ABSTRACT

URBANSKI, CONSTANCE HEFFREN. Identity at a Crossroads: Mapping the Future of Catholic Schools. (Under the direction of Dr. Lance D. Fusarelli and Dr. Kevin P. Brady).

Catholic schools, K-12, in the United States were founded with the mission of responding to Catholic immigrant parents' desire for a place where their children's faith could be developed and protected. Today, however, Catholics have integrated fully into American society and no longer seek a place of refuge. Anxious to take their place in society's power structure, they no longer cling to the traditions and schools associated with their faith. Because this population has changed, a disparity exists between the traditional Catholic school mission and the needs of the population whom the schools now serve. This qualitative study is an examination of this disparity, having as its purpose an understanding of the needs of today's Catholic schools' stakeholders and how the mission of Catholic schools can best respond to these needs while maintaining their Catholic identity. This is a comparative case study, with data collected at Catholic high schools located in Southeastern United States. Research was collected through the use of loosely structured interviews with principals, separate focus groups with representative samples of the students and faculty, and an examination of the advertising materials disseminated by the schools. Results of the study are presented through direct quotes from the participants and reveal that participants view the mission of Catholic schools as serving as a vehicle for success in American society. This presents a dilemma for the schools over whether to accept this as their secularized formal mission, redefining Catholicism as a faith for Americans, not simply as one for immigrants.
Identity at a Crossroads: Mapping the Future of Catholic Schools

by
Constance Heffren Urbanski

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
North Carolina State University
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education

Educational Administration and Supervision

Raleigh, North Carolina

2011

APPROVED BY:

Dr. Lance D. Fusarelli
Committee Co-Chair

Dr. Kevin P. Brady
Committee Co-Chair

Dr. Kenneth H. Brinson Jr.
Committee Member

Dr. Paul F. Bitting
Committee Member
BIOGRAPHY

Constance Heffren Urbanski is currently a principal of a Catholic school within the Diocese of Raleigh. She has a Master's degree in English Education from Wilkes College and a Master's of School Administration from the University of North Carolina. Her goal is to follow the advice of the artist Michelangelo, and always be able to say "I am still learning."
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Background

Non-public schools, like any business, need to fill a particular niche in order to generate the enrollment necessary to succeed. Additionally, once they have established an enrollment base, it is necessary for the schools to remain responsive to their stakeholders’ needs in order to continue filling that niche. In a society in which parents shop for the right school for their child in much the same way that they shop for shoes, administrators often need to present their schools’ attributes in a way that is most appealing to both prospective students and their parents.

When those non-public schools have an established identity that may no longer be appealing to many of those whom the schools need to attract, generating enrollment can be particularly difficult. This may be further complicated by the moral dilemma that administrators of these schools may face. For today’s Catholic schools, this dilemma can be found in the question of whether it is better to maintain focus on the religious affiliation and beliefs on which the schools were founded or to broaden their appeal in order to stay open. Some of the schools’ administrators perceive this to be a moral dilemma because it may involve downplaying the schools’ religious foundation, a belief system to which the administrators are presumed loyal. Additionally, there may be a sense, on the part of the administrators, that downplaying the role of religion is tantamount to betraying their own religious beliefs. However, as expressed by Julie Biddle (1997) in her article Beyond the Traditional Realm, as Catholic schools “grapple with the market and mission of their schools, they must begin to peer over the ‘traditional rim’” (Abstract). The challenge for the
schools is to maintain the distinctive features that make Catholic schools desirable without alienating those who are uncomfortable with the schools’ traditional expression of Catholic dogma. As identified by national research studies and summarized by Convey’s (1992) *Catholic Schools Make a Difference: Twenty-five Years of Research*, these features include small class size, personal attention from teachers, academic and behavioral discipline and a sense of community.

For years, K-12 Catholic schools in the United States have found their niche by responding to Catholic parents’ desire for a place where their children’s faith could be developed and openly shared.

The Catholic school participates in this mission like a true ecclesial subject, with its educational service that is enlivened by the truth of the Gospel. In fact, faithful to its vocation, it appears ‘as a place of integral education of the human person through a clear educational project of which Christ is the foundation’ directed at creating a synthesis between faith, culture and life.

(Pope Benedict XVI, 2007, pp. 2-3)

Often during the history of American Catholic schools, this synthesis of faith and culture has been used to insulate students from a world that seemed inconsistent and/or disrespectful to that faith.

Catholic schools have, over the years, provided a place where Catholics could be protected from the hostility with which so many Americans treated them. Considered an immigrant faith that was vaguely ‘foreign’ if not treasonous, due to its ties to a Pope who resides in Rome, Catholicism was not a faith that was accepted by all in the United States
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(Fisher, 2000). For some Catholic immigrants newly arrived to the United States, both faith and ethnicity made assimilation into the mainstream difficult. Viewed by some in their new country as having a culture that was divisive and therefore dangerous, they often discovered that they were the object of fear and censure. However, determined to protect their faith and remain loyal to it, many Catholic parents enrolled their children in schools run by their parish.

A parish, the smallest geographical section of a Catholic territory referred to as a diocese, typically houses one church which is under the direction of the parish priest or pastor. Those parishes that were established in the United States during the eighteenth century were largely “nationality parishes” that served the religious needs of a particular ethnic group. While some regard these parishes as an important element in immigrants’ adjustment to their new home, others believe that, by allowing the parishioners to preserve their native culture, the parishes impeded assimilation (Juliani, 2007).

One element of parish life is the parish or parochial school. Parish schools are open to parishioners and are usually funded, at least in part, by the parish. While not all Catholic schools are parish-affiliated, approximately seventy-eight percent of Catholic elementary schools today are supported by a parish (National Catholic Education Association (NCEA), 2009). Since their inception, the parochial school was considered both a source of education and a method of preserving and protecting the faith in Catholic youth (Bryk, Lee, & Holland, 1993).

Since the Third Plenary Council of 1884, parochial schools have been the subject of lively debate (Dolan, 1985) revolving around the role that they should fill in the lives of the
parishioners. Originally identified by the first Catholic bishop in the United States, John Carroll, as having the “virtuous and Christian instruction of youth as a principal object of pastoral solicitude” (Hunt et al., 2004, p. 1), the mission of parish schools has been defined differently over the years. The provisions of parish school life changed with the needs of those whom they served, moving from ethnic enclaves for the protection of immigrants new to the United States to middle class parishes with a challenging curriculum to rival those found in secular private schools. Yet, parish schools have long been a vital part of the lives of the Catholic community. “The parish was the geographic, psychological, and spiritual center of the neighborhood” (Hidy, 1998, p. 13) and as such has had a great impact on the lives of those whom they served. For many, the parish represented more than just a community that gathered together to celebrate their faith. For them the parish was a the embodiment of the sociological definition of the word “community” in that the parish acted to “(1) develop a sense of belonging and loyalty, (2) empower action in common and (3) nurture values and standards for its members as part of their moral consensus” (Coriden, 1997, p. 6).

The parochial school system is divided into dioceses, over which the supreme educational authority is the bishop. The bishop of each diocese governs the schools in the diocese with the assistance of a school board and diocesan school superintendent. The pastor, who works with the school principal in such matters as salaries, building upkeep, and faith formation, holds immediate authority over each school. There is no recognized central authority in the area of Catholic education (Ryan, 1912). Despite this lack of centralization, as viewed by Archbishop Spalding, “The greatest religious fact in the United States today is
the Catholic School system, maintained without any aid by the people who love it” (Ryan, 1912, p. 1).

Aware of the role that parish schools played in the lives of many Catholics, the Church encouraged full participation in and support for the schools. After the First Catholic Synod, the first Catholic bishop in the United States addressed a pastoral letter to Catholics in which he emphasized the importance of “a pious and Catholic education of the young to insure their growing up in the faith” (Ryan, 1912, p. 2). This led to the plan of organizing separate Catholic schools. Further, the First Plenary Council of Baltimore in 1829 stated, “We judge it absolutely necessary that schools should be established, in which the young may be taught the principles of faith and morality, while being instructed in letters” (Ryan, 1912, p. 2). This emphasis was reiterated in 1929 in Pope Pius XI’s work, *The Christian Education of Youth*, in which he stated the ideal educational situation as one in which Catholic children are enrolled in Catholic schools.

Although the role of the Catholic parish has evolved over the years in an attempt to meet its members’ needs, its contribution has been a lasting one. As explained by Hidy (1998), “the parish school, church, and community steeped in the Catholic ethos offers the young child – by definition open, impressionable and imaginative – the chance to experience Catholic theology married to every day” (p. 13).

