting for the other girls to come out. It is much more personal and relaxed. Some of the girls are highly competitive but I think the number is less. Also, just the way that they get ready to play is different. This is a physical thing with their bodies. They’re doing all this stretching. The boys don’t stretch or, if they do, they’re also competing and doing it together. The boys run down the field all in a line. And if somebody is out of tune then they have to do it again. So it builds this teamwork and competitiveness. The girls will never do that. I mean, they could do that. It’s just that even girls that are really sporty just don't think of that. (L. 10)

From these comments and others, I gathered that the administration organized different spaces for boys and girls for athletics both because of their different bodily tendencies, such as differences in strength, and for psychological ones as well. Dr. Todd felt that boys and girls tend to approach sports with contrasting attitudes. The girls tend to be more collaborative and more in-tune with their bodies’ needs, hence the desire to stretch together before practicing. Meanwhile the boys tend toward competition and build their teamwork through competition. Dr. Todd went on to link these tendencies to the Catholic philosophical understanding of the body and soul saying, “When you accept the presupposition that the soul is embodied, then you don’t think of that in a secondary way. The body is a part of who you are” (L. 9). While Dr. Todd did not elaborate further, I see this comment connecting with my reflections in the previous chapter.
on Pope John Paul II’s Theology of the Body (which Dr. Todd studied in his own graduate studies).

From the perspective of Theology of the Body, each student has an individual human soul, but their soul is embodied in either a male or female body. While the maleness or femaleness of the body does not determine anything about a person, there are tendencies of females and males which can impact the formation of one’s identity. Dr. Todd said that when the boys and girls play pickup (informal) soccer games together during lunch or after school, it is very clear that the “boys have to hold back when they play” (L. 9). While he felt this was good to some extent, he also felt that they need time and space in which they could be fully competitive and use their strength. He was not stereotyping boys’ and girls’ tendencies but rather emphasizing that this was a way to help them develop their capacities.

The separation of girls and boys at Logos for music is fascinating because it is intimately linked to the importance Logos gives both to the fine arts and the Catholic tradition. The students have a rich education in singing sacred music, which very often is written for multiple voices. The whole school sings together daily at morning prayer, twice weekly during Chorus, and weekly at school Mass. During each of these moments the students are separated boys from girls and encouraged to separate themselves further into their particular voice: soprano, alto, tenor, or bass. The students all know where they belong because their voices are tested during chorus, and they practice the four parts then. I spoke with Dr. Todd about this separation for singing, and he told me an interesting anecdote about the previous school year. He said,

We had a problem because last year, they [the chorus teachers] put the younger boys with the girls. This is disaster. If I knew this, I would have stopped it. Their voices hadn’t changed yet. It’s actually a way of belittling them. But a boy immediately feels that all the older boys are thinking ‘you’re a girl.’ (L. 7)
Everyone is separated based on their voices, but this separation does not go so far as to make the younger boys feel that they belong with the girls, even if the pitch of their voices is like the girls’. As in the example of sports, Logos is quite comfortable with the notion that there are natural differences between the sexes, and they should sometimes be in separate spaces with different expectations. The students have freedom both within the campus and within their personal spiritual life. Yet, from what I heard and observed, a female student is not “free” at Logos to do sports with boys even if she is equally strong and athletic as most of the boys. Nor is a young boy whose voice sounds like a girl’s voice “free” to sing with the girls (though Dr. Todd’s assumption is that the boy would not want to sing with the girls). This ties back to an understanding of human nature that all of my schools share. Femaleness and maleness are categories embedded deeply in one’s nature. Aspects of one’s identity such as one’s physical strength or the tone of one’s voice should be considered within a larger framework of one’s personhood. The administration at Logos decided that there were deep reasons in accord with the students’ nature as male or female which make it best for them to be separated for various activities.

Some of the alumnae reflected that Logos’ expectations on account of their bodily differences felt too stereotypical at times. The boys were always expected to move the benches needed in the library for school Mass, and they were also given the job of raking and shoveling outdoors during Logos Service. One alumna said she felt she could move the benches with the boys, and another said she would have liked to work outdoors raking and shoveling. Most of the boys used their freedom during lunch or breaks to play sports, but the girls often felt they were not welcome to join in. Some of the most athletic girls would join into a boys’ soccer game at times, but it generally felt like a male-only space. I already wrote in detail about the difficulties
presented by uniforms and dress code for girls at all the schools. At Logos the dress code for
girls is the strictest of any of my schools, and many girls struggled to feel beautiful and
understand the rationale behind the rules. Caitlin admitted that she was quite frustrated as a
student because of these stereotypical roles for the boys and girls but that over time her
perspective changed. She said,

> Being older and wiser now, looking back on it, I’m able to really appreciate the fact that
most boys are never even taught to see a woman and think, ‘How do I take care of her?
Or what should be expected in society to take care of her?’ I think that was a really
positive thing that came about from a lot of those differences between the boys and the
girls the Logos. (L. 70)

Caitlin was the alumna who said that she could move benches along with the boys, and, of
course, she physically could have. What she realized in retrospect was that, by designating this
task to the boys, the school was teaching them to have a spirit of service toward their elders and
toward the girls.

### 4.3.2 A Lived Theology of the Body

Pope John Paul II’s philosophical and theological explanation of sexual ethics is taught at
most of my schools. Cardinal Newman, Fernbrook, and St. John’s have particular courses within
their curriculum that study these concepts. Logos does not explicitly study sexual ethics at any
point. Yet, Logos, of all my schools, has the most radical, in the sense of being countercultural,
approach to relationships between boys and girls. A quick list will show this to be true.

1) In the Logos Student Handbook, which all students sign, it states that boys and girls
should maintain friendships with each other at school (meaning friendships as opposed to
romantic relationships).

2) If couples do “pair off,” they are spoken to by the administration, and, if necessary, the
administration and their parents will meet with them to discourage the relationship.
3) No one invites dates to dances. There are no tickets either, so each student arrives with friends to the dances.

4) The school dances are family dances. The whole family is invited to attend, including young siblings.

5) The students are taught ballroom dancing, line dancing, and swing dancing. There is no music with words played at dances.

6) While no one brings a date to the dances, each individual dance played requires a partner. Each boy asks a girl to dance a dance with him, and the boys are encouraged to ask many different girls over the course of the evening.

When I spoke with Dr. Todd and the alumnae about the atmosphere in the school regarding dances, it was apparent that the dances were very popular. While all the students recognized that the school dances were very odd in today’s culture, they had a deep affection for them. Dr. Todd told me that on account of their COVID policies the school did not host any dances for over a year. While they did provide outdoor socials as a substitute, he said the students really missed the dances. Dr. Todd also said that the goal of both the dating rules and the dances was to build community, which requires downplaying the sexual. With his quick sense of humor, Dr. Todd laughed and added that “We don’t deny that every boy has a favorite girl to dance with. It is just that by the next school dance, it’s going to be someone else” (L. 17). He was laughing because he knows that, while the school policies focus on building community, the students will naturally still be interested in romantic relationships. Yet, by structuring the dances in such a way as to be for the community, the romantic aspect lessens in importance.

A few other unique aspects of the dances are worth noting. The entire family of the students is invited to the dances, and this not only builds up the community bonds but also the
family relationships. While the adults have a glass of wine and chat, the little siblings run in and out and around everyone. Dr. Todd told me that in recent years they have started having a father-daughter dance during every dance (I did not ask if they have a mother-son dance as well). They also have two competitions at each dance: a swing dance competition and a waltz competition. There are often families that are particularly gifted in their dancing abilities. In hopes of winning, it is not unusual for siblings to dance together for a competition. Once again, the structure of the dances is such that community and even family are prioritized over romantic relationships. I personally do not know of any other high school in which a teenage brother and sister or a parent and child would dance with each other at a school-sponsored dance.

The alumnae experience of dating and dances mirrored Dr. Todd’s vision almost perfectly. The alumnae spoke of wanting to date in high school and having both their parents and the school forbid it in some sense. Lucy said,

I struggled. I wanted to be in a relationship. I felt that I was mature enough for it. But the school and my parents were really one voice. They both agreed, ‘you are not ready.’…I think deep inside I knew that I wasn’t ready for it yet. (L. 57)

Many of the alumnae talked about their own high school dating experiences. While the school forbade any signs of relationships on campus, and the parents supported those rules, many of the students’ parents would allow them to date outside of school. Regina and Sara talked in their focus group about dating and agreed that, although they both dated, they still received the message from Logos that the purpose of dating is for marriage. The purpose of high school was the development of virtue and academic growth. The school was saying they were not ready for marriage yet, so they should not be dating. The students should be focused on growing in maturity in all aspects of their life. This tends to happen more successfully without the distraction of romantic relationships. There was no denial of teenagers’ physical and
psychological desire for intimacy, but there was a sense that the broader culture allowed those desires to overwhelm teenagers. Thus, the school created policies that helped the student refocus on what Logos believed was more important at that stage of their development. Caitlin mentioned her gratitude that the school did not allow students to bring dates to dances. She felt the administration’s reasoning was that

   We don’t want girls crying in the bathroom because no one asked them to the dance the whole week leading up to it. Also they don’t want to lose half the students on their academic work because everyone is so preoccupied with who’s asking who. They just decided to sidestep the whole thing. (L. 73)

While Caitlin, Regina, Sara, and Lucy all had positive perspectives looking back on Logos’ dating and dance policies, Kelly felt differently.

   Kelly struggled in many ways at Logos and acknowledged that her struggles began with the turbulence of her home life at the time. Her parents divorced right before she started high school. She had spent years training to be a jockey and, when her parents divorced, they sold her horse. She and her brother Martin admired the Monroe family, a Catholic family in their town. Martin “largely followed Dan Monroe to almost every private Catholic institution that Dan went to from the time my brother left public school in sixth grade through college” (L. 105). Kelly then followed Regina Monroe, who was one of the alumnae I interviewed, to the Catholic schools she attended. Both Kelly and her brother Martin became Catholic because of the Monroe siblings and their experiences at these schools. Kelly saw something desirable in Regina’s family and her faith and wanted that for her own life. Yet she never felt that she fit in at Logos and had an overall negative experience there. When Kelly was a student, she was open with the students and teachers that she had a different background from most and that she was struggling with her parents’ divorce. She received much unwanted advice (often about personal matters such as dating) and attention from the teachers, especially at times from some of the male teachers. She
said that “There was too much blurriness between what a parent should be helping a child understand, discipling them, or supporting and what a school should do” (L. 109). Kelly felt that Logos was too involved in students’ personal lives that they would even have opinions about students dating. She recalled a conversation with a female teacher about the struggles to have “pure” relationships in high school. Kelly thought there was too much emphasis on purity among the Logos community. She believed that she was capable of a mature relationship that would not involve what was seen as sexual sin. Interestingly, Kelly, the most critical of my alumnae, is married now to her high school boyfriend, a classmate from Logos. She said that her bitterness toward Logos has ended because she is so grateful for having met her spouse there.

Pope John Paul II is often quoted by Catholics and non-Catholics alike saying that the problem with the sexualized culture is not that it reveals too much of the human body but “that it shows too little.”26 This summarizes the core truth that he is trying to teach in his Theology of the Body. Most of my schools teach explicitly about the dignity of the human person and how this dignity should impact one’s relationships, especially romantic relationships. Logos does not teach this explicitly. Dr. Todd said that Logos’ goal is to send these messages indirectly, partially to emphasize interiority, but it is also just their school culture. While the Dominican nuns at Cardinal Newman are trained to speak openly on sexual ethics, Logos teaches the same messages without words. These messages are largely transmitted through the community; thus, the last section of this chapter will look at the impact of the larger community at Logos on the students, and specifically on the girls.

26 I recently heard this quote attributed to Pope John Paul II by an agnostic feminist. Upon searching, I found it quoted many places but could not find a date or time when the Pope said it. The full quote is “There is no dignity when the human dimension is eliminated from the person. In short, the problem with pornography is not that it shows too much of the person, but that it shows too little” (Pope John Paul II, n.d.).
4.3.3 Community

In 2010 Mrs. Todd, who co-founded the school with her husband, wrote an article for Logos’s newsletter. She wrote about the community that had gradually built up over thirty years around Logos saying,

When Logos started, we were working to permeate our curriculum with the truth; we wanted a truly Catholic school. But we did not realize until years later that we were inviting families to gather round and, influenced by each other, to strive to live authentic Catholic lives. Perhaps the greatest blessing of the school has been the community that has grown up around it. (Todd, p. 304)

Many Catholic families moved to the area for Logos, and they changed the dynamic of the local Catholic parish near the school. They also created educational opportunities for their younger children aligned to their common Catholic beliefs. Mrs. Todd continued in her article,

Out of the school has come a beautiful Gregorian Chant choir that blesses the local parish. There is a strong group of homeschooling families who share ideas and have developed an Atrium for several age groups...the mothers provide meals for families when a new baby is born. These I think are signs of a living community. (Todd, p. 304)

The parish community that Mrs. Todd mentions in her article came up multiple times throughout my interviews with the alumnae. Some of the alumnae still live in the area and attend that parish. Sara, now a mother of little children, is one of them. She spoke of regularly seeing Katie, the older sister of a boy who was in Sara’s high class at Logos, at Mass. Katie and Sara never knew each other at Logos, but today they are acquaintances through church. Katie has older children, and Sara admires her parenting style and tried to imitate it. Sara explained,

I’m deep in mommy mode [by which she meant she had multiple little children], and I go to church and look around at all of the moms who have a pew full of kids. They’re all well behaved and they’re all nicely dressed. And I look at the effect of the mothers. They’re so patient, kind, and loving. I want to be like that. I’m not very much like it now. Katie is like my idol. She is just the sweetest, but at the same time, no nonsense. These women are not being walked on by their kids. They’re able to teach the rules and the expectations without yelling or screaming. These women are all my role models when I

27 Atriums are a form of Catechesis in the Catholic Faith for young children. They are based on Maria Montessori’s principles of education.
look around. And it’s also helpful because after Mass a lot of times, they’ll say to me ‘I remember those days,’ when they had their little kids super loud in the back of Mass. It’s helpful to hear that from the people you look up to, to know that they also went through what you’re going through. (L. 61)

I heard many other positive stories from the alumnae about positive impact the close-knit community has on them still years after high school.

Yet this community, with its strong focus on the family and the faith, emphasizes to girls and young women that good mothers either stay home with one’s children or work part time. Most women stay home full time when their children are young, and some return to work part time as their children get older. Throughout our discussions multiple alumnae made the point that the school lacked female leadership. Of the female teachers there, some were young full-time teachers, but they rarely stayed for more than a few years because their family obligations took priority over their school obligations. The older women were all part-time teachers who were still raising families and also putting their family obligations first. The only full-time women on staff during the years that the alumnae were there were two young female teachers, one who left to prioritize family and the other who went back to school. The other full-time female was the school secretary, who was a mother to one of the students. She was greatly admired by many of the students, in fact, a few of the alumnae mentioned her as one of their role models, but she was not in a leadership role in the school. This dynamic meant that students had many role models of women who prioritized family life as well as role models of women who were using their talents in the classroom part time while prioritizing family life. There were, as the alumnae mentioned, unfortunately, no women in leadership roles in the school.

