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NEGOTIATING INSTITUTIONAL IDENTITY: FACULTY MEMBERS’ ACADEMIC AND RELIGIOUS INTERPRETATIONS OF A CATHOLIC LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGE

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

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*****

The Ohio State University
1998

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ABSTRACT

Since the 1960s Catholic collegiate institutions have struggled with issues of identity. Two questions frame their struggles: What does it mean to be a college, and what does it mean for that institution to be Catholic? This qualitative case study explored these questions in the context of Ohio Dominican College, a baccalaureate institution founded by the Dominican Sisters of St. Mary of the Springs in Columbus, Ohio. The purpose of the study was to describe faculty members’ academic and religious interpretations of the college’s institutional identity.

The study concludes that participants characterize ODC as a liberal arts college, despite the historic strength of its professional degree programs. This interpretation provides a common purpose while allowing for flexibility in practice. In light of institutional realities, participants articulate three perspectives of the college’s educational program: integral, paradoxical, and popular. The Dominican tradition reinforces the liberal arts consensus. Interestingly, participants tend to separate the intellectual and religious aspects of this tradition. Decoupling allows the Dominican motto to function as a shorthand mission statement among individuals who hold
varying beliefs. Participants are sensitive to the college’s identity as a Catholic institution; however, they have difficulty articulating the meaning of Catholic identity and its expression in the life of the campus. They tend to locate commitment to this identity at the level of the individual and to view it as an option that faculty and students embrace voluntarily. The decoupling of the Dominican tradition from its religious aspects reduces its ability to contribute content and definition to the college’s religious identity.

The study indicates that even with the support of the Dominican tradition, the college’s institutional realities will increasingly pose challenges to its identity as a liberal arts college. Further, it suggests that participants are hindered in their efforts to engage in more productive conversations about the college’s religious identity by the inadequacy of language and content related to issues constitutive of this identity.
Dedication

To the valiant women whose loving challenge and support have given me strength, courage and confidence, especially my mother, Rita, and my sister, Mary.
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As lonely as the dissertation process feels, the writing of a dissertation is not accomplished by the author alone. Many people have contributed to this project and I wish to acknowledge them.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

As the twentieth century draws to a close, higher education in the United States is entering a new stage in its history which portends dramatic changes not only in the organization, financing, and management of collegiate institutions but also in their identities and missions (Kerr, 1998; Dill & Sporn, 1995). For colleges and universities seeking to maintain relations with churches or religious traditions, the current situation is even more complicated (Guthrie & Noftzger, 1992; Hughes & Adrian, 1997). A college’s relationship with a religious tradition presents an additional set of questions related to identity and mission. Not only must church-related colleges and universities take steps to maintain academic integrity, while pursuing the innovations necessary to survive in a rapidly changing and highly competitive environment; they must also find ways to interpret their religious identities to ensure their continued vitality and meaning.

The largest and most diverse group of church-related colleges and universities in this country are the approximately 230 Catholic colleges and
universities (Guthrie, 1992). For almost four decades leaders of Catholic collegiate institutions and church officials have been engaged in a complex conversation about the identities of these institutions and who has the authority to define that identity (Gallin, 1992; Gleason, 1994, 1995).

The current conversation began in the 1960s when changes in the American Catholic community and the Roman Catholic Church introduced ambiguities about what it means to be Catholic and about the purpose of Catholic higher education. The Sixties brought an end to the distinctive American Catholic subculture that had been gradually collapsing since the end of World War II. Catholics had made dramatic social and economic advances that moved them into the mainstream of American society. They no longer thought of themselves as a religious minority in a Protestant society (Gleason, 1994). The spiritual renewal and doctrinal reforms initiated by the Second Vatican Council further altered their understandings of the Catholic church and faith and of themselves as Catholics. The Council reversed the church’s longstanding condemnation of liberal ideals, such as personal and religious liberty, and its resistance to modern culture (O’Brien, 1994). The church and its members were now to live "in the modern world" and share responsibility for the fate of the human family (Gadium et Spes, 1965). Doctrines, authority structures, and religious practices that had once set Catholicism and Catholics apart from the rest of American society were dramatically altered and, in some cases, entirely
eliminated. What it meant to be Catholic had become far less obvious than it had been only a decade earlier.

These changes had tremendous impact on Catholic institutions. Rembert G. Weakland (1994), former bishop of Milwaukee, explains:

When the history of the last quarter of this century is written, it will emphasize how Catholics in the United States struggled with the question of Catholic identity of the many institutions that were its glory in the early part of the century. The immigrant church made remarkable sacrifices to build such institutions and saw in them a strong force for maintaining the integrity of their faith in a culture that was predominantly Protestant. By the third quarter of this century, however, the culture was no longer seen as Protestant and Catholics had become the largest church in the nation. A new situation demanded a new mission. (p. xi)

Nowhere has this search for a new mission been more apparent or more controversial than among Catholic colleges and universities. For six decades these institutions functioned apart from the American academic mainstream. They provided Catholics a place to pursue higher education without exposing themselves to the Protestant and secular influences of American society. Catholic educators saw as their primary task the imparting of a distinctive Catholic intellectual worldview and culture. But by the 1960s, the need for such safe havens had vanished. Catholics themselves had become critical of and embarrassed by their cultural and intellectual isolationism (Dolan, 1985). Together with their collegiate institutions, Catholics were ready to move into the mainstream of American society.
The Problem

The need for a new mission was obvious. What was not so obvious at that time and what remains contested terrain almost four decades later is what the new mission of Catholic higher education ought to be. Beginning in 1963 with the Land O'Lakes Statement and continuing through the stalemate over guidelines for implementing *Ex corde ecclesiae* in 1998, Catholic academic leaders and church officials have debated the definition of a contemporary Catholic university or college. At the center of this ongoing "conversation" are the dual questions: "What does it mean to be a university or college, and what does it mean for that institution to be Catholic?" (Gallin, 1992, p. 1).

Prior to 1960, those two questions posed little conflict for Catholic educators. Curriculums organized by Neoscholastic philosophy answered both questions simultaneously. The educational experience offered at Catholic institutions attended to students' religious formation and intellectual development by providing them with a distinctively Catholic world view. But as Catholics moved into the American mainstream and Vatican II redefined the faith, Neoscholasticism was disestablished as the ground and measure of Catholic higher education. Catholic educators turned to the American academic community for the definitions of academic legitimacy and quality. This redefinition of academic norms introduced the tension between answers to the questions: What does it mean to be a college, and what
does it mean for that institution to be Catholic? Religion had gradually been disestablished within American higher education during the twentieth century and American higher education was now a secular enterprise (Marsden, 1995). Legitimacy as a collegiate institution required a church-related college or university to maintain a clear demarcation between its academic and religious endeavors. Within many Catholic institutions this separation was achieved by locating its religious activities in the campus ministry office and the theology department; in effect creating two spheres of operations, one academic and one religious. The separation was structurally reinforced when the religious congregations\textsuperscript{1} that owned and operated these institutions transferred the institutions' governance to independent, self-perpetuating boards of trustees.

The internal separation between academic and religious spheres and corporate independence from the founding congregations introduced questions about the way these schools were now Catholic. Church authorities, concerned with what they saw as the growing secularization of

\textsuperscript{1}Religious institute, religious congregation, and religious order are terms used to describe groups of nuns, brothers, and priests. Religious institute is the technical term used in canon law to describe "a society in which members, . . . pronounce public vows either perpetual or temporary, . . . and live a life in common as brothers and sisters" (cc. 607). The Oxford Dictionary of Religion (19 ) defines religious congregation and religious order as two categories of religious institutes which differ in the type of vows the members take. Members of a religious congregation take simple vows while some or all of the members of an order take solemn vows. In this study, however, the terms religious institute and religious congregation are used interchangeably to refer to any Catholic societies of nuns, brothers, and priests, regardless of the form of vows their members take.
these institutions, sought to reassert a direct connection with and, therefore, control over Catholic colleges and universities through a series of legal pronouncements. These documents contain requirements which, if enacted, could significantly impact the academic status of American Catholic colleges and universities and perhaps threaten their eligibility to receive government and foundation financial support.

The Purpose

This interpretive case study intends to expand current understandings of the identity problems in contemporary Catholic higher education. It does so by examining how faculty members at one Catholic baccalaureate college sponsored by a women's religious institute respond to questions about what it means to be a college and what it means for that institution to be Catholic as they relate to the institution in which they work. The approach taken in this study differs from that taken in existing literature on church-related colleges in general and on Catholic colleges in particular in three ways.

First, this is a descriptive study of the ways individuals interpret and construct the identity of a particular college. In contrast, many efforts at defining the identity of Catholic universities are abstract and prescriptive treatments delineating and explicating the values or features that ought to characterize all Catholic colleges (Hesburgh, 1994; Hellwig, 1997; Buckley, 1993; Burtchaell, 1991; Dulles, 1991; Coleman, 1985). This abstract,
prescriptive quality also characterizes much of the literature on the identity of church-related colleges in general (DeJong, 1992; Hughes & Adrian, 1997). Commenting on the Catholic literature, historian David O’Brien notes:

There are many philosophical and theological texts about Catholic higher education that make great sense, especially if one is a Catholic. But they often seem light years removed from the average American Catholic campus. . . . Similarly, emphasis on a Catholic inspiration of the institution, as distinct from individuals, . . . simply bypasses questions about who receives this inspiration and by what process institutions respond to the inspirations they receive.

This study aims at the gap in empirical research on the individuals who receive and respond to the inspiration. It does so by examining faculty members’ interpretations of the college’s academic and religious identities. Its purpose is to describe the meanings that these individuals give to the institution’s identity as a Catholic college.

Second, this study differs from existing scholarship by focusing on the views of faculty members. Recent empirical studies have focused primarily on the perceptions and attitudes of college presidents, board of trustees, and the leaders of sponsoring religious institute (Gallen, 1996; Morey, 1995; Murphy, 1991; Loehr, 1987). Faculty as a group have been overlooked. The last major study of faculty teaching at Catholic institutions was published in 1964 by sociologist John Donovan. This study was limited to faculty at colleges founded by men’s religious institutes; no similar study has been conducted with faculty at colleges founded women’s religious
institutes. Given the faculty's significant role in devising, regulating, and enacting the core activities of Catholic colleges and universities, that is, their academic programs, their perceptions of these institutions and their work within them is critical to any discussion of their identities. The lack of attention to faculty perception, therefore, is a significant gap in the literature on Catholic higher education.

Finally, this study differs in the type of institution it examines, namely, a baccalaureate college founded by a women's religious institute. This group of institutions have recently begun to attract the attention of scholars and there is a small but growing body of research pertaining to them (For examples see Gallin, 1996; Morey, 1995; Murphy, 1991; Dumestre, 1990; Kolman, 1987; Schier, 1987; Loehr, 1987). However, much of the literature on identity in Catholic higher education has focused on the concerns of doctoral and research universities, most of which are sponsored by men's congregations. Furthermore, most of the contributors have been administrators and faculty members from these institutions. For example, the frequently referenced volume edited by Theodore Hesburgh (1994), *The Challenge and Promise of a Catholic University*, is a collection of essays by faculty at the University of Notre Dame. As would be expected, maintaining an environment conducive to conducting research is a central concern in these essays. The majority of Catholic colleges and universities, however, are comprehensive and baccalaureate institutions at which teaching is
central and scholarship aspirations are far more modest. Little has been heard from faculty members at these institutions about the challenge and promise of a Catholic comprehensive or baccalaureate college or university.

This study, in summary, aims at expanding the available knowledge pertaining to Catholic higher education by providing detailed and rich description of the ways faculty members at a Catholic baccalaureate college interpret and construct the institution’s academic and religious identities.

Research Questions

In seeking to understand faculty members’ interpretation and construction of the college’s identity, this study asks two questions:

• How do faculty members describe the college’s current academic identity and the ways in which that identity is expressed in the academic program of the college?
• How do faculty members describe the college’s current religious identity and the ways in which that identity is expressed in the life of the campus?

Organization of the Thesis

This introductory chapter describes the problem this study addresses, the study’s purpose, and the particular questions it seeks to investigate.
The remainder of the thesis is divided into two sections. The first explains the theoretical, historical, and methodological perspectives that frame and guide this study. The second section explains the findings of the study and the possible implications of those findings.

Chapter II situates organizational identity within the wider context of organizational theory and reconsiders the images used to conceptualize how collegiate institutions function. It also examines historical developments that set the stage for an investigation of contemporary Catholic higher education's identity problems and explains two interpretations of those problems. Finally, the chapter outlines four characteristics of organizational identity that form the framework for understanding organizational identity in collegiate settings.

Chapter III describes the methodology of the study. It begins with a discussion of the study’s design and the rationale for employing a qualitative approach and a single case study strategy. It then explicates the research methods used including site and participant selection, site and participant profiles, and data collection and analysis techniques. The final sections of the chapter examine the issues of the study’s trustworthiness and its limits.

A brief introduction to the second section explains the ways David Dill’s approach to symbol and ritual provides an overarching framework for interpreting the studies findings related to academic and religious identity. Chapter IV examines the ways faculty participants interpret the academic
identity of the institution in which they work. It explicates participants' share beliefs about the institution as a liberal arts college and examines institutional realities that challenge those beliefs. It then delineates three perspectives of a career-oriented, liberal arts education which faculty participants articulate as they attempt to reconcile idea of a liberal arts college with the college's realities.

Participants' understandings of the college's religious identity are explored in Chapter V. The tradition of the sponsoring congregation and the Catholic tradition both play different roles in informing and shaping the college's religious identity. The share beliefs and assumption about these two aspects of the college's identity are described and the ways these identity aspects are express in the life of the campus are discussed.

The final chapter, Chapter VI, explores the learning and implications emerging from this study. The chapter reviews the study by exploring how shifting levels of focus influenced its development. It summaries participants' interpretations of the college's academic and religious identity as well as the relationship between the two. Possible implications of the study's findings for Catholic higher education and for the concept of organizational identity are suggested and questions for further research proposed.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This literature review examines scholarship in two broad areas relevant to this study. Specifically, it explores scholarship pertinent to organizational identity in higher education and to Catholic higher education. The chapter is designed to provide an overview of major contributions in these two areas and to describe how this scholarship influenced my thinking in the study. The chapter is not intended to be a comprehensive review of all applicable research in these areas. Instead, the literature review presented here formed the interpretative framework I employed as I constructed the meaning of this study.

The section on organizational identity explicates the theoretical perspective that frames the study. It begins with a discussion and critique of the organizational metaphors or images most often used to describe and explain how collegiate institutions function and behave, namely, colleges and universities as cultures and as systems. This is followed by a description of the concept of organizational identity. The section on Catholic higher
education reviews the genesis and issues of the identity problems currently confronting Catholic colleges and universities in the United States.

Conceptualizing Organizational Identity

Questions of identity are some the most prominent and potentially consequential facing colleges and universities today. Shifts within the larger sociopolitical context, the higher education community, and collegiate organizations themselves increasingly generate choices for institutions, the resolution of which requires more than better information, improved structures and processes, or clearer goals and objectives to resolve (Drucker, 1994). More and more often institutions in all sectors of higher education find themselves confronting situations that provoke more fundamental and potentially disruptive questions about "who" they are, the purposes they serve and the work they do. Higher education research, however, has given little direct attention to the concept of organizational identity: what identity is, how colleges construct identities, or the influence that organizational identity might have on organizational behavior.

This section explicates the conceptualization of organizational identity that frames this study. It is comprised of two parts. The first reexamines two of the interpretive images or metaphors often used to describe how collegiate organizations function, in particular, those of culture and open systems. The second part draws from the literature on
personal and corporate identity to construct a description of collegiate organizational identity.

Organizational Metaphors

Researchers in the field of higher education rely heavily upon the metaphors of open system and culture to describe and explain how colleges and universities work (Birnbaum 1988). The vast literatures generated by these two metaphors leave little doubt as to their power and durability as interpretative devices. Nonetheless, like any device used to conceptualize and interpret reality, these two metaphors view organizations from particular perspectives. Gareth Morgan (1997) notes in his examination of organizational metaphors that "all theories of organization and management are based on implicit images or metaphors that lead us to see, understand, and manage organizations in distinctive yet practical ways" (p. 4). He explains that one aspect of metaphor is that it produces one-sided insights: "In highlighting certain interpretations it tends to force others into a background role" (p. 5). Morgan asserts: "We have to accept that any theory or perspective that we bring to the study of organization and management, while capable of creating valuable insights, is also incomplete, biased, and potentially misleading." He continues by calling attention to the inherently paradoxical nature of a metaphor: "It can create powerful insights that also become distortions, as the way of seeing created through a
metaphor becomes a way of not [emphasis in original] seeing" (p. 5).

Organizational metaphors by their nature, therefore, necessarily conceal and distort some features of a situation or organization even as they reveal and clarify others.

Both the systems and culture metaphors, as they are currently applied, tend to conceal the capacity of organizations for self-creation and self-perpetuation. As a result, they do not adequately consider the concept of organizational identity, its formation and its function. The following section discusses the limits of these metaphors and explores alternative organizational metaphors for understanding the behavior of colleges and universities in identity-challenging circumstances.

**Rethinking Organizations as Cultures**

This study can, on one hand, be located within the broad category of higher education research on organizational culture. Its purpose, after all, is to describe and examine the meanings made and shared by faculty members about the identifying characteristics and features of the college at which they work. The conceptualization of this research has been influenced by David Dill’s characterization of academic institutions as "value-rational organizations grounded in strong cultures" (1982, p. 303), as well as by the works of William Tierney (Chaffee and Tierney, 1988; 1988, 1990, 1993, 1997). Furthermore, Dill’s approach to the role of symbol and ritual in
collegiate culture functions as the framework for organizing and analyzing the findings reported in Chapters IV and V in Section II. This approach will be examined in more detail in the introduction of that section; however, briefly stated, symbols are the objects, acts, or ideas that provide unifying beliefs among members of an organization, and rituals are the processes for defining the meaning of those symbols.

On the other hand, I also intend the study as a challenge to the concept of organizational culture as it is often employed in current research in higher education. During the past two decades research on postsecondary institutions has focused considerable attention on colleges and universities as cultures (Tierney, 1990). Theoretically, the culture metaphor depicts organizational entities, both entire organizations and subgroups within them, as continuously emerging networks of shared meaning that both shape and are shaped by their members (Geertz, 1973; Chaffe & Tierney, 1988). Much of the research on culture has focused on one side of that equation, namely, on the influence that culture exerts on individuals and organizations. This pattern is reflected in organizational and higher education literature in a variety of ways. For example, studies examine the influence of disciplinary and institutional cultures on faculty work and attitudes (e.g., Clark, 1987; Becher, 1989), the influence of institutional subcultures on organizations (e.g., Kuh & Whitt, 1988; Berquist, 1992), the manipulation of symbolic elements to produce desired changes in

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individual and organizational performance (e.g., Schein, 1992; Seymour, 1992), and the power of culture to support the status quo and obscure systematic marginalization of some groups and individuals (e.g., Tierney, 1993, 1997a). This research strand has contributed enormously to our understanding of how colleges and universities function. Nevertheless, there is a lack of scholarly attention to the other side of the equation, that is, on how individuals shape the cultures in which they participate. This research gap leaves us with an interpretation of culture that is increasingly deterministic (Tierney, 1997b; Limerick, 1997). This one-sided and deterministic understanding of culture is problematic for two reasons. The first is that it does not take into account adequately the circumstances of contemporary higher education in the United States. Inquiry which focuses on culture’s power to shape thought and behavior is most effective and useful when the culture of a group is strong enough to recede from view. In circumstances where culture is an invisible, taken-for-granted aspect of daily life, it exerts formidable influence on members of the group (Geertz, 1973). It can be seen to have the power to determine modes of thought and ways of acting.

The circumstances in which colleges and universities currently find themselves, however, exhibit a decided lack of cultural consensus, both externally and internally. The society they serve is reconsidering and, in some cases, radically redefining its beliefs and understandings about such
fundamentals as the nature of knowledge (Kuhn, 1970; Fuller, 1993, Harding, 1987), of business and economics (Drucker, 1993; Toeffler, 1991), of religious belief and practice (Roof, 1993; Wuthnow, 1988), of social institutions (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton 1991), and of personal identity (Gergen, 1991). Cultural diversity is viewed in many arenas as a goal to be sought rather than as a problem to be resolved. The term *post* is often employed to characterize this society—*post*modern, *post*-capitalist, *post*-industrial, *post*-structural, *post*-Cold War—as a way of signalling that the changes being experienced are shifts of dramatic, even paradigmatic proportions.¹ This shifting sociopolitical context has higher education searching for a new consensus for its purposes and priorities in service of that society (Kerr, 1998; Dill & Sporn, 1995).

Furthermore, academe itself is split along epistemological, political, and methodological faultlines as well as along more traditional disciplinary and institutional divides. As a result, the academic community is balkanized and bereft of a sense of common endeavor (Kerr, 1998; Donmoyer, 1996; Clark, 1987). At the institutional level, burgeoning technologies blur old boundaries and the growing disengagement of faculty and students challenge the defining values and norms of many campus communities. In light of these contextual and institutional conditions, it is cultural

¹For different discussions of this shift see Drucker, 1994; Toeffler, 1991; Gergen, 1991.
fragmentation rather than cultural consensus that can be said to characterize U.S. colleges and universities.

In circumstances such as those currently experienced by collegiate organizations, the cultural assumptions that frame perceptions and legitimate actions become increasingly visible and, consequently, opened to question and debate. Individuals become more cognizant of the multiple cultures to which they belong and the way these cultures influence how they think and act. As their awareness increases, the influence of any single culture on the members of a campus community is likely to decline.² The influence of individuals on organizational behavior, on the other hand, has the potential to become more significant and of greater consequence in situations where cultural strength is diminished or diffused. Continuing to stress the shaping power of culture conceals the influence that the broader membership might exert on an organization in identity-challenging circumstances.

The second problem resulting from the current overemphasis on culture’s influence on individuals and organizations is that when the influence of individuals is considered in the current literature, the focus is often on organizational leaders (e.g., Chaffe & Tierney, 1988; Schein, 1992). Culture is characterized as some thing an organization has that can be

²For example, Patricia Wittberg’s (1991) describes such a process in her study of the transformation of contemporary Catholic religious institutes from intentional communities to associations in Creating a Future for Religious Life. Also, see the discussion of the impact that weakening cultural assumptions had on the role of women in the early church and at the time of the Protestant Reformation by Bonnie S. Anderson and Judith Zinsser (1988) in A History of Their Own.
shaped to support certain values and behaviors among the membership (Kilmann, Saxton, Serpa, 1985). This perspective is often linked with the view that "leadership and culture are two sides of the same coin" (Schein, 1992). In a common scenario organizational culture is often presented as "aberrant and in need of repair" (Tierney, 1997, p 5 of internet text).

Organizational change to correct the aberration is depicted as dependent upon the ability of the leader or a small group of leaders to articulate a new vision and then to reshape the college's culture to support the implementation of that corrective vision. Other internal constituents are portrayed as participants—be they enthusiastic supporters, pragmatic adapters, or troublesome resistors—in leader-initiated change processes. The visioning role of leaders in an organization is not being disputed here.

Rather, my point is that an exclusive emphasis on leadership's visions obscures the ways that other internal constituents interpretations and visions might be at work within the organization. It prevents us from seeing the influence these other visions might have on the development of the organization.

The fragmenting cultural contexts of U.S. colleges and universities suggests the need for an interpretive metaphor that helps us to see the perspectives and visions of a broad spectrum of internal stakeholders. Conceivably this need could be satisfied with a corrected interpretation of culture. Other authors are attempting to rehabilitate the concept of culture
from its more deterministic interpretations (e.g., Tierney, 1997b). I choose not to describe the study in this way for two reasons. First, culture has so many meanings that such a recovery project risks being merely another footnote on the subject. But more important, I am concerned that culture, regardless of its formal definition, has come to stand for something over and against the individual (Limerick, 1997). I use the concept of identity to focus attention on the ability of individuals to act against cultural influences—albeit never completely and with limited effect—and to shape the organizations in which they think and act. Stated differently, the words and actions of members of a campus community are productive, as well as reproductive. This stance is strategic. I am suggesting that our understanding of collegiate organizations and their current circumstances may be enhanced by an interpretive image that focuses on the ways faculty, staff, and administrators perceive the institution they work in and the influence their perceptions have on organizational development and behavior.

Revisioning colleges as systems

Colleges and universities are also routinely described as systems, that is, as "an organized whole that has two or more interdependent parts (or subsystems) and is separated from its environment by a boundary" (Birnbaum, 1988, p. 30). At issue here is not the idea that a college can be thought of as a system but the assumption that colleges are one type of
system, namely, open systems. The open systems perspective describes colleges as systems which are in relation with environments. From a point of observation outside both the organization and its environment, this perspective depicts a college and its environment as two distinct entities separated by a definable boundary. The boundary is permeable and allows inputs and outputs to flow across complex patterns of interdependence among a system’s subsystems and between these subsystems and the environment. Change within the college is understood to be the product of a stimulus-response reaction. The stimulus is often described as originating in the environment and, consequently, the college’s evolution tends to be viewed as being driven by environmental conditions.

But the fact that campus insiders stop and ask questions about "who" they are as an organization when confronted with certain types of choices suggests that colleges and universities are more than reactive systems. They can also be thought of as systems organized to produce and perpetuate their own identities. Their behavior, including change behavior, can also be said to originate from within and to be guided by an organizational sense of self. The metaphor of a self-reproducing or autopoietic system is more effective than that of an open system for illuminating this organizational characteristic.

*Autopoiesis* refers to the capacity of a system for self-creation or self-renewal through an organizationally closed system of relations (Morgan,
1997). The concept was originally used to describe living systems (Maturana & Varela, 1972), but is increasingly applied to social systems (Luhamann, 1995, Zeleny, 1980) and organizations (Morgan, 1997; Wheatley, 1992). The autopoietic systems perspective starts with the assumption that "the aim of such systems is ultimately to produce themselves; their own organization and identity is their most important product" (Morgan, p. 253).

The point of view in this metaphorical perspective is from inside the organization itself. The boundary between the organization and its environment which is so apparent in the open systems metaphor blur and recede from view. The college perceives and understands itself in terms of a set of relations with salient elements of its environment. It continues to have an "environment" but relations with the environment are seen as internally determined. The environment as it is perceived by the organization is a reflection of itself and part of its own organization. The system, in a sense, is the college in relation with the salient elements of its environment.

