THE COLLEGE PRESIDENT AS POET, PROPHET, AND PROVISIONER: AN INTERPRETIVE STUDY OF THE CHARISM OF MERCY AS INSTANTIATED IN THE LEADERSHIP STYLES OF FIVE COLLEGE PRESIDENTS.

DISSERTATION

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* * * * *

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To the women in my life who taught me to be

a poet, prophet and provisioner,

especially my mother, Margaret Dougherty,

and my sister, Regina Roth
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CHAPTER I

Introduction

In every country where Mercy convents exist, Catherine [McAuley's] own spirit lives. Gratitude for the gifts of God's mercy, her hallmark, opened these gifts to others in endless, bottomless hospitality. Simple, joyous, and direct in her approach, she bequeathed those gifts to her followers. She desired to animate to patient, humble, compassionate service to those, who with her, gave life and fortune to the poor and the needy.

The mode of operation of the Sisters of Mercy endeavors to be Catherine's own. She made herself aware of the pain and suffering of others; held herself open to requests and importunities on their behalf; took counsel to discern how best to effect relief and improvement, organized her financial and personal resources, decided what to do; and then set about immediately with great faith and trust in God to do it. After her wealth had been entirely disbursed, giving from her poverty became her style of life.

The woman who would rather be cold and hungry herself than the poor should have to suffer also had the flexibility, detachment and the freedom of spirit to change her direction when necessary, to end an unproductive venture, and set off on uncharted seas. (Regan, 1978, p. 14)

These words speak to the legacy of Catherine McAuley, foundress of the Sisters of Mercy. Since their foundation, the Sisters of Mercy have been women whose
primary motivation has been service to the poor, the sick, and the uneducated. The congregation believes that Catherine McAuley handed to them a tradition of service through the particular gifts God gave to each individual sister. The Sisters of Mercy consider the vision of Mercy a gift, a charism through which Catherine McAuley responded to the needs around her. This legacy has inspired works which have taken the inheritors of this tradition into hospitals, elementary and secondary schools, colleges, and social service agencies. In each of these ministries, the energy and creative spirit of Catherine is incarnated as the Sisters of Mercy strive to recognize and name that charism as it is active in their individual apostolates.

This study examines how that charism becomes instantiated in the women who endeavor to bring the spirit of Mercy into the halls of colleges sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy. The understanding of charism, as developed by Peter Worsley in his book *The Trumpet Shall Sound*, is utilized to expand the notion of charism to recognize both its historical character and present day reality. The story and legacy of the first Sister of Mercy is joined to the voices of five women who live out the legacy of Catherine McAuley in the context of
colleges sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy as college presidents.

Theoretical Perspective

Max Weber, one of the early sociologists of religion, formulated a phenomenological generalization of Charism:

... a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least exceptional powers or qualities. These are not accessible to the ordinary, but are regarded as of divine origin or as exemplary, and on the basis of them the individual concerned is treated as a leader (1947, p. 358).

Charism has been handled similarly in the context of religious life. Founders or foundresses have been portrayed as persons of their age with exceptional qualities that commanded a following. According to this Weberian approach to charism, these personal qualities have been transferred to the religious institution. The charism, for Weber, is then a timeless possession that can be reproduced in any age.

Anthropologist Peter Worsley challenged the Weberian interpretation of Charism, and proposed a radically socialized and fully historicized alternative (1968). Worsley's understanding is relevant to the discussion of religious charism. As an anthropologist, Worsley asks
what is it that people are attempting to describe in the word charism. What is the phenomenon? Weber said charism names the personal qualities of a remarkable kind of leader. Worsley claims that charism names a social relationship - an interactionist model (1968) that describes a phenomenon that transpires between a person and a group. According to Worsley a group of people "with possibly utopian or at least diffuse and unrealized aspirations" relates to an individual who is able to articulate the group's aspirations and consolidate them (1968, p. XIV). The leader must then convert these aspirations into concrete visible goals. In order to be perceived as charismatic, the leader has to be "recognized, socially validated and accorded the right to formulate policy, and then to command support for that policy" (1968, p. XI). To be charismatic, the person's gifts must be acknowledged as socially constructed. "Charism, therefore sociologically viewed, is a social relationship, not an attribute of individual personality or a mystical quality" (1968, p. XII).

Bernard Lee applies these concepts, as described by Worsley, to the discovery of the charism of a particular religious community. Lee states:

Charism is normally the social situation which provides the setting for a religious order. It does not exist in the founding person alone nor in the followers, nor in the aspirations of an age,
nor in the programs of action offered, nor in the
style of life proposed, but in the mutual
complicity of all of these together. (1989, p.
131)

Lee envisions the charism of a community as the
interpretation of a narrative structure that is begun at
the time of the founding. This narrative structure:

... emerges as charism when it is able to rise to
the occasion, and when that occasion, which is in
the contemporary world in all its concreteness,
rises in turn to meet it. When they meet publicly,
the world knows it. At that moment redemption has
a face and charism is afoot. (1989, p. 131)

Charism names an effective connection between a
community's narrative structure or "sacred stories" and
the contemporary social situation (Cada, 1979).

This research uses the definition of charism, as
reinterpreted by Worsley and expanded on by Lee, to
investigate the process by which the relationship
between historical tradition and the contemporary
situation is effected within the participants. This
definition presupposes that the charism of Mercy becomes
reflected in the individual administrator as she
recognizes this relationship between the tradition of
Mercy and the realities of the present time. This
refounding of the charism of Mercy empowers the
individual administrators to give voice to the works of
Mercy within their contemporary context.
Statement of the Problem

The Sisters of Mercy initiated their ministry of higher education in 1912 when Saint Xavier College in Chicago was authorized by the State of Illinois to award baccalaureate degrees (Sullivan, 1987). This occurred 123 years after the founding of Georgetown, the first Catholic college (Ford, 1988). The Sisters of Mercy have educated college students since that time with the founding of nineteen colleges throughout the United States. This endeavor by the Sisters of Mercy has been basically ignored in scholarly work done on both higher education in general and Catholic higher education in particular. The research on Catholic higher education has documented the founding of colleges by men and acknowledged their contribution to the educational field, but has neglected the efforts made by women religious (Powers, 1958; Greeley, 1967; Ellis, 1987).

The nature of colleges founded by congregations of women religious remains an untold story. As I engaged this material I became more concerned over the absence of the contribution of women religious in the literature on Catholic higher education. I began to ask questions and do research in the area. I realized that as a woman religious and an
administrator in a Catholic college I needed a history upon which to reflect and to develop my own understanding of leadership within the college.

Initial efforts over recent years have shown that indeed these colleges have unique stories to tell. Unfortunately the questions guiding these studies have concentrated on the past and ignored the development of these Catholic women's colleges as they integrate the traditions of the past with the reality of the present and a vision for the future (Kennelly, 1989; Ewens, 1978; Brewer, 1987). What are the implications for those of us engaged in the ministry today? How are the colleges sponsored by women religious different or unique as a result of the integration of our past and present reality? My understanding of charism leads me to conclude that the uniqueness of these colleges comes from this integration.

A study of this integration of tradition and vision, as manifested in the evolutionary development of colleges founded by congregations of women religious would expand the knowledge of the relationship between the history of these institutions and their contemporary identity. Moreover, current research in higher education underscores the need for an examination of the organizational identity and culture in order to unlock
the shared meanings that construct an institution's goals or purposes (Clark, 1970; Tierney, 1991). The process by which this identity or culture is constructed has not been examined by researchers.

According to Clark, this identity and culture creates a saga which provides "strong normative bonds." These normative bonds create a shared belief system within institutions that their organization is distinctive (1970). This distinctiveness provides a lens through which policy is designed, decisions are made and personnel are selected. While Clark addresses the impact of the historical character of distinctive colleges, the place of contemporary interpretation of historical narratives has not been explored.

As Catholic educators, the Sisters of Mercy have claimed that their institutions are distinctive. This claim has yet to be supported through systematic inquiry. Little has been done to document the existence of a distinctive culture or identity within Catholic higher education in general, or Sisters of Mercy institutions in particular. According to Ford, the study of Catholic higher education has provided useful data and insights but the purpose is "less analytic than informative and protective" (1988, p. 23). Through this empirical study, I have attempted to analyze the words and experiences of the college presidents. Moreover, scholars have attempted to describe and define what a
Catholic college is, but the question of understanding the meaning of their contribution has not been explored (Ford, 1988). Furthermore, research in Catholic higher education has not examined the connection between the historical legacy and the contemporary reality. In my research I sought to examine the relationship between historical tradition and the current context as it is instantiated in the college presidents. An inclusion of this aspect should broaden the understanding of the distinctiveness of colleges sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy.

According to the Sisters of Mercy, this distinctiveness of Mercy colleges is framed within the context of the spirit and the mission of the Sisters of Mercy as stated in the Constitutions:

We as Sisters of Mercy
freely responding to a call
to serve the needy of our time
commit ourselves to follow Jesus Christ
in his compassion for suffering people...
Through direct service
and through our influence
we seek to relieve misery and to address its causes,
and to support all persons who struggle for full dignity.

The translation of this spirit into organizational structures and policies within their institutions has not been explored. The role of individuals in the preservation and extension of the charism within these
structures and policies has not been explicated. If these institutions are to remain distinctive and viable the charism of Mercy needs to be identified as it is instantiated in the lives of individuals and institutions. Research has shown a steady decline in the number of women religious within the past thirty years (Wittberg, 1991). This reality challenges all congregations of women religious to explore the problematic of charism as it impacts the preservation of their mission and spirit within their apostolates. As the number of women religious diminishes, the future of Mercy institutions and the preservation of the charism of Mercy will depend on the congregation’s ability to share that charism with colleagues who are not Sisters of Mercy. The Sisters of Mercy are not unique in the need to explore their charism. As each congregation faces the question of the continuance of their ministries they will also need to explore the question of charism. It is my hope that this research may provide a basis for other congregations as they seek to discover their charism as it is constructed in their contemporary situations.

There are many questions to be researched in Catholic higher education. In this study I explore the Mercy charism as it is reflected in the leadership of five Sisters of Mercy who are college presidents. As leaders of Mercy colleges these women have the special charge to
"keep all concerned keenly aware of the central purposes, values and worth of the higher education enterprise" (Kauffman, 1980, p. 14). According to Francis Marie Trailkill, OSU on the occasion of her inauguration as President of the College of Mount Saint Joseph:

A major task of a leader is the stewardship of the mission of the institution; it is the president's role to ensure congruence, consistency and conformity of mission, message, milieu, market and money. (1988, p. 8)

This understanding of leadership suggests a process by which these women interpret the historical character of the Mercy tradition within the reality of their contemporary situation. An analysis and interpretation of its essence and the process by which it occurs, will add to the current understanding of how identity and culture within the institutions sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy are constructed as well as how this process occurs in other institutions of higher education.

Purpose of the Study

Colleges sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy face an uncertain future unless the spirit that animates their efforts can be shared with those who will join them in their ministry of higher education. The purpose of this research is to examine the relationship between
historical tradition and current context as it is instantiated in the college presidents.

The task of describing the dialectical process by which these Sisters of Mercy interpret historical tradition and their contemporary situation was conducted within the interpretive paradigm. Through my position as interpreter I involved myself in this dialectical process and recognized that the data that I reported was not some objectified entity but rather was mutually constructed by the participants and myself. Through our interaction with one another, the participants and I constructed knowledge that "fused the horizons" (Godamer, 1976) of our individual understandings and formed a collective understanding.

Three questions guided this study:

1. How is charism effected in the leadership of these presidents in colleges sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy?

2. What is the collective understanding of charism of these presidents?

3. How is this charism shared with the people with whom they work?
Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this research the terms listed below are defined as follows:

1. Religious Congregation is a group of persons animated by a common concern or mission. This group organizes itself within the Catholic church and receives canonical status.

2. Women Religious are members of a religious congregation who publicly profess vows of poverty, chastity and obedience.

3. Charism is that common spirit which animates the works of women religious as they seek to function within their specific ministries.

4. Sisters of Mercy are a congregation of women religious whose foundress, Catherine McAuley, established the group to give special care to the poor, the sick and the uneducated within the Roman Catholic tradition.

5. Catholic college is an institution of higher education chartered by appropriate governmental agencies. The goals and purposes of the college are framed within the Roman Catholic tradition.

6. Ministry is service which calls for a generous, selfless attention to the needs of others, that does not seek reward or demand reciprocity (Schneiders, 1986, p. 259).

7. Naturalistic paradigm is a world view that acknowledges that realities are multiple, constructed and holistic. Research is conducted within the natural environment of the problem under study (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).
Design of the Study

This study was designed to provide in-depth information on the process by which the women college presidents interpret historical tradition within their present day contexts. In order to inform the data gathering and analysis, several areas of literature were examined. In chapter two of this document the reader will find the research on Catherine McAuley, Charism, the history of Catholic higher education in general and Mercy colleges in particular and leadership reviewed. Chapter three outlines the methodology chosen and the research design utilized. The methodological choice of qualitative methods allowed for the probing of the understandings of the college presidents through in depth interviews, observations, and document analysis. The data gathered was analyzed using the constant comparative method recommended by Bogdan and Biklen in their text Qualitative Research for Education. This method of analysis provided me with the opportunity to continually engage the material during the research project as well as to allow the reader to experience the "thick description" of the data as presented in chapters four and five. Chapter six concludes the document with a summary of the findings and recommendations for future research.
CHAPTER II

Review of Literature

This literature review examines the research on four topics related to this research study. I designed the chapter to provide an overview of major contributions to the area and to describe how this scholarship influenced me in the study. This chapter is not meant to be comprehensive of all relevant literature in the areas of charism, Catherine McAuley, Catholic higher education, and leadership. Rather, the literature presented formed the framework within me as I constructed the meaning of this study.

The chapter begins with a focus on charism, the theoretical perspective from which I framed the study. The literature on Catherine McAuley examines the current understanding of the historical tradition of the Sisters of Mercy. The history of Catholic higher education is reviewed, giving special emphasis to the founding and development of colleges sponsored by women religious, especially the Sisters of Mercy. The chapter concludes
with a discussion of the current research on leadership and the college presidency.

Charism

The Constitutions of the Sisters of Mercy (1991) makes explicit the heritage that leads the efforts of the 7000 women in that religious congregation. Contained within that document are the words that inspire the works of Mercy. The constitution states:

   Catherine McAuley's unique gift from God,  
   the gift that is her charism alive in us,  
       authors us  
       to give what we have received  
       and to receive what others give  
       in directing our energies  
       to the service of the poor  
       the sick  
       and the ignorant.  

   We cherish as the essence of our inherited charism  
   the recognition  
   and the fostering  
   of the dignity of every human person.  

   In this we address no hierarchy of needs,  
   but rather we seek to serve whatever the needs  
       fall within our competence  
       in the manner  
   that best reveres and develops the dignity of the other.

The question before the inheritors of that tradition is how that charism comes "alive" in their daily life and ministry. In order to investigate the enactment of the charism in the experiences of Sisters of Mercy today it is
necessary to explore what is known of the construct of charism and the manner in which the charism informs action.

Theological research into the construct of charism has centered on an exegesis of the New Testament, specifically the letters of Saint Paul (Rahner, 1975; Schutz, 1974). According to the authors, the term charism was first used in a theological context by Saint Paul the Apostle. He used the term charism a number of times, and it was often translated into Latin as "gift" or "grace" (Rahner, 1975). Rahner suggests that the first letter to the Corinthians made explicit Paul's understanding of the term. Paul describes charism in this letter to the Corinthians:

Now there are varieties of gifts but the same spirit; and there are varieties of service but the same Lord; and there are varieties of gifts working but it is the same God who inspires them all in every one. (I Corinthians 12: 4-8)

From this biblical beginning the construct of the theology of charism has been explored, examined, and described and yet remains "underdeveloped" (Rahner, 1975).

The understanding of the early Christian church, as explained by Rahner and Schutz, was that charisms were gifts of God given through the spirit to individuals for service to the community. These gifts provided the community with a "locus and common framework for
individuals to serve the community" (Schutz, 1974, p. 60). The life and words of Jesus empowered others to continue his life and ministry by calling others to exercise their gifts in freedom and love (Rahner, 1975).

As the community matured, there was a gradual change in the understanding of the term charism. The institutionalization of the apostolic church resulted in a more developed and organized church community. The task of exercising charism was relegated to the leaders of the community and was defined as caring for and transmitting the historical tradition of the church. The variety and communal aspect of charism were replaced by an exclusive relationship of charism to legitimate authority. Ernest Kasemann explained that during this transition the distinction between clerics and laymen found its genesis:

> It is now tacitly accepted that the authority of the institutional ministry is guaranteed by the principle of tradition and legitimate succession which has become the basis of all church order ... the Pauline conception of the church order based on charisms disappeared in the very church the Apostle himself created. (1964, p. 87)

The charism was now the sole domain of ordained ministers whose role it was to transmit that charism or spirit to the community. Document analysis of the New Testament has charged that this change resulted from a growing patriarchal philosophy that had been adopted by
the church to conform to the political climate of the time (Pagels, 1979; Eisler, 1987). This biblical exegesis reveals the effect of the culture of apostolic times on the development of the scriptures and the development of the understanding of the construct of charism.

According to the Pagels (1979) and Eisler (1987) the scriptures, written in large part during the creation of the Holy Roman Empire, reinforced the political thought of the state. Concerned over the breakdown of the existing family traditions and the role of authority, the church fathers framed the scriptures in such a way as to control a potential cultural revolution. Authority became omnipotent with the males of the culture as the bearers of that authority. In the text The Chalice and the Blade, Eisler argues: "It was essential to subordinate and silence women - along with the feminine values preached by Jesus - if androcratic norms, and with them, the church's power, were to be maintained." (Eisler, 1987, p. 140) Attributing the possession of charism to only male ordained ministered, reinforced the position of the church as the authority and established the patriarchal philosophy that continued to prevail in the church until the calling of the Second Vatican Council in 1962 (Weaver, 1985).
During the Second Vatican Council, the bishops called on all the faithful to recognize and respond to the gifts of the Spirit within them. According to the letter of the bishops entitled *Lumen Gentium* there are special graces of the Spirit which are distributed "among the faithful of every rank" (1966, p. 27). Gifts which make the people:

fit and ready to undertake the renewal, and whether these charisms be remarkable or more simple and widely diffused ... they are fitting and useful to the needs of the church. (1966, p. 29)

While the pastoral does acknowledge the charisms and gifts of the "people of God," it still maintains that the "judgement as to their genuineness and proper use belongs to those who preside over the church and whose special competence it belongs" (*Lumen Gentium*, 1966, p. 29).

This document does not refer to women religious specifically, but research has been conducted in which the document was analyzed for its impact on the charism of religious congregations. In a reflection on the meaning of *Lumen Gentium* to members of religious congregations, Buckley included the following:

1. The origin of every charism is the Holy Spirit - not the hierarchy nor human structures.

2. Its impetus is distinguished from the action of the Spirit in the sacraments and in the habitual ministrations of the church's ministers.
3. Charism is by nature a special grace, given to anyone of the faithful as an enabling gift for a specific ministry.

4. Its purpose is the renewal and development of the church.

5. The authenticity of a charism is to be tested and judged by the hierarchy. (1985, p. 656)

Specifically, women religious were challenged to examine their charism, or spirit, by Pope Paul VI in his apostolic exhortation, Evangelica Testificatio, On the Renewal of Religious Life. Pope Paul VI stated:

The charism of religious life, far from being an impulse born of flesh and blood or one derived from a mentality which conforms itself to the modern world, is the fruit of the Holy Spirit, who is always at work in the church. (1971, p. 11)

According to this document, the various forms of religious life are derived from the charisms of the founders of these religious communities who were raised up by God through this gift of the Holy Spirit.

The charism of the founder does two things, first it gives each religious community that dynamism which defines it, often called its particular spirit. Secondly, it provides for the future a "certain constancy of orientation" that allows for a continual revitalization and change in external forms" (1971, p. 12). Further in his apostolic letter, Mutuae Relationes, Pope Paul VI refers to the charism of a religious community as "an experience of the Spirit, transmitted
to their disciples to be lived, safeguarded, deepened and constantly developed by them with the Body of Christ continually in the process of growth" (1978, p. 11). It is this experience of the Spirit that gives the distinctive character to a religious community:

This distinctive character also involves a particular style of sanctification and of apostolate which creates a particular tradition with the results that one can readily perceive its objective elements. (1978, p. 11)

This proposed understanding of charism, within religious congregations seems to limit the spirit of the congregation to the charism as lived by the founder. There is no acknowledgement of the contextual and time bound aspects of the construct. There is also the continuing imposition of a hierarchical structure from the institutional church. There is something incongruent with charism as a gift of the Spirit that defines "a particular style of sanctification and apostolate." This need to define and particularize reflects the patriarchal culture described above that values law and order over the values of interpretation and adaptation. The work of Worsley and Lee, as well as, the biblical work of Pagels and Eisler, raise the question of charism as a social relationship that evolves with time. The charism of Mercy as I understand it is not a definitive essence but rather a movement, a process by which individuals relate to their historical
tradition and current context and engage in an interpretation to inform their actions. This movement negates the imposition of hierarchical structures and call on religious congregations to reinvent their charism.

Religious congregations have struggled in recent years to understand and respond to this call to name their charism. In order to clearly describe the charism of their community, religious congregations studied the historic life of the founder and learned about the social and political environment in which the founder functioned. In some instances the search for the collective charism stopped here. In more recent work, the construct of charism has been expanded to recognize the sociological as well as the theological construct of charism. The insights of this research indicated that the charism of a given founder must be enfleshed in the lives of the members today.

Charism is essentially a living reality, and like every living reality confronts continually the questions of growth or decline, of development or disintegration. (Buckley, 1985, P. 662)

This sociological view of the construct of charism utilized the theory developed by Worsley in his book, The Trumpet Shall Sound. Worsley proposed an interactionist view of charism which defines charism as "a social relationship, not an attribute of an individual personality or mystical quality" (1968, p.
XII). This theory informed the work of Bernard Lee, who examined the construct of charism from a sociological as well as an historical vantage point.

