The Catholic Worker Movement: A Critical Analysis

Stephanie L. Beck

Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis

StephanieLBeck@gmail.com

October 26, 2008
Introduction

My first encounter with Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker Movement happened during the spring of my sophomore undergraduate studies. I mean this figuratively speaking, of course, as Dorothy Day left this world the year that I was born. My only way of knowing her is the same as many others – through her legacy. I became so intrigued by the story of Dorothy Day – what she stood for and accomplished, in addition to the rough path her life took to get there – that I often feel sometimes as though I have met her. And if someone asked me that old, cliché-of-a-question used now as a modern-day icebreaker: “If you could meet (have dinner with, spend the day with, etc.) one person dead or alive, who would it be and why?” my answer, without question, would be Dorothy Day, and my reason would be because I am intrigued and inspired by her very existence.

When I first encountered Dorothy Day, I was thirsting for a way to better understand the faith that I had known all of my life. My admiration for Dorothy Day is a result of her courage, faith, dedication and, perhaps above all, her compassion. Her ability to stand firm in her beliefs, even at a time when her own church accused her of politically opposing them, is possibly one of the most difficult things any person could imagine doing. But she did not stop there. Her decision to speak out and stand firm in her faith also led her to opposition from society as a whole. She spent time in jail cells for protesting. She opposed war when everyone else seemed to feel it was necessary. And she, as a woman who clearly believed in equality for all, was able to look at the feminist political movement with a critical eye so as to support ideas with which she agreed without compromising her overall values.

My introduction to Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker Movement came by way of a class I was taking to fulfill a liberal arts/humanities requirement while working on my
undergraduate degree. At the time, I was pursuing a degree in music therapy (just a semester later, I would have a change of heart regarding my major), and as a part of my liberal arts education at a Catholic university, I was required to have a certain number of religious course credits. I chose a class called “Faith and Justice” in order to fulfill my final three religion credits. To specify, this class focused on the Catholic faith and its connections to social justice issues.

It took only a few class sessions for me to realize that I had chosen a class that would not only fulfill my required credits, but it would also fulfill my desire to better understand my personal connection to my own faith. It was a defining time in my academic life and my faith life for many reasons. I was at the time also taking my first sociology class (“Modern Social Problems”), and my passion for sociology was discovered through these two classes. The classes were my silver lining during a semester where I was otherwise unhappy from an academic standpoint. I was struggling immensely in my music classes and would soon find that studying music was not the path I wanted to take. Had I not been in two classes that stirred a burning passion within me to learn more, the semester might have been more difficult than it was. By the end of that semester, I wanted out of music and into the world of sociology. I wanted to learn how I could become involved in social justice thought, not just in words but also by my actions.

This idea – words and actions – was one of the most important ideas I took away from the discussion on Dorothy Day. What is interesting here is that so many preach this notion of action, but sometimes they forget the words that back up that action. Just as words without action are meaningless, leading by example means a lot more if the words you speak tell people why those actions are important in the first place. Dorothy Day seemed to understand this. And so, the Catholic Worker Movement was born. It is clearly identifiable by words – published papers distributed on the streets of New York in the 1930s (and now local versions distribute in
cities across the globe), original works written by Dorothy Day herself, and more information provided by others that believed in the movement. It is also clearly identifiable by actions – Dorothy Day welcomed poor, destitute, homeless, addicts, prostitutes, and anyone generally rejected by society into her home for a meal, a place to clean up and sleep, and a place to be loved. This is arguably the closest thing to experiencing the Christian God here on Earth.

What I found through Dorothy Day was an expansion of the Catholic Social Teaching. This teaching is backed up by Catholic Church encyclicals, and it continues to be appended by popes since its inception post-Vatican II. So, why then, having been a product of more than twelve years of formal Catholic education, had I not formally learned anything about this official Church teaching before my sophomore year of college? It became one of my main interests to pursue this further – to understand why the Catholic Social Teaching seemed to have evaded mainstream Catholicism, at least within the realm of my own personal experience. Having continued to look at Dorothy Day throughout my sociological career, it has become clear to me that she is the Catholic Social Teaching personified, and she existed on the outskirts of her faith and her society. So, understanding Dorothy Day’s relationship with her Church and her society may help to understand why the Catholic Social Teaching continues to be a secret within the Church.

