

THE EFFECT OF CATHOLIC IDENTITY ON COLLEGE  
STUDENT PERCEPTION OF MISSION

By

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A COMPARATIVE CASE STUDY ANALYSIS

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this work to my grandmother, Addie Webb. Although you passed just three short months before you could see my final work, I know that you were with me to the end. May you rest in peace in the heavens above.

Tears are prayers too. They travel to God when we cannot speak.

– Psalm 56:8

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To my mother – without your encouragement and supportive words, I would have not been able to get through this process. Thank you for allowing me to be me, for caring for my children while I studied and worked, and allowing me to have a career that I love.

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## **Comparative Case Study Analysis**

### **The Effect of Catholic Identity on College Student Perception of Mission**

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#### **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this comparative case study analysis was to examine the effect of Catholic identity on college student perception of mission. Much of the uncertainty of Catholic identity evolves around students' experiences of Catholics at Catholic institutions (King, 2014). Despite the correlations that have been made between institutional mission and student outcomes, organizational behavior, and strategic management, remarkably there are few reliable and valid measures in existence that directly evaluate stakeholders' perceptions of an institution's mission (Ferrari et al., 2004 and Ferrari et al., 2006). The comparative case study analysis address the following: Catholic identity and its effect on college students' perception on the level of Catholicity as shown and practiced through mission. This research study will also act as a framework for future research studies on Catholic identity as it relates to specific student populations.

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### **Introduction of the Topic**

American Catholic higher education has a strong tradition distinct from other faith bases. (Garrett, 2006). Rittof (2001) describes the concept of Catholic identity as the most “relevant and dominant” issue in American Catholic higher education (p. 1). Catholic higher education is seen at numerous institutions, has historically been autonomous from Church authorities in governance, finances, and academic initiative, and was sluggish to accept coeducation (Burtchaell, 1998). Catholic higher education’s primary purpose was to formulate future clergy, which evolved into educating the Catholic laity and to its current non-religious structure (Garrett, 2006). Catholic institutions today take on a different landscape in the way in which they govern themselves, the diversity of their student bodies, and modifications in their mission statements. Due to these changes, the question has arisen, “Are Catholic colleges and universities losing their identity?”

Gleason (1995) proposes that several U.S. Catholic institutions lack strength and resilience and are more apt to be swayed by the wider culture than to offer any type of influence to greater society. It can be readily seen that the broader culture tends to shape the subculture of an institution of higher education. For U.S. Catholic colleges and universities, forming their internal cultures so that they can be strong as well as placed in a position to have some influence on the society as a whole is a challenge (Buckley, 1998). To offer a model for the presence of faith, Catholic institutions should focus on what they can give to wider culture that comes from the heart of the religious tradition and cannot be acquired with the same value at other schools

(Rymarz, 2011). Wuthnow (1993) posits “The Church must...be backward looking; it has a special mission to preserve the past, to carry on a tradition” (p. 48).

To assist in the understanding of the effect of Catholic identity on college student perception of mission, it is important to give a historical overview. To understand identity at its innermost level, there is not only a sense of “who” but also there is a sense of motivation — the “why” of the institution (O’Connell, Harrington, Monsegur, Vogtner, Burnford, & Krebbs, 2012). O’Connell et al. (2012) go on to note that in observing that identity — the “who” and “why” of an institution — a “mission” should be seen through which you also start to see and understand the “what” and “how” of an institution, the way of its acting true to its identity. The Catholic identity of an institution has a distinct influence on how students perceive the mission of their college or university (Boylan, 2015). Catholic identity focuses on the ways Catholic institutions incorporate their religious tradition into their institutional lives (King, 2014). “It is in the mission statements of each of these institutions where the principles and values of a Catholic education are publicly articulated” (Estanek, James, & Norton, 2006, p. 205). Engagement in academics, campus life, and personal interactions are the ways in which students gain awareness of the mission and unique character of their college or university.

Since the publication of *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* (John Paul II, 1996), Catholic colleges and universities in the United States have spent time discerning and dealing with their Catholic identity (King, 2014). King goes on to note that superficially, this work seems that it is just about institutional structures and policies. However, when one examines this body of work more carefully, it is focused on students and their experience with and reaction to the Catholicism of the institution (Clifford, 2008; D’Souza, 2002; Dulles, 2006; Garrett, 2006; Heft, 2010; and Lawler & Salzman, 2011).

## **Background of the Problem**

Catholic institutions need to formulate strong Catholic identities (Anthony, 2012). Much of the uncertainty of Catholic identity evolves around students' experiences of Catholics at Catholic institutions (King, 2014). While this is concerning, it is unexpected how little focus has been made on student perceptions of Catholic identity. Estanek, James, & Norton's (2006) study is distinctive in that research of the effect of mission on student perceptions comparative to Catholic identity is new.

Many of the initial studies on the institutional identity of Catholic colleges and universities, used trend analysis and concentrated on variables such as the number of founding religious groups in existence on governing boards and amongst the faculty (Galvin, 1971; Maloney, 1973); the amount of Catholics within the student body (Maloney, 1973) and; the amount of required courses in theology or the number of liturgical or co-curricular activities presented for Catholic formation (Lucey, 1978), as necessary factors of identity. Through the 1980s and early 1990s, qualitative case studies like those of Preville (1985) and Markham (1988) researched the institutional story as a means by which unique identity might be identified. Murphy (1991) has concentrated on the extent to which vision and values, particularly as articulated through the tradition of the founding order and the leadership of the college or university, effect perceived Catholic identity of institutions.

Early studies on mission utilized the Carnegie Classification Scheme as an independent variable to research the connection among mission, student involvement, and educational outcomes (Pike, Kuh & Gonyea, 2003). DePaul University formulated a Mission and Values Inventory that has been used to study mission and identity as perceived by college and university staff (Ferrari & Velcoff, 2006). Results of the studies point out that most of the staff respondents

were clear regarding the institution's mission, Catholic values, and mission-driven opportunities (Ferrari, Cowman, Milner, Gutierrez, & Drake, 2009). Other research outcomes were that institutional mission is carried throughout the institution through the administration, academics, policies, and student services (Boylan & Pavlick, 2011).

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to examine the outcomes of the effect of Catholic identity on college student perception of mission.

### **Need for the Study**

Despite the correlations that have been made between institutional mission and student outcomes, organizational behavior, and strategic management, remarkably there are few reliable and valid measures in existence that directly evaluate stakeholders' perceptions of an institution's mission (Ferrari et al., 2004 and Ferrari et al., 2006). After thorough research of the problem, a gap in the literature was identified. The gap identified, which will be addressed by this research study, is that there is a lack of empirical studies that explicitly focus on the effect of Catholic identity on college student perception of mission.

### **Significance of the Study**

The present study will add to the body of knowledge providing research and understanding of the effect of Catholic identity on college student perception of mission. This research study will also act as a framework for future research studies on Catholic identity as it relates to specific student populations.

### **Relevance to Educational Leadership**

Effective leadership is paramount to the success of any organization. For institutions to be successful in their mission, effective leadership is imperative (Bass, 1985; Bennis, 1989;

Sergiovanni, 1992). As Cook (2001) has proposed, the Catholic school leader's character molds the school community's Catholic structure. Catholic leadership preparation supports that there are characteristics that are necessary in order make decisions regarding children, teachers, and the school community that mirrors the school's Catholic identity and mission (Miller, 2006; Schuttloffel, 1999; USCC, 1972, 1988). Consistency between a leader's beliefs and actions create trustworthiness in a school's community and promotes its Catholic identity (Schuttloffel, 1999, 2008).

Given today's academic environment, educational leaders must also be entrepreneurs (O'Connell, Harrington, Monsegur, Vogtner, Burnford, & Krebbs, 2012). O'Connell et al. go on to state that this is what leaders do in Catholic institutions. However, one could argue that this is not achievable unless they are first and foremost leaders. Catholic educational leaders as represented by head teachers, school principals, governors, trustees and school board members and the Catholic hierarchy itself clearly has a strategic role to play in the preservation of the unique identity of Catholic education (McGlaughlin, O'Keefe & O'Keefe, 1996). It could be deduced that with Catholic colleges and universities sharing the same principles and values as k-12 Catholic schools, that these similarities could also hold true for the leaders in Catholic colleges and universities.

Boylan (2015) states that as the need to communicate the unique identity of Catholic institutions grows, especially considering the economic stressors, research is beneficial to Catholic institutions by offering proof of the substantial impact on students of a strong Catholic identity. The researcher goes on to state that the outcomes can inform selections for programming and communications about the character and quality of Catholic identity throughout the college student environment, and assist leaders in developing concrete ways to

promote and declare it throughout the community. Schuttloffel (2013) posits that Catholic school leaders have the opportunity to build upon Pope Francis's leadership and contribute to the future of the Church by creating institutional cultures that are service-oriented, faith learning communities.

## **Research Methodology**

Comparative case study analysis methodology was used for this research study. Comparative case studies are comprised of the analysis and synthesis of the similarities, differences and patterns across two or more cases with a shared focus or objective (Goodrick, 2014). Comparative case study is a qualitative research method, with the primary goal to deduce causal relationships between elements by methodically comparing incidences of a phenomenon, more specifically, those considered as different configurations of variables or factors (Rihoux & Ragin, 2009).

A case study can also be defined as an exclusive and brief story articulating more on the unique features about events, organizations, companies, individuals or any other entities measured (Lechman, 2014). Case study approach as research methodology is largely acknowledged as a beneficial tool of in-depth problem analysis, permitting contextual thinking, pairing both qualitative and quantitative methods, shedding light on the issues discussed (Fleetwood, Ackroyd, 2004; Easton, 2010). According to Yin (2010), a case study can be defined as "an experimental inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context" (p. 22). In the case study, focus is given to contextual conditions, regarded as extremely pertinent to the phenomenon being investigated, while an experiment typically consciously separates the phenomenon from its context and places attention on a number of variables (Iacono, Brown & Holtham, 2009). Yin (2010), also underscores that the borders of

the phenomenon do not have to be visibly defined, and use of various sources of information for case study building is desired.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Dyler & Fry's (2012) study found overall support for the significance of spiritual leadership theory in protecting Catholic organizational identity. Given that the research being conducted focuses directly on Catholic identity, the theoretical framework that will guide this research study is spiritual leadership. As time progresses, there is a developing and exponentially growing strength for a global societal and organizational shift (Fry, 2003). From this understanding has come a necessity for more inclusive leadership that encompasses the four essential areas that define the heart of human existence—the body (physical), mind (logical/rational thought), heart (emotions, feelings), and spirit (Moxley, 2000). The purpose of spiritual leadership is to generate vision and value congruence throughout the strategic, empowered team and individual levels and, ultimately, to nurture increased amounts of organizational commitment and productivity (Fry & Cohen, 2009). These qualities of spiritual leadership are imperative traits for successful educational leaders at faith-based institutions.

Fry (2005) hypothesized that those practicing spiritual leadership personally will score high on both life satisfaction in terms of joy, peace and serenity and the Ryff & Singer (2001) dimensions of well-being. Fry further explains, they will: (1) experience better psychological well-being and (2) have a decrease in physical health problems in terms of allosteric load (cardiovascular disease, cognitive impairment, declines in physical functioning, and mortality).

### **Limitations and Delimitations**

Every study has a set of limitations (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005), or “potential weaknesses or problems with the study identified by the researcher” (Creswell, 2005, p. 198). This research

study only includes students as a population. Additional research studying faculty and staff perceptions of mission would help to holistically identify varying campus population perceptions of the effect of Catholic identity on perception of mission at Catholic institutions, further contributing to the limited research on this topic. Additionally, by explicitly stating the limitations of the research, a researcher can help other researchers “judge to what extent the findings can or cannot be generalized to other people and situations” (Creswell, 2005, p. 198).

Delimitations refer to “what the researcher is not going to do” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). One identified delimitation of this research design is that it does not study the effect on other populations outside of students. To broaden the research outcomes, future research could include replicating the study at other Catholic identifying colleges or universities using faculty and/or staff populations. The data obtained could be compared in order to identify any emerging trends of the effect of Catholic identity on perception of mission of these populations. The results of this study will add to the body of knowledge.

### **Definition of Terms**

National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). Using this assessment survey, the National Center for Postsecondary Research at Indiana University annually collects information at hundreds of four-year colleges and universities about first-year and senior students’ engagement in the college environment and their perceptions of the institution. The NSSE is an established, valid, and reliable assessment. The instrument has been administered each year since 2000 at hundreds of participating postsecondary institutions.

Mission Perception Inventory (MPI). This study consists of a set of 20 question items, 19 on religious preference and 19 on college students’ self-reported level of engagement in their institutions’ mission. MPI questions are appended to annual administrations of the NSSE and

available for use by college consortia. Consortia participants may later opt to join the ongoing MPI data-sharing project and receive a custom MPI report (McCormick, Gonyea, & Kinsie, 2013).

M-C Form C. This measure is a uni-dimensional measure that includes thirteen true-false (true=1, false=0) questions from the original 33-item measure, the Marlow-Crowne (Matteo, Bottom, & Ferrari, 2013).

DePaul Mission and Values Inventory (DMV) or DePaul Values Inventory (DeVI). This measure was initially developed for assessing perceptions of mission, values, and activities at a large, urban, Catholic, Vincentian institution (Ferrari et al., 2006).

Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding (BIDR). Paulhus' (1984) 20-item, seven-point subscale that examines socially desirable responding, called *impression management* (Ferrari and Cowman, 2004).

Personal Value Survey. Schwartz's (1992) 57-item, assessing individual values.

## **Summary**

The research shows that it is the role of everyone at an institution to embed Catholic identity campus wide. From the Board, to the President, to university administrators, faculty, and staff - all play a pivotal role in the effective communication and understanding of an institution's Catholic identity. Supporting Catholic identity must be part of the mindset, a shared understanding of why they do what they do (Miller, 2011). Lowery (2012) states that faculty and professional staff need to work together in developing curricula, pedagogies, and co-curricular activities needed to substantiate an identity that is "anonymously Christian" if not Catholic in nature.

An investigation of the literature shows that studies on specific racial, ethnic, and religious populations related to Catholic identity and student perception on mission are limited. Studies on groups such as Latino(a)s, Asians, Muslim, and Jewish believers would assist Catholic institutions in identifying how they can better serve these populations by clearly expressing their Catholic identity, therefore, offering a more inclusive educational environment, while still maintaining Catholicity.

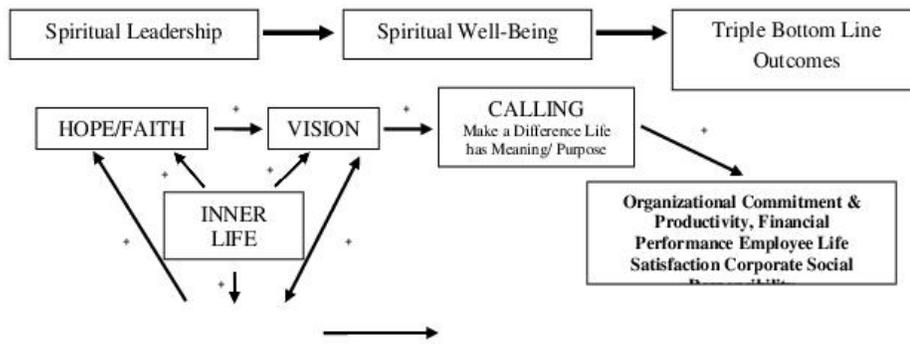
## **CHAPTER II**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

This review of the literature will cover a thorough history of the Catholic faith in America, explain Catholic identity as it relates to institutional vision and mission statements, cover student perceptions of Catholic identity, and give clarity and understanding of the importance of diversity of Catholic colleges and universities. This chapter will go on to further review how to effectively communicate Catholic identity, give clarity on the perception of how institutional mission is practiced at the University level, and the importance of assessing perceptions of mission, vision, and values. This chapter will close with a review of the use of survey methodology to conduct self-report research to assess an institution's "Catholicity." This research study will be built upon the theoretical framework of spiritual leadership.

#### **Spiritual Leadership Theory**

According to Fry & Cohen (2009), the purpose of spiritual leadership is to delve into the essential needs of leaders and followers for spiritual wellbeing via calling and membership. They go on to state that this is done in order to realize a coordination of vision and value among individuals, empowered teams, and between organizational levels, leading to increased wellbeing and organizational commitment of the employees, and improving financial performance and social responsibility of the organization. A major proponent of spiritual leadership theory is that educational institutions are a source for spiritual persistence that encourages its employees with a myriad of intrinsic motivation factors that include vision, hope/faith, altruistic love, task involvement, and goal identification (Fry, 2003). The connection between hope, faith and altruism, established on calling and membership, is shown by Fry & Cohen (2009) as follows:



## 2.1 The Spiritual Leadership Model

### History of the Catholic Faith in America

The first American Catholics settled in Maryland and Pennsylvania in the late 1600s (Garrett, 2006). Within the Catholic faith, Clergy were among the few who were educated during this time. Occurrences where Catholic laity spoke publicly about education were a rarity (Power, 1972). John Carroll, the first Bishop of Baltimore, founded Georgetown College, in Washington, DC, in 1789, and was the country's first Catholic institution of higher education (Garrett, 2006). Georgetown was the first of 42 Catholic schools founded prior to 1850 whose mission was to prepare and educate young clergy, provide support for missionary work, and ensure cultivation of religious and moral tenets (Power, 1972).

During the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Catholic higher education received little financial support from philanthropic organizations, large benefactors, or the institutional church (Leahy, 1991). The rate of success of the 152 Catholic colleges chartered from 1850 to 1900 was roughly 30%. During the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, change began to take place. Catholic institutions started moving away from just serving men who wanted to become priests to a more secular approach to education for men. Curricular structure also began to change as Catholic colleges attempted to accommodate the university era (Leahy, 1991). This was also a time when

many American Catholics believed that the area of research went directly against their faith. Pope Leo XIII and the United States bishops founded The Catholic University of America in 1887 as an attempt at reform and as a national institution of learning that would integrate faith and science (Garrett, 2006). The Catholic University offered graduate education in philosophy and theology (Leahy, 1991), possessed a research-oriented model of higher education, and was founded to respond to the challenges of modernity, institutionally and ideologically (Rittof, 2001).

Fifty-three Catholic colleges were founded in the first half of the 20th century and enrollment at Catholic colleges increased from 16,000 in 1916 to 162,000 in 1940 (Rittof, 2001). As enrollment grew, the issue of accreditation came to bear. Accreditation began in the late 19th century with the standardization of curriculums and was a crucial factor in requiring Catholic institutions to conform to the nation's educational norms (Gleason, 1997). These curriculums, while necessary for accreditation, at times went against the mission of Catholic institutions and their desire to educate faithful followers. Roughly, 60% of Catholic colleges did not qualify for participation into regional accrediting associations in 1930 (Leahy, 1991). Therefore, this was not a standard that most Catholic institutions initially adhered to in order to conform.

