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ABSTRACT

This interpretative case study examines how the faculty at Ohio Dominican College, a Baccalaureate II, coeducational college, perceives the college's academic and religious identities, and how these identities are expressed in the life of the campus. Additionally, on a more conceptual level, the study offers an opportunity to examine the emerging concept of organizational identity and its relevance for higher educational institutions. Data for the study were collected between January and September 1997 in interviews with fourteen full-time faculty, as well as with extensive site observations and document analysis. The study found qualitative differences in the way participants' viewed the college's academic and religious identities--as an academic liberal arts institution, and as a Catholic college with a Dominican tradition. Faculty identification with Dominicanism is more widespread than with Catholicism. Further differences are concerned with the values of liberal arts education, as opposed to education in applied and professional fields. Although liberal arts are central to faculty perceptions of the college, more than half of the 31 baccalaureate majors offered are in applied and professional fields, and 63 percent of the baccalaureate degrees are awarded in those fields. (Contains 29 references.) (RH)

Negotiating Organizational Identity: Faculty Members' Academic and Religious Interpretations of a Church-Related College

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Negotiating Organizational Identity: Faculty Members' Academic and Religious Interpretations of a Church-Related College

At the close of the twentieth century questions of identity are some of the most prominent and potentially consequential facing U.S. colleges and universities. More and more often these institutions find themselves confronting situations that provoke fundamental and potentially disruptive questions about "who" they are and what constitutes their most central, distinctive and enduring features and functions. However, little research has focused on explicating the concept of organizational identity for research purposes or on understanding how colleges construct their identities and the influence that identity might have on their behavior.

This study explores organizational identity within a collegiate organizational setting and functions on two levels. Primarily, it is an interpretive case study that examines how faculty members at one Catholic, baccalaureate college interpret and construct that institution's identity. For colleges and universities that maintain relations with religious traditions, identity issues are complicated by an additional set of questions related to religious identity and mission. Not only must church-related institutions endeavor to maintain academic integrity, while pursuing the innovations necessary to survive in a rapidly changing and highly competitive environment; they must also reinterpret their religious identities to ensure their continued vitality and meaning. Tension between academic and religious identity emerged in the nineties as a critical issue for

Catholic higher education with the issuance of *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* (1990), the Vatican's controversial statement on the nature of a Catholic university, which many view as a serious threat to the academic status of these institutions (Wilson, 1999; Mooney, 1994). The study examines how faculty members describe the college's academic identity and religious identity and the ways in which those identities are expressed in the life of the campus. On a second and more conceptual level, the distinctive and complex set of issues posed by the particular case study offers an opportunity to further understand and explicate the emerging concept of organizational identity and its relevance for the study of higher education institutions.

Organizational Identity

Efforts to develop organizational identity as a tractable concept for research are relatively recent (Albert & Whetten, 1985; Diamond, 1993; Fombrun, 1995; Olin, 1992; Whetten & Godfrey, 1998). In higher education literature, the concept of organizational identity has been linked with that of culture (e.g., Chaffe & Tierney, 1988; Kuh & Robinson, 1995); however, it is not well defined in these works. Organizational identity, therefore, remains an inchoate concept lacking the theoretical definition and richness of concepts such a culture and climate (Reicher & Schneider, 1990). Nevertheless, there is sufficient material on personal and organizational identity from which to construct a descriptive framework for conceptualizing identity in collegiate organizational settings. This study relies on four characterizations of organizational identity drawn from the available literature: Identity as (a) an ability, (b) an internal perspective, (c) a diversified, and (d) narrowly articulated.

Identity 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, including 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 (Albert & Whetten, 1985).

Identity as insiders' interpretation.

Identity can also be described as the way campus insiders interpret a college. 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 sense of purpose and uniqueness, direct strategies, guide behavior, define key stakeholders, and shape views of the environment.