Doing a critical analysis of Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker Movement should prove fruitful for a small-scale understanding of perceptions on the Catholic Social Teaching. Through a critical review of literature on the Catholic Worker Movement, I hope to explain how American society affected Day and the Catholic Worker Movement as well as how they affected society and perceptions of the Catholic Social Teaching. I would like to explore why the Catholic Worker Movement, which is nearing a century-mark of existence, continues to have a
strong-hold in many communities while maintaining a low profile and avoiding formal organization. I am also interested in how Dorothy Day’s leadership qualities affected the Catholic Worker Movement and how social thought affected her and the movement.

**Specific Aims**

A critical analysis of the Catholic Worker movement will be undertaken by applying a multi-level analysis to the movement and its founders. The first consideration for analysis will be what I call the internal perspective, which will look at the thought that influenced the movement’s own philosophies and actions with consideration for how social thought functioned from the perspective of those inside the movement. A second analysis will apply social theory from what I call the external perspective with an application of the type of society the movement looks to create as well as the type of society it is in its own right. This will consider perspectives from literature written by movement outsiders, with observation from a non-participatory perspective. The final analysis will consider how the movement intended to change society, in what ways it may have been successful, and also ways it has not been successful and why. This analysis hopes to consider what other social movements can learn from the Catholic Worker movement and what it can teach society as a whole.

**Understanding the Internal/External Focus**

When reading the literature on the Catholic Worker Movement, it becomes clear that there is interplay between Catholic Worker ideology and social thought. The movement applies social theories in its own practices, while at the same time social theory can be applied to the movement as tool for analysis. This should prove to be a strength rather than a weakness in this theoretical discussion, for it is perhaps the best way to study any subject sociologically, as it
acknowledges the constant interaction between society and a movement (or a culture, person, etc). As C. Wright Mills explained in *The Sociological Imagination* (1959), to truly understand an individual, one must understand the society in which the individual lives, and to truly understand the society, one must understand the individuals that make up that society. The same applies to the Catholic Worker Movement, and, on a smaller scale, the people within it. When we spend too much time arguing about cause and effect, we end up with a chicken-or-the-egg argument, causing us to overlook and undermine the interplay by assuming that one directly causes the other. When we consider their interrelatedness, we acknowledge the give and take, thus admitting that the cause and effect are not so obvious. Things become clearer in the gray areas, and we gain more by admitting this up front. Keeping this in mind, my research seeks to answer the following questions:

- How did the ideas of society at the time of the movement was founded affect the movement and its founders (what is the historical context)? Have the changing ideas in society affected the movement over time? If so, how? Did the movement change society? Did society change the movement?
- Did the movement organize or does it remain a movement in its modern-day form? How do the Catholic Worker Movement’s ideas remain centralized when the physical existence is not?
- What social thought shaped Dorothy Day and contributed to the movement? Are Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker Movement inseparable? Why is the charismatic leader still so attached to the movement so long past her death?
Put more succinctly, my overarching research question seeks to understand this: what are the reciprocal relationships between Dorothy Day, the Catholic Worker Movement, American society, American social thought, and the Roman Catholic Church and how have they affected each other? What has become of the movement as a result?

**Theoretical Framework**

The questions will be answered in context of social theory alongside an analysis of other existing literature, and it will consider, through a narrow analysis of just one movement, whether it is possible for a movement to avoid societal pressures for conforming. I believe that in order for something to avoid social pressure, it must pressure society to change. I expect to find that it is possible to avoid conformity but only by flying under the mainstream radar – leaving its ability to change society significantly hindered by the fact that most people have not encountered the movement. However, I also expect to find that the movement changes most people that come into contact with it, thus arguing in favor of the ability of the movement to inspire change.