Advocacy, specifically for African Americans, supporting the establishment of Catholic higher education, resulted in the founding of Xavier Academy in 1914 in New Orleans, Louisiana (Green, 2011). Xavier Academy was founded by the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament as a secondary school to serve African American Catholic children. Franklin (1996) states that, "one reason why Xavier Academy, the Black Catholic secondary school opened in New Orleans in 1914 through the financial support of Blessed Katherine Drexel, became a collegiate institution in the 1930s was because the Catholic leadership refused to allow African American

Catholic admission to its Catholic colleges and universities across the country.’’ (p. 53). Green (2011) notes that six years prior to the Supreme Court’s decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), that desegregated all US public schools, Archbishop Joseph Ritter and Archbishop Patrick O’Boyle in 1948 desegregated Catholic schools in both St. Louis, Missouri and Washington, D.C.

The mid-twentieth century brought additional change. This was a time of the GI Bill. The GI Bill has “a profound impact on social culture, tearing down assumptions of ethnic, religious and racial superiority” (Bennett, 1996, p. 249). The percentage of Catholics age 17-25 that enrolled in college increased from 19% in the 1930s to 45% in the 1960s (Garrett, 2006). Catholic colleges increased their size and scope to meet this demand and to gain financially after lean times before and during World War II (Leahy, 1991). Enrollment at the approximately 300 total institutions grew near 400,000 (Rittof, 2001). This is when the conversation of what constituted a “true” Catholic college began.

The Second Vatican Council led to profound change in Catholicism and Catholic higher education (Garrett, 2006). Pope John XXIII’s (1963) document *Pacem in Terris* indirectly opened the door. Though he did not call for Catholics to compromise in matters of faith, he admonished them to “show themselves to be animated by a spirit of understanding and unselfishness, and ready to cooperate loyally in the objects which are good in themselves, or conducive to good” (§157). Due to this document, enrollments at Catholic high schools decreased, religious scholars attended institutions such as Harvard and Yale in greater numbers, and the Catholic college curricula were revised to include separate theological courses for non-Catholic students (Gallin, 2000). Prior to 1960, most Catholic schools had a common culture, including a commitment to liberal arts, character formation and a sense of community. The

academic curriculum reflected the values and teaching of the Roman Catholic Church, and students were required to attend Catholic religious services on campus (Rittof, 2001).

The Second Vatican Council was convened from 1963 to 1965 to include Catholics in the current culture and bring the Church out of isolation and into the contemporary world (Dulles, 1997). The Second Vatican Council enhanced secularization, changing the Catholic Church and Catholic higher education (Garrett, 2006). Vatican II opened the doors of the Catholic Church to a new attitude of renewal and freedom of conscience for Roman Catholics around the world (Rittof, 2001). The Second Vatican Council's drive infiltrated into higher education (Garrett, 2006). The International Federation of Catholic Universities (IFCU) met at Land O'Lakes, Wisconsin, in 1967, marking the first official effort comprised of a wide-ranging group of Catholic educators to determine the landscape of Catholic higher education (Gleason, 1997). Their report, "The Nature of the Contemporary Catholic University," was a statement of independence from Catholic higher education to the universal Church (Gallin, 2000). The Land O'Lakes Statement clearly specifies Catholicism must remain a part of a Catholic institution's identity (Garrett, 2006). Garrett goes on to note that it also states that Catholicism must be noticeably present and successfully operative. It stated that the Catholic university must recognize theology as a valid discipline (Burtchaell, 1998) and has a responsibility to carry on public service initiatives. The document concludes by stating, "the Catholic university of the future will be a true modern university but specifically Catholic in profound and creative ways for the service of society and the people of God" (IFCU, 1997, p. 121).

Some experts posit that the Land O'Lakes statement initiated an undertaking among Catholic conservatives that ultimately led to the historical and controversial *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* (John Paul II, 1990). *Ex Corde's* purpose was to make clear the Catholic character and identity

in higher education (Rittorf, 2001) and to describe the relationship between Rome and Catholic institutions (Lively, 1996). The document calls for a stronger, more concrete affirmation or articulation of the Catholic character of universities and an organic unity between the Gospel and culture (Buckley, 1997). Catholic institutions are to “make known their Catholic identity by integrating Catholic teaching and discipline in all university activities” (Alexander & Alexander, 2000, p. 1). Pope John Paul II stated part of the nature of a Catholic university is “to make known its Catholic identity, either in a mission statement or in some other appropriate public document” (1990, Art.2, §3). *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* also identified the issues of academic freedom and institutional independence brought forth in the Land O’Lakes Statement (Garrett, 2006).

After this statement, through the latter part of the 1960s and 1970s, Catholic identity and the subsequent change in Catholic higher education continued. The Decree on Ecumenism in Higher Education was released in 1970 (Garrett, 2006). This document contained much language revolutionary and indicative of the change in American Catholic higher education (Garrett, 2006). During this time, the American Association of Catholic Colleges (AACC) reaffirmed its support of the 1940 American Association of University Professors (AAUP) “Statement on Academic Freedom” at a 1969 joint meeting. In 1976, the University of Notre Dame hosted a meeting entitled “Vatican Council: Ten Years Later.” Also during this time, the Purpose and Identity Committee of the AACC appointed a subcommittee to produce a statement in 1977 on Catholic identity that could be used specifically for institutional self-studies. A desire existed to maintain a Catholic identity, but a reluctance to create a controversy over faculty hiring also surfaced (Gallin, 2000).

Catholic identity also makes its way into the conversation about Catholic identity as it relates to faculty. Pope John Paul called for Catholic colleges to have a majority of the faculty

be Catholic (Garrett, 2006). Steinfelds (1997) cited studies indicating that some faculty bemoan the loss of Catholic identity, others see the notion as merely ceremonial, and others begrudge the idea that Catholic identity may have an impact on teaching and research. Bresline (2000) focused on faculty hiring practices, stating such practices need to be reviewed to ensure the mission and philosophy of the college is maintained. Heft, Katsuyama and Pestello's (2001) research indicates Catholic faculty hired at Catholic institutions feel greater, positive effect of that Catholic affiliation on all components (i.e. teaching, research, and service) of their jobs.

As with faculty, the effect of Catholic identity as it relates to the board of trustees becomes known. The Boards of Catholic colleges and universities were originally comprised only of those of the Catholic faith. In the mid-1960s, conversations began regarding laity being on boards. These conversions occurred at different rates and stages, but by 1969, all 66 Catholic schools in the Middle States Association had switched (Gallin, 2000). These moves came out of three areas: lay involvement was a natural growth of the laity's new role in the Catholic Church as defined by the Second Vatican Council; the swift increases in enrollments after World War II which created more complex institutions; and *The Horace Mann League of the United States of America, Inc. et al. v. Board of Public Works of Maryland et al.* (1966) was decided by the Maryland Court of Appeals (Garrett, 2013). The Horace Mann case involved two Catholic colleges and one Methodist college that were found to be sectarian and ineligible for federal funds. This scared Catholic college presidents into expanding the boards as a way of demonstrating their institutions were not entirely religious (Dosen, 2001).

While American Catholic colleges and universities have been in existence for well over 200 years, the debate of what makes an institution truly "Catholic" still goes on today. Pope John Paul II published the apostolic constitution *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, in an effort to produce

consensus on this issue (John Paul II, 1990). The document listed four “essential characteristics” of the identity of Catholic colleges and universities (Estanek, James & Norton, 2006):

(a) Christian inspiration not only of individuals but of the university community; (b) a continuing reflection in the light of the Catholic faith upon the growing treasury of human knowledge, to which it seeks to contribute by its own research; (c) fidelity to the Christian message as it comes through the Church; and (d) an institutional commitment to the service of the people of God and of the human family in their pilgrimage to the transcendent goal that gives meaning to life (p. 200).

### **Catholic Identity – Vision and Mission Statements**

Hellwig (2004) states that “because our colleges and universities have various purposes, programs, and student bodies, it is very unlikely that a particular institution will match all of these elements and indicators” (p. 115). Garrett (2006) reported that since *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* (1990) and Hellwig’s (2004) provision of pragmatic guidelines, “mission statements, learning objectives, and strategic planning at Catholic colleges are focusing on their Catholic identity and how it is best portrayed” (p. 245) (see also Nichols, 2005; Woo, 2005). It is significant that the first of Hellwig’s recommendations focused on Catholic identity as communicated through institutional statements and public documents.

According to Senge (1990), learning organizations are “where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning to see the whole together” (p. 3). Colleges and universities are very much educational institutions and institutional vision is the way in which goals are identified, commitment is founded, and expectations are strengthened (Fox, 2003; Fox, Scheffler, & Marom, 2003; Pekarsky, 1998). Institutional vision defines the kinds of people a college or university is attempting to grow (Abelman & Molina, 2006) and identifies the skills, aptitudes, attitudes, and understandings students should be obtaining throughout their education (Fox, 1997).

For most colleges and universities, the outward communication of their vision presents itself in the form of a mission statement, a vision statement, or both. The mission statement gives the “who” we are, whereas a vision statement is the “how” the mission is intended to be implemented. Mission statements are often found in university marketing materials, both in print and digital formats. Whether print or digital, these statements should be placed prominently and in a conspicuous location. It has been suggested by Hartley (2002) that mission statements reflect the realities of their institutions’ environments, whereas vision statements drive these realities.

More than 80% of all non-religious institutions have recently made major revisions in their institutional vision (Association of American Colleges, 1994; Birnbaum, 2000) in response to new challenges and an increasingly competitive marketplace. Estanek, James, and Norton (2006) report that most religious schools have also done this, with Catholic colleges and universities making a thorough effort to embed Catholic identity both culturally and institutionally (see also Hughes & Adrian, 1997). Specific outcomes, such as intellectual development and the education of the whole person, service, leadership, and citizenship, are typically included in the mission statements of Catholic schools (Abelman & Dalessandro, 2008). Young (2001) also found that Catholic-based mission statements mentioned service more than non-religious school statements, followed by spirituality, truth, community, human dignity, equality, tradition, justice, and freedom.

Despite the changes, that many Catholic colleges and universities have made to their vision statements, the meaning behind these newly revised statements have failed to reach and resonate amongst campus constituents. Although the visions of Catholic colleges and universities have been researched, little attention has been given as to how this information is

actually communicated to stakeholders in and outside of academic communities. Doing so may improve communication among campus constituents, improve communication between administrators and faculty, and allow the academic and religious mission to be more central to the way the institution conducts its business (Guy-Sheftall, 2006). “Articulating a clear and authentic vision remains an ongoing but essential challenge for Catholic institutions of higher education” (Cesareo, 2007, p. 18).

Pekarsky (1998) states that a “well-conceived vision is an informing idea that is shared, and clear, and compelling” (p. 280). An institutional vision that is shared has the capacity to embrace, inspire, and motivate those within an institution by communicating the common characteristics of its key constituents (Hartley, 2002). Meindl (1990) states that institutional vision is a “rich web of negotiated meaning and contextual variables” between leaders and their cohorts, intended to generate a sense of collaboration (p. 159). A vision must be clear and concrete enough to identify an institutional identity and offer genuine guidance in making educational decisions and setting priorities on all levels of the learning community (Senge, Kleiner, Roberts, Roth, Ross, & Smith, 1999). An institutional vision that is compelling generates an enthusiasm among the stakeholders and stimulates them to transform vision into a pattern of meaningful activity (Baum et al., 1998; Kirkpatrick, Wofford, & Baum, 2002).

According to Morphey and Hartley (2006), institutional vision statements now serve as icons that communicate with stakeholders who have specific expectations of colleges and universities that “have important legitimizing roles, both normatively and politically” (p. 468). Despite this fact, Abelman and Dalessandro (2008) state that although mission statements are prevalent across most academic institutions, only one-third of all 4-year colleges and universities possess actual vision statements. The researchers note that private schools in general and

“religious” private schools in particular are more likely to have vision statements than public institutions, and 2-year colleges are more likely to have vision statements than 4-year institutions.

Abelman et al. (2007) reported that mission statements are sometimes less clear and compelling than vision statements, and that the sought after results articulated in mission statements are less realistic than those articulated in vision statements. They go on to state that on the other hand, mission statements tend to be longer and more complex, using language that reflects more movement and change than vision statements and emphasizing (to a greater degree than vision statement) the implementation of ideas. The authors conclude that a well-conceived, carefully constructed mission and/or vision statement can and should be a commanding and valuable communication tool for all types of colleges and universities.

Research conducted by Abelman and Dalessandro (2009) assessed the content of vision statements at Catholic colleges and universities, and addressed how these statements can best serve as guiding, governing, and promotional. Using the Carnegie Foundation’s Classification of Institutions of Higher Education (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 2005) as a guideline, a stratified, random sample of 30 schools each from public and private doctorate-granting, master’s-granting and baccalaureate-granting colleges and universities were selected from a population of all U.S. and Canadian institutions. From this sample, religious institutions were identified through website references to religious/church affiliation by four trained coders with inter-coder reliability exceeding .95. The researchers then identified and verified institutions with Roman Catholic affiliation using a roster of membership institutions provided by the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities.

The findings from the study suggest that institutional vision of faith based colleges and

universities varies greatly from secular institutions. Abelman and Dalessandro (2008) note that these vision and mission statements lean towards being more shared, clear, and compelling, but have less comparative advantage, than those of non-religious institutions. The institutional vision of Catholic schools is significantly more clear, compelling, and complex. The researchers note, however, that Catholic schools offer mission statements and vision statements that are significantly less shared when compared with other religious schools. They go on to report that the institutional vision of Catholic schools also exhibit significantly less relative advantage and observability than other religious schools. These findings reinforce Morey and Piderit's (2006) recommendation that a Catholic education "must have traction with the students" (p. 117) by more explicitly addressing the merits of a Catholic education.

Abelman and Dalessandro (2008) report several limitations to their research reporting that schools affiliated with Pentecostal, Baptist, Presbyterian, United Methodist, Evangelical Lutheran, United Church of Christ, Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints, and Southern Baptist churches are represented in this investigation's random sample. They go on to state that for the sake of comparison with Catholic institutions, these non-Catholic religious institutions were clustered under the umbrella category of "religious." The researchers note that this does a disservice to the differences that exist across these faith-based colleges and universities and the expression of those differences in their respective institutional vision. Further research on non-Catholic religious institutions should be conducted in order to identify differences across these faith-based institutions.

While there is strength in the use of computerized content analysis systems, there are some limitations. Although DICTION is known to be a multipurpose program intended for use with any sort of English-language text, the standards that come with the program are based

principally on political text materials (Abelman and Dalessandro, 2008). Abelman and Dalessandro go on to explain that its application to the institutional vision of colleges and universities in general and Catholic schools in particular is both innovative and exploratory. Further research could include taking data from this study and using a computerized content analysis tool appropriate for educational materials.

Estanek, James, and Norton (2006) state that assessment has become a highly refined, costly, and controversiality of college and university governance, practice, and culture. However, Love & Estanek (2004) observed that administrators and members of the faculty frequently approach assessment efforts with distrust and recognize it as something that is enforced from outside academia with little significance to the main responsibilities of teaching and scholarship. Along with the assessment movement in American higher education, Catholic institutions have been exploring appropriate methods for investigation to effectively define the distinct values and principles mutually shared by the more than 200 Catholic colleges and universities in the United States (Estanek, James, and Norton, 2006). Assessment cannot be imposed effectively from above or from without (Love & Estanek, 2004) and assessment must not be based on what is most easily counted (Astin, Banta, Cross, El-Khawas, Ewel, Hutchings, Marchese, McClenney, Mentkowski, Miller, & Moran, 1991)

The research conducted by Estanek, James, and Norton (2006) had two purposes: (a) to consider the mission statements of a representative sample of Catholic colleges and universities as a point of analysis of Catholic identity characteristics that are institutionally agreed upon, and (b) to identify and categorize dominant institutional values from mission statements that may inform a Catholic identity assessment process. The researchers in this case reported that their study differed than other research in that it did not seek to compare the mission statements of

Catholic institutions to another body of literature or set of values; instead, through employing content analysis techniques, it allows the mission statements to speak for themselves so that the dominant values of Catholic higher education can be surfaced directly to provide an internally generated basis for the assessment of Catholic identity. The following research question was asked: whether the mission statements of a representative sample of Catholic colleges and universities could yield a collective vision of Catholic higher education upon which a plan for assessment could be built. The researchers took a random sample of Catholic colleges and universities in the United States. Their sample, obtained from the website of the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities (ACCU; [http://www.accunet.org/search/all\\_catholiccolleges.asp](http://www.accunet.org/search/all_catholiccolleges.asp)), initially contained 235 institutions. This number was further reduced by 16 institutions, which were not located within the U.S. or had closed. The purpose was to develop a representative sample of approximately 25% of Catholic colleges and universities in the United States, or 55 institutions. The researchers also wanted to ensure that this population mirrored the diversity of Catholic higher education in the United States in terms of sponsorship, size, and location to prevent overrepresentation or underrepresented in the sample. Each institution was counted by sponsoring order with the percentage calculated for each group down to 1% of the 218 institutions. The researchers stated that 46 institutions were sponsored by congregations that accounted for less than 1% of the 218 institutions and were put into an "other" group. This allowed the percentages of the sample to be determined.

Out of this sample, the researchers performed a non-factored random sample that was generated electronically. Within this sample, the researchers then calculated the number of institutions by sponsorship. From the analysis of the ACCU list of institutions, institutions were

added or subtracted to match the appropriate percentage. An ACCU map assisted in determining the appropriate geographic distribution of the systematic random sample. From this step, it was identified that 25 of the 55 institutions should come from the East, 19 from the Midwest, 7 from the West, and 4 from the South. After being downloaded into a database, a content analysis of these mission statements was conducted using the method of narrative analysis proposed by Kvale (1996). Three rounds of analysis were conducted, which included identification, discussion and color-coding of themes and categories, whereby a codebook was established. The researchers then performed a search for missing themes and made suggested adjustments. Then a database of the sample institutions was created and checked which institutions' mission statements included which themes in the codebook (Estanek, James, and Norton, 2006).

For their analysis, the researchers believe that their results indicate that the mission statements of a representative sample of Catholic colleges and universities could yield a collective vision of Catholic higher education upon which a plan for assessment could be built. The major finding of this research is that the mission statements refer so often to specific student learning outcomes that these outcomes could be used as a basis for assessment. However, the researchers go on to state that while they parsed out individual themes in this analysis in order to identify them, the reality is that these themes are intertwined in the actual statements of mission.

From the researcher's analysis of mission statements they posit that an institutional understanding of Catholic identity is culturally embedded in a number of factors including: foundational heritage and sponsorship; the groups of constituents it serves currently and historically; and how the institution defines its educational enterprise. They go on to note that specific outcomes such as intellectual development and the education of the whole person, service, leadership, and citizenship may characterize all institutions of higher education.

However, the researchers go on to state that when they are taken together and coupled with the statements of Catholic identity and sponsorship they articulate the basis for a distinctively Catholic education and can form the basis for assessment.