According to Lee, charism "is a deeply historicized social phenomenon" (1989, p. 124). Charism is not a property. It is not a thing to be possessed, but rather it is a socio-historical process that emerges from the interaction of the history of a particular institute with the present day realities of its members (Worsley, 1968). This relationship of past to present provides a foundation on which the future can be constructed.

The story of a community's past includes the legacy of the foundress, the historical period in which she lived, and the culture of that time. This story is interpreted by the members within their own context and culture (Renfro, 1986; Buckley, 1985; Lee, 1989). This interpretation orients the members and gives meaning to their experiences (George, 1977). The question of charism is not one of definition but rather it is an acknowledgement of a dynamic that involves the members of the community in an ongoing conversation and interpretation of their past and present so as to discern the future direction for the congregation.

Because of this new understanding of charism it is not sufficient to conduct historical research in order to explore the founder's charism. There should also be serious study of this dynamic movement as the charism is incarnated
within the lived experience of the members of the congregation. This means that in addition to historical research, there needs to be a concerted effort to help members bring to the level of awareness, the charismatic call which they share and which they are experiencing and living. Through research into the experience of charism by individual members, a collective understanding of charism could be developed. The current literature on charism offers theories as to this interpretive understanding, but empirical research has not been conducted. Since charism is a social relationship, the development of this construct will change as the culture and environment of the members change. Each generation will instantiate the charism differently. Empirical studies would recognize this relational aspect of charism. This study was designed to address this need. If the charism or spirit of a congregation is to be shared with those with whom they work, an articulation of that charism, as it is effected in today’s world, is needed. Through an investigation of the leadership of the five college presidents I hope to assist in that articulation.

In addition to increasing the religious congregation’s understanding of charism as relational and dynamic, a sociological study of these congregations would also increase the field of sociology’s knowledge of groups and how groups work. Wittberg (1989) in her book *Creating a*
Future for Religious Life: A Sociological Perspective, acknowledges that sociological studies of group types and organizational structures have completely ignored religious life as a site for research. Few research studies have been done on religious congregations of women "despite the fact that they constitute what is probably the oldest and most widespread women's network in the United States" (Wittberg, 1989, p. 7). Congregations of women religious are a source of knowledge that the field of Sociology has left untapped. These groups and their ministries are a fertile ground for research into the dimensions of group behavior and commitments of women. The population of my study will provide sociology with data elicited from five women religious whose personal and professional commitments will provide insights that have been neglected by the field.

Catherine McAuley

The research conducted on Catherine McAuley has relied on her letters as well as correspondence from founding members of the Sisters of Mercy (Degnan, 1957; Neumann, 1969; Savage, 1949; Bourke, 1987; Regan & Keiss, 1988). In addition, the researchers have explored the time and culture in which the Mercy congregation was founded.

Catherine McAuley's life can best be understood within the context and times in which she lived. Born in
Ireland in 1778, Catherine experienced the tumult of a world shaken by the American and French Revolutions. She also experienced the constraints placed on the Catholic population by the union of England and Ireland. Catholics in Ireland could not hold public office, could not teach in a public school, or educate their children in their faith. If protestants desired property, they could simply offer five pounds for it no matter what the real value (Healy, 1973, p. 11). Research on the culture of Catherine's time indicates that the place of an Irish, Catholic woman was one of subservience to the demands of society, the church and to the restrictions of a conservative family structure (Keiss, 1988; Bourke, 1987). Even as an adult Catherine McAuley was dependent on the male members of her family for a place to live, food to eat and even for permission to practice her religion. Catherine overcame these restrictions to found a group of "pious ladies" who would serve the needs of the struggling poor of Ireland. While most religious women of the nineteenth century remained in their cloister to pray, Catherine McAuley and her Sisters sought to achieve justice for the poor in Ireland. (Healy, 1992) Of particular interest to Catherine and her associates was the need to "prepare unlettered, untrained young women with skills which enabled them to value themselves and to be valued in return" (Keiss, 1988, p. 18).
Catherine's response to the needs of Ireland's poor was nurtured by a childhood marred by the early death of her father, the renunciation of the Catholic faith by her mother and a constant dependence on the goodness of her Protestant relatives to support her and her brother and sister (Degnan, 1957; Savage, 1949). Unschooled in her faith, Catherine struggled to practice a faith that she had learned as a very young child while listening to her father instruct the impoverished Catholics in the neighborhood. Throughout her life, Catherine continued to challenge the demands of the system by providing the needed skills and education that would permit the people of Ireland to claim their own dignity and worth (Savage, 1949). The beginnings of the House of Mercy illustrated this point. A young girl came to Catherine seeking refuge from being alone and unable to support herself. Catherine was determined to aid the young woman and took her to a house of refuge already established in Dublin. She learned that the charitable house was run by a committee with strict guidelines to be followed before anyone could be admitted. Furthermore, the committee was not meeting until the following week. The girl eventually ended up back on the streets. Catherine immediately decided to open a house for these women in which they would receive care, concern and the necessary skills to enable them to be self-supporting (Degnan, 1957, p. 37-38).
Inspired by her Catholic faith, Catherine McAuley founded the Sisters of Mercy in 1831 in Dublin, Ireland. A reflection on her letters written to the Sisters in the community provides a portrait of a woman who saw a need of the people of Ireland and responded to that need by creating an opportunity for service by the wealthy, educated women of Dublin society (Neumann, 1969).

Gathering a small group of Irish women, Catherine established schools and hospitals to meet those needs. Refusing to be confined by the image of the quiet, demure, praying nun, Catherine sent her Sisters walking through the streets to respond to the suffering people of Ireland (Savage, 1949; Regan & Keiss, 1988).

According to Regan & Keiss:

There is no evidence that Catherine saw herself as a woman who dared to be different. Her gaze was so fixed on what needed to be done she hardly noticed that she refused to be confined by convention or custom. She did not so much challenge the mores of the church and the world but rather adopted the mores of the Gospel message. (1988, p. 22)

Catherine possessed a vision of her ministry that both inspired and motivated her actions. She shared that motivation and inspiration with the women who chose to join her in her efforts. She succeeded in creating a sense of common endeavor among her sisters where each one "discovered a sense of being significant" (Neumann, 1969, p. 73). She led her community by enabling and
empowering her sisters to see a need and to respond to that need with their skills and talents (Bourke, 1987).

Catherine's leadership was not just an ideal. Excerpts from her letters to the congregation show a woman who was able to merge the ideals of faith and religion with common sense and creative business tactics (Neumann, 1969). According to Regan and Keiss in their book Tender Courage:

Catherine McAuley held herself open to requests and importunities on behalf of the poor, took counsel to discern how best to effect relief and improvement, assessed financial and personnel resources, decided what to do and set about with faith and trust to do it. (1988, p. 49)

Catherine led her community by connecting them with each other, challenging her sisters to be aware of those around them and a sensitivity that provided service to those in need (Neumann, 1969). Her letters are alive with anecdotes and witticism that enabled her sisters to accomplish, with good humor, the arduous task of serving the poor of Ireland.

From her letters a picture is gleaned of a woman who entrusted each of her sisters in leadership positions with autonomy. While offering information and advice, her stance of non-interference in the affairs of each institution as well as her empowering confidence in those entrusted with its progress emerges in her encouragement: "Look at it with all your brains and you will soon make great improvement" (Neumann, 1969, p.
One of the strongest tenets of Catherine's leadership was the ability to release the strength and potential of her sisters. According to Regan & Keiss:

Sharing her vision with those drawn to the same ideal, Catherine exercised a leadership that was more a dynamic of their life than an authoritarian stance. (Regan & Keiss, 1988, p. 51)

The current research on Catherine McAuley and the founding of the Sisters of Mercy provides a picture of the woman and her efforts during the nineteenth century in Ireland. Unfortunately this research has been limited and defined by the assumptions and frameworks of that time period. The research about Catherine McAuley has not questioned or explored the possibility that the representation of her activities, as presented in her letters, was influenced by the culture and society of her time. The question of socialization and its impact on how Catherine McAuley's choices were made, has been muted or ignored. The research done by Regan and Keiss began to ask some of these questions especially on the influence the Quaker religion had on Catherine McAuley's life but this question was only referred to and never developed (Regan & Keiss, 1988). The tenets of the Quaker religion and its attitude toward women was certainly an influencing factor as Catherine defied convention and established hospitals, schools, engaged the clergy in debate and challenged the limits of society on women in nineteenth century Ireland. Yet, the
current research silences this fact by framing the understanding of Catherine within the norms of conventional behavior. Our portrait of the foundress of the Sisters of Mercy has been painted by biographers who have defined their subject within the assumptions of what was acceptable for a woman and a religious in nineteenth century Ireland.

The story of Catherine McAuley is the story of a woman who challenged the norms of both the society and the church. She entered the public sphere to address the needs of women and children which were caused by evils within the bureaucracy of that society. This is a woman who challenged bishops and broke with tradition. A reading of her biographies, however does not present this picture. There is a flatness in the majority of the research that does not accurately portray the power and strength of this woman. The absence of this dimension of her character constrains the manner in which her followers are able to emulate her. A feminist reading of her life would provide a different depiction and as such enable the followers of Catherine McAuley to be motivated and inspired by a truer picture of the foundress. The story referred to above would certainly take a different direction if the priority Catherine placed on the dignity of that young woman and the frustration with a system that categorized and labeled people according to rules established by a committee was
voiced. A focus on the concern of Catherine for the women in her society and a reflection on the impact that had on decisions Catherine made would encourage those who have followed her to place women in the center of their concerns and not to allow demands of an unrealistic bureaucracy to limit their actions. In this study I hope to assist the five college presidents to articulate the charism of Mercy and to recognize that this charism may call on them to challenge the assumptions of today's society within their institutions.

In addition to this need for a revision of our understanding of the historical tradition of Catherine McAuley and the Sisters of Mercy, what is lacking in this literature is a reflection on how the spirit of this woman lives and works in Sisters of Mercy today. This task has been addressed by the Mercy Association in Scripture and Theology. In the last five years, this group has encouraged reflection on the life of Catherine McAuley and interpretation of the spirit of that life within the ministry of Sisters of Mercy today. The group has provided an avenue in which the charism of Mercy comes alive in the words and reflections of its members. According to Mary Ann Scofield in her article, "Toward a Theology of Mercy", the need is to get to the heart of the charism. She wrote:
Mercy is possible in any situation. But it should be clear that we cannot simply equate it with good. No ministry is automatically an act of mercy; but within any ministry, the doing of mercy is possible, that affective seeing and being seized by, and that effective doing and sustaining. And for us as Sisters of Mercy, any "job" is worthwhile and even precious if within it we are doing mercy and that doing of mercy will energize us no matter how exhausting our task. If we really got to the heart of our charism, we'd be fully alive. (1992, p. 7)

This quest for the heart of the charism has led authors to reflect on the story of Catherine McAuley and interpret it within the various ministries of the Mercy congregation.

Research on the merciful response to violence (Upton, 1992); health care for poor women and children (McHugh, 1991; Talone, 1991); Hispanic women and ministry (Pineada, 1992) and interpreting Scripture in the contemporary church (Rosenblatt, 1991; Schubert, 1991) has added to our knowledge of how the historical tradition of Catherine McAuley interacts with and is interpreted by the women involved in that ministry today. The authors of these studies have extended the boundaries of what it means to be motivated by the charism of Mercy. Through their intellectual efforts the theological construct of charism has been integrated with a sociological understanding of how mercy is present in the world. Rouleau defined their task:

We, all of us enspirited by mercy, must together dream our future, reincarnate the archetype and the myth of mercy. Creativity will arise in us if we share our discernment of the gifts of the
spirit, of mercy as an inner reality impelling us to re-embodify it in varied ways and new forms which will respond to the needs of our world today. (1990, p. 9)

A detailed description of this research is beyond the parameters of this literature review, but the implications for the field of education are central. Theologians have asked questions and explored areas in which the charism of Catherine McAuley has been interpreted by various constituencies.

Noticeably absent from the list above is any consideration of the field of education in general and higher education in particular. Where is the intellectual search for the re-embodiment of the spirit of Catherine McAuley in the field of education? In the original rule of the congregation, the foundress established the priority of education for the followers of her traditions. The rule stated:

The Sisters shall be convinced that no work of charity can be more productive of good to society, or more conducive to the happiness of the poor, than the careful instruction of women. (cited in Sullivan, 1987; p. 21)

Reflections and personal insights have been offered (McKillop, 1983; Sullivan, 1987), but the systematic study of the meaning of the Mercy tradition within the ministry of education has not been undertaken. It would seem that research into the impact of the interaction of historical tradition and contemporary context; the interaction of theory and practice would increase the
understanding and efficacy of Mercy education for the congregation and those who join them in the educational ministry. I have attempted to begin that task with an interpretation of how the Mercy charism is instantiated in the lives of five Mercy college presidents.

Women Religious and the Ministry of Catholic Higher Education

From the hallowed halls of Oxford to the majestic corridors of the Vatican, from the intellect of John Henry Newman to the inspiration of John Paul II, educators within the Catholic tradition have struggled with the goal and purpose of Catholic education. Particularly the American Catholic colleges and universities have gone through birth pangs as they attempt to create institutions that are true to the heritage of the Catholic faith as well as to challenge broader educational community.

Within the last 25 years that struggle has intensified within the American Catholic educational institutions. Changing definitions of knowledge, church and authority after the Second Vatican Council as well as the maturation of the American institutions during the later part of the twentieth century have sent ripples of dissent and revolution through the hearts and minds of American Catholic scholars. The higher
education institutions of the American Catholic Church are in the midst of an identity crisis which could alter the place of those institutions within the church and society. This section will seek to place this crisis within an historical context by examining the development of the institutions, and by giving special emphasis to the development of colleges and universities founded by congregations of women religious in general and the Sisters of Mercy in particular. The chronicle of women’s efforts will highlight the evolutionary tract that has brought all of the educational institutions to this point.

John Power's text, *A History of Catholic Higher Education in the United States*, is acknowledged, by most, as the most comprehensive account of the beginning of Catholic colleges and universities. Yet, in one paragraph, placed on the last page of the introduction, Powers covers the entire history of Catholic colleges for women, all founded by women religious. This paragraph is offered as evidence that the attitude of the church toward women in general and women religious in particular remains consistent. He stated:

Although Catholic colleges for women as well as Catholic colleges for men fall within the scope of its treatment, this book centers its attention on colleges for men. This emphasis is justified because in its essentials Catholic higher education for women was patterned after colleges for men ... and colleges for women came into existence about one hundred years after colleges for men. (1958, p. VIII)
In a few short words, Power dismisses both the importance of Catholic higher education for women as well as the contribution of women religious to the endeavor.

John Tracy Ellis in the text, *The Catholic University*, presents an often quoted article tracing the tradition of autonomy through the history of Catholic colleges. In tracing the history of autonomy and academic freedom from the founding of Georgetown in 1815, to the close of the Vatican Council in the 1960's, Ellis devotes one and a half pages to Catholic higher education for women. He mentions only the College of Notre Dame and Trinity College as examples of the early foundations. In describing the aims of Catholic colleges, he discusses these two institutions. He stated:

in both [colleges] the statement of the aims and purposes were probably more clear cut in them than in the men's institutions and contained, perhaps, a less markedly moral and religious tone. (1970, p. 221)

In bemoaning the lack of intellectual rigor in Catholic colleges, Ellis again uses Trinity and Notre Dame to indicate that within colleges sponsored by women religious the goals were to:

develop leadership ... true scholars ... and (to develop) students endowed with the knowledge many sided as well as thorough, with a firm grasp of first principles, a just judgment, a well trained
power of reasoning and broad cultural appreciation. (1970, p. 221)

Ellis establishes these two colleges as challenging the intellectual stagnation prevalent in colleges for men but then ignores this and bases the remainder of his forty page chapter on a discussion of the traditions of colleges founded by men for the education of men.

Perhaps the most comprehensive account of the history of the early colleges founded by women religious is presented by Sister Mariella Bowler in her dissertation in 1933. In her work she chronicles the founding of all the colleges by Catholic women religious. Some of the phrases she uses to introduce each institution are listed here, in order to examine both the attitude of the writer and the academics of her time.

Under the direction of Father Neale ... Through the influence of Father Neale and with the approval of Bishop Carroll ... At the direction of Archbishop Marechal ... Due to the zeal and encouragement of Right Reverend Benedict Joseph Flaget ... Through the inspiration of Kentucky's pioneer bishop ... Under the direction of Father David ... It was Reverend John Dubois who directed the community ...

The history of each college is bracketed by the involvement of a member of the male clergy. These descriptions of the early days of 14 colleges founded by religious women mention 52 male clergy by name and 18 women religious. In addition, 67 collective nouns were employed to refer to the women who were involved in the
foundations. The contribution of the women religious who founded these colleges are muted within an historical representation that values only the male clergy's involvement. This approach rendered women religious invisible, nameless, and voiceless within a ministry to which thousands of women actively contributed their energies, vision, and financial resources.

Research into the development of these colleges for women highlighted the changes in the contour of population and culture of the United States. Society in the United States changed drastically at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries. Politically, economically, and ideologically, the new nation moved from classical liberalism to a new liberalism with increasing power to the business and government sectors and decreasing power to the individual. This move from an agrarian society to an industrial one produced drastic changes in the lives of the people of the country.

Of particular concern was the influx of a large number of immigrants from southern and eastern Europe which raised fear among some of the people that the new immigrants would "destroy traditional American values and create a strong following for radical economic and political ideas" (Karier, 1972, p. 157). In order to protect a society that was felt to be "just and progressive" these new immigrants needed to be
assimilated into the American way of life. Science and its accompanying research had "proven" that these new arrivals were indeed less able and therefore less virtuous than the average American citizen. These deviant tendencies had to be controlled and changed in the minds of the "real" Americans. Society looked to the scientist and the academic to point the way. Governments became centralized, business became industrialized and school administration and social agencies became professionalized.

All served to classify, standardize and rationalize human beings to serve the productive interests of society, essentially controlled by wealth, privilege and status. (Karier, 1972, p. 161)

As the control of government and business came more into the hands of the experts, the expectations on the role of schooling was also changed. More and more, government and business leaders were determining the conditions of freedom for the people. Increase governmental regulations, demands from the corporations and demographic changes led to a reevaluation and restructuring of the public school system. (Spring, 1990) The school became a critical vehicle in the socialization process that would produce "measured and standardized workers for the labor market" (Spring, 1990, p. 228).
The prospect of assimilation into a predominantly protestant culture struck fear in the hearts of some American Catholics. A large number of the "deviant" immigrants were from Catholic countries, especially Ireland and Germany. In order to "protect them from the injurious influence of the world" (McCluskey, 1970, p. 32) and to preserve the religious traditions brought from Europe, an alternative method of education was seen as necessary by the Catholic hierarchy in the United States. The clergy were entrusted with the education of the young men in the traditions and tenets of the faith.

Since the clergy were seen as the conduit through which the Catholic youth "would be saved," Bishop Carroll instigated the founding of Georgetown Academy in order to educate the clergy and allow for the continuance of the Catholic faith in the new world. Georgetown, St. Louis, Fordham, and Notre Dame began with this purpose:

   to offer a preliminary or preparatory education for boys who were aspiring to the priesthood, to create a center for missionary activities, and to provide a place where boys and young men might be given an opportunity to cultivate the moral virtues. (Powers, 1958, p. 340)

There was little attention paid to the academic life of the student. Even as young men were admitted who had no desire to become clerics, the curriculum remained classical and the atmosphere remained monastic. Truth and knowledge had been defined by the Church; the
colleges were to transmit that truth and knowledge. The bishop and priests were recognized as the sole possessors of that knowledge and truth. The concept of learning and discovery was not a part of the Catholic mindset. Students were presented with the church's teaching and expected to recite it from memory (Greeley, 1967).

As the nineteenth century progressed, the Catholic leadership in the United States continued to impose limitations on educational institutions to remain true to the religious purpose of the colleges. Presidents were chosen from members of religious congregations because of their doctrinal orthodoxy rather than educational expertise. The faculties, predominantly clerical, were encouraged to maintain the conservative atmosphere that would allow the students to "resist threats to the faith" (Powers, 1972, p. 55). Even as the university movement infiltrated the Catholic colleges the clergy resisted the temptation to advance their notion of the purpose of education. The university was seen as the opportunity to meet the demands of the Catholic population for professional schools rather than an opportunity to contribute to the acquisition of knowledge.

The question of women being admitted to the Catholic colleges and universities was not even considered in the nineteenth century. According to Powers:
Catholic clerics, presidents and professors, probably guided by the church's traditional but unofficial attitude toward the natural inferiority of women, were unable to find any convincing testimony proving that women either needed or could profit from higher learning. (1972, p. 273)

When elementary schools were developed in the latter part of the century, the church had no difficulty with the education of young girls. This would provide them with sufficient education to become good Christian wives and mothers (Powers, 1958). According to an unnamed cleric of the time: "The best diploma for a woman was always a large family and a happy husband" (Powers, 1958, p. 274). The need for advanced education for these women however, was already in the minds of Religious women.

In 1822, there were roughly 200 nuns in the United States. By 1920, the number had increased exponentially to 88,773 (Brewer, 1987, p. 15). These women epitomized the deviance and resistance as perceived by the general population (Ewens, 1978, p. 86). As representatives of this "foreign" church, women religious were viewed with suspicion and hatred. In some instances, nuns were physically attacked and convents were destroyed by fire (Bowler, 1933). In the midst of this atmosphere, the women set about establishing a new brand of religious life and Catholic higher education for women that was uniquely American and, at the same time, uniquely independent.
The year was 1790, and the first convent was established at Port Tobago in Charles County, Maryland (Ewens, 1989, p. 19). From this beginning women religious struggled with the demands of the church on them and the need to adapt to the realities of American society, especially in the area of education for women. Church law required the profession of solemn vows by "real" religious and imposed the restriction of the cloister on these women. In contrast to European society in which religious were supported by endowments, dowries and dependent on the generosity of rich patrons, the reality of life in the United States required that these women be self supporting, resilient and fiercely independent. This tension forced women religious to examine their life style and make adjustments that would change the position of women religious within the American Catholic church (Brewer, 1987; Ewens, 1989).