The college endeavors to reproduce and extend this set of self-defining and self-producing relations by subordinating all structural changes to it. This is accomplished by "engaging in circular patterns of interaction whereby change in one element of the system is coupled with changes elsewhere" (p. 240). The college cannot enter into interactions that are not part of its identifying set of relations with its environment. Since the college
and elements of its environment together comprise the system, change can be said to originate within the system and to be guided by the college’s understanding of itself.

Morgan (1997) identifies three important advantages of thinking about colleges and universities as self-reproducing systems. First, it helps us see that colleges and universities enact their environments as projections of their own identity. Second, it assists us to see the intimate connection between many of the problems colleges and universities encounter in their environments and the identities they endeavor to maintain. Third, it highlights the importance of organizational identity in understanding and explaining change and development in these institutions. Conceptualizing colleges and universities as organizations devoted to the creation and maintenance of their own identities leads us to consider the possible meanings of the term organizational identity.

The need for a concept of organizational identity becomes more apparent once we begin to think about organizations as identity producing and reproducing systems. A coherent theory of organizational identity does not exist. The following section draws from disparate bodies of literature to construct the theoretical understanding of identity that frames the present study.
Four Characterizations of Organizational Identity

Efforts to develop identity as a tractable concept for organizational research are relatively recent (Albert & Whetten, 1985; Diamond, 1993; Fombrun, 1995; Olin, 1992; Schmidt, 1995). In higher education literature, the concept of organizational identity is linked occasionally with that of culture (e.g., Chaffe & Tierney, 1988; Kuh & Robinson, 1995). Nevertheless, identity is not well defined in these works and remains an inchoate concept. Organizational identity, therefore, lacks the theoretical definition and richness of concepts such as culture and climate (Reicher & Schneider, 1990). However, there is sufficient material on personal and organizational identity from which to construct a descriptive framework for conceptualizing identity in collegiate organizational settings. In this section I describe four characterizations of organizational identity drawn from the available literature. Identity is described as (a) an ability, (b) an internal perspective, (c) diversified, and (d) articulated narrowly.

Ability.

First, organizational identity can be thought of as an ability. Erik Erickson (1968 & 1980) describes an individual’s identity as the ability to experience oneself as having continuity and sameness over time and to act accordingly. A college’s identity functions in an analogous way. It allows an organization and those within it to recognize a college as the same
organization even as the particulars of its existence—mission, structure, leadership, location, clientele—change throughout the life cycle of the organization. Questions of identity, therefore, are likely to emerge as particularly salient in connection with events that interfere with an organization’s sense of continuity and sameness. These include life cycle events such as the foundation of an organization, the loss of a founder or other identity-sustaining element, the accomplishment of the organization’s raison d’etre, periods of extremely rapid growth, organizational retrenchment, and changes in collective status through takeover, merger, divestiture or acquisition (Albert & Whetten, 1985).

Insiders’ interpretation.

Second, identity can be described as the interpretation of the college by its internal stakeholders. As social systems, colleges themselves do not interpret and construct their identities. Rather, the people working within them interpret and construct identities for them. A college’s identity describes the set of features that internal groups such as administrators, staff, and faculty associate with a college (Fombrun, 1996) and consider to be the college’s most important, distinctive and enduring characteristics (Albert & Whetten, 1985). This set of features defines what the college is and suggests what it could become (Chaffe & Tierney, 1988). As such, identity can provide a campus community with a sense of purpose and
uniqueness, direct its strategies, guide its behavior, and define its key stakeholder relationships. Furthermore, it can shape the way internal constituents view their environment, constraining how opportunities and threats are defined, perceived and responded to.

Describing identity as a set of features is not the same as saying that a college's identity is a fixed, ideal reality or that identity is shared by all the members. A college or university, even one of modest proportions, is too organizationally complex and structurally extensive to ever be completely visible to its members, even its leaders. Individuals working within a college may have little or no contact with sizeable segments of the campus community. They are likely to have only a surface understanding of the work done by many other individuals within the college. They may pursue purposes and actions on behalf of the college that diverge, even conflict with the purposes and actions of other members of the organization (Cohen & March, 1974). To perceive and experience the diversity of people, purposes, structures, and activities that comprise a contemporary college as a single organization requires its members to imagine it as such and themselves within it (Anderson, 1991).³ A college's identity, therefore, is

³I am borrowing here from Benedict Anderson's idea of nations as imagined communities. In *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Anderson (1991) defines a nation as "an imagined political community" and explains that "it is imagined (emphasis in original) because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion." He goes on to say, "In fact, all communities larger than primordial villages of fact-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined" (p. 6).
the enterprise as it is imagined by its members. The organizational identity that emerges from this collective imagining process is continuously, and often contentiously, renegotiated by the members of college community in the course of carrying out their regular and extraordinary activities on behalf of the college. It expands to include many voices and diverse images, even as it is constrained by the current norms of higher education and the historical and contextual realities of the institution.

The coherence of a college's identity depends on the degree of overlap among the features its members identify as well as the interpretations they give to them (Chaffe & Tierney, 1985). Members of a campus community can demonstrate varying degrees of consensus around the features they identify as important and enduring. Furthermore, even when there is significant agreement about the college's important and enduring features, community members are likely to interpret these features differently. The appropriate level of overlap among features and the interpretations given them depends upon the particulars of the college and its present circumstances (Chaffe & Tierney, 1989). A widely shared, coherent identity, for instance, may be optimal for a college in relatively stable circumstances. It could become an incumbrance in circumstances requiring creative and flexible responses. Change within in an organization will require a certain degree of identity disintegration and incoherence.
Diversified.

Coherence is not the same as the absence of diversity. A third characterization of collegiate organizational identity is it is likely to be diversified (Olins, 1990). The way we talk about organizational identity, both in practical and scientific discourse, often implies that organizations have one identity. Stuart Albert and David A. Whetten challenge the taxonomic tradition which treats organizations as if they were either one organizational type or another. These researchers contend that many, if not most, organizations are hybrid composites of multiple organizational types (Albert & Whetten, 1985). A hybrid is an "organization whose identity is composed of two or more [organizational] types that would not normally be expected to go together" (p. 270). Identity hybridization is a natural and necessary development of organizations functioning in complex and turbulent environments.

Collegiate institutions, even those of modest size and scope, understand themselves as several different types of organizations, including a school, a business corporation, a research facility, a center of art and culture, a religious organization, and a social service agency. In the United States, collegiate institutions generally exhibit an ideographic or specialized pattern of hybridization. In other words, they buffer the college’s central

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4 Albert and Whetten discuss two forms of organizational hybrids: the holographic form and the ideographic form. In an holographic hybrid each unit within the organization exhibits all of the organization’s identities. The identity of
academic core by constructing separate support subsystems for responding to the diversity of demands placed on them by their environments (Albert & Whetten, 1985; Thompson, 1967). For example, colleges develop subsystems for nonacademic functions, such as enrollment management, institutional advancement, and residence life, so that faculty members are free to concentrate on core functions, namely, teaching and research. The support subsystems are comprised of specialized units of professionals whose primary commitment is to their specialized function in the college rather than to its academic mission and functions. These subsystems are often loosely coupled to each other and to the academic core to allow for optimum flexibility of action within the organization (Birnbaum, 1988). The variety introduced by this form of hybridization enhances the college's capacity to monitor and respond to its environment. On the other hand, it also has the potential to undermine institution-wide consensus about and commitment to a common mission (Albert & Whetten, 1985).

**Tailored statements.**

Finally, colleges and universities avoid constructing global statements of identity. Organizations avoid questions of identity whenever possible. But when confronted with a question that cannot be avoided, organizations generally construct responses that are limited to the particular question being

the whole organization is reflected in each sub-unit, albeit in a diminished form.
raised (Albert & Whetten, 1985). The reason for this is that the emergent and diversified nature of organizational identity makes global identity statements both very difficult to articulate and hard to live with. A college cannot focus on all aspects of its identity simultaneously. Furthermore, new aspects of its identity emerge and existing features are reinterpreted as the college interacts with its environment and makes new decisions in relation to that environment. The very process of raising and attempting to answer questions of identity can itself alter the organization’s identity. Broad and expansive statements of identity may have unforeseen ramifications that could limit a college’s flexibility in responding to new opportunities and challenges in the environment. Consequently, colleges and universities can be expected to articulate their identities in multiple limited statements that focus on the specific features or issues being questioned or challenged, rather than in one or a few global statements.

**Summary**

The various images or metaphors we use to conceptualize how colleges and universities function lead us to see, understand, and manage them in particular ways. Paradoxically, by leading us to see in a particular way, each metaphor also conceals or distorts other institutional dimensions. Colleges and universities increasingly face situations that offer challenges to their identities. The two organizational metaphors regularly used to describe
the nature and behavior of higher education institutions, however, tend to lead us away from seeing the identity-producing and identity-perpetuating behavior of collegiate organizations. The metaphors of culture and open systems are not as effective for thinking about the behavior of organizations in circumstances in which their identities are challenged. In turbulent and culturally fragmented circumstances such as those presently confronting colleges and universities in the United States, identity and the autopoietic system may prove more useful images for seeing, understanding and managing colleges and universities.

The concept of organizational identity is not well defined in the organization and higher education literature. This section described four characterizations of identity that influence this study. A college’s identity can be thought of as (a) its ability to experience itself as having continuity and sameness. It can also be understood as (b) the set of features faculty, administrators and staff associate with the college and use to imagine its great diversity of people, aims, and functions as a single enterprise. The identity of a collegiate institution is (c) by necessity diversified and (d) articulated in statements narrowly tailored to the particular questions being asked.
Questions of Framing

In any interpretive endeavor, decisions about framing the text, problem or event to be examined shape its outcome. Where we begin to tell a story depends on which story we want to tell and, in turn, goes a long way in determining which story we can tell. How broadly we define its range and where we choose to bring it to a close will shape the story’s meaning.

American Catholic higher education’s struggles with its identity can be characterized in a variety of ways and, consequently, a story about it could start in any number of places. It can be characterized as centering on the relationship between the sacred and the temporal realms or, in more contemporary language, the sacred and the secular. In this case, the starting point of our story could be Augustine’s civil treatise, *The City of God*, or, more to the point, the rise of medieval universities amidst the riotous debates sparked by scholasticism’s innovative merging of pagan philosophy with traditional Catholic thought (Tarnus, 1990; Southern, 1970). The identity quest can also be described as centering on attempts to

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5 Richard T. Hughes and William B. Andrian (1997) use various Christian denominations’ views of the relationship between the sacred and temporal spheres as a framework for explaining the differences and similarities in the denominations’ approaches to higher education in *Models of Christian Higher Education: Strategies for Success in the Twenty-First Century*. It is also the primary image behind the views of individuals such as the theologian Avery Dulles who take the normative stance that Catholic colleges and universities are on a slippery slope to secularization.
reconcile Catholic culture and American culture. This story could start with the founding of Georgetown College at the end of the colonial period or with the waves of European immigrants who came to this country in the last half of the eighteenth and first quarter of the nineteenth centuries. A third portrayal might frame the present struggle in terms of the effort to synthesize the Catholic faith with modern modes of thought and standards of scholarship. In this case, the story might begin with the issuance of two papal encyclicals: Testem Benevolentiae condemning what the Catholic church labeled Americanism in 1899 and Pascendi Dominici Gregis condemning modernism in 1907.

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This characterization is a common theme among historians of the American Catholic experience. It has been treated from various historical perspectives, including social (Dolan, 1985; Liptak, 1989), institutional (Hennessey, 1981), intellectual (Reher, 1989; Sparr, 1990; Appleby, 1992), documentary (Ellis, 1956), political (O'Brien, 1989), feminist (Kennelly, 1989), race (Davis, 1990), and spirituality (Chinnici, 1989). It is a major theme in the historical literature on Catholic higher education in the United States, including Phillip Gleason's (1995) comprehensive history of Catholic higher education from 1900 to the decade of the 1960s and David O'Brien's (1994) thematic treatment of Catholic higher education since the 1960s.

Phillip Gleason (1995) frames his history of American Catholic higher education in the twentieth century, Contending with Modernity, with this conflict. Because of the particular history of the American Catholic community, the Catholic-American issue and the Catholic-modernity issue are closely connected. Catholics spent the first two-thirds of the twentieth century challenging the assumptions and values of modern scientific scholarship and American liberalism, which they saw as closely linked. Through acculturation and assimilation to American culture, Catholics and Catholic collegiate institutions have changed their stance toward modernity and the values and modes of thinking that it entails. The tensions that arise from attempts to synthesize the Christian faith and modern scholarship are more clearly visible in discussions of the identity concerns of Protestant colleges and of church-related colleges in general. See for example, George Marsden's The Soul of the University or David S. Guthrie and Richard L. Noftzger, eds., Agendas for Church-Related Colleges and Universities.
Each of these three characterizations is a valid and interesting way to frame the identity challenges of contemporary Catholic colleges and universities. It is not within the scope of this literature review, however, to take the long view needed to tell any one of those stories adequately. This study focuses on the period between 1950 and 1998. This was a period of "startling changes, significant soul-searching, and extraordinary maturing" for both the Catholic church and its collegiate institutions (Gallin, 1992, p. 1). It was also the period during which church officials and university leaders first attempted to formally define the nature and mission of a contemporary Catholic university or college. It characterizes the current discussion of identity in terms of the dual questions that have occupied Catholic higher education in this period: What does it mean to be a university or college, and what does it mean for that institution to be a Catholic? The following section begins by examining historical developments in two aspects of Catholic colleges and universities during this period. It then describes the current debate about the identity and mission of Catholic collegiate institutions from two competing perspectives.

A New Era

Contemporary Catholic colleges and universities are very different organizations than they were in the 1960s. The language Catholics used to describe these institutions then and now provides an introduction to the
qualitative changes that have taken place. In the late Fifties and early Sixties, Catholics began to talk about themselves and their collegiate institutions as isolated in a religious, intellectual and cultural *ghetto* (Ellis, 1955). Colleges and universities were challenged to move from stagnant intellectual *backwaters* into the free flow of the academic *mainstream* (Greeley, 1969). Academic *excellence* as defined by the academic mainstream was the shared aim of these schools (Land O’Lakes, 1963). In the nineties, by contrast, Catholic colleges and universities are being asked to explain how they are *different* from other collegiate institutions. The continuing quest for academic excellence clashes with calls for greater clarity and emphasis on their *Catholic identity*. After four decades of adapting to the norms of the academic mainstream, critics charge that these institutions are plummeting down the *slippery slope of "secularization"* (Dulles, 1991; Burtchaell, 1991).

Contemporary Catholic higher education’s struggles with identity can be seen as emerging in the 1960s from the convergence of three powerful forces: (a) the assimilation and acculturation of American Catholics (b) the theological innovations of the Second Vatican Council and (c) the nation’s multiple social and cultural crises (Gleason, 1995; O’Brien, 1994). By the 1960s, Catholics had shed their immigrant status. They had fought for their country in two world wars, achieved educational levels above the national average, and entered white-collared professions (Gallup & Castelli, 1987;
Dolan, 1985; Burns, 1990). They now felt more like their non-Catholic neighbors than different from them. Increasingly better educated and upwardly mobile, Catholics began to expect their colleges and universities to reflect the values and norms of the academic mainstream. Heightened expectations promoted expansion of graduate and professional programs as well as the professionalization of the schools’ faculties and administrations (Gleason, 1995). The Second Vatican Council’s affirmation of personal freedom, the role of the laity, and the autonomy of the secular sphere called into question the paternalistic and authoritarian practices on Catholic campuses (O’Brien, 1990). New theological perspectives also ensured the collapse of Neoscholasticism as the foundation of Catholicism’s distinctive educational philosophy and curricular model (Gleason, 1995). The nation’s cultural crisis as reflected in racial tensions, antiwar protests, campus disturbances, and the women’s movement reinforced and complicated the identity issues faced by these colleges and universities.

Change was the order of the day. Catholic identity, seen as intrinsically connected with traditional authority and the past, was not only open to question but demanded scrutiny. As the pursuit of excellence continued, campuses redirected energies and resources toward improving their scholarly performance and academic reputation. Academic freedom and institutional autonomy replaced religious orthodoxy and congregational control as indicators and guarantors of the institutions’ legitimacy and
quality. Leaders of Catholic colleges and universities sought independence for their institutions from the religious congregations that founded them. This separation was deemed necessary to realize their aspirations to enter the academic mainstream, to enhance their public images and academic reputations, and to maximize opportunities for obtaining external financial support.

The following section examines in greater detail the changing relationship between collegiate organizations and the religious institutes that founded them during this period. It is followed by and examination of changes in the academic personnel, philosophy and structures that also occurred during this period.

Corporate Interdependence to Independence

The majority of Catholic colleges and universities in this country were established by religious institutes of nuns, brothers, and priests. Until the late 1960s these colleges and universities were part of the congregations that established them. They shared the congregations' missions as well as many aspects of their cultures and histories (Gleason, 1995; Morey, 1995). Colleges and congregations also shared finances, personnel, administration, and physical location (Gallin, 1996). The colleges served as sources of new members for the congregations and as places where congregation members pursued the professional preparation needed to carry out the congregations'
pursued the professional preparation needed to carry out the congregations' ministry initiatives in education, health care, and social service.

As subdivisions of religious congregations, colleges and universities were linked directly to the Roman Catholic Church. They were understood to be arms of the church that helped carry out its mission to preach the gospel. Ironically, their location within the religious congregations also provided them with a degree of autonomy from local ecclesiastical authorities. The Catholic Church itself is organized into geographical districts called dioceses that are presided over by a bishop (cc. 368-374). Dioceses are comprised of a central administration and a network of parish churches that minister to the needs of Catholics within the diocese. Religious congregations represent an alternative system of organization and ministry within the church that is transdiocesan. Congregations regularly own or sponsor institutions such as colleges and hospitals in multiple dioceses. Likewise, their members may live and work in a number of dioceses around the world. Canon law recognizes the special role of religious institutes and affords them significant autonomy from local church authorities in their internal affairs and the operation of their ministerial organizations and endeavors (cc. 590-591).

As a result of this historical pattern of development, the religious identities of these Catholic colleges and universities are informed and shaped by two sources, the founding religious congregation and the Roman Catholic Church. Furthermore, their identification with the founding congregations,
that is, their identity as a Dominican or a Jesuit college, may have meanings that are distinct from those resulting from their identification with the church at large, that is, their identity as a Catholic college. In the introduction to *Models for Christian Higher Education*, Richard T. Hughes (1997) describes the strength of the congregational influence: "[I]t must be said that there is no such thing as a stereotypical Catholic institution of higher learning, simply because the orders that sponsor so many Catholic institutions differ dramatically from one another in their historic emphases" (p. 7).

Congregational and Catholic identity, therefore, are better understood as overlapping but not co-terminus interpretations that contribute to a college’s religious identity. The influence of and relationship between these overlapping interpretations will depend upon the particular circumstances of a college or university and of the sponsoring religious congregation.

The nature of congregation-college relationships changed radically and rapidly in the 1960s. Alice Gallin (1996) examines these changes in *Independence and a New Partnership in Catholic Higher Education*. Originally, governance of collegiate institutions was the responsibility of the leadership of the religious congregations. In 1947, 90% of Catholic colleges and universities were under the direct control of religious orders and that remained the case until 1967 (Tasch cited in Gallin 1996). The particular modes of governance varied. Nevertheless, congregation-college relationships in this period were characterized by seven general traits: (a)
The congregation was the parent corporation and owned the property and facilities used by the college. (b) The congregation was the only legal corporation and it conducted the college as one of its activities. (c) The congregation supplied most of the college’s personnel, including the president and faculty. (d) Superiors of the religious institute comprised either the entire board of trustees or at least its a majority. (e) Religious superiors, exercising their canonical prerogative, appointed members to the college’s staff and faculty. (f) The congregation and/or religious superiors exercised financial controls beyond those reserved in canon law for the Holy See. (g) The president of the college could also be the religious superior, local or major. (Tasch cited in Gallin, 1996, p. 19)

The high degree of interdependence in matters of finance and governance began to strain congregation-college relationships, especially from the point of the view of the collegiate organizations. These institutions could not be run effectively if congregational leaders had to be consulted and their permission obtained for decisions as simple as purchasing a new lawnmower or making minor changes to the curriculum (p. 1). Even more significant, Gallin points out, were negative implications the intimate connection had for the collegiate institutions’ efforts to enter into the academic mainstream and for their eligibility to receive newly available sources of government foundation funding. Leaders of collegiate institutions, therefore, began to seek corporate independence for their
institutions in the 1960s. Beginning with Webster College, St. Louis
University, and the University of Notre Dame in 1967, Catholic colleges and
universities rapidly underwent a process of laicization, or "the transfer of
governance from communities [religious institutes] to boards of trustees with
predominantly lay membership" (p. xi). It is not within the scope of this
review to examine the social, educational, political, legal, congregational,
and ecclesial events and factors that contributed to this development. It will
suffice to examine the results of the process.®

In the decade between 1967 and 1977, over 90% of the institutions
moved to independent corporate systems governed by an independent board
of trustees (p. 18).® By 1992, that number had risen to 96%. The
representation of lay persons on boards increased significantly. In 1940 only
11% of colleges and universities reported having lay board members but by
1967 the number of schools reporting lay board members was 45%
(Gleason, 1995, p.). At present, lay persons constitute the majority of

® For a more in depth treatment of the subject, see Alice Gallin, 1996,
Independence and a New Partnership in Catholic Higher.

® In Independence and a New Partnership in Catholic Higher Education, Alice
Gallin indicates that there are numerous variations of governance structures within
Catholic higher education today. Nevertheless, they fall into two general
categories: unicameral and bicameral or two-tier systems of governance.
Approximately two-thirds of all Catholic colleges and universities have unicameral
boards; the remain one-third have bicameral boards. It is interesting to note,
however, that according to a 1995 study by Anne Munley for the Leadership
Conference of Women Religious that ratio is reversed for colleges and universities
founded by religious institutes of women. Two-thirds of these institutions employ
bicameral boards thus reserving limited powers to congregation.
board members at most Catholic institutions (Gallin, 1996; Munley, 1995). Furthermore, congregational leadership no longer had a role in personnel decisions and the number of congregational members serving at these institutions dropped dramatically (Gleason, 1995; Munley, 1995; Leahy, 1991). Initially, the presidency continued to be filled by members of the sponsoring congregations, but increasingly the office is held by lay persons or religious from other congregations. A study of colleges connected with women’s religious institutes (Munley, 1995), for instance, indicates that only 37% of current presidents are members of the sponsoring religious institute.

Changes in governance distanced congregations from the colleges they had established. Twenty years later, questions remain concerning the nature of the relationship between congregations and the now independent colleges and universities. Indicative of the confusion is their inability to find language that adequately captures the new relationship. The terms sponsorship and partnership are commonly used but have proved less than satisfactory for clarifying the situation (Morey, 1995). Furthermore, these changes introduced ambiguity about the colleges’ Catholic character. Without the congregation to provide a structural connection between the college to the church, questions arose about who was to guide and guarantee the college’s Catholic identity (Gallin, 1996; Gleason, 1995; Consolidated Catholic Health Care, 1993). The Catholic Church has not yet
developed mechanisms for relating with independent organizations functioning outside of diocesan or religious institute structures.

New corporate governance structures were not the only changes that create confusion about identity within Catholic higher education. Changes in academic personnel, philosophy, and structures also contributed to the increased ambiguity about the collegiate institutions’ identity and mission. The following section examines some of these changes in academic structure and ideology.

Changes in Academic Structures and Ideologies

Changes in academic personnel and structures began even before many of the changes in governance structures were initiated. Escalating enrollments after World War II had necessitated the hiring of large numbers of new faculty members. Between 1940 and 1960 faculties at Catholic institutions had grown by 85 percent and religious congregations had not been able to meet the demand for qualified academic professionals (Gleason, 1995). Consequently by the early Sixties, the majority of faculty were lay persons, better educated than their cleric predecessors, and likely to have been recently hired for their disciplinary expertise (Donovan, 1964). Catholic colleges and universities had organized into academic departments along disciplinary lines and offered degrees in specialized majors well before 1950. After World War II, applied and professional degree programs had
grown rapidly with Catholics’ expanding perception of college education as career preparation. The focus on academic excellence within Catholic higher education in the 1950s fostered both the improvement and expansion of graduate programs (Gleason, 1995).

Changes in academic ideology, on the other hand, lagged behind these structural innovation and have not been as easily resolved. In a recent essay, Monika K. Hellwig (1997), director of the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities, described the central place of the liberal arts tradition in the identity of Catholic higher education:

The second characteristic of Catholicism as it applies to higher education can be dealt with rather briefly because it is readily explained and understood. There is a great wealth of literature, art in all forms, ethical and political philosophy, ritual and devotional forms, and so forth, which the Catholic community has passed on through the ages. There is also a danger that the demands of multi-disciplinary advances in research, theory, and technical expertise will crowd out the passing on of this heritage. There is a tendency for courses in computer science and statistics to take up curriculum space that was traditionally available for classical languages and philosophy. Likewise, modish or highly specialized courses in literature tend to crowd out the great classics of western Christianity. There is a rush to "instant culture," "instant symbols," and "instant wisdom." In all of this it is clear that a fully Catholic higher education must cling to the liberal arts tradition of historical, philosophical, and artistic depth, in a calmer search for meaning from the wisdom of the past than is generally envisioned in contemporary curricula. It is easy to understand in theory, difficult to accomplish in practice, and certainly countercultural at every step. (1997, 9. 20).

This statement reflects the conflicted reality of the academic enterprise in Catholic higher education. At least three academic perspectives on the
purpose of higher education are visible in her statement: the liberal arts
tradition, pragmatic concerns for career preparation, and disciplinary
specialization. These three views continue to compete for influence. A brief
examination of their development is offered to help explain their contribution
to the present identity problems in Catholic higher education

Catholic higher education has a long connection with the liberal arts
tradition going back to John Newman, the Jesuit ratio, and the medieval
university. However, the tradition took on added significance for American
collegiate institutions in the first half of this century. Liberal philosophy and
modern modes of scholarship had begun to make inroads among Catholics,
especially intellectuals, in the United States and in Europe in the nineteenth
century (Appleby, 1992; Dolan, 1985). These developments were viewed
by the church leaders as threats to the Catholic faith and to the church’s
authority. The Holy See put an end to these explorations with modern
modes of thinking with encyclicals condemning the Americanist heresy
(1899) and the Modernist heresy (1907). These two legal pronouncements
along with an earlier papal endorsement of scholastic philosophy\textsuperscript{10} as the

\textsuperscript{10}Philip Gleason notes that: "The term \textit{Scholasticism} refers broadly to the
 teaching and method of the "schoolmen," that is the philosophers and theologians
 who propounded their views at the medieval universities, especially at the
 University of Paris. St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-74) is generally regarded as the
 outstanding figure among Scholastics, and the revival of the nineteenth century
 aimed primarily at recovering his ideas and drawing upon them to establish Catholic
 teaching on a solid intellectual foundation" ( p. 105). At its emergence in the
 medieval world, scholasticism marked a decided change in the Catholic Church’s
 attitude toward secular learning and pagan wisdom (Tarnas, 1991). The
 rediscovery of Aristotle’s writings sparked the development. For the first time
foundation for Catholic intellectual thought (1879) effectively isolated Catholic academic institutions from major developments in the scholarly communities of both the United States and Europe.