Describing identity as a set of features is not to say that a college's identity is fixed or that it is shared by all the members. A college, even one of modest proportions, is too complex and extensive to ever be completely visible to its members, even its leaders. 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).[1] A college's identity, therefore, is 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. 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, 1988). 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 their interpretations depends upon the particulars of the college and its present circumstances. Change within in an organization will require a certain degree of identity disintegration and incoherence.

Identity as diversified.

Coherence is not the same as the absence of diversity. A third characterization of 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. However, many, if not most, organizations are hybrid composites of multiple organizational types (Albert & Whetten, 1985). Collegiate institutions, even those of modest size and scope, understand themselves as several

[1]I 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).

different types of organizations. Hybridization is a natural and necessary development for organizations functioning in complex and turbulent environments. In the United States, collegiate institutions generally exhibit an *ideographic* or specialized pattern of hybridization.[2] In other words, they buffer the college's central academic core by constructing separate support subsystems for responding to the diversity of demands placed on the institution by the environment (Albert & Whetten, 1985; Thompson, 1967).

Identity as articulated in narrowly tailored statements.

Finally, colleges and universities avoid constructing global statements of identity. When confronted with an identity question that cannot be avoided, organizations generally construct responses that are limited to the particular question being 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. 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.

Relationship between organizational identity and culture

Positing the concept of organizational identity raises questions about the relationship between organizational culture and organizational identity. The two are closely related but distinct concepts concerned with meaning and sensemaking within an organization. The

[2]Albert and Whetten also discuss holographic hybrids in which each unit within an organization exhibits all aspects of the organization's identity. The identity of the whole is reflected in each unit, albeit in a less articulated form.

difference is one of perspective (Fiol, Hatch, & Golden-Biddle, 1998). A college's culture is a general system of rules that governs meaning in the institution and serves as an interpretive scheme that individuals use to make sense of and structure their actions and those of others within the college. It is a symbolic field that provides a context for meaning and sensemaking about the college and the 'reality' it occupies. By contrast, "identity reflects how a social entity makes sense of itself in relation to the cultures it is a part of " (p. 58). A college's identity provides the contextual understanding of the system of rules that shapes how members of a campus community understand themselves and the college in relation to the larger social system. It is constituted through a self-reflexive process that is tempered by feedback from organizational culture and other meaning-making systems with which the college interacts.

The advantage organizational identity for the study of how colleges work rests in its relative accessibility (Fiol, Hatch, & Golden-Biddle, 1998). Culture is deeply embedded in the fabric and consciousness of an organization, making it both difficult to access and to change (Schein, 1992). Identity, on the other hand, is more conscious and reflexive and thus more accessible and potentially more amenable to change. The self-reflection process resulting from identity-challenging situations or questions permits and supports self-critique and self-knowledge, that can serve as a locus around which new patterns of acting and thinking can occur.

Catholic Higher Education and Identity

The genesis of Catholic higher education's current identity problems is highly complex and protracted. It is not within the scope of this paper to describe in detail the "startling changes, significant soul-searching, and extraordinary maturing" (Gallin, 1992, p. 1) that have occurred within Catholic higher education since 1960 and helped foster the current crisis. Briefly, 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 the religious congregations that founded them, underwent a dramatic change in personnel, and refocused their academic missions. Corporate separation from the religious congregations that founded them provided the freedom and resources required to enter and to 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 continue 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 a definitively Catholic philosophical foundation to ground and distinguish their academic programs rendered institutions inarticulate about the distinctive qualities of a Catholic college and a Catholic education.

A pair of questions is at the heart of the current discussion of identity within Catholic higher education: What does it mean to be a university or college, and what does it mean for that institution to be Catholic. At the risk of oversimplifying a very complex phenomenon, there are two different perspectives on the proper answers to those two questions. Explained succinctly by the former director of the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities:

> Some persons, beginning from the point of view of the church, see the relationship [between a Catholic institution and the Church] 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; other begin with the broad understanding of the life and purposes of a university, and the struggle to express the way in which such a task might have a legitimate connection with the mission of the church (Gallen, 1992, p. 1-2).