What I expect to see is that the movement’s ideas have not changed because it has been able to remain a grassroots movement over time, thus allowing it to evolve based more on the needs of those it serves rather than based on the pressure to organize, centralize, and bureaucratize. While some argue that this deems the movement “misguided and ineffective” (O’Connor 1991: 8), I will argue that it allows the movement to remain effective by its own standards, creating its own society rather than conforming to the one within which it exists. It has only been ineffective by the narrow standards of modern-day efficiency and institutionalization – a Weberian ideal-type understanding of effectiveness (Goodwin and Scimecca 2006: 175). However, I expect an in-depth review of the Catholic Worker insider-based literature (literature written by those who participate in the movement – founders and
followers), taking into consideration those served, Catholic Worker communities, and those involved in the movement, to show its effectiveness to be very real and true. Dorothy Day might likely argue that, in this way, the Catholic Worker Movement only remains effective because it is ineffective by other common standards. For example, definitions of hospitality are different for Day than they are for modern-day institutions (Murray 1990). The meaning of hospitality under the guise of the Catholic Worker Movement does not agree with rational approaches common to Western society. Murray (1990) explains that providing hospitality at hotels, restaurants, etc. has routinized the concept and provided a specific, measurable concept by which society understands hospitality. This is entirely opposite to the goals of the hospitality the Catholic Workers extend to those that they serve.

While the ultimate definition of effectiveness would have been to change the entire social system, it could not do this without first conforming. As Joseph (2003) notes, “groups may strengthen their position by acting in accordance with wider social developments” (50). The Catholic Worker Movement did not form alliances simply for the sake of advancing its ideas and, as a result, did not influence hegemonic forces the way that many groups have. Therefore, their ability to change the entire social system was significantly hindered by a lack of willingness to succumb to hegemonic forces in order to gain influence.

The internal perspective will show that the movement is indeed effective in changing the people that encounter it. The Catholic Worker Movement created its own society where the marginalized and outcast members were no longer either of those (O’Connor 1991: 8; Coy 2001), and I hope to further develop the external focus by demonstrating the kind of society the movement created within its own figurative walls.
While this research does not intend to wholly address the relationship between the Catholic Church and American society, some of that will be addressed peripherally, as this relationship does play a role in defining the Catholic Worker Movement because the movement was both religious and social in nature. While it is clear why the social theories contributing to the movement should be considered, the religious aspects are also important from a social perspective. Political sociology will also play a role in the analysis, as the movement was and continues to be strongly affected by the socio-political climate, including communism, socialism, and capitalism. The Catholic Worker Movement’s own response to these political ideologies, which it believed to be flawed for their promotion of combinations of violence, materialism, and community ownership, was distributism (O’Connor 1991: 82). This idea will be discussed within the context of the internal/external analysis.

Prior Research, Background, and Significance

The Catholic Worker Movement has been of interest historically because it sought to defy many social norms, going against the political grain since its inception. It is organized by a set of strong, clear values – leaving the footprints of solidarity, hospitality, social justice, and peace everywhere it treads – but, at the same time, it is independent, decentralized, and grassroots in nature (Riegle 2003: 7). How does it maintain such a seemingly universal message? How does it not become fragmented in scope when it is physically fragmented and disconnected by its very nature? These questions are what the current literature does not seem to address, and I would like to explore the literature further to be sure that it has not been addressed. Then, through an analysis of the existing movement in its disconnected but universal scope, I intend to explore those questions.
Current research on the Catholic Worker Movement takes various forms. Books written by individuals who have been personally affected by the movement attest to its strengths (Riegle 2003; Coy 2001), while works written by the movement’s founders themselves reinforce its purposes, values, and justify its existence (Day 1948; Day 1963). This is what I refer to as the insider-based literature.