Between 1920 and the late 1950s, neoscholastic philosophy became, at least symbolically, the organizing principle for the undergraduate curricula at Catholic colleges and universities in the United States. Symbolic because, despite considerable rhetoric and repeated efforts, Catholic educators could never reach a consensus on a statement to define a Catholic liberal arts education or to specify what that would imply in curricular terms (Gleason, 1994, p. 246). Nevertheless, in the minds of Catholic educators, a liberal arts education unified by neoscholastic philosophy was what made their institutions and the educational experience they provided distinctively Catholic. They saw it as a vehicle for imparting to students a way of thinking and a philosophy of life that would support the development of a strong Catholic culture.

Resistance to defining Catholic higher education exclusively in terms of a liberal arts curriculum unified by scholastic philosophy came first from those who took a more "realistic" view of students' needs to prepare for gainful employment (p. 248). Catholics in the first half of this century occupied the lower ranges of the nation's socioeconomic distribution.

secular learning or learning about the natural world was viewed as distinct from knowledge derived by theology. Furthermore, secular learning was valuable and was a necessary foundation for deeper religious understanding.
(Wuthnow 1988). College was perceived primarily as the means to a better end: a professional career and a more comfortable life. From the turn of the century, the expansion of Catholic colleges and universities had been fueled by growth in professional and graduate enrollments and the popularity of more vocationally oriented undergraduate programs. As early as 1926, for instance, enrollment in professional and graduate programs outnumbered collegiate enrollment almost two to one (Gleason, 1994, p. 82).

Rhetorically, the battlelines were drawn by the "traditionalists" and the "realists" between the cultural and vocational goals of higher education (p. 250). In practice, however, Philip Gleason notes that by 1945, "most Catholic educators believed liberal education could be legitimately combined with more professionally oriented programs . . . [E]lectivism and the credit-hour system had put an end to the prescribed liberal arts curriculum" (p. 248). The goal now was an integrated curriculum that preserved the liberal spirit and provided room for the professional preparation the economic need of their students dictated.

Disciplinary specialization emerged in the late 1950s as a second source of resistance to the push for curricular integration. Catholic educators devoted themselves to the pursuit of excellence in the decade of the fifties. The definition of what constituted excellence, however, changed as the decade progressed, especially for faculty. The large number of newly hired faculty had acquired the values and perspectives of the modern
academic enterprise during graduate school. Disciplinary specialization, not synthetic breadth, was the hallmark of the academic professional in their minds. In the early Sixties administrators continued to push efforts to improve curricular integration but most faculty interest had little interest in such efforts. Philip Gleason describes the situation in terms of the changing definition of academic quality:

In the early 1950s, the improvement of academic quality was conceived in terms of greater intellectual unity, which was to be achieved by integrating the curriculum around Neoscholastic philosophy and theology. By 1961, the faculty clearly placed a higher value on departmental autonomy, which implied that academic quality was a function of scholarly competence in specialized disciplines. That represented a significant movement in the direction of secular norms of excellence and away from the older belief that Catholic higher education should embody and make available to its students a distinctive Catholic intellectual vision whose characteristic mark was its synthesizing power. (p. 296)

For many faculty, the aim of their teaching was to introduce students to the research, theory, and technical expertise of their particular disciplines. Integration, while perhaps a worthy ideal, was seen as an impractical goal.

The place of the liberal arts was further relativized when the theological innovations of the Second Vatican Council for all intents and purposes displaced neoscholastic philosophy as the singular foundation of Catholic theological thought and of curricular design. The goal of integration can still be heard in faculty discussion of general education and read in mission statements. But without the totalizing system of Neoscholasticism and the broad support that it enjoyed with the Catholic community, the
liberal tradition competes as one among equals with the more pragmatic career preparation and specialized disciplinary approaches.

To a large extent, Catholic colleges and universities are not unique in this respect. American higher education in general is wrestling with similar questions about the educational goals of its highly diverse network of postsecondary institutions. But the question of educational goals at Catholic institutions differs in one significant aspect: some individuals continue to view the liberal arts as integral not only to a college’s academic identity but to its religious identity, as well. If we return to Monika Hellwig’s statement about the liberal arts, this difference becomes apparent. In the first sentence she describes the liberal arts as a "characteristic of Catholicism as it applies to higher education," not as a characteristic of the educational program offered at Catholic colleges. For her and for others, the liberal arts tradition, although no longer defined in neoscholastic terms, is not merely an educational philosophy but a Catholic philosophy that can make an academic enterprise Catholic.

It is an easy leap from this perspective to the view that resolution of the current identity problems within Catholic higher education depends on finding a replacement for neoscholastic philosophy. Philip Gleason takes this position when he characterizes the present state of Catholic higher education:

Now Catholic colleges and universities are pretty thoroughly modernized in institutional terms, but the ideological challenge
presents itself more imperiously than ever. The task facing Catholic academics today is to forge from the philosophical and theological resources uncovered in the past half-century a vision that will provide what Neoscholasticism did for so many years—a theoretical rationale for the existence of Catholic colleges and universities as a distinctive element in American higher education. (1994, p. 322)

The environment in which Catholic institutions function now is quite different from the one that it occupied when Neoscholasticism appeared to galvanize Catholic thought and culture in the United States. Today no single theological perspective or philosophical ideology unites Catholics in the United States. Religion has been disestablished in the academic sphere (Marsden, 1994, 1995). Proliferation and production of knowledge, rather than its integration and synthesis, are the primary work of academic professionals. Strongly differing opinions about the need, the wisdom, and the possibility of such a totalizing and distinctive theoretical rationale are at the heart of the debate about identity.

The Present Debate: Two Views, Four Voices

Questions about what makes a college Catholic and who has the right to define that identity have loomed large on campuses in the nineties. The apostolic constitution on higher education, *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, issued by Pope John Paul II in 1990, is often identified as the origin of the current emphasis on Catholic identity. Alice Gallin (1992) makes it clear in her documentary history of this period, however, that the constitution is a late
manifestation of an ongoing dialogue about identity that began in the 1960s. Prior to 1965 neither the Vatican nor Catholic educators had attempted to articulate the nature and role of contemporary Catholic universities. Between 1965 and 1973 leaders from Catholic universities around the world collaborated to articulate a vision for Catholic higher education that would harmonize with the Vatican II document, "The Church in the Modern World." This vision included the assertion that academic freedom and institutional autonomy are fundamental to the nature of all universities and the assumption that there are multiple ways to express Catholicity.

The vision of an autonomous Catholic university free to define its identity and mission did not meet with the full approval of the Vatican. Thus began a bilateral exchange between the Vatican and academic leaders in the United States. The exchange was sporadic and relatively low key between 1973 and the early 1980s. The Vatican escalated the debate with the 1983 Code of Canon Law and the initial draft of a constitution on higher education which was circulated in 1985. Five years of heated dialogue preceded the publication of the constitutions, *Ex corde ecclesiae*, in 1990. Eight years after the constitution's publication deliberations on guidelines for its implementation in the United States continue with little hope of resolution any time soon (Allen, 1997; Schaeffer, 1997).

The present dialogue involves highly complex and abstract philosophical and theological positions. To help the reader understand the
current debate I present two perspectives that dominate and frame it. Alice Gallin (1992), former executive director of the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities, explains the two views:

Some persons, beginning from the point of view of the church, see the relationship as one of instrumentality—the university is an arm of the church and assists it in its tasks of preaching the gospel to all nations and cultures; others begin with the broad understanding of the life and purpose of any university, and the struggle to express the way in which such a task might have a legitimate connection with the mission of the church. (p. 1-2).

I recognize even as I present this statement that I am oversimplifying a very complex situation and that by reducing the conversation to a two-sided debate I risk distortion. However, the two perspectives are widely accepted as framing the debate and it seems to me that simplification in this instance will facilitate understanding. To expand each of these perspectives, I compare statements made by two prominent participants in this dialogue, namely, Pope John Paul II and Father Theodore Hesburgh, former president of the University of Notre Dame.

From the Heart of the Church.

Pope John Paul II (1990) clearly articulates the first perspective in *Ex corde ecclesiae*. We can see this in the following excerpts from that document:

Born in the heart of the church, a Catholic university’s . . . privileged task is "to unite existentially by intellectual effort two orders of reality that too frequently tend to be placed in opposition as though they were antithetical: the search for
truth and the certainty of already knowing the fount of truth" (1). ...Every Catholic university, without ceasing to be a university, has a relationship with the church that is essential to its institutional identity (27)....[Each Catholic university] is a living institutional witness to Christ and his message, so vitally important in cultures marked by secularism ...(A)ll the basic academic activities of a Catholic university are connected with and in harmony with the evangelizing mission of the church. (48). (John Paul II, Ex Corde Ecclesiae)

Three important assumptions characteristic of this perspective are reflected in his statements. First, with the phrase, "Born in the heart of the church," the pope asserts that Catholic colleges and universities are organizational extensions of the Roman Catholic Church, regardless of their corporate independence. They are directly linked to the church and share its evangelical mission. Second, when read in conjunction with canon 812 of the 1983 Code of Canon Law, this link subordinates colleges and universities to the church in matters related to faith and morals. Canon 812 requires that those who teach theological subjects in any institution of higher studies have a mandate from a competent ecclesiastical authority. This authority is normally the bishop of the diocese in which the school is located. The underlying belief is that the teaching authority of the Church is vested in its bishops. From this perspective bishops hold the ultimate authority to critique the work of Catholic theologians and, if necessary, to discipline those faculty who present opinions contrary to the doctrines and teachings...
of the church. Consequently, they also have a legitimate role in the hiring and firing of theologians on the faculties of Catholic institutions. The constitution and canon law are ambiguous on whether the bishop’s authority to intervene extends to other academics whose works might touch on issues relevant to faith and morals. In any case, this type of intervention by external authorities is seen as problematic from the point of view of the American academic community.

The third assumption involves the nature of knowledge and the nature of a university. John Paul II states that the task of a Catholic university is "to unite existentially by intellectual effort two orders of reality that too frequently tend to be placed in opposition as though they were antithetical: the search for truth and the certainty of already knowing the fount of truth." This view posits the existence of two complementary realms of knowledge, faith and reason, which can be integrated, albeit never completely, by the human intellect. Since all truth and knowledge are ultimately one, there is no inherent conflict between the nature of these institutions as colleges and universities and their natures as Catholic institutions. Any apparent conflict between knowledge gained through academic endeavors and the knowledge received through faith is superficial. It can be resolved by

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First and Foremost a University.

Father Hesburgh, on the other hand, offers a very different perspective on the nature and mission of Catholic colleges and universities. Characteristic of this view is the following statement explaining the world and mission of a contemporary university:

One must remember that the church did not create the modern university world as it had helped create the medieval university world. Moreover, the church does not have to be present in the modern world of the university, but if it is to enter, the reality and terms of this world are well established and must be observed. . . . The reality of the university world may make the church uneasy at times; nevertheless, all university people throughout the world recognize this reality and its terms as essential to anything that wishes to merit the name of university in the modern context. One may add descriptive adjectives to this or that university, calling it public or private, Catholic of Protestant, British or American, but the university must first and foremost be a university, or else the thing that the qualifiers qualify is something, but not a university. (Hesburgh, 1994, p. 3-4)

Three assumptions characteristic of this perspective are reflected in this statement. First, this view takes as its starting point Vatican II’s acknowledgment of and positive stance toward the secular world. Church and contemporary academe occupy different spheres governed by different paradigms or world views. Second, when negotiating the distinct and at times incommensurate worlds of church and academy, these collegiate
institutions inevitably encounter conflicts between the secular and scientific norms of the academy and the faith and doctrinal teachings of the church. These conflicts, Hesburgh insists, must be resolved in accordance with the secular norms of the academy. Finally, Catholic colleges and universities serve the church by fulfilling their unique missions as academic institutions. Therefore, they must be autonomous organizations with missions distinct from that of the church itself. These institutions function within the Catholic tradition but are not an extension of the Roman Catholic Church. As Father Hesburgh explains:

[A Catholic university] is not the church teaching, but a place—the only place—in which Catholics and others, on the highest level of intellectual inquiry, seek out the relevance of the Christian message to all of the problems and opportunities that face us and our complex world (p. 4).

The current debate would likely lose some of its fire if the reality and terms of the university world were as well established and universally accepted as Father Hesburgh claims. Father Hesburgh’s views are the predominate perspective among faculty and administrators at Catholic institutions in the United States. Nevertheless, there are also academics who hold views similar to those espoused by John Paul II in the Vatican documents.

The divergent opinions among professors at Catholic universities are illustrated in an article that appeared in the Chronicle of Higher Education in November 1996. One section of the article contrasts the views of two
theologians, the Reverend Richard P. McBrien of the University of Notre Dame and the Reverend Giles Dimock of the Franciscan University of Steubenville, on the role of bishops as it relates to the affairs of a Catholic university. Father McBrien, whose own scholarship has come under fire by some bishops, is quoted as saying:

Bishops should be welcome on a Catholic university campus. Give them tickets to ball games. Let them say mass. Bring them to graduation. . . . But there should be nothing beyond that. They should have nothing to say about the internal academic affairs of the university or any faculty member thereof (Lively, 1996, p. A9).

He goes on to explain that it is not that academics are above criticism, "but I want the criticism to come from people with the credential to criticize" (p. A.9). Father Dimock, on the other hand, justifies the bishop’s right to intervene in the academic affairs of a university: "The bishop, not the theologian, is the successor of the apostles" (A9). He insists that faculty ought to restrict themselves to teaching only official church positions in theology courses, especially at the introductory level:

Students have a right to the teaching of the church. . . . Many theologians are substituting their own beliefs for the teaching of the church, depriving [students] of the Catholic doctrines for which they or their parents forked over a lot of money" (p. A9)

The statements of these two theologians not only demonstrate the differences in theological perspectives. They also highlight the lack of consensus among academics about the nature of an academic organization.
Summary

Catholic colleges and universities in the United States have undergone radical and rapid organizational and ideological changes since the sixties. In less than three decades, they experienced separation from their founding congregations, underwent a dramatic shift in personnel, and changed their academic missions. These changes have had significant consequences, both positive and negative, on their identities and missions. Corporate separation from the religious congregations that founded them provided the freedom and resources required to enter and flourish in the academic mainstream. At the same time separation introduced ambiguities about their relationships with the congregation and their link with the Catholic Church that continues to produce questions about their status as Catholic institutions. Entry into the academic mainstream brought exciting opportunities for expansion and better quality faculties assisted their maturation as contemporary academic institutions. Assimilation to the norms of the American academic establishment also introduced further ambiguities. The loss of Neoscholastic philosophy to ground and distinguish their academic programs left them inarticulate about the distinctive qualities of a Catholic college and a Catholic education. They now share the general muddle about academic purpose that pervades the rest of American higher education. The second half of this thesis examines the ways faculty members at one Catholic institutions make sense of their institution’s identity.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter explicates the methodology of the study reported here. It begins with a discussion of the study’s design. This is followed by a description of research methods, including site and participant selection, site and participant profiles, data collection procedures, the role of the researcher, and data analysis procedures. The soundness and limits of the study are discussed in the final sections.

Study Design

The available research on organizational identity often employs a case study strategy and uses both qualitative and quantitative methods (Fombrun, 1995; Schmidt, 1995); however, that body of research is minimal. Consequently, there was no clear methodological precedent to follow -- or with which to differ -- in designing this study. I relied, therefore, on the nature of the phenomenon being investigated and the study’s purposes to guide my decisions about the research design, including the overall approach, strategy, and research methods (Donmoyer, in press; Marshall, & Rossman, 1995).
Catherine Marshall and Gretchen B. Rossman (1995) have suggested that a qualitative approach is uniquely effective in "research that is exploratory or descriptive, assumes the value of context and setting, and that searches for a deeper understanding of the participants' lived experiences of the phenomenon" (p. 39). All three criteria described this study. The immediate purpose of the study was to provide "thick description" of the ways faculty members at one baccalaureate college interpret the identity of that institution (Donmoyer, in press, p. 63).

Organizational identity, as it was conceptualized in Chapter II, is a social phenomenon that is unique to a particular organization and is continuously being constructed by the individuals or groups of individuals within that context. A secondary purpose of the study was to explore the phenomenon of organizational identity in a collegiate setting in order to identify salient themes and issues for further study. Given these features of the study, a qualitative approach was adopted.

The nature of the phenomenon being investigated and practical considerations reinforced the choice of a single case study strategy. Examining a social phenomenon as idiosyncratic and complex as a college's identity requires prolonged immersion in the campus setting and in-depth interviews with members of the campus community. Both of these methods are time consuming and generate significant quantities of data. Only by limiting the study to a single case could I delve into the institution's
particular realities and the participant’s perspectives to the extent I thought
necessary to understand and communicate participant’s interpretations of
the college’s identity. A case study was the most realistic strategy for
satisfying the requirements of informational adequacy and resource
efficiency (Zeldich, 1962, cited in Marshall & Rossman, 1995). Furthermore,
the strategy has been described as appropriate for both descriptive and
exploratory studies (Yin, 1984; Marshall & Rossman, 1995; Wolcott, 1994).
It’s value for generating questions and insights which can be transferred and
inductively generalized to other situations has been established (Stake,
1994; Donmoyer, 1990; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

This study, therefore, is a descriptive case study that explores,
primarily through interviews and site observations, faculty members’
interpretations of salient features of one college’s organizational identity.

Research Methods

Selection of the Site

Ohio Dominican College in Columbus, Ohio was selected as the site
for the study for both conceptual and practical reasons. An aim of the study
was to expand the discourse on Catholic identity beyond its current focus on
research universities, all of which are sponsored by men’s religious
institutes. The primary consideration in site selection, therefore, was for
type of institution and of sponsoring congregation. ODC as a predominantly
undergraduate college sponsored by a women’s religious institute satisfied both criteria. The 117 collegiate institutions founded by women’s congregations comprise approximately half of all Catholic colleges and universities and consist primarily of baccalaureate and comprehensive institutions. ODC is sufficiently similar to other collegiate institutions in this group in terms of mission, history, organizational structures, financial status, academic programs, and student body to encourage transferability and generalizability of the data.

Second, the college was chosen because its recent history and current situation made it a potentially interesting site for investigating organizational identity. Between 1986 and 1996 ODC had experienced rapid enrollment growth and had implemented a series of campus-wide initiatives which effected changes in academic programming and delivery systems, the composition of the student body, and the campus culture. Any of these conditions could challenge and raise questions within the campus community about the college’s identity.

Last but definitely not least, ODC was selected because of the college’s proximity and of the degree of access I was granted. The college was located within a 30 minute drive from my home and I was granted almost unrestricted access to the campus, its personnel, and its activities. This enabled me to be on campus regularly, attend routine activities and extraordinary events, and interact formally and informally with a wide range
of faculty, administrators, and staff over a seven-month period. These functional and pragmatic reasons, while regularly discussed in research texts, are less often mentioned in the methodology chapters of dissertations. However, in this case, they were particularly important to the study because they maximized my exposure to the organization, the identity of which I was asking people to describe and interpret for me.

The College

Ohio Dominican College (ODC) is a Baccalaureate II, private, coeducational, liberal arts college located in an urban fringe area on the northeast side of Columbus, Ohio. It is one of two undergraduate collegiate institutions founded and now sponsored by the Dominican Sisters of St. Mary of the Springs. The college dates its establishment to the chartering of the Ladies Literary Institute of St Mary of the Spring by the State of Ohio in 1911. A new charter authorizing the college to confer baccalaureate degrees and changing its name to the College of St. Mary of the Spring was granted by the State in 1925. It became coeducational in 1964 and in 1968 changed its name to Ohio Dominican College. In 1969 the Dominican Sisters of St. Mary of the Spring transferred assets and governance of ODC to an independent self-perpetuating board of trustees (Caslandra, 1960; ODC Self Study, 1997).
After surviving periods of declining enrollments and resource shortages in the 1970s and early 1980s, the decade between 1987 and 1996 was a period of institutional growth and change. In the Fall 1996 the college enrolled 1,183 full-time students and 700 part-time students for an all-time high enrollment of 1883 students and a FTE of 1424. The fastest and largest increases were within the adult and transfer student segments. There has been a steady decline in the number of resident students. American students comprise 93% of the total enrollment. Almost all of these students are from Ohio; two-thirds are from the Columbus metropolitan area itself. American minorities constitute 18.4% of the total enrollment; international students 6.9%. The college does not have an open admissions policy but most applicants are accepted.

The teaching faculty also reach an all-time high of 110 in the Fall 1996 with 56 full-time members and 54 part-time members. Student-faculty ratio was 16.9. The total represents an increase of 34.6% since 1987. At that time full-time faculty out numbered part-time 48 to 27 and the student-faculty ratio was 14.9-1.

The college's budget has been balanced for more than two decades. Tuition and fees are the its primary sources of revenue. The endowment grew 200% between 1987 and 1996 but it remains modest. The college strives to keep tuition below the mean for similar institutions to control tuition discounting through institutional financial aid. Nevertheless, ODC is a
tuition-dependent institution and, therefore, is sensitive and vulnerable to changing environmental conditions.

Since 1987 the college has instituted significant changes in its educational vision, academic programming, and campus diversity and outreach efforts (ODC Self Study, 1997). The Invitation to Tomorrow is an ongoing educational visioning process aimed at transforming teaching and learning at ODC in light of the competencies needed for living in the twenty-first century, of contemporary learning theory, and of modern information technology. A significant commitment of financial and human resources have been directed to implementing this initiative and to the expanding the college’s technological capacity. The college’s continuing focus on enrollment growth led to the development of three new initiatives for attracting and serving adult and transfer students. One program, a cohort-based degree completion program, involves a contractual relationship with an external collaborator. Finally, with the aide of foundation grants, the college undertook a series of programs directed at improving the campus culture for minority students and enhancing ties with the college’s multicultural urban neighborhood.

Selection of Faculty Participants

In addition to selecting the case site, a second set of decisions were needed to select interview participants. There are no hard and fast
rules for sample size or selection criteria in qualitative inquiry. These decisions depend on the nature of the investigation, the setting and the resources available (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Patton, 1990). Again, my aim was to balance the need for adequate information with the efficient use of resources.

The study’s aims and practical considerations about time and resources led me to limit the study to full-time faculty teaching at the college during the Spring semester 1997. Since my primary aim was to understand participants’ current interpretations of identity and not how that identity had changed over time, retired faculty members’ perspectives were not viewed as essential. In addition several current faculty had been at the college for 25 years or more and could provide historical perspective. I also had regular opportunities to converse informally with a retired faculty member who still worked on campus part time. Part-time faculty might have provided alternative perspectives of the college’s present identity; however, their knowledge of the college is more limited than full-time faculty thus they were less likely to be rich sources of data. I decided that an investigation of part-time faculty members’ views would be more appropriate in subsequent studies. Finally, since the number of faculty on sabbatical, leave of absence, and administrative appointment was small, I decided it was not necessary to include any of them in the sample pool.
Selection of participants from among full-time faculty attended to the diversity within that group on two levels. I sought variety within the participants, first, according to functional and demographic categories such as disciplinary location, rank, years at the college, highest degree attained, lay person/woman religious, and gender. Second, I also wanted to include within the participant sample some of the faculty's more distinctive members, as well as those who might hold differing points of view.

In the early stages of the investigation I asked administrators and faculty members for suggestions about faculty opinion leaders, campus pulsetakers, outliers, and interesting characters. I used their suggestions along with information I gathered from an initial period of site observations and from institutional documents containing functional and demographic information on the faculty members to purposely select participants for the study (Patton, 1990).

Fourteen full-time faculty members agreed to participate in the interview phase of the study. These faculty members represented 25% of full-time faculty not on sabbatical, leave of absence, or administrative appointment and, when taken collectively, provided an adequate degree of demographic and perspectival diversity. It should be noted that the diversity within the participant sample did not mirror the patterns of diversity found in the faculty as a whole. Such symmetry would not have produced the best participant sample. For example, within the faculty as a whole over 50% of
the members have been at the college ten years or less, compared to about 33% of the study's sample. I could have drawn the sample to reflect the faculty as a whole; however, I would have had to exclude some highly influential senior faculty from the sample. In the process I would have lost the rich descriptions of the college's important and enduring features that these faculty provided. I also would have had to sacrifice variety in other areas, such as disciplinary location or participant perspectives.

Participants profile

Because the institutional site is identified in this dissertation and its full-time faculty is relatively small, issues of confidentiality prevent me from including descriptions of the fourteen participants. Instead, a narrative description of the participant pool is provided here.

Participants were selected from all four of the college's academic divisions and represented twelve of its seventeen program areas. At the time of participant selection, three participants held the rank of assistant professor, six the rank of associate professor, and five the rank of full professors. Three participants had not yet received tenure. Twelve of the fourteen participants had terminal degrees. They were evenly distributed by years of service with five participants having been at the college ten years or less, six for 11 to 20 years, and four for 20 or more years. Three participants had significant experience working at public doctoral universities.
before coming to ODC. Eleven began their professional academic careers at ODC; seven of these participants had previous professional experience in other fields or in other educational sectors. The participants included division chairpersons, individuals who had been instrumental in ODC’s recent technology and diversity change initiatives, elected and informal faculty leaders, a self-described troublemaker and campus conscience, and winners of outstanding teaching awards.

The vast majority, 85%, attended Catholic colleges and universities for some part of their own educational experiences. Most also identified themselves as Roman Catholic or as having been raised Catholic but there were also a nonbeliever and a member of another Christian denomination in the sample.¹ Eleven of the participants were lay persons, although two of the eleven were former members of the sponsoring Dominican order, something of which I was not aware at the time of participant selection.