28 The school is very small, so the female staff and faculty (both full and part-time) make up about half of the entire faculty and staff. There is not a lack of women working there but rather a lack of female leadership.
Some of the alumnae reflected that if there had been a female in a position of authority, she may have been able to better explain and advocate for the girls in the frustrations with the dress code. While the dress-code question may seem a minor reason to need female leadership, I tried to show in my previous chapter that dress code is a part of a bigger discussion. The question of appropriate dress at school speaks directly to girls’ self-image, appreciation of their body, and their sense of what it means to be female. These questions are fraught in this culture, so Catholic schools have an opportunity to guide girls with regard to these matters. While the alumnae mentioned a lack of female leadership with regard to dress code, I am sure other areas of the school culture could benefit from female leadership as well.

While I did not ask Dr. Todd about women in leadership directly, he did indirectly explain why this was the case. Dr. Todd does not have applications from female teachers or staff who have young children. The role of mothers in the home is considered so important within the Logos community that women with young children generally do not seek full-time work. Dr. Todd said he would not want to take them from that essential role for a full-time position because their children need them. Logos does hire many women part time and about this he said,

The emphasis is that women should develop their abilities. And when you see somebody who has at a pretty high level, then they’re great teachers. They’re fun to be around. And it’s not mutually exclusive from having a family…But there’s a kind of priority in their own family, as if ‘Family comes first. And then because I have this talent, I can do more. And I have the space.’ The two aspects [family and work] are one when the person does it and when the whole community says this is awesome. That has a huge effect on the kids. She’s respected by everyone and I want to be like that…that’s good. (Dr. Todd, p. 12).

Dr. Todd speaks to the idea that family should be first, and he argues that the community will recognize a woman living an integrated life balancing her family and her work. That community recognition will lead girls to see role models and allow those examples to impact their own vocational choices. Mrs. Todd’s article on the Logos community indicates that the community
has grown because many families with shared values moved to the area for the school. One of the shared values seems to be that women with young children are not working full time. The alumnae all saw this and very much appreciated it. But they also expressed their frustration that they had no female advocates in the school leadership. Yet, because of the strength of their high school exemplars, most of the alumnae today are living their own life similarly to the women they admired in high school.

4.4 Conclusion

The education happening at Logos is an example of a unique type of formation for an integrated life and an orientation toward motherhood. The emphases on beauty, freedom, and community emerge from the founders’ vision of a classical Catholic education. But the vision comes to life in a particular way at Logos because the school is so small. Everyone in the community knows one another and attends school dances. The school operates out of a beautiful old mansion and grounds. With regard to those the students have both freedom and a responsibility. The classical education gives the students a foundation in understanding the Catholic faith based on reason. The freedom of the environment gives the students the space to choose to grow in their own personal faith.

The alumnae’s experiences at Logos were mixed positive and negative, often correlating with the individual makeup of their classes. Because the school is so small, students spend years with the same few people. Sara and Regina loved their class and love the school to this day. Caitlin and Lucy were able to speak fondly of their high school experience, although they acknowledged having difficulties with regard to the class dynamic. Over the years in high school, they learnt to appreciate the diverse personalities of those in their class, especially those who, at first, they did not particularly like or understand. Kelly, Jane, and Ruth spoke openly of
deep wounds from high school because of the difficult personalities in their class. The alumnae’s experiences indicate that peer dynamics make long-lasting impressions on high school students, perhaps even more so than the overall school formation and philosophy. The young women who were clearly able to receive the formation offered by the school were those happiest with the peer dynamic at the school.

Finally, the Logos community, as I tried to illustrate throughout this chapter, emphasizes the beauty of family life by encouraging high school students to interact with their family members and those of other families in the community. Even the alumnae with negative experiences of the school spoke positively about persons they met in the community, such as Mrs. Jones and many others. The strength of the school lies largely in the formation that students receive from one another, the faculty and staff, and the community at large. As I mentioned throughout, in general, the women prioritize their families by staying home or working part time. The families support each other, the parish, and the school. Looking at the lives of the alumnae now, they have all taken this vision of family life to heart.

Comparing the ethos of the Logos community to the theoretical framework I offered in the earlier chapters, there seems to be a strong emphasis in the school and community on biology and nature and less of an emphasis on personal vocation as Vitz defines it. Vitz talks of the interaction of one’s vocations to holiness, to state of life, and to work, meaningful leisure, or service. Within the community, the final concentric circle, that of work, service, or meaningful leisure, is regarded as a part-time occupation for mothers. While this seems out of step with the theoretical framework I offered in previous chapter, the positive impact of many women in the community on the alumnae offers another viewpoint. In the following chapters, I will continue to show how the theoretical takes shape in different schools and school communities.
Chapter 5: Fernbrook: Flexibility Rooted in Tradition

5.1 Overview of Fernbrook

As I pulled up my car to Fernbrook one morning on a Tuesday, my first view of the school property was of rolling soccer and lacrosse fields. From the outside the school looks like any prep school. There is a lovely campus with outdoor seating scattered about the grassy areas. I saw some students, wearing plaid uniforms, studying together at the picnic tables where they were allowed to take off their masks. This was a few days after Labor Day at the beginning of the second pandemic school year (Fall 2021). Fernbrook, an all-girls’ 6th-12th grade school founded in 1979, is an “independent school inspired by the teachings of the Catholic Church” (quote taken from the school website). It is situated in the suburbs of a prominent city and has 218 students, largely from upper-middle-class backgrounds. They are careful not to call themselves a “Catholic school” because traditionally that title belongs to diocesan schools who are directly under the governance of the local bishop. As an independent school they have the freedom to educate as they see best without the oversight of the diocese and very little oversight from the state. While on the outside the school looks like a typical prep school, I felt a distinct difference from the moment I stepped into the building.

I signed my name in the visitor log and spoke to the receptionist, telling her I had a meeting with the headmistress. Waiting for Mrs. Corwin to meet me in the lobby, I read the plaques on the walls about the habits of mind, heart, and character imbued in the school. Each plaque featured a teacher or alumna who spoke about the habits taught at Fernbrook and how those impacted them personally in their lives. I also noticed that adjacent to the lobby was a large chapel, big enough to fit the entire student body. It was simple but beautiful with stained glass windows and a gold tabernacle directly behind the altar.
Fernbrook is an all-girls’ school with an all-female faculty. The teachers and staff are lay persons, meaning there are no nuns or priests teaching or administrating in the school. There is a priest who is the chaplain of the school. He says daily Mass, hears confessions daily, and gives spiritual direction to those who want it. His role is to tend to the spiritual needs of all in the school community. The spiritual charism of the school comes from its connection with the Prelature of Opus Dei. This Prelature is an organization within the Catholic Church that helps form lay people, meaning people living ordinary lives, not priests or nuns, so that they can sanctify their daily work. The goal is to give lay persons formation so that their lives are “fully consistent with their faith, in the middle of the ordinary circumstances of their lives and especially through the sanctification of their work.”

The founding of Opus Dei is quite recent in the history of the Catholic Church, less than 100 years ago. Many of the faculty and families involved in Fernbrook have connections with Opus Dei. The chaplain of the school has always been a priest of Opus Dei.

When the headmistress, Mrs. Corwin, came to greet me in the lobby, we decided to first tour the building together and then sit down for her interview. We were meeting at the end of a school day, so the girls were beginning to leave classes and pack up their things for the day. Mrs. Corwin said she loved walking through the building and seeing the girls packing up and chatting at their lockers. The previous year, on account of Covid, the school was in-person with one virtual day built in each week. One of the pandemic protocols was that students did not have locker usage. This year the girls had lockers again and were happily chatting while they gathered their books and many greeted Mrs. Corwin with a smile. There was no reservation when the

30 While Opus Dei’s goal is formation of lay people, there are priests of Opus Dei who carry out much of the formation through administering the sacraments and giving retreats.
headmistress passed them, a sign to me of the relationship she had with them and their comfort with adults in authority. She showed me the classrooms, the gym, the performing arts center, the art rooms, and finally the new science labs. Fernbrook is built on wetlands, and Mrs. Corwin explained that the science teachers were working to incorporate more interaction with the wetlands into their classes. One goal of the school was to allow students to do research with the wetlands as well as help landscape the area so that people could take nature walks there. This goal was one of the last they had for development of their campus. She mentioned that the campus was designed to accommodate 230 girls, and they were quite close to that number of students. They did not want to grow more than that because the small size was necessary given their mission. I found this interesting especially because Logos felt the same about their own small size. Outdoors there were tables and tents, which allowed for the girls to get outside and take their masks off and work. They have an open campus, meaning that the girls have freedom to go anywhere during their free periods and lunch. This freedom was very intentional, both to allow the students to get out into nature but also to give them opportunities to use freedom responsibly.

While Fernbrook’s campus looks and is entirely different from Logos’s campus, I was struck by the similar phrases and words used by Mrs. Corwin and Dr. Todd to describe the aims of education at their schools. They both spoke of the intentionality of the school being small, the importance of the size for the mission, as well as freedom and tradition. The common vocabulary used indicates the common areas in their educational philosophy, but the schools have taken very disparate approaches to achieve those aims. Where Logos emphasizes the classical curriculum, beauty, and community, Fernbrook focuses on secularity, flexibility, and parental involvement. Throughout this chapter, I will expand on these words to explain Fernbrook’s individuality.
One immediate connection between Fernbrook and Logos, but also a distinction, has to do with their curriculum. Just as Fernbrook is careful to avoid the word Catholic, they also avoid calling themselves classical though much of their curriculum uses the Great Books tradition. Their avoidance of the word classical is part of their mission to be Catholic and secular.

Fernbrook is a young school, just over 40 years old, and when I asked Mrs. Corwin about the impetus for its founding, she said that even if there were vibrant Catholic classical schools in the area at the time of the founding, there would still have been a need for an Opus Dei school. She said,

"The vision of the [Opus Dei] schools are schools in which we have a rich liberal arts curriculum but we’re all about engaging the world…our education has to be flexible and forward thinking, secular…We draw on tradition, we are rooted in it. We have such a clear vision. But it’s a mission that really emerges and grows. And it’s flexible, depending upon a lot of different phenomena. (F. 101)"

Mrs. Corwin’s emphasis on secularity and flexibility was unique to Fernbrook as compared to my other three schools. She indicated that their flexibility was where she would distance Fernbrook’s education from the education at classical Catholic schools. She said, “We have to be rooted in tradition, but we have to be able to respond flexibly” (F. 101).

An example of this ability to change with the times can be found in the philosophy class the girls take their junior year. Mrs. Corwin said that course had been modified in recent years to a course in Big Questions in Ethics of Human Flourishing. Many of the same concepts, such as nature, happiness, and teleology, that were taught in the former Ethics and Metaphysics classes are still taught in the class today. The difference is that the school was flexible about how to approach the concepts. From what I gathered, their Ethics and Metaphysics courses used to study the various philosophical topics as a part of the syllabus (one week on teleology, one week on
happiness, etc.). They found this approach was becoming too removed from the girls’ reality. Rather than insist that the girls address philosophy in one particular way, they modified the course to something more accessible to high school students in today’s culture. Now they study topics more relevant to the girls but intentionally interweave the philosophical concepts throughout the discussion. This type of flexibility was a way that Fernbrook aligned itself with a liberal arts curriculum, but also distinguished itself from other traditional classical schools.

A second term the administration used was secularity. This is a term used uniquely at Fernbrook. The best way to point to this difference is through the words of one of the alumna I interviewed. Valerie said

People need to understand secular the same way Opus Dei and Fernbrook does - that you can have a lively life of faith alongside a deep engagement in the world and not make everything explicitly relate back to the faith or Church things. We would pray at the start of each class and each classroom had an image of Mary and a crucifix. We didn’t name classrooms. They were just numbered. While there was also spiritual preparation available for Christmas, we also celebrated the season in non-religious ways: watching The Grinch and drinking hot cocoa, decorating cookies, classroom decorating competition etc. (F. 111)

At each of my other three schools, Catholic saints’ names were used in various ways (to name classrooms after and to divide students into different “houses”). At Fernbrook, Catholic saints’ names were not used at all. Even the name of the school is secular. Someone driving past the campus and seeing the name of the school would not know it was a Catholic school. This secular spirit comes from the school’s connection to Opus Dei and Opus Dei’s goal to prepare Catholics to be in the middle of the world. Another one of the alumnae added that the understanding of secularity was very deep, much deeper that watching The Grinch at Christmas time. She said that at the heart of secularity was an understanding of human nature and happiness. As a school, Fernbrook, like my other schools, makes a point of the commonality in all human nature. Whether or not one is religious, one can relate to anyone because of their shared human nature.
This understanding of secularity is apparent in the way virtue is taught at Fernbrook, of which I will write much more in the following section.

During my time at Fernbrook, I was able to interview Mrs. Corwin, the head of school, Mrs. Worthington, the head of the Humanities department, Miss Livingston, a Physics teacher, and five alumnae. I conducted one focus group with two alumnae and three individual interviews. Each of the alumnae were between 26-33 years old and therefore were between 8-15 years out of high school. Three were married and had children. Two were unmarried. Of the three married and with children, one was full-time stay-at-home mother, one was working full time, and one worked part time. Of the unmarried women one was working, and another was pursuing her PhD. In what follows I will pull from all my data to sketch a picture of Fernbrook’s particular way of forming girls with regard to an integrated life and an orientation toward motherhood.

5.2 Formation for an Integrated Life

5.2.1 Virtues in the Curriculum

Just as at Logos I had to prioritize writing about a few aspects of the formation for an integrated life in the interest of space, so too, at Fernbrook. I have chosen here to focus on the many ways the school encourages individual growth in virtue and the school’s approach to personal faith formation of the students.

With regard to virtue formation, the faculty and staff are all united around the mission to form girls in practical wisdom through knowledge of the habits of mind, heart, and character, what I would call growth in virtue and character development. Mrs. Corwin hearkened back to Aristotle multiple times throughout our conversation. She spoke of his understanding of practical wisdom as well as his writings on friendship. While many of the administrators at my schools
referenced Aristotle, Fernbrook gave a particular importance to his philosophy. They use his term “practical wisdom” (p. 1800) in their everyday language, and, during fall 2021, when I did my research there, they had a professional development for the teachers on friendship in Aristotle. Coming back to school after a very difficult pandemic school year, 2020-2021, the faculty and staff saw the girls struggling to grow in friendship with one another. I heard from Miss Livingston, the Physics teacher, that during their professional development, Mrs. Corwin led the faculty in a discussion about the different types of friendship in Aristotle and how they, as a school, could encourage the girls’ growth in friendships with one another. As I mentioned in previous chapters, while not all Aristotelian philosophy corresponds to an integrated life from a Catholic perspective, his writings are a starting point for many of the schools. They look to him for his articulation of the natural law, especially with regard to truth, teleology, human nature, and a fulfilling life. Additionally, his approach to understanding virtue and friendship is relevant and accessible both to the faculty and the high school students. Beginning with an Aristotelian foundation in virtue, Fernbrook has a multifaceted approach to virtue formation throughout the school.