The Research Site

Ohio Dominican College (ODC) is a Baccalaureate II, private, coeducational college located in an urban fringe area on the northeast side of Columbus, Ohio. 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. It became coeducational in 1964 and 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.

After surviving 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 traditional students. Over ninety percent of the student body reside in Ohio; two-thirds are from the Columbus metropolitan area. The teaching faculty also reached an all-time high of 110 in the Fall 1996 with 56 full-time members and 54 part-time members. The college's budget has been balanced for more than two decades. The endowment grew 200% between 1987 and 1996 but it remains very modest. Tuition and fees are the its primary sources of revenue.

Since 1987 the college has instituted significant changes in its educational vision, academic programming, and campus diversity and outreach efforts (ODC Self Study, 1997). An ongoing visioning process aims at transforming teaching and learning in light of competencies needed for living in the twenty-first century, contemporary learning theory, and 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.

Methodology

A qualitative case study strategy was chosen because of the exploratory and descriptive purposes of the study and the idiosyncratic and complex nature of the social phenomenon being investigated (Marshall & Rossman, 1995; Stake, 1994). The research site was selected primarily because the college is sufficiently similar to other Catholic undergraduate institutions in terms of mission, history, structure, financial status, academic programs and student body to encourage transferability of findings. Recent rapid enrollment growth and a series of campus-wide initiatives that effected changes in academic programming and delivery systems, the composition of the student body, and the campus also added to its interest as the site of inquiry.

Data collection occurred between January and September 1997. Interviews with fourteen, full-time faculty participants were the primary data source and form the core of the study; extensive site observations and document analysis provided its background and frame. Rather than occurring in distinct phases, data collection from the three sources progressed intermittently and, at times, simultaneously. Concerned with obtaining both a range of perspectives and the perspectives of key faculty members, a combination of two purposeful sampling techniques, stratified and snowball (Patton, 1990), was used to identify the faculty participants. Each faculty member participated in a semi-structured interview, lasting from 90 minutes to three hours in length. An interview guide was employed to provide consistency in the topics covered; open-ended questions allowed participants maximum latitude in their responses. Each interview session was audiotaped and then transcribed in its entirety. Comprehensive fieldnotes and analytical notes were compiled for all interviews and site observations within twenty four hours of the event.

An inductive analytic approach (Patton, 1990; Miles & Huberman, 1993) was employed to organize and analyze the data. Data analysis was cyclical, reflexive and led by the data (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). Initially, interview transcripts and fieldnotes were segmented by categories drawn from the interview guide and then coded within each category. Individual summaries of each interview were constructed from these materials and distributed to each participant for review and comment. A second phase of coding occurred after participants' feedback was received. The particular linguistic expressions used by the participants were particularly important for identifying points where participants' views converged to form a consensus and diverged into different perspectives.

Findings

The study findings suggest that the characteristics which members of the campus community associate with the college and use to imagine its central features function as symbols within the community (Dill, 1982). Symbols are "those objects, acts, relationships, or linguistic formations that stand ambiguously for a multiplicity of meanings, evoke emotions, and impel men [sic] to action" (Dill, 1982, p. 313-14). They represent shared assumptions and understandings about the college that provide unifying beliefs among individuals whose primary belief systems are anchored in different academic fields or administrative functions.

Symbols need to be supported by rituals, or the patterned sequences of social activity that express and articulate the meaning of symbols for the campus community (Dill, 1982). Rituals on a college campus include both processes used to deliberate core values and technologies, for example, the review of the general education curriculum, and formal rites and events, such as commencement. Rituals help create commitment and common purpose among members of a

campus community. At the same time they reveal the multiple and often conflicting views held by the members. Gaps between symbols and rituals can produce frustration and cynicism that, in turn, can reduce the power of the symbol to support a common belief system (Dill, 1982).

The following section explores the symbols around which participants construct the college's identity and their supporting rituals. The idea of ODC as liberal arts college functions as a symbolic concept for their academic interpretations, while two linguistic formations, the Dominican motto "To contemplate truth and share with others the fruits of contemplation" and the concept of Catholic identity, support their religious interpretations.