The three Dominican sisters on the faculty and who participated in the interviews held different ranks, taught in different divisions, and fit into different categories of years of service.

¹Religious affiliation could not be ascertained for some participants at the time of participant selection since the college keeps no records on its employees in this area.
Data Collection

Data collection for this study occurred between January 29, 1997 and September 1, 1997. Data were collected from three sources: in-depth interviews, site observations, and institutional documents. Rather than occurring in distinct phases, data collection from the three sources progressed intermittently and, at times, simultaneously. In the initial stages, for instance, I read institutional documents, engaged in a period of site observations, and conversed with key campus figures before interviewing any participants. I continued to make regular site visits throughout the period in which I was conducting the in-depth interviews. I returned to examining institutional documents and took up a more focused examination of congregational historical materials as issues related to those materials emerged from the interviews and my site observations.

The interviews with the fourteen faculty participants were the primary data source and form the core of this study. If the participant interviews were the core of this study, the site observations and documents were its background and frame. The extended period of site observations provide the context which gave the faculty participants' words sense and meaning. Data from the observations were not used to confirm or disconfirm participants' interpretations but, rather, to help me grasp the nuances and particularities of the participants' perspectives of the college. The visits were also another venue for me to listen to the participants and to other
faculty members talk about and interpret the college’s identity. Documents served initially as a source of questions for me and later supplied background information on the college and the congregation. Each of these techniques is described in this section.

**Interviews.**

The format of the participant interviews was semi-structured. An interview guide (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Patton, 1990) was used to provide some consistency in the issues and topics covered (See Appendix). On the other hand, the questions asked were open-ended to allow the participants maximum latitude in answering them. The guide helped me as a novice researcher to remain open to the participants’ issues and meanings and to get what I wanted from the interview. After all, "an interview is a purposeful conversation, usually between two people . . . , that is directed by one to get information from the other" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 96.)

The interviews with twelve of the participants were single sessions lasting from 90 minutes to three hours in length. The interviews with the remaining two participants were conducted in two sessions. In both cases unexpected circumstances necessitated that the initial session be shortened. A second session was conducted with each participant to cover topics not discussed in the first. The two sessions combined lasted about three hours in both cases. The altered format of these interviews in no way negatively
impacted the interview; in fact, both participants were rich sources and the second session afforded opportunity for clarification and probing more deeply into certain topics. Interviews with thirteen of the participants were conducted on campus, either in the participant’s office or a conference room, and during daytime business hours. One participant preferred that the interview be conducted at her home after the work day.

Comprehensive fieldnotes were compiled as soon after the interviews as possible. When extensive notes could not be compiled at the conclusion of an interview, I recorded my initial impressions, insights, points of irritation, and concerns about the interview on the tape. I returned to these recorded remarks later that same day for further expansion and reflection.

Each interview sessions was audiotaped with the permission of the participant and later transcribed in its entirety for analysis purposes. There are various views on the benefits of taping and transcribing a complete interview. I chose to do both for a number of reasons. First, I did not want to interrupt the flow of the interview with my notetaking activities. Furthermore, the interviews were long and as a lone interviewer I did not want to rely either on my notetaking skills or on my memory to capture and

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2 Most of the texts on qualitative research techniques with which I am familiar recommend audiotaping and transcribing the whole interview. In her class on data collection, however, Patti Lather challenged that assumption. I later had the opportunity to be interviewed by Patti and was impressed by the way she used notetaking in the interview to establish rapport, deepen my own observations, and clarify her understanding of my views.
reconstruct the salient points of the interviews. In addition, because of my previous experience at two similar institutions, I wanted a complete transcript of each interview to check for any signs of memory merging on my part.

All but two of the interview tapes were transcribed by professional transcribers. I compared their transcriptions with the audiotapes to enhance accuracy. Each participant was given a copy of the complete interview transcript and invited to review, correct, and comment on any aspect of it. Approximately half of the participants returned their transcripts with comments, most were minor corrections and clarifications. The other participants acknowledge receipt of the transcript in informal exchanges on campus and indicated that had no corrections or additions to make.

After coding the transcripts, I constructed summary profiles for each participant with selections taken from the interview that pertained most closely to the research topic. These profiles were then sent to the various participants so that they had a second opportunity to correct any misinformation and to clarify my interpretations. Ten of the participants responded after receiving these profiles, either by returning an edited transcript and contacting me by phone or e-mail. Two participants asked me not to use comments they had made as direct quotes. Their requests could be accommodated without impacting the integrity of the study.
Site Observations

Site observations were conducted throughout the seven months of the study. The most intense period of observations was between mid-February and the end of May. During those three and one half months I was on campus three to five days a week. Visits were more sporadic and infrequent during the summer months and concentrated in the month of July. I varied the times of my visits so that I was on campus during "regular business hours" from early in the morning to late afternoon, in the evenings and on weekends. In this way, I became familiar with the patterns of activity and learned the ebb and flow of life at ODC.

I also attended a wide range of events and activities. I hung out in the mail room, near the xerox machine, the library, the student lounge, and the hallways to get a sense of the place and to help render myself a routine sight. Attending classes in day, evening, and weekend timeframes and in different disciplines and fields allowed me to see who taught and who learned, what was taught and how it was taught at ODC. I regularly sat in on routine meetings associated with academic administration such as the Dean’s Council and the meeting of academic chairpersons. I occasionally attended meetings of subcommittees working on the institutional self-study for an upcoming accreditation visit. Teaching faculty meetings provided a window into the faculty’s primary concerns, while college assemblies
provided information about institutional initiatives. A meeting of the president’s cabinet afforded me a bird’s eye view of the college.

I attended commencement, an honors convocation, and mass in the college chapel to experience first hand these major symbolic expressions of campus culture. I took advantage of cultural events and guest speakers. I sat through admission’s information sessions and athletic events. To develop an understanding of the Dominican tradition and of the spirit of the founding congregation, I attended congregational celebrations on major holy days and feasts days, visited with Dominican sisters in their home, occasionally celebrated eucharist in the sisters’ retirement center, and talked with older sisters who had a long association with the college or had played a particular role in its history.

Regular and frequent visits over an extended period of time also afford many opportunities for casual conversations with the participants and other faculty members, administrators, and staff members. I often used these informal encounters to compare my observations and interpretations of events or institutional features with those of campus community members. For instance, it was often my practice after a meeting or event to ask one or more individuals about a particular exchange or the history of an issue in order to obtained various perspectives. These exchanges were invaluable in expanding and deepening my understanding of the institutional context.
Fieldnotes as well as analytical notes and personal reflections were compiled for site observation visits in several ways. I took notes and wrote down observations during events when such behavior was appropriate and did not draw undue attention to myself. I drew sketches of the rooms, of seating patterns in meetings and assemblies, or anything that caught my attention. If I could not take notes during an event or there had been no need to take notes, I tape recorded my observations and thoughts in the car on the way home or back to work. As soon as possible, in all but a few cases on the day of the observation, I would use my fieldnotes and/or taped comments to construct a more comprehensive account of the visit and my observations about the event, the people, the behavior, and the atmosphere. I recorded and explored the insights and questions the visit prompted. I also used this writing time to push myself to the bring my feelings about what I experienced to the surface so they could be examined.

Documents

Documents were collected which pertained to the college and to the Dominican Sisters of St. Mary of the Spring. Those relating to the college ranged from the fliers about student events to the most recent accreditation self-study. Of particular significance were the college catalog, student and faculty handbooks, recruiting materials, the past two accreditation self-studies, faculty members annual reports, and fact book of statistics.
pertaining to enrollment and the faculty. These materials played a supporting role by both framing and elucidating the data collected in interviews and observations. I read and analyzed them for espoused values, reoccurring themes, and patterns which both confirmed and disconfirmed data collected from visits and interviews.

The documents relating to the congregation were primarily historical accounts and records. Initially, I used these materials to acquaint myself with the charism or particular spirit of the founding congregation. In later stages of the investigation, I used materials in the congregation’s archives to gather historical information on the college itself.

**Researcher and Researcher Role**

The quality of any research project depends on the appropriateness and soundness of data collection and analysis techniques. In the case of qualitative inquiry, the researcher herself is the locus of both data collection and analysis. Therefore, the transition from a discussion of how data was collected in this study to the ways it was analyzed seems an appropriate place to describe myself and my background and the role I took in this study. There is considerable discussion about the technical meaning of "validity" in qualitative research (Lather, 1986; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994), but in its dictionary definition the word "valid" means "well-grounded on principles or evidence" (Webster’s New World,
1986, p. 1568). A research instrument, be it a pencil-and-paper survey or a human researcher, needs to be "valid" in the sense of being adequately grounded in theoretical and practical knowledge relevant to the phenomenon being studied and the techniques being used.

I began this study well-grounded in practical and theoretical knowledge of higher education administration, Catholic higher education, Catholic religious institutes, and theology. I have been a professed member of a religious institute, the Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati, for twenty-two years. Most of my professional career has been spent in Catholic higher education. I worked for eleven years at two Catholic undergraduate colleges sponsored by women’s religious institutes and held various administrative positions, including assistant academic dean and assistant dean of students. Currently, I am serving my second term as member of the board of trustees of one of those institutions.

I have a masters degree in theology which provides a basis for understanding and for rethinking the religious and ecclesiastical questions facing Catholic colleges and universities. Through my thesis research on changing models of authority in women’s religious institutes I became familiar with the scholarship in that area. Through doctoral studies in education, I acquired theoretical knowledge of higher education, organizations and administration, educational foundations, and research methodology.
While my previous experience and education served to ground me and
gave me confidence as a researcher, it also left me with a particular set of
preconceived ideas and prejudices about higher education, Catholicism, and
religious life. I was aware as I approached the study that I had biases, but it
was only as the study developed that I realized more fully what they were.
Keeping a reflexive journal helped me to track my feelings, thoughts, and
decisions during data collection and analysis. I used this technique to be
deliberate about questioning my own values and prejudices and to track the
processive development of my thinking. At times my preconceived notions
and feelings provided important clues to what I was seeing and hearing. For
example, I learned early to heed the judgmental inner voice that said, "That
is not how we/I did it." Not only did it signal a need to attend to my own
judgments but also that I may have come upon a potentially significant
situation or feature.

My experience and education also influenced the role that I assumed
during this study. As a novice educational researcher I had thought I would
"keep my distance" and lean more toward the observer end of the observer-
participant continuum (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 88). My identity as a
woman religious and my previous experience, which were included in my
introduction to the campus community, provided me with credibility and
facilitated my entry into the community. The fact that I was on campus so
regularly and frequently also helped me to establish rapport. I never "went
native" and always retained a sense of being alien, nevertheless, I did move far closer to the participant end of the continuum than I had expected. I also tracked the feelings and behavior related to this aspect of my experience in the journal.

**Data Analysis**

There are numerous ways of describing what analysis is in qualitative inquiry: data reduction, display, and conclusion drawing (Miles & Huberman, 1993); describing, classifying, and connecting (Dey, 1993); and description, analysis, and interpretation (Wolcott, 1994). Underlying all these views is an inductive interpretive process of engaging, distancing, and reengaging a phenomenon, situation, or text for the purpose of gaining and creating new meaning and insight about it. The general approach to data analysis in this study, therefore, was an inductive one. Data collection and analysis progressed "in a pulsating fashion" and mutually informed each other (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 72). Data analysis occurred throughout this investigation and was cyclical, reflexive, and, to a large extent, led by the data (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p. 10). I qualify the last characteristic because the study began with a particular issue to be investigated, that is, the problem of academic and religious identity in Catholic colleges. I cast a wide net in investigating faculty members perspectives of the college’s identity and allowed the themes and categories to emerge from the
participants’ words. Nevertheless, the conceptualization of the problem did
not emerge directly from data but, instead, preceded and guided its
collection and analysis.

The quantity of data generated in this study from personal interviews,
extended site observations, and document analysis was daunting. It takes
over two reams of paper just to print out the interview transcripts.
Therefore, it is important to state up front that it was not possible to give all
the data equal consideration and, furthermore, that it is probable that some
potentially significant information or interesting insights were not captured in
the process. It is equally important to state that I endeavored to be
intellectually and technically rigorous in working with the data throughout
this process without rendering them lifeless.

Discussions of data analysis often begin with a sentence about
reading the data several times and then proceed to explicate in detail the
concept of coding and coding techniques. Perhaps owing to my background
in theology, I spent considerable time reading and rereading the interview
transcripts and observation notes from several perspectives before I coded
anything in earnest. Initially, I read each interview along with my fieldnotes
several times in order to familiarize myself with each participant, his or her
views and ways of expression. I grouped the interviews as a single text and
read it several times to get a sense of the whole and the larger patterns
within it. I did the same with my fieldnotes.
At this point I segmented the data by the coding categories imbedded in the interview guide and modified throughout the interview process and read these chunks of data through several times. I then coded the transcripts and fieldnotes within each category working both to reduce the data by selecting material most relevant to the research and to identify concepts and themes within each category. By the end of this process, I had selections relating to the various categories for the various participants. These materials were used to construct the individual summary profiles that I distributed to the participants for their review.

A second phase of coding began after I had participants’ feedback. I reexamined my construction of the problem in terms of academic and religious identity in light of the data and decided to keep it as the overarching structure. Data was bundled into the two categories and then read for patterns and themes that emerged in each. The physical management of the data was accomplished through word processing and large index cards; one quotation per card identified by code and participant. Duplicate cards were made when a selection applied to more than one code. Experimentation with computer-based data analysis software came too late in the project to be useful. The card method was old fashion but I found the tactile and visual proximity of the data on the cards to be beneficial.

The particular linguistic formulas and expressions used by the participants were particularly important for identifying points where
participants’ views converged to form a consensus and diverged into
different perspectives. Some expressions, such as the Dominican motto and
phrase "a liberal arts college" stood out as features that collected or
attracted other data fragments to themselves. Other expressions, such as
"ruse" or "best of both worlds," both attracted some fragments and repelled
others. Rereading David Dill’s simple but effective description of symbol and
ritual provided a frame for organizing and explaining the patterns of
consensus and disagreement among participants’ perspectives of both
academic and religious identity. Methodical construction of data charts
helped make explicit the conditions that defined the three perspectives of a
career-oriented liberal arts education in Chapter IV, as well as to the lack of
such coalescing of views for religious identity in Chapter V.

Soundness of the Study

Two issues remain to be examined in this chapter, both having to do
with the credibility and usefulness of the study’s findings. The first is the
issue of a study’s trustworthiness or its soundness. The criteria for judging
a study’s soundness and the means for establishing it differ according to
research approach and the project’s purpose. This qualitative study sought
to understand and to communicate the participants’ perspective of a
contextually bound and complex social phenomenon. As such, it does not
claim to capture the definitive description of ODC’s identity but, rather, to
present a description of the participants’ interpretations that is credible, dependable, confirmable, and transferable (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). There are no universally accepted or applicable means for establishing trustworthiness in this type of study. The soundness of the study was attended to in five ways, most of which have been alluded to in the various sections of this chapter. I will recount and summarize them here:

1. **Prolonged engagement.** An investigation of a contextually bound and complex social phenomenon such as organizational identity requires time on site (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 237). The seven months at the site afforded the level of substantial involvement in the life of the campus I needed in order to develop an understanding of the college’s culture. It also allowed enough time to establish the rapport and trust necessary to understand the participants’ constructions of the college and its salient features. My time at the site was maximized by my prior knowledge of Catholic higher education and of religious institutes.

2. **Triangulation of data and perspectives.** *Triangulation,* as it is used by qualitative researchers, means bringing multiple data sources, methods, and perspectives to bear on a single phenomenon (Marshall & Rossman, 1995, p. 144). In this study data was gathered from multiple sources, namely, participants interviews, site observations, fieldnotes from both of these activities, and documents produced by the college and the sponsoring congregation. For some researchers, such as Matthew Miles and Michael
Huberman (1993), triangulation of data sources is a form of testing in which the multiple perspectives are squared with each other. I did not use the multiple data sources so much as a validity check but as a way to enhance the data I had available to me. Michael Quinn Patton (1990) argues that different kinds of data produce different results and that the investigation of these differences can enrich one’s understanding of the phenomenon.

Triangulation, in the sense of bringing multiple perspectives to bear on one phenomenon, was also pursued in the selection of participants and in the pattern of site visits. Stephen Ball (1990) stresses the need for researchers to audit their data collection for adequate representation and coverage. The care taken to attend to the diversity among the faculty in the participant sample reflects such an audit, as does the wide range of days and times, locations, and types of activities included in the site observations. My aim in triangulation was to create a richer, more comprehensive understanding of ODC and the participants’ interpretation of its identity.

3. Orderly and systematic analysis from various perspectives.

Perhaps this is a third form of triangulation but it seems distinct enough to warrant its own mention. The data from interviews, site observations, fieldnotes, and documents were submitted to systematic and comprehensive analysis. Furthermore, the perspective of analysis was shifted at times to mitigate against unidimensional analysis. This shift of perspective was seen in the different ways the interviews were conceived of as text, that is,
as individual texts, as a whole, and as concept bundles. It was also reflected in efforts to look for outliers, disconfirming evidence, and alternative explanations.

4. **Member checks and peer debriefing.** The central and privileged position of the researcher in both data collection and analysis requires techniques for checking the researcher’s interpretations. Member checks, in the form of the interview transcripts and the summary profiles, were opportunities for the participants in a study to examine and compare my categories and interpretations with their own and to offer feedback. In addition, I asked one ODC faculty member to read large sections of the findings chapters to see if she "saw the college" in my words. Her comments were insightful and helped me rethink parts of Chapters V and VI.

Peer debriefing is a second technique which involves seeking an external check on the inquiry process and which is not discussed elsewhere in this chapter. I used two different sources for peer debriefing at various points in the project. Three other doctoral students and I formed a peer writing group when we began to work on our dissertations. We met throughout the course of the project. In addition to personal support, these women provided valuable insights and suggestions about my study’s design and data collection strategies, asked hard questions about my theoretical assumptions, and critiqued the written product in its early stages of development. In the latter stages of the project, I sought the assistance of a
former colleague with knowledge of and experience in Catholic higher education, religious life, and faculty issues. Her insights helped create a more sound interpretation and a more well written document.

5. Reflexive journaling. When discussing myself as researcher and the role I took in this project earlier in this chapter, I referred to the use I had made of a reflexive journal for tracking my own perceptions and development throughout the research project. I began the process by identifying the a priori assumptions that I was aware of bringing to the project. I continued to record on a regular basis my developing ideas, frustrations, judgements, and reflections about myself, the participants, the college, and the project.

Limits of the Study

Any research project has limits imposed by design, method, and situation. Three specific areas of limitation related to this study are identified and addressed here, namely, the issue of generalizability from a single case, researcher subjectivity, and the participant sample.

1. Generalizability. This descriptive case study is not generalizable in the traditional sense of being proved statistically significant for a universe or category of phenomena. The descriptions and interpretations reported here are of a particular organization and the insights garnered are most directly applicable to that setting. Nevertheless, the description and insights may be
useful for thinking about issues related to organizational identity in other collegiate settings. ODC is similar enough to other Catholic baccalaureate and comprehensive institutions to support the transferability of the findings to those settings. The same may also be said, although to a lesser extent perhaps, of its transferability to other types of church-related collegiate institutions. Generalization can also be viewed in more personal and inductive terms. The vicarious experience and learnings gained from reading a case study can expand the cognitive structures of the reader, therefore, allowing generalization to different settings.

2. Researcher subjectivity. The bias of the researcher is always an issue to be addressed in discussing the limits of a qualitative project. I believe that my personal and professional background enriched this study and, furthermore, that I took steps to both examine and reveal my own perspectives and location. Nevertheless, it remains possible that my subjective perspectives and judgments led me to overlook salient features or alternative explanations. The quantity of data and the organizational complexity of a college presents an almost unlimited number of possible perspectives, further exacerbating the problem.

3. Participant Sample. The purposeful approach used to select the faculty participants is also subject to researcher bias. A different group of participants or a larger group might have produced different results. Returning to an example used previously, if I had decided to have the
diversity within the sample mirror the actual faculty in terms of years of service, there would have been more of the newer faculty members in the sample. This could have produced a different picture. If there is a weakness in the sample it is the absence of male faculty members in mathematics or the hard sciences hired in the last five years.

Restricting of the sample to full-time faculty also limits the study. Part-time faculty members represent half of the total faculty but their voices are not heard in this study. Furthermore, faculty members are not the only members of the campus community who participate in the ongoing interpretation of a college’s identity. Further research is also needed to examine the ways other groups interpret the college’s identity, including the president and other senior administrators, members of the board of trustees, and academic support and student services staff persons.
The second section of this study relates the major findings in terms of academic and religious identity and the relationship between these aspects of organizational identity. David Dill's approach to symbol and ritual provides an overarching framework for organizing the chapters in this section.

Symbols, according to Dill, are "those objects, acts, relationships, or linguistic formations that stand ambiguously for a multiplicity of meanings, evoke emotions, and impel men [sic] to action" (quoted in Dill, 1982, p. 313-14). Symbolic objects, acts, and ideas serve the purpose of providing unifying beliefs among individuals within a collegiate organization. They help members of the college to imagine and to experience themselves as a community working together toward meaningful purposes and common ends.

Symbols are supported by rituals, patterned sequences of social activity which express and articulate meaning within a group (p. 314).
Rituals, by this definition, are not limited to formal and routine rites and events, such as awards ceremonies or commencement. Processes by which a campus community deliberates its core values and technologies, for example, the review of the general education curriculum or campus-wide visioning processes, are also forms of ritual. Through ritual, according to Dill, a community attempts to define the meaning of its symbols. It is this collective attempt to define a symbol that creates meaning and commitment within the community as a whole. However, because symbols are by their nature intangible and ambiguous, any attempt to define them can only approximate their meaning. Rituals can never fully articulate or make manifest all the potential meaning of the symbols they support. The gap between symbolic ideals and ritual expressions can produce frustration, disappointment, and cynicism that, in turn, can contribute to a loss of shared meaning and reduce the power of the symbol to support a common belief system.

The features which members of the campus community associate with a college or university and use to imagine the organization’s identity function as symbols within the community. They represent shared assumptions and understandings about the college, its mission, work, and character, that provide unifying beliefs among individuals whose primary belief systems are anchored in different academic disciplines or administrative functions. The rituals through which the community endeavors to express and define these
symbolic features help create commitment and common purpose among the members of a campus community. At the same time efforts to define or express these symbolic features in policy statements or in the academic program will invariably reveal the multiple and often conflicting views held by the members.

Chapters IV and V explore the concept of identity by examining the understandings and interpretations of two features that faculty members in the study closely associate with the college’s identity. Chapter IV focuses on academic identity and describes faculty members’ understandings of ODC as a liberal arts college. This chapter delineates some of the assumptions and understandings faculty participants share about this characterization of the college, examines institutional realities that challenge it, and describes three faculty perspectives of what a liberal arts education is at ODC. Chapter V focuses on two symbolic characterizations participants use to talk about the college’s religious identity, namely, ODC as a Dominican college and as a Catholic college. The chapter examines participants’ assumptions and understandings about both characterizations and the different ways each functions within the group. Participants’ views of the ways the college’s religious identity is expressed in the life of the campus are described and analyzed. Chapter VI examines the relationship between participants’ interpretations of both aspects of ODC’s identity. It also explores possible implications of the study for practice and directions for further study.
CHAPTER 4

ACADEMIC IDENTITY: ODC AS A LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGE

In this chapter I examine faculty participants’ understandings and interpretations of ODC’s academic identity, particularly its identity as a liberal arts college. I begin by examining the assumptions and understandings that the faculty members in the study share about ODC as a liberal arts college. I then describe institutional realities that faculty members regularly encounter in their role as teachers which challenge and qualify this characterization. Specifically, I discuss the college’s enrollment distribution in liberal arts and in professional programs and changes in student demographics and attitudes. Finally, I delineate and discuss three perspectives of a career-oriented, liberal arts education that participants in this study articulate as they attempt to reconcile the differences between the idea of ODC as a liberal arts college and the institutional realities of the college.
Preparing to Enter the Community

I prepared to enter the ODC community as a participant observer by reading various college documents for public audiences: the current catalog, most recent accreditation report, and current recruiting materials. As I read, my attention was drawn to the themes of liberal arts education and career or professional preparation and the way they were woven together to describe the college’s academic mission and programs. I was particularly struck by the phrase "Ohio Dominican provides . . . a career-oriented, liberal arts college education." The phrase caught my attention not because it was foreign or unique but because it was so familiar. I have worked at two Catholic colleges which employ almost identical phrases in comparable documents to describe their academic missions and programs. My experience, however, suggested that while institutions may use similar descriptive phrases to identify themselves formally, the meaning they give to these phrases in practice can be subtly but significantly different. In the interviews, therefore, I sought to understand how faculty at ODC interpret these concepts and use them to organize their thinking about the college’s academic identity.

A Liberal Arts College: Shared Understandings

Faculty participants demonstrate broad consensus about a number of salient features related to college’s academic identity, including the primacy
of teaching, a focus on undergraduate education, and a commitment to first-generation college students. However, it is the characterization of ODC as a liberal arts college that exerts the greatest influence on their thinking about the college’s academic identity. The fourteen faculty participants consistently describe ODC as a "liberal arts college." This characterization of the college came through in participants’ responses to several of my questions as well as in the issues they raised during the course of the interviews. The characterization of ODC as a liberal arts college, for example, often emerged early in the interview as the participants responded to my opening probe about what attracted them to the college. When I asked participants to describe the college, I often heard statements such as "We are a higher education institution, serving the needs of a very specific target population in Central Ohio, in the context of Catholic Dominican, liberal arts education," or "I’ve always heard ‘liberal arts college’ and that’s how I’d describe it. Small, Catholic, liberal arts." It surfaced in other conversations when participants discussed the critical issues currently confronting the college.

The faculty interviewed also share assumptions about the purpose and source of a liberal education at ODC. The purpose of a liberal education is to provide ODC students with the intellectual and cultural breadth requisite for a rich, satisfying and productive life. Typical is this statement by a humanities professor:
When I am trying to explain this to a student, I call them the liberating arts. . . . Because we have such limited horizons and one of the things the liberal arts can do for us is broaden those horizons and stretch them and shake them up.