However, it may also be the Catholic ethos itself that is currently in flux. Catholic ethos, “an element that gives …a specific identity, that is said to provide an educational environment that is distinct and unique” (Freund, 2001, p. 1), was originally derived from the traditions of the religious orders that administered the schools. With Vatican II, the presence
of those religious faithful dwindled and was replaced by lay people who unwittingly altered the ethos to some degree (Fahy, 1992). This alteration, combined with the change in mission to include greater emphasis on academic success and social mobility, has resulted in a Catholic school experience that no longer resembles that found at the inception of Catholic schools in the United States (O’Farrell, 1992). As viewed by Hidy (1998), we need to acknowledge that “Catholicism no longer defines us, that our values, spending habits, language and attitudes are indistinguishable from anyone else’s. It is not our faith, but our social class that shapes us” (p. 14). Upon their immigration to the United States European Catholics were “hewers of wood and drawers of water for white Nordic, Protestant America” (Kane, 1955, p. 23). However, American Catholics have since grown in power, as they have grown in number. “In the middle of the 20th century U.S. Catholicism moved from neighborhood enclaves into mainstream society. Many Catholic families are now solidly middle class” (Ospino, 2010). As this shift in class has occurred it has been accompanied by a shift in values that has impacted Catholics’ choice in schools.

**Statement of the Problem**

The mission of Catholic schools in the United States has always been intrinsically linked to the society that the schools have served. Not just individual schools but the entire American Catholic school system was developed by the Church “as a response to the felt need to protect itself and its people from the cultural animosity they felt in America” (McShane, 2010, p. 2). As such, the schools were responding to the prejudices that Catholic immigrants faced. So great were these prejudices that pleas on Catholics’ behalf for more
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sensitive treatment made by John Hughes, the first Archbishop of New York, to the Public School Society were denied (McCadden, 1964).

Rather than encouraging Catholics to continue sending their children to be educated in a hostile environment, Hughes and his colleagues decided to start their own, discrete Catholic school system. Within this more secure environment, they felt certain that the Catholic faith would be protected and nurtured. They recognized that, without an alternative to public schools’ Protestant influence, the immigrants would be limited to choosing either to remain outsiders and the object of scorn or to give up their faith as well as their native culture and language in order to fully assimilate into American society. The Catholic schools system provided the means for immigrants to be insulated from the hostility of American culture and maintain their own customs (NCEA, 2010).

However, the Church was aware that protection was not the only function that the schools could provide. Recognizing that, ultimately, their students needed to assimilate into their new American culture, the schools worked to prepare students “to be players in the culture and the world that they would inhabit as they grew older” (McShane, 2010, p. 5). Realizing that the students’ faith was not the key to acceptance in this world, the schools emphasized academic excellence, believing that mastery and accomplishment in this realm would lead to success in the students’ new society.

Just as the mission of Catholic schools in the 19th century was driven by the needs of the society they served, so too have Catholic schools responded to needs felt at other critical points. As immigrants became assimilated into American culture, they no longer needed to reside in ethnic centers within urban areas for protection. They were replaced in these
neighborhoods by the poor, often non-Catholic minorities. Having lost the niche that they had once found in assisting the immigrants, the schools now discovered a new niche, one with a very similar mission (Bryk, et al., 1993). Once again, the schools provided service to the poor and academic challenge to a group marginalized by much of American society. Once again, the Catholic schools found that their mission was one that responded to a societal need.

Today, K-12 Catholic schools in the United States are facing a crossroads far more complicated than any faced in the past. These schools are now dealing with a changing student demographic that includes non-Catholics as well as Catholics who no longer cling to their faith for protection and acceptance. Additionally, Catholic schools face increasing costs, as the last of the post-World War II generation of religious personnel retires, to be replaced by more expensive, lay employees (Vitello & Hu, 2009). In order to continue to thrive, Catholic schools must again identify and respond to a specific need. By doing so the schools may be able to formulate a mission that will reenergize the schools and provide them with a direction for the future. In order to recognize and address these needs, however, they must first identify the diversity that now exists among the stakeholders in Catholic schools.

The change in student body may be summed up by Byrnes’ (2004) comment that, “Gone are the days that parents sent their children to Catholic schools primarily because they are Catholic” (p. 43). Enrollment in Catholic schools has changed due to a number of factors. Among these is the dilution of individual Catholic identity that resulted from the assimilation of Catholics into American society. This problem of weakened Catholic identity has been compounded by the dearth of clergy and religious teaching in Catholic schools since
Vatican II (Marty, 1995). This lack of clergy and decline in religious teaching has, in turn, resulted in budget problems created by the need to pay lay teachers. These budget problems and the competition for enrollment from charter and other private schools have led to increases in tuition. Because of these increases, and strong competition from charter and private schools, Catholic schools today must work hard to attract students. The students of today are very different from the traditional Catholic school student population in demographic and in expectations.

Today’s stakeholders include non-Catholics who regard Catholic schools as safe environments that have an established reputation for discipline, both in terms of conduct and in academics. The rate of non-Catholic students enrolled has risen from 2.7% in 1970 to its current level of 14.5% (NCEA, 2010). These students often select the schools when the local public schools are not an option, due to poor academic product, lack of security, or an overemphasis on testing. For others, Catholic schools are regarded a more affordable alternative to secular private schools, a phenomenon referred to by Baker and Riordan (1998) as the “eliting” of Catholic schools. For these stakeholders, a strong academic program is often the goal of their enrollment.

The stakeholders also include Catholics, both those who are devoted to their faith and those for whom religion is less important. Neither of these faces the type of religious discrimination that directed the construction and mission of the Catholic schools of the past. Today’s Catholic students, in most areas of the United States, may never have witnessed the bias that characterized the Catholic experience of the past. For them, the mission upon which these schools were formed has no relevance.
Additionally, in dealing with their changed demographics, Catholic schools must recognize that today’s stakeholders have both an extensive array of educational choices available to them and, in many cases, the financial latitude to take advantage of those choices. Further, Catholic schools must acknowledge that the educational consumers of today are both savvy and demanding. In order for the schools to be competitive with other private schools, they must provide an educational product that is academically strong and capable of competing with that found in these secular, often well-funded private schools. To do this requires that the schools maintain a strong financial base.

Not only must Catholic schools be academically challenging and responsive to the needs of society, the schools must also identify a strategy for the expression of their Catholic identity. If the schools wish attract additional enrollment by marketing themselves to non-Catholic families, they may need to focus more on what makes them an attractive educational option for those families and less on their religious affiliation. In areas such as North Carolina, in which the Catholic population represents only 10% of the state’s total population (Statemaster, 2009), maintaining Catholic identity without alienating potential students may be particularly difficult. However, as presented by Fr. Joseph McShane, former President of Fordham University, Catholic schools need to be “sneaky” in dealing with their own future. While few would immediately welcome a strategy that advocates being “sneaky”, McShane (2010) clarifies this advice, stating that, if the schools become identified with academic excellence, “The brand will bring them in; the success they seek will keep them in the seats; and the wisdom of love will make them whole” (p. 11). This “sneakiness” is closely tied to
the schools’ administrators’ sense that promoting Catholic schools today often involves a moral dilemma.

Because the struggle for Catholic schools to adapt to a changing society is one that affects the schools’ future, as well as impacting the direction that the Catholic Church may take with regard to how it relates to both Catholic and non-Catholic youth, an examination of the issue is significant. If the Catholic Church is to remain a vital component in the lives of its children, its educational mission must be clarified for both stakeholders and observers. Catholic educators must recognize that it is no longer necessary for assimilation into American society or protection from it. Rather, Catholic educators must acknowledge that their mission must respond to current societal needs in order to survive. However, this newly formulated mission must also embrace the traditions of Catholicism that make its history and its identity unique.

Further complicating the schools’ need to gain acceptance as both steeped in tradition and relevant to contemporary issues is the scandal of sex abuse that has recently been the focus of media attention. This scandal has not only been detrimental to the image of Catholicism that is presented to those outside the faith, it has also shaken the confidence of even the staunchest Catholics. While the abuse itself, though shocking, is reported to have been perpetrated by a minority of the priesthood, “a percentage not disproportionate to that recorded in other helping professions such as teaching or counseling” (Whitehead, 2002, p. 1), the greater betrayal has been the extent to which the abusers have remained unsanctioned. It is reported that “as many as two-thirds of the U.S. bishops have in effect tolerated such misbehavior by simply transferring the offending priest” (Whitehead, 2002, p. 1). That Pope
Benedict XVI, in his fifth year of the papacy, is reported by some to have “been responsible for some of the failings of abusive priests” (Bryant, 2010, p. 1), further shakes the confidence of Catholics around the world, while also detracting from the Church’s mission. For the schools that are affiliated with that Church the scandal adds another roadblock to the presentation of Catholic schools as a desirable educational option. The scandal further obfuscates the schools’ attempts at identifying a mission that can marry both tradition and change.

Bridging this gap between the past and the future will require a responsiveness and openness to change that would be relevant for study by many institutions that seek to avoid obsolescence. Because the conflict between tradition and change that is the focal point of this research study can result in lessons that can be applied to areas as diverse as the continuation of the traditional marriage or the federal postal system, its study may be significant to researchers and policymakers in many areas of society.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to investigate the disparity between traditional Catholic values upon which Catholic schools were developed and the values of Catholic school stakeholders of today, with the purpose of redefining the future of Catholic schools’ mission. Many Catholic schools are discovering that a dilution in stakeholders’ Catholic identity, combined with the increase in the diversity of their student population created by discontent with public schools, has resulted in a discrepancy between the traditional values that were the driving force behind the schools’ original mission and the beliefs of its new student demographic. This imbalance may, in turn, create a need for the realignment between the
current student population and the values they hold and the professed mission of Catholic schools today. The purpose of this study, therefore, is to investigate that need and to identify a possible direction for Catholic schools’ future mission.