The first layer of character formation at Fernbrook is called “applied virtue ethics.” This is the explicit teaching and modeling of the habits of mind, heart, and character for the purpose of obtaining practical wisdom. Each girl attends classes that explain what these habits are, and each teacher posts in her syllabus and her classroom the particular habits necessary in that discipline or class. For example, the math teachers might focus on order, the science teachers on curiosity, and the history teachers on fairmindedness. The students are told that these are the virtues they must work on in this particular class this year. Knowing how busy teachers are, one may think it is easy to write some habits in one’s syllabus, talk about them at the beginning of
the school year, and then forget about them while trying to get through all the material on the syllabus. Yet Mrs. Corwin gave me an example of how she consciously works to teach fairmindedness in her course. She said,

I teach the seniors in their capstone course which is the end of a two-year program of the Big Questions and Ethics of Human Flourishing. For me it’s always a question of fairmindedness. They choose a topic, a social issue, and they take Catholic social teaching as the lens of human dignity and looking at equality and freedom and through the history of philosophy and theology. They are able to examine [the social issue] from all sides. Of course, I’m going to be advocating for the Catholic social teaching position, but the idea is to be able to understand the nuance, why this issue is so complicated. You thought you had an answer in the beginning but by the end [it is harder to see a clear answer]. So, you’re cultivating fairmindedness and humility. (F. 2)

Mrs. Corwin said she is “advocating for the Catholic social teaching position” but wants the students to see the deep complexities in all social questions. I heard from one of the alumnae, Valerie, that this fair-minded approach to societal issues had an impact on her as a student at Fernbrook. She mentioned that in one of her courses they had to write papers analyzing the different sides of a problem. Their teacher first had them read numerous articles about educational outcomes of students attending public schools in the Washington, DC area. They learned about various policy recommendations to raise the educational outcomes from different socioeconomic, racial, and ethnic perspectives. Valerie said she realized, “There are some confounding problems. How do you work through them? But I remember considering all the different views” (F. 88). She learned, because of their teacher’s fair-minded approach, that simplistic or partisan responses to social problems are not open-minded enough to discern the complexity of most issues.

Valerie had another story about the impact of her philosophy class on daily life choices, a clear example of virtue ethics being applied in her life. In class they discussed what makes a person a person rather than an animal, and they learned that a person’s ability to reason was the
distinguishing factor. Valerie said that her teacher linked reason to alcohol. She said, “If you give away your reason by drinking alcohol, you’re making yourself an animal, you’re getting rid of the one thing that distinguishes you from the animals” (F. 88). Valerie concluded that anything that makes a person more human is good and reason is good. Substance abuse causes one to lose one’s reason. Without hammering it home her teacher made a really clear point and Valerie commented,

   It's not that I never had alcohol, but I do not see the appeal of crossing that line [into drunkenness]. And even with friends in college, I was able to explain, and it gave me a really great story to be able to tell. ‘I will never forget this one teacher who said this…’ (F. 89)

While the objective of the class was to learn about human reason, Valerie remembers that class as a moment where she intellectually grasped the importance of the virtue of self-control with regard to alcohol. Throughout the curriculum at Fernbrook virtue ethics is taught both explicitly and implicitly through the examples of virtuous lives given in class.

5.2.2 Personal Growth in the Virtues/Mentoring

The explicit teaching of the habits of mind, heart, and character is only the first step in Fernbrook’s approach to virtue. Virtue in the curriculum is taught in a general way to all the students. Mentoring gives each girl the opportunity to grow individually in particular virtues. Everyone is assigned a mentor, and in the older grades each girl can request a particular teacher to be her mentor. Every teacher is hired with the understanding that they are both responsible for teaching content and for mentoring students. Mrs. Corwin said to me that teachers are hired to be coaches. The word coach in this context is synonymous with mentor. Teachers are hired to teach classes and help individual students on their path of personal growth. I asked her if she hires women with previous experience mentoring or if they are coached to become mentors. She said they look for women to hire who have an intellectual and spiritual foundation that the school can
then cultivate. Interestingly, Ruth, one of my alumnae from Logos, used the exact word as Mrs. Corwin, ‘coach,’ when she voiced her desire that in high school someone could have helped her navigate some of the social pressures. Ruth said, “Maybe if there was coaching” (L. 78) it would have been easier for her to handle certain situations. The girls at Fernbrook have exactly what Ruth wished she had in high school. They each have someone to listen to their struggles and help them target growth in specific virtues that will help in those struggles.

Throughout the Fernbrook school day, there are blocks of time in which students can meet with their mentor. One of the advantages to having an open campus is to facilitate mentors meeting with the girls. The goal is for each student to meet with her mentor every two weeks for 20 minutes. The mentor is also in regular contact with the student’s parents. Mentoring allows for an intense focus on individual character formation through coaching every girl. Mrs. Corwin compared the classic “Catholic school discipline” of old to Fernbrook’s mentoring. The strict rules and authority so famous of Catholic school nuns existed to build character in the students. Mentoring at Fernbrook exists for the same purpose, but the approach is very different.

We’ve let go of the old way, the residual Catholic school way of having to follow the rules or rigor. These words that just don’t mean anything anymore—for me at least. Certainly they don’t help do the very thing that we’re trying to do… any time you chastise girls…I mean you have to exhort, you have to give critical feedback, and you have to set expectations, and if they don’t follow it, there have to be some repercussions. But this idea of a relationship in which you’re in this authoritative…it really doesn’t promote agency. So we’ve gotten to the point with our faculty where they understand they are coaches, and they are much more about learning how to listen. We’ve done a whole year where it’s how to listen in mentoring, how to ask good questions and how to really scaffold their support. (F. 7)

At Fernbrook the faculty and staff work to build up relationships of trust through listening to the students. This is the foundation both for friendship between the girls and the teachers and for growth in virtue.
The range of topics discussed during mentoring sessions seems to vary widely depending on where the girl is in her own life and what the mentor’s capacity is. Valerie talked about mentoring in her interview with me. She said that she started at Fernbrook in 8th grade.

Mentoring was quite strange to her. That first year or two she had a lovely woman who was her mentor, but they didn’t “talk about anything of consequence” (F. 90). Valerie said she just wasn’t ready to open up. We would chat about very basic things, but I never felt she needed more. It set a good foundation because as awkward as it was at first, I felt like she cared about me. She was patient, she took her time, and had truly no agenda. (F. 90)

Valerie said the topics addressed usually were about classes, family, and friends. Even with that first mentor with whom she did not really “click,’” she learned a lot about the value of mentoring. One summer Valerie read a book that her mentor loved, and her mentor wrote a note with her thoughts about the book, the characters, and specifically about the character development of one person in the book. Valerie was touched by the time and effort displayed by this small token.

Miss Livingston, the Physics teacher I interviewed, is a younger teacher and newer to the school. She was an alumna of the school herself and had experienced the mentoring throughout her time there as a student. Now as a teacher and mentor she said that she

Leans more towards general sort of formation, not specifically spiritual formation. Because that’s not necessarily what all of us are qualified for. When I think of spiritual formation, I think of a spiritual director who is usually a priest…I don’t necessarily think I would feel qualified. (F. 32)

With her mentees Miss Livingston discusses the more general topics that Valerie mentioned: growth in virtue in classes, family, and social life. Another way of looking at these topics would be that “entry-level” mentoring helps girls grow stronger in their relationships with their family, their friends, and their work. Yet, through my interviews with alumnae, I found that as students
got older, with the help of more experienced mentors, some of them were able to take mentoring to the next level.

As they became more used to being mentored, they were often paired with more mature, experienced teachers. Topics addressed at this higher level of mentoring had to do with the girls’ growth in their relationship with God and in their understanding of themselves. Miss Turkin, an upper-level philosophy teacher, mentored Valerie, Susie, and Janet, three of the five alumnae that I interviewed. Her approach to mentoring and these students’ response to her show the profound impact she had both through mentoring and through the example of her own virtuous life. It was no coincidence that so many of the alumnae I spoke with were mentored by Miss Turkin. Their relationship with her led to much of their growth in high school and their current affection for Fernbrook. Their gratitude made them open to interviewing with me. It is also no coincidence that the teacher who was a role model to the students because of her virtue was the one who helped them grow in virtue the most.

5.2.3 Case Study – Ms. Turkin

Valerie, Susie, and Janet each spoke at length about the impact Miss Turkin had on them in high school. Valerie told me that when, in her freshman year, she discovered that Miss Turkin was her new mentor she was very intimidated. In fact, all three of the young women Miss Turkin mentored said that they “avoided her” (F. 46) or were “intimidated” (F. 91) when they began to meet with her. They described her as “polished,” (F. 91) “stern,” (F. 91) and a “straight-shooter” (F. 92). Valerie said that

In the chapel Miss Turkin would always sit in the same pew and all the pews around her would fill up but nobody wanted to sit near her because the majority of the students didn’t know her. (F. 91)
Yet over the next four years, her relationship with Miss Turkin became one of the most significant relationships of her life. She helped Valerie grow in the habits of mind, heart, and character in all aspects of her life.

Janet came to Fernbrook for the academics with little awareness of the Catholicity of the school and the focus on character formation. She completely fell in love with what the school had to offer over the course of her time there. She had some poignant memories of Miss Turkin’s role in her coming closer to her faith over those years. She said,

I remember we sat down for our first advising meeting. And I’ll never forget where we were. I remember the room we were in, and the desks were pushed together. We’re facing each other. And I remember I was gripping the desk like this in front of me. And she asked me, ‘Janet, what do you like best about yourself? And what do you like worst about yourself?’ And I just remember like looking at my knuckles and gripping the desk. (F. 46)

Janet wanted to be a good student and answer every question correctly, but this direct question through her for a loop. She had never thought about what she liked and disliked about herself, and she was afraid of answering incorrectly. Soon after, at the first parent-teacher conference, her father asked Miss Turkin

‘Do you think Janet is happy? Does she talk to you about if she’s doing well and if she’s really happy?’ And Miss Turkin responded, ‘I think Janet is going to have to get to know me a lot better before she tells me anything like that.’ (F. 48)

Earlier in this chapter I mentioned that “entry-level” mentoring seems to involve discussions of how to improve in areas related to academics and relationships at home and school. The examples my participants gave me of Miss Turkin’s mentoring were exceptional because, as Janet said, “She was responsive to where I was and what I was working on, while also being challenging.” (F. 48) At the end of their first year together in mentoring, Miss Turkin suggested that over the summer Janet could try reading the Gospels for five minutes per day. She left Janet
completely free to decide if she wanted to do so and never asked her if she had done so. Janet appreciated the suggestion and the complete freedom.

Janet also shared an anecdote from Miss Turkin’s Metaphysics class which Janet remembers vividly. In the fall they studied Metaphysics, and in the spring they were studying sexual ethics using Catholic Church documents. Janet said,

And we were talking about the Church’s teaching on sexual ethics, maybe some Theology the Body, I don’t really remember. But I remember vividly this girl in our class. She asked this question all of a sudden, “but is it possible to be happy without having sex?” I remember Miss Turkin just look in her like with this kind of gesture. I don’t think she said anything but with this gesture said, ‘Look at me.’ Miss Turkin has a celibate vocation. To me it was like an example of just living. This is a way to live. (F. 47)

The girls recognized Miss Turkin’s authenticity. She was teaching them content that she believed and lived without any pretension.

Like Janet, Susie and Valerie were intimidated and even terrified when they started mentoring with Miss Turkin. Susie explained the cause,

She asked you questions that really got to it. It was not fluffy. She really had an interest in figuring out ‘What do you need to work on? What can I help you with?’ And that takes work and humility. And as a little ninth grader, I was scared of that. (F. 46)

But both women told me that while it took time to break the ice, the relationship became one of the most influential ones in high school. Susie spoke of Miss Turkin as a wonderful model of holiness, and Valerie said her mentor revealed to her mentees her own struggles in character development.

She would sometimes tell us her problems. We knew that she was always working out, going to the gym after school and hated it. We knew she hated it. It was a two-way street in terms of friendship. (F. 92)

In addition to being a philosophy teacher and a mentor, Miss Turkin advised the Student Government. Some of the women I interviewed were also members of Student Government.

From all their comments I gathered that as the girls got to know her in a variety of contexts, they
admired her more and became closer with her. Miss Turkin asked direct questions, had a sincere interest in helping the girls become better, and was willing to show her own weaknesses to them. These aspects together made her a role model they will never forget. Growth in virtue at Fernbrook happens because the girls have exemplars of virtuous people there, they receive personal advice on how they individually can grow in virtue, and they learn what virtue is in the curriculum.

5.2.4 Personal Faith

While Fernbrook’s mission is centered around virtue and practical wisdom based in secularity, as they define it, they offer many opportunities for the girls to grow in personal faith. From what I could tell, it seems that the deep personal faith of the faculty and staff led them to develop the virtue formation that takes place in the school. The faith formation is offered as well and given importance, but it is encouraged through example and not required of anyone. Mass and confessions occur daily during “prime education hours” (9-10am) (F.14). Most Catholic schools have an ‘all-school Mass’ a few times a month, and many offer Mass daily before the official school day begins. It is very rare that a school has Mass and confession daily during the academic hours. At Fernbrook, however, no one is required to attend. In the spirit of freedom, this period is called Enrichment. Students at Fernbrook can choose to be enriched by attending Mass or to be “enriched through reading” (F.75). Those who are not attending Mass read during the period, and they chose books to read with the approval of a teacher. They cannot read books that are assigned for school. The whole setup is very purposeful. Enrichment is not a study hall because the administrators do not want girls to choose to study for tests or to finish homework over going to Mass. The choice is between reading for enrichment or attending Mass. It is also very intentionally placed in a primary academic period because the school wants to send the
message that the Mass should be a primary focus of one’s day and thus should be at a time when everyone is most alert. All the alumnae that I spoke to were grateful for the experience of attending daily Mass. One student, Annabel Harrison, said, “I was not into reading. I would have fallen asleep. So I just went to Mass.” (F. 75). Over the years she became increasingly grateful for daily Mass, and it became a source of strength for her especially when she was having social difficulties in school. Another student, Becky said,

I think the daily Mass was huge, it was just so baked in…We would sometimes joke if we had an exam later in the day ‘At this point, [I’ll] get more out of it if I pray to God for a better exam than if I take these 30 minutes to scramble and try to read again or something like that’…As an adult, in college…if it was a tough week, I would pop in for daily Mass, when I could find that type of thing. That was a crutch, or a habit that I could lean back on. And you could remember those days in high schools when there were different problems that were your big problems at the time, that you were figuring out in high school, but still leaned on that daily Mass to help figure out what the right decision was. (F. 66)

Yet no explanation of personal faith in the school would be complete without understanding the relationship between the students and the chaplain.

5.2.5 Case Study – Fr. Tony

Fr. Tony was the beloved chaplain of Fernbrook for decades, and, without me asking about him, every one of the alumnae I interviewed spoke of him. He was famous for his love of Fernbrook, his sense of humor, and the joy that he brought to everyone in the school. He passed away recently, and his funeral Mass was overflowing with the Fernbrook community. After his burial, a reception was held at the school. One of the alumnae spoke to his influence saying,

I know there was a positive impact on people because when Fr. Tony passed away the number of stories and testimonies from people, even people that now do not have a lot of love and affection for the school and its mission, had nothing but good things to say about him. (F. 94)
Some anecdotes I heard about him included his blessing the sports teams before games, cheering at every home game, and keeping a bowl full of Skittles on his desk. Any girl could stop by his office for “three Skittles” during passing times between classes, and he would chat with them. Janet said that everyone stopped by his office for Skittles regardless of whether they went to Mass or not. The alumnae joked that he thought our sports teams were the best and our choir sounded like angels. Janet said, “It didn’t, but it made all the difference that he really, sincerely thought it did. Having someone look at you like that changes you.” (F. 113) His naturalness, sense of humor, friendliness, and love for the students stood out through all the interviews. Everyone appreciated his spiritual advice but first and foremost appreciated the love he had for each individual person.