The cloistral regulations did not inhibit these women from contributing to the education of the Catholic female population. Convents were opened and young girls were invited to become students in the first female academies sponsored by the religious communities. By the year 1852, 115 Catholic girls' schools were in operation (Ewens, 1989, p. 24). Long before 1880, some of these schools offered college level courses and extra years of study. Some few had degree-granting privileges in approximately the same time frame as those of the
earliest women's colleges. Elmira was charted in 1855 and Vassar in 1865. St. Mary of the Woods had a similar charter in 1848 and St. Mary's at Notre Dame by 1862 (Solomon, 1985). The foundresses of these academies were deterred from calling these institutions colleges due to religious restraints. The church would not approve "colleges" for women (Ewens, 1989).

The evolution of these academies into colleges was precipitated by the demands of the hierarchy to establish an alternative school system in 1884 (Powers, 1958). Religious women responded to the challenge implicit in this decision by establishing colleges which would prepare nuns and, eventually, lay women for teaching positions in the parish schools (Power, 1958). The curriculum for the colleges was influenced by the prevailing attitude toward women as well as the advances that had been made in women's education in existing female colleges (Solomon, 1985).

The Catholic philosophy of education was pushed to a different level through the establishment of these colleges. Education was finally seen as an integration of the intellectual and the spiritual. Women religious challenged the dichotomy of mind and spirit that was prevalent in the colleges for men (Ruffing, 1991). Liberal Arts and the pursuit of intellectual excellence were valued and encouraged in the early efforts for collegiate education for Catholic women (Solomon, 1985).
The curriculum in these early colleges developed liberal arts programs that were religious, intellectual, and vocational. The vision of the women who founded these colleges recognized that the dominant view of church leaders of women as limited and inferior could only be challenged by equipping women to take their place in society with the skills and talents of competent professionals.

The women who were the pioneers in this collegiate effort for women were able to create structures and systems that enabled the Catholic women to gain an education as well as a sense of self worth that put them in the forefront of Catholic education. The colleges were established with structures that emphasized the partnership of women and men. These colleges led the way in seeking accreditation by state, regional, and national agencies. They encouraged faculty and staff to join national educational and professional organizations (McCarthy, 1985; Ewens, 1989). The sense of isolation that had been characteristic of the men's college was absent from the earliest days of Catholic colleges for women.

From the beginning, Catholic women's colleges differed significantly from the men's colleges. The former were deeply influenced by the curriculum of other women's colleges (Solomon, 1985). They shared with them an underlying assumption that "to educate
women was to improve society - that women were the bearers of culture" (McCarthy, 1985, p. 7).

The women religious who guided this movement claimed a freedom from clerical control that allowed them to relate to priests, bishops and their colleagues in female education as equals (Ruffing, 1991). This resulted in a collection of colleges that encouraged women to see collaboration and cooperation as the means to achieve a fuller life for themselves and all of society. This unusual view of women and their "place" in the world served as the impetus to structural change within the American Catholic church and its educational system (Ruffing, 1991).

The Sisters of Mercy began their involvement in the field of higher education with the founding of Saint Xavier College, in Chicago in 1847. This college, originally established as an academy, was approved by the state of Illinois to award baccalaureate degrees in 1912 (Sullivan, 1987). The involvement of the congregation in the field of higher education has not been systematically documented. However, there are reflections and observations of individual Mercy colleges. These reflections and observations varied in analysis from a book written by Sister Mary Augustine Roth entitled Courage and Change chronicling the foundation of Mount Mercy College to a three page listing of important dates for the College of Saint
Xavier. This material chronicles the founding of colleges as a response to the need of the society. Initially founded to meet the need of the congregation for the education of the younger members, the missions of the institutions evolved to address the needs of the society as a whole. The philosophy of Mount Aloysius Junior College illustrates this point:

Within the Catholic tradition and the heritage of the Sisters of Mercy, the College believes in the importance of religious, spiritual, and moral values as integral to one’s educational experience. It insists, therefore, on a core curriculum of liberal arts and religious studies courses. The religious studies courses are designed to assist students to cope with personal questions of faith, to consider the religious dimension of contemporary cultures, and to participate in ethical decision making. Responding to calls from the church and the Mercy congregation for an even deeper commitment to education in social justice, the College emphasizes questions of ethics, human justice, peace, hunger, and similar topics.

There is no existing body of literature which traces the historical origins of the total group of colleges sponsored by Sisters of Mercy. The task of gathering these documents and analyzing them to create a clear picture of the heritage of the institutions is beyond the scope of this study.

Sister Mary Christina Bouey's (1963) dissertation on Sister formation programs sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy offers some general knowledge concerning the history of the institutions sponsored by the congregation. The aim of the study was to investigate
the programs for the education of members of the congregation and did not offer any other insights into the colleges in general.

According to Bouey, in 1962, the 14,218 members of the congregation in the United States sponsored the largest number of Catholic institutions of higher education for women in the United States (1963, p. 3). At the time of the study the Sisters of Mercy sponsored seventeen liberal arts colleges and eight junior colleges. These institutions were founded and conducted as independent institutions sponsored by the individual communities (Bouey, 1963, p. 5).

Today the 7,000 members of the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas sponsor two universities, ten liberal arts colleges and six junior colleges. Unfortunately, analysis and explanation of the decline in numbers of institutions and changes in the foci of those institutions are lacking.

Significant to the future of the colleges sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy was the establishment of the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas. In July, 1991 the Sisters of Mercy in the United States formed the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas uniting the twenty five congregations under one governance structure. As a result of the founding of the Institute in 1991, these colleges are under the auspices of the Institute while concomitantly they remain
financially independent. The implications of this new
governance structure on Mercy colleges has not been
addressed. Systematic study into the past and the
present of these institutions is required if there is to
be a corporate effort into planning for the future. The
Sisters of Mercy need to name and own their mission and
purpose in conducting institutions of higher education.

This need has become more crucial as the numbers of
Sisters of Mercy available for the ministry decreases.
The future of the mission of the Sisters of Mercy in
higher education may well depend on their ability to
share with the laity their vision. The discussion in
this study of the collective understanding of charism by
the five college presidents will be the first step in
this effort.

Women religious are among the most educated women in
the United States. By 1980, 43% of all American
religious women had at least one Master's degree, 2% had
Ph.D.'s and 94% had a Bachelor's degree (Neal, 1984, p.
165). This education should put women religious in the
forefront of the effort to further the aims of Catholic
education. According to Wittberg:

Entering a religious congregation was and remains,
one of the surest ways for a competent [Catholic]
women to rise to the top of large scale
educational and health institutions in America.
(1990, p. 530)
Women religious have the experience and talents to develop increased opportunity for leadership that continues the legacy of those early pioneers in Catholic higher education. Continued research is necessary if this to occur. The participants of this study, with combined experience of almost 70 years in the college presidency, have much to offer as we begin to recognize the contribution that women religious have made and continue to make in educational leadership.

This study seeks to investigate how the lives and ministry of the Sisters of Mercy, in Colleges sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy, interpret the legacy of Catherine McAuley. This perspective will allow a conversation to ensue between the past and the present that will facilitate the realization of the Mercy charism in the ministry of higher education. The literature available to those interested in the place of women religious in higher education and the contribution of those women to the Catholic church has grown within the last twenty five years. More work needs to be done. The contribution of Catherine McAuley and the Sisters of Mercy is yet to be reclaimed.

Moreover, research has yet to be done on the specific contributions of the Sisters of Mercy in areas such as leadership development, curriculum and the empowerment of women students. The reasons for this are many. Part of the difficulty lies in the relative youth of the
Mercy colleges. Another part of the difficulty is the lack of resources available on the history of the community and the institutions of higher education. The literature reviewed in this section indicates that the Sisters of Mercy would benefit from a reflection on their history and an interpretation of that history through the experiences of Sisters presently engaged in the ministry of higher education.

**Leadership**

Leadership has interested researchers and theorists like no other topic in the social sciences. Stogdill's (1974) classic *Handbook for Leadership* contains an entire chapter devoted to defining this elusive concept. Bennis and Nanus (1985) stated that decades of inquiry have produced more than 350 definitions of leadership. "Like love, leadership continued to be something everyone knew existed but nobody could define" (Bennis and Nanus, 1985, p. 5).

Bass (1981) noted that "there are almost as many definitions of leadership as there are persons who have attempted to define the concept" (p. 7). According to Bennis and Nanus, "Never have so many labored so long to say so little" (1985, p. 4). For the purpose of this study the examination of this extensive literature will be limited to an overview of research on leadership in general, and a review of research that has been conducted on the college presidency.
Theories of Leadership

In approaching the many different theories and studies on the topic of leadership, this study concentrated on the theories of McGregor (1960); Argyris (1964); Fiedler (1967); Burns (1978); and the research of Stogdill (1974). These studies were selected because of the impact they have had on the research conducted on the college presidency. McGregor’s theory and research has had an impact on the corporate and educational worlds. His theory centered on a set of ideas about motivation in organizations.

The way a business is managed determines to a very large extent what people are perceived to have potential and how they develop. (1960, p. IX)

McGregor’s research found that most managers embraced what is known as Theory X management style. This particular theory stated that most managers need to actively and personally control, direct, and supervise those individuals under them. McGregor believed that managers who utilized this theory brought about a self fulfilling prophecy in their organizations. If the manager perceives the individuals as needing to be motivated from outside themselves then that is how employees in the organization functioned.

Through his research findings, McGregor found that there is a need to challenge managers to behave, supervise, and direct their followers in a different manner. This
challenge came to be known as Theory Y. The major principle of Theory Y is:

The essential task of management is to arrange organizational conditions so that people can achieve their own goals best by directing their efforts toward organizational rewards. (1960, p. 61)

This principle attempts to treat individuals as adults and encourage management to build upon the concept of employee self-direction. Theory Y gradually became accepted as a leading style and behavior of management and leadership.

Theory X and Theory Y are both statements emerging from the tradition of the human resource school, which deal with management and leadership behavior within an organization. Building upon McGregor's theory and research findings, Argyris (1957, 1965, 1976) found that formal and structural organizations have a basic tendency to inhibit the creative growth of an individual working in the organization. According to Argyris a leader should focus on participative leadership. Involvement on the part of all individuals in the organization is crucial. The leader attempts to focus on the problem solving process rather than attempting to provide a solution to a problem. His research findings demonstrate that a quality decision is more likely to occur from a group process if the leader displays neutrality by avoiding evaluation or criticism of the situation (1966). He stressed the importance of the relationship between the
leader and the followers as being a series of learning experiences.

Argyris viewed leadership as a learning experience which nurtured the partnership between a leader and one's followers. This partnership attempts to foster and promote both mutual cooperation and mutual contribution in the organization (1976).

Fiedler's research (1967) was a bit different from that of McGregor and Argyris. Fiedler's research and theory highlighted the social psychological perspective of leadership. His theory demonstrated that leaders may be separated into those who value task success and those who value interpersonal success. The theory and research discussed by Fiedler emphasized the importance of the interaction between the leader and the group. The topics of motivation, attitude, and situational control were important concepts in Fiedler's theory.

Fiedler reflected upon the behavior of the organization by studying the influencing factors of the structure of the task, the positional power of the leader, and the leader's relationship with the group. (1967) Utilizing the "Least Preferred Co-Worker Scale" Fiedler believed that by identifying the leader's orientation those three factors in the organization could be modified. This approach to organizational leadership called on the individual leader to change his/her organizational situation. The importance of studying both the behavior of the leader and the
organization which one leads has been Fiedler's challenge to the study of leadership.

Stogdill's (1973) research indicated that the characteristics of a good leader are elusive. His research demonstrated that a complex paradigm of interaction between leader and situation is involved in the making of a good leader. These insights were made after an extensive review of the literature in the field of leadership. The focus of Stogdill's research was the relationship between the leader and the organizational experience. His research invited those studying the topic of leadership to reflect upon:

(The) prime necessity is to break loose from the existing trend toward repeating what has been done over and over again in the past. A second necessity is utilization of the complex, more inclusive research designs. To these necessities should be added the desirability of combing variables that have not been studied in relation to each other. It is especially desirable that one or more measures of followers or group reaction be included. (1973, p. 429)

The challenge to continue to research and write on the topic of leadership is left to those who are serious about studying the relationship between leaders, followers, and their organizations.

Burns (1978) contributed the theory of transformational leadership to the understanding of the concept. He defined leadership as:

Leaders inducing followers to act for certain goals that represent the values and the motivations - the wants and needs, the aspirations and expectations - of both leaders and the followers. And the genius of leadership lies in
the manner in which the leaders see and act on their own and their followers' values and motivations. (1978, p. 19)

He continued that leadership was a process of mobilizing, by persons with certain motives and values, various economic, political, and other resources, in a context of competition and conflict, in order to realize goals held independently or mutually held by both leaders and followers. (1978, p. 19)

The challenge of this form of leadership is in the communication of an organizational vision and the mobilizing of human resources with the organizational vision.

The research conducted by these men has contributed to an evolving understanding of leadership. The questions I bring to their findings is that of assumptions, populations and ideology. The assumptions of the research around an organization as a site of competition and conflict as well as an acceptance of the individualistic mindset of both leader and follower limit the perspective each takes on the concept of leadership. The researchers stressed that either behaviors that the leader exhibits or personal characteristics that they possess are essential if the organization is to flourish. The emphasis placed by the authors on the achievement of the individual leader denies the relational aspects of organizations and the collective responsibility for the success of the enterprise. The assumption of a hierarchical organization that is controlled
by authority and rationality frames and constrains the conclusions these men made.

The empirical studies which led to the development of the theories were conducted with groups of men and therefore the transferability of their conclusions to women leaders or followers is suspect. The presumption that the theories are as easily applied to men as women denigrates the contribution that women's experience could bring to our understanding of leadership and organizations. This research has subsumed the understandings of women around leadership within theories and constructs that were developed by men from the experience of men. The results have either been a silencing of the female experience or an emphasis on what are perceived as feminine characteristics. These characteristics are portrayed as complimentary to and inferior to male characteristics. This study is intended to enlarge our understanding of leadership to include the voices of women who construct their leadership through their personal experience which is influenced by but not limited by their gender.

Ideologically these researchers seem to believe that leadership is a fixed concept that can be delineated by the imposition of theories derived from analysis of quantifiable data. Their lack of recognition of the qualitative aspects of leadership provides an incomplete picture and limits the understanding of leadership. The absence of the contextual
and cultural dimension of the construction of leadership in these works has had a continuing impact on the understanding of the college presidency. The incorporation of these aspects in my study will refocus our understanding of leadership.

The positive and negative impact of these theories and their concomitant limitations on the field of higher education will be illustrated in the next section in a discussion on the literature on the college presidency.

**Leadership and the College Presidency**

The research conducted on the topic of the college presidency has been framed, for the most part, within the theoretical perspectives described in the last section. For the purposes of this study the work done by Cohen and March (1974); Bensimon, Neumann, and Birnbaum (1989); and Bensimon (1990) will be reviewed. Thus it was not intended to be a comprehensive review of the literature. It was designed to show the evolutionary and revolutionary component in research if the assumptions of the researchers above are not permitted to limit and constrain a researcher's understanding of leadership.

Cohen and March (1974) in the book *Leadership and Ambiguity* outlined a research study on the role of college presidents. Their research was based upon four empirical studies of college presidents at forty-two colleges. Asking
the presidents how they would personally determine if they were successful or not as a college president, Cohen and March found that there was very little consensus among the presidents' responses. However, they discovered that the presidents' perceptions of a successful president could "fall into three broad categories: constituency-oriented items, institution building entrepreneurial items, and functional-administrative items" (1974, p. 45).

After completing their research, Cohen and March stated that their findings affirmed that there were four elements which played an important role in understanding the images and leadership behavior of college presidents:

First, the presidency is parochial ... [The presidents] reference groups are bound by region of the country, by size of the college, by type of college, and by wealth. Second, the presidency is honorific. The status of the president is apparently less dependent on the quality of his tenure than it is on the quality of his school. Colleges make presidents, not the reverse. Third, the presidency is conventional. The terms used to describe it are familiar constructs. They derive from shared beliefs, linked to available theories and ideologies of administration. Fourth, the presidency is heroic. Whatever terms are used, the role is seen as an important one. The president is the (one) who acts, or guides, or decides, or supports, the (one) who is - in some sense or other - responsible for the institution. (1974, p. 78-79)

Added to these four elements, the researchers concluded that: "the contribution of a college president may often be measured by his (her) capability for sustaining creative interaction of foolishness and rationality" (1974, p. 229).
Bensimon, Neumann, and Birnbaum in the monograph *Making Sense of Administrative Leadership* continued the discussion of leadership in the college presidency by contributing a synthesis of the theoretical literature on leadership and integrated that synthesis with what is known about higher education. Specifically they relate theories and models of leadership with organizational theories.

The theories of leadership are categorized by the authors as trait theories, power and influence theories, behavioral theories, contingency theories, cultural and symbolic theories, and cognitive theories. According to the researchers:

While trait, behavioral, and contingency theories describe for the most part leadership under conditions in which roles of leader and follower are clearly distinguished and assume clarity in organizational purpose, cultural and symbolic theories represent a significant departure from traditional approaches. Instead of viewing leadership as an objective act in which leaders influence the activities of followers through the display of specific traits, or power, or behaviors, cultural and symbolic theories view leadership as a subjective act in which leaders facilitate followers' commitment by constructing a reality that is congruent with followers' beliefs and that reflects desired ends. While cultural and symbolic theories view the leader as inventing reality for his followers, cognitive theories regard leaders as an invention of followers. (1989, p. 26)

Bensimon, Neumann and Birnbaum integrated these theories of leadership with a organizational typology suggested by Bolman and Deal (1984). This typology suggested
four different perspectives or frames from which to view an organization. They explained:

The structural frame emphasizes formal roles and relationships, the human resource frame focuses on the needs of people, the political frame considers the conflict over scarce resources, and the symbolic frame views organizations as cultures with shared values. (1989, p. 27)

In their analysis the authors acknowledged the complexity of the organizational structure of the college or university and that the difference between effective and ineffective leaders may well depend on the leader's ability to deal with those multiple realities.

The authors concluded that current research in leadership and organization does not reflect the complexity of the higher education enterprise nor does it reflect the concept of leadership arising from the group rather than being dependent on positional power. According to Bensimon, Neumann and Birnbaum a research agenda for higher education:

must recognize that leadership as is the case with most social constructs, is multidimensional and that its definition and interpretation will legitimately differ among different observers ... no consensus presently exists - or is even likely to - on a grand theory unifying theory of academic leadership. (1989, p. 80)

Bensimon provided concrete application of the suggestion above that different observers would provide different observations in her paper, The meaning of "Good Presidential Leadership": A Feminist Critique,
Reinterpretation and Reconstruction. Bensimon deconstructed a study done previously on good presidential leadership. In the original study the four frames of organization (political, bureaucratic, collegial and symbolic) were used as lenses to view the leadership style of thirty-two college presidents (twenty four men and eight women). In this reconstruction, Bensimon reanalyzed the data with a feminist lens. Specifically, she "re-sees" the data from the vantage point of two of the presidents (one male and one female) who had previously been identified as organizing their leadership through similar frames.

The results of the study indicated that the voice of the woman president had been suppressed by the utilization of a conceptual framework that was, in essence, androcentric. According to Bensimon, all four of the basic frames "derive from theories borne out of the studies of men" (p. 5). In reframing the concept of leadership, Bensimon employed the epistemology and ontology of feminist theory. Bensimon commented:

This time I did not filter their replies through the frames; rather I permit them to speak more naturally, in their own voices and thus, retaining their individual identities. (p. 4)

Through her reconstruction and reinterpretation Bensimon acknowledged the social construction of leadership and this fact necessitated that gender be taken into consideration.
When leadership is viewed as a social construction of reality the role of the leader is to structure the experience of others in ways that are meaningful. How presidents go about defining reality depends on how they experience the world: how they relate to others, what they consider important, how they interpret their role. (Bensimon, 1990 p. 8)

This paper made two important contributions to the theoretical understanding of leadership. Bensimon offered a picture of the college president that emphasized relationship, connectedness, and an ethic of care and responsibility. Leadership was seen as relational rather than the task of an individual. In addition to her contribution to leadership theory, the methodology of her reconstruction moved the manner of doing educational research to a different level. By giving voice to her female president Bensimon allowed the experience of women in the leadership to participate in the mainstream discourse on leadership. This experience of a woman college president not only raised questions about the efficacy of imposing models on women it also raised the question of imposing the models on male participants as well.

In the main, the research that has been done on the college presidency has been framed within an understanding of leadership and organization that is constrained by the assumptions and ideology described in the section on leadership theories. These assumptions imposed a definition of the construct of leadership and then proceeded to "find"
characteristics that were appropriate. The work done by Bensimon challenged researchers to reframe their understandings and to allow the understanding of leadership to emerge from the lives and experiences of those involved in higher education.

The voice of Bensimon's female college president added a new dimension in our conception of both leadership and organization. Previous research while seen as the definitive understanding of the college presidency has ignored gender. Bensimon brings to the conversation an understanding of leadership that is effected by context, culture and gender. Rather than seeing leadership as a static phenomenon that is "shaped by objective and independent variables" Bensimon brought the woman's voice into the discourse on leadership (1990, p. 7). According to Bensimon:

Leadership is not segmented - it is not how one behaves, or the way in which one does things, nor does it reside in unique attributes. ... Leadership represents the beliefs and values to which the individual subscribes. (1990, p. 8)

If we are to recognize this contribution to our understanding of leadership our research methodologies need to reflect leadership as a construct that is contextual and relational. This study acknowledges the contextual and relational aspect of the leadership of the participants and seeks to reframe the college presidency within that understanding.
The next chapter outlines my efforts to recognize this conceptualization. The methodological choices I made during the conduct of the study were influenced by my interaction with the literature reviewed in this chapter as well as my interpretation of what was absent. It was my aim to challenge the conventional understanding of leadership and organization by bringing the openly ideological voice of women religious who are college presidents into the discourse. I designed the study with that aim in mind.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between historical tradition and current context as it is instantiated in the college presidents. In order to understand the process by which the charism is manifested by these women, a methodology was required that permitted the construction of knowledge in an atmosphere "within which people can respond in a way that represents accurately and thoroughly their points of view about the world" (Patton, 1990, p. 24). The research design and methodology were selected to facilitate this understanding.