From another vantage point, scholarly articles discuss how the Catholic Worker Movement has contributed to broader topics: Catholicism (Betten 1977; Carrey 2004; Hennesey 1983; Bokenkotter 2005: 380; Dolan 2002), religious movements/activism (Boehrer 2003; Betten 1977), pacifism (Leavitt 1997; Cheyney 1994), hospitality (Murray 1990), and community (Nepstad 2004) are some of the topics covered when the Catholic Worker Movement and Dorothy Day are referenced. Other major theoretical discussions provide in-depth analysis of both feminism (O’Connor 1991) and charismatic leadership (Aronica 1987) as they relate to the Catholic Worker Movement. This is what I will refer to as outsider-based literature, and while this research provides valuable insight into the Catholic Worker Movement, it leaves room for deeper considerations. I intend to draw together these internal and external perspectives for a more holistic view of the Catholic Worker Movement, and this is where I hope to add something new to the existing Catholic Worker research.

Some particularly focused analyses claim that the success of the movement is marginal because the ideals failed to internalize into the American mainstream (Piehl 1982: 242; O’Connor 1991: 8). Other writings seem to re-hash the same points, focusing strongly on the history of the movement and its major themes – anarchism, Catholicism, pacifism, homelessness, etc. (O’Connor 1991; Riegle 2003; Zwick 2005; Coy 2001). Some writings discuss distributism
as well (O’Connor 1991: 84; Thorn 2001), providing a deeper look at what the movement hoped to bring to society.

A clear theme that emerges from the initial consideration of the literature is the importance of the link between Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker Movement (O’Connor 1991; Day 1963; Aronica 1987; Piehl 1982). While this link is obvious insofar as Day is the founder of the movement, a review of the literature indicates that the connection goes far beyond that, as the Catholic Worker Movement and Day are nearly synonymous in most discussions. A researcher can hardly consider the Catholic Worker Movement without considering the Dorothy Day simultaneously. My initial plan of action in research was to focus as much as possible on an analysis on the Catholic Worker Movement, only referencing Dorothy Day when it was absolutely necessary. However, this proves difficult as many Catholic Worker Movement writings are written either about or by this influential founder and leader of the movement. Indeed, as one begins looking at the intellectual trappings of the movement, it becomes evident that separating the two would be more than difficult to do.

So, I find it necessary to continue a discussion that includes Dorothy Day, but I will also take on the challenge of providing a stronger focus on the movement when others have not. This should prove fruitful in the external perspective discussion of charismatic leadership and the lack of institutionalization of the movement. Even with Day gone nearly 30 years, her leadership lives on in the movement and still attaches her to it. While Reigle does make mention of the unexpected continuation of the movement beyond Day’s death (2003: 7), the literature does not seem to have sufficiently addressed how it is possible for the movement to remain so strikingly similar to its origins even with the loss of its Weberian charismatic leader (Whimster 2004). While in some ways it has indeed changed, in more ways it has not, which will be evidenced by
drawing comparisons between original writings and more recent writing/action, providing an opportunity to use the insider perspective literature and bring the internal and external focuses together.

Even the changes in focus of the movement have likely been based on changes in the needs of those it serves, which is actually an indication of staying true to the original purpose of the movement (Day 1963: 40; Piehl 1982; Riegle 2003: 7). In a way that Weber himself would have never predicted (Joseph 2003: 95), the charismatic leader has remained embedded in the movement, which is evidenced by the fact that she is still synonymous with it. The movement is not bureaucratic and therefore the charisma does not appear to have been routinized. Those who are passionate about the movement today continue to prove this by their constant reprints of her writings and quotes on Catholic Worker Web sites and in newspapers. Through the Catholic Worker Movement, Dorothy Day indeed continues to live (Riegle 2003 x, 7).