His official role as chaplain meant that he said Mass and heard confessions every day. He also preached “Chapel Periods” (F.16) to each grade monthly and annual retreats. His role was spiritual. He did not teach theology classes but was there to make the sacraments accessible and help the whole community grow in their faith. Some of the most powerful things the alumnae said about him included,

We were so lucky to have Fr. Tony there. He was an amazing bridge between the spiritual life of the school and everything else. He made it super clear that the joy, that everyone was happy at Fernbrook came from the spiritual life of the school. (F. 53)

Valerie, another alumna, said, “This is Fr. Tony, who was sort of larger than life” (F. 93). She said that he was very hands off with the formation in the faith. He would be happy to chat and laugh with the students with complete naturalness and without discussing anything spiritual. Growth in the spiritual life was the choice of the individual student, and he was there to help anyone who wanted guidance. Janet, who was at his funeral, spoke to another alumna there who said she never talked to Fr. Tony about God, but she went to his office and chatted with him
every day because she felt loved there. Valerie summarized what I think all the alumnae were trying to say about him with “This is what a Catholic priest is. This is what a father is” (F. 94).

5.2.6 Annabel’s Formation for an Integrated Life

To conclude this section on formation for integrated life at Fernbrook I will tell Annabel’s story. Thus far, I have shown the positive formation happening at Fernbrook.

Annabel’s story is interesting because it is largely one of an unhappy high school experience, yet, at the same time, her story reinforces some of the best qualities of Fernbrook that I have already mentioned. Annabel told me that she felt very left out of the social life in her class especially in her senior year. She said that she never understood why it happened, but during her senior year she felt “Nobody’s paying attention to me. I’m excluded” (F. 72). She added that at lunch she often felt ignored, not heard, or cut off in the midst of contributing to the conversation.

It was like really frustrating. It was actually bad. I started feeling that nobody cares about me. If I disappear, if I die, if something happens to me, nobody’s going to care that I’m gone. I was never suicidal. I didn’t get to that point. But who knows? If it kept getting worse, it could have maybe. (F. 72)

I asked Annabel if the cliquishness and rudeness of the other girls was noticed and addressed by the administration and teachers. She remembered some attempts were made to tell the others that this behavior was inappropriate, but it did not seem to have much effect.

What did seem to impact Annabel was the efforts of her mentor and Fr. Tony to help her grow through the trials she faced. Through the help of the chaplain and her mentor she was able to turn a difficult situation into a better one. She learned to look around and recognize the needs of others so that no one would feel left out the way she did. Her mentor, who was another “master-mentor” like Miss Turkin, encouraged her to turn it around and see when other people are hurt or in situations when they’re outsiders. If they are to go talk to them. If they’re lonely, to notice those things. So that I wasn’t so focused on me, me, me. (F. 73)
As an outsider listening to Annabel’s story, I still felt indignant that she suffered so much at the hands of the other girls. Yet it was clear that, whatever was going on behind the scenes, Annabel received support to grow through the difficulties. To this day Annabel does not know if she would send her own children to Fernbrook. Yet, even so, her story is a testimony to the core aspects of Fernbrook’s mission. The mentoring and the encouragement she received to grow in her personal faith benefitted her through her struggles and in her life after Fernbrook.

5.3 Formation for an Orientation Towards Motherhood

I definitely felt it in the dating world, there were things that were not assumed, but came to the forefront, that you weren’t on the same page. You’re looking for someone to live your life with, thinking, ‘I want to be on the same page on how we think about raising our kids.’ And you’re not talking about that on the first couple dates, but it became very apparent. I went to New York and met all these different people, and it is so obvious when you meet someone that’s not on the same page. He doesn’t believe these things and it is just not going to work. To connect it back to the curriculum at Fernbrook, much of it is so ingrained in me. And I think that shows how much Fernbrook did such a great job. It became such a part of me…it was something that really stuck with me, so many years out of high school. And I think some of it was the curriculum. I think some of it was the families, my family and the families that you would interact with, and how you saw them as examples of how they talked with their kids, how they raise their kids, what you would point to as a healthy family environment. (F. 67-68)

In this quotation Becky, one of the alumnae, gestures to the deep differences she found between her understanding of the world and many of those she met in the mainstream dating culture.

While she does not articulate what those differences are specifically, I know from the context of our whole conversation that she is talking about differences in views on faith and with regard to sexual ethics. Fernbrook emphasizes secularity and flexibility, but that is not at odds with teaching the faith, Catholic sexual ethics, and an orientation toward motherhood. Their most impactful means of transmitting these ideas are their Humanities classes, their focus on parents as primary educators, and the community.
5.3.1 Identity Formation through the Humanities

While some of my schools are hesitant to use the language of identity formation, Fernbrook is willing to wade into the debate. Many of the schools avoid the language of identity because they believe that their goal, the formation of the whole person, is different from the formation of one’s identity. All of my schools base their understanding of the person on an Aristotelian understanding of nature; thus, all teach against a postmodern view of the person. Virtue and character formation are the focus rather than identity formation. But the administration at Fernbrook felt they could reclaim the postmodern language within a Christian context. Mrs. Worthington, the head of the Humanities department, had thought deeply about this question. She said,

We have to talk identity. We can’t afford [to not do so], just because that word has been subverted in the wrong way. We have to shift, be courageous in engaging the language. And enlarging that discussion because we do craft our identity as women. And we have lots of influences that affect how we craft it. But we also have a lot of freedom and ultimately how we express ourselves as a woman is unique as our uniqueness. Rather than run away from identity politics, we have to build authentic identity in women as women. (F. 21)

Explaining more about what she meant by this Mrs. Worthington said that each woman expresses herself as a woman uniquely. The biological fact that women can give birth means that all women have “an identity that’s both shared but also completely unique” (F. 21) because each person is different. Humanities courses at Fernbrook “have to have a heavy dose of women if they’re going to explore their identity” (F. 28). Listening to Mrs. Worthington describe how the Humanities teachers focus on female characters, I was struck at the unique formation the Fernbrook girls receive when reading novels. Because the school is an all-girls school, they use literature as an opportunity to show the girls many examples of different ways women shape their identity. Mrs. Worthington reflected,
Taking a journey through a character expands the experiences you can have. It expands the number of moral dilemmas you confront. It helps you develop empathy. Even when we’re reading Beowulf, we're looking at the women with a microscopic eye. (F. 28)

All of the students at every grade level are reading books generally considered part of the Great Books tradition and analyzing the female characters specifically.

There is one unique course offered which focuses intentionally on identity formation of women and on motherhood. This course stood out from all the courses at all my schools as the only course which uses both literature and personal stories to help girls understand what it means to be a woman and their orientation toward motherhood. Because it is an AP Language course, it was not taken by all the girls at Fernbrook, only those prepared for a college-level class. Mrs. Worthington described the first unit to me.

The biggest central question I asked in that unit is ‘What are the factors that contribute to a woman forming her identity as a woman?’ And one of the things I want them to see is there are diverse factors. (F. 19)

She begins the course with three summer reads: Their Eyes Were Watching God, Oh Pioneers, and House of Mirth. Each of these books is written by a woman around the same time period in different geographical regions and cultures in America. She uses these books both as an opportunity to talk about the individual formation that happens on account of regional diversity and to discuss regional causes for the political polarization one sees in the United States. This gives the girls an opportunity to reflect on the common struggles these women have as well as their unique situations.

In addition to the books themselves, Mrs. Worthington draws on personal narrative to present many different examples of women making choices about work-life balance. She shares her personal story with her students. Her mother was a stay-at-home mom who hoped her daughter would go to law school. She was horrified when her daughter told her she wanted to be
a teacher so that she could be more available to her children. She felt her daughter was choosing a less brilliant career path so that she could be more available to her future children. The students in the class also read various articles, some of which I have mentioned previously in this dissertation, that address the topics of work-life balance from different angles. One is Anne-Marie Slaughter’s “Why Women Still Can’t Have It All.” Then the girls also must interview and observe women in their own family
to discern what difference women do make in the everyday lives of their family. Here they are 16-year-olds, potentially at the peak of selfishness, in some developmental level. The idea is to get them outside of themselves, and just looking and talking to the women in their family in a receptive way. (F. 19)

The unit culminates with a panel discussion where Mrs. Worthington invites some mothers of the students to come in and discuss their choices about work-life balance. She always ensures that the panel reflects a wide variety of choices that women have made.

As I said earlier, this AP Language course stood out to me because there was nothing like it in my three other schools. The class uses personal narrative and examples in literature to illustrate the variety of ways women live out their identity. I could not help but compare it to a course offered at St. John’s, one of my other schools. They offer an elective course called The Genuis of Women. The title comes from Pope John Paul II’s phrase the “genius of women” (1995, p.6) and the teacher uses a textbook summarizing Edith Stein’s philosophy on women. While I did not look at the textbook myself, from what Mrs. Allen told me, the book explains women’s uniqueness through four qualities: receptivity, generosity, sensitivity, and maternity. I spoke with an alumna of St. John’s, not in an official interview, who took the Genius of Women course and is now a college student. Using the language of the course, she mentioned her desire to be more maternal in college although she does not have children. Her comment concerned me because it seemed as if she had a rote understanding of herself as a woman, which could be at
odds with living an integrated life. While I did not look at the textbook or the content of the course at St. John’s in greater details, I felt that course had the potential to be overly stereotypical, in contrast to the AP course at Fernbrook. It is unfortunate that the course at Fernbrook is only taken by the AP students. Their approach to teaching the girls about women’s identity through novels and personal narrative is the strongest example of formation specifically geared toward women that I saw in all my schools.

5.3.2 Parents as Primary Educators

While Mrs. Worthington and Mrs. Corwin spoke of the ways Fernbrook helped the girls form their own identity, they were both quick to follow up on their comments with the essential role of the parents in identity formation. Parents’ role as primary educators of children has been affirmed by the Catholic Church repeatedly across centuries. Pope Paul VI in his 1965 encyclical letter *Gravissimum Educationis* ("Extremely Important Education") said

> Since parents have given children their life, they are bound by the most serious obligation to educate their offspring and therefore must be recognized as the primary and principal educators. This role in education is so important that only with difficulty can it be supplied where it is lacking. (p. 1)

Part of Fernbrook’s mission is to support the parents in their mission as primary educators especially in areas of sexual ethics. Mrs. Worthington explained that in the Humanities courses,

> We’re really careful, especially about human sexuality… There’s no direct characterization of a sexual experience because we don’t want to do anything that damages the beauty of human sexuality and marriage, we don’t want to form them afraid or with distorted images of the goodness of that. (F. 27)

They avoid books that have any depiction of a sexual experience, and any discussion of human sexuality, outside of the narrow scope of the Theology of the Body course, is kept for the parents to address. Mrs. Corwin told me that when parents are frustrated about something within this realm and say to her, “What is the school doing about it?” She responds, “It’s not really the
school. We can talk about theology, but that’s just 5%. Most of it has to be in your home, starting at a very young age” (F. 12). Fernbrook teaches Theology of the Body in the middle school classes using the Ruah Woods Institute curriculum, used by many of my schools, that I mentioned in a previous chapter. This is not a “Catholic sex ed” class. While a traditional sex ed class has to do with safety in sexual practices, Theology of the Body focuses on understanding the sacredness of the body itself. Fernbrook uses the curriculum but does not pretend that it is sufficient in any way. Teaching a class on the topic is just the tip of the iceberg. Mrs. Corwin said that what the girls are seeing and hearing via social media is much more powerful than any curriculum they offer at school. This is where the parents must be involved. Fernbrook recently hosted a speaker for the parents who shared data on phones, social media, and the impact on girls. The school feels that, as much as they try to cultivate the environment at the school, they need the parents’ support to really help the girls navigate the technological age that they are in.

There are other areas of school life where parents are clearly the primary educators. The Parent Teacher Association (PTA) at Fernbrook is responsible for hosting dances. This was unique among all my schools. Rules and regulations for dances at all the other schools were a source of much debate. At Fernbrook, the school does not get involved. Additionally, Mrs. Corwin said that Fernbrook will never have ideological clubs (such as a Democrat or Republican club, or an LGBTQ club). Recently, students asked her if they could start an LGBTQ club, and she told them that all these matters are seen as private and not within the realm of the school. She encouraged the girls to bring questions of ideologies and sexual identity to their parents. The administration at Fernbrook is convinced that girls are more likely to become authentic Christian women if their families help them navigate the culture. If that message comes solely from the school, it will be much less effective.
5.3.3 Community/Role Models

The girls at Fernbrook were formed to live integrated lives and to think about themselves as women in many ways, including the individual mentoring, the Humanities courses, and the encouragement the school gave for them to talk with their parents about many topics. In this last section, I will reflect on the stories of the alumnae about the Fernbrook community and the impact the community had on their understanding of themselves and their future vocations.

Many of the alumnae mentioned different aspects of the community for which they are still so grateful. Susie said that she and her parents decided to drive an hour each way to attend Fernbrook because the teachers were such great role models of the faith (F. 39). Becky found the peer influence at Fernbrook the most influential for her. She talked of friends outside of her high school who had to drink alcohol to enjoy dances and how that continued to impact their idea of fun in college. She said

That just wasn’t on the radar at least for my group of friends. I never felt I missed out on anything because of that. We would go to the semi-formals and have a blast being ourselves. We didn’t need that kind of lubricant to get ourselves comfortable. And I think that really played out in college and you hear a lot that freshman year, they had a sip of alcohol and then they go wild. And I never felt that. (F. 63)

She reminisced that she and her friends laughed a lot, that they were able to be themselves and be goofy together. The environment of the school brought out their individuality, and they were comfortable with one another and with themselves.

Another striking example of the community came from Janet. Her parents wanted a strong academic environment for her and some type of formation, but they had reservations about Fernbrook because of its Catholicity. Yet, Janet’s father knew a man from work who sent his daughter to Fernbrook. He respected the man and thought highly of how the daughter was
being raised. This relationship of trust led him to send Janet to the school. Janet spoke of her first day at Fernbrook and how she was warmly welcomed to the school by this same daughter of her father’s friend. All of my participants mentioned various families, teachers, and peers at the school who they admired, looked up to, and learned from during their high school years.

From the community and various community members, the alumnae received a great deal of indirect or implicit formation in thinking about their vocation. There was very little, if any, direct or explicit formation in vocation. When I asked the alumnae what messages, if any, they received about vocation from the community at Fernbrook, the general sense was that they left the school with an appreciation both for family life and with a sense of obligation to use their talents for the world in some way. Susie said,

I’ve never in my life felt limited. Part of that has to do with my parents and how I was raised. Sometimes people say that the Catholic Church has this very limited view, ‘If you are going to be a good Catholic woman, you have to do such and such’…but I never felt that I had to do one certain thing. Even though there were very clear things that were the right things to do in life, there was not one path that you had to follow, such as a certain career. I think Fernbrook did play a big part in that. (F. 42)

When Susie said “there were very clear things that were the right thing to do in life,” she is referring to the idea of living in accord with one’s nature as she was taught to do both by her family and at Fernbrook. Fernbrook taught this Aristotelian approach to the world and nature but through the Humanities, through mentoring, and through the community, Susie understood that people can live in accord with their nature in a variety of ways.