Academic Interpretations

This section examines a) the understandings that participants share about ODC as a liberal arts college; b) describes institutional realities that challenge this characterization; and c) delineates three perspectives of a liberal arts education that participants articulate.

A Liberal Arts College: Shared Understandings

Faculty participants demonstrate broad consensus about a number of salient features related to ODC's academic identity. 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. All fourteen faculty participants consistently describe ODC as a "liberal arts college." They also share the assumption that the purpose of a liberal education at ODC is to provide students with the intellectual and cultural breadth requisite for a 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." Broadening horizons is considered to be critical for the first-generation college students who comprise the largest segment of the student population at ODC. Faculty participants also concur that the general education curriculum is the primary vehicle by which horizons are stretched and shaken.

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 stating, "I take it as a sacred trust to support the mission of the college that students need to be broadly, liberally educated, for personal reasons as well as professional reasons." 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 as an integral and distinctive feature of their professional programs.

Institutional Challenges: Enrollments, Attitudes, and Demographics

While the liberal arts are central to faculty members' perceptions of their institution, Ohio Dominican College is not exclusively a liberal arts college. The year the study was conducted, more than half of the 31 baccalaureate majors offered at ODC were in applied and professional fields and 63% of the baccalaureate degrees awarded were in these fields. The Divisions of Business Administration and Education together accounted for 44% of the college's degree-seeking students. Applied programs located within the college's arts and sciences divisions

represent another 22% of the degree-seeking population. 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 professional programs.

Recent changes in the composition of the student body offer further challenges to ODC's identity as a liberal arts college. Since the mid-1980s, ODC has experienced relatively rapid enrollment growth due to its success at attracting adult and transfer students. In the fall of 1997, first-time freshman accounted for only 39% of the new degree students and, in a startling inversion, juniors and seniors outnumbered freshmen and sophomores. Adult and transfer students are attracted almost exclusively to programs in business administration and education. They generally hold more utilitarian attitudes toward their college education and, therefore, are less likely to enroll courses outside their majors in the future. Furthermore, transfer students are often exempt from significant portions of the general education curriculum. If the current enrollment trends continue, the college could soon experience a student body comprised almost exclusively of upper class students enrolled in professional degree programs.

Daily confrontation with these institutional realities stress participants' interpretation of ODC as a liberal arts college. A senior faculty member in the social sciences articulates her concern saying, "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." 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 an unidimensional concept about which many faculty members

agree emerges as a conceptual container that stretches to embrace, not always comfortably, many meanings and interpretations. The multiple meanings attached to the concept become visible when participants shift describing ODC as a liberal arts college to defining what the College's literature calls a "career-oriented, liberal arts college education."

Negotiating between Symbol and Reality: Three Perspectives

Many of the participants use words or phrases such as "antithetical" or "opposed to one another" to describe the tension between the educational goals coupled in the phrase, "a career-oriented, liberal arts college education." At the same time they seem to accept that these two 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 three distinct perspectives on the nature of a liberal arts education at ODC: the integral, paradoxical, and popular. The three perspectives are offered as heuristic devices, rather than descriptions of reality. Their purpose is to explicate subtle variations of meaning among the participants' views. Each perspectives reflects a different emphasis in beliefs and attitudes about the *nature* of the relationship between career and liberal education, the *purpose* of a college education, the *means* of realizing that education, and *threats* to the college's academic identity and program.

Integral Perspective

The integral perspective emphasizes a classic liberal arts tradition with its characteristic focus on the moral purpose of education and a holistic, integrated theory of knowledge. About one-fifth of the participants articulate this view; all are faculty of longstanding.

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 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 suggest that the conflict exists only at the level of appearance. The conflict 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 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 *educated*." 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. . . . [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 describes the difference a liberal arts education makes in 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 . . . What I mean by that is you're not going to come here and learn to be a cop. You're going to come 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 participants' remarks.