In conclusion, from the research in this study it was identified that an assessment goal is warranted before one is imposed. Although tools for measuring the impact on students who attend Catholic institutions are still vague, a number of institutional researchers and scholars on higher education, student affairs, and enrollment management professionals are starting to work together developing suitable research methods that may demonstrate to be more effective in the future (Estanek, James, and Norton, 2006). The researchers note that this study demonstrates that there is a consensus of student learning outcomes that characterize a Catholic higher education experience and that the study further contributes to the effort to assess Catholic identity by providing a basis upon which assessment can be done that can be grounded directly in the stated educational aspirations of Catholic colleges and universities.

Further research that could take these findings even further would be to use this research and identify how it affects specific groups of students (i.e., Asian, Caucasian, African American students). Research could also include using this study as a foundation to create an actual assessment tool that could be used for any Catholic identifying institution. The researchers note in their conclusion that it is their hope that further research and thinking in this area will yield productive collaborations within Catholic higher education. They go on to state that those collaborations will result in an enhanced capacity of Catholic colleges and universities to continue to serve the Church and society in even more effective ways.

## **Diversity of Catholic Colleges and Universities**

Research conducted by Foote, Buzzi, Gaughan, & Wells (1996) begins the conversation of linking diversity with America's Catholic colleges and universities. This study comes out of research from The ACCU/Barry University Diversity Project. This project was designed to seek previously uncollected information on Catholic colleges and universities with respect to institutional demographics and programs/approaches that are being used in diversity efforts. The researchers noted that they wanted to explore the impact of Catholic identity, institutional mission, leadership, and other variables on these programs. They go on to state that this study would also test the hypothesis that the religious character of an institution facilitates, in a unique way, the development of community in the context of multiculturalism. In order to understand the tie of Catholic identity to diversity, we must first understand the complex nature of diversity within institutions of higher education.

Gordon and Bhattacharyya (1992) state, "Our recognition of human diversity today is not limited to variations in national origin, religion, race, and ethnicity; it also includes the diversity of gender, secular orientation, caste, class and language" (p. 407). College enrollments are changing markedly with respect to ethnicity, gender, age, lifestyles, academic needs, and a host of other factors (Foote et al., 1996). As ethnocultural groups grow within the United States, the demographics of college students within these groups change along with them. The significance of diversity in college and university campuses received far-reaching attention in recent studies (Anderson, 1988; Asante, 1991; Madrid, 1990; Rosser, 1990). In a study conducted by the American Council on Education and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (El-Khawas, 1989), college and university presidents reported the need for cultural diversity as one factor contributing to a higher quality of campus life.

Barr and Strong (1988) state that, “in general, multicultural programs in higher education are supported by an institution’s leadership as long as they are oriented towards responding to crisis and/or focus on student and staff development” (p. 86). Significant support exists for the position that academia must maintain a high degree of ethical integrity and that the college president plays an imperative role in maintaining that integrity (Chambers, 1981; Perlman, 1990; Trachtenberg, 1989).

Many colleges and universities are beginning to identify strategies that are more impactful to diversity. LaBarre and Lang (1992) describe the institutional transformations that occurred at two church-related, liberal arts colleges in their efforts to educate a pluralistic student body. They found a number of change strategies to be crucial: philosophical commitment, solid leadership, effective communication among all constituents, flexible planning, and financial backing (Foote et al., 1996). LaBarre and Lang noted that a dedicated mission and coherent curriculum were critical in the development of upholding diversity. Gordon and Strode (1992) proposed six steps in implementing change for colleges and universities looking to improve or implement diversity efforts: (1) encourage campus-wide commitment, (2) raise awareness of issues, (3) adapt behavior, (4) support structural change, (5) personify individual commitments, and (6) model personal actions that nurture diversity (patience, persistence, and risk-taking).

Foote et al. (1996) state varying places in the Bible that cover the importance of a unity amongst those who believe in God and his works. The creation event of the Old Testament Book of Genesis sets the tone and challenge of openness and unity for those who profess to believe in the Judeo-Christian God. The researchers add that throughout the New Testament, the inspired works of God remind us that any sort of discrimination has no place in the Christian community. The Acts of the Apostles also reflect the importance of unity. More recently, the theology of the

Second Vatican Council allows no room for discrimination or exclusivity for political, social gender, or racial separation or distinction.

Catholic universities have been called upon to respond to the sociocultural changes of the nation in light of the mandate from Pope John Paul II - *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* (1990). In this apostolic constitution on Catholic institutions of higher learning, he has called for a new evangelization - original in its fervor, its technique, its manifestation, and in its fullest exposure of the social doctrine and teaching of the universal church, grounded in the sacredness of all creation and the dignity of the human person (Foote et al., 1996). The Pope prescribes that every Catholic college and university assist in the protection and advancement of human dignity and of a cultural heritage through research, teaching and service to the community (par.12).

The challenge of reexamining institutional identity and mission in the light of diversity is grounded in the fact that educational institutions are cultural constructs entrenched in their specific cultural time and space (Foote et al., 1996). The researchers go on to state that for in the intercultural discourse that will characterize American higher education for the foreseeable future, each institution will serve both as forum and participant as playing field and player. The Catholic mission and identity of these colleges and universities is the foundation of which diversity should be reconsidered.

The works of Barr and Strong (1988), Corrigan (1995), Manning and Coleman-Boatwright (1991), Schmitz (1992a), and the documents of Vatican Council II (1966) suggest that if our ethic and heritage call for the inclusion of all peoples in the salvific love of God, then it is not enough to talk about mission and vision and their reflection in a vital, loving, and inclusive community. The researchers state that in the fullest commitment to diversity and multicultural society, it is incumbent on Catholic colleges and universities to provide leadership

and models for the church, the community and all levels of the education enterprise. This study was in response to these issues.

The researchers, Foote et al. (1996), noted that their goals were to: (1) seek information on Catholic institutions, including programs, approaches and individuals working on diversity, that might be useful to others involved in diversity efforts; (2) explore the effect of Catholic identity, institutional mission, leadership, and other variables on those programs; (3) test the hypothesis that an institution with a strong identity best facilitates community among heterogeneous groups, and that the religious character of an institution facilitates, in a unique way, the development of community in the context of multiculturalism and, (4) articulate and disseminate the resulting knowledge in ways that help foster thriving heterogeneous campus communities; and share lessons learned that might help interested campus communities apply tried and proven approaches to affirming, and making the most of, diversity within and beyond those communities (p. 14).

Foote et al. (1996) used a “Campus Diversity Questionnaire” that was tested on ACCU member institution presidents and others prior to disseminating the final questionnaire. Their 12-page questionnaire was sent to 198 ACCU member institutions in the U.S. The researchers received responses from 86 institutions (44% response rate). Follow up phone calls and mailings were used to increase responses from participants who had not responded. The data were inputted into a computer database where they ran a statistical analysis. The researchers report that the resulting detailed quantitative and textual information, while uneven due to institutions not responding to every question, was substantial.

The results indicated that clear diversity statements were seen in some mission statements and printed materials. Of the 86 institutions, 41 have a dedicated Office of Diversity, with eight

schools having more than one. Seventy-two participants reported Asian organizations at their schools with 20 having only one, five having two, one having three, two having five, one with six, one with eight, and one having 12. Twenty-six participants reported that they had racial/discrimination incidents on their campuses with 56 noting they had none. More than 60 percent of these participants reported that in response to these incidents they were changing policies, procedures, or organizations. Several schools noted specific diversity-related events, programs or events held on their campuses to bring awareness to this problem, such as communicating their action plan for diversity, panel discussions, and multicultural discussion groups. Events such as workshops, training programs, and curriculum changes were listed as least successful efforts.

Foote et al. (1996) noted that they did experience limitations to their study. One limitation was that they were trying not to generalize to a larger population, but rather to learn as much as possible from those willing to respond - so that others might learn from their experiences. The researchers report that generalizability of a research study is imperative. Another limitation the researchers noted was the sample size. Due to resource limitations, they designed the study to sample only one officer from each institution. Foote et al. state that they feel that a more complete study would go beyond what they did and examine the grassroots effects of diversity efforts by surveying samples of students, faculty, staff, and administrators. Overall, the researchers note that while the submitted mission statements were rich with references to religious dimensions and diversity, the study highlights the need, particularly in the context of diversity efforts, for future research to explore the extent to which mission statements are consistent with actual (or perceived) behaviors on campus.

## **Effectively Communicating Catholic Identity**

How, then, do Catholic universities communicate their Catholicity? One compelling way is through the use of their website. Gambescia & Paolucci's (2011) research explores how colleges communicate their academic fidelity and integrity to prospective students and other constituents via their official websites but take this down to how Catholic institutions communicate their Catholicity. The researchers go on to report that websites have taken major supporting roles in communicating the mission, purpose, objectives, academic programs, and student activities of a college or university. Some critics have posited that many Catholic colleges and universities have become "disconnected" from the impact of their religious benefactors or no longer practice the principles of their founding mission (Burtchaell, 1998; Morey & Piderit's, 2006). University leadership, when they are appointed, should make certain that faculty, staff, and administrators, are informed of the university's Catholic identity and its effects, and, most notably, about their responsibility to promote, or respect, that identity (Gambescia & Paolucci, 2011). The researchers state that if a college claims to "be Catholic," then this identity should be unmistakably and unambiguously displayed publically.

Since university websites have become the first line of communication with prospective students, faculty, staff and parents, this is an opportune way of effectively communicating Catholic identity in a clear and succinct manner. This identity should be clearly present within its mission, vision, and communication of its campus activities. One relatively simple and direct way for an institution to articulate its Catholic identity is to have this identity publicly declared in its important institutional documents and communications (Gambescia & Paolucci, 2011). Though identity theory mostly emphasizes the personal level of self, identity with group, corporate, or organizational entities, it often gives attention to public identity (Janosik, 1999).

Renewed attention in Catholic institutions to make known and spread their Catholic character has typically gone alongside the assessment movement in higher education (Estanek, James, & Norton, 2006). The undertaking reached a climax with the 1990 apostolic constitution by John Paul II, *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* (Gambescia & Paolucci, 2011). The researchers note that the constitution identifies the four essential characteristics of a Catholic college as:

1. Christian inspiration not only of individuals but of the university community as such;
2. Continuing reflection in the light of the Catholic faith upon the growing treasury of human knowledge, to which it seeks to contribute by its own research;
3. Fidelity to the Christian message as it comes to us through the Church; and
4. Institutional commitment to the service of the people of God and of the human family in their pilgrimage to the transcendent goal, which gives meaning to life (n. 13).

These edicts resonate through every aspect of Catholic higher education, and since its release the array of stakeholders from boards of trustees, college presidents, chief academic officers, faculty, students, and, especially, the faculty teaching religion and theology in U.S. colleges have conversed about what *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* means to their particular colleges (Langan, 1993). Again, the researchers note that university leadership, at the time of their appointment, should also ensure that faculty, staff, and administrators, are informed of the university's Catholic identity and its implications, and, most significantly, about their responsibility to promote, or respect, that identity.

There is no substantial research on college websites as they relate to the presentation of Catholic identity. Some of the information on Catholic identity, which exists on websites, is communicated by marketing and communications professionals who have not closely examined the clarity of Catholicity on these websites. Gambescia and Paolucci (2009) examined the

prominence of academic fidelity characteristics for online degree program offerings presented to prospective students by the use of a university's official website. The researchers identified eight primary characteristics used by universities to market their online degree programs. Solan and Gambescia (2010) identified, categorized, and studied attributes used in print advertisements in a metropolitan daily newspaper to promote adult continuing education degree programs. The research found that expediency, flexibility, and convenience were the most prominent program features used to market adult continuing education degree programs (Gambescia & Paolucci, 2011). In an earlier study, Paolucci and Gambescia (2007) examined university websites to identify the range of general administrative structures that universities are presently using in offering online degree programs. The researchers found a categorization arise of six general administrative structures.

Gambescia & Paolucci (2011) stated that even though several activities would be difficult to evaluate from a college website, if not at all visible, and some activities may only be intermittently available, it is reasonable to expect that enough Catholic “markers” are noticeable to lead an external user, as well as students and faculty, to believe that the college is true to its Catholic identity. Therefore, the researchers note that their method in this study is to first recognize basic markers expected of a Catholic college or university to present on its official website to prospective students and the institution’s constituents, thus providing a collective accounting for how the Catholic institutions in the United States are doing in explaining their Catholicity. This study does not use a sample but assesses U.S. Catholic institutions, giving a better understanding of the impressions they are making in the aggregate.

For the purpose of their study, the researchers used specific markers to research how colleges and universities depict their Catholic identity via their websites. They go on to note that

there is no available literature on Catholic identity through university websites; however, they trust the attributes listed below meet the essence of colleges expressing their publicly declared identity to prospective and current students. The researchers go on to report that Catholic institutions are explaining *clearly and unambiguously* their Catholicity on their websites when they include information or attributes such as the ones used for this research.

**Catholic on home page.** The first marker is a statement on the homepage that the college is currently “Catholic,” not simply historically Catholic.

**Affiliation with sponsoring Catholic identity.** Whether the college explains on its webpage and preferably links from the homepage (e.g., “History” or “About Us” - that there is dynamic and noteworthy sponsorship from a recognized Catholic religious order or Catholic diocese.

**Lead academic statement.** Visibly state its major declaration of academic purpose, goals, or objectives that students receive an education that is influenced by one or more of the following Catholic events: Catholic Intellectual tradition, Catholic theology, Catholic Church doctrine and teachings, Catholic spirituality, and Catholic social justice.

**Human resources page.** Whether a college plainly states in the employment section or human resources page that the institution is Catholic and expects that current and prospective faculty and staff will recognize and respect its mission and purpose.

**Catholic worship.** The institution should show that there is Catholic worship, devotions, sacramental opportunities (e.g., place(s) of worship, liturgical offerings, prayer services, devotions, holiday activities, active campus ministry, formal faith exploration activities), and that evidence should be no more than two clicks from the home page.

**Catholic social service.** The college should clearly indicate Catholic service, including

opportunities to serve the poor and disadvantaged, service learning opportunities, formal programs to learn about and participate in social justice, and support of formal program of Catholic-based volunteer corps (e.g., Jesuit Volunteer Corps.).

**Catholic heritage.** The institution should provide evidence of its Catholic heritage on this website by using photographs, images, or symbols that are clearly identified as Catholic (e.g., places of worship, crucifix, members of the clergy or religious order, patron saint artwork or statute, highly recognized Catholic symbols).

Institutions chosen for examination came from the list of Catholic institutions of higher education in the United States prepared by the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities (2010). Two hundred-six 2- and 4-year institutions were reviewed after the researchers removed seminaries from the list. Gambescia & Paolucci (2011) took a random set of 20 institutions in the sample, which were examined to confirm uniformity in understanding of the categorization and assessment of the seven markers. Then all participants were reviewed. The researchers note that they understand that if an institution is void of a single or even several attributes, that it does not necessarily question Catholic identity. The researchers go on to note that given the reach and frequency at which a website communicates an institution's mission, purpose, and goals to prospective students and constituents, it makes sense that Catholic colleges and universities would want to use more rather than fewer of these markers.

The outcomes from the research show that on average, a Catholic institution used 3.7 out of the seven Catholic identity markers identified for this study. It was also found that most common of the seven markers examined in this study was giving the history and explanation of an affiliation with the Catholic sponsor and the religious influence, as almost 90% of the colleges made this clear. The most common location where this was communicated was in the "mission"

or “history” link on the colleges’ home pages. The second most common marker used by the colleges was easy access to information about worship, devotions, liturgical services, and other Catholic devotional activities. More than three-fourths (76.7%) of the institutions had a link to the campus ministry or spiritual life of the campus no more than two clicks from the home page.

The researchers stated that the next most common marker used by colleges was the use of photographs, images, or symbols that communicate Catholic heritage and identity. More than 57% of the colleges used such symbols throughout their webpages at such a level where a viewer would see the college as clearly identifying with its Catholicity. They go on to report that next most common marker used by Catholic institutions is a visible explanation of student involvement in service (42.23%). Service is performed in a number of ways on these campuses, such as a mandatory service activity or project prior graduation, co-curricular service activities, opportunities to volunteer support to the poor and disadvantaged in their communities, programs of social justice, and service through a formal entity on campus, such as an institute or center for social justice (Gambescia & Paolucci (2011).

The researchers state that just below 40% of the institutions used the term Catholic on their home page. Some colleges use the term Catholic in their lead blurb about the school. Some colleges make Catholic identity part of their logo, such as Lewis University (2010), which uses the descriptor in its logo “Catholic and LaSallian University.” Many institutions prominently showed statements about their Catholic identity on their home page. The researchers report that the next to the least Catholic marker used by the institutions was their actual lead academic statement in which not quite 40% of the institutions explained their Catholicity as a prominent character in the goals and objectives of the students’ education. They go on to note that there were various places and ways in which institutions presented a lead academic statement. These

statements appeared in areas such as an introduction to their academic offerings, in the welcome statement by the chief academic officer, in the description of the goals and objectives of their core curriculum, in the listing of courses, or as an item that impacts all activities of a student's college experience.

Gambescia & Paolucci (2011) state that the least used Catholic marker was evidence on the human resources page that employees, including faculty, are expected to understand and be respectful of the college's Catholic heritage and Catholic mission. They state that just over 28% of the colleges reviewed in this study have information that the reader could easily distinguish that he or she would be working for an institution that was dedicated to a Catholic mission. It was found that more than 70% of institutions had human resources pages similar to a human resource page of any non-religious institution, with not identifying information related to their Catholic identity.

Gambescia & Paolucci (2011) suggest that individuals at high levels of responsibility should perform periodic reviews and revisions to their institutions' websites to warrant that their Catholicity is unequivocally communicated to visitors to these websites. The researchers go on to state that most important is ensuring that the mission of the college is communicated throughout the many sections of the college's website, so that visitors can see that the Catholic mission permeates the students' experience at the college. It is imperative that prospective students plainly comprehend the identity of any institution they are considering. This is especially true for students and their families who have not had exposure to faith-based institutions. A second group who may be affected is prospective students and their parents who are seeking an institution with a high level of devotion to the Catholic mission and identity (Grochowski, 2008; Reisberg, 1999). If Catholic seems to be absent in places important to

these constituents, (e.g. lead academic statement), or if Catholic is used in token ways, they may consider other Catholic colleges or universities to attend (Cardinal Newman Society, 2009).

The researchers state that reviewing the websites of Catholic colleges and universities using the seven attributes previously noted lacks sensitivity in reviewing an institution's commitment to a real and significant Catholic education. They suggest examining a college's mission statement or conducting a more inclusive research study of a college or university's core curriculum to determine Catholic identity is revealing. Gambescia & Paolucci (2011) report that the study is not a comprehensive evaluation of the institutions' websites and that a summary score of a specific college or university in relation to its Catholic identity should be taken within the context of the method being used.