**Research Questions**

The overarching question that drives this study is *Can Catholic school administrators develop a response to the needs of their changing population that will both remain true to the belief system on which the schools are based and be pragmatic enough to adapt to the population that keeps their schools sustainable?* This question acknowledges the possibility that a compromise can be reached, but does not accept that such a compromise is either inevitable or easily reached.

Further, the study will consider the question: *What aspects of Catholic school life indicate that its changing population of stakeholders is impacting the schools’ expression of Catholic identity?* This question addresses the need for specificity regarding the elements of school culture which are most being altered. This understanding will be essential to any efforts to understand the changes to date and will be useful in redefining the mission for Catholic schools in the future because it will indicate which areas of school life have the greatest potential for conflict with traditional values.

During the course of my study I hope to generate some answers to the following questions, which will help to inform the study and to add context to the dilemma of changing population within Catholic schools:

1. How are students in K-12 Catholic schools in the United States today different from those of past years?
2. What are today’s stakeholders’ specific priorities and which of these priorities would be categorized as needs rather than as preferences?

3. What changes need to be made in Catholic schools’ mission in order to address these needs?

4. How will making relevant changes to address stakeholders’ needs impact Catholic identity?

**Definition of Key Terms**

In order to remove ambiguity from the discussion of Catholic schools and their mission, the following terms and their definitions have been provided:

**Catholic ethos**: The fundamental values that identify something as Catholic. The expression, stated and unstated, of faith within an event that marks it as uniquely Catholic (Deehan, 2007).

**Diocese**: A diocese refers to the administrative territorial unit that is under the authority of a bishop. Typically, an area is divided up geographically into distinct dioceses, each under the domain of a specific bishop (Ryan, 1912).

**Lay employees**: Lay employees are those non-religious who make up 93% of Catholic school employees today (NCEA, 2010).

**Mission**: A mission statement provides a foundation for all activities within a school. It is a unifying touchstone about what the school values and what it stands for. A mission provides stakeholders with a sense of identity and shared purpose (Abrahams, 1999).

**Parish**: A parish is a geographical portion of a diocese that is under the direction of a priest who is called a pastor. Each parish typically has one church, but may have more than
one priest assigned to it. However, each parish is under the authority of one pastor (Ryan, 1912).

**Parochial school**: A parochial school, also called a parish school, is controlled and supported by the parish with which it is affiliated. It receives funding, to a large extent, from its accompanying parish church (Freude, 1998).

**Pastor**: The Catholic priest who has responsibility for a specific congregation called a parish (Nelson, 1990).

**Privatize or secularize**: To change function or focus from one that is religious to one that is worldly or lay (Ryan, 1912).

**Roman Catholic Church**: Roman Catholicism is the largest Christian faith. It traces its roots to the Apostles, specifically to Peter, who is believed to be the first pope (Bowker, 2006).

**Traditional Catholic school student**: A student who is a Catholic and who attends the school from a desire to continue learning about his/her faith and acquiring an academic education in an environment in which faith is freely discussed.

**Principles Embodied in Parochial Schools**

The sacrifice which Catholics are making in maintaining their system of primary schools is justified, in their estimation, by the following principles:

- (1) The spiritual interests of the child, while not exclusive of others, such as learning, health, skill, ability to make a living, etc., are supreme. Where there is danger of wrecking the soul of a Catholic child no consideration of economy has weight.
• (2) Next to religion, morality is the most important matter in the life of a child. Catholics maintain that morality is best taught when based on religion. Catholic educational theorists, especially, are convinced that the immature mind of the child cannot grasp principles of morality except they be presented by way of religious authority and religious feeling.

• (3) Considering the nature of the child-mind, the whole curriculum of the school is best presented when it is organized and unified, not fragmented and disconnected. Religion, appealing as it does to the heart as well as to the head, offers the best principle of mental and spiritual unification and organization. The exclusion of religion from the schools is a pedagogical mistake.

• (4) Although condemned by secularizing educationalists and sectarian enthusiasts as un-American and opposed to our national institutions, our schools seem to us to be second to none in national usefulness and effectiveness. They teach patriotism, and the results show that they teach it successfully. They teach morality, and the lives of the Catholic people of the country show the result. They teach religion, thus constituting, in an age that questions everything, a great institutional force on the side of belief in God, in religious obligation and in definite moral responsibility. (Ryan, 1912, p. 71)

**Significance of the Study**

This study is significant because it can give insight into the direction of the Catholic Church and its schools. An overview of the direction of Catholic education is important to Catholics around the world because it provides necessary data on how the Church and its
teachings are regarded both by Catholics and by non-Catholics. Further, it provides insights that are useful in determining how pertinent the Church and its schools are considered in today’s society. Both of these issues may be used as a barometer in assessing the overall health of the Catholic faith in the United States. This may, in turn, enable the leaders of the Church to make more efforts at presenting the faith in ways that increase its relevance for today’s changing society.

This study can also fill a gap in the literature concerning the role of Catholic schools in the South in general. Because the schools are a minority, there is little written about them or about how they fit into the predominantly Protestant landscape. Additionally, the study can add to the literature concerning Catholic schools in North Carolina, about which there is a dearth of existing literature.

Similarly, although there is significant study of the Wake County School System’s efforts to bring diversity through redistricting, little has been written about the impact that these efforts are having on the private and/or religious schools that enroll their expatriates. This study may provide a perspective, although indirectly, on that issue that is currently nonexistent.

Outside of the Catholic community, the study is significant as a symbol of the clash with modern culture that is being experienced by many traditions. What occurs in the Catholic schools may reflect outcomes for other such traditions and may indicate to them strategies that they can adapt for their own survival.

Because the struggle for Catholic schools to adapt to a changing society is one that affects the schools’ future, as well as impacting the direction that the Catholic Church may
take with regard to how it relates to both Catholic and non-Catholic youth, an examination of the issue is significant. If the Catholic Church is to remain a vital component in the lives of its children, its educational mission must be clarified. Catholic education must recognize that it is no longer necessary for assimilation into American society or protection from it. Rather, Catholic education must acknowledge that its school communities have changed drastically, both in religious composition and in the way in which they regard the schools’ role in their lives. The schools must, therefore, realize that their current mission is one that must be re-evaluated and revised to meet current stakeholders’ needs in order to survive. However, this newly formulated mission must, to remain Catholic, also embrace the traditions of Catholicism that make its history and its identity unique.

Bridging this gap between the past and the future will require a responsiveness and openness to change that would be relevant for study by many institutions that seek to avoid obsolescence. Because the conflict between tradition and change can result in lessons that can be applied to areas of all types of education, encompassing both their current curriculum and their method of providing instruction, its study may be significant to researchers and policymakers in diverse areas of society. In fact, it may be useful to those affiliated with other types of institutions that are seeking to redefine their own mission statement.

Summary

Over the past few centuries, American Catholics have built an alternative school system in response to the needs of the people whom they serve. Although historically opposed by non-Catholics as unpatriotic and divisive due to their connection to a Pope who
is not American, the schools provided a haven for immigrants who faced discrimination, and a safe environment in which to teach their faith.

As Catholics became increasingly assimilated into the culture of their new country, their schools’ mission evolved to include an emphasis on academics as a vehicle for upward mobility. Associated with discipline and academic rigor, the schools received the full support of the Catholic Church. However, despite this support, the issue of school financing has been “a matter of priority concern for Catholic parishioners and dioceses in every historical period and geographic location” (Walch, 1996, p. 301).

A dwindling demographic, shortage of religious clergy working in Catholic schools, and dilution in Catholic identity soon complicated the issue of affordability for those who wished to attend the schools. As Catholics no longer enrolled in the schools for protection or indoctrination in their faith, the schools found it necessary to turn to non-traditional students for enrollment. Yet, this enrollment has created a need to re-evaluate the schools’ mission. As framed by Grace (2002), Catholic schools are now challenged to remain relevant and "on the front foot" in an “increasingly demanding secular and market-driven global society” (p. 5). Catholic schools across the United States are deciding whether to face the challenge of contemporary life and redefine their mission or to acknowledge that the need for Catholic education no longer exists.

Chapter Two includes an overview of the literature, tracing the development of Catholic education in the United States. It identifies the resistance to that development and the role that Catholic schools played in the lives of the immigrants. It then traces the
evolution of the schools as they address the needs of Catholics who have assimilated into society.

Along with the development of Catholic schools, the chapter follows the evolving mission of those schools as that mission alters due to the changing role of their stakeholders and the fluctuating needs of the society in which those stakeholders live. The chapter also follows the migration of Catholics into the Southeastern region of the United States. It chronicles the development of Catholic schools in the predominantly Protestant state of North Carolina, acknowledging the impact of anti-Catholic sentiment on the development of Catholic identity in the state.