Means: The general education curriculum.

The general education curriculum, both content and sequence, is viewed as the means by which this liberating education is achieved. Using Plato's allegory of the cave, a social scientist exemplifies the focus on 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." The general education curriculum, he continues, is what "allows someone to 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."

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 role of the liberal arts in the college's academic program. They speak of two sources of threat: changes to the general education curriculum and academic specialization. They contend that ODC has one curriculum for all students and express concern about modifications to individual courses and the general education curriculum. Variations introduced in academic programs designed to attract adult and transfer students are particular sites of concern. The second source of threat is the emphasis on academic specialization. Characterizing academic majors as "hogs at the trough," one professor asserts,

"The research suggests it is the major that has essentially destroyed the concept of a liberal education." While these participants identify with particular academic disciplines, they tend to downplay the distinctions between disciplinary orientations at the undergraduate level: "I don't think there's something called deep disciplinary understanding short of graduate school. . . . I've never thought that my job was teaching them how to be [disciplinary specialists]."

Paradoxical perspective

As the label suggests this perspective does not have a unidimensional focus. Participants emphasize preparation in a particular academic specialization while retaining a deep appreciation for the speculative aspects of a liberal education. Approximately one-third of the participants articulate this interpretation; they are located in the natural and social sciences and education.

Nature of the relationship: A paradox

Faculty members associated with this perspective focus on the paradox present in the idea of "a career-oriented, liberal arts education." A member of the education faculty captures the tension inherent in this perspective:

> I see a need for a broadening . . . 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.

It is important to note that the compromise to which she refers is between the broad goals of liberal education and the specialized goals of an academic major, 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 beliefs. However, the paradoxical perspective diverges from the integral view by emphasizing the goal of academic specialization as a 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 particular world view.

From this perspective educating students in a particular discipline is central to faculty work and a critical outcome of the college's academic program. A senior social science professor, 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."

For these participants the disciplinary focus is tempered by a deep appreciation of the liberal agenda. Their goal is to foster the development of individuals who combine the critical competencies of a liberally educated person and a disciplinary specialist. An education professor asserts that her goal is 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.

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 is far more central to their understanding of what affects the educational experience. A social scientist, for example, explains:

> 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 aspect of the curriculum 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.

Threats: Quality issues.

Within this group threats to ODC's academic identity are described in terms of threats to quality. They characterize two changes in the student body as potential sources of threat to the quality of the college's academic programs. First, participants express concern about a perceived decline in the quality of the student body. Students are viewed as increasingly underprepared both academically and culturally to do college level work. While these faculty acknowledge the impressive progress that many of the students make, they are concerned that the lower starting point negatively impacts possible outcomes. The second quality issue is the increasing number of adult and transfer students enrolling in professional programs. The issue is not so much the academic competency of these students but, rather, their pragmatic orientation. Adult students very often do not have the time or inclination to pursue knowledge for knowledge's sake.

Popular perspective

The popular perspective is distinguished by an emphasis on meeting the needs and aspirations of students and by a pragmatic stance toward changing societal expectations regarding higher education. This is the largest and most diverse group of faculty. Almost half of the participants articulate attitudes and beliefs that are consistent with this perspective. The majority teach in professional programs; however, the group also includes humanities faculty who teach primarily required general education courses.

The size and diversity of views within this group makes crisp distinctions more difficult. William Massey of Stanford's Institute for Higher Education Research perhaps captures the basic attitudes and 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. They draw upon both perspectives when talking about the educational enterprise in which they see themselves involved.

Nature of the relationship: Complementary.

Most participants in this third group perceive the relationship between career-oriented and 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 absence of tension or conflict in the phrase "the best of both worlds" contrasts sharply with the paradoxical perspective's tension-filled compromise of desirable but divergent educational goals. Like the integral perspective, this perspective reduces the dualism in "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.

Purpose: Addressing students' needs.