What is also notable is that Day’s cofounder of the Catholic Worker Movement, Peter Maurin, does not receive as much attention as Day does in the research or otherwise. In many ways, Peter Maurin’s ideas were what inspired Day, and she relied on his philosophy to help shape her words, actions, and the development of the movement (Day 1948). Additionally, the concept of the Catholic Worker farm commune was the result of Maurin’s dream of a communal society. Day’s charisma may be a contributing factor as to why she has received – and continues to receive – so much more attention and credit for the Catholic Worker Movement. In fact, much of the credit Maurin received was from Day herself. They worked as partners. Where she focused on action, he focused on philosophy. Day has been the practical test of Maurin’s philosophies since they began working together, and it seems important to consider this factor –
why Maurin is in the shadows of the movement – as this research moves forward considering Day as well.

Furthermore, keeping in mind the internal/external focus, the initial review of the literature indicates that some strong reciprocal ties exist between the Catholic Worker Movement and classical social theorists. The movement appears to have applied, even contributed to, certain social thought, as Day’s “life and writings were permeated by religio-ethical-social concerns, norms and ideals,” (O’Connor 1991: 3) while at the same time social theories can be used to explain the movements, its actions, and its beliefs. Furthering this research, the classical theories that will be applied include, but are not limited to, socialism (Goodwin and Scimecca 1991: 7), pragmatism (Goodwin and Scimecca 1991: 4, 14-16), Marxism (Goodwin and Scimecca 1991: 86; Marx and Engels 1988), mechanical solidarity (Goodwin and Scimecca 1991: 120; Jones 2001), conspicuous consumption (Veblen 1994), and also, in an opposing relationship, Calvanism (Goodwin and Scimecca 2006: 178-180) and social Darwinism (Hofstadter 1944; Goodwin and Scimecca 2006: 104-106, 249). To note some background briefly, social and Marxism tie into the Catholic Worker Movement because of their profound influence on Day’s thinking. Pragmatism applies at its most basic meaning when we consider the importance of theory and practice in the movement. Veblen’s (1994) conspicuous consumption ties in with Day’s own thought as well, and, as was already noted, Calvanism and social Darwinism were popular ideas that arose during the time of the movement but in opposition to it. What appears to have resulted from this use of theory is a community much like that of Durkheim’s mechanical society, and this will be explored more in depth in the thesis.
Analysis and Theoretical Discussion

This discussion about the need to consider Dorothy Day when analyzing the Catholic Worker Movement provides a good introduction for the first part of my analysis, as it will discuss Dorothy Day beyond a charismatic leader (Aronica 1987), activist (O’Connor 1991; Zwick 2005; Riegle 2003), Catholic (O’Connor 1991; Zwick 2005; Day 1963; Aronica 1987; Riegle 2003), anarchist (O’Connor 1991; Piehl 1982: Day 1963; Thorn 2001), pacifist (Coy 2001; Thorn 2001) or potential saint (O’Connor 1991; Berger 2000; Riegle 2003; Thorn 2001) – all ways in which she has been considered in previous literature. Rather, it seems beneficial to consider the ways that Day was influenced by and contributed to social thought. For, not only can we apply sociology to the movement in the fashion of an overarching analysis, we can analyze how it was applied in the movement’s philosophies and actions. Through these considerations, we find that Day can be discussed not only from a historical and religious standpoint, but she can also be discussed in the way that we discuss other great social thinkers that contributed to theory, practice, and research. Current research touches on this idea (Coy 2003; O’Connor 1991), but it does not seem to discuss it specifically. While Day made it clear that she did not consider herself a philosopher (O’Connor 1991: 58-59), she spent much time thinking hard about society and reading works of other social thinkers (O’Connor 1991). She, in her own right, became a social thinker when she began studying society and thinking critically about how it could be improved. She was shaped by the socio-political climate of her time (O’Connor 1991: 3), rising mostly in opposition to many of the mainstream ideas that were taking shape in the 1930s and earlier (Goodwin and Scimecca 2006: 249, 288) when the Catholic Worker Movement began to arise. Day’s ideas were certainly being shaped prior to the 1930s, and she possibly found herself in the midst of more agreeable schools of thought in those times.
(Goodwin and Scimecca 2006: 228-231, 272-288). However, just when her vision began to take shape, American social thought was being shaped by the likes of Calvinism/Puritanism (Goodwin and Scimecca 2006: 178-180; Whimster 2004), the Protestant Work Ethic (Goodwin and Scimecca 2006: 177-178; Whimster 2004), Social Darwinism (Hofstadter 1944; Goodwin and Scimecca 2006: 104-106, 249), and laissez-faire ideology (Goodwin and Scimecca 2006: 272), all ideas to which I intend to demonstrate that Day and the Catholic Worker Movement were in direct opposition (Day 1963). Much like Weber’s analysis of the origin of Western Capitalism (Whimster 2004) links it to a body of religious ideas – namely Calvinism and the Protestant Work Ethic (Goodwin and Scimmeca, 176) – we can link the Catholic Worker Movement to a body of religious ideas – the Catholic Social Teaching\(^1\), the social encyclicals\(^2\), and the Mystical Body of Christ\(^3\) (O’Connor 1991: 21, 40-41; Day 1963: 47; Zwick 2005: 317; Thorn 2001)– and see this as the social movement that operated in defiance of the capitalist Protestant Work Ethic. Day’s ideas were originally rooted in Communism and Marxism (O’Connor 1991: 14), and the Catholic Worker Movement has felt influences from both of those; however, the ideas of the movement are not fully realized with the religious aspect, namely Catholicism in a pure form.