Chapter Three identifies the use of Bolman and Deal’s Four Framework approach to organizations as the conceptual framework used, explaining the relevance of this framework to the study. It explains each of the frames and the role that it will play in organizing and informing the data. It indicates the use of a constructivist perspective for the study, as one that allows for a fluid approach that is consistent with the nature of the topic to be studied.

Chapter Three includes the research design as well as the research questions that will guide the study and the sites from which data will be compiled. It includes a characterization of each of the sites, and an overview of points for comparison between the two. It also points out that the selected sites are largely representative of the broad range of stakeholders present in Catholic schools today.

The chapter also provides a rationale for the use of a qualitative, dual case study approach. It addresses the appropriateness of this approach based on the subject being studied. It includes the methods that will be used in accumulating data and the way in which
the data will be organized and analyzed. Further, it addresses issues of validity and reliability, acknowledging that, for some qualitative researchers, these terms have been replaced by the arguably more accurate “credibility” and “confirmability” (Trochim & Donnelly, 2006). The chapter also stipulates the study’s efforts to provide a triangulated approach to data collection. It continues with an acknowledgment of areas of personal bias/limitations that may impact the study and continues the discussion of the study’s limitations that was initiated in Chapter One.

Finally, Chapter Three suggests that the significance of the study lays in its examination of the conflict that can result when traditional values are confronted by progress. This conflict is one that may be felt by a broad range of institutions, both religious and secular.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

General Introduction

Today’s Catholic schools, K through 12, in the United States are experiencing a significant shift in their student populations due to factors as global as the effects of the No Child Left Behind legislation and patterns of migration and as local as the individual fluctuations of each community’s population or vagaries of the local public school board (Hoff, 2008). The balance of Catholic school student populations is moving from a predominantly traditional Catholic student community to one that has an increasingly strong representation of non-Catholics. Additionally, those Catholics who remain affiliated with the schools no longer enroll their children in the schools simply from a desire to maintain and protect their Catholic identity. No longer made up of loyal Catholics who accept the decrees of the religious hierarchy without question, Catholic school stakeholders today may be equally critical of the Church with which the schools are affiliated, whether or not those stakeholders are Catholic.

Leslie Scanlon (2002) attributes this feeling of skepticism toward the Church to a combination of the influences of general culture and the abundance of choices now available to Catholics. For Scanlon, “accustomed to having choices, to questioning authority and institutions, American Catholics feel free to challenge doctrine with which they disagree, to look skeptically at organized religion” (p. 28). This freedom to criticize may have an effect on the way in which Catholic identity is expressed within the schools, creating a disparity with its formal, institutionalized expression. This discrepancy may then result in the need for a re-evaluation of the schools' mission.
As public school parents become increasingly disenchanted with the rigorous testing mandated by NCLB’s emphasis on accountability, they are looking to Catholic schools as an option. Similarly, those who are disappointed with the academic performance or the safety of their public schools are turning to Catholic schools for a remedy. Unlike public schools, Catholic schools are not held accountable for end of course testing, nor are they concerned with particular measures of annual yearly progress, as they utilize standardized testing for prescriptive rather than evaluative purposes. Further, Catholic schools in some areas out-perform neighboring public schools on the standardized testing they do administer, making them an attractive option for those who can afford the tuition charged by Catholic schools. For some this is made particularly attractive when coupled with the schools’ ability to refuse admission to those who may be regarded as threatening to the safety of those enrolled, providing a more secure, safe environment.

While this increase in non-traditional Catholic students is often a boon to Catholic schools suffering a loss of traditional students due to economic challenges and/or a general loss of Catholic identity, it also has resulted in some unanticipated problems. Used to dealing with Catholic families that accepted that their schools were primarily responsive to the dictates of their Church, Catholic school administrators of today are struggling to address the needs of families who are not a part of that Church. Because they are not a part of the Church they are often ignorant of its policies and unconcerned with the hierarchy from which many of those policies have been derived.

In the same way, many Catholic school administrators are finding that the identities of their schools have not kept pace with their changing student bodies. No longer turning to
the schools for protection from a hostile anti-Catholic society, as had been the case at the schools’ inception, today’s Catholics do not regard the schools as a sanctuary (Veto, Nugent, & Kruse, 2001). Similarly, they no longer rely upon the schools to aid them in maintaining devotion to their faith. Today’s Catholics are often conflicted about that faith even if they continue to identify with it. As former Catholic priest James Carroll explains, “A Catholic can continue to claim Catholic identity even while disagreeing powerfully with those who assert their exclusive right to define Catholic identity” (Kennedy, 2008, p. 65). This conflict, however, presents a greater challenge to Catholic administrators who must walk a delicate line between maintaining the Catholic identity of the schools and generating sufficient student enrollment to allow the schools to continue to stay open. Since many of the schools rely upon a parish or diocese for some degree of financial support, this may pose a dilemma that is difficult to resolve (Pytel, 2009). Adding to the confusion, Catholic school administrators are selected based partially upon their solid standing and presumed loyalty to the teachings of the Church. This background may further obfuscate the administrators’ ability to make decision regarding the schools’ future direction and changed mission.

In order to avoid alienating their newly diverse stakeholders, the administrators may need to recognize that the schools’ traditional values are no longer consistent with those of many in their school community. For some schools, this inconsistency has resulted in alterations to their Catholic identity of which they may not be fully conscious and which may not have been planned. As viewed by James Carroll, “The Catholic people...are really
changing the Church quite powerfully, simply by continuing to affirm their identities as Catholics while also affirming their responsibilities for their own lives” (Kennedy, 2008, p. 66).

Since the early 1700’s Catholic schools in the United States have offered an alternative to those who did not feel that their particular needs were being met by public schools. For those new to the United States, Catholic schools presented a means by which they could more readily be assimilated into their new nation while not completely eschewing their native culture (NCEA, 2010). For many, Catholic schools provided an atmosphere in which their faith could be fostered and protected, free of the Protestant influence that pervaded public schools (Billington, 2000). For others, Catholic schools were an ideal forum for indoctrination in the faith, a venue for evangelization (O’Connor, 1998). As Catholic schools became more successful, both academically and in terms of enrollment, many parents and children turned to them as the answer to overcrowded classrooms and a mediocre academic product. In urban neighborhoods, in which safety was a priority, concerned parents sent their children to the schools in the hopes of protecting them from societal values that conflicted with their own. Parents of children with special needs often found Catholic schools a desirable option to the labeling and isolation that their children faced in public school programs (U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005). Though initially created as a means of developing and insulating the Catholic faith while providing an alternative to the predominantly Protestant influenced public schools, Catholic schools and their mission have changed with the changing society that they have served over the years. It is the awareness that their mission is being changed and uncertainty over the ramifications of that change
which, in many cases, is without plan or involvement on the part of the Church that sponsors them, that concerns some.

An organization’s mission is its statement of purpose. It serves as a compass that unifies its stakeholders and clarifies the organization’s reason for existing. As viewed by Schnaubelt (2007), the mission statement has multiple uses. “Since the mission statement articulates an organization’s vision and values, it can be an effective leadership tool, public relations tool, and compass for decision-making” (p. 1).

The need for a stated purpose as focal point is particularly true for schools. “A school, to be effective, must have a clear and vital mission” (Boyer, 2002, p. 14). For Catholic schools in the United States, the relationship between the students attending the schools and American society has always had a great impact on the schools’ definition of their mission. Skerrett (2009) argues that it is vital for schools to regularly reevaluate their mission based upon objective data that accurately depicts student needs. As their student populations have changed, the mission and culture of Catholic schools in the United States have evolved in response to this change. Though often not a purposeful alteration, the mission of Catholic schools has demonstrated a subtle shift that reflects the values and needs of its changing stakeholders. This shift has caused some to pose the question: “What makes a school ‘Catholic’ and why is this important...?” (Casey, 2009, p. 10). Attempts to answer this question have revealed a sharply divided Catholic community, as stakeholders struggle with the realization that it may be economically necessary for their schools’ mission to keep pace with the changes in the students that they serve. Often this changing mission conflicts with the tradition upon which the schools were founded. This conflict, if unresolved, may threaten
the schools’ expression of their Catholic identity, long considered vital to their societal role. Reardon (2004) depicts this change in identity as a “villain void”, believing that the schools’ identity and mission have lost their focus of protecting their students from external criticism. She believes that, in losing this emphasis, the schools themselves have become generic. “Parents who regard the word ‘Catholic’ as a brand name are mistaken” (p. ii). Reardon believes that today’s Catholic schools exist as “myriad micro-organisms” (p. 9) which function individually, with little or no systemic connection. She blames this condition on a distant Vatican with a laissez faire attitude toward its schools, citing the Vatican’s declaration in 1965 that “the Catholic school is to take on different forms depending upon local circumstances” (p. 10). This view on the Church’s position is not regarded as neglect by all, however. McLaughlin, O’Keefe, and O’Keefe (1996) view this individualized approach as a sign of the Church’s responsiveness to varying types of need.