The broadening of horizons to which she refers is considered by many participants to be particularly important for the first-generation college students who comprise the largest segment of the student population at ODC. Faculty describe these students as bringing limited personal experiences to their collegiate studies and as too focused on the pragmatic and career returns of a college education. In the words of one long-term faculty member, "I think we do students a tremendous service here. Perhaps because they come in incredibly narrow to begin with and we really do broaden their perspective." Faculty participants also concur with the idea that the general education curriculum is the primary vehicle by which horizons are stretched and shaken. The explanation of the curriculum offered by a senior arts faculty member is representative of many of the participants' views:

The education here is grounded in the liberal arts in that 50% of the student’s education is general education. Students take courses in all areas of the college: science, math, philosophy, writing, history . . . social studies, behavioral studies. So that, no matter what they choose to major in, they have a firm foundation in liberal arts. . . . Out of that should come thinking skills, writing skills, communication skills, analytical skills, certain quantitative thinking skill . . . so that the liberally educated person can really fit in in many kinds of situations and with some specific learning be able to apply their basic thinking skills and be successful.
As expected, faculty in the arts and sciences strongly support and identify the college with the liberal arts. What is somewhat surprising, however, is the support for the liberal arts among the faculty participants in applied and professional fields. These faculty members demonstrate in varying ways a strong personal commitment to the liberal arts. For example, one participant describes her commitment to the college’s liberal agenda by stating, "I take it as a sacred trust to support the mission of the college, which I do believe in, that students need to be broadly, liberally educated, for personal reasons as well as professional reasons." Three participants located in professional programs have completed a mentoring program designed to prepare faculty from disciplines outside the humanities to teach in the humanities core program; two of those faculty members who have gone through the program reported teaching in the humanities program on a regular basis.

Support for the liberal arts from faculty in applied and professional fields is further evidenced by their consistent affirmation of the college’s large general education component. They describe this component of the curriculum, which comprises approximately 50% of the academic program, as integral to the preparation of students in their programs. This curricular component sets ODC’s professional programs apart from those offered by more vocationally oriented colleges with which ODC competes for students. As one education faculty member explains:
Our largest divisions are career preparation programs, but we are not a training institution. We do incorporate the basic liberal arts education into that career or the professional training. It is the majority of the program that the students get. And integrated into their professional program is the liberal arts education.

In another example a participant from the business division uses the liberal arts component of the program to describe how ODC’s business administration programs differ from business programs offered at a more vocationally oriented baccalaureate college in the same city. He states, "ODC is not a business school like [a neighboring institution]. . . . Say you go to [that institution] for business administration, you know nothing else except business administration. You know nothing about literature, history, the liberal disciplines. You don’t know much about the world around you and that makes it difficult to deal with different situations when you graduate and pursue your career objectives." The strength, consistency, and pervasiveness of support for the liberal education agenda among the faculty, especially faculty in applied and professional programs, strongly suggests that the liberal arts are central features of the college’s identity among the faculty.

Institutional Challenges: Enrollments, Attitudes, and Demographics

While the liberal arts are central to the faculty members’ perceptions of their institution, Ohio Dominican College, however, is not exclusively a
liberal arts college. Like the majority of Catholic colleges founded by women's religious congregations, the college was founded as a local institution in which lay women studied the useful as well as the liberal arts and members of the sponsoring congregation prepared for careers in the classroom (Kennelly, 1992). Chartered as The Ladies Literary Institute of St. Mary of the Springs in 1911, the College of St. Mary of the Springs opened as a senior college in 1924, offering a general liberal arts curriculum. By 1927, however, Dominican congregational leaders had added a normal department to the college in response to the needs of the congregation and local Catholic diocese (Caslandr, 1960). Since that time, degree programs in professional fields have comprised much of ODC's academic program and played a vital role in maintaining the college's continuing financial viability.¹

At the time of the study, the college was classified as Baccalaureate II College in the Carnegie classification system (1994) which indicates that ODC awards less than 40% of its degrees in liberal arts fields. That year Ohio Dominican awarded 63% of its baccalaureate degrees in professional and applied fields. More than half of the 31 baccalaureate majors offered at ODC are in applied and professional fields.² The applied and professional

¹The college offered a Bachelor of Science in Home Economics by 1935. Nursing and commerce programs were added in 1940 and library science in 1946.
²The college's 1996 viewbook states that the college offers thirty majors, however, both the viewbook and 1996-1999 catalog list thirty one baccalaureate degree programs. Seventeen applied and professional programs are listed, including accounting, business administration, business administration with fashion
programs consistently attract more students to the college than do the arts and sciences programs combined. In the fall semester of 1997, the Divisions of Business Administration and Education together accounted for 44% of the college's degree-seeking students. Applied degree programs located within the college's arts and sciences divisions represent another 22% of the degree-seeking population. These programs are generally larger than the degree programs in the academic disciplines within their respective divisions. For example, in the arts division, students majoring in communication arts, public relations, and visual communications comprise 80% of the division's enrollment. A similar situation exists in the division of social and behavioral sciences where there are six social work majors for every one sociology major. This pattern of enrollment is relatively consistent with the college's historic pattern. In 1977, for example, 60% of ODC's incoming freshman sought to major in business, criminal justice, education, home economics, library science, or social work. In addition, almost one-fourth of Ohio Dominican's total enrollment is comprised of continuing education students enrolled in professional certification programs.

merchandising concentration, communication arts, computer science, criminal justice, elementary education, health administration, information systems, international business, library and information systems, public relations, school library media services, social work, special education, teaching English to speakers of other languages, and visual communications. Thirteen arts and sciences programs are listed, including, art, biology, chemistry, cross-disciplinary studies, economics, English language and literature, history, mathematics, philosophy, political science, psychology, social science, sociology, Spanish, and theology.
for example, teaching certification, thus further strengthening the professional programs' presence and importance on the campus.

Recent changes in the composition of the student body offer new challenges to ODC's identity as a liberal arts college. Since the mid-1980s, ODC has experienced relatively rapid growth in its enrollment. This growth is due almost exclusively to the college's success in opening new student markets, specifically among adult and transfer students. Growth in these subpopulations has more than offset a declining trend in the traditional student population. The infusion of these new subpopulations is reshaping the composition of the student body in significant ways. In the fall of 1997, for example, first-time freshman accounted for only 39% of the new degree students enrolling at ODC and, in a startling inversion, juniors and seniors outnumbered freshmen and sophomores. These changes in the student body have significant implications for the college's academic programs and, therefore, its academic identity. Adult and transfer students are attracted almost exclusively to the college's professional programs, especially in

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3Both sets of figures reflect only students classified as degree-seeking. If the number of first-time freshmen is calculated as a percentage of all new students, that is, degree and continuing education, than it drops to 24%. Likewise, if we look at total enrollment, then continuing education and upperclass students outnumber freshman and sophomores 1331 to 603. Post-baccalaureate students enrolled in teacher certification programs account for most of the students in the continuing education classification. Fifteen students are listed as unclassified and are not included in these figures.
business administration and education. If adult and transfer enrollments continue to expand and traditional student and first-time freshman enrollments continue to decline, the college will soon face the very real possibility of having a student body comprised almost entirely of upperclass students enrolled in professional degree programs.

The situation is further exacerbated by adult students' decidedly utilitarian attitudes toward their college education and the fact that transfer students are often exempt from a significant portion of the general education curriculum. Even faculty who are highly supportive of efforts to recruit these new student populations acknowledge these students' pragmatic attitudes. One proponent, for example, noted, "Older learners are coming to college for something specific. [They are] not coming in to be broadly educated. They are very attuned to needing skills to get the job they want." These factors suggest that these students will enroll in far fewer courses outside their majors in the future. This raises serious questions about quality control when the majority of students graduating from ODC may do so without having completed the general education component of the curriculum. It also raises critical questions about the continued viability of arts and sciences departments. If the current population inversions continue, that is, more juniors and seniors than freshmen and sophomores, the demand for service courses which has traditionally supported a large number of faculty positions in arts and science departments will decline. In a tuition-dependent
institution such as ODC, these conditions are likely to present choices about faculty and resource allocations that could seriously alter ODC’s academic mission and program.

ODC faculty, therefore, daily confront practical realities in their role as teachers that shape their interpretation of Ohio Dominican as a liberal arts college. Participants describe these changing institutional realities as exerting pressure on the college’s identity as a liberal arts college. A senior faculty member in the social and behavior sciences articulates her concern saying:

We do have a tension on this campus between the liberal arts and the professional programs. Professional programs get all the students. That’s a slight exaggeration. But [in] a lot of the traditional liberal arts programs we have our smattering of majors and we end up providing service courses.

She returns to the issue later noting:

We’re doing really quite well in attracting adults. But I think to survive as a true liberal arts college, we need a core of traditional students as well. The adults tend to come into the professional programs. The implications of that are huge.

A humanities faculty member summarizes the implications for the college in terms of a critical choice, "I think we . . . have to somehow decide whether we are going to be a liberal arts college or a business college or a professional school with some liberal arts courses."

What at first appears as a unidimensional or simple concept about which many faculty members agree emerges as a conceptual container that
stretches to embrace, not always comfortably, many meanings and interpretations. As we will see in the following section, the multiple meanings attached to the concept of the liberal arts becomes an issue when faculty participants shift from describing ODC as a liberal arts college and attempt to articulate the implications of this identity for academic policies and practices. The career-oriented goals of students and the large enrollments in professional and applied programs pose an interesting and thorny curricular riddle for faculty who conceive of the college in which they work as a liberal arts college. Faculty members articulate far more varying perspectives when they are asked to describe what a career-oriented, liberal arts education is at ODC.

Negotiating between Symbol and Reality:

Three Perspectives of a Career-Oriented, Liberal Arts Education

Many of the participants use words or phrases such as "antithetical" or "opposed to one another" to describe the tension they experience between the two educational goals coupled in the phrase, "a career-oriented, liberal arts college education." At the same time they seem to accept that these two conflicting educational goals frame and constitute the teaching enterprise in which they are involved. In their efforts to create meaning from this dual focus, participants describe varying views of the nature of a liberal arts education at ODC. Participants’ interpretations cluster in three distinct
perspectives: the integral, paradoxical, and popular. Each of these perspectives of a career-oriented, liberal arts education reflects a different curricular emphasis in the beliefs and attitudes held by the faculty members.

Previous research has explored the differences in the attitudes and work life of faculty in the sciences and humanities (Snow, 1969), in different disciplinary communities (Becher, 1989), and in different types of collegiate institutions (Clark, 1987). This study differs in that it aims to understand the differences among faculty members’ beliefs and attitudes within a modest-size, baccalaureate institution. We have already seen that the participants share a number of common understandings about the college. Furthermore, they are all full-time faculty and, although they are located in different disciplines, they share the academic socialization process of graduate school. The majority also earned their bachelor’s degrees from liberal arts colleges. Each of the participants’ views, therefore, are likely to overlap. That said, it is also the case that each participant emphasizes the values and priorities of one perspective over the other two. In the following descriptions the remarks of any single participant are used to illustrate only one perspective. For example, if I use a participant’s views of the purpose of a college education to illustrate the integral perspective, then I do not use that same person’s views on possible threats to the integrity of the academic program to describe the paradoxical perspective.
The three perspectives described here are offered as heuristic devices. As such they are intended as "theoretical rules of thumb" (Webster), rather than descriptions of reality. Their purpose is to facilitate the explication of subtle variations of meaning and nuances of interpretation among the participants’ views of a career-oriented, liberal arts education at ODC. The description of each perspective begins with an examination of how participants characterize the nature of the relationship between the goals of career and liberal education. This is followed by descriptions of how participants holding that perspective understand the purpose of this type of college education, the primary means involved in realizing that educational experience, and, finally, the threats to the college’s academic identity and program.

**Integral Perspective**

The integral perspective emphasizes the liberal arts tradition with its characteristic focus on the moral purpose of education and an holistic, integrated theory of knowledge. Approximately one-fifth of the participants articulate this perspective of liberal education at ODC. All the participants within this category are faculty of longstanding in the humanities and social sciences.
Nature of the relationship: "A bit of a ruse".

For participants within this perspective, the phrase "a career-oriented, liberal arts education" is not so much a description of the college’s academic program or its educational agenda but as a recruiting tool used to attract students to ODC. A senior social science faculty member exemplifies this view:

I’ve always been a believer that education is fundamentally about moral transformation. It’s not about technique, it’s not about knowing stuff. It’s about the habits of the mind that allow us to be decent judges in the world. . . . But you can’t go out to new recruits and say, "I don’t care whether you ever get a job. Come here and we’ll educate you and you’ll get your own voice and you’ll be free." Well, nobody would ever come here. You have to sort of go to the gates of Hell to get them to come in. And, in that sense, there is a bit of ruse there.

By labeling the phrase "a career-oriented, liberal arts education," a recruiting ruse, the speaker’s words suggest that the conflict exists only at the level of appearance. The conflict generated by this dualism is eliminated by distinguishing between the education students think they want and the "real" education that is the work of the faculty.

Purpose: "To be educated."

A senior humanities professor describes the purpose of the education provided at ODC in this way: "We know that virtually every student who is here has a very practical goal that they get a job. . . . But I see that in the context of a much broader educational goal, which is that they become
She explains that to become educated means that students have "a liberal education, which is this great mystery that we try to accomplish in courses in philosophy and theology and literature and the arts. The so-called liberal arts." She further defines educated in terms of the outcomes of this curricular mystery:

[W]hen they're all together and students have enough of them and are challenged in them, they begin to have a worldview that is different from a very functional, practical, pragmatic kind of worldview. . . . To me, the thing about a liberal education is that it gives a quality and a dimension to life that a job just does not.

The social scientist who spoke previously of a ruse describes the different quality or dimension that a liberal arts education adds to students' lives:

I think what we really mean by a career-oriented, liberal arts education is that we're going to educate people in the life of the mind such that the life of the mind will be acted in the world. What I mean by that is you're not going to come here and learn to be a cop. You're going to come here and . . . learn about the dilemmas and problems and conundrums that have to do with the law . . . And what we're doing is trying to make you strong enough morally so that when you . . . become a cop on the street or a parole officer your can make moral judgments.

Opposition to a utilitarian view of knowledge and of a college education can be heard in both of the preceding participants' remarks. The purpose of learning as it is understood from within this perspective is the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake rather than for its utilitarian benefit. Another senior humanities professor explains, "I think the contemplation [of truth] we are about is more the speculative intellect than the practical
content. Speculative intellect is knowledge for its own sake, not for what it can do for you."

For these faculty members, a major aim for them as teachers is to foster in students the habit of seeking or contemplating the truth in their daily lives. In remarks delivered at the December commencement the year this study was conducted, a long-time faculty member describes this aim in the following way,

At ODC, higher education is more than a business, it’s a calling. Our mission is nothing less than "To contemplate truth and to share with others the fruits of this contemplation." . . . This isn’t a calling just for the theologians or the philosophers or the good sisters; this is a calling for all of us. "To contemplate truth," to try and figure out what life is all about, to reflect on the meaning of this world, to look at the larger picture and ask the really big questions. And to make connections.

In the interview this same faculty member continues:

We believe that there is . . . a meaning of life that people need to be in touch with. . . . Some of us come at it theologically, some of us come at it philosophically, some of us come at it sociologically, some of us come at it psychologically, but literally we’re all in the same system of understanding of the world and its condition and we share that with our students. We teach that to our students.

The ideal toward which ODC faculty and students strive is, in her words, to become "a scholar of the world and a student of life."
Means: The general education curriculum.

Within the integral perspective, the general education curriculum is viewed as the means by which the liberating and integrating education provided at ODC is achieved. The social science professor who spoke previously describes the curriculum as "one of the tightest conceptions of what liberal education is supposed to be." This professor draws on images from the allegory of the cave in Plato's *The Republic* to explain the curriculum's role:

One of the images I use is that of the prisoner who’s taken from the cave . . . and dragged up the steep and rugged ascent. You don’t get up there because you feel like you want to go. Somebody drags you up there. It’s part of the mystery.

The curriculum, the professor continues, is what allows someone to come here and be forced, if you will, out of the areas that they feel comfortable with . . . . The curriculum covers the range of ways of knowing and takes students out of their particular way of knowing and requires them to learn other modes.

From his description it is clear that both the curriculum’s content and its sequencing are critical to the learning experience. These professors are more likely than other participants to identify specific disciplines, courses, and even course content when discussing the general education curriculum. The curriculum is a sequenced progression through a carefully designed course of study based on a particular view of the Western intellectual tradition rather than mere exposure to different disciplines.
Threats: Curricular changes and specialization.

Faculty members associated with the integral perspective describe threats to the college’s academic identity in terms of threats to the central and defining role of the liberal arts in the college’s academic program. These faculty speak of two sources of threat: changes to the general education curriculum and academic specialization. First, faculty associated with this view believe that ODC has one curriculum for all students. In the words of a humanities professor, “One of the things that has been going on around here is the quiet way we have more than one college in the college. . . . I fight [it] all the time. I just keep saying, ‘We have one catalog, folks.’” In the interviews and in public forums, these individuals express concern about how variations in individual courses as well as deviations from the prescribed general education curriculum impact the college’s identity. Changes introduced in academic programs designed to attract adult and transfer students are particular sites of concern. The social science professor cited previously uses the current policy exempting adult students in the cross-disciplinary and accelerated business administration degree programs from the language requirement as an example. He argues, “If it continues, it’s the end of the general distribution requirement . . . ; it will undermine our curriculum.”

A second source of threat to ODC’s broad liberating agenda is the emphasis on academic specialization that pervades American higher
education. The aforementioned social science professor asserts, "The research suggests it is the major that has essentially destroyed the concept of a liberal education." Calling academic majors as "hogs at the trough," he continues by asserting,

I don't think there's something called deep disciplinary understanding short of graduate school. . . . I never thought that getting a major in college was what a really well educated person should do. . . . I've never thought that my job was teaching them how to be [disciplinary specialists].

Participants with this perspective identify themselves as members of a particular academic discipline; that is, they describe themselves as a philosopher, sociologist, or psychologist. However, they tend to downplay the distinctions between disciplinary orientations. The professor who spoke at commencement, for example, states, "We're increasingly recognizing the fact that it's one dynamic and that we just come at it from different disciplines." At least two participants in this group describe themselves as holding positions that put them outside the mainstream of their disciplinary communities. Further, these faculty do not define their role as teachers in terms of initiating students into the worldview of their disciplines.

Paradoxical perspective

An emphasis on preparing students in the content and methodology of a particular discipline or field distinguishes the paradoxical perspective of a career-oriented, liberal arts education from both the integral and popular
perspectives. As the label suggests, however, this perspective does not have a unidimensional focus. These faculty emphasize academic specialization in a particular discipline or field while retaining a deep appreciation for the moral and speculative aspects of a liberal education. Approximately one-third of the participants articulated views consistent with this interpretation of a career-oriented liberal arts education. Participants associated with this perspectives are located in the natural and social sciences and in the education division. Some have been at the college for less than five years, others are faculty of longstanding.

Nature of the relationship: A paradox

Faculty members associated with this perspective focus on the paradox or contradiction present in the idea of "a career-oriented, liberal arts education." A member of the education faculty captures the tension inherent in this perspective of ODC’s educational program in the following description of the relationship between the two educational goals:

I come from a liberal arts background. . . . It changed me as a person. I see a need for a broadening, a general knowledge component, a discover-yourself, if you will, component to education. Realistically, however, I think our current world doesn’t allow for it to happen. And certainly the students we attract here couldn’t afford to do just that. So we have this compromise, which is the preparation of people for careers with a significant part of their undergraduate work done in the humanities. It is less than satisfactory. I wish we had more time for the professional part but I would never dream of taking it from the liberal arts component.
The word *compromise* means a settlement or agreement (Webster), but the character of that settlement or agreement depends on the specific context in which the word is being used. A compromise can mean making peace, selling out, reaching a happy medium, or coming to an understanding. The sense of conflict contained in this individual’s words carries the connotation of a negotiated agreement that involves concessions or trade-offs between two valuable aims, that is, breadth and specialization. It is important to note that the compromise to which the speaker refers is between the broad goals of a liberal arts education and the specialized goals of an academic discipline or professional field and not between programs in the arts and sciences and programs in applied and professional fields.

The paradoxical perspective shares with the integral a deep appreciation for the broad values of a liberal arts education. As a result, participants who articulate integral and paradoxical perspectives often perceive one another as holding similar or highly compatible beliefs. The distinction between the perspectives is further masked by the fact that many faculty within the paradoxical perspective are located in arts and sciences fields. However, the paradoxical perspective diverges from the integral view by emphasizing the goal of academic specialization as the defining element of the undergraduate experience at ODC. Faculty within the paradoxical perspective consider the tension-filled relationship between the liberal and
specialized educational objectives to be the dynamic source that gives shape and power to the educational experience at Ohio Dominican College.

**Purpose:** Introduction to a world view.

From the perspective of these faculty, educating students in the knowledge and methodology of their particular disciplines or fields is central to their work and a desired outcome of the college’s educational program. A senior professor in the social sciences, for instance, explains that she and her departmental colleagues see it as their role to "invite [our students] to understand the world . . . the way we do as [disciplinary specialists], to learn that perspective, that way of thinking." Teaching for these faculty is almost exclusively perceived as teaching in their disciplines. This differs from faculty within the integral perspective who frequently talk in more generic and global terms about teaching.

The disciplinary focus is tempered for these participants by their deep appreciation of the college’s liberal agenda. Their intention is not to educate narrow disciplinary specialists. Rather, for these faculty, the purpose of a college education is to foster the development of individuals who combine the critical competencies of a liberally educated person and specialized knowledge and skills, such as those of a biologist or a teacher. An education professor describes her aims this way, "I want them to become reflective about what they do. If something works, I want them to be able
to understand why it works. I have this notion that I’d like my students to be experimenters in the classroom.” Accomplishing this goal, she continues, means assisting students to integrate what they’re actually experiencing and learning into some type of articulated philosophy so that they can say this what I believe about working with [this clientele]. . . . When they leave, they ought to be able to say this is why I’ve chosen to do this and this is why I work with this [person] this way.

She continues explaining that it is also her job to help "students to understand their own moral perspectives and provide them with avenues to explore these . . . rather than just saying, ‘This is what you ought to do.’"

The goal, as suggested in these remarks, is the education of critically reflective specialists and practitioners who know both their field and themselves.

**Means: The discipline and the teacher.**

Inviting students into a discipline’s worldview depends more on the faculty who teach the curriculum than on the curriculum itself. For these participants, their role as teacher appears to be far more central to their understanding of what affects the educational experience. The previously mentioned education professor, for example, describes her role this way:

I like to share with students an approach to thinking about [the field] that is both intellectual and personal, emotional and thoughtful. . . . My job is first to help them become more informed about the field, to provide them with experiences in
the field, and then help them interpret the experiences in light of other aspects of our classes.

After describing her role as teacher in a similar fashion, the social scientist who spoke earlier of inviting students into a disciplinary world view states:

I think that what really matters is the relationship you have with your students. And if you can be excited about your subject and you can convey to them that excitement and your belief that they benefit by this and that they can do it, then you get a good thing going. . . . Fundamentally, I think it comes down to examining your own relationship with your subject matter and your own relationship with your students.

The curriculum is not unimportant to these faculty members. The most significant aspect of the curriculum and the one to which they give the most attention is the academic major. These faculty focus on the content and sequencing of courses within the major in much the same way that faculty in the integral perspective do with the general education curriculum. A professor in the physical sciences, for example, describes her approach to the development of her courses, "[E]ach course . . . has its place in a sequence of courses, so I have to carefully consider how it fits into the curriculum as a whole." However, they do not appear to perceive the curriculum in as fixed and independent terms as some faculty members in the integral perspective. In this group teacher and curriculum, while not one, are so intermingled as to be inseparable.
Threats: Quality issues.

Within this group threats to ODC’s academic identity are described in terms of threats to the quality of its academic programs. These faculty members describe two changes in the student body that they perceive as potential sources of threat to the quality of the college’s academic programs. First, faculty express concern about what they perceive as the declining academic quality of the student body. High school students in general are viewed as increasingly underprepared both academically and culturally to do college level work. Students enrolling at ODC are viewed as particularly in need of basic academic skills. As a result, current students must devote larger portions of their coursework to attaining more basic information and skills than those in past years. One faculty member explains that her division has "had to establish pre-requisites and co-requisites on some of our courses that weren’t there before. . . . What we are seeing is that students are taking more math prerequisites than they once did." While these faculty acknowledge the impressive progress that many of the students make, they are more concerned that the lower starting point negatively impacts the final outcomes that can be achieved in the course of study. The same faculty member voices this concern when she explains why a senior research project is not required of students majoring in her area:

It’s almost as if we get them and they’re not quite ready for college. So we spend all that time getting them up to par. By the time they graduate, they’re actually quite good and they’re ready to do research.
But we don’t have them that fifth year. How are we suppose to fit that in, too?

Another participant explicitly links the quality of the student body with the college’s identity when she states, "Many of [our students] don’t get accepted into other colleges because they don’t have college-level skills. We take them, we help them improve, but I think it does start to impact our identity as a college." The fact that several of these faculty members teach in the college’s most rigorous and quantitatively oriented programs may contribute to these perceptions.

The second quality issue that concerns these faculty is the increasing number of adult and transfer students enrolling in professional programs, particularly business and education. The issue is not so much the academic competency of these students, although faculty members report mixed evaluations of this population’s academic preparedness. Rather, it is the pragmatic orientation they bring to their studies that concerns these faculty. Adult students with family and work responsibilities very often do not have the time or the inclination to pursue knowledge for knowledge’s sake. For ODC to maintain its identity as a liberal arts college, it needs students who have the time and desire to engage in a "discover-yourself component of education."
Popular perspective

The popular perspective of a career-oriented, liberal arts education is distinguished by an emphasis on meeting the needs and aspirations of students and a pragmatic stance toward changing societal expectations regarding higher education. This perspective represents a fundamentally different approach to conceptualizing a college education. Its point of departure for thinking about the collegiate academic experience at ODC is the student and the student’s needs and/or expectations. This contrasts with the two previous perspectives which proceed from well established academic traditions of a college education, its purposes and the means to effect it. A participant in this group reflects the difference stating:

Some of us are perceived as pragmatists, in a disparaging sense of the term, in that we’re willing to accommodate to some of the needs of the marketplace, in a sense. Whereas others would take a more traditional position and hold firm to it.

William Massey of Stanford’s Institute for Higher Education Research describes the assumptions underlying this view:

Tastes have changed: people used to be interested in the classics; now they are interested in making money. In the end, we have fundamental and deep social changes—and they are what they are. I do believe in the market. If there is a demand, we have an obligation to meet it.