---

\(^1\) As described by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, “Modern Catholic social teaching has been articulated through a tradition of papal, conciliar, and Episcopal documents…[highlighted by] several of the key themes that are at the heart of our Catholic social tradition…Life and Dignity of the Human Person; Call to Family, Community and Participation; Rights and Responsibilities; Option for the Poor and Vulnerable; The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers; Solidarity; Care for God’s Creation” (USCCB 2005) (for complete descriptions of these themes, see [http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/projects/socialteaching/excerpt.shtml](http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/projects/socialteaching/excerpt.shtml)). Additional reviews of the Catholic Social Teaching are provided by Boileau (1998) and Aubert (2003).

\(^2\) See information above on Catholic Social Teaching, which is based on the social encyclicals. More detailed discussion of these encyclicals will be provided in the final thesis paper.

\(^3\) “The Mystical Body of Christ describes a belief, popular especially in the 1920s and 1930s, that all people are one in the body of Christ. It was used to transcend political and cultural differences to attempt to unite under common beliefs” (Thorn 2001).
When considering Day as a social thinker, one major distinction of note is that she was less of a researcher (in the scientific, data-collection sense) and more of an activist. This makes her approach more qualitative and ethnographic in nature. Considering that qualitative research has just recently begun to come into its own in social science research, Day could be considered ahead of her time as the observer and activist that she was. Furthermore, as a movement activist, Day was always testing theories in everyday life and thus was similar to social scientists in that way as well.

**Methodology**

The answer to these previously-mentioned research questions will be achieved by a critical review of the existing literature on the Catholic Worker Movement. I will first consider the broad base of literature, which will include a brief look at biographies on the founders of the movement, books written by those who have worked with the movement, and papers that have talked about the movement in the context of the larger topic (e.g. religious movements, farm communes, poverty, Dorothy Day herself, etc.). Second, I will narrow the focus by considering the existing sociological literature that has been written about the movement. I will cover the social theories that others have related to the movement, identify gaps in the sociological focus, and then I will mention the theories that have possibly been overlooked. Third, I will consider the actual existing literature of the movement – newspapers published by various Catholic Worker Houses across the United States – and Web sites, brochures, etc. from the various Catholic Worker houses across the country. This literature should reflect the existing state of the Catholic Worker Movement. It will reinforce whether each Catholic Worker stands on its own as a grassroots group and will assess if and how the movement has changed since it began. This
will also help to explore what issues the Catholic Worker Movement continues to address, whether it now addresses different issues, if it has dropped issues that it originally addressed, and if it has remained true to its original purpose.