In this chapter the philosophical assumptions for the research methodology and the particular inquiry methods used to guide the study are supplied. In the first part a general description of the interpretive paradigm is given. The research methods and the analysis process are detailed in the second part. Included in this section is
the description of the setting and population; how the
data was collected; the role of the researcher; how data
analysis took place; and the establishing of
trustworthiness. The last section of the chapter
concludes with a discussion of the ethic and perceived
limits of the study.

Design Choice

There has been considerable controversy among
researchers about the nature and use of paradigms for
conducting research. A paradigm has been defined as: a
disciplinary matrix in which theorizing is conducted
(Popp, 1975); as such a paradigm provides the researcher
with a world view, a general perspective, a way of
organizing complexity and a set of basic assumptions
develop in response to historical and cultural
conditions. They represent constellations of theories,
questions, methods and commitments which share central
values and themes that give direction to scientific work
(Popkewitz, 1984). "Each model holds a radically
different view of the nature of reality, values a
different kind of knowledge, and promotes a different
set of standards" (Schwandt, 1988, p. 379). An essential
concern of mine, as I began this study, was to conduct
the study within a paradigm that recognized that the reality of the participants is subjectively constructed rather than objectively found (Lather, 1988).

This choice of a paradigm represented a distillation of what I thought about the world (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This world view which I possess, naturally has an impact on how I see and hear; how I perceive and interpret. Paradigms enable me to see the world in a certain perspective, but by that very fact paradigms are also constraining:

A paradigm is a world view, a general perspective, a way of breaking down the complexity of the real world. As such, paradigms tell what is important, legitimate and reasonable. Paradigms are also normative, telling the practitioner what to do without the necessity of long existential or epistemological consideration. But it is this aspect of paradigms that constitute both their strength and their weakness - their strength is that it makes action possible, their weakness is that the very need for action is hidden in the unquestioned assumption of the paradigm. (Patton, 1978, p. 203)

In order to examine the understanding of the participants in the study, I recognized that I would need to work within a paradigm that acknowledged the construction of reality by the participants in their context. Merriam stated:

... the world is not an objective out there but a function of personal interaction and perception. It is a highly subjective phenomenon in need of interpreting rather than measuring. Beliefs rather than facts form the basis of perception. Research
is exploratory, inductive and emphasizes process rather than ends. (1988, p. 17)

I also recognized that the knowledge that would be produced would be partial and conditioned in that it will reflect the ideas of only those persons involved in the study and my interpretation of that constructed knowledge. The interpretive or naturalistic paradigm and qualitative methodology allowed me to enter into the natural setting of each of the participants in an attempt to understand their perceptions in their own naturally occurring stages (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 1990).

This study is embedded in the interpretive paradigm of the social sciences. The goal of this paradigm is to develop an understanding of human events and actions, and to interpret what meaning can be made of human events and actions and interactions in their socially constructed world (Burrell & Morgan, 1979; Erickson, 1986; Morgan, 1983). The interpretive paradigm is based on the philosophical traditions of phenomenology and hermeneutics. Essentially its methodology centers on the phenomenological concern for how reality is constructed and experienced through the conscious acts of people and the hermeneutical concern for interpreting meaning in the lived experience as well as in the written text (VanMaenben, 1986).
In this interpretive inquiry the research design was an emergent one. Because I placed a high priority on interactions, it was not possible to control the situation and so the design was fluid. I wanted to utilize a design that allowed for a flexibility of method necessary to engage these women in a conversation around their leadership style; a conversation which required that I remain open to and responsive as new concepts emerged from my interaction with the participants. Emphasizing this point Patton noted:

... designs must be emergent rather than preordinate: because meaning is determined to such a great extent; because the existence of multiple realities constrains the development of a design based on only one (the investigator’s) construction; because what will be learned at the site is always dependent on interaction between investigator and context, and the interaction is not always fully predictable; and because the nature of mutual shapings cannot be known until they are witnessed. All of these factors underscore the indeterminacy under which the naturalistic inquirer functions; the design must therefore “be played by ear; it must unfold, cascade, roll, emerge. (Patton, 1990, p. 208-209)

The purpose of this study was not to provide a definitive explanation of leadership in Mercy colleges, but rather to grasp an understanding of these women in their situations at this particular time. This desire to
increase the understanding of how the interpretation of their historical context influenced the leadership style of these college presidents made the choice of qualitative methods appropriate for this study. The goal of my research was to acknowledge the multiple realities that merge to inform a presidents leadership style and to explore how these realities converge in the individual president's attempt to make meaning within her life. Patton expanded on this concept:

It is an effort to understand situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context and the interactions there. This understanding is an end in itself, so that it is not attempting to predict or control what may happen in the future necessarily to understand the nature of the setting - what it means for participants to be in that setting, what their lives are like, what's going on for them, what their meanings are, what the world looks like in that particular setting - and in the analysis to be able to communicate that faithfully to others who are interested in that setting. (Patton, 1985, p. 1)

The choice of qualitative methods offered me the tools to collaboratively explore with the participants the multifaceted aspects of their understanding of the Mercy charism and its impact on their leadership style. Because I was particularly struck by the absence of the woman's voice in the literature on leadership, I felt particularly drawn to methods that would permit the voices of the women in the study be given a prominent position. Through the use of the qualitative interview the values and beliefs of the five
women in the study and the inductive analysis of their words, the subjective reality of these college presidents could challenge the foregone conclusions proposed by the literature that is the result of research conducted utilizing the male perspective as its predominate focus.

This study then was embedded in the interpretive paradigm and utilized the qualitative methodology. The next section addresses the research design that flowed from my commitment to this world view and the methods which supported the purpose of my study.

Research Design

Population and Setting of the Study

My membership in the Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy and my involvement in a college sponsored by that community allowed me access to the five Sisters of Mercy who are currently presidents of community owned institutions of higher education. The choice of this sample was the result of my interest in the impact of charism on the enactment of educational leadership in colleges sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy. The sample size was limited to Sisters of Mercy who are presidents of baccalaureate institutions. This was done to allow for an in depth study as well as to concentrate on the
experiences of women whose commitment to the spirit of a religious congregation adds an additional component to their identities as educational leaders. My belief that the gender of the college president influences the manner in which they construct their understanding of leadership negated the possibility of including the seven men who are presidents of Mercy colleges in this study. The selection of leaders of baccalaureate institutions also provided a venue in which the atmosphere encouraged reflection on the philosophy of Mercy education and was not limited because of the constraints of more technical, two year institutions.

In addressing the question of sample size Patton stated:

There are no rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry. Sample size depends on what you want to know, the purpose of the inquiry, what’s at stake, what will be useful, what will have credibility, and what can be done with available time and resources (1990, p. 184).

This sample provided participants whose lives, commitments and institutional type would best assist me in exploring the place of Mercy charism in the practice of educational administration.

The Sisters of Mercy currently sponsor eighteen colleges within the United States where more than 35,000 students are now enrolled. Of these eighteen colleges five baccalaureate institutions are headed by members of the order, five are junior colleges headed by female
presidents and the remaining eight are baccalaureate institutions, five by male presidents. The five women religious who are currently presidents of the baccalaureate institutions were the participants for my study. The five colleges in question are located in Pennsylvania (2), New Jersey, Rhode Island, Vermont and New York.

The participants were:

1) Sister Lucille McKillop, R.S.M., Ph.D.

Sister Lucille has been president of Salve Regina University in Rhode Island for nineteen years. Previous to her tenure as President Sister Lucille taught Mathematics at Saint Xavier College in Chicago and served as chairperson for five years. Her academic credentials include a Bachelors, Masters and Ph.D. in Mathematics. Salve Regina was founded in 1947 as a college of arts and sciences. Originally founded exclusively for women, the college became coeducational in 1973. The college currently has an enrollment of 2,000 men and women. The college was granted University status in July, 1991.

2) Sister Grace Ann Geibel R.S.M., Ph.D.

Sister Grace Ann has been President of Carlow College in Pennsylvania for four years. Previous to her tenure as President, Sister Grace Ann served as Academic Dean
at Carlow and taught in the Music department. Her Academic credentials include a Bachelors, Masters and Ph.D. in Music. Carlow College was founded in 1929 as a liberal arts college primarily for women. In 1949 the college began admitting some male students to the day school but the percentage is very small. The total population of 1200 includes 520 full-time students and 680 part-time students.

3) Sister Janice Ryan, R.S.M., M.Ed.

Sister Janice has been president of Trinity College in Vermont for twelve years. Previous to her tenure as president Sister Janice taught at Trinity in the Special Education department. She also served as a legislative lobbyist for the Vermont Association for Retarded Citizens. Her academic credentials include a Bachelor degree in English and a Masters degree in special education. Trinity College was founded in 1925 as a liberal arts college for the education of women. The enrollment today is 1400, approximately 400 of those students are full-time.

4) Sister Isabelle Keiss R.S.M., Ph.D.

Sister Isabelle has been president of Gwynedd-Mercy College in Pennsylvania for twenty one years. Previous to her tenure as president she taught English at the secondary school level and served as chair of the
English department in a Catholic high school. Her academic credentials include a Bachelor, Masters and Ph.D. in English. Gwynedd-Mercy College was founded in 1948 as a junior college and was granted a charter as a four year coeducational institution of the arts and sciences in 1954. The enrollment is 1,900, approximately 700 of those students are full-time.

5) Sister Barbara A. Williams R.S.M., M.L.S., M.A.

Sister Barbara has been president of Georgian Court College in New Jersey for twelve years. Previous to her tenure as president Sister served as Academic Dean and Director of Library Services at Georgian Court. Her academic credentials include a Bachelors in English, a Masters in Library Science and a Masters in Theology. Georgian Court College was founded in 1908 as a liberal arts college for women. The enrollment is 2490, approximately 1100 of those students are full-time.

A meeting was held with these five women on June 3, 1991 to explain the purpose of the study and to seek their involvement. Each of the women religious agreed that she would participate in the study and allow me access to her campus. During the meeting the Sisters expressed interest in and excitement about the study. At that meeting, the presidents were asked to allow me to observe them on their campus and also to interview them
in regards to their understanding of their role as college presidents. Arrangements were made to spend time on each campus. I felt that this initial contact was essential so the participants would have input into the research project from the beginning. I wanted to involve them as soon as possible to encourage collaboration throughout the study. The results of this meeting were incorporated into a proposal for the study that was submitted to the Human Subjects Committee of Ohio State University. Approval for the study was granted to conduct the study.

Data Collection

Data collection began with a focus group held in conjunction with a meeting of all presidents of Mercy colleges. At this meeting the women religious who are presidents of four year institutions were asked to discuss their definitions of leadership. This conversation was audio taped and I took field notes. In addition to the data collected at this time a combination of techniques were used to obtain a broad range of data. These techniques included semi-structured interviews, observations, and analysis of documents written by each of the participants within the
past two years. Each of these techniques are described below.

**Interviews**

I interviewed each of the participants at her individual campus. The format of these interviews was semi-structured in that the interview protocol was developed using the information from the focus group. The interview protocol was used to guide the discussion but I remained open to the development of the interview as the participant and I engaged in a conversation around her understanding of presidential leadership in the context of Mercy colleges.

A limitation of this technique is that the participants responses are time and culture bound. Their views and perceptions, as well as their memories, could change over time. Because the participants controlled the tape recorder they could also eliminate any topic that they did not wish included. Areas of conflict or tension within the institution were often topics the presidents did not want included in the study. Several of the participants did avail themselves of this opportunity and therefore limited the data available for analysis. According to Patai:

From the enormous store of memories and possible responses the interviewee selects or simply finds available particular themes, incidents and
recollections which are then communicated in a particular way. (1988, p. 147)

This limitation made the on-going member checks within the design even more essential. Through this the participants were able to revisit the material and make any additions or corrections they chose.

The results of these interviews were transcribed and were coded and categorized using the method recommended in Strauss and Corbin's text Basics of Qualitative Research (1990). Through the use of the suggested "open coding, axial coding and selective coding" patterns and variations were identified and returned to the participant for their reactions.

I engaged in reflection concerning the interviews on site. These reflections were recorded along with other field notes to trace emerging patterns, methodological concerns and questions as well as my own reaction to the interviews. Through the use of this reflexive technique I charted my own thoughts concerning the emergence of theoretical constructs and any changes in my own knowledge and beliefs. This assisted me in remaining theoretically sensitive and open to the theory that emerged from the interaction of the data, the participants and myself. Theoretical sensitivity recognizes the personal experiences and qualities of the researcher. According to Strauss and Corbin:
Theoretical sensitivity refers to the attribute of having insight, the ability to give meaning to the data, the capacity to understand, and the capability to separate the pertinent from what isn't. (p. 42)

The reflexive journal allowed me to track the influence of my own experience, beliefs, and values as I analyzed the data.

This material assisted me in the final analysis of the data. As the interviews progressed these field notes revealed areas of concerns of the participants that needed to be probed through follow-up interviews and through an adjustment to the interview protocol.

Observations

Several days were spent at each site familiarizing myself with the context within which each of the participants function. I did this in an effort to ascertain the environment and culture that was unique to each of the five institutions. Field notes on both the observations and any informal conversations were taken. These field notes were analyzed on an on-going basis so that they could inform my participation in the interview. They were also analyzed for any patterns or common themes that developed.
Documents

Participants were asked to submit samples of documents to me that they had written within the last two years. While the participants determined the content of these samples, I was most interested in communication with the faculty, the board of directors, the student body and alumni. This material provided another insight into the understanding of the president of her role. I read and analyzed this material for patterns, themes and disconfirming facts that enlightened my analysis of the other data collected.

Role of the Researcher

I began this research in a privileged as well as tenuous position. As a Sister of Mercy and as a former administrator in a Mercy college, I was familiar with the culture of the institutions as well as the philosophy of the sponsoring religious order. I also found a lack of scholarly interest in the distinctive character and mission of colleges sponsored by congregations of women religious in my review of the available literature. As a student of higher education I read and studied theories that limited the understanding of presidential leadership to either
specific traits or behaviors. As a woman I investigated various aspects of the current research and found a lack of inclusion of the female experience. These facts influenced what I heard as I engaged in conversations with the participants. In my role as interpreter, it was important for me to track my own thought during this process so that I was aware of my own preconceived ideas and prejudices. Through the maintenance of a self reflexive journal I attempted to keep these concerns uppermost in my work.

I used the reflexive journal to track my thoughts and decision making processes as I began to develop codes and categories. Through this process I endeavored to recognize the values and prejudices that I brought to the analysis. Rather than denying the values I held as the researcher, I felt it was important to openly acknowledge and clarify them in the research process. In Mooney's words:

To be asked not to be influenced by my values is to be asked not to be influenced by my bonds of belonging or my tentacles of becoming. It is to ask the impossible, for what I am is involved in these. Values signify the inescapable necessity of man (sic) that he (sic) select some things from all other things for his (sic) appropriate use at each specific time and place ... The more sensitive I can be in investing myself consciously in realizing my values through my research activity, the more profoundly can I penetrate universality. The road to conquest of sentiment and superficial identification is not through the denial of sentiment and identification, but
through its ripening into conscious valuing. (cited in Pinar, 1975, p. 192-193)

The field notes contained in the journal provided a history to the work and permitted me to revisit decisions and rethink categories. In this way I acknowledged my involvement and influence in the process.

The participants were asked to participate in on-going member checks to ensure that their perceptions were accurately presented. I shared the result of the interviews with each president and requested any additions or deletions they cared to make. At that time they were also asked to comment on any patterns or themes they saw emerging as well as commenting on the initial patterns and themes that I had identified. At the completion of the analysis the same procedure was followed. A complete draft was mailed to the group in July, 1992. They were asked to read the material and indicate if the results reflected their experience. The purpose of this process was to maximize that the work I had completed reflected their perceptions of the position of president. Where there were differences in interpretation, those differences were noted in the presentation of the data.
Data Analysis

The process used to analyze the data was an inductive one. As suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985), the process began with the information gained from my interaction with the participants, as well as with the other materials gathered on site. The constant comparative method as described in Bogdan and Biklen's text, *Qualitative Research for Education* was employed in the analysis of the data. This method recommends that data analysis occur "in a pulsating fashion - first the interview, then analysis and theory development, another interview, and then more analysis ... until the research is completed" (1982, p. 68). My research included the additional step of returning the data and emergent theory to the participants so that the analysis of the material was a collaborative effort.

This process enabled the participants to interact with me as we endeavored to identify patterns and themes that served as the basis of a grounded theory of charism as it is instantiated in the lived experience of these administrators. Grounded theory refers to: the development of theories derived from empirical data of cultural description (Spradley, 1980); theory that follows from data rather than proceeding them (Lincoln & Guba, 1985); qualitative analysis that includes a number
of distinct characteristics such as making use of the constant comparison and coding paradigms to seek conceptual development and density (Strauss, 1987); theory derived from data (Glasser & Strauss, 1967). My aim was to build grounded theory that spoke to the lived reality of the presidents and was credible to them.

This analytic procedure also allowed my own theoretical assumptions to be reflected and changed with constant exposure to the data. The words of the five presidents and my reflection on them, changed my understanding of the construct of leadership. The continuous engagement with the data forced me to question assumptions and address the biases that I brought to the study.

The interview data, field notes, and document analysis were coded and categories developed. The process of coding and categorizing was based on the model suggested by Strauss and Corbin's (1990) design for developing grounded theory. I initially read the data for emerging themes and categories. These categories were studied to determine patterns and themes that emerged within the individual category. Eight major categories were identified and then those categories were studied to make explicit the conditions that formed the category. These common themes and patterns, as well as disconfirming facts were presented to the
participants to solicit their opinions of my interpretation. The resulting interpretation was a collaborative effort between the five participants and myself.

From this interaction with the data and the insights of the participants emerged the metaphor of the college president as poet, prophet and provisioner. Next, I revisited the data to delineate the characteristics of those three constructs that had emerged within my mind. This process resulted in chapter four of the dissertation which tells the collective story of the day in the life of a Mercy college president and chapter five in which I share my interpretation of the president as poet, prophet, and provisioner.

The data presentation is both a reflection of this process and an extension of it. I sought to recreate the dynamic process I experienced during data analysis by presenting the data in a manner in which the reader could hear the words and sense the meaning of the participants.

Eisner's artistic approach to data analysis was particularly helpful during this aspect of the analysis. He stated:
What one seeks is not the creation of a code that abides to publicly codified rules, but the creation of an evocative form whose meaning is embedded in the shape of what is expressed. (Eisner, 1981, p. 6)

The process of data analysis continued as I attempted to express the results of our interpretation. The data presentation in this study is, in reality, a continuation of the data analysis as the readers are invited to involve themselves vicariously in the process.

The next section addresses the question of validity in qualitative research and its impact on the creation and design of this particular research study.

Validity Issues

The validity question in qualitative research "pertains to the extent that the method investigates what it is intended to investigate" (Kvale, 1989, p. 74). The forms of validity that are applicable in naturalistic research will reflect the purpose of the research, as well as the methods used to generate theory. Rather than attempting to "prove" external validity, as understood in the dominant paradigm, I attempted to incorporate within the design aspects that maximized the readers ability to find my research findings trustworthy. Trustworthiness refers to the
researchers ability to persuade the reader that "the findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to, worthy of taking into account of" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 290).

In attempting to apply criteria that were meaningful within a naturalistic inquiry I relied on the model suggested by Lincoln and Guba in *Naturalistic Inquiry* (1985) and expanded by Lather in the article Research as Praxis (1986).

The first criteria was prolonged engagement. By this was meant the substantial involvement at the site of inquiry. The research attempts to build the trust necessary to "uncover constructions, and to facilitate immersing oneself in and understanding the context's culture" (Lincoln and Guba, 1989, p. 237). The amount of time is determined by the researcher and reflects the interaction necessary to become comfortable with the context. My own attempt at establishing prolonged engagement can be evaluated on two levels. I have been a member of the sponsoring religious order for twenty five years and was an administrator in one of the colleges for five years. These experiences permitted an involvement with the culture and context of the institutions and people involved with the study. The research design that I planned also allowed me to
interact with the participants as a group and as individuals during the focus groups, campus visits and personal interviews. While this exposure may not be seen as extensive it did give me sufficient opportunity to immerse myself in the culture and provided sufficient opportunity to interact with the participants as we explored the concepts of charism and leadership.

The second criteria is that of progressive subjectivity. The use of the reflexive journal allowed me to monitor my own developing constructs and the development of theory as the research project progressed. The use of the journal served as a lens through which I looked back to the past and toward the future as my ideas and those of the participants merged to form theory that spoke to the reality of our collaboration.

Peer debriefing was also used as a technique for providing an external check on the inquiry process. This technique offered me the opportunity to expose myself to probing questions (Guba, 1981). I was cognizant of the importance of regularly detaching myself from my participants. Peer debriefing functioned as a mechanism to keep me self-reflective through exposure to searching questions by a protagonist who was capable of playing the role of "devil's advocate" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).
The choice of a peer debriefer was important, as I strove to maintain rigorous self awareness. According to Lincoln and Guba:

The peer debriefer should be neither junior - lest his or her inputs are disregarded - nor senior - lest his or her inputs be considered mandates, or lest the inquirer hold back for fear of being judged incompetent. The debriefer should not be someone in an authority relationship to the inquirer. The debriefer should be someone prepared to take the role seriously, playing devil's advocate even when it becomes apparent that to do so produces pain for the inquirer. (1985, p. 309)

I asked a colleague and friend and in the college of education to serve as the peer debriefer for the study. While she was not in the same department as I, she was familiar with Catholic colleges and women religious. Her interaction with myself and the data proved to be both challenging and stimulating. We met on an ongoing basis for the length of the study and she asked probing questions and provided the emotional support that was needed. According to Lincoln and Guba the use of a debriefer "is an effective way of shoring up credibility, providing methodological guidance and serving as a cathartic outlet" (1985, p. 243). The peer debriefer in this study helped me to be both honest and sane with her insightful comments and suggestions.