From this perspective the purpose of an ODC education is "to produce productive members of society; good citizens, people who will contribute to the economic progress of society." Participants talk about this purpose in two ways. First, they discuss helping students gain the knowledge and skills they need to enter and advance in their careers. For instance, an education professor describes her goals as a teacher:

> 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* suggests a pragmatic orientation toward learning and teaching. Her language contrasts with the language used by professors in the paradoxical group who describe their goals in terms of helping students to become *reflective* about what they do and to develop a *philosophy* of professional practice.

The second way faculty describe their purpose is in terms of meeting students

where they are and helping them advance toward greater intellectual, cultural, and developmental maturity. Academic achievement is often discussed in terms of the progress that 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.

Means: Student-centered approaches and information technology.

These faculty members use language and imagery consistent with current teaching 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. Student-centered approaches place greater significance on the collaborative nature of the learning-teaching process. Professors in this group describe themselves as facilitators, resources, guides on the side. The role of the faculty member is described in terms of developing authentic tasks that facilitate students' learning. Students are given a more central and substantial role in shaping the courses in which they are enrolled. The faculty in this group take a more positive, but not uncritical, stance toward the integration of computers and electronic technology in the learning-teaching process.

Threat: Resistance to change.

For participants in the popular group threats to academic identity are any obstacles that prevent the college from implementing changes necessary to meet evolving societal expectations and clientele demands. An education professor considers faculty resistance to changing modes of instruction to be a 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/ors. . . . 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.

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. For these participants 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.

The Meaning of Multiple Meanings

The presence of three distinct views of the curriculum could be interpreted in various ways. Looking back to the earlier discussion 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.

In this case, I interpret the presence of multiple perspectives as an example of the third

scenario. The three perspectives 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. They are keys to its durability and tenacity under difficult conditions. In fact, the greater threat to organizational identity at ODC comes from the possibility of losing any of the three perspectives.

Even with the support of the Dominican tradition, the college's capacity to imagine itself as a liberal arts college is potentially threatened by three conditions. First, ODC's success at recruiting adult and transfer students is likely to increase the dominance of professional degree programs and to fundamentally alter the student body. 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 sciences. 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. 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. Finally, the small number of participants whose views are associated with the integral perspective are all faculty of long standing. 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.

Religious Interpretations

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 the idea of a Catholic college or the Dominican tradition provides the degree of consensus that the concept of a liberal arts college does for their interpretations of its academic identity. Instead both concepts act as symbols to inform and shape the faculty's interpretations of ODC's religious identity. However, in this case we do not find the distinct perspectives or the thick description that characterized their interpretations of Ohio Dominican's career-oriented, liberal arts education. Participants' views of ODC's religious identity and the ways it is expressed in the life of the campus are decidedly more disparate and inchoate.

Two Symbolic Concepts

Unlike a career-oriented, liberal arts education, 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. At the same time, the participants in this study regularly discuss Dominican and Catholic identity as distinct concepts and interpret them in a semi-autonomous fashion. A senior social science professor reflects this tendency in his description of the two concepts:

> 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 [ODC] has to do with discussing and trying to understand all that's contained in the creed. . . . 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 professor views the Catholic and Dominican identities as highly interdependent, his description, nevertheless, allows for the possibility of interpreting the two concepts separately.

Participants in general 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

Contrary to what one might expect, Dominicanism functions as the more inclusive and unifying symbolic concept for the participants. Participants are at ease discussing the college in this way. 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. 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 quoted the Dominican motto during the interview; many return to it several times. For twelve of the fourteen participants, the Dominican motto functions as a substitute for the college's overall mission. A particularly cogent example of this shorthand interpretation is heard in the remarks of a social science professor:

> 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 the professor not only identifies the congregation's motto with the college's mission but also claims the motto as the calling of all member of the campus community. As might be expected, the three Dominican sisters who participated in the study 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. An education professor 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.