Last, I will also look at classic sociological theory as it relates to the Catholic Worker Movement. Theoretical perspectives will be applied to thoughts within the movement (and the reciprocal relationship between the movement and social thinkers) as well as applied on the movement from the outside looking in, considering the movement as its own social structure.

Looking at works written by the founders (Day 1948; Day 1963) of the movement will help understand what influenced the movement both religiously and socially. Literature on the Catholic Social Teaching, which greatly influenced the ideas of the Catholic Worker Movement, will be considered for explanatory purposes. Other focuses of the movement’s founders will be mentioned (e.g. Dorothy Day was known to participate in protests, suffrage, and peace movements), as this will give depth to the meaning of the movement and provide some insight into what other issues may have influenced the movement.

Literature will be analyzed by identifying appropriate social theories in existing literature as well as applying theories that may not yet have been considered. Theoretical perspectives will be applied to not only the sociological literature but also to the broader, movement-based literature (Web sites, etc.).

Limitations and Implications for Further Research

This review will be limited to the Catholic Worker Movement in the United States. Because the Catholic Worker Movement is political by its very nature, it is important to consider the political environment that is affecting it. It is for this reason that I am focusing on the Catholic Worker Movement in the United States. Although the Catholic Worker Movement
exists throughout North America and across the world, a United States Catholic Worker Movement focus makes sense because 1.) the Catholic Worker Movement originated in the United States; therefore, its original and purest influences and issues will be related to the United States, and 2.) focusing on various countries would complicate the research question by bringing in different political environments for consideration; these environments could significantly affect how the movement has evolved in each country.

In more extensive research, it would be beneficial to consider how and if the movement has evolved differently in different countries. This could possibly encourage more theoretical considerations as well as an analysis of how various political structures affect social/religious movements. However, if the movement has evolved similarly in various countries, thus various political and even religious environments, this would be an interesting extension of the discussion the strength of the movement and the sustainability of both its ideas and its original grassroots form.

Other limitations include a possible lack of information. Based on my existing knowledge of the Catholic Worker Movement, it still operates in the form of a grassroots movement. While my analysis may reveal different findings, I am entering the research with this assumption. This will make it difficult to fully analyze the movement, as every Catholic Worker house and farm commune will be independent. They will each have their own focus, striving to serve their communities as the very base of their needs. One Catholic Worker House will not operate like any other, except that I expect them to follow the same basic set of values with slight variations. This poses a risk in the analysis and its global application to the entire Catholic Worker Movement. While this is a limitation, it will also make the research intriguing, keeping in mind that there is universality and independence at the same time. This dichotomy should
make for interesting theoretical analysis, and my intention is to consider this issue throughout the analysis. It may be impossible to consider every Catholic Worker house or farm; therefore, not every detail will be covered. I intend to look for broad themes across the Web sites while still making note of the differences that may exist. I expect that this may be a theme in and of itself, with each Catholic Worker house or farm serving the immediate needs of its own community; this is both a commonality and a difference at the same time. So, while it will not be possible to consider every single house or farm in the United States (some may not even have Web sites, brochures, or papers to analyze), it should be possible to gain a broad sense of what is going on in the Catholic Worker Movement today by looking at as many different components as possible. There is a benefit to this as well. Looking at too many Web sites, brochures, and newspapers could cause the research to get too bogged down by tedious details and overlook the important big-picture themes.

**Research Bias**

Personal bias will be a limitation also, as I will be affected by my own experiences with the Catholic Worker Movement. I consider Dorothy Day a role model in my life, and I will need to be careful not to let this bias my writing about the movement. Because I have visited one Catholic Worker Farm commune, I will have to consider my personal experiences and perspectives to be only my own and remember that they are not necessarily universal, especially keeping in mind that each Catholic Worker House and Farm exists independently of the others. It will be easy for me to enter this research with preconceived notions about the Catholic Worker Movement, and I will be careful to set those ideas aside, remembering that the purpose of my research is to gain new information rather than relying on my previous knowledge and
experiences. I will also work with my thesis committee to verify that this issue remains controlled throughout the research.