We need to provide an interesting menu at the university—a menu of where we think the world is going—but we can’t dictate what people are going to want. If they don’t like the menu, we have an obligation to change it—but not too quickly. We have to balance “leading” with “following” (cited in Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1991, p. 169).
The last sentence is an important one. Faculty members in this group do not oppose all the traditional academic values and norms represented by the integral and paradoxical perspectives. In fact, they draw upon both perspectives when talking about the educational enterprise in which they see themselves involved. What is different is the prominent role this group affords to students’ needs and societal expectations in defining the type of collegiate educational experience offered at ODC.

This is the largest and most diverse group of faculty. Almost half of the participants interviewed articulate attitudes and beliefs that are consistent with this perspective of a career-oriented, liberal arts education. The majority of participants in this group are in professional programs; however, the group also include humanities faculty members whose teaching load is comprised primarily of required general education courses. The group includes faculty who have been at ODC for as few as three years and for more than twenty-five years; most have been at the college less than fifteen years. Since this group represents the widest range of attitudes and beliefs, the diversity of their views makes crisp distinctions more difficult.

**Nature of the relationship: Complementary.**

Most participants in this third group perceive the relationship between the two educational aims of a career-oriented, liberal arts education as complementary. A faculty member in the business division explains:
Let me tell you what I tell perspective students that are looking at our degree and seeing all those general distribution requirements. . . . I tell them the major gets you in, the liberal arts component helps you to advance and become the best you can become. It’s the best of both worlds.

The phrase “the best of both worlds” suggests that the dual focus of the program is interpreted as a golden mean or happy medium. The absence of tension in this view of the pairing of foci contrasts with the paradoxical perspective’s tension-filled compromise between desirable but divergent educational goals. The previous statement also suggests that this group of faculty members, like the group holding the integral perspective, reduce the dualism in the phrase “a career-oriented liberal arts education” by subsuming one goal into the other. In this case, however, the priorities are reversed; the liberal agenda is subsumed into the career preparation agenda.

Humanities faculty in the group are more ambivalent about the complementarity of the two components. This is understandable given their disciplinary location and their involvement in the general education function. What connects them to this perspective is their pragmatic approach to the role of general education in the curriculum.

Purpose: Addressing students’ needs.

For faculty associated with this perspective, the purpose of a "career-oriented, liberal arts education" is "to produce productive members of society; good citizens, people who will contribute to the economic progress
of society.” Faculty members associated with this perspective talk about this purpose in two ways. First, participants, especially those in professional programs, discuss the purpose in terms of helping students gain the knowledge and skills they need to enter and advance in their chosen career fields. They are also quick to point out that this means more than vocational or technical education. An education professor asserts, "We are not a training institution. We incorporate the basic liberal arts education into that career or the professional training." A colleague in another professional program stresses that the goal is "more than just a job. We present it as a career requiring continuous, ongoing, lifelong learning." The aim of ODC’s academic programs is to assist students to pursue the career-oriented educational goals they have set for themselves, supported by a broader intellectual foundation.

A comparison of the views of an education faculty member in this group with those of the education professor used to illustrate the paradoxical perspective can help elucidate the difference between this perspective and the other two. Both education professors discuss the goal of their teaching in terms of helping students to make meaning of course content for themselves and to integrate what they learn and experience into their theory of practice. In the popular group, the education professor who distinguished between vocational education and career preparation describes her goals as a teacher in this way:
My ultimate goal, no matter what I’m teaching, [is] for them to be able to list basic principles that they feel are pertinent to the way they’re going to teach or the way they should teach, based upon what they have learned from their research and so forth. To me, that is always taking the information and distilling, synthesizing it down to relevancy in my life, and that’s my goal.

Her emphasis on distilling basic principles that have relevancy for the way they are going to teach connotes a more pragmatic and utilitarian orientation toward learning and teaching. The colleague in the paradoxical group, on the other hand, describes her goals in terms of helping students to become reflective about what they do and to develop a philosophy of professional practice. She also talks about helping students explore professional moral dilemmas and understand their own moral perspectives. The language of reflection, philosophy, and morals is more consistent with the speculative orientation shared by both the integral and paradoxical perspectives.

The second way faculty in this group describe their purpose is in terms of meeting students where they are and helping them advance toward greater intellectual, cultural, and developmental maturity. A professor in the humanities, for instance, discusses the importance of developing general education courses that are appropriate for the type of students who enroll at ODC. The purpose of general education, she argues, is not to transmit a particular body of knowledge but, rather, to select and use content to help students develop the basic academic competencies they need to be successful in college and at work.
Academic achievement is often discussed in terms of the progress students evidence from matriculation to graduation or from the beginning of a course to the end rather than in their progress toward a pre-set performance standard. From this orientation, the grading process becomes a tool to support learning instead of a measure of achievement. A professor in a professional program describes how she uses grading to advance learning:

We talk about grade inflation . . . and every time that is brought up . . . I look at what I do . . . . Very many of my students get high grades partly because they are majors and they are more vested in the courses . . . . But I also look at how I teach . . . . I teach for them to be successful. If somebody gives me a paper that is a failing piece of work, I won’t take it . . . I give it back to them and I say in one week I’d like you to re-work this. Take note of the comments I’ve made here. We can talk about it if you’d like to come talk with me . . . . My objective is to teach them, not to catch them at what they don’t know or to take sloppy work. But to call them to a higher expectation and to help them get there, if there’s any way I can do that . . . . I try to work with them in some different ways to get them where they want to be.

The goal for this faculty member and others associated with this perspective is to foster learning in the students they teach.

Means: Student-centered approaches and information technology.

These faculty members use language and imagery consistent with current reform movements within higher education when discussing the means they use to help students attain knowledge and skills useful for
advancing their academic and professional development. Specifically, they discuss student-centered learning approaches (Barr & Tagg, 1997) and the role of electronic technology in the learning-teaching process.

The student-centered approaches described by these participants place greater significance on the collaborative nature of the learning-teaching process. The aforementioned education professor, for example, explains her role in a student-centered learning process this way:

> My role is to provide resources, to take the students’ questions, point them in the right direction, to offer challenges, to help. . . . I just see myself as a facilitator all the way around. When I start a course, I try to pose the big question that we’re all trying to answer in this course. And then I actually negotiate that question with the students the very first week.

It is apparent in her remarks that students are given a more central and substantial role in shaping the courses in which they are enrolled. Students are also expected to assume greater responsibility for what is learned in the course, both for themselves individually and for the group as a whole.

Student-centered does not mean individualized instruction. The faculty member who previously discussed her approach to grading qualifies her student-centered approach by stating:

> I’m not saying I teach to each person separately in the classroom. But I’m always open to the needs of the individual. I tell them, "If what we’re doing in class . . . is not going to satisfy your learning needs, come and talk to me. We’ll work something out."

As she continues her explanation, she connects her student-centered philosophy with the needs of the nontraditional students who comprise the
majority of students she teaches:

I say to adjunct faculty . . . please use the same approach because we recognize the experience that many of our students bring. Some of them have worked in [the field] for 15 years. They just have no credentials. We don’t discount what they’ve learned through experience. We try to use that and make their time worthwhile.

Others in the group make similar observations and connections. It is worth noting that most of the participants in this group have significant contact with adult students in the classroom. Many come from divisions with programs that enroll large adult and transfer populations. While the group holds varying opinions about these students’ level of academic preparation, there is consensus that these students are more focused and motivated about their education than traditional students.

Faculty in this group talk about employing a variety of teaching methodologies in their classes. The lecture mode plays a minimal role. On the other hand, many discuss the multiple ways they are currently experimenting with and using electronic technology in their teaching. They take a positive, but not uncritical, stance toward the integration of computers and electronic technology in the learning-teaching process. Several participants were among the earliest proponents of technology on campus. Two were members of the committee that planned the college’s technology initiative. One of those faculty members was also the first to conduct a course delivered completely by distance-learning technologies. All
participants in the study identify the recent and significant technology investment as one of the most critical decisions the college has made in the past five years. However, faculty in the other two groups are more suspicious of the role of electronic technology in education, less convinced of its benefits, and less likely to use it in their teaching than are faculty in the popular perspective.

The story of an humanities faculty member who has been very involved in the integration of computer technology in general education courses in her discipline is illustrative of the impact of technology on the attitudes and practices of these faculty. This faculty member became involved in technology initially because of her conflicted feelings about the use of computers in the classroom. However, after three years of working with computers in the classroom, she finds that they increase her interaction with more students in her classes and provide a platform for more active and collaborative learning among students in a class. For example, she explains:

> It has taken me three years to realize that my yakking at students didn’t necessarily teach much. . . . I wasn’t listening to what they already knew. I was re-teaching things and I wasn’t respecting what they were bringing to the table. . . . I am really a guide on the side. No longer the sage on the stage all the time.

Her primary teaching responsibility has become the development of "authentic tasks" that facilitate students' learning. In a later conversation, she explains what this means to her:
It's my job now, I think, to design authentic tasks. Real work worth doing. . . . If I can invent the right task, [students] are going to master what I need for them to learn. . . . The job of a creative teaching professional is to identify tasks that will create the possibility of learning given skills while accomplishing something real. . . . The job of the guide on the side is to design tasks that lead students to production . . . and at the same time insure learning.

There is an interesting similarity between her emphasis on the right authentic task and the emphasis on the curriculum in the integral perspective. In both cases, it is the pedagogical medium that is seen as effecting the educational goals. The present description differs in that the process leads, instead of forces students toward the intended learning outcomes.

**Threat: Resistance to change.**

For participants in the popular group threats to academic identity come from obstacles that prevent the college from implementing changes necessary to meet evolving societal expectations and clientele demands. They direct more attention and energy to issues related to institutional survival than to identity maintenance. It would be a mistake, however, to interpret the popular perspective’s attention to the demands and conditions of the college’s external environment as concern only about survival.

Though these faculty members may be more sensitive to pragmatic issues; nevertheless, their views are grounded in the belief that the norms and practices of higher education in general and ODC in particular are
outdated in many respects and need to be re-envisioned in dramatic ways.

A long-term humanities faculty member, for example, discusses the implications for education of the global shift from an industrial society to an informational society. He notes that in the industrial model people must go to social institutions such as banks and schools to obtain their services. With the advent of technology, however, the model is being reversed. He explains that in an informational society

the individual is at the center and the bank comes to the individual, school comes to the individual, other social institutions come to the individual. You can do it all sitting at your computer at home. You can do banking from home, you can do your learning from home, you can do shopping from home, you can do all that. The institutions are coming to the individual now rather than the other way around.

The aforementioned education professor considers faculty resistance to changing modes of education to be one of the critical issues facing the college:

I think that the country seems to be moving to a different model of education all together. . . . I think if we’re going to be a viable part of the 21st century, we’re going to have to open ourselves to different models of how to provide our package educationally. . . . I am amazed at how an either/or mentality crops up among people who normally do not think in either/or.s. . . . I think that the challenges of different ways to package and to deliver education is going to be hard for a traditional liberal arts faculty to deal with. And not just at this institution.

For both of these participants and others in this group, the status quo and resistance to responding to society’s changing expectations are sources of concern because they negatively impact the learning of students who will
live most of their lives in the twenty-first century. Curricular change and variation to meet the different and evolving needs of various student clienteles are viewed as necessary and appropriate educational strategies rather than as threats to the integrity of the college’s identity and academic programs.

Summary

Faculty participants demonstrate a broad consensus around the characterization of Ohio Dominican College as a liberal arts college. This symbolic image of the college exerts significant influence on their thinking about the college’s academic identity. It provides unifying beliefs among faculty from varied disciplines about the purpose and source of the educational experience ODC offers to its students. While the characterization of ODC as a liberal arts college is a central symbol for faculty members’ perceptions of their institution, institutional realities challenge and complicate this interpretation of the college’s academic identity. The increasing preponderance of professional and applied degree programs and of adult and transfer students have significant implications for the college’s academic identity and its educational programs.

The curriculum is an academic community’s attempt to define and express its interpretation of a college’s academic identity. A multiplicity of meanings obscured by the symbol’s elasticity becomes visible when the
participants in this study move from describing ODC as a liberal arts college and attempt to express the meaning of that identity for academic policy and practice. Faculty participants articulate far more varying perspectives when they describe what a career-oriented, liberal arts education is at ODC. In their efforts to create meaning from this dual focus, participants describe three perspectives of the educational experience offered to students at ODC: the integral, paradoxical, and popular perspectives. Each perspective is grounded in a particular curricular emphasis. The integral perspective emphasizes the liberal education tradition with its moral focus and integrated theory of knowledge. The paradoxical perspective emphasizes academic specialization in a particular discipline or field, while retaining a deep appreciation for the breadth provided by a liberal education. Finally, the popular perspective is distinguished by its emphasis on students and their needs and expectations, and an openness to changing societal expectations regarding higher education.

The presence of three distinct views of the curriculum could be interpreted in various ways. Three possibilities present themselves. Looking back to the earlier discussion of Dill’s explanation of symbol and ritual, the presence of multiple views could be read as an indication that campus rituals or the processes for deliberating core academic values are inadequate. It could also be concluded that the presence of these three views are the best that can be expected given the gap between the concept of a liberal arts
college and institutional realities. A third interpretation could be that these three perspectives are necessary for the college to negotiate and flourish in its particular context while maintaining a sense of continuity and sameness. Albert and Whetten (1985) argue that in order to respond to the multiple demands of a complex and fluid lifespace, organizations come to see themselves as a composite of organizational types. It may be that this hybridization also occurs on other levels.

In this case, I interpret the presence of multiple perspectives as an example of the third scenario. The participants’ strongly shared understanding of ODC as a liberal arts college serves to provide unifying beliefs and sets symbolic boundaries. The three perspectives of the curriculum supply the variety of visions and competencies the college needs to both adapt to rapidly changing conditions and to maintain key features and relationships that are central to the organization’s continuing self-recognition. The three perspectives are keys to its durability and tenacity under difficult conditions. In fact, I think a greater threat to organizational identity at ODC comes from the possibility of losing one of the three perspectives through faculty attrition than from the presence of three views. The participants whose views are associated with the integral perspective are fewest in number and are in later stages of their careers. As they retire, the integral perspective may be weakened. It is not just an issue of numbers but also of influence. These senior faculty are well generally well respected
and their views carry influence among the faculty. It is doubtful that new faculty with similar views will quickly attain the same levels of respect and influence.
The preceding chapter examined how faculty participants’ interpretations of ODC’s academic identity are informed and shaped by the concept of a liberal arts college and by institutional context. This chapter explores their interpretations and constructions of ODC’s religious identity. In the case of religious identity, no single concept provides the degree of consensus which the concept of a liberal arts college does for its academic identity. Instead two concepts act as symbols to inform and shape the faculty’s interpretations of ODC’s religious identity: ODC as Dominican college and as Catholic college. Each concept serves different functions. I begin by examining assumptions and understandings that participants share about ODC as a Dominican college. This is followed by an examination of the assumptions and understandings that participants share about its Catholic identity. I then describe the participants’ views of how the college’s religious identity is expressed in the life of the campus. Here we
do not find the clustering of views into distinct perspectives or the thick
description that characterized their interpretations of Ohio Dominican’s
career-oriented, liberal arts education. Participants’ views of the ways that
ODC’s religious identity is expressed in the life of the campus are decidedly
more disparate and inchoate.

Preparing to enter the community

I began the preceding chapter by recalling the reading I did in
preparation to enter the ODC community as a participant observer. In that
reading I also found material related to the college’s religious identity. This
material drew my attention to the ways the concepts of the Dominican
tradition and a Catholic college are used in constructing the college’s
identity. My interest was particularly piqued by the prominence of the
Dominican order’s motto, "To contemplate truth and to share with others the
fruits of this contemplation," in the college’s mission statement. Such a
close association of the missions of the college and the congregation
contrasts with my own previous experiences.

The two colleges at which I worked, the College of Mount St. Joseph
and Holy Names College, describe their religious identities primarily in terms
of being Catholic colleges. Although the cultures of both institutions are
influenced by the sponsoring congregations’ legacies, that legacy plays
either a secondary role or no role in the colleges’ mission statements. In
neither case do I think that the emphasis on Catholic identity necessarily suggests a greater degree of separation between the colleges and congregations than that which exists between ODC and the Dominican congregation that sponsors it. Instead, the primary focus on Catholic identity reflects the absence of an easy connection between the congregations' missions and traditions and the intellectual enterprise that a college represents. In both cases the religious congregations have been heavily involved in education at the elementary and secondary levels and their members are well educated. However, neither congregation has the strong tradition of study or emphasis on the intellectual life that is integral to Dominicanism. As the ODC viewbook points out, the Dominican intellectual tradition is almost 800 years old!

I offer a brief comparison of the mottos and the institutional commitments of the congregation to which I belong and the Dominican Sisters of St. Mary of the Spring to help illustrate the difference. First, my congregation draws on the Vincentian-Setonian tradition. This tradition is highly pragmatic and stresses direct service to the poor, the suffering, and the needy. Our motto is "The charity of Christ urges us." This motto is a source of motivation and direction for me personally. However, it is difficult to imagine it functioning as a unifying symbolic concept for a contemporary

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1The American Sisters and Daughters of Charity tradition is based on the visions of Vincent de Paul and Elizabeth Bayley Seton.
collegiate organization in the same way as the Dominican motto does at Ohio Dominican. Second, the Dominicans of St. Mary of the Spring have historically committed a larger proportion of congregational resources to the establishment and support higher education institutions. The Dominicans opened two colleges within a two-year period, Ohio Dominican College (1924) and Albertus Magnus College (1925) in New Haven, Connecticut.² Through the years both colleges were maintained often at great risk and cost to the congregation itself. My congregation, on the other hand, established only one college even though it historically has been approximately twice as large as the Dominicans of St. Mary of the Spring. Instead, we directed congregational resources toward the establishment of at least seven hospitals, an orphanage, a maternity home, and numerous social service agencies. The Dominicans' pattern of institutional investments reflect their commitment to the life of the mind while my congregation's institutional profile evidences our focus on doing works of charity.

²Pinpointing the year of a college's establishment is often difficult. It is particularly so for those founded by women's religious institutes. Many of these colleges began as girls' academies and expanded gradually to offer college-level courses. Charters to offer collegiate degrees were often granted before the institution actually began to function fully as a college (Morey, 1995). ODC's foundation is officially designated as 1911 when it received a charter from the state of Ohio as a literary college (Burton, 1959). However, operation of St. Mary of the Spring College was sporadic and enrollment was limited to Dominican sisters until 1924. In that year the college opened as a senior college and accepted its first lay students. Albertus Magnus College in New Haven, Connecticut emerged from a girls' academy begun in 1901 by the Dominicans. It was established as a college in 1925.
In the interviews I sought to understand the ways faculty members at ODC interpret the concepts of Dominican and Catholic identity and use them to organize their thinking about the college’s religious identity. The following section examines assumptions and understandings participants share about these two concepts.

Two Symbolic Concepts

The opening phrase of the college’s mission statement characterizes ODC as a Catholic college with a Dominican tradition. When faculty participants describe the meaning of this characterization, neither concept predominates to the degree that the concept of a liberal arts college does in their descriptions of the college’s academic identity. The Dominican tradition is a pervasive, powerful, and positive organizing concept for all the participants. However, the concept of a Catholic college is sufficiently persistent and distinctive in the thoughts of some participants to prevent it from being completely subsumed by the Dominican tradition.

The idea of a Catholic college with a Dominican tradition does not pose a logic riddle for the participants to solve. Dominicanism is by definition a particular expression of Catholicism (Oxford Dict of Religion). That being said, it is also true that Catholic and Dominican are not synonyms; they represent distinguishable phenomena. The participants in this study regularly discuss Dominican and Catholic identity as distinct
concepts and interpret them in a semi-autonomous fashion. A strong proponent of the college’s distinctively religious identity, for instance, describes the two concepts with this clearly Dominican-inspired formulation:

> The Dominican part of it means that you take the life of the mind seriously as a vocation that leads to holiness. . . . I think that study and prayer are so closely allied, as phenomena, that one speaks to the other. So the Dominican elevation of the life of the mind as important is the idea that the mind can, in a limited way, know the world. . . . For me the Catholic nature of it has to do with discussing and trying to understand all that’s contained in the creed. . . . The truths that are contained in abbreviated form in the creed are ultimately the truths that will lead us to a deeper understanding of who we are and what we’re here for. . . . What the life of the mind does is raise questions about what we say we believe. For me the quintessential idea of the Dominican is the person who can reconcile reason and faith without doing damage to either.

Although this social science professor views the Catholic and Dominican identities as highly interdependent, his description, nevertheless, allows for the possibility of interpreting the two concepts separately. As we will see in the following sections, participants tend to associate the college’s Dominican identity with a calling to the intellectual life while Catholic identity is more closely associated with creedal issues.

**ODC as a Dominican college**

Participants are at ease discussing the college at which they work as a Dominican college. The Dominican tradition engenders a broader consensus among them. It could be anticipated that fewer people would
identify with this narrower and more particular expression of Catholicism; however, the reverse is the case. Contrary to what we might expect, Dominicanism functions as the more inclusive and unifying symbolic concept for the participants. All participants use the Dominican motto, "To contemplate truth and to share the fruits of this contemplation with others," to construct ODC's religious identity. For the participants the motto fulfills three significant functions: a) provides a common institutional mission and a shared calling for the members, b) it connects the religious identity of the college with its core academic functions, and c) it both defines and expands who belongs at ODC.

A common mission and shared calling.

Thirteen of the fourteen participants quote the Dominican motto at some point during the interview; many return to it several times during the conversation. For twelve of the fourteen participants, the Dominican motto functions as a substitute for the college's overall mission. An education professor, for instance, explains, "I identify the college with its mission statement. . . . The contemplation of truth and sharing of the fruits of your contemplation with others is one way of thinking about teaching." Another education professor asserts, "We are very mission driven. . . . We all try to work with our students to seek truth, to question what is truth and what are the levels of truth. Then we encourage them to share with one another. "

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In the previous chapter we saw a particularly cogent example of this shorthand interpretation in the remarks made by the social science professor at the mid-year commencement ceremony:

Our mission is nothing less than "To contemplate truth and to share with others the fruits of this contemplation." This isn’t a calling just for the theologians or the philosopher or the good sisters; this is a calling for all of us.

In this statement she does more than identify the congregation’s motto with the college’s mission. She also claims the motto as the calling of each member of the campus community.

Other participants reflect this sense of call. The three Dominican sisters on the faculty who participated in the study, as might be expected, discuss the motto in relation to aspects of their lives beyond their work at the college. More surprising is the number of lay participants, approximately one third, who also discuss the motto’s role in their lives beyond the college.

A participant from the education division notes:

The contemplation of truth itself is both our job and what we ought to be doing ourselves. . . . I don’t think it’s a facile statement. It is for me in the research that I do, in the research that I read, in the novel that I chose to read in my private life, in my interactions with other people. . . . I think we are flying in the face of modernity when we say that.

She continues to explain that contemplation is thinking and re-thinking. Configuring and reconfiguring. It’s like a jigsaw puzzle but the jigsaw changes all the time. . . . If you contemplate something, it’s like a glass of water that you put one drop of ink in. It changes the whole thing.
Other participants spoke of contemplation as a reflective stance toward life, an aesthetic appreciation, and a form of prayer.

**Connecting religious identity and the academic core.**

Participants indicate that it is the emphasis on the intellectual life that facilitates their identification with the Dominican tradition. When asked what specifically attracts her to the tradition, for example, a participant from the science division explains:

> The emphasis on study. I’ve always like learning. I think of myself as a broad-minded thinker. I like to try and see how things fit together. There’s that respect for the element of learning that I see in the Dominican ideal that I plug into.

Learning and the intellectual life as participants interpret them within the context of the Dominican tradition take on a moral and a spiritual, if not specifically religious, dimension. For the professor who spoke at commencement, the imperative aim of this Dominican-inspired community of scholars is to provide "vision, in a world too often blinded; hope, in a world too often defiled with despair; love, in a world too often consumed with hatred; and joy, sheer joy at the infinite possibilities that await us all." The social science professor who previously described the quintessential Dominican as a person who can reconcile reason and faith sees in the Dominican motto a necessary link between intellectual activity and the praxis of justice:
There’s a very close connection between intellectual activity and what I call praxis or action in the world. This is not an ivory tower where people come to retreat. It’s a place where you become prepared to go out into the world. . . . The nature of the student body and the nature of the curriculum is [sic] such that you can really step back and say, "I’m not just playing at an elitist game of education for the people who can afford it." What we’re doing here is really the work of the gospel in the fundamental sense of that. That is, we’re helping people who otherwise probably would not be able to have a credential, like a B.A. degree. In doing that we’re also addressing our social responsibility. So the way we define liberal arts around here . . . is preparing those students to go into the world and make a difference. . . . I think the difference is that our students will have a sense of moral value that will allow them to make important decisions that will have effects on other people.

His description of teaching at ODC as "the work of the gospel," both in terms of the clientele it serves and the outcomes it pursues, is more explicitly Christian than are the views voiced by some of his colleagues. Nevertheless, the participants generally share the view that the work of the college and the work they do are motivated by a collective sense of social responsibility.

Defining and expanding who belongs.

Participants describe the Dominican spirit as permeating the college, its work, and its people. It is "in the atmosphere around here." It is also the quality that marks individuals as members of the ODC community. A senior professor in the arts division, for instance, describes the college’s Dominican character as part of a collective psyche of the campus community:
The Dominican search for truth is present in everyone’s psyche. Everybody’s out there trying to understand the world in their own way . . . You don’t have to be a Catholic, you don’t have to be a professed Dominican to do that, but it’s in the Dominican spirit. That’s what we’re about, that’s what everybody talks about. It’s the language of the place. Students really pick up that that’s what we’re doing . . . You’re working with people along the way and as you’re learning, you’re sharing with students, so the students are part of that Dominican motto. I don’t know if any student actually thinks, “Boy, that was a great sharing of the fruit of contemplation today.” But at some subconscious or unconscious level, I think that they connect with it in some way. I think everybody who is here for the long term buys into it in some way. People who are uncomfortable with talk like that and can’t buy in, don’t stay. They go and find their place elsewhere and that’s okay.

A level of comfort with the Dominican ideal of contemplating truth and sharing insights about truth, therefore, is necessary to feel a part of the community. I understood his closing remarks to indicate a symbolic boundary and not a literal one. I never got the impression that failing to buy into it in some way resulted in formal exclusion. Rather, it was his way of making sense of who choses to stay at ODC and who choses leave.