The third criteria is that of triangulation of data sources, methods and theoretical schemes. Information for this study was gleaned from the words of the
participants, the context of the institutions and the written material provided by the respondents.
Participant observation, interviews, and document analysis served as methods in the study to discover patterns and themes, as well as, disconfirming information. The theoretical schemes informing my study encompassed the areas of charism and educational leadership. The combination of these approaches provided a view that enhanced my understanding of the charism of Mercy as experienced in educational leadership as well as broaden my understanding of the complexity of the commitments of a college president.

The fourth criteria, face validity, is incorporated in the on-going involvement of the participants in the research design and the analysis of the data. Throughout the research project, efforts were made to encourage the participants to be actively involved in the design and result of the study. The initial focus group was suggested so that the definition of the problem as well as the research design could be finalized with the input of the respondents. Data, emerging patterns, and themes were shared with the participants throughout the study so that the results reflected accurately their perceptions and thoughts. Member checks such as those described above, served to place the participants in a position of central importance in the creation of
knowledge. These ongoing member checks enabled the participants to hear their voice and see their lives reflected in the theory as it emerged from the interaction of their efforts and mine to achieve a deeper understanding of our topic.

The fifth criteria, catalytic validity refers to the degree that the participants are moved to change because of their experience in the research process. The impact of their participation can only be judged in retrospect, but the research design was created to encourage self reflection on the part of the participants and to enable them to rethink their definition of leadership as they were socialized to understand it. The results of this study will also be shared with the leadership team of the Sisters of Mercy in order to encourage the community's collective reflection on the construction of the charism by administrators in community sponsored institutions. This educative aspect of the research process was a motivating factor as the design unfolded.

The sixth criteria, transferability, refers to the ability of the reader to make inferences which may apply to his or her own context or situation (Guba and Lincoln, 1989, p. 224). The researcher provides the reader with "thick description" (Geertz, 1973) and then the reader makes the decision concerning the
applicability to their context. Thick description enables the reader to enter into the context being researched and to glimpse at the reality of the participants. The goal of my presentation was to allow the reader to become a vicarious participant in the interaction between the participants and myself. Through the use of the participants own words and our collaboratively developed theory I hope to continue our dialog with whomever the research is shared.

I chose the format of the data presentation with this goal in mind. Through story telling I hoped to engage the reader in the lives of the presidents and to encourage the development of new insights from their own perspective. Ian Mitroff described this effort:

The best stories are those which stir people's minds, hearts and souls and by doing so give them new insights into themselves, their problems, and their human condition. The challenge is to develop a human science that more fully serves this aim. The question is not 'Is storytelling science' but 'can science learn to tell good stories?' (cited in Reason and Hawkins, 1988, p. 83)

It is my hope that through this break in form I can capture the imagination of the reader and facilitate the transferability of the theory developed with the participants in the study to the broader field of higher education. As the reader interacts with the material it was my hope that he/she would they bring his/her own
context and situation into dialog with the data presented in the study.

The last section in this chapter will address the ethics of qualitative research and the limitations of this study.

**Ethics**

The ethics of qualitative research were of primary importance as I conducted this study. According to Louis Smith:

> Ethics has to do with how one treats those individuals with whom one interacts and is involved and how the relationships formed may depart from some conception of the ideal. At a common sense level, caring, fairness, openness, and truth seem to be the important values undergirding the relationships and the activity of inquiring. (1990, p. 260)

These characteristics of caring, fairness, openness, and truth were integral to the design and implementation of my study. Ethical issues of particular concern in this study were:

1) PARTICIPANTS

   A) Involvement: All of the participants were asked to voluntarily participate in the study. During the focus group in June, 1991 I gave a detailed explanation of the purpose of the study, the time commitment required, and possible uses of the completed study. During this meeting each person
was given time to ask clarifying questions and to express any concerns about the study. In addition, I contacted each person individually prior to the initial interview, reinforcing the description given at the focus group and again requesting their voluntary participation.

B) Audio taping: Before each person was interviewed I asked permission to audio tape the conversation. The participants were told that if, at any time, they did not wish the contents of our conversation recorded, the machine would be turned off. Several of the presidents did avail themselves of this option. The participants were told how the interviews would be used in the dissertation. They were also informed that they would see any reproduction of their words in the document before the final draft. I assured them that I would be the only person to listen or read their transcriptions unless they gave their permission.

2) DATA

Ownership and control of the data was a difficult topic in this study. I was aware throughout the study that while I sought the reactions of the participants to the emerging data, the possibility of disagreement over interpretation was possible. My decisions in this regard were governed by the suggestion of Lincoln and Guba (1985) in which they recommended negotiated outcomes. At any point during the study that discrepancies arose between my interpretation and that of a participant, this was noted.
I tried to be diligent in monitoring my actions as I dealt with the participants. I felt that the parts of the design which involved the participants in the design and analysis of the data facilitated a study that was conducted with integrity.

**Limits of the Study**

There are several limitations to this study. They are summarized as follows:

1) The fact that the sample size was small and composed entirely of Sisters of Mercy could limit the transferability of the results.

2) The fact that only the presidents of the institutions were interviewed limits the results to the espoused theory of the participants. The results might be very different if other constituencies on the campuses were interviewed.

3) Even though I do not believe that objectivity is a realistic goal in research, some question might be raised concerning my membership in the congregation of the Sisters of Mercy. Were there areas missed because I was involved in the research and an active member of the community?

4) Since I was so explicit in the description of the purpose of the study the participants may have been
pre disposed to include the charism of Catherine McAuley in their reflections on their leadership style.

**Summary**

In this chapter I explained the methodology which directed the conceptualization and implementation of the study. I also discussed the methods that were used to gather, analyze and report the data. I explicated for the reader the efforts I exerted to ensure that the results were regarded as trustworthy.

The following chapter presents the results of our labor. In chapter four, I represent the words of the participants in a collective story detailing a hypothetical day on the life of a college president. In chapter five, I continue the presentation of the data utilizing the metaphor of poet, prophet, and provisioner.
CHAPTER IV

A DAY IN SEARCH OF MEANING

Your silence today is a pond where drowned things live
I want to see raised dripping and brought into the sun.
It is not my own face I see there, but other faces,
even your face at another age.
Whatever's lost there is needed by both of us -
a watch of old gold, a water-blurred fever chart,
a key .... Even the silt and the pebbles of the bottom
deserve their glint of recognition. I fear this silence,
this inarticulate life. I'm waiting
for a wind that will gently open this sheeted water
for once, and show me what I can do
for you, who have often made the unnameable
nameable for others, even for me.
(Adrienne Rich, 1978, p. 29)

The words of this poem were unearthed as I struggled
for the perfect phrase, the perfect beginning for the
presentation of my data. I was captured by the depth of
feeling that these words express. Initially I saw this
poem as an expression of the conversations I had with the
participants in the study. As I engaged the data and
reflected on my experience during the study, I realized
that these words were also a reflection of my emotions,
my confusions as I interpreted the words of the five
college presidents in the light of my experience as a

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graduate student, a female administrator, and a Sister of Mercy. This inarticulate life that Rich so passionately describes was not some abstract entity. It was my life. It was the life of the women I interviewed. It was the life of all women leaders who have been cast in the literature as shadows of the male administrator, the male leader.

I decided that my expression of the life experiences shared with me by the participants in my study would be represented in such a way that their words, their experiences, their values, and beliefs would be given voice. I was convinced that by representing what I heard in a manner that validated their experience I would in some way validate my own experience and that of other women leaders. I sought to find myself and my leadership within the words and activities of the women in the study. The construction of a collective day in the life provided me with that opportunity.

This chapter is a story. A story that tells of the experiences of the five women in my study. The day itself was lived in my imagination but the substance of the story came from the instances the women related in response to the question "Could you tell me an instance when you felt the charism alive in your actions?" I listened and shared vicariously in the experience of being a college president in an institution sponsored by
the Sisters of Mercy. I invite the reader to do the same. The text of this story provides a context within which we can hear the reality of everyday life as experienced by these women.

I needed to write this story. Not because of the great things that I heard or to extoll the accomplishments of the individual women. I needed to write this story because I had to hear it. I felt compelled by the data to allow the voices of my participants to tell their own story. The silence of women college presidents must be ended. The contribution of these presidents has been muted within a field that subsumes what women do under the mantle of all college presidents. This story speaks for itself. Something different is happening here than what the literature tells us about the functioning of college presidents. I've experienced that difference in my own life and now I heard it in the words of the women in the study.

This is not a story about an individual or even five individuals. It is a representation of a dynamic I heard as the presidents spoke of their leadership styles. The conflicts, tensions, hopes, and dreams formed a collective story within my mind as I sorted and analyzed their words. These women frame their understanding of leadership within their communities - both religious and educational. I chose to present their thoughts in a
collective story in order to emphasize the relational and contextual aspects of their understanding of leadership.

**A Day like Many Other Days**

Mornings have always been my favorite time on campus. The air was fresh with the promise of early spring as I walked across campus to the administration building. I've been president at Mercy College for ten years and I am still in awe of the physical beauty of the campus. The buds on the trees greeted me as I approached the door of McAuley Center. There was a sense of peace as I entered the building to begin another day.

The corridor was bustling as the staff prepared for the onslaught of the first day of the spring quarter. As I passed the business office the secretaries greet me. I was struck by the spirit of the office in comparison to that of just a few years ago. When I first arrived on campus I was concerned about the attitude of some of the staff. The close proximity of my office to theirs, allowed me to hear some of the interactions of the staff and the students as the students tried to maneuver through the maze of forms, fees, and frustrations that accompany the privilege of higher education. Caustic comments, impatient questions, and confusing answers often greeted the hapless student who turned to the staff
for help. I realized that I couldn't legislate a true change in attitude, so early one morning I simply left a little card on each of the staff member's desk... "The student isn't an interruption to our work. They are the reason for it!" The attitude change had been gradual but eventually an atmosphere of helpfulness and concern replaced the formidable one.

I smiled as I entered my office. My secretary greeted me with a pleasant "hello" and a pile of letters to be signed, phone calls to be returned and a reminder that I was due at the Gallic Society in thirty minutes. I knew it was going to be one of those days where I would be pulled in a thousand different directions! I gathered up the materials for my talk and hurried back out to the parking lot.

The Gallic Society was a local group who had invited me to speak on higher education. Even though time is always a problem, I feel it is important to get the name of our college and our mission before the general public. Therefore, I accepted as many of these invitations as I could. The group was very receptive. In speaking of our college I found myself speaking of Catherine McAuley and her dream for education. I think she would be pleased with our colleges. I stressed her desire to alleviate the pain and misery of the people of her time especially the oppression of poor women. We have expressions of that in
our day also. Not so much misery in the sense of penal laws or cholera, but in the confusion that comes about when you aren't as educated, as free as you can be.

At the Gallic Society I shared a project that the college community had recently begun in the hill district. We call it the "Bridge of Hope." The hill district was the largest low income neighborhood in the city. This program was designed to be community based and respond to the needs of the poor women in the area. We founded Hill House and developed a program that provided the support and nurturance these women needed in order to take advantage of educational opportunities and lift themselves out of poverty with our help. There were sixty five women enrolled in the program so far and it was still in development. The college community is really committed to the program. It is a challenge because financially we carry the program, and the financial burden caused the community to make difficult choices about other expenditures. So it was hard, but I think that the commitment to continuing the program is indicative of the characteristics of the Mercy charism. It is what we are about!

I was pleased with the response of the group. I hurried to the car grasping several business cards from people who wanted to help. "Call me if I can do anything, Sister" echoed as I exited the room. I wondered if they
realized how dangerous it was to say that to a Sister of Mercy. One of our community goals is to connect the rich with the poor. Those business cards would soon be in the hands of the woman coordinating the project. We would be able to help more women through the generosity of the members of the Gallic Society. Our "Bridge of Hope" was under construction.

I pulled into the parking lot and was stopped by several student government members as I tried to navigate toward the door. They wanted to have a picnic for the faculty and staff to celebrate the end of the year and express their appreciation. I told them I thought it was a wonderful idea, but they really needed to speak to the Dean of Students. I encouraged them to pursue the idea with her. I try very hard to keep decisions at the level at which they should be made. This mind does not have to make all the decisions on campus. I really do believe in the concept of subsidiarity.

As an administrator I believe that you have to bring on board people who are highly competent and then let them do their jobs. We need to involve in our ministry people who are skilled and creative if we are going to bring together the art of Mercy education. If we are going to succeed in enabling others, being compassionate, and personalizing the Mercy charism, then we need to empower those who join us in our ministries.
I arrived back in the office with an hour to do some paperwork before my next meeting. The mail was piled high in the middle of my desk so I dealt with that first. I had no idea what a the magnitude of correspondence that came with this job. As I sorted the pile, I came across a note from one of the students. It was a short note with a copy of his grade sheet but the contents said volumes to me. I flashed back to last summer when I first met Joe. Our first encounter had been through the mail. Joe wrote to me from prison where he had spent five years for possession and sale of drugs. Prior to those five years he had been using drugs for five years, so a ten year gap occurs in his life history. He had been in three different colleges prior to that. Now here he was in his thirties with nothing. He was being released from jail and needed a job, an education and a place to live so that he could try to get his life together. He had learned some library skills in jail. Could Mercy College help him? The Director of the Library, Vice President for finance and I talked about it and came up with a possible solution. He could work in the library, live in the apartment we had reserved for older male students, and take some courses that would count toward degree completion. It was something that was possible here with a little bit of creativity. There was no undue financial strain on us; he was working, paying room and board out
of his earnings and taking courses that would move him toward a degree. Together we were able to make that happen. The grade report in front of me told me that the effort was worth it. In his first semester he had taken two courses and earned an A and a B. Every once in a while you have the feeling that you can make a difference in somebody's life. I quickly jotted a note to the Librarian and Vice President for Finance to share the good news. I continued to open the rest of the mail with renewed spirit.

I moved on to my next meeting with only a few minutes to spare for lunch. The cafeteria was bustling with faculty, students, and staff. I noticed that we had a few extra visitors to liven up the place. The elementary schools in the area were closed for an in-service day so several of the faculty, staff, and students had their children with them for the day. I said "hello" to a few of the children I recognized as I went through the line. Some of these children had visited the campus since they were infants and had become part of the family.

I joined a table at which several faculty members were discussing a project on which they were working at the time. The conversation was lively and intellectually challenging. I found this exchange invigorating. The academic in me responded to the world of ideas as the faculty shared some of their research interests. I felt
energized as I gathered up my tray and headed toward the door. Several young women on the basketball team stopped me to discuss the upcoming game with a local rival. I assured them that I would be there to cheer them on as they defended their title. It was a building year so they needed all the encouragement they could get.

I left the cafeteria and headed for Smith Hall where Dick Young, Vice President for Administration, was meeting with the housekeeping and maintenance staff. Dick and I try to meet with them once a month. I think it is important for them to hear how grateful I am for all they do for the college. I try to notice things like the new lines the maintenance staff had painted, or the new bushes that the gardening staff had placed at the entrance, little things like that. I try to impress on them how important they are to what happens here. I consistently tell them that they are teachers too. The director of admissions told me a story about a housekeeper who was giving a tour of the residence hall to a prospective student and her family. She brought them through the building and showed them different rooms. The family commented on how nice the rooms were and how orderly students kept them. The housekeeper said "we have wonderful women here and they should be! After all, that is the why we are here. We are all teachers. We try to teach them to be the best they can be." There really is
an ownership about what happens in the institution. I think an important part of the presidency is empowering people, building up people. You can read that in what Catherine McAuley wrote. Her idea was to build up people. She took them off the street and helped them to realize their capabilities. All aspects of the campus contribute to the educational mission. Through our encouragement and recognition, the members of the staff are animated to make their contribution. It is the way people treat each other that makes the difference.

The meeting ended and I stayed for a while to chat with some of the people. I was not looking forward to my next meeting. The faculty was meeting and there was a certain amount of tension concerning the gathering. We have been having a problem with the cross registration of men in our day division. Historically, men registered in the evening division had been permitted to take day classes only on a limited basis. In recent semesters with changes in administrative personnel and department chairpersons, men had enrolled in classes whenever they wanted.

At the beginning of this semester the academic dean and I realized that there were one hundred and twenty men enrolled in day division courses. The academic dean announced at a meeting of the department chairs that the practice had to be curtailed because our mission
specifically states our special concern for women. The decision had been made that in order to protect that mission the original restrictions would be applied to men enrolled in the evening division. Word of the decision to limit the number of men in the day school got out to the faculty and the tensions erupted. People did not really understand what was happening. Some of the faculty interpreted the decision as an arbitrary one that had no educational or historical foundation.

We recognized that the difficulties had to be addressed. I made arrangements for a consultant to facilitate the faculty meeting at which time the problem could be discussed in light of the mission of the college. Through the give and take of a healthy discussion we agreed to work toward a compromise policy to ensure the mission and provide flexibility for students. Despite my apprehension, the meeting went very well. I spoke to a new member of the faculty as we were leaving the meeting and she said "I want you to know that in all my years at my former institution we never had any exchange like that." She was impressed that the group was willing to talk and try to work things out. People sincerely listened and respected what others were saying without adopting adversarial positions. Her comments were reassuring. There were painful moments. There were no two
ways about it. But, I think, as a result, we will work our way through it together.

I took the long way back to the office, mentally preparing myself for the last meeting of the day. The budget and planning committee was meeting to present the results of their efforts over the last two months. The process had certainly been challenging and time consuming for all concerned. I do feel though that it is essential. In my mind the president has to articulate the vision and mission of the college, but at the same time there is no evidence that a major change will occur because one person, or government, or church, or president has this vision. The vision comes from the people within the institution. I often think of Ghandi who said, "I have to go ... there go my people." I entered the room for the meeting eager to find out where the people will lead us.

The task of the group was to revise the strategic plan for the years 1993 to 1998. I worked through the four vice presidents who were asked to go to their unit directors and each department chair and have them recommend additions or deletions to the strategic plan. I was not involved in that process at all. They had a couple of months to develop their plan and today we were having the meeting where it would all comes together. The results were positively exhilarating.

The four faculty members, two students, and the four vice presidents presented their products to the executive
assistant who compiled the report so that it reflected the input of all the divisions of the college. The meeting today convened to review the results of that compilation. We discussed it as a group, and suggested revisions. The four vice presidents will incorporate those revisions into a final report. My task in the process, in addition to being a part of the discussion, will be to take the final report and present it to the Board of Trustees. I will lay out a prism through which to look at these goals — where we will be in 1998 in relation to the technologies, the demographics, the values and global perspective. There was a sense of accomplishment as the meeting adjourned. The collaborative effort had produced a document that would guide the college's efforts for the next five years. The process was empowering and the members of the committee left with a sense that we had contributed to the future of the institution.

I left the meeting and phoned my secretary to check on some projects that she had been working on during the day. The sun was setting as I walked through the building. I was exhausted and the day wasn't over yet! I passed the chapel and thought about going in for a few minutes, just to collect my wits. I realized that if I sat in chapel I would go sound asleep, so I decided to go into the cafeteria to talk to some of the students. I
don't get a chance to do that as much as I would like. A group of students greeted me as I sat down at one of the tables. I knew some of the students fairly well and others at the table I hadn't even met. One of the students asked how I was and I told her I was so tired that it was a choice of going to chapel and falling asleep or coming in to visit with them to stay awake. I told them I didn't want to hear any problems; I wanted to hear the best news in their lives. We had a very lively conversation that went from the latest gossip in the residence hall to a provocative discussion about the feminine face of God. The energy at the table rejuvenated my spirit. I appreciate the fact that I can go in at anytime and the students can be comfortable. They're not all at the same level of comfort, but we were able to have a conversation and I got a sense of what was happening in their lives. I wanted them to know that I care about who they are and what they are doing.

I moved on to the next item on my agenda. The drama club was having a play to commemorate the twenty fifth anniversary of the director and I was in the production. I couldn't resist the invitation to perform. Another day ended as I grabbed my script and hurried off to rehearsal. There is always time for fun in the life of a Mercy College president!
Conclusion

Public speaker, thespian, administrator, educator, colleague, and friend are all part of the persona of these Mercy College presidents. These characteristics are not seen as separate entities by the participants but rather integrated aspects of who they are as women, as Sisters of Mercy, and as presidents. The next chapter discusses the themes and patterns I heard as I listened to these women. These patterns and themes coalesced into an understanding of leadership that defied categorization within the "definitive" theories of leadership. The metaphor of poet, prophet, and provisioner emerged in my mind as I engaged the material. The words of the participants spoke to me of a process not a product; of relationship and integration not traits and skills; of a unity of being not an isolation of position. The metaphor that was constructed in my mind as I analyzed the data reflects not individual characteristics but rather the expression of an understanding of leadership that is multidimensional and multi-faceted. The literary device of metaphor allowed me as a writer to represent the multidimensional understanding of leadership as expressed by the participants in the study. Through the use of this technique I hope to "lay claim to a science that is aesthetic, moral, ethical, moving, rich and metaphorical
as well as avant garde, transgressing, and multi vocal” (Richardson, 1988, p. 202).
CHAPTER V

THE PRESIDENT AS POET, PROPHET AND PROVISIONER

A researcher's and the participants' involvement in a research project is a creative process in which each is changed. My involvement with the five women in my study has changed me and my understanding of leadership. The act of listening both with my heart and with my mind produced within me an understanding of leadership that was rich, multi-faceted, and multi-dimensional. The words of these women have painted a deep, vibrant, and living picture in my mind. The shapes and contours of this picture were sketched within the lives and experiences of women religious who have chosen to live their ideals and beliefs within the hallowed halls of academe. Colleges sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy serve as the background for this portrait of educational leadership.

My mind's eye saw and my heart's ear heard the stories of these women as they strove to instantiate the vision of Catherine McAuley in their practice of educational
leadership. Theory and practice joined to form a collage of pastel dreams, vibrant hues of revolution and stark tones of reality. This collage of dreams, revolution, and reality challenges students of leadership to deconstruct perceptions that limit college leadership to charismatic traits or managerial skills, and to re-draft definitions, and rethink models.

These presidents, these women, these Sisters of Mercy took me beyond an intellectual analysis of the presidency into a world that both recognized and valued the paradoxes and complexities of their roles. The soul of a poet, the spirit of a prophet, and the mind of a provisioner emerged not as individual characteristics or traits but rather in an integrated fashion as they painted a portrait of a college president.