I intend to draw on my own experiences where appropriate. I also intend to draw on experiences others involved in the movement have shared with me, but again I do not want to those to limit what I gain from the new research I am doing. I would like to use this information to enhance what I find, discussing how new findings may be counter to my existing ideas or how they reinforce things I have already learned.

**Future Research**

While it is too much to consider in this paper, another interesting furthering-research component for future consideration may be an analysis of major metropolitan areas that do *not* have a Catholic Worker Movement presence. There is certainly a need in most communities, as the movement exists to serve the poor and no city is without poverty. Furthermore, Catholic Worker farm communes have been known to exist in areas of the country where the Catholic population is very small; therefore, a large Catholic presence is not always the determining factor of the presence of the movement. It would be interesting to look at what causes the movement to thrive in some cities while having no presence in others. Taking it another step, it would be interesting to explore what causes the movement to continue to flourish in some areas while it may have been run out or simply shut down in other areas. Do certain urban environments encourage the Catholic Worker Movement while others squelch it? Do some homeless populations welcome the hospitality houses while others do not? Does the existence of other forms of homeless shelters affect the movement? Does a city’s political environment – and even its philanthropic environment – affect the Catholic Worker Movement and its fund-base? Or is
the movement entirely self-sufficient and can succeed anywhere it sets itself up? These would be interesting questions for further research, but they are too broad to consider here.

Furthermore, a method of social analysis first introduced by W.E.B DuBois to study the race relations in the United States suggested applying a “structural analysis to understand intra-and-inter community relations” (Goodwin and Scimecca 1991). DuBois’s point was that the complex dynamic of racial issues could only be understood by studying the internal communities created within each race and the overall community where the races interact. This kind of analysis would be beneficial in consideration of the Catholic Worker Movement also, as it creates its own community that operates by standards and expectations it sets (or does not set) forth for its members. It is then affected by the greater society within which it resides. As this critical literature analysis has consistently pointed out, there is an interplay here that is important. Using DuBois’s method of social study allows for research and analysis from both levels and would provide great depth to the research already done on the Catholic Worker Movement. Work that incorporates observation, interviews, and original data collection would be beneficial here.

An interesting modern-day analysis could also draw hyperconsumerism into the discussion, as Dorothy Day was a reader of Thorstein Veblen (1994). Modern-day concepts of Veblen’s original ideas are reflected in ideas about consumerism, over-consumption, luxury, and the American culture of spending and affluence. All of these issues are reflected in Dorothy Day’s own social thought. While some of this will be reflected in my research, further research could apply it to modern-day writing on these subjects and current issues (debt, spending, growing gap between rich and poor, etc.).
**Human Subjects**

As I am focusing a critical review of the sociological literature, there will be no direct research on human subjects in this project. Researching human subjects in this case would require me to incur great expense, as much travel and more time would be necessary to complete such a project. While researching the Catholic Worker Movement could certainly entail face-to-face interviews, focus groups, and direct observation, these are not practical forms of research for this thesis project, as no Catholic Worker Movement presence currently exists in the Indianapolis area. Observing and interviewing not only the workers involved in the movement but also the homeless that it serves would be beneficial in expanding the research. Furthermore, a general public survey to measure knowledge of and attitudes about the Catholic Worker Movement in areas that it has a strong presence would greatly add to the body of knowledge on the movement; however, these are not practical forms of research for this particular project. A review of the literature and media on the Catholic Worker Movement will provide theoretical insight within the time and financial constraints of this master’s thesis project.

**Stages of Project and Targeted Completion Dates**

Literature Research – Ongoing through 2008

Proposal Hearing – Early November 2008

Theoretical Framework – October/November 2008

First Draft – Mid-November 2008

Final Draft and Defense – December 2008
Works Cited