The researchers understand that their study did not take an in depth look at Catholicity by colleges in the United States. Gambescia & Paolucci (2011) do recommend that further research, such as a qualitative study, be conducted to learn how creative staff who design and place copy on college websites are using websites to communicate their Catholic identity and examine how extensive *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* (1990) and its four critical characteristics are emulated. They go on to note that research needs to be conducted to define what other markers can be emphasized by Catholic colleges and universities to show that they have a strong commitment with their Catholic mission (e.g. centers and institutes, special events, co-curricular activities, and majors/minors). Researchers could also survey leaders of human resources departments in Catholic institutions to see if they are hesitant about communicating in such a public way (i.e., via their website) the understanding that those who work at these institutions need to respect the Catholic identity (Gambescia & Paolucci, 2011).

Matteo, Bottom, & Ferrari's (2013) research study examined students' perceptions of mission, values, and activities at a small, suburban Franciscan, Catholic university. This research was part of a larger group of studies that assessed university mission. The researchers note that research on how mission is implemented at Catholic institutions proposes a concern for preserving Catholic identity and mission. Practical reasons may also require that mission evaluation plans become a strategic priority for colleges and universities (Ferrari et al., 2004). National and regional accrediting bodies have been requiring that higher education improve their assessment initiatives (U.S. Department of Education, 2006). Accreditors, governmental and private support, expect an institution's mission and core values to be apparent in programs, planning and decision making (Wang, Gibson, Salinas, Solis, & Slate, 2007; Gow, 2009). Due to relationships with a church or religious order, faith-based institutions may feel a greater sense of obligation and responsibility to have mission statements that not only successfully communicate their values but that they are defined in campus policy and practices (Matteo, Bottom, & Ferrari, 2013).

### **Perception of How Institutional Mission is Practiced**

Studies on how mission is practiced at Catholic colleges and universities shows a concern for preserving Catholic identity and mission (Matteo, Bottom, & Ferrari, 2013). Other research have studied faculty, staff, and administrators' perceptions of mission at both Vincentian and Jesuit universities, utilizing both quantitative inventories (Ferrari et al., 2006) and qualitative approaches such as in-depth interviews (Peck et al., 2008). Research on student success in both non-religious (Kuh et al., 2005) and religious institutions (Ferrari et al., 2010) specifies that the degree to which mission is practiced within campus culture may be attributed to academic

attainment. An additional study found a correlation between lower division students' observations of campus altruism and their public service objectives (Ferrari et al., 2005).

Assessing whether constituents perceive that the mission is being implemented or that mission-driven initiatives and values are important, questions only to the degree that they provide confirmation that the institution is providing promised educational outcomes (Matteo, Bottom, & Ferrari, 2013). The researchers study examined students' perceptions of mission, values, and activities at a small, suburban Franciscan, Catholic university. This research was part of a larger group of studies that assessed university mission.

Study participants were students at a small, suburban, Catholic university in the northeastern U.S., which practiced the Franciscan tradition (Matteo, Bottom, & Ferrari, 2013). Two hundred seventy-five students participated, of whom 75 were males and 218 were females, with 31% noticing that they were the first in their families to attend college. The most frequent religious affiliation noted was Christian-Catholic. Half of the participants resided on campus with the rest being commuting students.

Data were collected of the perceptions of undergraduate students of the university's Franciscan, Catholic, and suburban identities. The researcher's study also collected data on their acceptance of specific mission-driven activities to gain a better perspective of how the environment might be prompting students in these areas (Matteo, Bottom, & Ferrari, 2013). The researchers identified only one other research study specifically assessing Franciscan identity. That study researched the role of the Franciscan tradition in connection only to Franciscan colleges and universities that had institutionalized service-learning (Scavage, 2009). While it would be valuable to conduct the assessment using an instrument specific to these institutions, due to lack of resources and time constraints, the study used the existing DePaul Mission and

Values Inventory (DMV) (Ferrari et al., 2006). Initially developed for assessing perceptions of mission values, and activities at a large, urban, Catholic, Vincentian institution, the researchers note it could be adapted for use at a small, suburban, Catholic, Franciscan university.

The DePaul Mission and Values Inventory is a 39-item, multidimensional measure formulated to measure university stakeholders' perceptions of their university's mission, vision, and values (Ferrari et al., 2006; Velcoff, 2006). This measure has two parts: (1) *Institutional Identity* and (2) *Mission-Driven Activities*. The original authors of the inventory, through factor analysis, stated that the Institutional Identity section contained two subscales (i.e. *Innovative and Inclusive* and *Religious Pluralism*) (Matteo, Bottom, & Ferrari, 2013). The researchers state that only answers to these two subscales contained within the *Institutional Identity* section of the DMV were examined in their study.

Matteo, Bottom, & Ferrari (2013) modified the first version of the DMV to make certain that the measure could be used for this research. After collaborating with administrators and the university, slight modifications to the Innovative/Inclusive subscale and the Religious Pluralism scale were made. The researchers used an abbreviated version of the Marlow-Crowne social desirability scale, M-C *Form C*, to determine whether participants responded to the questionnaire in a socially applicable way. The M-C *Form C* is a uni-dimensional measure that included thirteen true false questions from the original 33-item measure.

Participants were recruited through a university-wide email, which was sent several times throughout each semester. The researchers also encouraged faculty to remind students to participate. The email contained a message explaining the study. This is also where informed consent was captured. A gift card incentive was offered to participants if they inputted their student identification number. Duplicate numbers were removed by a neutral party at another

university to ensure anonymity. Once the code was drawn, that number was sent to the registrar for identification and awarding of the incentive.

The research outcomes from the study offer strong initial backing for a Franciscan DMV (Matteo, Bottom, & Ferrari, 2013). The researchers state that the items that employed the innovative/inclusive and religious pluralism aspects of the original measure were also generalizable to another institution embracing similar values, but whose mission reflects its own distinctive Catholic tradition. The researchers go on to note that these outcomes are promising given the lack of available measures intended to examine institutional identity at Catholic institutions generally, and more specifically, those representative of the Franciscan order. A modified DMV could be a beneficial measure for Catholic institutions interested in upholding and developing their distinctive mission identities. Colleges and universities can gain from knowing if or what features of their programs are validated by students and other constituents, as well as understanding if demographic variables (e.g. year in school, ethnicity, etc.) impact mission perceptions.

The researchers report limitations to their research study. They note that demographic characteristics of their sample may have altered the validation process due to overrepresentation of particular populations and a higher than normal age for this type of sample. This is a possible outcome of survey instrumentation use due to lack of control of the sample. Future studies might research if students reported Franciscan DMV scores are linked with individual differences (e.g. GPA), specifically curricula or experiences (e.g., involvement in student government, major, athletics), and if they can forecast behavioral results (e.g. civic engagement after graduating) (Matteo, Bottom, & Ferrari, 2013). The researchers add that other Franciscan institutions may

also contemplate working in partnership in order to provide backing for the unique values and education they provide.

### **Assessing Perceptions of Mission, Vision, and Values**

Ferrari & Cowman (2004) propose that newer methods and evaluation of values must contain the effect of social institutions such as communities, organizations, and schools on value suitable behavior. These social systems play a dominant part in values education and evaluating the influence these organizations have on students may be revealing to administrators of higher education. The subject of values education and institutional assessment is becoming prominent in colleges and universities (e.g. Burtchaell, 1998; Murphy, 1991). Burtchaell discussed the ancillary and sluggish damage of values education by the lack of interest by private colleges and universities from their church affiliations. University mission statements that previously comprised of words such as ‘values, morals, and congregational affiliations’ now yield to words such as ‘independent, coeducational, and residential’ (Ferrari & Cowman, 2004). The researchers go on to state that in terms of colleges and university environments, studying student perception of their institutions’ mission and values is beneficial for examining academic programs, institutional operations, and student services.

There has been no methodical assessment tool that has studied how institutional values may be perceived or understood by student populations (Ferrari & Cowman, 2004). The researchers describe institutional values of colleges and universities as goals and outcomes, as well as procedural operations, which are realized to students and staff replicating the distinguishable standards of the institution. Ferrari and Cowman (2004) formulated a reliable and valid self-report measure for students to assess perceptions of their institution’s mission and values through three empirical investigations. The first study outlined the instrument, the DePaul

Values Inventory (DeVI). The second and third studies examined different aspects of the instrument's construct validity.

DePaul University is a private teaching university in Chicago, IL. It views itself as an 'urban, Catholic, and Vincentian' institution. The university states that it expresses its Catholic mission and values by direct service to the poor and economically disenfranchised through such programs as actively engaging students in volunteer and community service directed at impoverished communities. Murphy (1991) noted that even though it is a Roman Catholic university, DePaul University emulated Vincentians (referring to the namesake of the school, St Vincent DePaul) through respect for human dignity, diversity, and individual 'personalism.' The researchers note that the DePaul Values Inventory (DeVI) was initially created to study student perceptions of DePaul University's institutional mission and values. Three studies were conducted.

The first study was designed to research student perceptions of an urban, Catholic, and faith-driven university (Ferrari & Cowman, 2004). To generate and construct the scale, three separate samples of students were initially used. The researcher noted that the samples focused on the following: (1) the scale's original item pool, generating 88 items; (2) helping to simplify the scale to narrow it and to attain higher reliability, decreasing the number of items to 47; and (3) further simplifying the scale to a 22-item instrument. This first study discussed the development of a reliable self-report instrument, called the DeVI, formulated to measure student perceptions of an urban, Catholic, and faith-driven university. The researchers note that there were no significant gender variances on the four subscales (*institutional values, emphasis on diversity, pro-social general altruistic atmosphere, and, life-long commitment to values*) on the DeVI, and scale scores were not linked to social desirability biases. Ferrari and Cowman (2004)

state that the results showed a valuable, concise instrument suitable for use with young adult college students attending an urban, faith-based university.

A second study examined the 22-item DeVI's validity that came out of the first study, with another sample of undergraduate students, who were not participants in the first study. A confirmatory factor analysis examined if the four-factor structure of the DeVI described in Study 1 stayed intact (Ferrari & Cowman, 2004). The researchers note that it was anticipated that the instrument would uphold its current four-factor configuration. The study's 292 participants were 18-21 years old and enrolled in an introductory psychology class. After informed consent was captured, the participants were tested in a large group environment where they filled out additional scales along with the DeVI. Participants were given 30 minutes to complete all scales.

Ferrari and Cowman (2004) report that the DeVI's current four-subscale-factor structure was maintained by a confirmatory factor analysis, thus upholding the construct validity of the measure. They go on to state that the fit of the existing planned four-factor model also holds additional indication of the significance of the fourth DeVI subscale (Life-long Commitment to Values); if it were to be left out, the DeVI model is not suitable for the data. It can be claimed that even with a low, but satisfactory, coefficient alpha, the fourth subscale should be included.

Ferrari and Cowman (2004) report that all fit indices for the confirmatory factor analysis presented the DeVI as a valid measure; although, investigations regarding the significance of the chi-square fit index ( $p < 0.00001$ ) could come to light. The researchers state that even though a significant chi-square may demonstrate a poor fit between the model and the data, it may also be an outcome of having too much power (i.e. the sample size of 292 participants surpassed the suggested critical size for proposed model of 211), which may give a false positive (see Schumaker & Lomax, 1996). The current significance level of the chi-square might have been a

product caused by too much power (Ferrari & Cowman, 2004). The researchers used other models such as the NNFI and GFI to determine fit. These models reinforced the chi square analysis results, demonstrating that the researcher's outcomes were valid.

The third study determined if the values measured by the DeVI measure were actually perceptions of institutional and not individual values. Ferrari and Cowman (2014) anticipated that scores from the DeVI would not significantly correlate with scores from another known measure that examined personal value systems, controlling for social desirability. Former measures of values concentrated on either individual or cultural values (Rokeach, 1980; Schwartz, 1992).

Participants in the third study included 106 students in an introductory psychology course. Forty-one were men with a mean age of 20.61 and women with a mean age of 19.85. Fifty-three percent were Caucasian students enrolled in lower division classes. Almost half lived in an urban setting. Just as in study two, participants in study three were not participants in any of the previous studies (Study 1 or 2).

During their class, participants were given a consent form, a demographics form, the 22-item DeVI, and two additional psychometric inventories. Participants were asked to complete the Paulhus (1984) 20-item, seven-point subscale of the Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding (BIDR) that studies socially desirable responding, called *impression management*. Participants were also given Schwartz's (1992) 57-item Personal Value Survey, examining individual values. Based on their scores, 10 subscales compiled individual value structure (e.g. Conformity, Universalism, and Security) and seven subscales characterized cultural value structure (e.g. Embeddedness, Mastery, and Harmony) (Ferrari & Cowman, 2004).

Discriminant validity was observed in Study 3 by correlating subscale scores from the DeVI with Schwartz's (1992) Value Survey, controlling for social desirability scores with Paulhus' (1984) measure (Ferrari & Cowman, 2004). The researchers reported the BIDR impression management subscale significantly correlated with the first and fourth DeVI subscales of Institutional Values and Institutional Impact. Fractional correlations, while also controlling for impression management, amongst personal values as evaluated by Schwartz's measure and institutional values from the DeVI, were performed. The researchers go on to note that even after controlling for social desirability, the Achievement subscale from Schwartz's Personal Value Survey was the only significant one that correlated with one DeVI subscale, which was Institutional Impact, suggesting that these self-report measures evaluate differing notions. Even when controlling for social desirability, Ferrari and Cowman (2004) report that in this study, the personal value of Achievement correlated to institutional values of Life-long Commitment to Values. The researchers conclude that as a goal for their mission, institutions of higher education should place a solid importance on academic achievement for their students. It is also the goal of these institutions that students are able to highlight increased achievement throughout academic environments.

The results of these three studies showed that the DeVI was a reliable and valid measure across a number of samples of students (Ferrari & Cowman, 2004). The researchers report the constraint of low reliability of the fourth DeVI subscale, which, if including additional items to increase the fit of the model, may be enhanced. Ferrari and Cowman (2004) noted that future research could study potential standards for assessing behavioral results related to values education. The researchers state that these outcomes of direct student performance, coupled with DeVI scores, could allow a connection to be made between institutional mission and how

students realize self-report responses. The DeVI develops a different approach to values assessment by concentrating on organizational observations of institutions, as opposed to only using individual difference factors in personal value structures (Rokeach, 1980; Schwartz, 1992). Ferrari and Cowman (2004) note that by including quantitative measures like the DeVI colleges and universities (notably those with urban, private, faith-based characteristics) may evaluate their own capacity to reach their students, and determine the efficacy of their values education.

### **Use of Survey Methodology to Conduct Self-Report Research on Mission Perception**

Social and behavioral scientists who use survey methodology to perform self-report research have realized that participants, whether or not consciously, have a propensity to make choices that are biased when articulating their beliefs, opinions, and lifestyle choices (Crowne & Marlowe, 1960; Ones & Viswesvaran, 1998; Darnon et al., 2009). The research conducted by Ferrari et al. (2010) centers on whether impression management inclinations affected students' responses concerning their Catholic university's mission identity and mission-driven activities. The researchers go on to note that more explicitly, they examined impression management inclinations self-reported by college students who differ across variables relating to gender, first-generation college status, and religious preference. Their study also researched opposing responses amongst men and women at Catholic schools in respects to their perceptions of their school's mission. In addition, the researchers examined students based on their self-reported status as *first-generation* college students. Ferrari et al. (2010) also studied the role of students' religious affiliations when answering mission related statements at an urban, faith-based institution.

One example of self-reported biased response is *social desirability*, the propensity to incorrectly report one's feelings, beliefs, or opinions in way where it would receive more

favorable social approval (Crowne, 1960; Paulhus & Reid, 1991; Ferrari & Cowman, 2004).

One common form of social desirability tendencies is *impression management*, the careful and decisive misstatement to others of one's thoughts, beliefs, and opinions. Controlling for socially desirable responses bias (e.g., impression management) appears to be a crucial step in forming more exact survey research outcomes (Ferrari et al., 2010). The researchers go on to note that if particular groups of students are giving socially fitting answers to affect others on school-related survey topics, such as their views of the school's mission, then it is imperative that researchers account for impression management in their research study.

Previous research found that survey responses might be swayed by non-test significance gauges motivated by impression management (Crowne, 1960). In a meta-analysis of 66 studies, Ones and Viswesvaran (1998) stated that males exhibit greater self-reported socially desirable responses than females. Previous research by Drozd (2009) revealed that, on average, a first-generation college goer has lower SAT scores and grade point averages, and worked a job more hours per week than their non-first-generation college counterparts. Ferrari et al. (2010) state that these outcomes indicate that first-generation college students may not be as socially integrated in their institution's community and may not completely comprehend or engage in their institution's mission and values when compared to non-first-generation college students. They go on to state that this could infer that first-generation students might offer socially desirable responses on survey measures about their institution to influence others. The researchers state that no published research has examined if these individuals would provide more socially favorable responses on mission-related surveys in comparison to non-first-generation students.

Ferrari et al. (2010) hypothesized that Catholic students, similar to Catholic faculty and staff from Ferrari & Janulis' (2009) research, report more robust perceptions of their Catholic school's mission-related activities than do non-Catholic students. The researchers go on to state that Roman Catholic students attending a Catholic institution may answer in socially appropriate tendencies on surveys because they believe their Catholic religion should impact their answers and selections on these mission inventories. Due to this fact, the study conducted by Ferrari et al. (2010) controlled for impression management tendencies by religious preference on their survey of the Catholic school's mission and mission-related activities. Students were offered incentives such as a free four-hour credit waiver and gift certificates for purchases made through Amazon.com to positively influence participation. The survey was up for five weeks with one reminder being sent one week prior to the survey being taken down.

Ferrari et al. (2010) found that female participants responded in socially appropriate ways more than male did. They go on to note that non first-generation students reported a stronger impression management tendency than first-generation students. The researchers stated that their study is first to depict that non-Catholic Christian and other faith formations were more likely to reply in a socially desirable way than Catholic participants. Ferrari et al. (2010) note that their results did not support the research outcomes of previous studies; however, unlike previous studies, the survey did demonstrate that social desirability tendencies (specifically impression management strategies) function within survey responding. The researchers state that their outcomes related to gender and generation are similar to other studies, however, once they statistically controlled respondents' tendencies to present a positive public impression; they found the results opposite to other published research studies.

Ferrari et al. (2010) suggest that researchers of institutional Catholic mission, vision, and value perceptions must think through the role of social desirability - specifically, impression management - when assessing student engagement and appreciation of the school's purpose. The researchers note that they believe the results would be generalizable to include small, rural Catholic institutions, but further investigation is needed. They also reported their research used a single measure of impression management, indicating their results are limited to that measure. Ferrari et al. (2010) suggest further research be conducted using varying measures of social desirability in general, particularly impression management, to conclude if their outcomes are generalizable. Recognizing that human variables are common in responses, the researchers go on to state future researchers could include measures of social desirability in their survey administration. They also note that impression management tendencies may be controlled by statistical methods, resulting in the research becoming more useful in terms of outcome acquired.