Susie, who is now a stay-at-home mother, also remembered being struck by the personal narrative of a teacher in another class. Susie said,

We all loved her, Mrs. Haaverdale. She went to Harvard and I remember that she was telling us one day that she was in some class at Harvard and the professor asked, ‘How many of you would actually want to be a stay-at-home mom?’ She raised her hand and she was the only one. And she was taken aback that nobody else wants to do that and was really shocked. She realized, ‘This is a different environment.’ But that struck me that she
went to Harvard. She’s so smart. She’s pursuing this great academic path, yet she also has this desire to be a mother, possibly stay-at-home with kids. And those don’t necessarily cancel each other out or clash. (F. 45)

Susie said that Mrs. Haaverdale’s personal narrative sent the message to her that pursuit of academic excellence or a career is good in itself. She said “educating yourself to the best you can, that’s going to help you raise your kids as well as you can. It’s not a waste if you decide not to go into the workforce full time or anything like that” (F. 45).

Becky was very grateful for the way Fernbrook prepared her to think about motherhood and careers. She feels she has found her vocation currently as a mother and working full time in very successful corporate environment. She studied economics in college, and her only regret is that she had no role models in high school of women in business and economics. Recently, she moved back into the city near Fernbrook, and she said she would love to go back to her high school and speak at a career day there so that the current students could understand the opportunities in the business world better.

The Fernbrook administrators promote an understanding of secularity and flexibility which is in dialogue with the culture. Yet, at the same time, the girls are hearing personal narratives of women choosing to put motherhood over their academic careers despite the opinions of their families (such as Mrs. Worthington standing up to her own mother) or professors at elite universities (such as Mrs. Haaverdale in a Harvard classroom). From the words of the alumnae, as well as looking at their own situations, professionally and personally, it is clear that Fernbrook helped the girls to see the value of both developing their talents through school and career and in prioritizing motherhood.

5.4 Conclusion
My first visit to Fernbrook ended around 5pm. The girls had left school an hour ago, and most of the teachers and staff had gone home. On my way out, I decided to stop by the chapel. There I saw four or five teachers and staff members sitting and praying. They were not on their knees. They were sitting, looking at the Tabernacle, maybe reading from the Bible or a spiritual book. They were reflecting on their day with Jesus. At Fernbrook, the Catholic identity of the school is more subtle than in others of my schools. This is not a school that will preach about one’s mission as a Catholic or the need to discern the vocation God has for you. But at Fernbrook, most of the teachers and staff members take their own faith seriously. For this reason, they help the girls develop their character through mentoring, through books and personal narrative, and through exposing them to the Catholic faith through daily Mass and regular confession. Students are surrounded at Fernbrook by people such as these teachers quietly praying at the end of the day, a chaplain like Fr. Tony, and a philosophy teacher and mentor like Miss Turkin. Most of my participants had a great affection for Fernbrook because they grew positively there and all of them are able to see how they grew in character there on account of the formation.
Chapter 6: Cardinal Newman: Forming Catholics to Address the Issues of Today and of Tomorrow

6.1 Overview of Cardinal Newman School

My relationship with Cardinal Newman school began long before I stepped foot in the building. At a conference, in one of my first years as a doctoral student, I heard a talk given by a Dominican nun about girls’ education. I had not yet developed the questions for my own dissertation, so I did not try to talk with her, but I remember stepping away from the talk thinking that she was doing incredible work. I found out later that she was a ‘Nashville Dominican.’ All Dominican nuns and priests share the charism of St. Dominic, which is marked by prayer, study, community, and service (CN. 12). Yet among Dominicans there are different congregations. The Nashville Dominicans, more formally the Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia, have a particular vocation to educate. After I discovered this order, I paid attention to where these nuns were working. While they are trained and educated in Nashville, they work all over the country. They live in community so that there are never fewer than three in any school, but there are often only three in very large schools. Yet like yeast that is the “leaven for the dough,” these sisters transform the schools at which they work.

The Nashville Dominican nuns are active at every level of Catholic education and work tirelessly to improve it. “The sisters presently teach over 15,000 students from preschool through college in the United States, Canada, Europe, and Australia.” They run their own college where all the sisters are educated while also providing an excellent Catholic education for many lay people. There are also sisters working in higher education at other Catholic universities to improve education programs and to form Catholic teachers. The majority of the order work in

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31 https://www.op.org/charism/
32 https://www.nashvilledominican.org/apostolate/where-we-serve/#
Catholic schools across the country teaching Pre-K through 12th grade. When I asked Sr. Marie Benedict, one of my participants, how she ended up in her own assistant principal position, she said that part of their Dominican charism is that they “go where there is a need, and we have a talent” (CN. 2). It is clear from observing the joy of all the sisters that they love what they do. When it was time for me to choose schools for my dissertation research, I knew I wanted to include a school run by the Nashville Dominican sisters.

An acquaintance of mine, Ms. Anderson, used to teach at Cardinal Newman, a co-ed Catholic high school run by the Nashville Dominicans. She offered to put me in touch with the administration, who generously welcomed me to visit and use the school as a site for my research. Cardinal Newman is located in the greater suburbs of a large city and currently has about 700 students. They hope to grow to be 800 students. I arrived for a site visit one morning in January and interviewed Sr. Marie Benedict, one of the assistant principals, Sr. Beatrice, the chair of the Bioethics department, and Mr. Martin, the head of the math department, as well as two alumnae who graduated eleven and twelve years ago. At all my schools, it was difficult to get in contact with alumnae, but at Cardinal Newman it was the most difficult. I suspect this is largely because I did not have any personal connections to the school and that the school is very young, only 14 years old. They do not yet have established alumni networks or an alumni coordinator. The secretary helped me put together a contact list to find participants. The young women I interviewed were from the first two classes that completed all four years at the school. Dr. Teresa Pickering is married, has a child, completed her doctorate in nursing, and has returned to Cardinal Newman to teach. I told her powerful story in depth in a previous chapter. Marianne is single and has also returned to Cardinal Newman as the registrar.
Both alumnae commented that the House system, which is now a key to school community, was new and underdeveloped when they were there. Thus, it was not particularly effective in forming them. Today, the House system is fundamental to friendships between classes, between teachers and students, and to school spirit. These comments made me realized that I was not going to be able to paint a holistic picture of the school with so few alumnae interviews and with alumnae who were present when the school was so young. For this reason, I broadened my research in other ways. I sat in on a few classes, contacted teachers for resources, read some of their philosophy textbooks and materials, and conducted a parent interview and follow-up with her daughter, a very recent graduate. Mrs. Lagasse and her daughter Megan were able to give me different perspective which was very helpful.

Their overall school curriculum, unlike Logos and Fernbrook, is a typical college prep curriculum. Yet, from the founding of the school, the curriculum has incorporated a Bioethics curriculum into the college prep programming. This is what makes Cardinal Newman unique. Bioethics is the study of what is ethical with regard to living things, specifically with regard to the human person. Cardinal Newman is the only Catholic high school in the country to have every student participate in a four-year Bioethics curriculum. Sr. Beatrice, who I interviewed, is not only the chair of the Bioethics department but also is the author of the books used in the first two classes, The Human Person and Ethics. The third course is on issues in the Beginning of Life, and the fourth is issues in the End of Life. It is not just the students who learn the Bioethics curriculum, but each new hire, both faculty and staff, take the course, and it is offered every fall to the students’ parents. In fact, Mr. Martin, the math teacher who participated in this study, was first a parent at the school. He was searching for a new career path when his son started as a freshman. Mr. Martin decided to take the Bioethics course for parents and was so impressed by it
that he started teaching at the school. Every single person I interviewed spoke of the Bioethics curriculum with immense gratitude and appreciation in the first 30 seconds that we spoke.

The Bioethics curriculum and the Dominican charism go hand in hand at Cardinal Newman. When the school was founded, Bishop Templeton, the bishop of diocese where the school is located, wanted both the Dominicans and a Bioethics curriculum, so he reached out to the Nashville Dominicans to help him start the school from the ground up and to create the curriculum. Sr. Beatrice spent the entire year before the school opened writing the textbooks for The Human Person and Ethics. She said,

[Bishop Templeton and the superintendent] wanted the kids who graduated from this school to be ready to address the issues of the day. They didn’t want more unthinking Catholics. They said, ‘We don’t want the kids to just know that this is right or this is wrong, but we want them to understand why things are right or wrong. So not only can they address the issues of the day but also the issues of tomorrow... of 5 of 10 years from now.’ (CN. 20)

In the following section on formation for an integrated life at Cardinal Newman, I will explain the Bioethics curriculum in depth, especially its focus on intellectual virtue, just as Bishop Templeton hoped. Additionally, in this section, I will look at the unique focus on developing each person’s individual talents and capacities.

6.2 Formation for an Integrated Life

6.2.1 Bioethics and Intellectual Virtue

Sr. Beatrice, who was a philosophy professor at the college level, was asked to write the Bioethics curriculum and begin teaching it at the high school level. She has been doing so ever since and has published multiple editions of her two textbooks over the years. The books are now used in other high schools as well.

When I looked at her textbooks, I realized that Sr. Beatrice had taken complicated philosophical concepts, largely from Aristotle, St. Thomas Aquinas, and St. John Paul II, and
brought them to a level that 14- and 15-year-old students can understand, albeit with difficulty.

The titles of the chapter topics, as shown in the images below of the Table of Contents from both textbooks, show the influence of and often use the language of Aristotle, St. Thomas Aquinas, and St. John Paul II.

![Table of Contents](image)

**Figure 2**

Sr. Beatrice explained the purpose behind the first two courses. She said,

> The first two courses are, strictly speaking, not Bioethics. We call them Bioethics. They’re in the Bioethics umbrella. They’re just getting a philosophical foundation. The first one is a philosophical understanding of the human person, because the kids will learn that we judge all of the ethical issues basically on “What is it doing to the human person?” So they have to rightly understand who they are, and understand the powers of their soul. What are they working with? First you understand philosophically, who the human person is: why he has such a high dignity because of the powers of his soul, because he’s a person able to be in relationship. Then the second half of that course we go into: how do we treat other human beings? Particularly, we start with St. John Paul II’s analysis of love. (CN. 20)

Marianne said that she “hated” (CN. 56) Bioethics in high school because it was so complex, but she and every other alumnus appreciated it later on. Mr. Martin said that all the alumni come
back and say, “That was a great class” (CN. 39). Sr. Beatrice acknowledged the difficulty of the
concepts and her own gift of reaching high schoolers. She said, “I have the intellect to
understand the complicated stuff. But I don’t have the vocabulary. I have the vocabulary for kids,
so I can bring complicated ideas down” (CN. 23). I appreciated Sr. Beatrice’s comment that she
knew her own talent with regard to making the texts accessible to high schoolers. Throughout my
time at the school, I heard repeatedly that the nuns work in areas where they have particular gifts
and there is a need. Sr. Beatrice knew herself well and put her talent at the service of writing the
Bioethics curriculum. After completing the four courses of the Bioethics curriculum, the students
understand and can argue the “why” in ethical issues without having to say, “I believe this
because of my faith.” Mr. Martin said,

Sr. Beatrice [in her textbooks] addressed these issues about end of life, beginning of life,
abortion, choice, all that stuff, and not from a religious perspective, but a philosophical
perspective. So these kids can leave here and go to college and can argue those points
without mentioning the word Catholic.” (CN. 32)

Sr. Beatrice and I also discussed how these students are in fact able to learn more theology in
their theology courses because they have studied philosophy. In the Catholic tradition, because
of the tight-knit relationship between faith and reason, philosophy precedes theology, but most
high schools do not have philosophy courses. I recently spoke to a Moral Theology teacher at a
diocesan high school which was not a school I studied. She said she spends half the year in
Moral Theology teaching philosophy because the students need that foundation first. In contrast,
at Cardinal Newman Sr. Beatrice said,

The students take Ethics sophomore year and Moral Theology junior year. Ethics is
basically moral philosophy. So, it’s a perfect order. The philosophy precedes the
theology. What it actually does is frees the theologian to do more theology. Sr. Marie
Benedict said that when she talks to other Sisters in our community who teach in other
schools that don’t have the philosophy, they don’t get as much accomplished. (CN. 24)
The Bioethics curriculum prepares Cardinal Newman students to defend the moral teachings of the Catholic Church from a philosophical viewpoint. Additionally, because they take philosophy courses, they are able to learn more theology than other students at other Catholic schools.

One aspect of an integrated life is the building of one’s faith on reason. Another aspect is growth in virtue. Cardinal Newman, Logos, and Fernbrook\(^{33}\) all use an Aristotelian and Thomistic framework for virtue, but they each emphasize it in different ways. At Logos and Fernbrook, I saw a primary concern for the formation of students in moral virtue, whereas at Cardinal Newman the formation of students to think critically took precedence. At Fernbrook and Logos, moral virtues are discussed and practiced in the first years of high school, and only in junior and senior years is philosophy, the why, addressed. At all three schools the students study philosophy and cover many of the same topics that Cardinal Newman covers in its first two Bioethics courses. Yet, at Logos and Fernbrook, philosophy courses are capstone courses taken later in high school and tend include more primary texts (reading parts of Aristotle or Plato, for example). At Cardinal Newman the foundational philosophical concepts are covered in freshmen and sophomore years through Sr. Beatrice’s textbooks, which takes primary source material and brings it to a younger student’s vocabulary and intellectual capacity. Cardinal Newman, by focusing on the ‘why’ in the early years of high school, emphasizes the primacy of growth in intellectual virtue. None of the schools focus on moral or intellectual virtue to the exclusion of the other types of virtue, but the tendencies are interesting to note.

\(^{33}\) In this discussion of the schools’ philosophy courses and their emphasis on virtue, it may become clearer to the reader why I am not using St. John’s as much in my dissertation. There are many commonalities between Logos, Fernbrook, and Cardinal Newman in their approaches to philosophy and virtue. While Cardinal Newman does not call itself a liberal arts high school, many aspects of the Bioethics curriculum teach concepts that liberal arts-focused schools strive to embed in their curriculum. St. John’s, when I visited over a year ago, was just beginning a Western Civilization course to try to address some of the concepts that are already so much a part of Logos’s, Fernbrook’s, and Cardinal Newman’s educational philosophy. The main difference I saw between St. John’s and my other three schools was that St. John’s is trying to change its curriculum to focus on the connection between faith and reason. The other three schools started with this idea as a part of their mission.
Looking back to the founding of Cardinal Newman, one can see why the school prioritizes intellectual virtue. As Bishop Templeton said, the mission of the school is the formation of thinking Catholics, who can explain why they believe what they do. The understanding of the human person, the powers of the soul, and of relationality and of love, all come from philosophy. The school does not want students leaving high school for college saying, ‘The Catholic Church teaches x, y, and z because it is in the Bible, or the Pope says so.’ Rather they leave being able to say, ‘The Catholic Church teaches x, y, and z because that stance corresponds to our understanding of the dignity of a human person and our view of human flourishing.’