This metaphoric image of the college president as poet, prophet, and provisioner became concrete in my mind as I heard the words of these women - not filtered through the androcentric theories of leadership - not translated from the male experience and then applied to themselves but rather as I heard women's words applied to female experience. These images created within me an awareness that this was a new reality. A reality that came from the perspective of women college presidents and which shattered the images and symbols and metaphors that have
conceptualized leadership and the presidency. My interpretation of this new conceptualization of the president as poet, prophet and provisioner takes on significance as the invisibility of the women leaders comes to light in the voices of the five college presidents.

**The President as Poet**

There is a delicacy about poetry. There is an artistry in the poet through which the power of language releases the connections, the relationships that allow us to "hear and see our words in new dimensions" (Rich, 1979, p. 248). It is a gentle creation that transforms reality and takes the reader beyond the ordinary and names a world of vision and hope (Cooper, 1984; Keyes, 1986). The poet brings to life the possibilities. "Poems are like dreams: in them you put what you don't know you know" (Rich, 1979, p. 40). Through the poet's words and images we are invited into a realm that holds, with tenderness, the emotions, feelings, and values of the human experience. Through the insights of the poet, an atmosphere is created in which a new understanding of those feelings, emotions, and values is nurtured and respected. The poet calls forth, from the reader, a new consciousness, a new reality in which we are freed to think in new ways, dream new dreams. The poet and the reader, the president and her colleagues, through passionate speaking
and listening co-create a space in which the poetry of lived experience is given form and texture.

The president, then, is a poet. Not in the tradition of rhyme and meter but rather in the tradition of Adrienne Rich in whose poetry we find:

... no mere will to mastery,
only care for the many lived, unending
forms in which she finds herself.

I have cast my lot with those
who age after age, perversely;

with no extraordinary power,
reconstitute the world. (Cited in Cooper, 1984, p. 27)

The poetry of these women in the study emanates from their understanding of themselves as persons involved in a process that entails a connection and a relationship with those around them. The presidency, for them, is an opportunity to make bridges, forge relationships, and establish connections.

Through their understanding of their commitments as presidents, Sisters of Mercy, and women, the participants strive to form a unified whole from which they are able to free their own potential, as well as, the potentialities of others. There was a validation of their personal experiences as they function in the public domain. Feelings and emotions joined with knowledge and reality to create a tension that infused their understanding of educational
leadership. They administer colleges with their hearts and with their heads. They would be quick to mention that one may often overshadow the other, but the desire to balance the two was apparent to me as I listened to their words.

These poet presidents have cast their lots with the people of their institutions in order to reconstitute the world through Mercy education. They have joined in solidarity with their colleagues to accomplish this goal. Through this collaboration, the rhyme and rhythm of the vision and mission of the institutions is actualized. The words of the presidents show a desire to model this collaboration and reveal the power of this connectedness.

During our conversations there was an almost tangible sense of the power that words had to constrain the thoughts that the women sought to verbalize. Just as poetic license frees the author to reframe accepted definitions in order to express their new understanding of a concept, experience, or emotion, the women in this study struggled with the a desire to express their experiences and yet seemed to be without the language that would facilitate that expression. Their language was determined by their experiences rather than allowing their experiences to be determined by language. There was a respect for the power of language to limit and define. As they reflected on their leadership style the words they chose were words that came from their lived experience, rather than from formula definitions out
of textbooks on leadership. Sister Janice expressed this
notion in her effort to define the term leadership.

I'll just do it with what comes immediately to my
mind when you asked the question. I had previously
thought when you introduced the topic about
everything we've read over the years in the
textbooks and I just dismissed that. So I'll sort
of image down. When I think of leadership I think
of an art and I think of the art of leading. I
think of Ghandi who says 'I have to go ... there
go my people.' I think of leader/servant. Those
spring to mind first and foremost, and then I
think of community. I think of family and I also
think of the bottom line! I think of directing
while in community.

Just as the poetry of Adrienne Rich evolved from her hopes
and dreams for herself and other women the word leadership
took on nuances and dimensions that incorporated the visions
and hopes these women have for their institutions. It is not
a static concept but rather one that has evolved from an
integration of their past with the present, as well as,
their dreams for the future. Their vocabulary has been
influenced by who they are as well as who and what they have
encountered in their lives. Each of the women related
instances in her life that assisted her in developing her
leadership style.

Sister Lucille spoke of the development of her
philosophy of education through her encounter with minority
students who were able to succeed because of the faith the
math faculty had in them. Sister Barbara acknowledged her
position as advocate for special education students and
spoke of the impact of her exposure to the political system as a lobbyist had on her understanding of leadership. Sister Grace Ann attributed the opportunity to do creative work with other people as academic dean as the reason for her willingness to undertake the job of president. Sister Isabelle saw her experience as a volunteer in a refugee camp as influencing the way she does educational leadership. Sister Barbara gained insight into the importance of collegiality and subsidiarity through the historical changes that occurred in the church and in her community after Vatican II. Their life experiences changed these women and they recognized the impact of these changes on their style of leadership. In discussing the research project Sister Isabelle reflected on the importance of these experiences had on the presidents' understanding and enactment of their leadership.

You are going to find Sisters of Mercy whose lives have given them experiences which help them to perceive leadership differently. It just strikes me that even my own experience in a refugee camp has made me more tuned into the need to provide education for refugees.

In addition to their own life experiences these women gained insight and understanding about their leadership style through reflection on the life experiences of Catherine McAuley, foundress of the Sisters of Mercy. In reflecting on the characteristics necessary for an administrator of a Mercy college Sister Isabelle stated:
I would like to see the person taking the president's role recognize our own growing understanding of the collaborative style of leadership which I think Catherine McAuley showed us some one hundred and sixty years ago, even though as the century evolved we moved far away from it.

Sister Lucille reiterated this influence as she broadened the definition to include the process of enabling others "to be their best selves." As she examined her own leadership style she acknowledged the influence of Catherine McAuley. She commented:

I was always impressed how, in the very beginning, Mother McAuley started out with very young people and sent them all over ... calling forth people's leadership. She saw their talents and had faith in them. They used those talents and look where we are now. She was an enabler. So it seems to me that one of her talents was to facilitate the good works of other people and I think that is what women do. I think it is one of the things we in religious communities do best.

The legacy of Catherine McAuley served as a marker by which the presidents made decisions and discerned direction. They seem to have internalized the story of Catherine McAuley and the early days of the Mercy community. The Presidents related what they understood as the focus of Catherine McAuley's decisions to the situations in which they found themselves. The challenges of the modern educational institutions were filtered through the words and actions of Catherine McAuley. The direction of an institution in all areas, finance as well as curriculum, were interpreted in light of the stories of Catherine
McAuley. Questions about the amount of financial aid it is advisable for an institution to offer led Sister Barbara to reflect:

I think Catherine McAuley would be happy if she were running Georgian Court. I think the fact that we are giving financial aid permits those who might not be able to afford it to be educated. I think that inter-relationship with the person is a carry over from Catherine. She saw each person as important. I think the individual attention we give to each person's situation would please her.

Sisters Lucille and Isabelle provided additional examples of this interpretation of their heritage. In defining leadership Sister Lucille offered a simple description: "I think that it is to be your best self and help other people to be their best selves. I think Catherine McAuley was a master at it." Sister Isabelle expanded on that definition:

I guess when I try to reflect on it, I value Catherine McAuley's sense of animation as being the essence of leadership. That certainly means to do whatever you can do to draw others to the vision of what you are seeing and free them to tap whatever potential they have.

The impact of the Mercy heritage was more difficult for Sister Barbara to conceptualize, yet she saw it as integral to her understanding of her position as college president. She explained:
I think it is the nature of the presidency that you are responsible for the advancement of the mission. The mission is clearly an expression of our sponsorship and our charism as Sisters of Mercy. From an institutional perspective it is so important that whatever the Mercy mission is, should be, can become, it has a chance to grow and operate within the institution. Would I feel that way if I were not a Sister of Mercy? I would need to, but maybe it would not be as natural to me, because I think it is in our blood. And maybe because it is in our blood, it is harder to define.

While the Sisters acknowledged the importance of the charism or spirit of Catherine McAuley on their understanding of the office of president, they had difficulty articulating exactly how this charism would be visible in their actions. According to Sister Lucille:

I think it is pretty hard for people to talk about what they are doing. I'd like you to talk to one of our administrators. He really sees what is happening on a Mercy campus ... they are able to articulate it better than those of us who are in it. We don't talk about things, we just do them!

Sister Janice concurred with this sentiment. She stated:

They are watching you do it, and it's easier to talk to people like that about the Mercy Charism than it is to Sisters of Mercy themselves. I think you are going to get more from talking to people who are on the outside about what they see happening in Mercy institutions then from many of us who are completely absorbed in it, because we are embarrassed.

This connection to the mission and spirit of Catherine McAuley, articulated or not, provided a backdrop for the further development of the construction of leadership for
the five Sisters of Mercy. They envisioned leadership as the act of making connections, releasing relationships and recognizing interdependence.

Listening to the women speak of their institutions and the people with whom they work, I was able to hear the poetry of connection and feel the energy these women receive from all involved in their ministry. They were very clear, that in their minds, the mission of the college is accomplished through collaborative efforts rather than individual achievement. During a focus group on the topic of leadership the presidents expressed this concept poetically.

I think my style is, by design as well as accident, collaborative. I have learned through the years that that is the way to accomplish what I would like to see done better - by making my own leadership more one of freeing others' energies and talents in whatever ways possible. I probably started out more willing to do everything myself, and I think you find out in a hurry that it doesn't work (Sister Lucille).

Whereas it is perceived that you have the power, the reality is, that power is given to you by the people. So, yes, you're paid and expected to lead, but you also have to know how to be a follower, and you have to know when to be a follower and when to lead. (Sister Janice)

I always think of leadership as the art of what is possible ... that leads me to reiterate Janice's words, but I think so many of them are cornerstones of what leadership is all about. I could add perhaps to her words with collaboration but with decisiveness, of giving direction and seeing direction. (Sister Grace Ann)
I jotted down a few notes and I've heard them all which is kind of encouraging. Envisioning the possibilities is where I started and then how do you make the possibilities become real? The linking of resources ... somebody talked about identifying talent ... what do you need ... who do you need to carry it out. That brings me again to the collaborative, working together toward agreed upon goals. I think those are three aspects that dominate my thoughts. (Sister Isabelle)

We share leadership. We empower others in leadership. It needs to be called forth. I think one of the responsibilities is to empower people to assume leadership in whatever way they can express that. (Sister Barbara)

Leadership to these women seems to be a dynamic process in which all involved work together to accomplish the institutional goals. Mutually supportive relationships release potential and empower the community to create as a whole more than any one part would be able to create. The presidents provide direction but they also receive direction from the college community.

Just as Adrienne Rich envisioned her poetry as an opportunity to stand in solidarity with women, the poet presidents envision their leadership as an opportunity to establish an atmosphere of mutuality and connectedness in which a greater good can be accomplished. In writing about her relationship with her various constituencies, Sister Isabelle acknowledged this interdependence.

Encouraged by the dedication, the creative endeavors, the flexibility and ingenuity of the students, faculty, and administrators, and the Board of Directors, I am confident that Gwynedd
Mercy College not only will meet the challenge, but continue to grow as an institution and as a contributor to an ever wider audience of those who wish to expand their knowledge of themselves, their world, and their ability to serve others.

This interdependence defines leadership for these women as a corporate effort, enlivened by the contributions of each member of the college community. The efforts of faculty, staff, students, and trustees coalesce to provide the momentum and vitality for the enterprise. The life of the institution comes from the life giving networks formed within the college.

It is important that we understand institution as a corporate moral person. It is important that we understand institution as simply the relationship of the persons who form the community which is called the institution. (Sister Lucille)

It was evident to me that people and quality of life are the moving forces for these women rather than structures and policies. Policies and structures were viewed in the light of their relationship to the people in the institution. Sister Janice illustrated this: "As a leader, my caring comes out in really relating things to how they are going to benefit that student walking across the stage."

A particularly telling story about the termination of a long term employee also illustrated this point. In relating the story Sister Isabelle stressed the desire of the administrative team to deal with the person involved with care and dignity. Her words showed an empathy with the
individual and a willingness on the part of the administrators involved to work with employees to create a viable solution. She related:

This person was absolutely incompetent and there had been efforts made to keep shifting them into a role that the individual could be handled with competence and that had not been successful. It had reached a point where the incompetence was creating a ripple effect of problems that touched a lot of people. That said to us that it had to be addressed. And so we asked ourselves, what is the way that we can terminate this person so that the person leaves with dignity and a sense that the service they were able to render for a long number of years was appreciated? We worked together and I think it was done tactfully.

This vision of the integrity of the person also had an influence on what educational opportunities should be offered to students. The mission statements of each of the institutions studied emphasized the education of the whole person. Of particular interest to Sister Grace Ann was the importance of the college to the empowerment of women and the impact those students can have on the world. She placed a great responsibility on colleges for women sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy when she wrote:

Women's colleges believe in the fundamental worth of women to our world. They believe in women's intellectual powers, and in their spiritual and moral strength. They must therefore, necessarily believe in each female student. Their goal is to lead her to believe and trust herself.

The dignity and care with which the presidents referred to the student body revealed an awareness that the time a
student spends in a Mercy college should provide an atmosphere in which that student can grow mentally, physically, socially, and spiritually. Sister Lucille commented:

Our smallness has been one of our greatest assets. It has allowed us to know students as individuals. It has enabled us to establish a student-teacher relationship which is a human relationship. We need to know our students well enough to help them as individuals to understand what is happening and what will happen as they face the future.

Education was not seen as an end in itself, but rather as an opportunity for the college, faculty, students, and staff, to influence the world at large. Sister Janice referred to this goal in describing the education offered at Trinity College. She wrote:

We offer students a value based education. Values such as respect for diversity, the pursuit of academic freedom, and helping others are part of the Trinity experience. We encourage students to participate in community service and work toward the betterment of society, to explore their spirituality and to advocate for peace and justice. This enriches the lives of our students and helps them to make informed and ethical decisions in an increasingly complex world.

According to the five poet presidents, the educational process needs to recognize the interdependence of the global community. Students are encouraged to learn and grow in relationship with their college community as well as with the world.
Being an institution sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy in the Catholic tradition creates obligations of how we conduct the college. We need to be sure that our students realize that being equipped for their first job is not the focus of a college education. The broader vision requires a depth and breadth of understanding of the human condition. Pragmatically, career preparation is important, but an appreciation of the wonders of the world is necessary as well. (Sister Isabelle)

The presidents in the study define their leadership in relationship. Just as the poetry of Adrienne Rich is a reflection of herself and her own experience, the presidents construct their understanding of leadership by relating to their own experience, to the goals of the community and to the heritage of Catherine McAuley. These relationships are fused within the presidents as they unite the public and private, the sacred and the secular, the cognitive and affective. The artistry of this fusion produces a poetic view of the task of leadership.

The President as Prophet

Prophets are provocative persons to encounter. They present a unique vision of the reality of which they are a part. This vision is a view that is garnered as the prophet interprets the experience of the community in the light of values and goals. The prophet calls on the community to constantly keep the broader picture of mission, values, and goals in the forefront. As such, the prophet contributes to the vitality of the institution by validating and
encouraging the community to reflect on its own history and experience and to incorporate that reflection into a direction for the enterprise. Scott in the book *Interpreting the Prophets* emphasized this concept when discussing the vocation of prophet in the nation of Israel:

The prophets hold that the nation is constituted not by its political structure centered in the king, his judges and officials, his army and his laws; nor by the official cult with its priesthood; nor yet by its economic organization and institutions. The nation is the people, constituted as such by the covenant and characterized by the social ethic written into the covenant. The covenant was, in fact, not a single fixed and written code, but a living tradition which was formulated variously at different periods (1968, p. 190).

The prophet, then, speaks for the collective mind of a society that exists within a history and experience that reinforce that society's mission and values (Scott, 1968). Each member of the society has the collective responsibility for listening and responding. In the mind of the prophet this means among other things that:

The community must accept the moral responsibility for the direction and goals of its common life. For it is the on-going community rather than the individual which is the carrier of history and the trustee of destiny. The living historical consciousness, necessary to every vital and self-conscious community can exist only through common awareness of social purpose and meaningful ends, as well as of meaningful beginnings and historical experience (Scott, 1968, p. 228).
The prophet is committed to, and yet critical of her cause. The disconcerting questions of the prophet often serve as a catalyst for reflection and redirection. The prophet maintains a respect for the past while challenging the present to look toward the future.

History for them is not simply a continuity from the beginnings to a hoped for consummation. It is what the community is doing now, within the experience of the present generation (Scott, 1968, p. 143).

There is a passion in the prophet that evokes within the community a quest for a "better" way, a more creative idea, a fresh look at the mission and values of the institution. This passion comes "from a crucible where the life of the prophet is fused with the life of his/her people" (Scott, 1968, p. 127). This is not the stereotypical view of the prophet as a bearded man with eyes blazing and voice booming declaring that he speaks for the Lord! Rather, these are people who come from among the people, who speak the collective mind of the people.

The presidents in this study articulate a prophetic voice in the various communities in which they participate. They do not limit themselves to the college community but also recognize their commitments to the communities of the Catholic church and the Sisters of Mercy. There is a fusion of experience that does not place these commitments into discrete categories but rather parts of a whole. The
presidents do not see these communities as divergent interests in which they involve themselves but rather as integrated aspects of their lives.

As prophetic voices within these groups, the presidents see as integral to their participation, the desire to challenge the groups to remain faithful to their missions and values. They do not seem to expect that this faithfulness will come from the strength of their own personalities or individual efforts, but rather from the collective concern and attention of the members of the communities. Their prophetic voices speak the words and advocate the stances that the church, the religious community and the college have established as the focus of their endeavors. The five women indicate their understanding of their positions as one in which they witness to the values and goals the group has established and keep those values and goals before the group as they attempt to enact them. The prophet president hearkens back to the foundational values on which the institutions and communities were established. These values are not seen as static and unchanging, but as living testaments to the vitality and agelessness of the mission.

This historical continuity that the presidents espouse leads them to speak from an awareness that the challenges of today require a response that incorporates the knowledge of the past, and the promise of the future within the
structures and policies of the present. Sister Lucille illustrated this concept in discussing the place of colleges sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy in the wider field of Catholic higher education. She wrote:

There are legitimate concerns/fears among us. We are concerned about the value and effectiveness of our corporate as well as our individual apostolates. On the corporate level we find our colleges are often treated as little step sisters by older, more established colleges, larger universities, bottom line conscious foundations, accrediting agencies lifting eyebrows and shouting warnings if we break into new or different paths. We suffer from the paternalistic attitudes of all of them. We need to assert our maturity, our mission, our success, with no apologies that our youth is not spent. We are young in years, but we are part of the Catholic tradition in higher education which is old and rich in its heritage. This tradition holds us responsible for constructing the temporal order rightly and directing it to God through Christ. Our colleges were destined by our founders to be places where the thirst for knowledge, the hunger for justice, and the dedication to the Gospels would thrive side by side.

The voice of challenge comes from within as the presidents speak from the internalized values gleaned from their various community commitments. Sister Grace Ann stated:

The quality of leadership in its highest sense is an inner quality, an effect of character and the conviction of values. Leadership emerges from within, out of confusion, sometimes out of chaos, when you have found the voice within you that compels you to take a stand and move forward ... It is that confidence, that conviction of what is right and important that prompts the behavior of the true leader.
These values become operative through reflection and are enacted within the frame of historic continuity. In reflecting on choices made within the academic program, Sister Isabelle offered this insight:

I hope that my sense of what the values of Mercy tradition are influence my own values in this institution. I have consciously tried to measure this institution against that standard. I mean we didn't take on a program at Saint Malachy's out of a sense of being a philanthropist or lady bountiful, but out of a commitment to work with the poor and do a little bit that would help them help themselves. That has been a conscious effort of mine: to ask is this something a Mercy college should be doing?

The choices affirmed by the presidents, within their institutions, acknowledge the importance of the foundational values to the continuity of the mission. The process of decision making is placed in the context of a broader historical perspective. The presidents question the community and themselves as to the appropriateness of a decision or action in light of the institution's purpose as it is understood by the community.

In speaking about the purposes of their institution, the prophet presidents continued to put forth the values of the institution as they have been interpreted by the community. Sister Janice wrote in her annual report:

We want to provide all who come to the college with the opportunity to learn about our values, about a truly Christian community, about academic
excellence and about intellectual and moral integrity.

Sister Isabelle continued that theme in her remarks on the place of values in the curriculum. She stated:

I think that the values that we talk about, the valuing of diversity, the sense of the global community, the sense of the contributions of women, I think all of that gets an opportunity to be reflected on from the perspectives of the various disciplines.

The values and goals of the communities of which they are a part becomes a filter through which the actions of the community are measured. For example, their task, as they understand it, is to keep that filter present as decisions are made, curriculum is developed, and goals are set. This prophetic commitment can be seen in the design of faculty meetings, the agenda for meetings of senior administrators, or the rituals that are a part of institutional celebrations.

Sister Barbara shared an instance in which the faculty spent time reflecting on their own personal values and the values inherent within the mission of the institution. The design of the meeting allowed each to clarify his/her own understanding of the purposes of the college and to collaborate with each other in evaluating how the curriculum and policies of the institution meshed with those purposes. According to Sister Barbara, the goal was to name the values
and to examine "are they in what we teach, how we teach, and how we interrelate with one another?"

The formation of an administrative council provided Sister Grace Ann with the vehicle for balancing the values of the institution with the pressures that are exerted from external constituencies. In addition, she envisioned this council as a means by which the college could be better informed to meet the changing needs of the student population. She commented:

I wanted to get a group of other people (not senior administrators), faculty, staff and students to form an administrative council. We meet once a month and what we really try to do is to be more of a think tank in terms of the external environment. We look at what is happening out there and what impact that could have on the college. We try to look at the strengths and opportunities here in the college that could address the needs.

The needs and pressures of today's world are filtered through the prism of the college's mission and goals.