The research study conducted by Ferrari et al. (2010) had 1706 students (1070 female, 616 male), who were primarily Caucasian and upper-division Junior/Senior students, enrolled in a Midwestern, urban, Catholic university. The researchers note that participants self-identified as a first-generation family member to enroll in college or non-first-generation, and regarding religious affiliation as Catholic, Christian or non-Christian. Participants completed the 20-item impression management subscale of Paulhus' Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding (BDIR) as well as the DePaul Mission and Values (DMV) scale. Both the *Innovative and Inclusive* and the *Catholic Pluralism* subscales were used from the DMV.

### **Ranking an Institution's "Catholicity"**

Bolduc (2009) notes that there are many ranking systems for America's colleges and universities but ranking Catholic colleges along the religious dimension has still yet to part of the

research. There are about 220 Catholic colleges in America, representing a range of religiousness and Catholicity. Several books have defined the variability in religiousness on religiously affiliated campuses (Benne, 2001; Cherry, 2001; Morey, & Piderit, 2006; Riley, 2005). Bolduc (2009) states that for obvious and important reasons, American Catholic colleges and universities devote an impressive amount of effort in endeavoring to comprehend and communicate what constitutes “true Catholic identity.” The researcher goes on to note that in 2004, the Holy See reminded Catholic educators that bishops have the responsibility to determine whether a college or university may label itself Catholic. They further report that the use of religious standards is controversial, with great potential for misuse.

Archbishop J. Michael Miller proposed various options for developing “benchmarks” of catholic identity - a way of thinking, he notes, that is particularly at home in American higher education where outcome assessments have been institutionalized in various forms (Bolduc, 2009). The Archbishop states that, “It’s not a matter of ‘scoring’ institutions, but providing basic data that, taken together, may point up areas that need attention .... Even there, you’d have to do studies over time, comparing a group when they come in as freshmen and when they leave as seniors...so it’s a complex analysis” (Allen, 2005, p. 2). To some degree, schools are already doing some of this in the form of student surveys due to accreditation agency requirements regarding mission effectiveness. Bolduc (2009) notes that, additionally, this data could be utilized for internal evaluation by the sponsoring religious orders, trustees, campus ministry, and perhaps other institutional departments.

Catholic colleges and universities have played a pivotal role in today’s adult Catholics. This is supported by a survey conducted by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) that documented a list of features that were captured from adults who attended Catholic

institutions (Gray & Perl, 2008). According to the survey, those who had attended Catholic colleges or universities were more likely to:

- Consider themselves to be practicing Catholics;
- View the sacraments as “essential” to their faith;
- Say that the Mass is “very important” to their religious practice;
- Have considered becoming a priest, brother, nun or religious sister;
- Report that they are “proud to be Catholic;”
- Say that “helping the poor and needy” is a moral obligation;
- Follow various Lenten practices (Gray & Perl, 2008, p. 8).

This is a list of positive attributes, however, there are still challenges faced by American Catholicism. Reflect on the new social realities that have confronted the Church in the past few decades: the closing of parochial schools, lowering numbers of priests and religious, diocesan financial troubles, and the diminishing number of children being raised in the Church (Bolduc, 2009). Cultural shifts juxtaposed with traditional Catholic teachings makes for additional difficulties such as the topic of transgender individuals. Despite the expanded need for a robust Catholic identity that can be nurtured in Catholic higher education, the 2008 CARA report archives the declining numbers of American Catholics who have attended a Catholic institution (Gray & Perl, 2008).

Morey and Piderit’s (2006) research on senior administrators at Catholic institutions found that the Catholic culture that these administrators experience every day, they tell us, “does not measure up to their own convictions about how things should “be” and “generally speaking, most administrators in the end admitted that their colleges and universities had rather weak Catholic cultures” (p. 4). While the Morey and Piderit book focuses on Catholic campuses, quite

a few other recent studies provide useful background for understanding the religious and spiritual lives of today's college students (Bolduc, 2009). One source proposes a optimistic explanation of how six Christian colleges have preserved their religious traditions (Benne, 2001); another offers a qualitative summary of interviews and observations of religiousness and campus life at four unnamed universities (Cherry, 2001); another uses a journalist's vantage point to look at a dozen or more religiously affiliated colleges (e.g., Bob Jones, Brigham Young, Notre Dame, Yeshiva) with concentrations ranging from feminism to race and "sex, drugs and rock and roll" (Riley, 2005).

Bolduc's (2009) research study's purpose was to understand how to "benchmark" or document differences in levels of student religiousness on Catholic campuses. The researcher goes on to state that this research applied social science survey methodology to four "typical" Catholic colleges, and the results demonstrate use for broader applications. The four liberal arts institutions, ranked as "middle of most rankings of Catholicity" and "represented mainstream colleges and universities," as stated by the researcher, participated in this research study for simple and practical reasons. All four institutions, who obtain their enrollment within the New England area, were among ACCU member colleges. Bolduc (2009) notes that none of the institutions are theologically or academically left or right with each obtaining students from a similar pool of applicants. None of the colleges markets itself to the religiously motivated as being "more Catholic" or "less Catholic" than the other institutions, although the researcher's evidence supports that a case could be made.

The sample of students was formed using a scientific random selection, a process using registrars at each university. Student volunteers from research classes, campus ministry offices, or student government positions dropped off the questionnaires in student dormitories. After a

period of time, they picked up the completed forms that participants had placed in sealed envelopes to protect anonymity. A total of 1337 students participated; however, only 925 were used for the research study since they self-identified as being Catholic.

It was not the goal of the researcher to rank the institutions based on their Catholicity. Using student oriented survey research to measure the Catholicity of an institution is one method of many possible, each one possibly receiving legitimate criticisms from theologians and Church leaders (Bolduc, 2009). The researcher goes on to state that this is not a theological study, but a sociological one. Good or bad, the researcher notes that this research circumvented such overarching issues and instead concentrated attention on the students whose intellectual and spiritual well-being, which is the focus.

The researchers report that the analysis of data from the four colleges revealed consistent patterns of statistically significant differences in religiousness among students, isolating the colleges into two groups. The researcher goes on to note that about three-quarters of students on all four campuses believe that it is possible to disagree with the Church's teachings on birth control and still be a "good Catholic." Bolduc's (2009) evidence informs that there is definitely a significant tendency for students to pick a college with a compatible religious alignment but it is not as dramatic as anticipated. Beyond this selectivity effect, the results show that the institution can, and often does, affect their level of religious commitment. Bolduc's (2009) data reported a positive association between student religiousness and their sensitivity to social justice issues. The researcher also found that the students who go to Mass regularly are more likely to volunteer and high proportions of the student volunteers on each campus reported they were driven by their religious beliefs. Finally, their survey found that not only were the more religious

students on campus the most affirming of the mission based values of their colleges, but they also had the strongest affinity to the institution.

The researcher notes that all of the institutions that participated had a large number/high percentage of students from New England, which they feel is a factor that may limit generalizability, to the extent that regional differences included Catholicity and general application results. The research study contains two biases: first, a 5% higher response rate for women (more religious than men); and second, the probability that the “more religious” students were the most likely to complete their questionnaires (Bolduc, 2009). Neither of these introduced serious errors, but the remaining effect is that the overall religiousness of the sample is more likely to be exaggerated than understated. The researcher suggests further research on Catholicity be conducted such as additional surveys like these which can help colleges and universities to maintain and enhance the religious commitments of students. Bolduc (2009) argues that if the Church in the United States is to sustain and flourish for years to come, we should limit reluctance to discuss common benchmarks of institutional Catholicity. Further adding that these outcomes can assist in supporting national dialogue that could ensue about how to prepare young adults for their unavoidable roles as future leaders of the Church.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

#### **Major Theoretical Framework for Qualitative Research**

For this research study, spiritual leadership will be used as the major theoretical framework. Fairholm (1998) argued that spirituality is a vital dimension to leadership and was one of the first scholars who put spirituality and leadership together. Sanders, Hopkins, & Geroy (2002), Fairholm (1997, 1998, 2001), and Fry (2003, 2004) have conducted the majority of the research to date on formulating theories of spiritual leadership.

Fry (2003) defines spiritual leadership as “comprising the values, attitudes, and behaviors that are necessary to intrinsically motivate one’s self and others so that they have a sense of spiritual survival through calling and membership” (p. 695). This entails (1) creating a vision where members of an institution experience a sense of calling in that their life has significance and has impact and; (2) creating a social/organizational culture grounded on altruistic love where leaders and followers have genuine care, concern, and appreciation for both oneself and others, creating a sense of association and being understood and valued.

#### **Research Design**

This researcher conducted the research study using a comparative case study analysis. The case study is a research strategy, focusing on understanding a phenomenon within its natural setting (Iacono, Brown, and Holtham, 2009). Comparative case study is a qualitative research method, aiming to deduce causal relationships between variables by methodically comparing occurrences of a phenomenon, specifically, cases considered as different formations of variables or factors (Rihoux & Ragin, 2009). Eisenhardt (1989) notifies that the case study as research method is exceedingly valuable when a researcher intends to capture the dynamics of a process

within and amid fixed environments. Yin (2003a) supports the effectiveness of case studies in social sciences, sociology, community studies, marketing, innovation changes, strategic planning, etc. Gilgun (1994) also supports case study research for its theoretical and methodological advantages.

Qualitative methods were considered more fitting to the study of social and cultural phenomena than quantitative methods of the physical sciences, (Iacono, Brown, and Holtham, 2009). Qualitative research looks to find the matter of concern in its everyday setting, and by way of interviews, observations, reviewing text, and listening to the voices of those closely involved (Smyth & Giddings, 2007). Qualitative analysis is a meaning-pursuing method (Paillé and Mucchielli, 2003). Qualitative research is commonly grounded in a scientific philosophy informed by interpretivism, a model in which it is presumed that reality can be deduced in varying ways and that knowledge and understanding are reliant on perspective and individual knowledge (Bryman, 2008; Graneheim & Lundman, 2004).

“Qualitative research can be informed by data-driven inductive or theory-driven deductive approaches (Knudson et al., 2012, p. 7). The outcomes of inductive qualitative research vary from descriptive versions of particular characteristics of human behavior to esoteric theories detailing human actions and social structures. Conversely, the results of deductive qualitative research endorse, reject, or grow a previously recognized social, cultural, or psychological theory (Bryman, 2008). The quantitative study of human meaning creation usually investigates theoretical or hypothetical contributory associations (Dzurec & Abraham, 1993). In qualitative research, dependability (Bryman, 2008; Golafshani, 2003; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) is recommended as comparable to validity and reliability in quantitative research.

## **Comparative Case Analysis of Selected Cases**

### **CASE I**

**King, J. & Herr, A. (2015). Does Catholic identity affect students? *Journal of Catholic Higher Education*, 34(2), 195-209.**

Since the publication of *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* several decades ago, Catholic colleges and universities in the United States have actively studied their religious identity (John Paul II, 1996). The inherent goal of most of the research conducted on Catholic identity of Catholic colleges and universities have been to make sure students come across and appropriate the Catholic tradition (King & Herr, 2015). The researchers go on to note that their research will attempt to address that to be able to have a full understanding of Catholic identity student needs and their viewpoints must be cultivated.

Buckley (1997) argues religious identity should not be *extrinsic* to the academic mission of higher education, as if the two were “distinct entities related to one another only additionally or influentially” (p. 12). Instead, religious identity should be *intrinsic* to Catholic higher education, animating all of its work and bringing it to its “inherent completion” (p. 12). King and Herr’s (2015) research attempts to address this aspect of institutional efforts. They go on to state that specifically, this essay examines the question, “To what extent do institutional characteristics of a school affect student perceptions of its religious identity?” (p. 196).

### **Methodology**

In their quantitative research study, King and Herr (2015) developed and conducted a survey asking students about their perception of and participation in the Catholic culture of their campuses. Their survey was distributed by email to allow for an increased number of student participants. The researchers contacted 35 institutions asking for onsite coordinators who would

assist with approval and distribution of the survey. These coordinators were also requested as they had direct contact with students and could increase participation. Data were gathered from more than 1,000 students at 26 different Catholic colleges and universities about their perceptions of their institutions' Catholic culture. The researchers then compiled a database of the 1,099 student surveys collected from 26 institutions. However, only 963 surveys were actually reported for the research because some were incomplete. The data, comprised of institutional features indicative of Catholic identity, was gathered from publicly existing resources (King & Herr, 1998). The researchers reported that they attempted to be sure their sample of institutions represented diversity of Catholic characteristics, varying from institutions that express their Catholic identity to those whom Catholic identity is not clear, as well as schools that fall within these two ranges.

King and Herr (2015) noted that it was challenging to ensure their sample was representative of diverse Catholic institutions. They go on to report that only efforts to categorize institutions per Catholic identity are lists by “conservative” organizations and are not (and do not pretend to be) based on quantifiable measures (p. 198). Many of the approximately 250 Catholic colleges and universities in the United States are not listed by *First Things* or the Cardinal Newman Society (The Newman Guide to Choosing a Catholic College, 2014). The Cardinal Newman Society includes only ten schools on their list with the identifier “strong” Catholic identity; *First Things* possesses two lists of ten schools each, one using the identifier of “strong” Catholic identity and the other using “weak” Catholic Identity (King & Herr, 2015). The researchers used these publications to assist them as an alternate resource to ensure that the institutions they included in their research were diverse in religious culture.

King and Herr's (2015) research primarily focused on a single question, "Which statement best describes the religious culture of your college or university? Student participants could select for the following options:

- "The culture is not very Catholic. Few faculty, staff, and students are Catholic. Catholicism is rarely a part of student life and academics."
- "The culture is somewhat Catholic. Some of the faculty, staff, and students are Catholic, and Catholicism is sometimes a part of student life and academics."
- "The culture is mostly Catholic. Many of the faculty, staff and students are Catholic, and Catholicism is a large part of student life and academics."
- "The culture is very Catholic. Almost all of the faculty, staff, and students are Catholic, and Catholicism is a large part of the student life and academics" (p. 199).

## **Findings**

King and Herr (2015) used two sets of data and conducted a linear regression analysis. This was done in order to examine the impact of institutional characteristics of a school on student perceptions of Catholic identity. The researchers report that they found that institutional characteristics comprise about 25 percent of the difference in student perceptions of their colleges and universities, and that the institutional features that have the greatest effect are those that students interact with on a frequent basis. The vast majority of students reported that their campus was either "mostly Catholic" (52 percent) or "very Catholic" (25 percent). Only a few students (1 percent) reported that their school was "not very Catholic," while the remaining students (22 percent) reported that their school was "somewhat Catholic" (p. 199).

The researchers (King and Herr, 2015) collected student data and compiled a database of institutional characteristics of the schools where the surveys were distributed. An assessment of

that information was conducted using websites and bulletins. After reviewing the literature, the researchers note that there is no list of variables describing Catholic identity, so they developed their own list of characteristics to gather from the schools. The researchers state that the purpose of their list was that it be holistic, endeavoring to collect what is universally accepted as indicative of Catholic identity, rather than supporting one set of characteristics over others. The characteristics included:

- A religious (i.e. priest, sister, member of a religious congregation) president
- A Catholic president
- The existence of a campus ministry
- The number of people staffing campus ministry
- The existence of an office of service learning
- The number of people staffing the office of service learning
- The number of required classes on religion
- The presence of a chapel
- The frequency of daily Mass
- The frequency of Sunday Mass
- The type of visitation rules in the dormitories
- The enforcement of alcohol policies in the dormitories
- The presence of coed or single sex dorms
- The percentage of faculty who were Catholic
- The percentage of the student body who were Catholic (p. 200).

From this list of characteristics, the researchers (King and Herr, 2015) eliminated several of these variables from their statistical analysis that would not provide additional value to the

research. There was a redundancy between having a religious president and a Catholic president, so the researchers eliminated the latter. Campus ministry was eliminated since every school in the research study possessed a campus ministry. The number of staff in campus ministry and service learning offices were taken out as variables as this number was comparative to the size of the institution. The larger the institution the number of staff increased. The smaller the institution, the number of staff decreased. Percentages of Catholic faculty and staff were removed as information on these numbers was inadequate, posing no value in evaluation. Lastly, the researchers reported that they removed the “required course in religion” variable and shifted their focus on required courses in Catholicism. Their reasoning was that most institutions viewed classes in Catholicism as a subset of classes in religion, which would in essence pose a double count of classes in Catholicism. More specifically, the researcher’s study focused on Catholicism as opposed to the broader topic of “religion,” so this decision was appropriate. Classes on Catholic Christian tradition or that had Catholicism in the title were included in the research. The complete process of eliminating variables left the researchers with the following list:

- A religious (i.e. priest, sister, member of a religious congregation) president
- The existence of an office of service learning
- The number of required classes on Catholicism
- The frequency of daily Mass
- The frequency of Sunday Mass
- The type of visitation rules in the dormitories
- The enforcement of alcohol in the dormitories
- The presence of coed or single sex dorms (p. 201).

The researchers note that data were then inputted and coded in a spreadsheet where if a variable had a higher number that was associated with “more Catholic” for the variable. King and Herr (2015) reported that they attempted to code the characteristic proportionately so that a one-unit change in one characteristic would weigh approximately as much as a one-unit change in another (p. 201). The researchers go on to state that coding performed to make sure that classifications of institutions’ Catholic identity were neither subjective nor discriminative. Variables relating to Catholic identity were weighted in the same manner.

King and Herr (2015) linked the response of each student to the institutional characteristics of the college or university he or she attended in order to answer the question, “To what extent do institutional characteristics of a school affect student perception of its religious identity?” (p. 202). The researchers performed a linear regression with the dependent variable of student perception and the full list of institutional characteristics as independent variables. The variables with large p-values suggested that there is no significant impact on student perceptions of religious culture. When each variable was removed, the researchers performed the regression again with those variables that were left. The R-squared was adjusted each time in order to see any increase. If there was an increase, the researchers stated that the variable should be removed from the regression. If there was a decrease when a variable was eliminated the researchers retained the variable in the regression. Sunday Mass, alcohol policy, religious president, and service respectively, were eliminated.

After omitting these variables, the researchers re-ran the regression and note that with the results for intercept, co-ed dorms, visitation policy, daily mass, and required courses being 0.235, determining this set of variables accounts for 23.5 percent of the variance in students’ perceptions of the religious culture of their institutions. With p-values of all the outstanding

variables almost at zero, it infers that these variables do significantly affect student perception of religious culture. “The coefficient of each of these variables is positive, indicating that a higher numerical value of the variable causes an increase in student perception of the religious culture” (King & Herr, 2015, p. 204). The researchers posit that their regression analysis implied that, together, these found variables could have a significant effect on student perception of the Catholic culture of a college or university.