In the spirit of growth in intellectual virtue, debate is highly encouraged in philosophy courses. The students are very comfortable speaking up when they disagree. The Bioethics teachers model emotionless debate in their classrooms. Sr. Marie Benedict said, “It’s very important that they have a healthy place in which to debate controversial issues, because we need to model what it looks like to disagree and not belittle” (CN. 4). She told me that they often play a game in which, upon introduction to a new topic, the students choose a corner of the room to move to based on their current view on the subject (“I agree.” “I disagree.” “I am not sure.”). Students are encouraged to freely choose to voice their opinions on the topics. While the textbooks themselves and the teachers are firmly planted in the Aristotelian/Thomistic understanding of objective reality, the teachers want to ensure that the students are comfortable expressing disagreement and learn how to debate charitably with one another. I heard similar points regarding the philosophy courses at both Fernbrook and Logos. Each school shares a common view of reality and tries to teach students to appreciate this view through growth in
intellectual virtue. But alongside that goal, each school also emphasizes the need for charity and to love each person regardless of their views.

I was able to see this in action when I observed The Human Person class. I snuck into the back of the freshman class in the midst of a discussion about the relationship between a morally evil act and the one who does the act. Sr. Ann, who was leading the discussion, spoke definitively about the necessity of loving the (fictional) person who was doing an evil act. She also said that in no way could one condone the act itself. While I was in the class, Sr. Ann fielded a question from a boy who seemed unconvinced by her argument. She was perfectly calm, smiling, and yet she stuck to her word, elaborating on it with other examples to clarify her points. She modeled respect for his question as well as clear thinking about her view.

Megan, the recent graduate I spoke with, mentioned to me that the discussion in philosophy classes were respectful of different views but also sometimes seemed overly concerned with getting the argument perfect. The philosophy teachers were happy to debate but ultimately wanted to make sure the students grasped the logic of an argument.

Marianne told me that in college she audibly disagreed with her professors multiple times on points about the Catholic faith, even when she was not practicing the faith herself. She realized that she knew how to debate respectfully because of her classes at Cardinal Newman. Interestingly, related to the emphasis on intellectual virtue, she was not practicing the faith at the time, but she said, “I was still standing by it like no other” (CN. 57). This anecdote seems to me to be evidence of two virtues. First that Marianne knew how to respect other persons in debate. Second, she had learned intellectual virtue in the school. Even if she did not have it in her heart at the time, she still was convinced in her mind.
Mrs. Lagasse gave me an example of the impact of the Bioethics courses on students’ daily lives. In the 4th Bioethics course, End of Life, students learn how one can analyze and make moral decisions about often complex medical situations that can come up with regard to end of life issues. For example, students learn criteria about when it is just or unjust to take a sick person off a feeding tube or life support. Generally, adults do not consider these questions unless there is a sick individual in one’s family, and, in those circumstances, it is often difficult to think objectively and find answers quickly. Mrs. Lagasse told me that a family who had multiple children graduate from Cardinal Newman had a grandmother die of COVID-19 in the hospital recently. The children who had taken the End of Life course were able to help their parents communicate with the doctors and hospital staff about their wishes. The mother said she had a steep learning curve to learn the principles she needed to make those decisions, but her children already knew them.

Mrs. Lagasse, Marianne, Sr. Beatrice, and Mr. Martin all told me stories of the impact of the Bioethics curriculum on the whole school. The curriculum unites everyone at the school. I mentioned above that it is not only the students who take the course, but it is also required of all new hires, staff, and faculty. Additionally, the school offers the Bioethics course for parents because they want the parents to understand what they are teaching their children. Marianne summarized her experience and that of her peers with the Bioethics curriculum. She said,

It taught us how to give more, it taught us why we believe what we believe. It gave us such great talking points on it. It also gave us a way to look at things differently and to help us see things from other people’s point of view. (CN. 58)

Bishop Templeton’s hope was that the curriculum would educate students to be thinking Catholics. From Marianne’s words, it seems that the curriculum has gone beyond shaping the students to be thinking Catholics and is also helping them be more virtuous.
6.2.2 Capacities/Talents

The Dominicans’ charism, which is so alive at Cardinal Newman, emphasizes the need for each individual to discover one’s talents and gifts. As I argued in earlier chapters, helping students, boys and girls alike, to recognize their gifts and talents and develop them is a means to helping the students find their vocations. Revisiting the argument with regard to women specifically, second-wave feminists were arguing for women to leave the sphere of the home and family so that they could develop themselves through projects and professional work. However, as mentioned previously, Catholic scholars and second-wave feminism agree that each person should be developing their capacities. Thus, any ways the schools are helping students see their own gifts and talents is a means to helping those students discover their vocation and helping girls specifically develop a healthy understanding of themselves as women. It is only when a girl has a strong foundation of an integrated life and a knowledge of her talents that she can orient herself toward motherhood as a holistic part of her being. Cardinal Newman, because of their Dominican charism, is seriously invested in helping all the students understand their own personality and strengths.

One way they help the students be more aware of themselves is that they teach the freshman students about temperaments. The students take a temperament test and discover if they are primarily sanguine, choleric, melancholic, or phlegmatic and what their secondary temperament is. The teacher will guide the class to an understanding of the terms and help them see the strengths and weaknesses of each temperament (CN. 4). They connect one’s temperament to the corresponding virtues and vices. For example, one with a phlegmatic personality has a tendency to laziness (vice) but also to be a peacemaker (virtue). Choleric temperaments may be bossy but are also capable of leading and bringing out the talents of others. Sr. Marie Benedict
says they re-visit the temperaments whenever there is a school election for student leaders. They encourage the students to notice the different temperaments of the candidates and vote for opposite personalities to be president and vice president on student council. Because different personalities have different strengths and weaknesses, they will complement each other in accomplishing tasks.

Over the course of its 14 short years, Cardinal Newman has developed a vast array of leadership positions for students through clubs, sports, service leadership, and the House System. Both Sr. Marie Benedict and Megan, the recent graduate with whom I spoke, mentioned these opportunities as particularly formative because they allow every student to find a place outside of academics where they are comfortable and can develop their talents. The House System is used as an avenue for fun, for competition, and for growth in the spiritual life and in leadership skills. Each student is placed in a House, named after a saint, when they enter freshman year, and they stay with that House throughout the four years. Within each House are co-ed small groups, composed of students from all four grades. These meet with a small group leader, a teacher, regularly to develop friendships between the classes. Each house is responsible for organizing events and helps the whole school celebrate the feast days of the Catholic Church. Teresa and Marianne mentioned that when they were students there, the system was just beginning and was not well developed. They said that today,

People just love amping up their house, and it’s healthy. I really liked that Cardinal Newman really tries to hold healthy competitions. (CN. 50)

I feel like now [Houses] are really cool and dynamic. They’re fun and exciting. (CN. 62)

In addition to leadership positions within Houses, Sr. Marie Benedict told me that they have many clubs within the school. All that is needed to start a club is an approved mission statement, a faculty adviser, and six members. They currently have a club that meets after school to play a
board game called Warhammer. A group of students united around a common interest in the board game and took the initiative to start this unique club. Sr. Marie Benedict said that it is very important to the administration that students all find a place to belong and take on leadership roles, whether it be through traditional sports, the House system, or clubs.

6.3 Formation for an Orientation Towards Motherhood

Cardinal Newman and St. John’s are both more traditional diocesan schools in contrast to Logos and Fernbrook which are both independent liberal arts schools. While Cardinal Newman and St. John’s are very different, I found many similarities in their approaches to formation for girls and for vocation. As diocesan schools, the dances were more typical (as opposed to Logos and Fernbrook) and organized by teachers and students, with teachers chaperoning. Both schools offered an elective course on Vocations for junior and senior students in accord with the recommendations of the bishops, who oversee diocesan school curriculum. Finally, I saw many parallels in the types of formation available for the girls specifically, such as Bible Studies, after-school programs, and retreats. In this section, I will look at each of these aspects of their formation.

6.3.1 Sexual Ethics and Dances

From a theoretical perspective, the Bioethics classes cover the topic of sexual ethics and the complementarity of the sexes in great depth. Sr. Beatrice said,

[Through the Bioethics curriculum] the kids get a sense of sexual ethics their freshman year. And they also get, which I think is very helpful—they learn about sensuality, sentimentality, and the emotions. So they have the tools for navigating through their adolescent years. (CN. 23)

The formal instruction in the Bioethics textbooks about the complementarity of the sexes and motherhood and fatherhood comes directly from the pages of St. John Paul II’s books Love and Responsibility and Theology of the Body, edited only to be more accessible to 14- and 15-year-
old students, as well as other supplemental texts which elaborate on the same content. In The Human Person textbook, it says,

> While every person is a whole and complete human being, no single person is complete as a sexual organism. Males only have half of what it takes to function sexually; females have the other half. And the half that a male has is different from that which a female has. The two different halves need each other in order to function properly. Together they make a sexual whole, that is a sexual organism. This is why we say their bodies are sexually complementary. (p. 136)

The textbooks briefly talk about the biological necessity for a mother and a father for each child at different developmental stages. Only once did I note a specific description of the role of the mother and father. It said,

> To raise [a child], both [parents] are needed because the male is better designed for protection, the female for nurture. To teach him, both are needed because he needs a model of his own sex, a model of the other, and a model of the relationship between them. (p. 168)

The formal instruction on the complementarity of the sexes continues into a study of different types of love. In that context, the books discuss that women tend toward sentimentality more, while men tend toward sensuality more. The language in the textbooks, while identifying differences between men and women, is that of tendencies rather than absolutes. In this way the books are very consistent with St. John Paul II’s language and what the Catholic Church documents have said in recent years.

Sr. Beatrice told me while teaching these topics, she takes the conversation a bit further than the textbooks. She uses the language of roles for mothers and fathers. She points out common physical differences between men and women, such as men generally being taller and stronger and women generally being less physical and more relational. She refers to scientific studies showing these differences. From that starting point, she builds up the argument that men
and women have different responsibilities. She uses that terminology of roles intentionally, because she is trying to encourage boys to embrace the role they can have as a father. She said,

I’m hoping it gives it rise to men to realize [their capacity]. I think manhood has been so denigrated. And I try to show it that way, actually, because I try to explain from natural law—not from Scripture, from natural law—man’s role in the family, and why it’s so important. (CN. 28)

This attempt to show boys what fatherhood means from natural law corresponds to the point I made in a previous chapter that my schools try to explain sexual ethics from a teleological understanding of the person, rather than from Biblical faith. Sr. Beatrice told me that she presents the idea to students that tendencies in physical differences between men and women are tied to their asymmetry in sexual reproduction.

While the terminology of roles can be problematic and lead to overly stereotypical views of motherhood and fatherhood, the goal in both the formal and informal instruction in the Bioethics courses is to transmit a very positive view of traditional ideas of the differences between men and women. I say a very positive view because what is being promoted as the differences between men and women is critiqued in second-wave feminist thought, largely because of the damage done to women from these views. St. John Paul II’s viewpoint, on which the teachings at the school are based, shows how traditional views of men and women, rightly understood, lead to human flourishing.

A more concrete way Cardinal Newman impacts the students’ understanding of sexuality is the culture surrounding dances. As I have mentioned in earlier chapters, I ask in great detail about the school dances, who is there, how students dress, and what music is played, because dances are a microcosm of the culture upheld by the school. At Logos the dances were family dances. At Fernbrook the dances were left to the parents to organize because parental involvement was so important to their school culture. At Cardinal Newman, the school hosts the
dances with the help of student leaders. Ultimately the teachers and administration are responsible for all aspects of the dance including the music, the dress code, and the chaperoning. There is a strict dress code enforced. No one is allowed into the dance if he or she is dressed inappropriately. The music is highly screened—the only music allowed is that without sexual innuendo, violence, or inappropriate language. One teacher is responsible for listening to about eight hours of music suggested by the students and choosing the songs that meet the criteria. Mr. Martin told me that after every dance the students complain that the music was awful because so many of the songs they requested were not played because they failed to meet the criteria. Finally, the chaperones at the dance itself make sure that students are dancing appropriately. This means dancing in a way that respects the individuality and dignity of other persons and not objectifying other persons as sexual objects. For the teachers and administrators, dances are a headache. Enforcing what they deem to be a positive culture at dances, contrary to what is happening in almost every other high school, is hard, but it is considered worthwhile.

In an earlier chapter I wrote in depth about the tensions between the administration and the girls with regard to everything about the body and dress, both at dances and with regard to uniforms. I will not revisit that conversation fully here but just mention that with regard to formation of women at Cardinal Newman, this was a particular area of struggle. Marianne, who now works at the school and has deep affection for the school, spoke at length about her negative experiences in high school on this account. She said she would hear about the beauty and dignity of women before a wardrobe talk that ended up feeling like body shaming.

There was such a focus for the girls on how we dressed. There were points where it almost felt like body-shaming…They would have fashion shows. There was one, it was so bad, I don’t think they ever did it again, where they had a bunch of the upperclassmen girls show what to wear and what not to wear to school. How to dress your uniform, how to dress out of school, how to dress a school dance. And they let the girls wear the
inappropriate stuff for the part on what not to wear! I think they were trying to show us how ridiculous it looks, but it didn’t go over well. (CN. 60)

When I followed up with Sr. Marie Benedict, I mentioned Marianne’s comments about body shaming. She immediately knew of a particular incident on a retreat where the girls were made to feel ashamed of their bodies. The administration had planned a talk that was not delivered as they had hoped, and many girls had been offended by it. While it was reassuring to hear that the administration was aware of the situation and very careful afterward about such topics, it still seems as though Marianne faced difficulties many times in this area.

Cardinal Newman School transmits ideas intellectually to students through their Bioethics curriculum in a way that is quite unique from most high schools. The witness of all my participants led me to believe that students leave Cardinal Newman with intellectual clarity on moral teachings of the Catholic Church, especially with regard to sexual ethics. Yet, with regard to dances and dress code, Cardinal Newman struggles, along with many Catholic schools, to encourage what they believe is a positive culture and tone. Dances are ‘appropriate’ only with hours of dedicated work on the part of multiple staff members to screen music, ensure modest dress, and chaperone the dance floors. The mainstream culture the students face everywhere they turn outside of school powerfully tugs them in the opposite direction of the formation they receive at school. Although the staff and faculty at Cardinal Newman have an uphill battle to fight, they continue to fight it for the sakes of the students.

6.3.2 Formation for Girls and for Vocation

Both St. John’s and Cardinal Newman offer special groups after school for girls. These designated spaces for girls allow for discussion of different many topics relevant to them. At Cardinal Newman the group is called the Women at the Well Bible Study, named after the woman in the Gospels who spoke to Jesus at the well and then brought many others to him. At
St. John’s the program was called GRACE (Girls Respond Actively to Christ’s Example). The programs are different, but the structure and content overlap. Both take place after school hours in small groups composed of girls of similar ages, with female staff members either leading or advising. At Cardinal Newman the group uses different materials throughout the year but consistently revisit a program from Formed.org created for teenage girls. This website provides digital materials on many Catholic topics for various ages from Catholic shows for toddlers to Catechesis materials for adults. The Women at the Well group studies Formed.org’s program for teen girls called *True Beauty: Womanhood: Becoming the Woman You were Created to Be*. The topics range from friendship, to dating, to chastity, to modesty and address many teenage concerns such as pressure from social media. The small group format allows for the girls to open up to one another more comfortably and creates a space in which they often share about their struggles. Only a fraction of the girls in the schools attend these groups regularly, but these seem to be where a great deal of the more personal formation for girls happens.