Sister Isabelle used the direction statements of the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas to set the stage for the first executive staff meeting of the year. This direction statement contained the focus for the efforts of all the ministries sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy. It read:
Animated by the Gospel and Catherine McAuley's passion for the poor, We, Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, are impelled to commit our lives and resources for the next four years to act in solidarity with:

The economically poor of the world, especially women and children

Women seeking fullness of life and equality in church and society

One another as we embrace our multi-cultural and international reality.

This commitment will impel us to develop and act from a multi-cultural, international perspective; speak with a corporate voice; work for systemic change; and call ourselves to continual conversion in our lifestyle and ministries.

(Direction Statement
Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas
Founded July 20, 1991)

As she shared this statement with the senior administrators of the college she said, "I would like us all to reflect on the Direction Statement to determine how it would influence and pervade what goes on here at Gwynedd Mercy College." The purpose of this exercise was to involve the administrators and, in turn, their respective staffs in a collaborative process to integrate the goals of the sponsoring community with the goals and mission of the institution.

The accreditation process was employed by Sister Lucille and her staff to encourage reflection on the values that were instrumental in the founding of Salve Regina College. Each person at the college was given a copy of the original charter and asked to study it in light of the
current needs of the college. Small group discussions ensued during which the meaning of the words written by the founders were applied to the college as it exists today. According to Sister Lucille this type of open communication facilitates an ownership and collective responsibility for the mission of the college. Sister Lucille added:

Nobody gets up and preaches to them. However, we do encourage them to think about it. ... I really do think they know why they are here ... It just seems to happen, it just seems to happen.

This process of sharing the original intent of the college allows the administration in general and Sister Lucille in particular to put the efforts of the present day college community within the context of their heritage.

Several of the presidents discussed how important the celebration of Mercy Day is to the incorporation of the college community into the mission and spirit of institutions sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy. September 24th, the day set aside to commemorate the founding of the Sisters of Mercy, was described by the participants in the study as a day of celebration, remembrances, and recommitment for faculty, students and staff. Various events are designed at each of the institutions to provoke within the group a reflection on the values and goals that initiated the endeavor. Sister Grace Ann commented:
I think in the course of each year we should try to do something to focus our efforts. Mercy Day lends itself to that. There should be something in the course of the year that reminds the people in the institution of the roots of who we are and what we are trying to continue.

Sister Isabelle reinforced this idea:

I think that it is our job to say that we hope a commitment to the Mercy tradition will imbue the whole experience here. Fortunately, we focus on that Mercy tradition most emphatically right in the beginning of the academic year with our celebration of Mercy Day. We utilize a week of activities (displays, special liturgies and seminars) all of which we articulate as a dimension of this tradition and heritage.

Through the celebration of Mercy Day, the college communities ritualize their involvement in the living heritage of the Mercy mission. Just as the prophet seeks to keep the foundational values before their community the presidents envision these celebrations as opportunities to keep the original values alive within the minds and hearts of the people in the institution.

In addition to their sense of responsibility to challenge the college community, the participants in the study also indicated a sense of stewardship, responsible membership in the community of the Roman Catholic Church and the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy. They expressed their understanding that the mission and goals of their institutions are reflections of the broader commitment to advance the agendas of the church and the institute. This advancement is not seen in the context of blind faith but
rather advocacy that emerges from the foundational values of the two communities. The prophet presidents in the study speak of their commitment through a veil of suffering and tension that in some instances arose from what they perceived as contradictions in the espoused values and the enactment of those values.

During the focus group in which all the presidents participated there was a poignant discussion about their faithfulness to the Roman Catholic tradition and their frustration with the manner in which that tradition has been interpreted. Sister Grace Ann shared some of that frustration:

I always talk about the Catholic nature in terms of Mercy, the heritage and mission. I do not talk about the perspective of the church. I can't bring myself to do that because there are too many contradictions right now.

Of particular concern for these women is the view that institutional church takes on the place of women. Sister Lucille reflected on the responsibility she felt in this regard:

I think leadership today in these institutions, those that are religiously affiliated in any way, has to include, more critically than ever before, that which is prophetic. I think we are called to be prophetic about what Catholicism really is ... what is Catholic that is meaningful for women today. My own reference to our being a Catholic college always goes back to the Mercy Charism. That's really what I can describe at all.
Their criticism of the church comes from what they perceive as the misinterpretation of the values and beliefs that serve as the cornerstone of the tradition.

Sister Isabelle continued the discussion by acknowledging the pain that comes with the tension as well as the need to be even more committed to recognizing the tradition as a reference point rather than the hierarchical structures that have become synonymous with that tradition. She related a story about the tensions that erupted around the invitation of a controversial speaker to campus. In her mind the controversy and adverse publicity did not weaken the connection of the college with the Roman Catholic tradition. In fact she used the situation to reinforce the fact that responsible church authorities could not fault the community's invitation to the speaker. She commented: "We have had our moments at Gwynedd with the Right to Life group. I don't think responsible church authority has any qualms or questions about our position." The distinction these women seem to make is that there is a respect for and commitment to the Roman Catholic tradition and yet they assume a critical stance if the structures of the institutional church seem to fall short of the values espoused within the tradition. The belief system under which the five women function allows them to be committed to and yet critical of the church.
One of the most moving experiences for me, as I conducted this study, was to experience the anguish of these women as they sought to support each other in the struggle of balancing their commitments with a realistic picture of the church today. I was particularly struck by the strength and suffering that was evident as they shared with one another during the focus group. Sister Lucille expressed the hope and challenge that I heard in that room. She said:

You know we talked about a Mercy University this morning. That could possibly help us to leverage a more powerful message about what is the definition of a true Catholic college. Our mission statement talks about having experienced the mercy of God and alleviating unjust structures and everything that should be synonymous with being Catholic and yet we have to continue to suffer this kind of thing. Somehow, there has to be a breakthrough.

My sense from these women is that they clearly identify themselves and their institutions as Catholic, and yet they are concerned with the dichotomy between the foundational values and the manner in which some of those values are interpreted by the institutional church. They see as part of their position as a representatives of institutions affiliated with the Roman Catholic Church, the need to exert intelligent, responsible, mature, and prophetic membership. This maturity requires an obedience that leads to true self knowledge and a questioning of assumptions that
do not seem in concert with the reasons for which the church was founded.

During our conversations, I also heard the prophetic voices of the presidents speak to the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy about the place of higher education in the fulfillment of the Mercy mission. These women take seriously their responsibility to bring before the institute the importance of contributing to the world a quality alternative to other forms of postsecondary education. Sister Janice emphasized this point:

I think if we want our Mercy mission to live and become effective we want to address the needs of the poor, the needs of people who seek a just and peaceful world. If we really want to effect that, we need higher education to be even more a commitment of our mercy institute. It is the bedrock on which our mission will flourish.

The prophetic presidents call on the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy to affirm and support the ministry of higher education as a means by which the Mercy mission can be extended. This need has reached crisis proportion as the number of women religious involved in the colleges has diminished. The presidents raise the question to the congregation as to the meaning of sponsorship of institutions of higher education. Sister Isabelle reflected this challenge in her discussion of the changing understanding of the word sponsorship. She wrote:
Religious communities have always seen their corporate works as extensions of the mission and purpose of the church. However, recent attention to "sponsorship" has grown out of a concern that a particular religious community's ministry may have somewhat acculturated to society and therefore no longer utters the Gospel message in fidelity to the community's heritage. The need to examine the authenticity of our commitments and the witness we hope to render took on urgency in light of the significant decrease in the number of personnel in the sponsoring religious body.

The motivation for the institute's involvement in the ministry of higher education, according to the presidents should be to further the mission of the Mercy Institute. They call on the institute to recognize the colleges as the means by which the message of Mercy can become incarnate in the world. According to Sister Isabelle: "These institutions make it possible to incarnate Catherine McAuley's values, insights and mission in structures that preserve these values through the passage of time."

The question in the minds of these leaders is whether the institute understands the power of institutions of higher education to bring the ideal of the Mercy mission into the realm of reality. They envision their institutions as vehicles through which this can happen. Their prophetic words call on the congregation to reassess the purpose of the colleges and to affirm that purpose as vital to the goals and mission that the congregation has espoused. Sister Lucille discussed this concern when she commented:
The real issues at this critical juncture in time are not directly related to finances or to shrinking resources. Rather, the real questions are related to our own perceptions of quality as Catholic educators in higher education, the moral support of our congregation (not the financial support), the power base rooted in the administrators of our religious congregations, and the understanding of what a college is, why a college is, and how a college is. Answers to these real questions of the present will affect the future.

Again, the prophet presidents see it as their responsibility to keep before the religious community, the values that were the basis for their founding and to constantly assess how those values are made operative in the colleges they sponsor.

The presidents speak their prophetic voices as representatives of the communities with whom they have chosen to be associated. They see as paramount the task of remaining faithful to the purposes for which these groups have been founded. They do not envision their responsibility to create new directions or forge new paths as pioneering individuals, but rather to reinforce the communal responsibility for the mission. They raise questions and probe meanings in such a way that arouses a reflection by the community around the structures and policies of the status quo which need to be examined in light of the original purpose.
The President as Provisioner

The plains of western United States and the adventures of pioneer women provided a unique analogy for the college president in the last decade of the twentieth century. A stereotype of women as the passive, helpless female was shattered when frontier women embarked on the overland trail. The image fell by the wayside as the early pioneers struggled to sustain the family unit through the hardships of the western exploration (Faragher, 1979; Schlissel, 1982; Meyers, 1982).

Research into the place of the women pioneers presented a picture of women that has long been absent from our history books. The picture of the brave male adventurer who risked all to independently conquer the unknown wilds of the western United States was replaced by the picture of a team - man and woman, husband and wife - who joined forces to accomplish their goal of establishing a new life (Meyers, 1982). This revision of the history of the United States provides a new understanding of how women functioned during this exciting time of development in the United States.

The women of the early west shouldered the task of providing the needs of the family group so that this goal could be realized. The diaries of these women bring to life the commitment of the female pioneer spirit to do all that was necessary to maintain and support the common endeavor. According to Schlissel:
They show us women who were not merely swept along in the flow of migration, but women who were strong and resilient. They stood their ground as personalities, as actors in the family drama, and in the drama that history set before them. In the face of all of the forms of dislocation that commonly accompanied emigration, these women determined to maintain the family as an integral unit. (1982, p. 158)

These women were essential to the success of the enterprise. As provisioners they met the needs of the family group and supplied the necessities of everyday life that allowed the group to continue their efforts.

The traditional domestic chores attributed to women were supplemented by whatever other tasks were needed for the ongoing life of the family. Faragher stated:

In fact, women were more centrally involved in providing subsistence of the farm families than the men. Nearly all the kinds of food consumed by farm families were direct products of women's work. (1979, p. 50)

The range of responsibilities were not limited to the hearth and home. The pioneer women also provided the motivation that joined family groups into a network of supportive entities that increased the likelihood of survival. They organized church meetings, quilting bees, and barn raisings. They initiated small businesses that provided needed services. They opened boarding houses to supplement the meager family income and shared expertise with their neighbors (Faragher, 1979; Meyers, 1982; Stratton, 1981). All of these efforts combined to create community out of the wilderness. The efforts of the women pioneers provided a
stability and organization that encouraged and supported the homesteading of the western United States. The family unit committed itself to the goal of settling the west and the women pioneers did whatever was necessary to insure the success of that goal.

The college presidents in the study seem to have absorbed the spirit of the women pioneers. They acknowledge, as one of the responsibilities of their leadership, the importance of providing whatever tools and sustenance are needed by the community to achieve its goal. The reality of the bottom line and its influence on the success of the endeavor is foremost in the minds of these provisioner presidents. These women recognize that in order for the collective enterprise to succeed there needs to be an organization in place that will facilitate the work of the community. The provisioner president employs the people and designs the structures that promote the mission of the institution.

The provisioner president gets the job done. She is a person who is able to determine the practical and efficient method to accomplish a goal. The provisioner president understands and appreciates the working of an organization. In order to succeed, the presidents in the study recognize the necessity of planning and implementing structures appropriate to a problem. The provisioner is a builder, a designer, a planner. The strength of these provisioner
presidents is in their ability to meld the vision and mission of an organization with the reality and practical concerns of everyday life. Through insights shared by each president with her community, the organization has a clear view of its goals and mission and a way in which they can be realized. The provisioner president hears the dreams, feels the challenges and designs a practical program of action in collaboration with those who are joined with her in ministry.

While the early pioneer provisioners saw their major responsibility in the area of food, clothing and supplies, the modern day provisioners in the college envision their responsibility in the area of personnel and planning. The presidents in the study see it as crucial to involve people within the college community, who can bring the skills and expertise that were needed for the community to achieve its goals. According to Sister Barbara: "In looking for administrators I look for people who tend to be different from myself and who tend to be extremely competent." The women in the study recognize that they do not have all the skills necessary and the success of the endeavor requires the strongest team they can assemble. Sister Grace Ann stated this succinctly when she commented that: "this head doesn't know everything, and you need people with different opinions."
The efforts of the presidents are focused on bringing on board the people who have the tools and the motivation to move the institution forward. This concept was evident in Sister Isabelle's discussion of the challenge of living the Mercy philosophy. She said:

Living up to our philosophy is challenging. It is impossible to do it alone. The living expression of our stated philosophy is best carried out by bringing to campus persons who espouse the values intrinsic to us.

The presidents see themselves as providing for the needs of the community by selecting and nurturing talented people who share the values of the institution. Sister Lucille acknowledged this ongoing responsibility in her comment:

I am good at picking good people, I know that. And once I have picked them, even if they are not as good as I thought they were, I work with them.

In addition to competence, the participants in the study identify other characteristics they seek in providing the community with new members. According to Sister Janice:

I want someone who is as competent as I can find in their area, so that would be number one. But there are really two number ones. I would also look for people who fit our mission which would come out of the Mercy tradition. I'd also look for someone who is fun to work with. The work is very hard and thus, if you are always going to look at it as work, you are going to wear out pretty soon. I look for an integration of fun and work.
This integration of work and fun, heart and mind are very important to the presidents as they seek to employ people who will meet the needs of the community. The individuals they choose:

must be committed to its specific Catholic mission - to provide a holistic education experience aimed at touching the hearts and souls as well as the minds. They must bring their varied talents and resources to bear on the successful achievement of the college's long range plans and goals (Sister Isabelle).

The participants in the study also function with the understanding that in addition to providing the institution with talented people it is necessary to create an atmosphere in which that talent can grow and flourish. There is a sense that the empowerment of faculty and staff is a service that is crucial to the job of college president. "Certainly anyone who aspires to the role of president, desires to see an educational environment where all are able to achieve their potential" (Sister Isabelle). Sister Lucille described this concept in relating her leadership and that of her staff to the story of Catherine McAuley. She stated:

We're looking for a way to facilitate the work of other people, some way of nourishing the young people and not so young people that we are working with so that they themselves will become better people, builders and bridges for other people. In my own personal opinion, I think that is what Mother McAuley was doing. Even in her writings you see that. She was always trying to help people to become the best person that he or she could be.

The provisioner presidents recognize that, in order for the goals of the institution to be achieved, the people who make
up the community must have a situation in which they feel a sense of ownership and commitment. The presidents see as part of their responsibility, the ensuring of an atmosphere in which this can occur. Sister Barbara commented:

My style of leadership is creating an atmosphere in which people who have ideas are able to develop them. I look for good people who are full of ideas and I give them the opportunity to develop them. I think that is an important part of leadership, to create and environment in which people feel they have something to contribute and give them the chance to do it.

Just as the pioneer women provided the family with whatever it needed to survive and flourish, the provisioner presidents acknowledge that part of their responsibility to provide the tools, the people, the atmosphere and the encouragement that will enable the community to accomplish its goal.

Functioning as a catalyst, the presidents motivate the college community to reflect, plan and participate in activities that will further the mission. The presidents encourage the networking that is vital to the success of the enterprise. Just as the pioneer women organized quilting bees, barn raisings and food cooperatives, the college presidents facilitate the supportive networks they need and that the members of their institutions require. Each of the presidents discussed structures that were in place at their institutions that encouraged joint efforts within the faculty and staff. The planning process is described as a
collaborative process in which the members of the college - faculty, students and staff - participated. Through the efforts of the presidents and their staffs structures are in place that allow for the mutual sharing of ideas and support. These structures are portrayed as life giving to the community.

There was a sense as I spoke to the presidents that the place of structures in the college were viewed as supportive, rather than determining. The structures existed to provide an avenue of exchange rather than the ideas of the people being forced into arbitrary structures. Sister Grace Ann reflected on this as she discussed a change in the administrative structure at Carlow College. The administrative team at Carlow normally met once a week and the president chaired the committee. Sister Grace Ann realized that the group would be more effective if the meetings were chaired by her Executive Vice President. She stated: "There was a shift in the structure of the administrative staff meetings in that now Pat chairs them. I used to do it but she does it so much more efficiently." The structure of the meeting was adapted to meet the needs of the group and the community as a whole.

The presidents recognize that the structures in place facilitate the life of the community and are therefore dependent on the needs of the community for their effectiveness. The structures serve the community rather
than the opposite. Sister Lucille shared an instance in which the structure of long range planning had to give way to the need of students to understand the complexities of decision making. A suggestion was made by the student body at Salve Regina that an existing building be used for a student pub. Instead of pointing out the difficulty with the suggestions and denying the request, Sister Lucille and her Vice President for Planning worked with the students to assist them in reaching their own conclusions. When the group met, the suggestion was offered: "Let's see what we can do about planning this out. It will probably cost money so why don't we sit down and work it out." A group of professionals were brought in to provide the expertise needed to make an informed decision.

A contractor, who is on the Board of Directors, and an architect from the city were invited to work with the students to determine the feasibility of the plan. The group worked it all out and realized that the cost would be prohibitive. The planning process served as an opportunity for learning on the part of the students as well as an example of responsible membership in the college community. Sister Lucille felt that "if you work it out with the students, they come to their own solutions. It is terrible when you have to say no, no, no, that wouldn't work. You can't do it." The structure of planning served to meet the
educational needs of the students and to support the ultimate goal of the institution.

Sister Grace Ann spoke of the need for structures and policies to reflect the goals of the community and to facilitate the achievement of those goals. The budgetary process is an important task of the administrative team in all colleges and universities but especially in a small, Catholic college which is tuition driven and possesses little, if any, endowment. The practical reality of finances often places the women in the study in difficult positions as decisions are made in allocating meager resources. The philosophy that informs the decisions comes from a realization that whatever is decided must reflect what the community needs in order to survive. The decisions are not always the most expedient nor the least painful.

Sister Grace Ann illustrated the point by sharing a decision she made about the faculty salary scale. She said:

I have a real commitment to advancing the salary scale. I have kept firmly to encouraging the budget committee to naming it as a priority. Because of that priority we have suffered in other ways. I really felt strongly about that for a lot of reasons. I think management-wise it is a sane decision. It is an effective way to proceed because I explained that I would ask more of the faculty and they would feel more secure if they were paid a fair wage. I also felt strongly about it from the justice perspective. I came from the perspective of respect for the individual.
The decisions made by college presidents are rarely linear and require that the presidents to look at and promote the realization of the various perspectives. The provisioner presidents feel it is essential to keep the needs of the group in the forefront as decisions are made and directions discerned.

Even the choice of their living arrangements is seen in light of the bigger picture. What will further the mission of the institution? Sister Barbara explained her decision to live in a residence hall. She commented:

I do live in the dormitory. That is one of the things I felt was important, both when I was dean and in this position. I have been doing it for twelve years. Of course, Monk Malloy out in Notre Dame gets an article in the "Chronicle" about him doing it! But I do feel it is important that the students get to know me as a person. If they see you as a person it is a little easier for them.

The presidents place their decisions within the context of the community and what is best for that community.

Sister Isabelle reinforced this concept as she described a decision she made regarding publicity for the college. In her mind a public relations campaign needs to support the mission of the college and present a picture of why the college exists. She envisioned her leadership function as providing the conscience in publicity decisions. She stated:
Advertising would be a thing that would come to my mind most quickly. I remember one year a poster that showed piles of money and a little figure was climbing the piles of money. The message was this is how to succeed in life. Come to Gwynedd Mercy and you will climb! I said 'get rid of it'. That is not what we are about.

The criteria for action, in the minds of the participants, is what will be true to the mission of the college and what will ensure the success of that mission. Decisions are not made out of expediency or even practicality alone. The presidents ask themselves 'does this poster, this agenda, this process, provide what the college community needs to flourish consistent with its goals'?

The act of placing decisions within context extends beyond the college boundaries and permeates the margins of the society within which the presidents find themselves and their institutions. The purpose of the colleges, in the minds of the participants, is to provide the students and faculty with opportunities that will enliven their commitment to the global community. These presidents see their institutions as corporate citizens of the world and therefore by providing the necessary tools for the community, the presidents anticipate meeting the needs of the broader community. The colleges do not exist in a vacuum and therefore they must respond to the world around them. Sister Janice spoke strongly about this as she discussed the importance of colleges for women. She explained:
Women's colleges have been called anachronistic, unrealistic, and unnecessary. Yet, I know otherwise from Trinity College experience. Research crosses my desk regularly that suggests differently. The Clarence Thomas hearings made me sure.

Clearly, women continue to need empowerment. Women's colleges for traditionally aged women will become anachronistic at precisely the moment the word "empowerment" and "social justice" are anachronistic.

In the minds of the presidents the world needs the type of education provided by their institutions. One of the goals of the colleges is to supply what the community perceives as a vacuum in the educational system. The president as provisioner supplies whatever resources, physical, emotional, or spiritual that are needed to achieve that goal. As I listened to the women in the study I did not get a sense of "ladies bountiful" but rather facilitators in the collective ministry. The college community established a goal and the presidents will do whatever they can to further that goal.

Sister Lucille reflected on this while discussing the position of a Sister of Mercy as a college President. According to Sister Lucille:

I was always impressed how in the very beginning Mother McAuley started out with very young people and sent them all over. That's what you are talking about ... calling forth people's leadership. She saw their talents and had faith in them. They used those talents and look where we are now! She was an enabler. So it seems to me that one of her talents was to facilitate the good works of other people and I think that is what
women do. But I think it is one of the things we in religious communities do best. I think we do it better than the others. For the others, being college President is a stepping stone to better jobs but it is not for us. We're not looking for better jobs someday. We are looking for a way to facilitate the work of other people.