### **Summary**

King and Herr’s (2015) analysis suggests several implications for understanding the effects of institutional characteristics on student perceptions of the college or university’s religious culture. First, the researchers noted that institutional characteristics account for less than 25 percent of the variability in students’ perceptions. Second, they reported that institutional factors that most affect student perceptions turn out to be those factors that students encounter most frequently: the type of residence halls (single-sex or co-ed) and their policies or the frequency of daily Mass or the number of courses they take on Catholicism. These happenings are what positively moves students the most and creates the strongest connection to their perceptions. Third, the researchers report that institutional factors that most affect student perception also turn out to be those factors closely connected to the mission of Catholic institutions. Fourth, the analysis identified that religious presidents, specific alcohol policies, the presence of service learning, and the occurrence of Sunday Mass are less relevant for student perceptions of Catholic identity and were not significant variables in their regression.

King and Herr (2015) caution against two uses of their research that would overstate its scope. First, the researchers explain that because policies affect only a portion of student perceptions and, thus, indicate that the students themselves have a distinctive role in determining

Catholic identity, trying to manipulate these variables without student buy-in would be problematic. King and Herr (2015) state that institutional policies need to be used in tandem with the students and their reception of them. They go on to report that they would caution against using this data to make up a ranking system. They also note that such an approach would create data points for institutions that could motivate schools to change their policies for the sake of rankings. The researchers state that “this approach would reduce Catholic identity to quantitative measures and marginalize some essential aspects of Catholic identity like care and concern for students” (p. 209). Circumventing these tactics can lead to a religious identity that brings these institutions to their definitive goal of an educational experience clearly affiliated with love of God and neighbor. Further research could include conducting this study using specific race and non-Catholic faith bases.

## **CASE II**

**Graham, P., Broderick, C., Ribera, A., & BrckaLorenz, A. (2015). *Are we who we claim to be? Perceptions of mission engagement among students and faculty at religiously-affiliated and independent institutions*. Association for the Study of Higher Education Annual Conference, Denver, CO.**

The term “mission” is raised in discussion regarding institutional type, used as an alternative to refer largely to institutional values, and used to define written statements of purpose (Bastedo & Gumport, 2003; Morphey & Hartley, 2006; Woodrow, 2006). “While the importance of institutional mission is acknowledged within the higher education community, there is a lack of empirical evidence investigating how missions are implemented” (Graham et al., 2015, p. 2).

This study (Graham et al., 2015) encompasses not only student but also faculty perceptions. Given that this comparative case study analysis does not include the variable of “faculty,” the information and data regarding faculty, to include the faculty research question, will not be considered in this research study analysis. The research question was, “What student demographics and institution characteristics are predictive of agreement with perceptions of institutional mission?” (p. 7). This study attempts to understand the impact of mission on college campuses, particularly how students and faculty perceive the efficacy of an institution’s mission. Using three scales, (1) Sense of Mission, (2) Respect for Diversity, and (3) Values Development, this study reveals how various individual and institutional characteristics, including religion, race, and institutional size, shape perception of mission engagement (Graham et al., 2015). The researchers posit that critical relevance of mission at religiously affiliated and independent institutions, these results can guide institutions in strategic areas of improvement for mission engagement. It should be noted that in the researchers’ study, the terms “independent” and “liberal arts” are used interchangeably.

## **Methodology**

The researchers, using survey data from students, investigate perceptions of mission engagement at religiously affiliated and independent institution. Boylan and Crockett’s (2014) research compared independent and Catholic institutions and found that the campus setting of Catholic schools has a positive effect on student perceptions of mission engagement. The researchers note that Boylan and Crockett did not control for student characteristics, which provides a completely different insight that can be added to the body of knowledge. While Graham et al.’s (2015) research study investigates student perceptions of mission, they also included variables such as student demographics and institutional characteristics. More

specifically, the researchers state that their study examines variation in students' perceptions of mission engagement as defined by their overall sense of mission engagement, others' respect for diversity on campus, and the intentional development of ethical values.

For the NSSE, students were asked how often they participate in contemplative and integrative learning, higher-order learning, quantitative reasoning, learning strategies, collaborative learning, discussions with diverse populations, effective teaching practices, interactions with faculty, as well as campus environment perceptions and quality of exchanges with others on campus (Graham et al., 2015). Using 2014 data, there were 473,633 students from 713 institutions who responded to the survey, with an average response rate for NSSE of 32%.

The student sample for this study included responses from 8,316 seniors who attended either one of the 47 institutions in the CCU consortium or 19 colleges in the MECIC (Graham et al., 2015). Approximately 24% of students in the sample attended an independent college with approximately (76%) enrolled in a Catholic college or university. Forty one percent of the student population identified as Roman Catholic and 35% identified as Protestant (i.e., Methodist, Lutheran). Seven percent of the population selected another faith-based religion and approximately 17% of seniors selected "None."

The researchers (Graham et al., 2015) note that the sample was diverse in terms of racial and ethnic backgrounds as 70% were White, 8% were African American, 6% were Latino or Hispanic, 5% were Asian, and 5% were of more than one race. They go on to state that approximately half of the research sample was first-generation students and that 68% were 23 years old or younger. Subsequently, men accounted for 30% of the sample with women accounting for 69%. Eighty-four of students were full-time and 27% lived on campus. There

were students who also began their studies at another institution, which accounted for two out of five seniors.

The researchers (Graham et al., 2015) report that 58% of students were enrolled in competitively selective schools and 26% were at 'very' or 'highly' competitive schools. They go on to report that 29% were from medium-sized schools (2,500-4,999), 45% from small-sized schools (1,000-2,499), and 10% from very small institutions with less than 1,000 students. The researchers note that the remainder of students, 13%, were from large schools (5,000-9,999) and 3% from very large institutions with enrollments of greater than 10,000. Fifty five percent of students were enrolled at baccalaureate offering arts and science schools and 18% were enrolled at schools who offered masters level degrees.

Graham et al.'s, (2015) research study utilized data from an additional item set asked by the CCU and the MECIC. Students were asked about their agreement with a series of statements related to their institution's mission. The researchers grouped answers in three scales – Sense of Mission, Respect for Diversity, and Values Development. The researchers guided their study using Boylan and Pavlick's previous work (2011; Boylan & Crockett, 2014), creating scales with a principal component factor analysis with an oblimin rotation. The scales were ranked on a scale of one to five with five as "Strongly agree" and one as "Strongly disagree." The average Sense of Mission score was 4.07 (.66 SD), Respect for Diversity was 4.11 (.71 SD), and Values Development was 4.04 (.80 SD) for students, respectively (Graham et al., 2015).

An additional question asked students to identify their current religious preference. The researchers stated that in order to refine responses, they placed answers into four categories: (1) "Roman Catholic;" (2) "Other Christian," including Baptist, Eastern Orthodox, Episcopalian, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, Quaker,

Seventh Day Adventist, United Church of Christ, and Other Christian; (3) “Other Religions,” including Buddhist, Hindu, Islamic, Jewish (Orthodox), Jewish (Conservative), Jewish (Reform), Jewish (Unaffiliated), Unitarian/Universalist, & Other Religion; and (4) “None.” The researchers go on to note that categories were designated utilizing theological variances and the number of respondents within groups. “The student characteristics explored in this study included a set of variables that described the college experience as well as demographics such as race or ethnicity, gender identity, first-generation status, age, and religious background” (Graham et al., 2015, p. 11).

The researchers (Graham et al., 2015) performed a series of ordinary least squares (OLS) regression equations that were used to understand predictors for student agreement with characteristics of mission engagement. They go on to note that the three mission engagement scales served as the dependent variables in regression models. The researchers further report that dependent variables were standardized prior to being placed in the model. Through normalizing the dependent variables, the stated unstandardized regression coefficient in the models can be deduced as an effect size (Nelson, Laird & Garver, 2010).

“The independent variables included in the senior student models were enrollment status, the extent of online learning, transfer status, major field as defined by STEM or non-STEM, being a member of a social fraternity or sorority, living on or off campus, and self-reported college grades” (Graham et al., 2015, p. 12). The researchers report that various demographic variables were also included in the model to examine differences in perceptions of mission engagement by racial/ethnic identity, gender identity, first-generation status, age, and religious background. The researchers note that they also incorporated total undergraduate enrollment,

selectivity, Carnegie classification, and consortium type in the models as controls for institutional environment.

## **Findings**

The findings of the study found that overall, individual and institutional characteristics explained approximately 9% of the variance in students' perception of Sense of Mission, 5% in students' perception of Respect for Diversity, and 4% in students' perception of Values Development (Graham et al., 2015). The researchers (Graham et al., 2015) state that after controlling for individual characteristics, students' college experiences, and other institutional characteristics, their findings show that students at Catholic institutions had a more positive perception of their school's Sense of Mission ( $B=.465$ ;  $p<.001$ ) when compared to students enrolled at an independent school. The researchers go on to note that students enrolled in a Master's level school also had a more positive perception of Sense of Mission compared to students at other Carnegie classified schools ( $B=-.240$ ;  $p<.01$ ).

Graham et al.'s (2015) research study found that with students' college experiences, the results of the model along with the other independent variables, STEM majors had a somewhat decreased perception of Sense of Mission than non-STEM majors ( $B=-.112$ ;  $p<.001$ ). The researchers note that seniors who earned mainly As in school were more likely to possess a more positive perception of Sense of Mission compared to those having mainly Bs ( $B=-.121$ ;  $p<.001$ ) and Cs or lower ( $B=-.439$ ;  $p<.001$ ). The researchers go on to report that outcomes from the model found that being a first-generation student ( $B=.058$ ;  $p<.05$ ) had a lower positive effect on students' Sense of Mission. Statistically significant differences were also found by gender identity.

Further, results of the study found that women ( $B=.118$ ;  $p<.001$ ) had a slightly more positive perception of the institution's Sense of Mission, compared to men. Students who identified with an identity other than woman or man ( $B=-.768$ ;  $p<.01$ ) along with students who chose "prefer not to respond" ( $B=-.595$ ;  $p<.001$ ) had a markedly lower perception of Sense of Mission (Graham et al., 2015). The researchers' model results also show that race and ethnicity are a significant marker of students' Sense of Mission. Asian ( $B=.147$ ;  $p<.01$ ), African American ( $B=.135$ ;  $p<.01$ ), and Latino or Hispanic ( $B=.220$ ;  $p>.001$ ) students held a more favorable perceptiveness of their institution's Sense of Mission, compared to white students. After controlling for other student demographics, college experiences, and institutional characteristics the researchers stated that perception of Sense of Mission was similar among white students and students from a multiracial background.

The researchers (Graham et al., 2015) go on to report that religion was among one of the most significant indicators of students' Sense of Mission. Students who did not classify a religion ( $B=-.351$ ;  $p<.001$ ) reported a considerably lower perception of Sense of Mission along with students from non-Christian religions ( $B=-.214$ ;  $p<.001$ ) and students from other Christian-based faiths ( $B=-.110$ ;  $p<.001$ ), compared to Roman Catholic students.

As far as Respect for Diversity, Graham et al.'s (2015) research deduced that the results from the senior student model show their perceptions of others' Respect for Diversity on campus were wide-ranging by school characteristics, demographic background, and institutional context. The researchers state that students at baccalaureate offering arts and science schools ( $B=-.071$ ;  $p<.05$ ) had somewhat lower perception of the school's Respect for Diversity compared to those attending Master's level schools.

The results regarding students' academic experiences discovered their perceptions of faculty, staff, and students respecting other diverse populations was positively correlated with college grades. Students who earned mainly As in school had a more optimistic opinion of Respect for Diversity than students earning mainly Bs ( $B=-.100$ ;  $p<.001$ ) or averaged grades of C or lower ( $B=-.355$ ;  $p<.001$ ) (Graham et al., 2015). The researchers state that students who lived on campus ( $B=-.008$ ;  $p<.01$ ) possessed a somewhat lower perception whereas transfer students ( $B=.008$ ;  $p<.01$ ) reported a slightly more positive perception of students, faculty, and staff's Respect for Diversity. First-generation students reported a slightly more favorable opinion of the campus climate than those whose parents had a college degree ( $B=.101$ ;  $p<.001$ ).

Gender identity and age also considerable influenced students' perception of Respect for Diversity. While men and women possessed comparable views of the campus climate, students who acknowledged another gender identity ( $B=-1.16$ ;  $p<.001$ ) held markedly lower perception (Graham et al., 2015). The researchers go on to report that Asian, Black, and multiracial students reported similar perception of the campus environment as White students. It should be noted that on average, Latino students, compared to White students, reported a significantly increased level of Respect for Diversity ( $B=.208$ ;  $p<.001$ ). Senior students categorizing themselves as Roman Catholic reported a notably higher perception of the school's Respect for Diversity than those from other Christian-based religions ( $B=-.099$ ;  $p<.05$ ), other non-Christian-based religions ( $B=-.188$ ;  $p<.001$ ), and those having no religious affiliation ( $B=-.338$ ;  $p<.001$ ) (Graham et al., 2015).

Regression results from Graham et al.'s (2015) research the senior student model show "major; self-reported college grades; gender identity; race and ethnicity; religious background; attending a Catholic institution; selectivity; and Carnegie type were significant predictors of

senior students' perception of Sense of Mission" (p. 16). The researchers controlled for school experiences, student demographics, and other institutional characteristics (Graham et al., 2015). The researchers report that students at Catholic institutions ( $B=.215$ ;  $p<.001$ ) possessed an increased favorable perception of Values Development compared to those enrolled at an independent school. Selectivity ( $B=-.030$ ;  $p<.05$ ) had a slight adverse result on students' perception of Values Development. They go on to state that students enrolled in Master's level schools possessed a more favorable perception of Values Development compared to those at other Carnegie classified schools ( $B=-.224$ ;  $p<.01$ ).

The findings indicate that along with the other independent variables, STEM majors had a slightly decreased perception of Values Development than non-STEM majors ( $B=-.160$ ;  $p<.001$ ) (Graham et al., 2015). The researchers report that seniors who possessed mainly As in school were more likely to have a more positive perception of Values Development compared to those earning mainly Bs ( $B=-.109$ ;  $p<.001$ ) and Cs or lower ( $B=-.446$ ;  $p<.001$ ). They go on to report that controlling for other student demographics, school experiences, and institutional characteristics, students who chose "prefer not to respond" ( $B=-.595$ ;  $p<.001$ ) had a markedly lower perception of Values Development compared to those who identify as a man.

Model outcomes also indicate statistically significant differences in students' racial and ethnic background. African American ( $B=.122$ ;  $p<.01$ ), and Latino or Hispanic ( $B=.263$ ;  $p>.001$ ) students held a more favorable perception of their schools' Values Development, compared to white students (Graham et al., 2015). The researchers report that, when controlling for other student demographics, college experiences, and institutional characteristics, no variances were found among Asian and multiracial students compared to White students. Much like the Sense of Mission and Respect for Diversity student models, regression results showed

Roman Catholic students reported more positive sense of Value Development, compared to students who did not indicate a religion ( $B=-.292$ ;  $p<.001$ ), identified with a non-Christian religion ( $B=-.126$ ;  $p<.001$ ), and another Christian-based faith ( $B=-.109$ ;  $p<.001$ ) (Graham et al., 2015).

## **Summary**

Milner and Ferrari (2010) argue “the most successful and focused campuses are defined by their mission and driven daily by a sense of mission” (p. 259). Largely, the results give religiously affiliated and independent-mission-centered institutions opportunities for growth as well as results to enjoy (Graham et al., 2015). Measuring the efficacy of mission is challenging, but this research gives way to an opportunity to understanding how students and faculty perceive campuses sense of mission, respect for diversity, and values development (Graham et al., 2015). A continuation of research studies such as these is imperative to the success of Catholic colleges and Universities. Research findings will offer a timely understanding of items for consideration as educational leaders continue to understand how Catholic identity effects student perception of mission.

## **CASE III**

**Boylan, E. (2015). Where Catholic identity is visible: Differences in college students’ mission perception at Catholic and independent colleges. *Journal of Catholic Higher Education*, 34(2), 211-234**

The Catholic identity of an institution has a unique impact on how students perceive the mission of their school (Boylan, 2015). Boylan goes on to note that “although certain constructs like leadership and service are commonly found in mission statements of all types of institutions, it is the interpretation and practical expression of these constructs in the student environment that

makes an institution exceptional and shapes its identity” (p. 212). Boylan’s study is distinctive in that research study on the effect of mission on student perceptions comparative to Catholic identity is new. The researcher states that this study is different from other research on the effect of mission, as it utilizes quantitative research methodology to measure student perceptions. This purpose of the study was to investigate differences in student perception of engagement in institutional mission and identity at Catholic and independent colleges in order to identify the constructs of mission most relevant to students in each group.

“A comprehensive review of mission statements of postsecondary institutions of every kind finds the same concepts and constructs repeated within, although their interpretation and manifestation on campus are distinct and affect groups differently” (Boylan, 2015, p. 213). Seeing that activities led by the strategic plan operationalize mission, which encompasses identity, then it is with strong strategic programming around mission construction correlated with Catholic character, that Catholic identity begins to be observable to students (Boylan, 2015). The researcher goes on to note that concrete strategic initiatives that mission and identity are recognized in the campus environment and thus affecting student perceptions of academic, social, and personal development experiences.

“The ongoing Mission Perception Inventory (MPI) study is a strategic approach to describing the distinct assets of Catholic higher education as seen by students, thereby giving evidence to Catholic colleges of their effectiveness in engaging students in the Catholic identity of the institution” (Boylan, 2015, p. 213). Analyzing the content of mission statements exposes the presence of shared themes across colleges and universities, as well as continuous use of what researchers call “visionary terminology” (Abelman & Dalessandro, 2008). The researchers used the same methodology of analyzing content at the beginning of the MPI study to formulate the

questions. Consequent analysis of content of mission statements of independent schools was conducted, indicating possession of similar constructs found in Catholic college and university mission statements, such as leadership and academic excellence. Boylan (2015) notes that observed constructs were used as the foundation for formulating questions that were purposefully created as “religion-neutral,” in preparation of potential future research to compare outcomes by consortium type of Catholic versus independent.

MPI research is adding to the body of knowledge regarding Catholic identity by utilizing this original instrument to collect college student assessments on mission constructs, perform statistical analyses, and obtain conclusions grounded in evidence captured quantitatively (Boylan, 2015). Contrasting previous studies, statistical analysis is conducted on results and comparisons made among types of institutions to identify causes of relative strength and weakness in results of student perceptions of mission and identity. Assessing perception using the MPI can assist in understanding whether methods of communicating identity are effective.

Irrespective of an institution's affiliations, mission plays a critical role in distinguishing institutional characteristics and possesses the ability to inspire and motivate those within it to communicate its characteristics, values, and history to important external constituents (Morphew & Hartley, 2006). Some ways in which an institution's identity can be conveyed is through academics, interaction with others, and visible symbols clearly placed across the campus. The Catholic institutional environment is a social model of the Catholic philosophy that impacts the behavior and attitudes students perceive and include in their perspective (Boylan, 2015). This occurrence of articulating identity bears a likeness to Social Modeling Theory (Bandura, 1986). The researcher notes that this is the impactful purpose of the MPI study, and more namely useful

to Catholic higher education, because review of constructs of mission essentially related to Catholic identity using this method is forthright.