Another formative offering, which likewise not everyone receives, is the elective Vocations course. At Cardinal Newman, roughly half the students take it before they graduate. I am not sure what percentage of the students take it at St. John’s, but it is likely comparable because the theology offerings in diocesan schools are similar. Looking at the syllabus for the course at Cardinal Newman, it seems as if it thoroughly addresses the first two concentric circles of vocation that I wrote about using Vitz’s framework. Students learn about the universal call to holiness, the first concentric circle, and they study the states of life: marriage, celibacy, and single life, the second concentric circle. There does not seem to be a structured discussion of the third concentric circle, that of work, service, or meaningful leisure, but I can see that aspects like this are weaved throughout the topics covered, especially because there is such a focus on one’s
own talents. Mrs. Lagasse told me that Megan took the course and found it overwhelming in some ways. Her personality is such that studying these topics made her feel “behind,” as if she should know what her own vocational calls were. Her mother assured her that was not the case, but it was interesting that the formal study of the topic of vocation could lead to a sense of unrest. Megan told me that she did not love that class. She felt that the course gave her a very clear understanding of the vocation of the sisters, but they never had a married couple come to speak about the vocation to marriage. She wished she had more opportunities to talk to married couples when she was in high school.

In addition to the Vocations course and the after-school club for girls, every student attends an annual retreat with their class, and the older students are separated into boys and girls. One of Cardinal Newman’s special events is an optional retreat for the junior and senior girls to Nashville, Tennessee to spend time with the Dominican nuns there. I heard from many that this is a moment where the girls see religious life and think deeply about their own path in life.

The diocesan schools I studied are bigger than the independent schools and have more traditional curriculums. Except for Cardinal Newman’s Bioethics curriculum and the theology courses at both schools, the courses are focused on learning for professional abilities. Thus, the formational activities specifically for girls happen outside of the academic purview of the school. Yet, like my other schools, the role of the community and roles models impact the girls at Cardinal Newman as well.

6.3.3 Community

There is an interesting dynamic in terms of the Cardinal Newman community regarding its geographic location and the impact that has on academics. One of the best magnet public high schools in country is about 20 miles away as well as some of the most highly ranked academic
private high schools. Mrs. Lagasse and Mr. Martin, both parents of children who attended Cardinal Newman, knew they were choosing a school with less academic prowess but with greater Catholic formation for their children. Mr. Martin decided to get involved teaching partly to help raise the level of academic courses offered by the school. Under his leadership in the past ten years, the math department has added multiple calculus courses. Both Mr. Martin and Mrs. Lagasse were so appreciative of holistic human formation that their children received at Cardinal Newman that they were not concerned with the academic rigor. The school is very solid academically and need not try to be as intense as the world-famous schools around them. Mr. Martin said that, while he was working to add higher level math courses to the curriculum, he knew that was not the most important part of education. Clearly, the families attracted to the school have other academic options and therefore are choosing Cardinal Newman for its unique Catholic charism and its Bioethics curriculum. I believe this is an important factor in creating the friendly and welcoming environment of the school. In this final section, I will tell some of the stories I heard about the impact of different teachers or aspects of the community on the students.

Mr. Martin, the math teacher, is very popular with the students and well respected by them. He is one of those “famous” teachers that every student loves and talks about years after they leave high school. He has a great rapport with the students that is partly due to who he is but, specifically, because he spends the first ten minutes of every class “shooting the breeze” with them. The beginning of each of his classes he says to the students “Okay, what’s going on?” (CN. 33) and lets the students just air their thoughts, their ideas, and their frustrations. He says he is careful to avoid controversial political topics, but besides that they can talk about everything. The students trust him and open up to him. Mr. Martin gives the students a different way to think about marriage and the family. While in no way contradicting what they learn in the Bioethics
curriculum (in fact, he came to the school on account of the curriculum), he offers a different narrative, a perspective that can be characterized as feminist, to them about how they can live their lives. He and his wife have taught their daughter to put off marriage until she has established a career. She understands that she must “be able to stand on her own feet.” (CN. 37).

Mr. Martin says,

She’s got a strong mother with a professional career, all that kind of good stuff. She’s going to be fine. I like to portray that in the classroom: don’t be in a hurry to get married. Graduate, be your own person, be independent; and I do drive this home with the women. Have your own life. Don’t be in a hurry. (CN. 37)

He tells the girls that marriage and a family are one part of your life, an important part, but not all your life. They should first establish themselves in a career path so that their family can have a proper place in their life. Once again, he is not contradicting the idea of complementarity of the sexes that the students have learned, but he has a different emphasis. The Bioethics curriculum is emphasizing a more traditional view whereas Mr. Martin is speaking from a more modern mindset influenced by feminism. I did not hear from any of the alumnae about him in particular because he was not teaching there when they were there, but I heard about his reputation from all the staff and teachers with whom I spoke. His advice must mean a great deal to the students.

In a schools run by Dominican nuns as well as lay people, the students could not help but notice the adults in the building who were all intentionally choosing to live their live in accord with various vocational states of life and areas of work. Marianne said,

One thing that really helped with [understanding vocation] was the fact that we had so many Dominicans here. When I was in school, we had three or four sisters, and we had a fabulous chaplain. It wasn’t anything they tried to shove down our throats, it wasn’t anything that was forced or made awkward. It was just always a quiet conversation. It was always there. We had such fun and dynamic religious sisters around the school. We felt like we could talk to them about vocations. Then also we had a lot of young teachers who were also still figuring out their vocations, we had some who were single, and some who were newly married. (CN. 58)
In fact, Sr. Marie Benedict found her own vocation to the Dominican order through Cardinal Newman. She was a lay teacher at the school when it opened, just after she graduated college. She came to know the Nashville Dominican Order while teaching there and left the school to become a nun. After becoming a sister and completing her EdD, she was sent back there in a leadership position. The sisters were clearly very happy in their vocation and their presence made the students aware of different ways one could give their life to the service of others. When I visited Cardinal Newman, I saw the joy of the sisters, and everyone I spoke with mentioned it as well.

Marianne, Teresa, and Megan all talked both about the sisters and about the young teachers they enjoyed. Marianne mentioned specifically that these young teachers were examples of virtue for the students and were also fun, which is why the students were willing to look up to them. She said,

We had so many really cool, fun, young teachers. Most of them were fresh out of Catholic colleges when they started teaching. They were first- or second-year teachers, really young and fun. They all just had like this beautiful radical love for God and it showed. They just were really good and virtuous, and they just led by example. (CN. 56)

Both Marianne and Teresa spoke at length about one teacher they loved in particular: Ms. Anderson. She was my acquaintance who used to teach at Cardinal Newman and who had helped me connect with the administration to study the school. When she was at Cardinal Newman, Ms. Anderson was the U.S. History teacher. She was single, she dressed in “cute outfits and was crazy smart” (CN. 61), and she always had her door open for the students. She earned their respect first because she was good at her job.

We always learned so much in her class. She made it really fun and dynamic. She never talked down to us. She spoke to us like we were her peers, not like we were little kids. Unfortunately teachers do, they talk to you like you’re a little kid and almost talk down. (CN. 61)
She taught the content well and respected the students’ capacities. Teresa said that Ms. Anderson was also her brother’s favorite teacher, so she clearly earned the love and respect of many students, not just female students. She was good at her professional work, and from that foundation she was able to connect with the students outside of the topic of U.S. History, especially with regard to their Catholic faith. Marianne told me that when she was a student she would hang out with [Ms. Anderson] a lot outside of class. I would just show up at her classroom sometimes if I had downtime and we would just chat. She would tell me about a saint book she’d read, or an experience she had in Adoration, or something. It wasn’t anything that was shoved in our faces, but it was something that she talked about. It was such a natural part of her life and a natural part of conversation with her. (CN. 61)

Teresa also mentioned that Ms. Anderson was comfortable talking about her struggle for virtue, but in a very natural way. She was able to laugh with the students and could relate to where they were in their journey (CN. 52). This reminded me of what the students at Fernbrook said about Ms. Turkin. She shared some of her own struggles with them, so they were able to connect better with her. It seems that when a person whom the students think of as a role model tells the students, prudently, of their own struggles, the role model becomes even more relatable as a teacher and mentor. Teresa said, “I think most students just felt welcome, and encouraged by her” (CN. 52). Both Marianne and Teresa looked up to Ms. Anderson and now have returned to the school in different roles.

Because I had fewer alumnae interviews at Cardinal Newman than at my other schools and because the school is younger, I did not hear as many stories about role models and mentors as I did at Fernbrook and Logos. Even so, from the alumnae and the staff I heard over and over again about the joy of the Dominican sisters, the example of different teachers, and other
community members. Mr. Martin summed up the experience of many saying, “It just feels different. It still feels different. To me it is different. It’s a happy place” (CN. 31).

6.4 Conclusion

From its founding, Cardinal Newman has been mission-driven to provide an excellent Bioethics curriculum, and, from all the stories I heard, they are doing so. While the alumnae I interviewed and their friends seem to have strayed from the Catholic faith after high school, they could not leave behind what they learned in the philosophy curriculum about personhood and happiness. Marianne was defending the moral teachings of the Catholic Church when she was not practicing the faith. Teresa told me a story of another alumna who had an unplanned pregnancy. This young woman told Teresa that she would not abort her baby because of what she learned about the value of life in the Bioethics classes. Teresa said,

We had a friend who … we weren’t really close after high school, but we had heard that she had gotten pregnant—unexpectedly, not planned. And her parents had encouraged her to maybe get an abortion. And she said that she couldn’t do it because of the ethics class at Cardinal Newman. She had her son, and she has him still. She is a single mom. It was just so incredible. I shared that with her bioethics teacher, Dr. Gilligan who’s still here, and he was so touched to hear that…He did ask what the son’s name was and said he would pray for him. And I know he does. There are so many other people who have been touched by those classes. They’ve been encouraged themselves, or they encourage their friends, their family members to uphold life and our values as Catholics. (CN. 47-48)

On reading the story of this young woman, one could think, “maybe she should have had an abortion and this school’s teachings just made her feel guilty.” Yet, one does not get the sense that the teachings in the Bioethics courses are forced on anyone in the school. They are presented as a path to happiness and wholeness, both of which are scarce in our society and much desired. Additionally, the teachers encourage debate, charity toward those who disagree with the views presented, and openness to hearing alternate views. There is little formation happening specifically with regard to the female students thinking about motherhood, yet, because of the
Bioethics curriculum, this young woman with an unplanned pregnancy chose to be a mother. Additionally, Teresa, whose story I told in a previous chapter, chose to get married and be open to children while finishing her PhD, despite the disapproval of those in her professional environment. The intellectual formation at Cardinal Newman is impacting the way women think about motherhood.
Chapter 7: Conclusion

7.1 The Ramifications of Exemplars in Schools

I started out my dissertation with a question about how Catholic schools are forming girls to think about motherhood and professional paths, but most of the data which I gathered, as I have shared in these chapters, concerns formation for an integrated life through philosophy, growth in virtue, and cultural norms about sex, marriage, and family. There are few moments in the education happening at my schools where girls are being formed to think specific ways about motherhood. Rather, showing students how one can live a ‘good life’ from an Aristotelian, teleological, and Christian perspective is more the concern of the schools. There is also agreement in my schools that the mainstream cultural perspective on sexuality in many ways is contrary to a view of a ‘good life.’ Thus, all the schools try to educate the students to think contrary to mainstream culture about sex and marriage. When the schools transmit this idea successfully both intellectually and through the example of the school community, the girls begin to see motherhood in a different light. Professional life begins to be seen as one aspect of an overall holistic integrated life, but faith, marriage, family, and motherhood grow in importance.

In considering the light shed by my research, I cannot overemphasize the importance of role models and exemplars in transmitting this framework of an integrated life to the students. Any educator in any type of school reading my study can learn from the impact that the lives of the adults in these school communities have on the students. While it may be tempting for an educator to think that he or she is simply ‘the math teacher’ or for a parent to be ‘Susan’s mom,’ the students notice everything about them. The alumnae, reflecting back 10-15 years mentioned minute details of their relationships with adults in the community, the classroom discussions, and even observations of adults they did not known personally in school.
One of the alumnae from Logos, Kelly, told me that she was uncomfortable with Logos’s mission to form the whole person. She felt there was potential for greater harm when the educational vision was broader. Following Kelly’s line of thought, a school should only teach academics, then the only harm the schools can do to students is to fail in teaching academics. However, the words of the alumnae about the role models and exemplars they have from high school show that Kelly’s thinking does not reflect what happens in a school community. The lives of those within the community shape the students’ understanding of the world because students soak up the environment around them. All schools, Catholic or not, can learn from the words of the alumnae in my study. Hiring matters and the school community matters. Students note everything about the people in the building and the surrounding school community. Years after they graduate, they think back on the lives of those they knew in school for guidance in making their own vocational choices.

My emphasis on exemplars has particular ramifications for Catholic schools and their formation of students with regards to Catholic moral teachings. At each of the four schools, in different ways, the students are taught philosophy and Catholic moral teachings, but much more impactful than the lessons was the experience of knowing many people believing and living these teachings cheerfully and peacefully. These schools all prioritize hiring faithful Catholics who believe Catholic moral teachings. I did not come across a single divorced teacher at any of the schools, and I mentioned previously that there were no single mothers on staff or faculty. Often the married teachers have many children. Some do not, but, for example, everyone knew that Mrs. McPherson at Logos wanted children but was struggling with infertility until she and her husband adopted. Similarly, the Cardinal Newman community knew that Teresa, Dr.
Pickering, had two miscarriages and wanted more children (and hence they negotiated a part-time position for her).

The alumnae testified to the deep impression it made on them to see both celibate vocations and families living lives faithful to the Catholic Church’s teachings. For the girls, the greatest importance was seeing that the women and the families were happy. I think of Sara at Logos, who is an only child and the daughter of a divorced couple. She spoke of her admiration for the mothers in the school community while she was a student and of learning virtues from the students in her class from larger families. Sara said that to this day, now as the mother of multiple children herself, she still looks to mothers in the Logos community as role models of motherhood. Janet, from Fernbrook, had a similar experience to Sara. Not coming from a faithfully Catholic family, Janet was deeply impressed by the example of the happy families she saw in high school. No one ever said explicitly why these families looked different from those she saw outside of school, but Janet felt they had something she wanted.

No school is perfect, no community is, and no families are. Janet and Sara’s experiences must be compared alongside those of Annabel (Fernbrook), Kelly (Logos), and Marianne (Cardinal Newman). These three alumnae, all at different schools, had various negative experiences in high school which left equally deep impressions on them. Annabel was never accepted among the girls in her class. Kelly felt many of the teachers crossed boundaries inappropriately trying to counsel her about dating. Marianne felt the school’s approach to modesty felt like body shaming. These alumnae were able to give positive feedback about their high school experience along with the negative, but their stories show the imperfection of each of the schools and the imperfection of the people within the communities. In some ways, Kelly’s skepticism of holistic formation is right. No school can form students perfectly and there will
always be misunderstandings and mistakes, miseducation. Yet my study shows that if school
leaders maintain high standards not only for the teaching capacities of the teachers but also for
the lives they live, much good can come out of it for the students.