The presidents view their job as one which enables others to do the work to which the community has dedicated itself. This dedication extends the boundaries of the college into the sphere of the society within which the institution exists. The presidents do not limit their responsibilities to the confines of the college campus but rather include in their sphere of influence the need for systemic change within the world.

There is not a sense of arrogance, but rather a spirit of corporate responsibility to make the world a better place. Since the college community has established this as a goal, the presidents see it as their responsibility to provide whatever resources will facilitate this goal. Education has been defined in these institutions as the vehicle by which individuals can assume a position as change agents. In discussing the reasons for higher education, Sister Grace Ann illustrated this point. She stated:

I think that another reason that it is important to sponsor colleges is that we can really prepare people for leadership in society. I feel it is the way to effectively change the system. Our goal is to free people as thinkers and to encourage people to continue to question and learn throughout life with a strong commitment to service. That is our mission statement. That service aspect joined with the developing of the capabilities of the individual will be a service of leadership. And
that is particularly strong in institutions that have a strong emphasis on women. What is needed now in society is that women will be freed to lead more effectively. Their experience is so important, their perspective is so important and is often times missing from the realm of decision making in government and so forth ...

This orientation toward service is an aspect of the college's philosophy that the presidents feel is integral to the purpose of their institutions. The designing of programs, the hiring of faculty, and the budgeting of resources are geared toward this end.

The presidents dream of their institutions providing an education that will empower their students and faculty to become active in their world. According to Sister Isabelle:

My dream is that Gwynedd's agenda for the future be driven by a vision of a quality education that will empower students to live in a new century where each will contribute to the creation of a more truly human and dignified life for themselves and those whose lives they touch.

These presidents see their institutions with a view that in providing an education and a work environment that encourages this view of service, they will in fact join in the collective effort to change the world.

The presidents indicate a consistent effort to engage their constituency in a shared discourse around the importance of this orientation to service. Through this exchange the presidents seek to provide an opportunity to articulate and implement the values of the institution
within the broader scope of society. The college is seen, by the presidents, in a mutual, reciprocal relationship with their world. The participants perceive that a function of their position is to provide the resources - the time, the appropriate reward system, the motivation - for their constituents to put into practice at the various levels on campus this commitment to service and the concomitant call to activism within the world. Just as the women provisioners in the early West recognized that their family units would be stronger if they helped to create a stronger settlement, the presidents in the study recognize that by facilitating and encouraging a sense of moral responsibility within the college, both the world and the college will be stronger.

The presidents in this study accept the position of provisioner on their college campuses. As the early pioneer women provided the food and clothing, these college presidents provide the resources, the structures and the opportunities that will enable the members of the college community to realize their mutually agreed upon goals. In the Schlissel's book, Women's Diaries of the Westward Journey, the author described the early pioneers:

Women were neither brave adventurers nor sunbonneted weepers. They were vigorous and given to realism and stoicism. The west to them meant the challenge of rearing a family and maintaining domestic order against the disordered life on the frontier. Once embarked on the journey, they were determined and energetic to make the move a success. (1982, p. 155)
In the words of the participants in the study, I heard a similar determination to do whatever was necessary to support and nurture the college community in the quest to achieve its goals.

**SUMMARY**

This chapter has been the story of my interpretation of what I heard participants in the study say. The metaphor of poet, prophet, and provisioner emerged in my mind as I listened to the words of these women. The interpretation is obviously constrained by my own limitations and the limitations of portraying a snapshot of the women's understanding of their own leadership. Despite these limitations, a vivid, multidimensional picture emerged. These women provided me with the opportunity to gain insight into the complex construct of leadership.

The dynamic aspect of their leadership styles came alive for me as the presidents painted a picture of poetry, prophecy and provisioning with their words. The painting is not complete nor is it perfect. It is a creation in process. It is a creation that is a collage of experience, values and empowerment. It is a portrait of women who have joined in solidarity with their colleagues in an effort to accomplish goals. It is a portrait of women who struggle to realize the values and goals of their institutions. It is a portrait of
women who are committed to providing resources that enable their communities to reach their goals.

The presidents' construction of their leadership is not an isolated piece of art but rather a portion of the mural that is created as each college community collectively moves toward the enactment of its foundational values. The presidents' understanding of their leadership emerges from their relationship with their history, their institutions, and their values. These women do not speak about the experience of leadership, but rather that their leadership is a reflection of their experiences.

The women in this study have constructed their understanding of leadership through an integration of their history and experience. The charism of Mercy is effected within this construction of leadership. Their commitment as Sisters of Mercy has influenced the manner in which they fulfill their responsibilities. They seem to have internalized the words, actions, and values of Catherine McAuley, the foundress of the Sisters of Mercy. This internalization has produced an understanding of themselves as persons and as leaders. This internalization is not a static, defining process but rather a dynamic process in which the participants interpret and make meaningful the responsibilities of the college presidency. The internalized values of their historical tradition function as a filter through which realities of their current context are
interpreted. They instantiate the charism as they interact with people, make decisions, and discern direction for their institutions.

The process by which this internalization occurs is less clear from the data. The participants speak of the charism "being in their blood", "happening by osmosis", "being absorbed in it". The question that arises is how does this happen? The presidents do not seem to be able to articulate how this occurs and yet an examination of their words reveals a process of translation and interpretation.

During our conversations the presidents spoke of the person of Catherine McAuley and the stories about her founding of the congregation as integral to their understanding of what a Mercy college should be and how it should be organized. The participants refer to being conscious of the example of Catherine McAuley and utilizing that example as a filter as they address the needs of their institutions. According to the presidents there is a translation or interpretation of what they understand as the spirit of Catherine McAuley into the realities of the college of the twenty first century.

This translation or interpretation occurs as the presidents consciously relate the questions of their day to the words and actions of the foundress. This relationship of the past with the present reinvents the charism or spirit of Catherine McAuley in the present day context. This
connection of the story of Catherine McAuley and the early
days of the religious congregation with the contemporary
situation in colleges sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy
creates a space within the presidents in which the charism
or spirit can be renamed. The charism then is effected
within the presidents as they engage in a continuous
dialogue with their past and their present. As I defined it
in chapter 1 charism is a relational phenomena. It is a
dynamic process by which the presidents interact with their
history and translate that history into an effective
response in their time, their culture, their institutions.

The spirit or charism that seems to animate these women
in their ministry of education is a spirit of solidarity,
compassion and response. The impact of this charism was
evident in the words the women spoke as they described their
leadership style.

The spirit of solidarity places these women in union
with the people they serve. The women spoke of themselves as
working in collaboration with the faculty, students and
staffs of their institutions. The presidents have indeed
cast their lots with the people of their institutions in
order to reconstitute the world through Mercy education. The
vision of education proposed by the five presidents
recognizes the need to see their institutions as a part of
the whole of
society and therefore collectively responsible for that society. The presidents understanding of the spirit of solidarity influences the structures designed, resources allocated and directions discerned within their institutions.

This spirit of solidarity is not an intellectual commitment alone. The women in the study speak of being motivated by an emotional as well as intellectual commitment to their ministry. The presidents are moved to compassion by the needs of their world. The human emotions of tenderness, sympathy, anger, and frustration are integrated as these women seek to construct their leadership.

Solidarity with and compassion for the world cause these women to respond. Their responsiveness comes from a deeply felt sense that they are in union with the other and therefore called to respond to their needs. A spirit of responsiveness calls on the presidents to act to relieve the need of the other. Again there is a sense of collaboration in this response to a need. The presidents see their task as facilitating and empowering others to respond as well as providing the tools a person needs to help themselves.

There does not seem to be a concentrated effort to share their charism with their constituents. This does not mean that the participants do not see it as important that the charism be shared but rather that there is no organized manner by which this occurs.
Several of the participants referred to instances in which the story of Catherine McAuley and her vision for the congregation was shared with the people on their campus. These sharings usually took the form of small group discussions with faculty or isolated instances of discussions among administrators. None of the women in the study spoke of an organized orientation to the charism of Mercy or any ongoing reflection by the college community on the articulation of that charism into their present day context.

Each of the presidents did indicate the rituals surrounding Mercy Day as a means by which the charism is shared with the college community. The particulars of these celebrations were not discussed so it is difficult to determine if these provide an opportunity for the college community to listen to the historical tradition and interpret that tradition in their own situation.

From my conversations with the five participants there seems to be an effort to share the story of Catherine McAuley and the foundational values of the Sisters of Mercy. There does not however seem to be a coordinated effort to encourage the college community to make the connection between this story and their contemporary situation.

The participants referred to the sharing of the charism as "it just happens", "it is just there", "they get it by watching us", "they read about Catherine McAuley", and "it
happens by osmosis". If, as the data indicates, charism is relational, in that it is created through reflection on historical tradition and the current context, then this lack of a coordinated effort will lessen the possibility that the charism will continue to be recreated by those who join the five presidents in ministry. In addition, the presidents' construction of leadership seems to be guided by their instantiation of the charism of Mercy. If leadership is to be developed within the various constituencies in Mercy Colleges then an ongoing process of interpretation and reflection needs to be incorporated into the professional development programs on Mercy college campuses.

In the next chapter I will utilize the knowledge I gained from examining the understanding of the five women in the study to state my findings and make some recommendation for future research.
CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

This final chapter has been divided into four sections. The first section is a review of the study. The second section provided findings drawn from the study. Section three will give the implications of the study and the final section will propose questions for further study.

Review of the Study

In this study I sought to examine how the charism of Mercy was instantiated in the lives and leadership of five college presidents. The definition of charism as a relational phenomena framed the investigation of the participants interpretation of their historical tradition within the context of their current reality. The participants in the study were all Sisters of Mercy who headed baccalaureate institutions sponsored by the religious congregation of the Sisters of Mercy.

The research project was embedded in the interpretive paradigm. The scientific concern within the interpretive
paradigm is how humans socially and symbolically construct their reality in a given time, recognizing that their language, history and culture influence their current actions. Since the purpose of the study was to examine how the presidents understood, made meaningful, the relationship between historical tradition and their current context, the interpretive paradigm addressed the needs of the research.

Within the interpretive paradigm, I utilized qualitative methods to address the three research questions outlined in chapter one. The central feature of this methodology is the researcher's focus on individuals and groups in their natural context and the development of an understanding of how these people make sense of and enact their daily lives (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I conducted interviews and visited the campus of each of the five institutions in order to gain access to the thoughts and feelings of the presidents around their leadership style and the impact of historical tradition on the development of that style.

I then analyzed the data from the interviews in an inductive manner utilizing the constant comparative method recommended by Bogdan and Biklen (1982). My research included the additional step of returning the data and emergent theory to the participants so that the analysis of the material was a collaborative effort. This process enabled the participants to interact with me as we
endeavored to identify patterns and themes that served as the basis of a grounded theory of charism as it was instantiated in the lived experience of the college presidents.

This interaction with the data and the insights of the participants were expressed as a collective story of a day in the life of a Mercy college president in chapter four and an explication of the metaphor of the president as poet, prophet and provisioner in chapter five. The data presentation was both a reflection of this process of interaction and an extension of it. I sought to recreate the dynamic process I experienced during data analysis by presenting the data in a manner in which the reader could hear the words and sense the meaning of the participants.

The study concludes with a discussion of the findings along with suggestions of the implications for the field of higher education in general and Catholic higher education in particular. Since the research activity is cyclic in that we find through our efforts that more questions need to be studied, I end my discussion with a series of research questions that occurred to me during the process of conducting this study.
FINDINGS

I began writing this dissertation in 1991 but, in reality, the dissertation began in 1978 when I began my study of educational leadership. During those fifteen years, I became aware that the theories that I studied and the scholarship that I read did not speak of my experience. I could not "find" myself in the words and theories that were proposed in the textbooks or advocated by the professors. During the present research for this study I found myself and my experience in the voices of the five women I interviewed.

As a Sister of Mercy, as a woman, and as an educational leader I found myself resonating with the construction of leadership that emerged as I listened to the women tell their stories. There was a consistency and congruency with my experience that was absent from the work I had studied. No longer feeling invisible in the development of an understanding of leadership I found strength, encouragement, and validation as I immersed myself in the data. Here I found new assumptions, new beliefs, around why educational institutions exist and how they function. The view of organizations and leadership that had been presented to me during graduate study was challenged as I vicariously lived the experience of the participants of the study.

I heard voices that spoke of leadership as guided by the charism of Mercy. That leadership was both historically
and socially constructed. The participants constructed their leadership within a framework of charism that rejected the narrow confines of leadership as a solitary exercise of positional power and broadened it to include collective and communal components. These women instantiated their charism in the enactment of their leadership on their college campuses.

The presidents in the study redefined leadership. They reconceptualized organizations. They reframed how I looked at the college presidency. They spoke as poets drawing their understanding of themselves and their leadership from a reflection of their lived experiences. They became one with the people they worked with as they designed their programs and made their decisions. Their decisions and programs were created in an intricate web of connection and caring. The poetry of connection and interdependence formed the basis for their actions.

They spoke as prophets advocating and encouraging the community to focus on goals that were mutually established. They voiced the collective mind of the community and drew their strength from that communal goal. They understood that their power came from acting within that community. This was not a power of might and control but rather a power that came from the community as a whole. They acted in a powerful manner as they empowered, supported, and encouraged the
college community, the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy, and the Roman Catholic Church to remain faithful to their foundational values. They made decisions with these values always in the foreground.

They spoke as provisioners as they sought to provide whatever tools necessary for the community to achieve those goals. They understood personnel needs, financial resources, and long range planning within the context of the collective activities of the community. Their talents and skills were placed at the disposal of the community in order to facilitate the accomplishment of the communal goals. They acknowledged that their leadership was one of providing whatever was necessary for the group as a whole to do more than any individual would be capable of doing.

In chapter four I utilized a poem by Adrienne Rich to describe a sense of invisibility, of silencing, that I had experienced within the confines of the dominant notion of leadership. This inarticulate life that Rich so poignantly expressed became articulated in the words and experiences of the participants of my study. The sense of their leadership as contextual, historical constructed and guided by their re-creation of the Mercy charism provided for me a space within which my construction of leadership had a home. This is a home where I hope to live, not in isolation, but in community with other women leaders.
Implications

The transferability of the findings of this study are limited because of the contextual aspect of the research. However, there are implications for the field of higher education in general and for institutions sponsored by congregations of women religious in particular. The analysis of the data does provide some specific recommendations for both groups. The recommendations are as follows:

Research into the concept of leadership should include a qualitative analysis of the place of values, culture and personal experience within the lives of educational leaders.

Much of the research on educational leadership has been limited to an analysis of inherited traits or learned behaviors. This study shows that college presidents' understanding of their position is influenced principally by values they hold, experiences they have had and commitments they espouse. A more complete picture of the process of educational leadership would be gained by incorporating these characteristics into the research.

Studies of women in leadership should be conducted allowing the theory of the participants to emerge from the data.
As indicated in the chapter 2, much of the research on women in leadership has subsumed their understandings within theories and constructs that were developed by men from the experiences of men. The results have either been a silencing of the female experience or an emphasis on what are perceived as feminine characteristics. These characteristics are portrayed as complimentary to and inferior to male characteristics. This study shows that women college presidents exhibit characteristics of care and concern as well as assertiveness, logic and rationality. The construction of this leadership style by the participants was guided by their reinvention of the Mercy charism as well as their experiences and personal values. By allowing the voices of the women to guide the development of theory rather than imposing theories on the experience of women, the assumptions that have defined leadership and organizations will be challenged.

Preparation programs for administrators in higher education need to consider the multi-faceted aspects of leadership as they design their curriculums.

This study shows the complexity of the role of a senior administrator in an institution of higher education. The data indicates that the leaders in this study conceptualize
the purpose of higher education as well as interpret leadership itself in a manner that is not expressed in the literature on the topics. They do not understand the institution in terms of structure and policies but rather in terms of the people and the relationships of those people. This construction of leadership as relational and contextual requires that administrators of institutions of higher education develop skills, talents, and attitudes that would question dominant understandings of educational organizations. Those charged with the academic preparation of future leaders need to consider that complexity and design experiences that will encourage the development of skills and the ability to question and reframe the understanding of the higher education enterprise.

Congregations of women religious who sponsor institutions of higher education need to articulate the charism of their congregation which makes their style of leadership within their institutions distinctive.

The women religious in this study have a deep understanding of the charism of the Sisters of Mercy. This charism guides the construction of their leadership. They have personally integrated that understanding into their
activities as college presidents. However, they experience considerable difficulty articulating that charism in a manner in which those who join them in ministry could understand and in turn integrate it into their practice. As the number of women religious diminish this articulation would be essential to the continuance of the congregation's mission.

The question of sponsorship of institutions of higher education by congregations of women religious needs to be addressed.

The position of the religious congregation and it's understanding of the ministry of higher education needs to be clarified. The words of the women in the study show that the charism or spirit of the congregation is instantiated as the individual engages in a process of interpretation of historical tradition and current context. The present study indicates that this process results in an understanding of leadership and organizations that guides how the women in the study interact on their campuses. The recent transference of power to predominantly lay Boards of Directors and the scarcity of religious in the colleges necessitates that the congregation be clear about the manner
in which they will encourage that process in order to ensure the continuity of their mission.

The Charism of Mercy guides the construction of the leadership of the five women in the study. The Institute of the Sisters of Mercy needs to examine how that charism is shared with the members of the faculty, staff, and student body of their institutions of higher education.

The present research indicates that the Charism of Mercy is instantiated in the leadership of the women in the study through an ongoing process of interpretation. This interpretation occurs on the cognitive, affective, and relational levels. Through this process, the participants have internalized the charism and use it as a filter as they make decisions, relate to people, and, in general, function as college presidents. If the Mercy Charism and the distinctiveness of institutions sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy is to be continued then this ongoing process of interpretation needs to be facilitated within the hearts and minds of those who participate in the ministry. This is not merely identification with the goals of the Sisters of Mercy but rather an ownership, a commitment to those goals. This commitment requires a program of sponsorship that recognizes and addresses the affective as well as the cognitive dimension of the Mercy Charism. The use of symbols and rituals during the Mercy Day celebration in which the college community reflected together is one way in which
this could occur.

The question of sponsorship and the Mercy Charism in colleges and universities sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy needs to be studied. The implications this has for personnel and financial policies needs to be addressed. The interdependence of the separate institutions needs to be recognized. The colleges sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy are at a crucial point in their history. The recognition that the charism of Mercy guides the construction of the leadership of the college presidents raises the question of how that charism will be instantiated by future leaders who have not had exposure to the historical tradition of the congregation and have not engaged in an interpretation of that tradition within their current context.

The position of president in colleges sponsored by women religious is key to the furthering of the mission. The search process for future presidents of these institutions should clearly articulate the goals and values of the institution before establishing the criteria for selection.

This study indicates that a primary responsibility of the president is to keep the values and goals of the institution before the college community. This study further indicates that the experiences and history of the presidents influence the manner in which they instantiate those values.
It would seem advisable that the search committee for the position of president include a consideration around the compatibility of the values and goals of the candidate with those goals and values. As the number of religious women diminishes, it is incumbent on the sponsoring congregation to instigate programs of leadership development which include discussion of the Mercy charism and its impact on leadership within institutions of higher education.

A process for long range planning should be developed both within the individual institutions and the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy.

The data from this study does not indicate any concerted effort toward long range planning within the colleges studied. While this may be a reflection of the questions asked during the interviews, the possibility exists that this area has been neglected. It would be important for the congregation to plan for the future of their institutions and the continuance of the Mercy charism through an integrated planning process that would involve all higher education institutions.
Questions for Further Study

Based on the findings of this study further research is warranted. This research project was limited to the espoused leadership styles of the college presidents. A salient follow up study would be to explore the college community's experience of the president's leadership. A study designed to explore the community's perception of the president would provide an additional perspective to inform our understanding of the leadership of these women.

The charism of the religious congregation seems to be integral to the theoretical understanding and practical implementation of educational leadership for these women. Research involving the remaining college presidents of baccalaureate institutions who are not Sisters of Mercy would explore the place the charism of the sponsoring community within their understanding of their position.

I would also recommend a similar research project in collaboration with a researcher who is not a Sister of Mercy. My own values and commitments as a Sister of Mercy have influenced the manner in which I formulated the question, designed the study, and analyzed the data. Another researcher with different values and commitments would provide us with perspective from which to view the leadership of the five women in the study.
In short, this research has expanded the understanding of leadership. The question of gender's influence on an individual's leadership style was integral to the participants understanding of themselves and thus was an inarticulated feminist ideology rather than a topic for explanation. Hence, through an emphasis on the words and experiences of the women in the study I was not constrained by a socially constructed concept of gendered characteristics prevalent in the leadership literature. The present research indicates that the women in the study understand organizations and leadership within those organizations differently than what has been proposed by the dominant research. Further research is needed to continue this discussion. Additional insights would be garnered from a project that examines the experiences and characteristics of other women college presidents to expand this new conceptualization of leadership.
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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL
1. Tell me about yourself. How did you come to be in your present position?

2. Tell me about your institution. How would you describe the education a student receives here?

3. How would you describe your leadership style? How does your membership in the Sisters of Mercy influence your leadership style? How would I see this style operative in your everyday activities?

4. How are decisions made here? What structures are in place to facilitate the decision making process? Why are those particular structures utilized?

5. Think of a decision you have made recently in which you felt the charism of Mercy was alive. What helped you make that decision? How did you know it was the right decision?

6. How would you describe your relationship with your Board, faculty, staff, students, external constituencies?

7. To what extent does your membership in the Sisters of Mercy influence how you function as a college president?

8. What should be the distinctive characteristics of a Mercy college?

9. If you were selecting a new president of a Mercy college what would it be important for them to know and to think about? What reading material would you recommend? Who should they talk to?

10. What is your vision for the role of the Sisters of Mercy in Catholic higher education? How would Catherine McAuley envision Mercy higher education in today's world?
APPENDIX B

COLLEGES SPONSORED BY THE SISTERS OF MERCY
<table>
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<tr>
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