## **Methodology**

Boylan's (2015) study was conducted to measure the differences in student perception of engagement in institutional mission and Catholic identity at Catholic and independent colleges in order to identify the constructs of mission most relevant to students in each group. This quantitative research study used data from institutions in separate consortia that administered MPI questions attached to the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) in 2009 through 2012. The National Center for Postsecondary Research at Indiana University uses the NSSE to annually collect data at numerous four-year colleges and universities about first-year and senior students' involvement in the institutional environment and their perceptions of the school (Center for Postsecondary Research, 2014). From the beginning, post-secondary institutions that participate have been administered this instrument each year. Constituents utilized for both NSSE and MPI instruments have comparable demographic profiles and are enrolled in colleges and universities of similar population size and with shared characteristics (Boylan, 2015). Eighty-nine institutions participated, which included 59 Catholic and 24 independent colleges, with 25,011 respondents from these institutions.

## **Findings**

"SPSS data files were split by class level and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVAs) were conducted to identify the significant differences between consortia" (Boylan, 2015, p. 218). The researcher states that there are significant differences between consortia on results of three scales: Sense of Mission, Respect for Diversity, and the overall mission Perception Inventory. The researcher states that the Sense of Mission scale means are significantly different between

Catholic independent school consortia for first and senior year, with Catholic means being higher. Boylan did note differences in mean results were detected on the Respect for Diversity subscale and the (MPI) scale, where senior-year means in Catholic consortium were higher than independent consortium means on the subscales and the inventory. Testing was performed by observing effect size to determine strength of mean differences. “The four-year average mean scores by level was .07 lower for Catholic college seniors (4.08) than for first-year students and .18 lower for independent college seniors than for first year students” (Boylan, 2015, p. 218).

Boylan (2015) notes that significant differences, on the first-year level, were found between consortia on questions relating to the perceived existence of the founding community’s tradition and opportunities for spiritual promise, where the Catholic consortium means on these items were higher than the means of the independent consortium. Similarities emerged at the senior level but were even larger. The Catholic consortium mean was higher, at the senior level, than the mean for the independent consortium on items such as expressing individual spirituality, having respect for those practicing different religions and of differing sexual orientations, observing confirmation of mission in courses, and discussions of ethical values by faculty.

Additional findings from the research study were that students at Catholic institutions, not all of who are Catholic, report more opportunities to increase their own religious commitment compared to students at independent colleges. Compared to students at independent schools, students at Catholic colleges perceived the faculty, staff, and other students at their schools to be more respectful of people of with different religious backgrounds (Boylan, 2015). The researcher reports that there is also a significant difference between means of Catholic and independent first-year students on just one item, evidence of the heritage of the institution’s founders (4.27 vs. 3.86). They go on to state that, there are significant differences in

eight of 19 items, with each of them indicating higher mean scores for Catholic schools, at the senior level. Areas of note are opportunities for community service; awareness of the heritage of the institution's founders; faculty, staff, and students having respect for people of difference religious; and students' perception that they are free to express their individual spirituality and strengthen their religious commitment. Catholic college seniors have higher mean scores than at independent colleges on perceiving that mission is seen in courses and that faculty hold discussions the ethical implications of course content. Additional validity testing was conducted and found that there is a high level of confidence that may be endorsed to these results.

The researcher (Boylan, 2015) examined the effect of institution type on scale scores of Sense of Mission, Respect for Diversity, Values Development, and overall Mission perception by performing a one-way Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA). The result indicated a significant effect. The univariate ANOVAs performed conclude that sense of mission scale mean scores were significantly different by institution type. The same scenario occurred with Respect for Diversity and MPI mean scores. However, there was no significant difference by type of institution found on Values Development scale.

A MANOVA was conducted using a split file by student level, to determine differences in students' mean scale scores by first versus senior year by institution type and were found to be significant by level for first-year and senior students. A secondary test, a univariate ANOVAs, was conducted and found that scale mean scores were significantly different, on the Mission scale, by institution type and student level on the Mission scale between first-year students and seniors; between first year student and seniors on the Diversity scale; and on the MPI scale mean scores for first-year students and seniors. There was no significant difference, using type of institution, found on the Values Development scale (Boylan, 2015).

## Summary

Longitudinal results from the Mission Perception study indicate that Catholic college students compared to those at independent colleges recognized the expression of mission and Catholic identity in their environment in distinct conditions that attends to the Catholic character (Boylan, 2015). The researcher found that students perceive in their surroundings, the presence of the religious heritage of the institution, active discussion of ethics in the classroom, respect for diversity, and opportunities for students to strengthen religious commitment, along with other characteristics. The researcher also reports that the results indicate that Catholic college students report higher scores than independent college students on items that strongly demonstrate Catholic identity, specifying that significant differences are found between Catholic and independent college students' responses to religion-neutral questions and constructs of mission. Through the researcher's use of the MPI and NSSE instruments it was found that "Catholic consortium outcomes show strength in student engagement on the same constructs that rise to the top when comparisons are made between Catholic and independent college consortia in the present research" (p. 226).

Boylan's (2015) results found that students at the end of their college career have been exposed to several years of the mission and identity of their institution and may more correctly evaluate the outcome of that experience. These senior respondents have higher mean scores on attitudes relating to diverse populations, performing community service, and perceiving that the mission is shown in courses. The results show higher means for seniors at Catholic schools relative to independent institutions indicating that the perception of mission and identity at Catholic colleges remains resilient after three of four years. The researcher reports that students at Catholic colleges report higher perceptions of principles and constructs attributable to a strong

Catholic identity and that student perceptions of mission are shaped differently over the college years by the type of institution they attend.

Boylan (2015) states that “one limitation of this study is the reliance on research conducted in pooled consortia of Catholic and independent colleges and universities participating in one or more administrations of the NSSE from 2009 through 2012” (p. 217). This means that the results may not be generalizable to other institutions of higher education. The researcher notes that students are not matched one-to-one by class level, but that some are from different cohort years. “Therefore, differences in mean results from first year to senior year do not indicate growth or change by a single cohort over time, but rather represent the levels of performance by student year, first-year or senior, that are distinct” (Boylan, 2015, p. 217).

Boylan (2015) notes that “future research using statistical tests of regression can be undertaken to identify the relative contributions of selected variables for predicting performance on mission items by consortia” (p. 226). Research could also include the results of communicating with the media and the Catholic higher education community about the value-added qualities of Catholic higher education and could be crafted around constructs that have been validated by the research to have the greatest appeal to students. The researcher goes on to note that future research conducted could include colleges and universities from the classifications of institutions used in the research study.

This research study indicates that advancement of mission and engagement by students using more concentrated programming, building upon concepts of Catholic identity is imperative. Communication with the media and campus community about the value of Catholic higher education can be informed by what Catholic college seniors claim are the most familiar characteristics of Catholic identity (Boylan, 2015). The researcher goes on to note that “student

responses suggest that some aspects of Catholic mission are in need of greater attention on Catholic college campuses including programming around ethical and spiritual development of students; respect for people of different sexual orientations, races and cultures; and career preparation” (p. 228). A student’s understanding of a college or university’s mission brings together their educational experience and gives them a sense of purpose. Boylan reports that the outcomes from this research study provide hopeful results that Catholic colleges and universities are nurturing students who value the Catholic identity of their institutions and who mature in their connection with the mission and identity of their institution between the first and last year of college.

### **Conclusion**

The results of these case studies, in this comparative case study analysis, will add to the body of knowledge on the effect of Catholic identity and student perception of mission. As Miller (2011) states, the challenge we are dealing with is to distinguish how to take part in a compelling faith-vision, given what and who we have become in today’s society - multicultural, religiously pluralistic, and sometimes antagonistic to one another. We must welcome scholars of different worldviews, both for their recognized gifts and for the challenges they bring about, because these tests may be gifts not yet recognized (Anthony, 2012). The research shows that an upfront and clear understanding of the mission and identity of a Catholic institution helps students to more successfully navigate and function within their educational environment.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **RESEARCH FINDINGS**

The purpose of this comparative case study analysis was to find emerging trends and themes that would add to the body of knowledge on the effect of Catholic identity on college student perception of mission. Research was conducted to select cases using the theoretical framework of spiritual leadership while ensuring potential cases possessed the following variables: Catholic identity, college student population, mission, and student perception. Research questions were also analyzed for appropriate comparison. The three case studies selected found that leadership having an intimate knowledge of student perceptions were imperative to successful support of the acceptance and dissemination of the Catholicity and mission of their institution.

#### **CASE I**

##### **King and Herr (2015)**

In the King and Herr (2015) case study, “Does Catholic identity affect students?,” the researchers state that to have a full account of Catholic identity, one needs to attend to students and their perspectives. They go on to note that to develop this kind of religious identity, Catholic institutions have created a number of administrative positions and have begun a number of initiatives. The researchers posit that the implicit aim of so much of this work is to ensure students encounter and, one would hope, appropriate the Catholic tradition. The research question was, “To what extent do institutional characteristic of a school affect student perceptions of its religious identity?” (p. 196)

The research findings showed that institutional factors account for about 25 percent of the difference in student perceptions and that the aspects that have the greater impact are those that

students encounter on a regular basis (King & Herr, 2015). The researchers report that the results of their research study also indicate that the variables that most affect student perception are those that they encounter daily and distinguish as distinctly Catholic. While there may be some similarities in how religious campuses portray their Catholic identity, it should be noted that each institution also has its own unique way of expressing its Catholic identity.

## **CASE II**

### **Graham, P., Broderick, C., Ribera, A., & BrckaLorenz, A. (2015)**

Graham et al.'s (2015) research, "Are We Who We Claim to Be Perceptions of Mission Engagement among Students and Faculty at Religiously-Affiliated and Independent Institutions," investigates student and faculty perceptions of mission engagement, taking into consideration salient demographics and institutional characteristics in order to provide meaningful and actionable data for institutions. Specifically, the researchers note that they examined variation in students' and faculty perception of the overall sense of mission engagement, respect for diversity on campus, and the intentional development of ethical values by the institution. Given that this comparative case study analysis was studying college student perceptions of mission, the variable "faculty" and its corresponding findings, were eliminated.

The researchers (Graham et al., 2015) note that, from their findings, they conclude that senior students' results provide some interesting challenges and affirmations on religiously affiliated and independent institution campuses. Senior students who preferred not to respond with their sex/gender showed significantly higher, negative results on all three scales, and students who identified as "another gender identity," had significantly more negative perceptions on two scales: Sense of Mission and Respect for Diversity. Additionally, senior students who identified as Christian (non-Catholic), other religion, and no religion reported greater negative

perceptions on all three scales. The researchers note that these results suggest two particular demographic groups on which to focus institutional efforts, indicating that colleges and universities would benefit from working with groups whose findings show greater negative perceptions of mission engagement. This should be done in order to gain a better understanding of what has caused these perceptions. It is with this information that institutional leaders can make informed decisions on how to bolster effective engagement of these students fostering positive response of an institution's mission (Graham et al., 2015).

The researchers (Graham et al., 2015) report that statistically significant positive results were found in the experiences of first-generation students, when compared to their counterparts, in regards to Sense of Mission and Respect for Diversity. Their research found that non-white students reported statistically significant positive results across the scales compared to White students. Their findings also noted that Latino or Hispanic students reported significantly more positive perceptions than their White peers on all three scales. They go on to state that Black, African American students reported significantly positive responses to the Sense of Mission and the Values Development scales and Asian, Asian American students had significantly positive results on the Sense of Mission scale as compared to their White classmates. These results show that students from diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds are reporting positive experiences with institutional mission, experiences of respect for diversity, and in their values development on the represented campuses in the study (Graham et al., 2015).

### **CASE III**

#### **Boylan (2015)**

In the case study conducted by Boylan (2015), "Where Catholic identity is visible: Differences in college students mission perception at Catholic and independent colleges," the

purpose of the research was to investigate differences in student perception of engagement in institutional mission and identity at Catholic and independent colleges in order to identify the constructs of mission most relevant to students in each group. The research question was, “What are the differences in student perception of engagement and institutional mission and Catholic identity at Catholic and independent colleges in order to identify the constructs of mission most relevant to students in each group?” (p. 218).

In the findings, Boylan (2015) notes that the results show that senior students at Catholic institutions score significantly higher than those at independent institutions on scores demonstrating sense of mission, respect for diversity, and overall mission perception. The researcher goes on to report that the results also show that there are some areas in need of attention, to include developing leadership skills, bolstering respect for other cultures, accepting people of differing sexual orientations, and encouraging awareness of social justice issues. Boylan states that outcomes observed in this research provide encouraging evidence that Catholic colleges and universities are nurturing students who appreciate the Catholic character of their colleges and universities and who grow their association with the mission and Catholic character of their institutions from the first to final year of their college career.

### **Research Study Design**

The research conducted in all three cases utilized quantitative research design to assist in identifying emerging trends and themes throughout the research. Quantitative research can be defined as a kind of empirical research into a social phenomenon or human problem, testing a theory encompassing variables that are measured with numbers and examined with data to understand if the theory describes or predicts phenomena of interest (Creswell, 1994; Gay & Airasian, 2000). It can be further explained that a quantitative approach certifies the opinion that

psychological and social phenomena have an unbiased reality that is independent of the subjects being studied (i.e. the scholar or researcher and the known or subjects are regarded as reasonably distinct and independent) (Yilmaz, 2013).

King & Herr (2015) developed and conducted a survey asking students about perception of, and participation in, the Catholic culture of their campuses. The researchers utilized onsite coordinators at 35 institutions to assist with obtaining approval and increasing participation. The researchers note that they conducted a linear regression using two data sets to examine the extent to which the institutional characteristics of a school affect student perceptions of Catholic identity.

Graham et al. (2015) conducted their research study using student data from the 2014 administration of the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). The researchers note that Catholic Colleges and Universities Consortium (CCU) has existed since 2002 and has used the same consortium items since 2004. These items were designed to focus on evaluating mission effectiveness to help participating institutions by obtaining useful outcomes for accreditation purposes and to act as a tool to make sure institutional goals line up with their mission (Boylan & Crockett, 2014). The researchers note that the Mission Engagement Consortium for Independent Colleges (MECIC) has been available to independent colleges since 2008 and has worked together with the CCU Consortium via the same set of additional questions attached to the end of institutions' survey administrations.

Boylan (2015), utilized data that were obtained from institutions in two separate consortia that administered Mission Perception Inventory (MPI) questions attached to the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) in 2009 through 2012. Some institutions did administer the

NSEE/MPI numerous times during the four-year timeframe, but only the most recent administration year data were used to prevent overrepresentation of any one school in the data.

### **Common Themes in Study Design**

All three studies selected for this comprehensive case study analysis utilized a quantitative research design. Each study used the variables of Catholic identity, college student population, mission, and student perception. King and Herr's (2015) research study examined the question, "To what extent do institutional characteristics of a school affect student perceptions of its religious identity?" (p. 196). The researchers utilized a survey to collect data from students at only Catholic institutions. They performed regression analysis to study the data. Graham et al.'s (2015) research study asked the following research question, "What student demographics and institution characteristics are predictive of agreement with perceptions of institutional mission?" (p. 7). The researchers used previously collected data from the NSSE, CCU consortium and MECIC, which included students from Catholic and independent institutions. The purpose of Boylan's (2015) research study was to investigate differences in student perception of engagement in institutional mission and identity at Catholic and independent colleges in order to identify constructs of mission most relevant to students in each group. Boylan utilized previously collected data from the NSSE but also included previously collected data from the MPI, which included students from both Catholic and independent institutions.

### **Study Participants and Data Collection**

Aliaga & Gunderson (2002) describe it as explaining a phenomenon by gathering quantitative (numerical) data that are examined using mathematically based methods such as statistics. The degree to which a sample reflects the population it was taken from is known as representativeness and in quantitative research; this is a significant factor in understanding the

sufficiency of a study (Polit and Beck, 2006). In a quantitative research study, any number of approaches can be used when gathering data and these can include interviews, questionnaires, attitude scales or observational tools.

## **CASE I**

### **King & Herr (2015)**

King and Herr (2015) utilized data that was gathered from publicly existing resources. From the distribution of their survey instrument, the researchers obtained 1,099 students from 26 institutions. The researchers note that they report the results of 963 surveys rather than the entire set of 1,099 due to some surveys being incomplete. Of the 26 institutions, 17 (65%) had less than 4,000 students and 745 student responses. Only two (8%) of the institutions had populations from 4-9,000 and 56 (6%) student responses. Seven (27%) of the institutions had greater than 9,000 students and 162 (17%) student responses. Fourteen (46%) of the institutions were located in the Northeast of the United States and resulted in 550 (57%) of the student responses. Eight (26%) were located in the Midwest and resulted 146 (15%) student responses. Four (15%) were located in the South and resulted in 267 (28%) of student responses. Lastly, no institutions were located in the West. Fifteen (58%) of the schools were in rural locations and accounted for 696 (72%) of the student responses. Eleven (42%) were urban school and accounted for 267 (28%) of the student responses. The researchers note that they attempted to ensure that their sample population of Catholic institutions represented diversity of Catholic characteristics, varying from institutions that express their Catholic identity to those whom Catholic identity is not clear, as well as schools that fall within these two ranges

## **CASE II**

### **Graham, Broderick, Ribera, & BrckaLorenz (2015)**

Graham et al.'s (2015) research utilized student data from the 2014 administration of the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). The researchers note that Catholic Colleges and Universities Consortium (CCU) has existed since 2002 and has used the same consortium items since 2004. The researchers go on to report that they utilized a student sample for their research study which included responses from 8,316 seniors who attended either one of the 47 institutions in the CCU consortium or 19 colleges in the MECIC.

### **CASE III**

#### **Boylan (2015)**

Boylan's (2015) study utilized data from institutions in two separate consortia that administered that MPI question attached to the NSSE in 2009 through 2012. A mixed methods research methodology (Creswell, 2003) was utilized to formulate the MPI questions. The researcher notes that their process included qualitative analysis of Catholic college mission statements, separation of the most compelling themes, formulation of questions from these themes, and pilot testing. Face validity of the measure was analyzed using a convenience sample of students utilizing focus group research and pilot testing (Boylan, 2015).

The researcher also utilized the NSSE Catholic College Consortium data that was initiated in 2014 with 14 participants. The researcher states that a data library of consortium results from 2004 through 2014 administrations was put together by the author/principal investigator. However, Boylan (2015) notes that only 2009-2012 data were used for this research study. The researcher notes that populations used for administration of both NSEE and MPI instruments have comparable demographic profiles and are enrolled in colleges and universities of similar population size. There were 89 colleges and universities, which included 59 Catholic colleges and universities and 24 independent colleges, with 25,011 participants.

Some of the institutions administered the instrument numerous times over a four-year timeframe. However, the researcher did state that they only used the most recent year data to prevent overrepresentation of any one school in the data. Outcomes of reliability and factor analysis reveal high reliability for the instrument as well as the subscales (Boylan, 2015).