7.2 Presenting an Alternate Social Script about Motherhood

I hope I have painted a realistic picture of my schools, and to that end I have shown the
negative examples alongside the positive. But despite the shortcomings of these school
communities, the administration and teachers ultimately strive to promote a view of an integrated
life that is radically different from what the students are receiving from mainstream culture. The
school leaders and teachers are willing to say there is truth, there is order in nature, there is a
human nature, and both God and Christianity are real.

Another way to explain what is happening in these schools as different from mainstream
culture is that the schools are promoting a ‘social script,’ to borrow a term from the social
sciences, for the students that is unlike the scripts the students see around them in the world. The
concept of a social script is particularly helpful here because it indicates a general set of
assumptions about life on which most people agree and act. The social scripts about sex and
marriage in our culture have completely changed in the past 70 years. There is a myriad of
reasons for this which I will not get into here. But the script of the previous era was that men and
women would marry for life, sex was a part of marriage, and procreation a natural consequence
of sex. This social script corresponded to a teleological view of the person and a Christian view
of marriage. Whether or not people believed these ideas on an intellectual level, they lived their
lives in accord with the ideas because the majority of people did.

As society has shifted away from a teleological philosophy and from Christianity, those
views have naturally changed too. Now the social scripts say that sex and marriage are a part of
one’s personal fulfillment. Having a child and, for women, becoming a mother is an aspect of one’s personal fulfillment that one can choose or not choose. My schools are not setting out to change the social scripts. They accept the world as it is, but because of their Christian and teleological views, they try to give a philosophical and theological basis for the students to see areas where a modern view of the person is problematic with regard to sexual ethics. Mrs. Todd, from Logos, explained how she and her husband set out to found a school that was faithfully Catholic but were surprised to find that from the school emerged a community of people who supported their beliefs. Attracted by the school’s educational philosophy, families moved to give their children this education. Suddenly, the students were surrounded by families that were living their lives in accord with Catholic moral teachings.

Faithful Catholics, such as those I interviewed, accept Catholic teaching on sexual ethics, some of which runs contrary to values that are a focus of second-wave feminism. A quotation from Simone de Beauvoir shows the conflicts clearly. Speaking of technological advances in obstetrics, abortion, contraception, and artificial insemination, she said,

> These changes have tremendous importance for women in particular; she can reduce the number of pregnancies and rationally integrate them into her life instead of being their slave. During the nineteenth century, woman in her turn is freed from nature; she wins control of her body. Relieved of a great number of reproductive servitudes, she can take on the economic roles open to her, roles that would ensure her control over her own person. (p. 139)

Control over a woman’s biological capacity for motherhood is considered essential to women’s economic opportunities. These Catholic women do not agree with this type of control over their body. But, another value of second-wave feminism, of which I wrote a great deal, perfectly aligns with Catholic thinking on personhood and women’s development: All persons must develop their capacities to live a fulfilling life. Betty Freidan (1963) proposed projects outside of the home to cure women of the “problem that has no name” (p. 57), but women’s reproductive
freedom seemed necessary to make this type of work outside the home possible. These Catholic women are rejecting a modern understanding of reproductive freedom but accepting feminism’s encouragement to fulfill themselves through development of their capacities.

There are members of these school communities who are not living with the same view of an integrated life and sexual ethics. The administrators spoke to me about various dilemmas they had with students or families who pushed back on the approach of the school regarding moral issues. Some felt the schools were too old-fashioned; others felt the schools were too modern. In thinking about these disagreements, it is helpful to return to the language of Garcia-Huidobro’s (2017) study that I included in my Introduction. They categorized Catholic schools into four different types: identity, dialogical, open, and secular. While I sought dialogical schools for my research, each school includes persons and families from opposite sides of the Catholic spectrum. For example, in the Cardinal Newman chapter, I told of Sr. Beatrice’s sometimes overly stereotypical language used to describe differences between men and women, such as men’s role as the head of the family. Yet Mr. Martin, also at Cardinal Newman, encouraged the girls to be established in their careers before getting married. The same students heard different views throughout their time at the school.

My schools strive to imbue in the students the intellectual resources through philosophy and the humanities to combat aspects of modern thinking on personal fulfillment. Many of the alumnae attest to the impact of the intellectual component of their high school education. But it is the role models of families, teachers, and peers within the communities of the schools that present a social script at variance with the social script of the mainstream culture. Once again, not everyone in these schools is following this alternate script. Not everyone believes it. But a
percentage of the community lives by this alternate script, showing students that this life can be fulfilling.

The schools rarely say anything to the girls about motherhood directly. But what the schools are teaching is impacting the trajectory of female students’ life choices. Teresa’s story, which I presented in Chapter 3 and revisited in Chapter 6, is a powerful example of how the formation she received in high school shaped her decisions afterward. She was on a trajectory that could have led to personal fulfillment – getting her PhD in nursing right out of college and setting up a successful career as a single woman. Yet, she was convinced of the lessons taught in her Bioethics classes at Cardinal Newman. Also, because of her Catholic faith formation, she believed she had a vocation and marriage to her boyfriend was a part of it. The course of events for her then was marriage before graduating from her doctoral program, a child before establishing her career, and an awareness that her chosen career path was not friendly toward motherhood. Upon returning to Cardinal Newman to teach, she has found a part-time career path that complements her desire to be present for her son and to have more children. Her high school education, though not ever teaching explicitly about motherhood, affected her choices about motherhood and her career path.

In our conversations, the alumnae all spoke to the influence of the intellectual formation, the community, and the role models from high school. Another point that became clear throughout our conversations was that if the schools want to help girls understand how they can both have an orientation toward motherhood and develop their talents throughout their life, there must be mothers in the schools. There were very few mothers with young children teaching in the schools. All of the schools were aware of this and working to creatively support mothers of young children as teachers. Dr. Todd at Logos told me that this year, for the first time, there are
young children coming to school with their mothers. The mothers are teaching, and one of the staff members watches the children during the mothers’ classes. Teresa at Cardinal Newman teaches full days two or three days a week and is home the other days. She, as far as I am aware, is the first teacher there to be given that schedule so that she can teach and spend time with her son.

The language of social scripts seems to capture much of what is happening with regards to motherhood in my schools. Social scripts are not set in stone, they cannot be proven, and they cannot be intentionally changed by a small group of persons. In the past 70 years the social scripts of our society regarding marriage, family, and motherhood have changed drastically and, in many ways, what is now the norm does not correspond to a Christian teleological view of the person. My schools present an alternate social script of motherhood to the girls through the holistic formation of the school as well as the community that naturally builds up around these schools. For many of the alumnae at the schools, when they considered various personal and professional paths, they chose paths like those of women they knew in high school. I think they sensed peace and fulfillment in the lives of many of the women and felt those pathways would bring them greater happiness.

7.3 Future Research

Thinking toward future work, I would love to expand my research on an integrated life in Catholic schools as well as continue thinking more about motherhood. Two separate projects have emerged throughout my thinking and writing in the past few years.

The first would expand my qualitative research on Catholic schools and an integrated life. Whenever I have had informal conversations about my research with parents of students at the schools, they have had deep insights into the formation their children receive there. I especially
appreciate the perspective of parents with multiple children whom they have chosen to send to different high schools. They have observations and comparisons unlike any I hear from the administrators and alumnae. These parents know their children and their children’s individual talents and capacities. They understand how the strengths and weakness of schools form their children in different ways. I would like to interview parents of students and of alumnae from my schools because I believe their perspectives could be a powerful way to round out the data on formation for an integrated life happening in the schools.

With regards to an orientation towards motherhood, I have had another future project on my mind for some time. Throughout my time in graduate school, I have read various books to help me develop myself in my scholarly life. I have always learned from these books, but sometimes I have been left thinking, ‘This is not totally applicable to my life as a scholar with young children.’ For example, *The Intellectual Life* (1946) by A.G. Sertillanges was written by a Catholic priest almost 80 years for male scholars, primarily for celibate men. Many of his insights are beautiful, such as the sections on the virtues needed for intellectual work and what it means to have an intellectual vocation. Yet one section, entitled ‘The Organization of Life,’ made me both laugh and feel frustrated. Sertillanges says, “Wise and peaceful work must not be associated with the noisy and spasmodic interruptions of a life all on the outside” (p. 42). What hope then does a mother caring for young children have in doing intellectual work? In my future work, I would love to address the themes that Sertillanges writes on, but make them more applicable to a broader audience, to persons with many different life circumstances. Or, taking a different tack, I could write on the intellectual life of mothers in particular. This project could include interviewing scholars who are mothers and their reflections on their intellectual life with children.
7.4 Development of Capacities through Motherhood

In concluding this dissertation, I would like to present one final idea about motherhood and the development of women’s capacities. Mrs. Corwin, the Headmistress of Fernbrook, spoke from her own experience on the subject of motherhood and her professional vocation to teach. She said,

My 15 years home intensively with my children was a time of tremendous personal growth, but it was also abject sacrifice. Abject sacrifice and that’s required for being a parent. And I think it falls on mothers more… I’ve been rebuilding my life since then. I always loved my work. I always have felt a calling to be a teacher. And this work [as headmistress] fulfills me and mothering fulfilled me, but not 100%...You must have a posture of openness about what you’ll need to do in a cycle. But it’s not just about what you need. It’s about where you give, how you’re fulfilled, and the degrees of sacrifice that you make at different times in different places. I do think that’s a broader vision of women through life cycles that we’re lacking completely. [Fernbrook] supports women through different life cycles. Rarely do jobs support women through their different life cycles or even men through different life cycles. But this school has a commitment to have an all women faculty. We have to support women in their different life cycles. (F. 30)

I was struck by her words because they point to the need not simply for structural changes for mothers but to the need for discernment. There is no magic formula that anyone can present to help women and families understand what is right for them at any moment. It is a combination of understanding the need to give, the need to be fulfilled, one’s own talents, and the demands of one’s individual circumstances. Throughout my dissertation I pointed out areas where the schools try to form students to understand these different aspects of themselves and their responsibilities toward others. In short, it is the entire education for an integrated life that gives women the tools to discern their vocational calls at different moments of their life.

Much of the discussion in my dissertation has been about the education these Catholic schools provide so that women have a fulfilling life integrated with motherhood. It seems that in today’s society mothers caring for children are viewed as taking time away from the
development of their capacities to develop the capacities of their children. Even within my data from my schools, which look very favorably on women caring for their children, often at the expense of full-time professional work, no one made the argument that women were actually developing themselves through care for children. Yet in the quotation above from Mrs. Corwin, she said that her time with her young children was both a time of “abject sacrifice” and of “tremendous personal growth” (F. 30). Throughout my dissertation I have shared many stories of women striving to live integrated lives. I would like to offer one last example using a children’s novel. As I said above, nowhere in my data did the idea surface that women could be developing capacities through care of children and of the home. This charming children’s novel makes that argument.

*The Country Bunny and the Little Gold Shoes* is a beautifully illustrated children’s book written in 1939 by DuBose Heyward. The story opens explaining how children believe that there is one Easter bunny, but in fact there are five, and they must be “the five kindest, and swiftness, and wisest bunnies in the whole world” (p. 1). Cottontail, a small brown female country bunny, not glamorous like all the long-legged jacks and white bunnies, dreams of someday being an Easter bunny. She is mocked by all the more beautiful and elegant bunnies for her aspiration. Then “the little girl Cottontail grew up to young lady Cottontail. And by and by she had a husband and then one day, much to her surprise there were twenty-one Cottontail babies to take care of” (p. 5). Upon seeing her family, all the more elegant rabbits laugh at her and tell her to “leave Easter eggs to great big men bunnies like us” (p. 6). So “Cottontail stopped thinking about hopping all over the world with lovely eggs for girls and boys and she took care of her babies” (p. 6).
Over time Cottontail’s children grew older and she trained them all in the different tasks of the home. She taught her children to cook, to clean, to garden, as well as to provide family entertainment and paint beautiful pictures.

“Then one day when the little rabbits were half grown up” (p. 10), Cottontail heard that the Old Grandfather bunny had to choose a new Easter bunny. She thinks she has lost her opportunity to be an Easter bunny, but she brings her children to see the selection. Noticing her many children, Grandfather bunny chooses to speak with her and discovers that she is wise, kind, and swift. He wants her to be his fifth Easter bunny but assumes that she cannot leave her children. Yet the children are so capable, they can run the home without her, and she accepts the undertaking.

Up to this point Cottontail’s story sounds similar to that of many of the women from my schools. Mrs. Corwin put aside her aspirations for fifteen years, to come back to them when her children were grown. But the story does not end there. Grandfather bunny, seeing Cottontail’s capacities, nourished as a mother, says, “Because you have such a loving heart for children, I am going to give you the best but the hardest trip of all” (p. 25). He entrusts her with the tasks of bringing an Easter egg to a very sick little boy living high up on a mountain that is dangerous to climb. Cottontail’s success in the task is due to her wisdom, kindness, swiftness, and her loving heart cultivated by care of her own children. Rarely is the argument heard that women raising children are developing their capacities in ways that work outside the home could not do. My schools have the resources intellectually and through their communities to make a convincing argument that motherhood
emerging from an integrated life strengthens women’s capacities in a way that professional work never can.


## Appendix A: Chart of Logos Alumnae

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year Graduated from Logos</th>
<th>Names</th>
<th>Class Dynamic/Overall experience at Logos</th>
<th>Current Occupation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Regina, Sara</td>
<td>They spoke of their class as being very tight-knit. Other alumnae talked of the 2007 class as being an example to them of what type of friendships could exist between the boys and girls. Today many of the alumni in this class still are best friends. Regina and Sara were good friends and still are today.</td>
<td>Sara was a nurse and is married with children. She is currently home with her children. Regina taught at Logos full time, married another teacher at Logos (who was also in her high school class) and they now have a child. Regina is now teaching part time at Logos.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Melanie (pilot study)</td>
<td>She spoke of her very small class as being a nerdy but friendly class.</td>
<td>Melanie only went to Logos for a few years. She is now married and has three children. She works part time from home as an editor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Ruth, Jane, Kelly, Cristina</td>
<td>They spoke of their class dynamic as being deeply problematic. The boys were immature with a macho masculinity. The alumnae with the most negative experiences at Logos were in this class. Ruth and Jane were good friends and still are today.</td>
<td>Ruth works part time in event coordinating. She is married with three children. Jane works part time as a chef. She is married with two children. Kelly works full time in marketing(?). She is married to one of her former Logos classmates and has no children. Cristina is married with one child and working full time as an editor and Pilates instructor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(pilot study)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Lucy, Gabriella (pilot study)</td>
<td>Good class dynamic. Everyone was quirky but they got along for the most part. Gabriella and Lucy were good friends and still are today.</td>
<td>Lucy is a nurse and is married with children. Gabriella has four children whom she homeschools, but she is also a part-time play director. She was the girls’ soccer coach at Logos for a few years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Caitlin</td>
<td>She mentioned that there were many different personalities in her class and she was not particularly friends with any of</td>
<td>She is married to a Logos alumnus. They have four children and she is home with her children.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
the other girls, but over the years there they learned to respect each other. There was one boy in her class who intimidated everyone and was a bit of a bully. That made the class dynamics difficult at times.