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. A science professor 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 within the context of the Dominican tradition take on a moral and a spiritual, if not specifically religious, dimension. A social scientist asserts that the 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." Another participant describes teaching at ODC as "the work of the gospel," both in terms of the clientele it serves and the outcomes it pursues. While many participants do not use such explicitly Christian language, they generally share the view that the work they do is motivated by a collective sense of social responsibility.

Defining and expanding who belongs.

The Dominican spirit is also the quality that marks individuals as members of the ODC community. A senior professor describes the 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. . . . 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.

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 one social science professor. This participant 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. But in a jarring divergence this participant is also quite public about being a nonbeliever. She explains that a commitment to the Dominican tradition means "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."

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. Catholicism, on the other hand, is a particular expression to which only a limited portion of the campus community subscribes.

ODC as a Catholic college

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. Evidence suggests, however, that many participants are less at ease discussing ODC's Catholic identity. For example, few participants make references to the college's Catholic identity prior to being asked explicitly to explain the meaning of *a Catholic college with Dominican tradition.* Furthermore, when nonCatholic participants were asked to describe the college's religious identity, they are quick to point out their outsider status and to suggest that they are not qualified to speak to the college's Catholicity. These same participants, however, show no reticence in discussing the college's Dominican identity.

For the participants 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. The concept of Catholic identity functions within the campus community a) to provide definition and clarity for its religious identity and, as a result, b) to create a need for explanation and clarification of its academic identity.

Specifying ODC's religious identity.

The label *Catholic* provides definition for the participants' religious interpretations of ODC by identifying it with a particular religious tradition. Participants use the term in both its general and proper form. The general form *catholic* stands for a universal, inclusive, ecumenical stance, while *Catholic* indicates a particular denominational identity. A senior arts professor uses this distinction to discusses 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.

At the same time this denominational label is interpreted differently among the participants. 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." One participant expressed a desire for more traditional and explicit expressions of the college's Catholicity. However, participants generally 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.

Participants carefully distinguish ODC's interpretation of Catholicism from dogmatic forms of radical orthodoxy. Concerns related to religious dogmatism point to the problem that Catholic identity poses for 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). 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, recent church documents and actions taken help keep alive specters of Catholicism's more authoritarian and dogmatic past.

Creating a need for explanation and clarification.

Participants focused significant attention in the interviews explaining how the college's Catholic identity does not impinge upon their rights as faculty. Participants focus on two issues in relation to this concern. The first is whether being Catholic is a requirement for employment at ODC. Although some participants express a 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. Furthermore, 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 and recount the assurances of compliance that they received from campus leaders at the time of their hiring. Several participants also stress the freedom they have to present multiple perspectives in their classes, even those that contradict church teachings. The issue of abortion is repeatedly used as a litmus test to demonstrate the extent of this freedom. An education professor describes her experience:

> 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]. The Catholic Church has a very specific position on that but it's a part of your class content.

Catholic Identity: A Gap between Symbol and Ritual

When asked to describe how the college's religious identity is expressed on campus, participants focus almost exclusively on its Catholic character. However, they generally find it more difficult to delineate the manifestations of this character. Participants have less to say and their characterizations lack the definition and thick description found in their accounts of the academic program. The following section examines the participants' descriptions the college's Catholic identity. 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.

Participants for whom the college's Catholic identity is a central characteristic of the college's identity give voice to feelings of frustration, cynicism, and disappointment 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, comments:

> 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.

Quality of descriptions.

The features that participants identify as expressions of the college's religious identity

include a sense of faith and goodness within the community, required courses in theology, campus ministry activities, religious signs, personal witness, and an emphasis on community service. What is noteworthy is the brevity and indefinite quality of participants' descriptions of these features. It was not uncommon to hear statements such as "It seems like it's so much a part of the fabric that I'm having trouble separating it." or "It's hard to say!" Furthermore, participants tend to list activities, events and features with little explanation or organization.

Absence of guiding models.