Further, the threat posed by a changing mission is viewed by some as both positive and a part of the Catholic tradition and, therefore, something to be both anticipated and expected. “Anybody who says that Church belief is timeless and will never change doesn’t know the history of the Church” (Carroll in Kennedy, 2008, p. 62). However, though many agree that the Church’s history has been one of change, others believe that change has been slow and often painful in coming (Massa, 2003). Still others view this current period as a crisis in the best sense of the word, an opportunity. For Weigel (2004), this period is a chance for the Church to become truly responsive to the changing needs of its people by “deepening the reforms” (p. 2) begun during Vatican II in 1962-65. While American Catholics may be divided on what direction this reform should take, most agree that much reform is needed.
As summarized by Gibson (2004), the Catholic challenge is “one of assimilating culturally without disappearing religiously” (p. 11).

**History of Catholic Schools and their Mission in the United States**

The first Catholic curriculum and design for elementary schools were developed by Jean Baptiste de la Salle in 1720. The founder of the Christian Brothers’ teaching order sought to create a curriculum that would include the basics of reading, writing and arithmetic while emphasizing the importance of religious instruction (Bryk, Lee, & Holland, 1993). While this emphasis on the backdrop of the Catholic faith was unique, the incorporation of faith in education was consistent with that found in public schools which were largely Protestant in influence (Butts, 1978). As characterized by Catholic convert, G.K. Chesterton (1922), America at that time was a “nation with the soul of a church” (p. 41).

The first parochial schools were founded in the mid 1700’s in Pennsylvania. The schools were affiliated with a parish, the responsibility of which included funding and administration for the schools. Early parish schools were small and neighborhood-based, enrolling students of both genders. They recognized their mission as the preservation and sustenance of the Catholic religious culture (Grace, 2002).

With the immigration waves of the early nineteenth century, parochial schools gained in student enrollment and importance. Immigrants to the United States were fearful both of the prejudice that they faced from those of other religions and of the exposure to other religious beliefs that they worried could result in the dilution of Catholicism. To avoid these influences they turned to the parochial Catholic schools, resulting in a slight shift in the schools’ mission. The Catholic schools of this time were the product of an organized campaign
headed by the first bishop of the United States, John Carroll. Carroll and his followers recognized that Catholic schools could be used both to assimilate Catholic immigrants into American culture and to instill “principles that would preserve religious faith” (Walch, 1996, p. 16). Soon, Catholic schools opened across the country in various locations with comparatively large Catholic populations. However, despite the growing number of Catholics, many immigrants, working only at low paying jobs, were unable to afford the relatively low tuition charged by the schools (Marty, 1995). From their inception, Catholic schools’ enrollment has been impacted by financial concerns.

Although Catholic schools did receive state school funding at first, the Public School Society, a Protestant organization founded in New York, convinced the state assembly to cease support for the schools. This move, based on the fear that Catholic schools posed a threat to American democracy due to Catholics’ allegiance to the Pope (Moore, 2007), halted the growth of Catholic schools in the late 1820’s (Walch, 1996).

However, a renewed emphasis on Catholic education by the First and Fourth Provincial Councils of Bishops resulted in increased interest in and development of the schools. These groups called for schools in which Catholic youth could receive both academic instruction and instruction in the doctrine of their faith. The bishops felt that allowing Catholic children to attend the public schools with their Protestant orientation was tantamount to negligence on their part. Rather, they sought to produce an educational product that would both preserve and advance their faith while preparing youth for a future in which they could be academically competitive (Marty, 1995).
Despite this support from the hierarchy of the Catholic Church, the Catholic educational experience in the United States has been riddled with conflict. On November 7, 1922 the voters of Oregon passed the Compulsory Education Act, aimed at eliminating Catholic and other parochial schools (Butts, 1978). This Act required that all Oregon children between ages eight and sixteen attend public school. Supporters of this Act believed that schools run by religious groups were an impediment to students’ assimilation into general society. The Society of Sisters, a group of Catholic nuns who ran a religious private school, sued Governor Water Pierce and other representatives of the Oregon government, alleging that the Act conflicted with parents’ right to send their children to schools where they would receive an appropriate religious training. The suit also argued that the Act was prohibiting the schools and their teachers from engaging in a useful profession (Mizia, 2000). The U.S. Supreme Court declared that the parents’ choice to send their children to Catholic or other non-public schools was a liberty that was protected by the Fourteenth Amendment.

Though the first Catholic schools are portrayed by the Catholic League, a civil rights organization, as seeking only “to inculcate the sublime truths of religion” (Greene, 2006, p. 2) and to provide a haven from the common schools in which Catholics were constantly ridiculed for their faith, this ridicule was often a response to behavior seen by other religions as hypocritical. Bennett (1958) regards the “dogmatic intolerance” (p. 25) found in Catholicism to be something very difficult to reconcile with its stated intentions of sharing sublime truth. In agreement with this position is Paul Blanshard’s (1951) American Freedom and Catholic Power, which sees this intolerance not just as a factor in the anti-
Catholic sentiment of the past but also as a threat to the future. On this point Bennett agrees, believing that the Church seeks not only to impact its own schools but also to try to “impose Catholic ideas” to control legislation (p. 26).

Such a suspicion with regard to the intentions of Catholics is, in the eyes of William Clancy (1958), “evidence of remarkable inability even to glimpse the realities of Catholicism in the modern world” (p. 5). C. Stanley Lowell (1958), however, feels that this inability may be attributed to the divided identity of the Catholic hierarchy. Clancy refutes this belief that Catholic divisiveness is a detriment to the Church, its followers, and its institutions citing it as merely an adaptation to a changing world and proof that “the Church is living, not dead” (p. 6). Yet, as stated by Richard Chilson (1987), “A changing church is a confusing church” (p. ix).

A Changing Population and Identity

A major factor in the confusing changes felt by the Catholic Church and its faithful can be found in the fluctuating mission of its schools. As Catholic immigrants became increasingly assimilated into American culture, the mission of their schools began to change. No longer necessary to protect against anti-Catholic sentiment or the influence of Protestantism, the schools entered a period of confusion regarding their role in American society at large and their role in the lives of many American Catholics. For many, assimilation into society had resulted in a dilution of their Catholic identity. No longer faced with the need to defend their faith, Catholics also found their relationship to the Church weakened by scandal and the sense that their faith was no longer relevant. Though
still Catholic, this identity was no longer as vital as had once been. As Stuart Hall (1992) argues,

We should think of identity as a “production”, which is never complete, always in process...Cultural identity is a matter of becoming as well as of being. It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists. .. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything which is historical they undergo constant transformation. (p. 222).

**Catholic Education in the Southeast**

The issue of cultural identity has particular relevance for those Catholics that settled in the Southeastern part of the United States, an area where anti-Catholicism has lingered longer than in any other section of the country (Moore, 2007). Impacted to some degree by the slow growth of the area’s Catholic community, anti-Catholicism “profoundly infected Southern life until well into the 20th century” (Powers, 2003, p. xi).

Although today more than forty percent of residents from the Northeastern United States identify themselves today as Catholic, only about twelve percent of those residing in the Southeastern states identify themselves as Catholic (Grammich, 2000). While this figure reflects significant growth during the twentieth century, the increase is due primarily to the migration of Catholics from the northern part of the United States (Powers, 2003). This migration, primarily motivated by economic and employment concerns, began after World War II.
Despite the increase of Catholics in the Southeast during recent years, Catholics in this region have faced a level of religious discrimination that has “rivaled race as the boundary separating groups in the South” (Moore, 2007, p. 1). This boundary is one that seems to be based upon cultural rather than theological differences, as is more typically found in the anti-Catholic sentiment of the North (Daues, 1994). Aversion to Catholics in the Southeast has focused upon fears that the religion poses a threat to democracy and an assault to individuality, based upon Catholic allegiance to the Pope. Interestingly, this emphasis on community is viewed by Greeley (1990) as one of the faith’s primary strengths, and a large part of the reason that many continue to identify themselves as Catholic, despite disagreements over Church policies.

The view of Catholicism as a threat to those of other faiths is one that has continued to impact regional response to Catholics. Even as recently as the early twentieth century, Southerners regarded Catholics as “the intolerable Alien, the bearer of Jesuit plots to rob them of their religion by force” (Cash, 1991, p. xviii). While Moore (2007) agrees with this portrayal of Southern anti-Catholicism, he argues that this “type of anti-Catholicism that approached religious paranoia” continued long after the century's midpoint (p. 17). In fact, Moore claims, as late as the early 1960’s Catholics were seen as an easy target, with the Vatican portrayed as having “equal villain status with the Kremlin” (p. 17), in threatening American democracy.