### **Cross Analysis - Participants and Data Collection**

King and Herr's (2015) study used a survey to collect its data. They ensured diversity in the Catholic identity and size of institutions. The researchers do state that, while there have been attempts to classify schools according to Catholic identity, they do not use quantifiable methods. Therefore, ensuring diversity was a challenge. This research study did not capture diversity in racial, ethnic, or religious backgrounds of their population. It also did not include the year of study of the student participants. The researchers also do not note any validity or reliability testing to support their methodology.

Graham et al. (2015) utilized previously collected and utilized a sample of student data from both the NSSC and CCU. This sample included both first-year and senior students. This research study did include both Catholic and independent schools, and utilized and reported on diverse student populations to include racial, ethnic, and religious backgrounds. The researchers employed three scales for their study – Sense of Mission, Respect for Diversity, and Values Development. These scales were guided by Boylan and Pavlick's previous work (2011; Boylan & Crocket, 2014) with a principal component factor analysis with an oblimin rotation.

Boylan (2015) also utilized NSSE student data in the research study. The inclusion of previously collected data from the MPI was also incorporated to help with measuring religious preference. The researcher noted that methodological assumptions of their research are comprised with ways of assessing the measures, comparative sample sizes, replicability,

populations, item validity and reliability, and institutional representativeness. They go on to report that statistical tests chosen are presumed to be adequate to yield valid results that meet the stated purpose of the study. The NSSE and MPI are both ancillary measures of student outcomes. Boylan states that the results are from self-reported data of students' attitudes and perceptions about components of the college experience and are not direct gauges of student learning outcomes. In this study, student results on mission perception are also presumed proxy measures of mission efficacy.

The effectiveness of whether mission-related questions in NSSE could solely determine student involvement in mission, applicable NSSE questions were plucked *a priori* from the instrument and formed into a NSSE Beliefs and Values (NSSE/BV) scale (Boylan, 2015). The researcher goes on to state that a follow-up *ad hoc* exploration of the NSSE/BV scale data showed it was less effective for measuring mission constructs than the MPI, although statistical tests indicated high reliability for the scale.

### **Common Themes - Participants and Data Collection**

Each case study employed quantitative research methodology. While case one (King and Herr, 2015) used survey instrumentation, cases two (Graham et al., 2015) and three (Boylan, 2015) utilized data previously collected from other instruments. Case 2 used the NSSE and CCU, while case three used the NSSE and MPI. All case studies included the following variables: Catholic identity, college students, mission, and college student perception. Graham et al.'s (2015) research study proved to be the most holistic of the three by utilizing the case study analysis variables that not only included Catholic identity, college students, mission, and student perception, but also diversity variables. These diversity variables allowed the case study analysis researcher to better understand not only the effect of Catholic identity on student perception of

mission, but also more specifically the perceptions of students with varying racial, ethnic, and religious backgrounds.

### **Findings**

King and Herr (2015) asked several questions to students about their perceptions but concentrated their analysis on student responses to a single question, “Which statement best describes the religious culture of your college or university?” (p. 199). The researcher’s findings were that institutional characteristics accounted for less than 25% of the difference in students’ perceptions. The researchers also found that the institutional influences that most affect student perceptions are those that students encounter most regularly: the type of resident halls (single-sex or co-ed) and their policies or the frequency of daily mass or the number of courses they take on Catholicism. The researchers also reported that the institutional influences that most affect student perception also are those aspects closely connected to the mission of Catholic colleges and universities. Therefore, classes that students take and living experience are primary factors in understanding student experience of college. Lastly, the researchers state that their study highlights factors that are not as significant for student perceptions of Catholic identity. Religious presidents, the specific alcohol policies, the presence of service learning, and the occurrence of Sunday Mass were not significant variables in their regression.

Graham et al.’s (2015) research study used three scales to study the impact of mission on college campuses and how students perceive the efficacy of an institution’s mission. The three scales were: (1) Sense of Mission, (2) Respect for Diversity, and (3) Values development. The researchers’ study further included variables such as religious, ethnic, and institution size, which proved to shape student perception of mission. The researchers note that senior students who provided no response to the sex/gender question were found to have significantly higher results

on all of the scales. These senior students who were not Catholic, but were Christian, of another religion or reported no religious affiliation also reported increased negative perceptions on all three scales. First-generation students, versus seniors, had significant positive results on both the Sense of Mission and Respect for Diversity scales.

Graham et al.'s (2015) research went on to provide additional findings related to diversity variables. The researchers report that non-white students reported statistically significant positive results across the scales compared to White students. They go on to note that Latino or Hispanic students reported significantly more positive perceptions than their White peers on all three scales. Black, African American students have positive results on the Sense of Mission and Values development scales with Asian American students having significantly more positive result on the Sense of Mission scale compared to White students. Therefore, the researchers posit that students with diverse backgrounds and races report positive results on all three scales.

The results from Boylan's (2015) research study indicates that significant differences are found between Catholic and independent college students' responses to religion-neutral question items and constructs of mission, whereby Catholic college students indicate higher scores than independent college students on items that strongly demonstrate Catholic identity. The researcher reported the existence of the religious heritage of the institution, active discussion of ethics in the classroom, respect for diversity, and students in their surroundings perceive opportunities for students to strengthen religious commitment, among other features. Students at the end of their college career have been exposed to several years of the mission and identity of their institution and may more correctly evaluate the outcome of that experience (Boylan, 2015). The researcher notes that student perceptions of mission are shaped differently over the college years by the type of institution they attend, and students at Catholic colleges report higher

perceptions of principles and constructs that can be attributed to a robust Catholic identity.

Better than an overarching approach, an intentional design concentrated on a narrow but associated subset of constructs of mission is suggested.

Categories	CASE I	CASE II	CASE III
	King and Herr (2015)	Graham et al., (2015)	Boylan (2015)
Purpose	King & Herr (2015) conducted a quantitative study that examined how to identify to what extent institutional characteristics of a school affect student perceptions of its religious identity.	Graham et al. (2015) conducted a quantitative study that investigated perceptions of mission engagement at religiously affiliated and independent institutions.	Boylan (2015) conducted a quantitative study to investigate differences in performance by Catholic and independent college consortia on measures of student engagement in institutional mission.
Data Collection	Survey	Previous data collected and used from National Survey of Student Engagement, the Mission Engagement Consortium for Independent Colleges, and Catholic Colleges	Previous data collected and used from National Survey of Student Engagement and Mission Perception Inventory

		and Universities Consortium	
Findings	Institutional factors account for approximately 25% of the variation in student perceptions and aspects that have greatest impact those that students encounter on a regular basis.	Various individual and institutional characteristics, including religion, race, and institutional size shape perception of mission engagement.	Significant difference in performance by Catholic and independent college students' responses to religion-neutral question items and construct of mission.

3.1 Case Study Matrix

**Cross Analysis of Findings**

King and Herr's (2015) study results suggest several implications for understanding the effects of institutional characteristics on student perceptions of the college or university's religious culture. The researchers found that formal policies do affect student perceptions of Catholic culture. The researchers also note that institutional factors that most affect student perceptions turn out to be those factors that students encounter more regularly: the type of residence hall (single or co-ed) and their policies or the frequency of daily mass or the number of courses they take on Catholicism. What students have the greatest and most frequent exposure to will have the most significant impact. The institutional factors that most affect student perception are also those aspects closely connected to the mission of Catholic institutions (King & Herr, 2015).

Graham et al.'s (2015) study, using three scales, found that individual and institutional characteristics that include race, religion, campus size, effect student perception of mission. Seniors who did not list their sex/gender or who listed themselves as "another gender identity" had more negative perceptions on the Sense of Mission and Respect for Diversity scales. Students who were not Catholic, a non-believer, or were of another faith has negative perceptions on all three scales. These are groups that colleges and universities should focus their attention on ways to more effectively engage these students so that they support an institution's mission. The researchers state that students from diverse backgrounds and races are reporting positive experiences with institutional mission, experiences of respect for diversity, and in their values development on the represented campuses in the study.

The results from Boylan's (2015) research shows that senior students at Catholic Colleges score significantly higher than those at independent colleges on scales representing Sense of Mission, Respect for Diversity, and overall Mission Perception. The researcher also reports that Catholic colleges demonstrate particular strength in representing several distinctive features of Catholic identity, such as knowledge of founding religious community, freedom to express individual spirituality, and discussion of ethical issues. Conversely, there are some matters that the results indicate are in need of attention, to include developing leadership skills, bolstering respect for other cultures, accepting people of differing sexual orientations, and encouraging awareness of social justice issues

### **Common Themes in Findings**

King and Herr's (2015) study found that institutional factors do make up about 25% of the difference in student perceptions of institutions. Graham, et al.'s (2015) research further report in their study that both individual and institutional accounted for 9% of variance in

students' perception of Sense of Mission, 5% variance in Respect for Diversity, and 4% of Values Development.

Graham et al. (2015), along with Boylan's (2015) research studies, investigated both Catholic and independent colleges and universities using the Sense of Mission, Respect for Diversity, and Values Development scales. Graham et al. used these scales to measure the impact of mission on college campuses, particularly how students and faculty perceive the efficacy of an institution's mission. Graham et al.'s research revealed that students at Catholic Institutions held a more positive perception of their institution's Sense of Mission compared to those at independent schools. The researchers also note that students at Catholic institutions held a more favorable perception of Values Development compared to those at independent institutions. For those students who identified as "another gender identity" or selected none and those who were non-Catholic it was found that they had more negative perceptions of Respect for Diversity. First generation and non-White students resulted in significantly positive results on perceptions of Respect for Diversity.

Boylan (2015) used the scales to measure the effect of an institution's type on student perceptions for first-year and senior students. Boylan's research found that scale mean scores differed significantly by institution type and consortia on the Sense of Mission scales between first-year students and seniors; on the Respect for Diversity scale between first-year students and seniors and; on the MPI scale for first-year students and seniors. There were no significant differences by type of institution on the Values Development scale. In summary, it can be stated that in the results in each of the three case studies it was found that Catholic identity does effect student perception of mission.

## **Conclusion**

Morey and Piderit (2006) suggest, “if the Catholic intellectual tradition is to positively influence the campus community...it must have traction with the students. Current and future students and their parents have to find merit” (p. 117). To enhance their religious identity, Catholic colleges and universities need to focus on both their institutional initiatives and the manner in which students receive them. It is clear from the research that students must play a pivotal role when reflecting on an institution's Catholic identity.

King and Herr (2015) studied to what extent institutional characteristics of a school affect student perceptions of its religious identity. They provide results showing that, in order to have a full account of Catholic identity, one needs to attend to students and their perspective. The researchers posit that it is not enough to merely decipher what colleges and universities should or should not do. King and Herr caution against two uses of their research. They note that since policies affect only a component of student perceptions and attempting to influence these variables without student buy-in would be challenging. They go on to report that it could also bring about an unfavorable student response, making initiatives feel forced and subsequently rejected. The researchers also state that they would discourage using these variables to put together a ranking system. The researchers posit such an approach would create data points for institutions that could motivate schools to change their policies for the sake of rankings, reducing characteristics of Catholic identity. Circumventing these tactics can lead to a religious identity that brings these institutions to their definitive goal of an educational experience clearly affiliated with love of God and neighbor (King & Herr, 2015).

Limitations of Graham et al.'s (2015) research study include the variation in students' perception of the overall sense of mission engagement, respect for diversity on campus, and the

intentional development of ethical values by the institution, which makes this study not generalizable. Other limitations of this study are: (1) that the religiously affiliated institutions are more likely than their public counterparts to discuss mission in ethical and elevated terms; (2) the spiritual development of students; and (3) the social and personal development of students.

One limitation of Boylan's (2015) study is dependence on a study conducted in closed consortia of Catholic and independent institutions participating in one or more administrations of the NSSE from 2009 through 2012. The researcher notes that results may not be generalizable to all postsecondary colleges and universities, however, the methodology could be modified to explorations on institutional mission at other institutions. Another limitation noted by the researchers is that respondents by class level are not matched one-to-one by class level, but that some are from different cohort years. "Therefore, differences in mean results from first year to senior year do not indicate growth or change by a single cohort over time, but rather represent the levels of performance by student year, first-year or senior, that are distinct" (Boylan, 2015, p. 217).

## **Summary**

A significant amount of research establishes that individual and institutional characteristics affect experiences in higher education (Baker & Robnett, 2012; Bank, 2011; Chickering & Reisser, 1993; DeSousa & Kuh, 1996; Hu & Kuh, 2002; Ribera, Rocconi, & McCormick, 2013; Strayhorn, 2013). Irrespective of an institution's affiliations, mission plays a critical role in distinguishing institutional characteristics and possesses the ability to inspire and motivate those within it to communicate its characteristics, values, and history to important external constituents (Morpheus & Hartley, 2006). Woodrow (2006) stated that "mission statements reach into people's hearts and souls and motivate them to collaborate toward a cause

that provides them with the opportunity to make a difference in the world” (p. 314). The findings from this comparative case study analysis will add to the body of knowledge regarding the effect of Catholic identity on college student perception of mission.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

#### Comparative Case Study Analysis

The purpose of this comparative case study analysis was to study the effect of Catholic identity on college student perception of mission. This analysis found that, in all three cases, there is a great importance on how Catholic identity affects student perception of mission. Variables considered were Catholic identity, college students, mission, and student perceptions. The purpose of King and Herr's research (2015) was to examine to what extent institutional characteristics of a school affect student perceptions of its religious identity. The researchers found that if Catholic colleges and universities are concerned about the Catholic tradition being handed on to students, they should attend to those aspects that most affect students. King and Herr's study also indicates that the variables that most affect student perception are those that they encounter frequently and recognize as distinctly Catholic. It is important to note that each institution will do this in their own unique way.

Graham et al.'s (2015) research study on Catholic colleges and universities attempts to understand the impact of mission on college campuses, particularly how students and faculty perceive the efficacy of an institution's mission. This case study analysis only considered the student population of this study, and not faculty, as faculty were not one of the variables studied. The researcher's results show that students from diverse backgrounds and races are reporting positive experiences with institutional mission, experiences of respect for diversity, and in their values development on the represented campus in the study. If institutions gain a better understanding of these students' experiences, they can potentially harness these experiences to improve (or sustain) the engagement of all students on their campuses.

The purpose of Boylan's (2015) research study was to investigate differences in student perception of engagement in institutional mission and identity at Catholic and independent colleges in order to identify the constructs of mission most relevant to students in each group. The researcher states that efforts to promote mission awareness and engagement by students can be enhanced by a focused approach to programming that builds on some of the constructs of Catholic identity that this research shows are strong. It was also found that better than a broad-stroke approach, a strategic design focused on a limited but related subset of constructs of mission is recommended.

### **Catholic Identity**

Identity in higher education encompasses both external and internal dimensions (Janosik, 1999). A university with a singular identity, for instance, can be "one which has distinguished itself from other institutions carrying out similar functions" (Townsend, 1989, p. 25) or one which is "unique or outstanding when compared" to others (Butler, 1992, p. 14). Analysis of these external and internal dimensions suggest that institutions which have a distinctive identity exhibit three overarching characteristics: (a) commitment to a unifying theme which is authentically demonstrated through articulation of institutional vision and organizational values; (b) operative decision making strategies which consistently emphasize and support vision and values; and (c) dedication to achieving excellence in the context of the specified institutional vision (Townsend, Newell, & Wiese, 1992).

The Catholic Church, through its publications and communications, has set high expectations for the religious identity of Catholic colleges and universities (Rymarz, 2011). Rymarz goes on to state for a Catholic institution, an imperative part of this identity is establishing both a connection with the past and an engagement with the present culture.

Research suggests that maintaining identity can be helpful for an educational institution (Estanek, James & Norton, 2006). Estanek, James & Norton (2006) remark that the best way to assess the identity of an institution is to base research on its mission statement.

## **Mission**

Most colleges and universities have a defined mission. Morpew and Hartley (2006) point out that irrespective of an institution's affiliations, mission plays a critical role in distinguishing institutional characteristics and possesses the ability to inspire and motivate those within it to communicate its characteristics, values, and history to important external constituents. It is raised in conversations about type of college or university (e.g., community colleges vs. bachelor's-granting universities), used as a alternative to refer generally to institutional values, and used to describe written statements of purpose (Bastedo & Gumport, 2003; Morpew & Hartley, 2006; Woodrow, 2006). While most colleges and universities are in agreement with the significance of mission, liberal arts and religiously-affiliated institutions particularly hold their missions in the highest regard, as they are understood to communicate strong beliefs about human flourishing (Lowery, 2012; Weiss, 2009), as well as exemplify a meaningful tradition that should be protected (Abelman & Dalessandro, 2008).

Research studies on mission report a significant aspect of the environment is the institutional mission, as it implicitly, and at times explicitly, affects decisions as well as the general campus character (Morpew & Hartley, 2006). A robust sense of college mission that brings together the educational experience of students can lessen uncertainty and delineate purpose for students and others in the college or university (Boylan & Crockett, 2014). Chickering (1993) specifies that it is imperative for an institution to possess clearly defined objectives for student learning and development.

## **Future Research**

Future research studies could include replicating this research by including findings on how specific races are affected by Catholic identity (i.e. Hispanic, Asian, American Indian, etc.). It could also include how non-Catholic students are influenced (Buddhist, Muslim, Episcopalian, etc.). Studies could be conducted at other niched-based institutions such as a Historically Black College or University (HBCU). HBCUs are much like their faith-based counterparts in that they have a very specific culture and brand than other college or universities. Faith-based institutions frequently have larger numbers of students who believe and practice a specific faith. HBCUs have a large population of African American students in attendance. Research could be conducted looking at the effect of HBCU culture/identity on non-African American students (Caucasian, Hispanic, American Indian, etc.).

## **Conclusion**

As societal influences continue to change and grow, leaders must be in tune with how to keep the integrity of institutional identity intact. What is clear from this comparative case study analysis is that there is a continuing need to conduct research to add to the body of knowledge on the effect of an institution's Catholic identity on student populations as it relates to mission. To enhance their religious identity, Catholic colleges and universities need to focus on both their institutional initiatives and the manner in which students receive them (King, 2014). This research will help continually inform educational leaders as to how best to communicate and disseminate their identity throughout their campus communities. It is imperative to understand that students play a fundamental role in developing it (King, 2014).

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**APPENDIX**  
**IRB EXEMPTION**



**DELAWARE STATE UNIVERSITY**

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Institutional Review Board – Human Subjects Protection Committee

September 29, 2017

Jacquelyn Malcolm  
Department of Education  
Delaware State University  
1200 N. DuPont Hwy  
Dover, DE 19901

Dear Jacquelyn,

Delaware State University's Institutional Review Board (IRB)-Human Subjects Protection Committee has reviewed your project **“The Effect of Catholic Identity on College Student Perception of Mission”**. After review of application, the Committee has granted an exemption from the IRB as it meets a Category of Exempt Research specified in 45 CFR 46.101 (b).

Please contact the Office of Sponsored Programs at 302-857-6834 if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Dr. Brian Friel  
Chairperson, Human Subjects Committee (IRB)

ckh