Participants' descriptions suggest that in the religious sphere participants work without the benefit of the kind of conceptual models that help them talk about the college's academic identity and program. Participants' differing beliefs and attitudes regarding ODC's Catholic identity do not cluster in a discernable pattern. Instead, their responses reflect a high degree of complexity and diversity within the beliefs and attitudes of individual participants. An example of this intrapersonal fluidity is evidences by the social science professor who both embraces the Dominican search for truth as her personal calling and describes herself as a nonbeliever. This eclecticism is characteristic of contemporary religious practice. Members of the baby boom generation, which includes most 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" (Roof, 1993, p. 5). This fluidity and idiosyncrasy undermines pre-existing models of religious belief and practice.

Responsibility for the future.

More than one-third of the participants identified sustaining the college's religious and specifically Catholic identity as a critical issue facing the college in the future. However, they are

not clear about who is responsible for this or how to do it. Many participants locate the source of the problem in the declining number of Dominican sisters working at the college. Lay faculty tend to look to the Dominican sisters to take the lead in this arena. Some lay faculty contend that maintaining the Catholic identity is primarily a concern for the Dominican sisters. Other lay faculty as well as the sisters hold the view that the future depends on contributions by both lay and religious members.

Students' Experience of Catholic Identity.

Many participants talk about how the college's Catholic character adds to the quality of their work, professional environment, or personal development. However, they do not talk about anticipated impact 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 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. . . . 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.

It is hard to image the participants responding in such an unconcerned manner if the liberal arts program were perceived as having so little impact

The Meaning of Multiple Meanings

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 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 that reunites it with its more specifically religious meanings.

The underdeveloped quality of participants' descriptions of ODC's Catholic identity suggests that existing rituals for defining and expressing this identity may be inadequate for creating and communicating meaning within the community. Catholic identity 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. What opportunities that do exist are infrequent and extraordinary episodes with little connection to the day-to-day functions of the participants and the college. Given the disestablishment of religion in U. S. higher education, it is difficult to envision how more regular and connected ritual processes could be developed to better support this symbolic concept.

Implications and Future Research

The following discussion examines five 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 the 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. 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. When study 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.

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 to draw students from around the nation. As a result, 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 about the nature and purpose of postsecondary institutions is far more fragile and illusive than rhetoric 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 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 that are not research institutions. The research university as the paradigm for all higher education appears to be losing its hold and thus 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 phenomena observed in this study is the decoupling of the Dominican motto from its Catholic roots in the interpretations 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. On the other hand, this development 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. Most congregations have developed programs to educate lay administrators, faculty and staff about the congregation's history and mission and to orient them to its values and visions. Often underlying 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. However, recent research (Morey, 1995) indicates that college and congregational leaders hold conflicting interpretations of the common legacy that they share. 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.

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 way participants' talk about the college's academic and religious identities. 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. 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.

The point here is not that collegiate institutions develop networks for discussing religious identity that revival their networks for discussing academic issues. Rather, the suggestion is that clarity about religious identity might be enhanced by refocusing campus discussions of religious identity on the elements that contribute to religious identity rather than on the often used but content-deficient meta-concept of *Catholic identity*. Discussions of more limited and manageable elements might help built content and support shared meanings.

Further Research

Finally, two broad questions are particularly intriguing to me as I look at further research related organizational identity.

1. Identity and diversity. Diversification of identity was discussed in terms of hybridization of organizational types. Albert and Whetten (1985) argue that in order to respond to the demands of complex and fluid life spaces, organizations such as colleges and universities come to see themselves as composites of organizational types. I have 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. It remains to be seen under what conditions collegiate institutions are best served by diversity or how much diversity is optimal. 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. A relationship between imagination and organizational identity is 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. However, as I listened to the participants talk about their institution, I heard patterns that called to mind the concept of the religious imagination (Greeley, 1981). This concept proposes 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. It is argued then that one can know more about a person and her behavior from how she images God or an afterlife than from her church attendance or belief in a particular doctrinal formulation. 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 that focus on institutional type, the percentage of time given to research or teaching, or faculties' beliefs in basic doctrines such as academic freedom.

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