It is important to note the definite relaxation of the connection between Dominicanism and Catholicism in this description. The decoupling of the two concepts allows Dominicanism to provide a common belief system that is accessible to individuals holding a wider range of views. The inclusiveness and elasticity of this symbolic concept is clearly demonstrated in the case of the social science professor who delivered the mid-year commencement address. This participant, as noted, equates the college’s
mission with Dominican motto and uses the motto to define her own personal calling. Furthermore, when other participants discuss the Dominican spirit, they identify her as an exemplar of that spirit. One participant says of her, "She's probably one of the finest Dominicans I know in the sense of her attitude of mind." Another, a Dominican sister, recommended that I read her commencement address as a noteworthy articulation of the Dominican spirit. But in a jarring divergence the social science professor is also quite public about being a nonbeliever. She acknowledges a belief in "a cosmic whole that manifests itself in a large variety. The Catholic church is one manifestation. Judaism is another manifestation. There are all these manifestations and its the same thing." But her beliefs do not include a divine being who resembles in any way the God of Abraham, Jesus, and Mohammed. She also takes an indifferent stance toward the institutional church. Unlike Dominican sisters, she explains, she is free not to care: "I don't invest my energy in the hierarchy of the Catholic Church because they are irrelevant to me." Nevertheless, she asserts her commitment to the ideals of the Dominican tradition and to the perpetuation and ongoing reinterpretation of those ideals at ODC. When asked what that means, she explains:

It means to be a good teacher. To be a good scholar of the world. To continue to believe that that is viable and that the college can continue to be a Catholic college for those for whom that manifestation is important.
In this definition of Dominicanism, we hear again the suggestion that Catholicism, not Dominicanism, is the more particular and, therefore, optional belief system for members of the ODC community.

The uncoupling of Dominican and Catholic is one of the most interesting features in the development of the college’s religious identity. The idea that individuals who are not members of the sponsoring religious congregation or who are nonCatholics can act as partners with a congregation to carry out the mission and work of a college is commonplace in Catholic higher education today. The difference here is in the reversal of the relationship between the universal concept and the particular expression of that concept. Dominicanism is interpreted by the participants as the calling to take the life of the mind seriously as a path to holiness/wholeness that is shared by all members of the campus community, not just the Dominican sisters. Dominicanism, in other words, is the overarching category that embraces multiple expressions of itself. Catholicism, on the other hand, becomes a particular expression to which only a limited portion of the campus community subscribes, that is, "those for whom that manifestation is important." I would speculate that few women’s religious institutes possess an intellectual tradition strong enough to support this type of reversal of the particular expression and the universal category. The capacity of Dominicanism to do so in this situation and in doing so to provide common beliefs among individuals who hold such divergent beliefs
about the college's religious identity attests to its power as a symbol within
the ODC community.

Participants find much to agree upon related to the Dominican
character of the college. The Dominican motto functions effectively to
provide common ground for participants to construct the college’s identity.
However, Dominicanism is more than the Dominican motto. The
quintessential Dominican, as explained previously, is "the person who can
reconcile reason and faith without doing damage to either." The faith
referred to in this definition is Christianity and specifically Roman
Catholicism. There is evidence to suggest that many participants are less at
ease discussing ODC’s Catholic identity than they are its Dominican identity.
For example, only two participants made more than passing references to
the college’s Catholic identity prior to being asked to explain the meaning of
a Catholic college with Dominican tradition. More than half of the
participants made no reference at all before being asked them that question.
In addition, when nonCatholic participants were asked to describe the
college’s religious identity, they were quick to point out their outsider status.
This status, they suggest, makes them less qualified to speak to the Catholic
aspect of the college’s identity. These same participants, however, showed
no reticence about discussing the college’s Dominican identity even though
they are not members of the Dominican order. An alternative explanation for
the lack of references to Catholic identity is that beliefs about it are so
consensual as to be unconscious. That is undoubtedly true to some extent for some members but it is not the interpretation I got while listening to the participants as a group. The non-Catholics’ reticence to venture opinions about the college’s Cathocity and the general lack of definition in many participants’ descriptions of the ways Catholic identity is expressed on campus suggested that faculty are not as clear about this aspect of the college’s identity or as confident in their ability to discuss it.

**ODC as a Catholic college**

Theodore Hesburgh (1995) has asserted that “[a] great Catholic university must begin by being a great university that is also Catholic.” For the participants in this study, the college’s Catholic identity represents an alternative value system to which the college subscribes in addition to the value systems that inform its functioning as a higher education institution in the United States. In other words, it stands for the more conspicuously religious and sectarian aspects of the college’s identity. The concepts of Catholic identity and the Dominican tradition perform different functions within the campus community. Whereas appeals to the Dominican tradition provide common ground and elasticity for the college’s religious identity, assertions of its Cathocity contribute definition and distinction to that identity. The concept clarifies the particular religious tradition that informs ODC’s identity as well as the college’s association with the Catholic church.
Besides clarifying ODC’s denominational identity, its Catholicity also creates a problem with identity for some of the participants. In the late twentieth century a church-related college is an exception to the rule in higher education in the United States (Marsden, 1994 & 1995). Catholic identity sets ODC apart from an academic mainstream that is secular by definition. As a result, Catholic identity is something that participants feel a need to explain and qualify. ODC as a Catholic college both a) provides definition and clarity for its religious identity and b) creates a need for explanation and clarification of its academic identity, a paradox which the next section will explore.

Specifying ODC’s religious identity.

When discussing the college’s religious identity, several participants refer to a series of discussions on the college’s mission statement held several years ago. The session on Catholic identity played off the general and proper forms of the adjective, that is, ODC is a *catholic* college and a *Catholic* college. In that earlier discussion the first formulation a *catholic* college, reportedly stood for a universal, inclusive, ecumenical religious stance; the second, a *Catholic* college, stood for a particular denominational identity and relationship. In the interviews conducted for this study, participants consistently use the adjective Catholic to designate the college’s denominational identity and affiliation. In other words the concept of
Catholic identity as it is used by the participants refers to those aspects of the college most directly connected with the Catholic faith and the Roman Catholic Church.

Earlier in this chapter, for example, we heard a social science professor and strong advocate of the college’s religious mission explain, "For me, the Catholic nature of it has to do with discussing and trying to understand all that’s contained in the creed." A senior professor in the arts division takes a similar approach when discussing his understanding of the college’s Catholic identity:

I think of the Catholic part with a capital "C." We have a collection of faculty who are everything under the sun and students get a wide range of viewpoints on all kinds of issues. But there is a fundamental piece that is consistent with Catholicism with a capital "C" that runs through it all. There are certain shared values that, no matter what your religious background, no matter what your life values, are reflected in the program.

These two participants are clearly comfortable with aspects of the college that are directly connected with the Catholic faith and church. Participants less comfortable with the college’s Catholic connection also intend the more specific denominational meaning when they use the term. Participants who find the college’s Catholic identity problematic state that they do so because they disagree with certain church tenets, policies, and actions.

At the same time this denominational label does not have the same meaning for all the participants. Sociologists of religion have observed that
greater variety exists within most mainline religious denominations today than existed between the denominations at mid-century (Roof & McKinney, 1987; Wuthnow, 1988). Just as Catholics, especially since the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s, represent a wide range of attributes, values, beliefs, and attitudes, the eleven participants who describe themselves as Catholics, in one form or another, express a range of views about the Catholic faith and the Catholic church. Participants use the exclusive/inclusive continuum implied in the "Catholic capital C/little c" formulation to categorize the different expressions of Catholicism on campus. As one participant notes, "It's a bell curve. . . . On the very conservative side [is] someone who's almost pre-Vatican II--'everybody should be Catholic.' And then on the other side you have the very liberal, almost anti-hierarchical church type."

During the interviews and site visits I heard members of the ODC community express views that I would describe as ranging from traditional Catholic perspectives to moderately liberal Catholic perspectives. I did not encounter individuals who expressed views that I would associate with the most extreme positions within the extended Catholic community today. For example, no one spoke of being a member of ultraorthodox groups such as Catholics United for the Faith or Opus Dei or of splinter groups such as the Pius V Society. Nor did anyone express radically unorthodox theological views such as challenging Jesus’ resurrection or divinity, articulate extreme
social justice positions, or advocate aggressive confrontation with church officials over issues such as women's ordination or sexual and reproductive ethics. Most participants articulate views consistent with mainstream interpretations of the theological perspectives contained in the directives of Vatican Council II. In other words participants' views tend to cluster near to slightly left of center on the Catholic continuum, thus giving ODC's bell curve an acute profile and low standard deviation.

One of the fourteen participants strongly advocates that Ohio Dominican College move decidedly toward more traditional and tangible expressions of its Catholic identity. Early in the interview he states, "The one fault I have seen here is it is not Catholic enough." He explains what he means by this as he continues, "I don't see a lot of religious activities going on. Prayer, people attending mass... I would like a bell that rings at 6:00 a.m., noon, and 6:00 p.m so people stand and say the Angelus." For him the ideal is to create an environment in which "you have a feeling that this is a Catholic community." He expresses particular concern about students' moral behavior and the relaxation of rules and regulations governing student behavior on campus. His views related to church authority, moral discipline, and conspicuous devotional practices locate him at the conservative end of the range of views at ODC. My observation after five months of regular site
visits is that a small group of mostly older faculty share his traditional perspectives and desire for more radical expressions of Catholicity on campus.

The remaining participants, on the other hand, describe Ohio Dominican’s Catholicity as moderate, understated, and open-minded. A humanities professor describes the college’s approach in this way:

ODC, by and large as an institution, is truly Catholic in the quiet sense of the word. . . . We are not going to wave the banners for the pope, but we are also going to speak up if somebody gets nasty or beats up on the institutional church. There is a quiet respect. . . . I think most of us most of the time are careful not to antagonize the establishment. That is not to keep safe but its out of reverence for the tradition of the church. By the same token, people do what they can, with what I think is a proper understanding of dissent, to quietly keep raising the questions.

A faculty member who grew up Catholic but is now somewhat distanced from the church, voices support for the quiet and intellectual way the college expresses its Catholicity:

I don’t perceive the college to be a conservative Catholic institution. And I really like that. I think that is far more intellectually attractive to me. And that might even encourage me to think about my own journey into Catholicism much more than if this was a more radical Catholic institution where the trappings were more important than how we interact with students. I think our Catholic nature is deeper and more in the thread of what we do than on the surface of what we do. It’s hard to articulate exactly what I mean by that.

This participant returns to the subject later in the conversation stating that the Catholic identity of ODC is evident in the way faculty think about the
college as Catholic: "You pick up on that in committee meetings and the
deliberate and specific discussions that have focused on us being Catholic."

Participants vary in the importance they assign to the institutional
church and to its teachings. However, I find a greater sensitivity to the
institutional church and its teachings among them, Catholic and
non-Catholic, than I had anticipated. This sensitivity comes through with
particular force as participants describe the implications of the college’s
Catholic identity for their teaching. Even those who are not Catholic or who
find the church’s positions problematic describe feeling responsible to
include official church positions in courses where such material is germane.
One professor describes herself as having difficulty with the college’s
Catholic identity although she was raised a Catholic. In most of the courses
she teaches, the church’s positions are not particularly relevant; however, in
one course they are. Because of the college’s Catholic character, she is
deliberate about including the Catholic perspective as one of several views
presented in that course. To make sure the church’s views are well
presented, she invites an expert in the field to teach that material. Others
discuss the care they take as individual professors in presenting the church’s
views in their classes even as they express disagreement with those
positions. These faculty members’ efforts to include the institutional
church’s perspective as one of the points of view presented in their courses
might not satisfy advocates of a more traditional Catholic approach.
However, I find that they indicate a clarity on the part of the participants about the college’s connection with the Catholic church.

Participants carefully distinguish ODC’s interpretation of Catholicism from more dogmatic forms. Participants do this by contrasting ODC’s quiet approach with the radical orthodoxy espoused at the Franciscan University of Steubenville. Since the mid-1970s, this university has been known for its deliberate efforts to develop an overtly Catholic environment on campus (O’Brien, 1994). Steubenville, for instance, operates from a statement of commitment endorsed by trustees, faculty and students that reads:

Our University is dedicated to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. I believe that Jesus Christ is the Way, the Truth and the Life. I commit this university to pursue a way of education based on God’s revealed truth and the teaching of the Magisterium of the Roman Catholic Church, and a life empowered by God’s Holy Spirit and nurtured by sound pastoral guidance.

Participants interpret Steubenville’s approach as dogmatic and as one with which they would be uncomfortable. They suggest that such an approach would be inappropriate at a Dominican college such as ODC where the pursuit of truth in its many expressions and sources is a hallmark virtue. One participant suggests that a Dominican college is likely to look less Catholic than other colleges because of that commitment to the truth.

The participants’ concerns about religious dogmatism point to the problem that Catholic identity poses for them. Authoritarianism and dogmatism are characteristics traditionally associated with Catholicism,
especially prior to the Second Vatican Council in the mid-1960s (Ellis, 1955). In the introduction to *The Challenge and Promise of a Catholic University*, for example, Theodore Hesburgh (1994) states:

> Many people in the university world and outside it take a dim view of the very possibility of a Catholic university. George Bernard Shaw put it most bluntly when he declared that a Catholic university is a contradiction in terms (p. 4).

Since the middle decades of this century, the U.S. Catholic higher education community in general has endeavored to embrace the values and norms of the academic mainstream and to shed any vestiges of its dogmatic past (Gleason, 1995). However, disciplinary actions taken by church leaders against Catholic theologians in the 1980s and 1990s (Annarelli, 1987; Curran, 1990), along with the publication of *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* by the Vatican in 1990 help keep alive the specters of a more authoritarian and dogmatic Catholic church.

**Creating a need for explanation and clarification.**

Even as ODC’s Catholic identity provides greater definition and clarity for the college’s religious identity, it creates a need for clarification about the impact of this identity on aspects of its academic identity. Participants spend more time in the interviews explaining how the college’s Catholic identity does not impinge upon their rights as faculty members than I had anticipated. Participants focus on two issues in relation to this concern:
whether being Catholic is a requirement for employment and the exercise of academic freedom.

Although several participants express some degree of concern about maintaining a critical mass of Catholic faculty members, thirteen of the fourteen explicitly state that being Catholic is not a requirement for teaching at ODC. A participant with recent experience on a search committee explains that she responds to candidates’ inquiries about the college’s Catholic identity in this manner: "It can mean whatever you want it to mean in terms of your involvement if you are a Catholic. But you don’t have to be a Catholic." NonCatholic participants speak of being assured of freedom in this area by campus leadership at the time of hire and of the sense of acceptance they feel at ODC. Diversity of religious beliefs among the faculty is viewed by the participants as a value of the campus community.

Even more important for the participants is the need to highlight the college’s support for and adherence to the principle of academic freedom. Five participants make explicit references to the AAUP statement on academic freedom. They recount the assurances of compliance with that statement that they received from campus leaders at the time of their hiring at the college. At the time of hire, a senior professor recalls meeting with college president and telling her:

I see my job as a teacher in introducing students to diverse points of view. What this group would say, what this groups would say, what this groups would say. I don’t presume to tell
them which is the right one. I will respect where I am. But you need to know that I will bring in all points of view.

She carefully recounts the president's favorable response assuring her that the college expected and supported such an approach to teaching.

Several other participants also make a point of the freedom they have to present multiple perspectives in their classes, even those that contradict church teachings. Three participants use the issue of abortion as a litmus test to demonstrate the extent of this freedom at ODC. The description of an education professor serves as an illustration. After acknowledging initial concerns about teaching at a Catholic college, this professor proceeds to draw parallels between the limits on religious content she experienced teaching at state institutions and the limits on content one might encounter at a Catholic college:

You can't go in and preach to your students a doctrine that is contrary to Catholic teaching. . . . That's really not any different to working in a state institution where there are rules on what you can and can't do, too. You can't have religious displays, for instance. . . There are things that you're expected not to take positions on in class because you have the power of an instructor. And it's a reasonable expectation that you would not knock the very ethos of the college itself in what you do in your classes.

Respecting the ethos of the college, however, does not unduly interfere or limit her freedom in the classroom. She continues her explanation using the issue of abortion to demonstrate the degree of freedom she experiences when teaching at ODC:
In [my field] we talk about elective abortions. . . . And I’ve always considered it my job to present both sides from a parental perspective. I want students to understand that this is an issue or a dilemma that doesn’t have any easy resolution. . . . I’ve always been able to problematize it and I think that’s part of my job. I never felt that I could not discuss that in my classes [at ODC]. If you were teaching sexual education, you could talk about condoms and all kinds of contraceptives. The Catholic church has a very specific position on that but it’s part of your class content. You ought not as an instructor go in and say you should do x, y and z anyway.

The point that the participant in this example and in the preceding one seem to be making is that academic freedom is always interpreted in the context of the institution in which it is being exercised. ODC as a Catholic college is presented as placing no undue restrictions on faculty members’ academic freedom.

Participants also make a point of describing the open-mindedness of the college’s intellectual environment. A humanities professor with experience teaching at a state institution explains that when talking to new faculty candidates, she tells them:

The college is by tradition Catholic, but they need not worry that that means closed minded. If anything, it’s the most open minded place I’ve ever been. The search for truth is more open than almost anywhere I’ve been. That’s a surprise to me. There is no topic that is verboten.

Again, the apparent purpose of this description is to demonstrate that faculty at ODC enjoy the same degree of freedom as faculty at nonreligious institutions. The college’s Catholicity does not impact academic freedom or the integrity of the academic enterprise negatively.
A senior social science faculty stands out from his colleagues by arguing that ODC provides more freedom than would be available to him as a faculty member at a public institution:

As a Catholic school [ODC] was a place that I felt free enough to do the kind of teaching and the kind of scholarship that I think is important. . . . I've always been a believer that education is fundamentally about moral transformation. It's not about technique, it's not about knowing stuff. It's the about the habits of mind that allow us to be decent judges in the world. . . . And this place has given me enough freedom to be able to do that. I'd be pilloried in other universities in the way I approach [my discipline], because I don't think, and never did, that the scientific discipline as it's studied in the late 20th century ever made much sense.

For most of the participants, however, assertions about the open mindedness of the campus environment suggest a more a defensive posture. The college's church affiliation is an exception in the secular academic community that requires explanation as well as proof that it does not unduly limit faculties' freedom.

Institutional Realities: Conflicting Interpretations

The previous chapter described institutional realities that participants regularly encounter in their role as teachers which challenge and qualify their interpretations of the symbolic concept of Ohio Dominican as a liberal arts college. In the case of religious identity, a similar examination is not useful. Certainly ODC has experienced the kinds of organizational and ideological changes that have made Catholic identity a question on Catholic campuses.
since the 1960s. It has undergone a process of laicization or the transfer of governance from religious congregational leadership to independent boards of trustees composed of elected lay and religious members (Gallen, 1996). There are fewer Dominican sisters and priests on campus. The student body is more religiously diverse. Conspicuously religious activities are limited and few students take advantage of these opportunities. What is not obvious from simply observing these changes, however, is the reason for or meaning of the changes.

There are individuals who interpret changes such as those that have occurred at ODC as evidence of Catholic colleges’ and universities’ steady slide down the slippery slope of secularization (Avery Dulles, 1991; Burtchaell, 1991). Historian Alice Gallin (1996) notes, "In this context 'secularization' has a negative connotation, implying that the values of the world, a world seen as devoid of religious meaning, have triumphed over the forces of faith and religion" (p. xi). Gallin and others such as David O’Brien (1994) question this interpretation. They argue that changes in Catholic higher education emerged from a complex constellation of cultural, historical and ecclesial developments that intersected in the 1960s. The changes produced are still unfolding and are not easily categorized in terms of more or less Catholic, religious or secular. Catholic colleges and universities are different but not necessarily less Catholic. Therefore, instead of looking at institutional realities that might influence participants’ interpretations, I focus
Catholic Identity: A Gap between Symbol and Ritual

Participants were asked to describe the ways they see the college’s religious identity expressed in the life of the campus. Interestingly, participants focus their responses to that query almost exclusively on the more conspicuously religious and Catholic nature of the college rather than on its Dominican character. For most of the participants, the college’s Dominican character, especially uncoupled from its Catholic origins, is expressed in the particular way that teaching and learning happen at ODC. The Dominican mission is carried out and fulfilled through an academic program informed by the liberal arts tradition. Participants appear to have little need to offer further explication of its manifestation in the life of the campus. The ways that the college expresses its more conspicuously religious and Catholic nature are not so easily delineated by them. Most participants have less to say when describing manifestations of these aspects of the college’s identity. Furthermore, their characterizations of these manifestations lack the kind of definition and thick description found in their accounts of the college’s academic program.

The underdeveloped quality of participants’ descriptions suggests that the campus community’s rituals for defining and expressing its Catholic
identity may be inadequate for creating and communicating meaning within the community. Dill’s (1981) explanation of the relationship between symbol and ritual is useful in this instance. You will recall that symbols, according to Dill, must be supported by ritual. Ritual is the means by which a group attempts to define and communicate the meaning of its symbols. Because of the perceived connection between the Dominican and liberal arts traditions at ODC, the campus community has regular and frequent opportunities, both formal and informal, to extend the collective ritual conversation about the meaning of the Dominican tradition. Furthermore, these conversations are more directly related to the core activities of the faculty and the college. Catholic identity, on the other hand, is perceived as less directly related to the academic functions of the college. Opportunities to converse about the meaning of the college’s Catholic identity, therefore, are likely to be more infrequent and irregular. This is borne out in participants’ accounts. They describe four communal discussions on topics related to Catholic identity in the past five years. These opportunities, while undoubtedly significant, are infrequent and extraordinary episodes with little connection to the day-to-day functions of the participants and the college.

The remainder of this chapter examines participants’ descriptions of ways the college’s Catholic identity is expressed in the life of the campus. Five points are discussed: a) the gap between symbol and practice, b) the quality of the descriptions themselves, c) the absence of guiding
models, d) responsibility for the future, and e) the impact of ODC’s religious identity on students.

**Distance between symbol and practice.**

Dill indicates that gaps between symbol and ritual can create frustration, cynicism, and disappointment among the members of a group. Participants for whom the college’s Catholic identity is a central characteristic of the college’s identity give voice to such feelings when describing the distance they perceive between the espoused ideal of Catholic identity and the actual manifestations of that ideal. A humanities professor, for example, remarks about what she perceives to be a loss of Catholic identity:

> There have been times when I thought the Catholic identity of this place was neglected. There still are times that I think that. . . . If I wanted to be facetious, there are times when it feels as if what used to be a Catholic, liberal arts college for women moved to a Catholic liberal arts, to a Catholic co-ed liberal arts college, and then to a liberal arts college with nice big humanities core and now we are a business school.

A senior social science professor expresses frustration with those faculty members who he feels are unconcerned about maintaining the college’s Catholic identity:

> I don’t want to become another formerly Catholic college or a college in the "Catholic tradition." I want to be a Catholic college. I don’t want to have the Catholic Dominican character of the institution something that’s kept in memory. I want it in
the hallways. . . . And in the classroom and in the offices and everywhere.

**Quality of descriptions.**

The various features participants identify as expressions of the college’s religious identity offer no surprises. They include in their list of manifestations a sense of faith and goodness within the community, required courses in theology and the humanities, the activities of the campus ministry office, visual religious signs, the personal witness of religious, clergy and laity, and an increasing emphasis on community service. What is noteworthy is the brevity and indefinite quality of participants’ descriptions of these features. Participants initially give short responses to the question of how religious identity is expressed in the life of the campus. Silence and follow-up probes do not significantly increase the texture and density of their descriptions.

Participants often have difficulty being specific when describing the ways the college expresses its Catholic identity. For example, a humanities professor who speaks with great affection and support for the college’s Catholic identity offers this response: "It seems like it’s so much a part of the fabric that I’m having trouble separating it." A participant who is not Catholic made several false starts before stating:

> It’s hard to say! . . . It’s a sense of faith among the staff and faculty. You can count on that goodness, I think. I don’t know what else to say. [Silence] There’s a sense of spirituality that
just penetrates meetings and interactions, and a respect that comes with that. . . . I have a strong faith and I don’t have to hide it in anyway. It’s okay to talk about it in class. It’s o.k. to talk about it any place I want to talk about it. . . . There are symbols of it everywhere, of course. I think it is just in the spirit. There’s a collegiality as result of that. The St. Thomas Aquinas Day is an important part of that.

We hear in the previous description the tendency to use a list format when describing the means of religious expression. Participant tend to link together institutional features with little organization or explanation of the features. A participant who is also a member of the Dominican order exhibits this pattern in the following response:

Well, campus ministry has been one obvious place, and more or less effective. We’ve had chaplains who have done a lot and chaplains who haven’t been able to. Certainly in the theology courses and the fact that we have a theology requirement. We’ve pretty much resisted that this could be comparative religion. The course has to be a substantial theology course. . . . I think there are cultural symbols around, and I make a point of trying to speak about them. I think there’s sacred space. I think that there is a witness to the [Catholic identity] in that there are religious people, priests and sisters, who choose to be identified with that. I don’t think we do enough with liturgy. I’d like to think we had a richer liturgy tradition, big events, big moments. We have a few. Probably the one the students would most be aware of is the celebration for the Feast of Thomas Aquinas. . . . I think we could do a lot more than that.

The sketchy and unorganized quality of the two previous descriptions are rendered more highly visible when they are compared with the same participants’ descriptions of the college’s academic program that go on for several pages each.
Absence of guiding models.

An analysis of participants’ descriptions suggests an absence of shared perspectives of the purpose and means of expressing denominational identity. We saw in the preceding chapter that while participants hold different academic beliefs and values, these beliefs and values cluster in three identifiable perspectives. In contrast, participants’ differing beliefs and attitudes regarding ODC’s religious identity do not cluster in a discernable pattern. Several participants speak of factions or groups when discussing the diversity of views within the faculty regarding the college’s religious identity. An example is the bell-curve image used by a science professor to describe the range of Catholic perspectives on campus presented earlier in this chapter. However, I do not find evidence to support the existence of discernable groupings among participants’ views.

What I find instead is a high degree of complexity and diversity within the beliefs and attitudes of individual participants. We encountered examples of this intrapersonal fluidity in the first half of this chapter. Recall, for instance, the social science professor who both embraces the Dominican search for truth as her personal calling and describes herself as a nonbeliever. The participant who would like to see a more tangible and traditional expression of Catholicism at ODC is another good example. On one hand he strongly advocates hiring Catholics for faculty positions whenever possible. On the other hand he offers the strictest interpretation
of the secular nature of the classroom. When asked how the college’s Catholic identity might influence him in his role in the classroom, he insists that religious views are out of place in any course except theology and the humanities core. The complicated intrapersonal perspectives of these and other participants mitigate against the kind of clustering evidenced in the integral, paradoxical, and popular perspectives of a career-oriented, liberal arts education. In the religious sphere participants work without the benefit of the kind of conceptual models of purpose and methods that help them talk about the college’s academic identity and program.