While anti-Catholicism became a part of Southern Protestant identity, so too did this sentiment impact the construction of Catholic identity in the South. Faced with discrimination that was often tinged with violence, Catholics in the region responded with
a renewed loyalty to their faith (Moore, 2007). Greeley (1990) explains this allegiance as an understandable “loyalty to a heritage that helps define yourself” (p. 33). In turning more firmly to the Church, Moore (2007) believes that Southern Catholics responded to the ostracism that they encountered by creating their own subculture, one that identified with Rome, and which more firmly embraced the symbolism and mystery associated with the faith. This recommitment to the elements of Catholicism most feared by non-Catholics was viewed by some as further indication of a “Catholic plot to take over America” (Beecher, 1977, p. 399).

It was not until the middle of the Civil Rights Movement that any real changes occurred within the relationship between Protestants and Catholics in the Southeast (Moore, 2007). These changes, however, were viewed as both positive and negative in nature. For Grestle (2001), the Civil Rights Movement created an understanding between white Protestants and Catholics that was “rooted in the tacit agreement that bound [the two groups] to preserve the racial status quo” (p. 524). Moore (2007) agrees that an uneasy truce between the two religions was provoked by “a crisis atmosphere of racial agitation” (p. 2), in which both factions identified a threat that was even more intimidating than the other.

Despite this redirection in hostility, for many this period revealed contradictions in the Catholic Church that caused some Catholics, particularly those in the South, to question their own religious identity. While Catholic teaching opposed discrimination based on race, some of the Catholic bishops in the South continued to allow the practice of separate churches, one to serve white Catholics and another to serve blacks (Moore, 2007). However, the Pope made his position clear at Vatican II when he declared the Church’s opposition to

**Catholicism in North Carolina**

As part of the Southeastern region of the United States, North Carolinians experienced all of the tension associated with the relationship between Protestants and Catholics. As characterized by Powers (2003), “The story of Roman Catholicism in North Carolina is one of three centuries of frustration followed by three decades of rapid growth” (p. xi). Yet, despite this growth Powers acknowledges that, until 1835, the North Carolina state constitution prohibited Catholics from seeking public office. Further, it was not until the year 2000 that a Catholic, Mike Easely, was elected to the office of governor of the state by popular vote (Freebase, 2010).

North Carolina’s Catholic population has grown significantly during the past forty years, with the increase in the number of Catholics in the state rising from 4.7% to 8.6%. However, although the number of Catholic adherents has grown rapidly, the number of Catholic churches in which they worship has increased by only five, from 175 to 180 (NCEA, 2010). This growth is relatively recent and can be primarily attributed to the migration of Catholics from the northern United States and the influx of Latinos, both groups that have a large Catholic representation. The growth tends to be greater in metro areas such as Raleigh or Charlotte and in the agricultural hubs, such as Sampson County, where field workers are needed (Stuart, 2004).

That Catholicism’s growth over the years has not always been swift is evident from some of the faith’s statistical data. The first known Catholic family in the state was formed in
1775 when Alexander Gaston of New Bern married Margaret Sharpe, an English Catholic immigrant to North Carolina (Powers, 2003). North Carolina, along with the rest of the Southern region of the United States, was under the jurisdiction of the Catholic Archdiocese of Baltimore (Maryland) until 1820. At this time, it was shifted to the supervision of the Diocese of Charleston (South Carolina), a diocese that encompassed North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia (Moore, 2007). The first Catholic parish in the state was St. Paul’s of New Bern, which was developed in 1824. North Carolina was the last state in the United States to receive its own Catholic diocese, the Diocese of Raleigh, in 1924 (Quinterno, 2004). The slow progress made by Catholics in North Carolina is attributed to a variety of causes. To Powers, the intermarriage of Catholics and non-Catholics within the state resulted in the loss of Catholicism on the part of the offspring of those unions. This dilution of Catholic identity and loyalty meant that little attention was paid to Catholic concerns in the area.

For some, the lack of attention resulted in the distrust of their religion. However, those who had found their Catholic identity diluted by lack of practice and support often discovered that “leaving a local church is easy compared to erasing the traces of Catholic socialization” (Groome, 2002, p. xiii). Greeley (2004), agreeing with this depiction of Catholic identity, goes on to address the discord often found between the institutional Church and its people which often characterizes their relationship. To Greeley, “There is precious little their Catholic leaders can do that will drive them out of their Catholic heritage” (p. 2).

Adding to the complicated integration of Catholics into the culture of North Carolina was the “unconsciously held opinion that Catholics were not good Americans” (Powers, 2003,
a view that the Catholic hierarchy struggled to combat. To Moore (2007), however, despite the best efforts of the Catholic clergy, it was only after the Civil Rights Movement that the level of acceptance was truly raised. “... The South of the early 1970s appeared more diverse, and the mainstream acceptance of the Catholic Church reflected that turnabout” (p. 162).

That Powers’ assessment of the degree to which Catholics were discriminated against is valid may be derived from the fact that, by 1971, the total student enrollment in Catholic schools in North Carolina numbered 10,768. This number was divided among 42 elementary schools and 3 secondary schools (Koch, 1992) and reveals a decline in both enrollment and number of existing Catholic schools, which began in 1964. This decline may, to some degree, have been created by a resurgence of the old fears of a threatened democracy created by the threat of a Catholic president. “Although virulent anti-Catholic sentiment had largely subsided by mid-Twentieth century, it flared up anew when John F. Kennedy was nominated for the presidency in 1960” (Powers, 2003, p. 40). For some, Kennedy’s nomination reawakened fears of the Catholic foreign allegiance.

This time period also brought another challenge to the Catholic Church, one that had significant ramifications in North Carolina schools. The Catholic Church responded to the challenges of the broad cultural shifts of the twentieth century at Vatican II by declaring that “all members of the Church had received an equal call” (Kurtz, 1996, p. 143). With this declaration, Wittberg (1994) believes, the foundation upon which the religious orders had been built, the belief in a superior relationship to their Church, was nullified. Lopez (2009) agrees that many orders are “literally dying” but believes that the cause of the loss is that
many are “confusing faith with politically-correct fluff” (p. 1), which fails to recognize that, as defined by Catholic doctrine, those who take religious orders have a relationship with the Church that is stronger than the relationship of those who remain lay people. This loss that is affecting the religious orders, despite the cause, has reduced North Carolina’s number of priests to only 150, a decline of 17 in the last approximately 50 years (http://www.catholic-hierarchy.org/diocese/drale.html, 2010) As a result, some of the Catholic parishes in the state are served by priests who must divide their time between more than one church, often located in separate towns.

Currently, the majority of Catholics in North Carolina can be found in their urban areas, primarily Charlotte and Raleigh. Today, the Catholic Church in Wake County maintains 15 congregations, with a total of 59,610 adherents, making it the third largest denomination in the county, with Evangelical Protestant, and Mainline Protestant posting the strongest statistical following. However, making the case for the diminishing role of organized religion in the county, the primary group is that which declares itself to be “unclaimed”, with 352,716 adherents. The category of “unclaimed” respondents refers to those who either have no religious belief or affiliation or have chosen not to respond to questions regarding their affiliation (Association of Religious Data Archives, 2010).

As the state and county reflect the nation’s loss of religion in both their schools and their churches, the role of administrator in most Catholic schools is filled by a lay person. Often, this lay administrator is torn between the pressure to maintain the traditional mission of Catholic schools and the need to make changes in order to withstand the challenges of an economic downturn. As depicted in Vatican II, the task of the Catholic
school is “fundamentally a synthesis of culture and faith, and a synthesis of faith and life: the first is reached by integrating all the different aspects of human knowledge through the subjects taught, in the light of the Gospel; the second in the growth of the virtues characteristic of the Christian” (Pope Paul VI, 1965, p. 23). Yet, the administrators often find that this task is not the primary concern of most Catholic school parents who prefer that the schools maintain the ability to provide quality academics and produce students who are competitive with those found in the most elite private schools. They also insist that this is provided at a tuition that is more affordable than the secular private schools with which they are forced to compete.

Pulled in two very different directions, the administrator of a Catholic school often struggles to maintain his/her vow of allegiance to the Church without losing his/her awareness that maintaining the “synthesis of faith and life” called for by Vatican II is not how most of the school stakeholders would view his/her job description. Rather, according to a study by Belmonte (2006), administrators often depict themselves in a “constant struggle to refocus the energies of the school community on a set of values consistent with the mission of Catholic schools” (p. 8). This struggle is made more difficult when faced with issues such as the influence of the media, the pressure for academic success, peoples disengagement from the Church

The lack of research regarding Catholic schools in North Carolina may be indicative of the degree to which the schools are struggling. Little is found regarding the Diocese of Raleigh system of schools or their collective identity. There is also no evidence in the existing literature that the schools plan to present a plan to combat any
assaults, purposeful or otherwise on their Catholic identity. This reflects the shortage of studies conducted nationally on the impact of demographic shifts on Catholic identity. Perhaps this study can provide some information to fill the current gap in the literature.

**Using Organizational Theory to Create Change**

If Catholic schools acknowledge that their role in American society has changed and, with it, the schools’ mission and identity must change, they must also work to define what that mission will be and how best to pursue that mission in light of the schools’ relationship with the Catholic Church. In working toward that goal, they must first identify who their current stakeholders are, what changes the schools need to make to address the needs of those stakeholders, to what extent the schools will be supported by the Church in making those changes, and whether those changes will endanger the identity upon which the schools are associated (O’Keefe, 2010).

In identifying a response to their current plight, Catholic school administrators may choose to turn to some of the principles of organizational theory for direction. Organizations are defined by Etzioni (1995) as “social units, deliberately constructed and reconstructed to seek specific goals” (p. xi), a depiction that is consistent with Catholic schools. As presented by Nonaka (1994), “The theory of organization has long been dominated by a paradigm that conceptualizes the organization as a system that “processes information” or “solves problems” (p. 14). The way in which Catholic schools solve the problems posed by their new stakeholders is vital to their evolving mission and identity, as well as to the progress they seek to make toward their goals. For this reason, it may be necessary for the schools to work inductively instead of deductively in order to identify those problems that need to be
solved. They may find it more effective to work backward from the conclusion that Catholic schools’ population of stakeholders and their needs have changed in order to arrive at what problems those changes have created within Catholic school identity.

Essential to the continuing health and longevity of Catholic schools is school climate. Climate in a school is viewed by Freiberg and Stein (1999) as “that quality of a school that helps each individual feel personal worth, dignity and importance, while simultaneously helping create a sense of belonging to something beyond ourselves” (p. 11). While Catholic schools’ current mission emphasizes the role of individual worth while also emphasizing each individual’s connection to the community (Bryk, Lee, & Holland, 1993), building a sense of belonging seems to have become problematic with the changing demographics. Compounding this problem of school climate may be the stress being placed upon the administrator, due to the competing pressures of the tradition of doctrine and concern for future economic health.

Marcoulides and Heck (1993) believe that cultural factors, including climate, are key to determining organizational outcomes. While Deal and Kennedy (1982) regard culture as being directly within the control of organizational leaders, Schein (2004) believes that an organization’s culture has as much power to affect the leader as the leader has to affect the culture. To him, a leader may be responsible for putting a culture into motion but then that culture takes on a life of its own, gaining momentum from interactions and crises within the breadth of the organization. For Catholic schools this portrayal would be particularly apt, as Catholic structures tend to be community-driven, rather than individually-centered (Marty, 2004).
Particularly important to expressing the school culture and climate is purposeful use of symbol or metaphor. McNeil (2005) suggests that, to be successful, school leaders need to carefully select those metaphors that can most effectively develop new ways of working. Cleary and Packard (1992) agree with this perspective, yet caution against allowing the symbols to enhance inappropriate intra-organizational conflict. For Bolman and Deal (2002), “Symbols govern behavior through shared values, informal agreements and implicit understandings” (p. 4), all-important to creating a new expression of identity for Catholic schools. This may be a particularly important area of organizational change, since, as described by Greeley, (1990), “Catholics stay in their Church because...of loyalty to the imagery of the Catholic imagination” (p. 63). Any new use of metaphor to evoke change would therefore need to be reconciled with the extensive use of symbolism and metaphor that has long been associated with Catholicism.

Yet, Bolman and Deal (2002) caution, to be truly effective, an organization must address more than one area, utilizing multiple frames or perspectives for solving their problems. They suggest that, in order to successfully effect organizational change, the group must first determine a specific course of action. This structural framework relies upon discrete and specifically delineated roles for all involved. McLeod (2007), however, believes that this approach is less effective in situations where the goals are less clear and there is a degree of organizational uncertainty. Sergiovanni (1984) would add that it is the role of the leader to take those identified roles, combine them with the evoked meanings of the organizational symbols, and weave them into “persistent cultural strands which define the organization’s mission and activities” (p. viii), thus removing uncertainty.
Despite the importance of strong leadership, Bolman and Deal (1991) advise against downplaying the importance of the human resource frame, as they regard employees as “the heart of any organization” (p. 359). They believe that an organization and its leader who is responsive to employees' goals and needs can, in turn, count on those employees for loyalty and commitment to the organizational goal. Motsett (1998), however, disagrees with this portrayal, feeling that most employees work within an egocentric philosophy that constantly wonders what they themselves can gain from each situation.

Awareness that some employees may reflect Motsett’s philosophy suggests the use of Bolman and Deal’s political frame. Individuals in an organization may have varying preferences and values, some of which may be irreconcilable. Additionally, there is usually a limit to the resources available to the individuals in the organization, causing further divisiveness. The political frame, therefore, can be used in channeling those differences productively. Although no leader can give everyone what he/she wants, an effective leader can “create arenas for negotiating differences and coming up with reasonable compromises” (Bolman & Deal, 1991, p. 361). Considering the extent of the gulf between the values of traditional Catholic education and that of its new stakeholders, reasonable compromise may allow for the realignment of both identity and mission.

Summary

Catholic schools in the United States have long tailored their mission to respond to the pressures faced by their stakeholders, pressures that were often the result of a society that was either insensitive to their religious beliefs or hostile to their loyalties. Historically, Catholic schools have served a population in pursuit of dual goals: “to teach children Christian
doctrine” (NCEA, 2010) along with reading and writing and to avoid the anti-Catholic and heavily fundamental Protestant tone of public education. Bias against Catholics lessened as Catholic immigrants became increasingly assimilated into American society, yet many parents remained committed to the goal of fostering Catholic values in their children through enrollment in the schools.

While initially parental commitment lingered, this loyalty to Catholic education is no longer as strong as it has been, leading Catholic schools to question their place on the educational landscape of the future. No longer the unquestioned educational choice for Catholic families who can afford the tuition, Catholic schools are now discovering that the role the schools have long played is no longer pertinent for those Catholic families. Additionally, their own stakeholders are no longer comprised of those for whom Catholic doctrine and values are of primary concern.

Though Catholic schools have long served predominantly Catholic students, a small percentage of students of other faiths were represented. These students were often attracted to the schools’ smaller class sizes and protective environments. For students likely to be bullied due to small stature or learning disabilities, the schools provided a safe haven not found in larger public schools. Despite this environment, however, Catholic schools have traditionally enrolled primarily students of Catholic upbringing.

For many diverse reasons, Catholic school populations are now in a state of flux. For some schools, the change has come about “as a result of the surprising role that Catholic schools have come to play in the national debate over the quality of education that has raged during the past 15 years” (Baker & Riordan, 1998, p. 1). For other Catholic schools, the
expansion of choice programs to include religious schools has become a regional boon. Some of these affected schools face an identity conflict created by a diluted Catholic identity and stronger integration into general society on the part of Catholic parishioners. Few today identify themselves primarily as Catholics, following in the footsteps of contemporary politicians such as Rudy Giuliani and John Kerry, who choose not to highlight their Catholic identity (Macaluso, 2008). As a result, many Catholic schools face the choice of closing, adapting, or struggling to maintain enrollment. Those who choose to adapt to their changing student base may need to alter their expression of Catholic identity or their mission in order to better address the needs of their more diverse clientele (Egan, 2000).

If Catholic schools are going to continue to exist, they must recognize that the needs of today’s stakeholders are very different from those of the past. No longer solely peopled by traditionally Catholic students, the schools no longer serve the same protective purpose that they have in the past. No longer insulating their students from a hostile society, Catholic schools need to acknowledge that their function has changed with their student population. This change has resulted in a breach between the schools” Catholic identity and current mission and the role that the schools might fill in today’s society.

As Catholic schools work to develop a response to fill this breach, they must be aware of the precarious nature of walking the line between tradition and progress. Studying this process of reworking the expression of mission and identity within the context of Catholic schools may provide insight into the future of those schools as well as the future of the Catholic Church in the United States.
Overview of Chapter Three

Chapter Three will examine the methodology planned for identifying the challenges that Catholic school administrators face in developing an expression of identity and mission that can be both consistent with the values of the faith tradition upon which the schools were formed and responsive to the stakeholders upon whom the schools currently rely for sustenance. It will identify and characterize the sample schools that will be used for the study. It will also include an explanation of why those schools were selected and how the schools serve as a representative sample of Catholic education in the Southeast region of the United States, specifically in North Carolina.

It will also include an explanation and justification of its use of a qualitative approach to study these challenges. It will discuss the theoretical framework by which the study will be structured. It will also present the research questions that guide the study and the methods by which the study will collect and analyze the data acquired. Finally, it will also incorporate an acknowledgment of the limitations of the study and a discussion of the ethical issues involved.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

General Introduction to the Methodology

This is a qualitative research study of the changing pressures that contemporary Catholic schools experience that may challenge their traditional expression of Catholic identity. This challenge is derived from the changing values, priorities, and expectations placed on them by stakeholders whose demographics have changed over the years. The study considers the effect of this challenge on Catholic identity as expressed explicitly, through the schools' mission statement and admissions materials, and implicitly, through their hiring practices and school culture.

While schools may, in many ways, continue to overtly express their mission as one that is based in traditional Catholic views on education, they may also be, either purposely or unwittingly, expressing contradictory views through their hiring practices, admissions and public relations materials, and through the priorities that they set. An examination of these areas indicates whether the schools are making changes in their expression of Catholic identity as they encounter different expectations from a changing demographic within their student populations. This study also provides insight into the degree to which these changes are purposeful and systemic, coming from the diocese in which they are located or if the changes are the individual school's response.