Eclecticism is characteristic of contemporary religious and spiritual practice in this country. Sociologist of religion Wade Clark Roof observes that members of the baby boom generation, which includes most but not all of the participants, "move freely in and out, across religious boundaries; many combine elements of various traditions to create their own personal, tailor-made meaning systems. Choice, so much a part of life for this generation, now expresses itself in dynamic and fluid religious styles" (Clark, 1993, p. 5). This fluidity and idiosyncracy of religious beliefs and practices undermines pre-existing models of religious identity and practice. Society is searching for new ways to talk about religion and spirituality. Catholic colleges such as Ohio Dominican could provide the space for reasoned and reasonable discourse about religious belief and practice and its role in
contemporary society. There is perhaps no better group of individuals to model this kind of conversation than the faculties at these institutions.

Responsibility for the future.

The participants in this study are less than clear about who is responsible for the maintenance and extension of ODC's religious identity into the future and the means for doing so. When asked to talk about the critical decisions facing the college in the future, more than one-third of the participants mention the need to develop means for sustaining the college's religious and specifically Catholic identity. The source of the problem is often identified with the declining number of Dominican sisters on the faculty and in administration. Lay faculty, even those who are highly versed in and committed to the Catholic Dominican tradition, tend to look to the Dominican sisters to take the lead in this arena. As one senior faculty member notes, "I don't think the Dominicans, the professed Dominicans, have really addressed the problem of what we're going to be when they're gone." He and others express concern about the eventual and inevitable retirement of the current Dominican president and influential sisters on the faculty who provide leadership, both symbolic and actual, in this area.

Some lay faculty speak of continuing the Catholic identity as a concern of the Dominican sisters. Dominican sisters themselves and those lay faculty involved in efforts to sustain the religious identity of the college,
on the other hand, hold the view that the future depends on both lay and religious members. A Dominican sister notes:

There has been some discussion over the years about helping our faculty realize that they are members of this Dominican family in an extended sense and to be members with us in promoting the Dominican tradition. . . . If we want to continue this Dominican identity, we really want to enrich the lives of these people in a way that they claim it and identify with it. . . . We do have a core group of faculty who you could almost say that about them. They’ve been here as long as any of us and are as committed and devoted, each in their own way, as any of the sisters. I want to help them and others to realize that they are as much a part of the ongoing identity of this institution as any one of the Dominicans.

The fact that more than one third of the participants, both lay and religious, have attended annual meetings of the Dominican Higher Education Colloquium suggests a significant level of interest among the faculty. This association of faculty and administrators from other colleges and universities sponsored by different Dominican congregations meets annually to discuss ways to foster the partnership between the laity and members of the congregation in maintaining the colleges’ Dominican identity. This gathering provides at least a segment of the faculty a more regular opportunity to delve more deeply into this aspect of their colleges’ identities. However, discussions have yet to progress beyond broad espoused ideals. There remains a decided absence of ideas for making shared responsibility a widespread reality among the faculties of these Dominican colleges.
Students’ Experience of Catholic Identity.

When discussing the influence of the college’s Catholic identity, most participants talk about the quality it adds to their own work, their professional environment, or their personal development. In contrast to the moral outcomes that participants associate with the Dominican tradition and a liberal education, participants do not talk about anticipated outcomes of the college’s Catholic character on students. Some participants go so far as to state that the college’s Catholic identity has no significant impact on the majority of students. A senior faculty member states it most emphatically:

I think it would be very easy to go to school here for four years and not really run into the Catholic identity a whole lot, outside of the theology and philosophy requirements. I think that people who work here make an effort, a tremendous effort, to infuse the campus and campus life with the values and teachings of the Catholic Church. I’m not sure how much of that takes, particularly for those students who are commuters. Campus ministry, it seems to me, runs a wonderful program. I don’t know what percentage of students actually participate, but I suspect it is not a whole lot. . . . I think for many students, ODC is a place to come and get an education. And the Catholic issue doesn’t really phase them one way or the other. Which is not necessarily a bad thing.

If these were the words of a more traditional Catholic faculty member expressing disappointment with the college’s religious expressions, it would be possible to interpret them as an exaggeration or overstatement made from disappointment or cynicism. However, that is not the case with this speaker as the last sentence of the comment indicates. The remark was offered as
an observation rather than an accusation. Other participants, while not as explicit as this participant, also describe students as relatively unaffected by, unconcerned about, and uninvolved in the religious identity and activities of the college.

It is hard to image the participants responding in such an unconcerned manner if the educational program of the college and especially the liberal arts component were perceived as having so little impact. In fact, the absence of concern stands out in bold relief against participants’ attitudes towards students’ apparent lack of enthusiasm for the values of a liberal education. As we saw in the preceding chapter, many of the participants are not hesitant about disabusing students of their utilitarian and vocational attitudes and beliefs about higher education. The participants’ lack of concern in this area strongly suggests that the college’s Catholic identity is perceived as peripheral to the core activities of the college.

Summary

Participants draw upon two symbolic concepts when constructing the college’s religious identity: the idea of a Catholic college and of the Dominican tradition. The Dominican tradition and more specifically the Dominican motto serve the community as common ground on which individuals holding diverse views can come together in their interpretations of ODC’s religious identity. The motto creates among the members a
common purpose and shared calling, provides a bridge between the academic and religious dimensions, and establishes characteristics that mark members as belonging to the campus community. By definition Dominicanism is a particular expression of Catholicism. However, participants tend to decouple the two concepts and allow them to function semi-autonomously in their interpretations of the college's identity. The Dominican character is expressed in the approach to teaching and learning at ODC, according to the participants. Their explanation of how Dominicanism connects and contributes to the college’s religious identity are more vague.

The concept of ODC as a Catholic college, on the other hand, contributes definition and distinction to participants’ interpretations of the college’s religious identity. It does so by clarifying for the participants the college’s particular denominational identity and affiliation. The views expressed by the majority of the participants reflect a Catholic perspective that is moderate, understated and nondogmatic. Catholic identity, however, creates an identity problem for them. In higher education in this country, church affiliation in general and association with the Roman Catholic Church in particular casts suspicion on a college’s academic status (Marsden, 1994). Participants demonstrate a need to show that the college’s Catholic identity does not jeopardize the exercise of the core values of the mainstream academic community, particularly academic freedom. Unlike Dominicanism, Catholicism is an optional commitment for individuals at ODC. Describing
the expressions of Catholic identity in the life of the campus is a more difficulty task for the participants. Their descriptions are noticeably briefer and less thickly articulated. Furthermore, I found no discernible pattern of clustering among their views.

The underdeveloped quality of and lack of overlap among the participants’ views of religious identity and its expressions on campus strongly suggest that the campus community lacks adequate rituals for working out and expressing both the Dominican and Catholic dimensions of its religious identity. Dominicanism is a powerful symbol with well established rituals for articulating its meaning in relation to the intellectual and ethical aspects of the enterprise. It appears, however, to lack a process which reunites it with its more specifically religious meanings. Opportunities for collectively articulating the meaning of the college’s Catholicity are irregular and extraordinary occurrences. Given the disestablishment of religion in higher education in the United States, it is difficult to envision how a more regular and connected ritual process could be developed to better support this symbolic concept.
CHAPTER 6

LEARNINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

This final chapter explores the learnings and implications that emerge from this study and is divided into four sections. The first summarizes the faculty participants’ interpretations of the college’s identity. The second section explicates possible implications of the study for Catholic higher education. The third explores how shifting levels of focus influenced the study’s development. The final section briefly proposes two questions related to organizational identity for further study.

Negotiating Institutional Identity

In Chapter II, colleges and universities were described as autopoetic systems that are organized to reproduce themselves and their identities. A college’s identity is the enterprise as it is imagined by its members. Chapter IV and V explored at length the faculty participants’ understandings of ODC’s current academic and religious identities. In this section I review the concepts that participants most closely associate with ODC’s identity.
and which they endeavor to perpetuate through their thoughts and actions on behalf of the college.

For the participants ODC is a liberal arts college. No other institutional characteristic gathers as much consensus or plays a more central role in their interpretations of the college’s identity than does this one. The concept endures as a central feature of ODC’s identity in the minds of the participants despite the historic presence and strength of professional and applied degree programs. It supports shared beliefs about their common purpose, which is to provide students an educational experience that develops in them the intellectual and cultural breadth and the critical competencies requisite for living a rich, satisfying, morally upright, and productive life.

At the same time, the concept of ODC as liberal arts college is a flexible one. Its endurance and success at supporting unity is found in its capacity to tolerate varying interpretations at the level of practice. Participants describe three perspectives of a career-oriented, liberal arts education at ODC. This diversity represents a range of perspectives and competencies that ODC needs in order to survive and flourish in its particular
environment. It is a sign of effective and successful coping with institutional realities rather than an indicator of dysfunction.

The concept of ODC as a college in the Dominican tradition reinforces participants’ consensus that ODC is a liberal arts college. The motto of the Dominican order, "To contemplate truth and to share the fruits of this contemplation with others," is seen as compatible with the mission of a college and with the liberal arts tradition. Decoupling the motto from its religious moorings increases its appeal among faculty participants and enhances its ability to function as a succinct articulation of the college’s mission among individuals who hold varying beliefs and opinions.

Even with the support of the Dominican tradition, however, the college’s capacity to imagine itself as a liberal arts college and to perpetuate that identity is potentially threatened by three conditions. First, ODC’s success at recruiting adult and transfer students is likely to increase the size and dominance of professional degree programs and to fundamentally alter the student body. It may become more difficult to imagine ODC as a liberal arts college if the proportion of the student body majoring in the arts and sciences declines further. The reduced demand for liberal arts course that accompanies this trend is likely to result in the loss of faculty positions
in the arts and science. Since arts and science faculty members are well represented in the integral and paradoxical perspectives, this change in the faculty’s composition could lead to the diminishment or elimination of either one or both of these perspectives within the faculty. While this loss or diminishment might not result in the demise of the college, it would significantly challenge the view of ODC as a liberal arts college. The small number of participants whose views are associated with the integral perspective and the senior status of many of them raises a similar issue. These participants articulate most clearly the language and content of the liberal arts tradition upon which other participants rely upon when discussing this feature of the college. As these faculty members retire, the language and content they contribute is likely to be depleted thus making it more difficult to sustain a rich and varied conversation about the college’s academic identity.

The participants’ frequent references to the Dominican motto suggest that they identify the college with the beliefs and values of the sponsoring religious congregation. Logically, it would seem to follow that the prominence of the Dominican motto would also support and clarify the ODC’s identity as a Catholic institution. However, the practice of decoupling
Dominicanism and Catholicism limits the effectiveness of this concept for supporting and clarifying religious identity. Participants share the understanding that to be a good Dominican means to be a good teacher and scholar; religious content and commitment are viewed as optional. Participants who retain the religious content often see in Dominicanism an intellectual approach to the Catholic faith that integrates for them the academic and religious aspects of the college’s identity.

Participants in general demonstrate an awareness of and respect for ODC’s Catholic identity. Even participants who are not particularly committed to it take steps to bring the Catholic perspective into their courses when doing so is appropriate to the course content. Nevertheless, it is an optional component of teaching and learning at ODC for both faculty and students. Furthermore, participants have difficulty describing in detail and with clarity the ways the college’s religious dimension is expressed in the life of the campus. In this case they lack the language and content needed to sustain a prolonged and productive conversation about the religious dimension of ODC’s identity. The lack of language and substance inhibits the college’s capacity to imagine itself as a Catholic college and to perpetuate that identity in the future.
Implications of the Study

This section will focus on implications of the study related to the problems of identity within contemporary Catholic collegiate institutions and more generally to the concept of organizational identity in collegiate settings. The particular and contextual nature of this interpretive study precludes any suggestion that the following implications be taken as generalizable conclusions. They are offered from the perspective that particular instances can be excellent portals for approaching more general concerns and in the hope they will contribute to better practices.

1. There is a need for greater diversity and inclusiveness of institutional perspectives in the theoretical and empirical scholarship on Catholic higher education.

The participants in this study voice perspectives, aspirations and concerns that differ in significant ways from those expressed by faculty at research universities whose voices predominate in the literature pertaining to the Catholic identity question. This suggests that the problems of identity in Catholic higher education would be better understood and potential solutions more approachable if the concerns and perspectives of more types of
Catholic postsecondary institutions were recognized and included in scholarly and professional discourse.

Within the group of colleges and universities that identify themselves as Catholic are represented two-year, baccalaureate, comprehensive, and specialized institutions as well as a small number of research and doctoral universities. However, discussions of identity in Catholic higher education rarely recognize this diversity of institutional types. Instead, the discussions proceed from the assumption that the institutions involved are research universities or, minimally, that what applies to research universities applies to other types of institutions as well. There has been little discussion, for example, of the promises and challenges of Catholic baccalaureate and comprehensive institutions.

The focus on universities is understandable given the history of Catholic higher education in the past four decades. Nevertheless, proceeding from the assumption that all Catholic institutions have the same aims, problems, and needs obscures important features of the identity-related problems in Catholic higher education and hinders individual institutions from coming to greater clarity about their particular identities.
The issue of academic freedom provides an example of how this homogeneous approach hinders understanding. When participants discuss the relationship between Catholic identity and academic freedom, they focused on academic freedom in the context of their teaching and on the interference from institutional leaders. In the literature on Catholic identity, on the other hand, university professors focus on academic freedom in the context of research and on the threat of interference from external church authorities (Worgul, 1992; Curran, 1990; Annarelli, 1988). It goes without saying that ecclesiastical interference in the scholarly enterprise is a critical concern for all Catholic institution since it poses a potential threat to their status as academic institutions. Nevertheless, the emphasis on the threat posed by church authorities has limited discussion of equally important and compelling questions about the meanings of academic freedom and the pressures placed on it by institutional authorities, boards of trustees, major donors, students, and governmental agencies. These other external forces are more likely to touch and impinge upon the professional activities of more faculty in Catholic colleges and universities than are interfering bishops.

2. The discourse and research on identity issues in Catholic higher education needs to focus more attention on the ways that contextual and
institutional realities shape a college’s identity and the expressions of that identity.

In this study we have seen that institutional realities shape participants’ interpretations of a college’s identity and how it is expressed in practice. The influences of institutional realities on the identities of Catholic schools, however, are often overlooked in the current literature on Catholic higher education.

A few Catholic universities possess ample endowments and academic reputations that draw students from around the nation. These institutions have a degree of freedom in the way they construct their identities. Most Catholic baccalaureate and comprehensive institutions, however, are endowment-poor and depend on their local or regional communities for students. They are tuition-dependent and live close to the changing conditions and demands of society and the market. Identity for these institutions is not simply a matter of principle but also one of survival.

3. Similarly, more consideration needs to be given to changing perspectives about the nature and mission of higher education in general.

The consensus which Father Hesburgh claims to exists about the reality of a university and, by inference, of other types of postsecondary
institutions is far more fragile and illusive than his claim would indicate. A broad range of external stakeholder groups continue to express their dissatisfaction with the aims and performance of postsecondary institutions in this country. Practices and values once thought to be essential to the nature of all higher education institutions, such as tenure and academic freedom, are being redefined or eroded. The strength of the popular perspective of a career-oriented, liberal arts education among the participants of this study suggests faculty beliefs about the nature, means, and outcomes of a college education are also changing, especially in institutions which are not research institutions. The research university as the paradigm for all higher education appears to be losing its hold and creating space for greater diversity in the definition of what it means to be an institution of higher education. Catholic baccalaureate and comprehensive institutions need to take advantage of this period of loosening and articulate promises and challenges of their own.

4. The nature and role of the sponsoring congregation’s mission and tradition are changing in unexpected ways.

One of the most interesting phenomenon observed in this study is the decoupling of the Dominican motto from its Catholic roots when participants
reinterpret it in the context of the college's mission. On one hand, this interpretive flexibility suggests that when a congregation's tradition contains symbolic material that is compatible with the intellectual mission of a college, it can be a powerful feature for supporting common beliefs about mission within a campus community. Not all congregational traditions can provide this symbolic material but when it can, it provides a college with an effective tool for strengthening its own identity.

On the other hand, this development complicates the view that Catholic colleges and universities draw upon two sources, religious congregation and church, in constructing their religious identities. It raises interesting questions about the relationship between a congregation's tradition and a college's religious identity. Does congregational identity continue to contribute to religious identity if that identity no longer has religious content? Could a college strengthen its identification with aspects of the sponsoring congregation's tradition without strengthening its sense of religious identity?

The phenomenon also raises questions about the effectiveness of efforts to continue a congregation's mission and values at a sponsored institution. A primary mechanism for addressing the influence gap created
by corporate independence and the dwindling number of congregational members involved in day-to-day operations has been to develop programs to teach lay administrators, faculty and staff about the congregation’s history and mission and to socialize them to its values and visions. Explanations and discussions of the congregation’s mission, core values, and history are incorporated in new staff and trustee orientations, ongoing staff development programs, annual board retreats, and institutional visioning processes.

Often undergirding these strategies are the assumptions that a congregation’s mission and values can be explained and transmitted in brief and occasional presentations and, further, that those who receive it will accept the congregation’s interpretation of it. But in a 1995 study, Melanie Morey interviewed the college presidents and congregational leaders of seven congregation-college pairings and found that in each case the college and congregation had conflicting interpretations of the common legacy that each pair shared. She points out that, as different types of organizations, congregations and colleges are likely to hear and use these common stories differently. This study provides further evidence to suggest that congregations do not control how their mission and traditions will be
received and interpreted by others. Individuals who are not members of the congregation have a different relationship with that mission and do not share the socialization that congregational members do. Therefore, it is highly probable that they will reinterpret the content of a congregations tradition and mission in significantly different ways.

The intent here is not to criticize these strategies or their outcomes. I am convinced that the future of Catholic higher education is ultimately in the hands of the laity, not religious congregations. What I am suggesting is that congregations need to reexamine their assumptions and expectations about the ministerial partnerships in which they are now engaged. There is a need for greater sophistication and realism about what partnership actually entails both for congregations and the lay persons and other religious governing, administering, and teaching in their colleges and universities.

5. Changing the focus of institutional discussions of religious identities could enrich understanding and provide new insights about a college’s Catholic identity.

This study described qualitative differences in the participants’ descriptions of the college’s academic and religious identities. When discussing academic identity, participants share an understanding of ODC as
a liberal arts college and then articulate three reasonably well developed perspectives of the way that identity is expressed in the curriculum. When describing ODC’s religious identity, participants identify it as a Catholic college and as Dominican college. However, their descriptions of how these two identities get expressed on campus are underdeveloped and exhibit no points of convergence. I would suggest that the differences originate in the networks of opportunities that participants have for exploring the meanings of the symbols related to each aspect of identity.

Occasions for reflecting on and discussing academic identity and the many elements that comprise it are built into the life of an academic institution at several interconnecting levels, including the personal, departmental or divisional, faculty, and institutional levels. Academic institutions abound in opportunities to discuss issues ranging from pedagogy to research productivity to student learning styles. These conversations enrich the language and the content participants have available for explaining academic identity and provide practice for conversing on the subject.

A similar multiple-level network of occasions for reflecting on and discussing a college’s religious identity are not built into the ordinary functioning of academic institutions. Discussions of religious identity tend to
be occasional events, often at the institutional level, that focus on meta-
symbols such as the meaning of "Catholic identity." There are few
occasions to explore the elements that comprise and contribute meaning to
that identity. Consequently, the language and content available to talk about
this aspect of identity is often limited and not shared among the members of
the campus community.

I am not suggesting that collegiate institutions develop networks for
discussing religious identity that revival their networks for discussing
academic issues. What I am suggesting, instead, is that clarity about
religious identity might be enhanced by refocusing campus discussions of
religious identity on elements that contribute to religious identity rather than
on content-deficient meta-concepts such as Catholic identity. Discussions of
more limited and manageable elements might help built content and support
shared meanings.

Traversing Levels of Focus

Through the course of this investigation, I have wrestled with
questions about its focus. Was I conducting a study that used the case of a
Catholic college to develop the concept of organizational identity and to
explain how identity is constructed in a collegiate setting? Or was I conducting a study which employed the case of one baccalaureate institution to shed new light on the identity problems in contemporary Catholic higher education? Looking back, I realize that the two foci represent different levels of analysis and that I advanced my thinking by moving back and forth between them. This traversing of levels influenced the conceptualization, data gathering and analysis, and writing phases of the study.

The more particular focus, the problem of identity in Catholic higher education, was the perspective from which I chose to construct and tell this story of the data. It was the originating source of the study and my source of motivation throughout. The selection of a baccalaureate institution as the site for the study and the decision to focus on the perspectives of faculty were influenced by my professional experiences in Catholic liberal arts colleges and by apparent gaps in the literature on Catholic higher education. The early chapters were devised to provide theoretical perspectives and historical background that informed my thinking and supported a story about the identity problems of Catholic higher education. I used my fifteen years of experience as an administrator and trustee in two
Catholic liberal arts colleges as a lens for analyzing and interpreting the data in Chapters IV and V.

The broader focus, conceptualization of organizational identity, functioned throughout the investigation to keep my perspective from becoming too narrow too quickly. Since the concept of organizational identity has not been the object of extensive theoretical or empirical investigation, I had to construct a conceptual framework as I progressed through this study. The four characterizations of organizational identity presented in Chapter II reflect a gradual process of clarification and definition that was informed both by the literature on identity and by the understandings of identity that emerged in the study. This process continued through the analysis and writing phases of the study and enriched the theoretical frame of the study.

Further Research

Finally, I turn very briefly to two broad questions related to the concept of organizational identity that are particularly intriguing to me as I look at further research in this area: what does diversity mean in relation to identity and what is the connection between imagination and identity.

1. Identity and diversity. The diversification of identity was discussed in Chapter II in terms of hybridization of organizational types. Albert and Whetten (1985) argue that in order to respond to the demands of complex
and fluid lifespaces, organizations such as colleges and universities come to see themselves as composites of organizational types rather than as single types of organization. In Chapter IV, I suggested that the three perspectives of a career-oriented, liberal arts education articulated by the participants are necessary for the college to negotiate and flourish in its particular context while maintaining a sense of continuity and sameness. There are, however, other possible interpretations of that scenario and, further, it is not clear that the present level of diversity will continue to be an effective response in the future. This case study, therefore, raises more questions than it answers about the diversification of organizational identity. It remains to be seen under what conditions collegiate institutions are best served by diversity or how much diversity is too much. Does diversity at one level of identity perhaps require unity at another level? How do the various interpretations of an organization's identity interact and relate with each other?

**Identity and imagination.** In Chapter II a relationship between imagination and organizational identity was implied in the assertion that a college's identity is the enterprise as it is imagined by its member. It was not within the scope of this study to explore the relationship between identity and imagination more fully. However, as I listened to the participants and other members of the ODC community talk about their institution, I heard patterns in their beliefs and attitudes that called to mind sociologist Andrew Greeley's concept of the religious imagination. Greeley
(1981), building on Clifford Geertz’s work on religion as a culture system, argues that the repertory of images and pictures available in our religious imaginations shapes the way we perceive and experience reality and make meaning of our existence. He contends that you can know more about a person and her behavior from her image of God or her fantasy of an afterlife than from her church attendance or belief in a particular doctrinal formulation (p. 3). I think a parallel statement might be made about faculty and academic imagination. Investigation of the images and pictures faculty draw upon to make sense of their work and professional context may provide insights which cannot be gained by more traditional approaches which focus on institutional type, the percentage of time given to research or teaching, or faculties’ beliefs in basic doctrines such as academic freedom. I conclude this study curious about what these the images and pictures might be and what they might reveal about the academic profession and higher education.
APPENDIX

Protocol

Introduction:

1. Thank you  2. OK to tape?  3. I will take notes

As you know, this interview is being conducted as part of my dissertation research. I am studying how Catholic colleges construct their institutional identities with a particular focus on the relationship between faculty and institutional identity. I will say a bit more about the concept of identity before we begin but first let me address a few other points.

I want you to know that Sister Mary Andrew has requested that the identity of the College not be masked in this study. However, I want to assure you that every effort will be made to safeguard your identity throughout this study and that what you say will be treated confidentially. Your identity will be coded in fieldnotes, recordings, and transcriptions and these will be kept in a secure place my home. I also what to reenforce the fact that your participation in this project is voluntary and that you are free to discontinue your participation in this project at any time.

While I am a member of a religious congregation and have worked at two Catholic colleges similar to Ohio Dominican’s, I do not assume to know ODC or the Dominican congregation that sponsors it. I am interested in learning how you view the college and your work.
Do you have any questions for me at this point? Please feel free to stop me any time if you do.

1. Tell me about yourself and how you came to your present position at Ohio Dominican College?

2. Did you plan to join the faculty of a small, church-related, liberal arts institution? (If yes, what attracted you to this type of college? If not, where would you have preferred to teach? Why? Why did you come to ODC?)

3. How would you describe your work at the college. What does it consist of this academic year?

4. How do you define teaching in this context? What is your role as teacher? What developments are most likely to impact your classroom practices in the next five years? How will your teaching be different as a result?

5. How do you define scholarship for yourself? How has your definition changed since you came to ODC?

6. If you were talking with a perspective assistant professor, how would you describe the College to help her think about how her expectations fit the realities of faculty life on this campus.

7. The college’s academic program is described as providing "a career-oriented, liberal arts education." What do career-oriented education and liberal arts education mean on this campus. What is the relationship between them?

8. What are the strengths of the overall academic program? What are its limitations? What are the three strongest degree programs or departments?
9. How would you describe ODC’s faculty?

10. How would you describe ODC’s current student body? How do you think it will change in the next 5 years?

11. ODC identifies itself as a Catholic Dominican college. What does that mean to you? How does the college express or manifest its Catholicity and Dominican character?

12. What were two of the most important decisions or actions taken by the college in the past 5 years? Why were they important?

13. What are the most significant or critical institutional issues or decisions the college will face in the next 5 years? Why are they important?

14. What major trends or features in the college’s external environment will be most influence the college in the next 5 years?

15. The Strategic Priorities for 2000 refers to the identity of the college. In your own words what is that identity?

16. Is there anything else you would like to tell me that will help me understand the identity of Ohio Dominican College?
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