Conceptual Framework

In approaching the data provided by different areas within the schools I was be guided by Bolman and Deal's four frame model for organizational leadership. In their work, *Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice, and Leadership*, Bolman and Deal (1991, 2002)
argue that there are four fundamental frames through which to view the activities and leadership of organizations. These frames include structural, political, human resource, and symbolic constructs. As a conceptual framework for this study, these constructs provided both direction and dimension in building a portrayal of the study's subject schools that can be both in-depth and detailed. As I examined each specific area of the study, I analyzed how the individual school reacted within that particular frame to the challenges presented and whether or not the school's message was consistent with traditional Catholic school identity. Additionally, I examined each reaction to determine whether it was consistent with the individual school's expressed identity, as indicated by its mission statement.

Also, by utilizing the four-frame approach, I was better able to affect a more complete analysis of the organization. The four frameworks outlined by Bolman and Deal can be used "as a diagnostic model that organizes the major schools of organizational thought and facilitates a comprehensive yet manageable approach to organizational complexity" (Gallos, 2006, p. 2). Allowing this model to guide my work helped to ensure that it avoided an overly narrow focus in favor of a more comprehensive and systemic view.

**Explanation of the Appropriateness of the Approach**

In studying the stresses put on Catholic schools due to a change in the composition of their stakeholders, I elected to take a qualitative approach to the topic. Qualitative research is defined as "an inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem, based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting" (Cresswell, 1994, pp. 1-2). This type of research involves examining people's words, actions, and symbols in order to find meaning.
It then entails tracing the patterns of meaning that can be found within the collected data. "Qualitative researchers enjoy serendipity and discovery... it is the endless possibilities to learn more about people that qualitative researchers resonate to" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 13).

"There are many reasons for choosing to do qualitative research, but perhaps the most important is the desire to step beyond the known and enter into the world of participants, to see the world from their perspective" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 16). I chose this approach for a variety of reasons. One particularly persuasive feature is its inductive nature. As described by Grbich (2007), in qualitative research, "reality is a shifting feast, subjectivity is usually viewed as important, and power is seen as lying primarily with the participants who are the experts on the matter under investigation" (p. 196). The sources of data in my research may, in some cases, choose to identify the pressures that they are experiencing by comparing their personal interpretations of what a Catholic school is today with what they had experienced as Catholic school identity in the past. This type of subjectivity is important to gaining an understanding of their views and beginning to interpret them.

Qualitative data deals with individual values and meanings. This type of approach seems to be consistent with the value-laden content of the study's subject matter. Because Catholic identity is value-based and impacted by doctrine, the culture, mission, and other aspects of school life will be equally affected and directed by the meaning and symbolism inherent in Catholic doctrine. Taking a qualitative approach to the research will enable the study to better describe the conflict that is enacted when these values confront the differing priorities of a changing population, that which is found in Catholic schools today. This type
of analysis can better present the confusion that may result when the practicalities of addressing the need for a growing enrollment meets the traditions upon which Catholic schools were founded. It can focus its attention on the type of description that can more truly replicate the nuances inherent in the evolution of schools that must tread a line between the past and present, between the secular and the religious.

As a piece of qualitative research, this study draws "from well-rooted traditions in anthropology, sociology, theology, social and clinical psychology" (Staples, 2005, p. 1). In many ways, therefore, the foundations of qualitative research parallel the development of Catholic education as a construct that is similarly rooted in the study of the culture, traditions, and beliefs of man. A qualitative approach can best allow participants to describe their own experiences, attitudes, beliefs, and motivations (Hakim, 2000). Qualitative research allows the participants to give much richer answers to the questions put to them by the researcher, and may give valuable insights that might have been missed by any other method (Rubin & Rubin, 1995).

When the Catholic schools' changing identity and its expression are further framed as "policy that is also a symbol" (Serow, 2004, p. 481), this approach becomes particularly valuable. How Catholic schools respond to pressures to privatize from their stakeholders may be a symbol that indicates the extent to which the schools can withstand the challenges of a changing society. It may even provide some indication of the health and future of the religious tradition upon which the schools are based, as they struggle to adapt to the changing needs of today's Catholics and the world in which they live. This struggle may be depicted as the symbolic battle between tradition and progress.
Theoretical Framework

Having determined that a qualitative approach to data analysis is optimal to obtaining the type of data most suitable for this study, it is necessary to also address the issue of which epistemology or knowledge tradition informs the research. The study was done from a constructivist/interpretivist view, which acknowledges reality as "fluid and changing" (Grbich, 2007, p. 8), consistent with the topic being studied. As based on a religion that emphasizes the "shared signs and symbols...recognized by members" (p. 8), similar to those found in constructivism, this knowledge tradition seems to best address the unique qualities found in Catholic schools. Just as the constructivist views all reality as being constructed by those who experience it, so too must the Catholic school administrator now work to construct the response needed to address the challenges to Catholic identity posed by his/her stakeholders as part of a changing world.

The constructivist view can focus on and analyze the ways that the administrators involved in the study attempt to "interpret and make sense of their experiences" (Grbich, 2007, p. 8) in the evolving milieu of Catholic schools of today. This view can best appreciate the necessity for the schools to change as they are faced with the often-conflicting needs of their increasingly non-traditional population. A constructivist view can be used to describe the schools' creation of a response for dealing with the need for a pragmatic approach that, by its nature, may be at odds with the symbolic nature of the tradition upon which the schools were formed. This view is well suited to illustrating the resultant class between tradition and innovation and the by-product of that clash, a revised look at Catholic identity. That Catholic
identity is, in fact, in flux is evident from the data compiled by the 1993 Gallup Poll of Catholics.

The poll, sponsored by the National Catholic Reporter, found data that lead to the expectation of "a gradual shift from specific Catholic identity to a broader Christian identity" (Hoge, 1993, p. 2). Additionally, Hoge believes that the data indicate that the move to a broader identity will make it increasingly difficult for Catholics to find value in their Church.

Finally, the constructivist tradition is one with which I myself am most comfortable. As one who is continually aware of the different realities experienced by others, this knowledge tradition responds to my desire to "relinquish the position of sole authority" (Gray, 2005, p. 26) and allow others to chart their own course in the quest for knowledge. I find this particularly important in addressing my own discomfort with categorizing the perspective of others, particularly when dealing with matters of faith and doctrine which may be interpreted both very personally and very discretely. A constructivist approach, in this area, allows for research to delineate the subjects' views accurately even if they are at opposite ends of the spectrum of faith and its expression.

**Research Questions**

1. How are students in K-12 Catholic schools in the United States today different from those of past years?

2. What are today's stakeholders' specific priorities and which of these priorities would be categorized as needs rather than as preferences?

3. What changes need to be made in Catholic schools' mission in order to address these needs?
4. How will making relevant changes to address stakeholders' needs impact Catholic identity?

These research questions are generated from a consideration of Allen's (2010) study on the perception of Catholic identity on the part of students attending Catholic high schools. The data generated from this study resulted in major policy recommendations centering on professional development for faculty and staff of the school.

The research questions are also influenced by the NCEA study done by DeFiore, Convey, and Shuttloffel (2009). This work identified seven critical factors that the authors believe must be analyzed and addressed in order for Catholic schools to reverse their current downward trend. These factors included declining demographics, weak leadership, parents who no longer value Catholic education, academic problems, shaky family finances, strong competition, and weak Catholic identity.

**Site Selection and Sample**

Participants in this comparative case study were selected from Bishop X School and T. M. Academy, pseudonyms used to protect those involved. Both of these sites are located in the Southeast region of the United States. Within this region there has been a certain degree of enrollment fluctuation, finally resulting in a drop in enrollment in Catholic schools in the region in the last ten years. This regional enrollment declined from 353,301 in 1998-99 to 337,095 in 2008-09. Also within the region, there has been a drop in the distribution of Catholic schools, from 987 in 1998-99 to 963 schools in 2008-09 (NCEA, 2009). In contrast, the composition of non-Catholic regional enrollment in Catholic schools has increased from
33,192 in 1998-09 to 50,888 ten years later. This is an overall increase in the regional non-Catholic enrollment of 15.1%.

Though both of the Southeast region sites chosen are Catholic high schools located in Raleigh, North Carolina, Bishop X is a Diocesan school, while T.M. Academy is one that, although located geographically within the diocese, is not directly supervised or sponsored by a parish and its pastor. Bishop X has been in operation for the past one hundred years and currently enrolls approximately 1200 students. T. M. Academy has been in operation since 2002 and has a student body of approximately 120 students. T. M. Academy is neither parish-based, as the majority of Catholic schools are, nor is it considered to be Diocesan, though it describes itself as Diocese-approved.

The schools were selected for the study because, in many ways, they represent the broad range of stakeholders associated with Catholic schools today. They are, therefore, pertinent to the topic of the study and appear to be subject to the types of pressures that the researcher seeks to evaluate. T. M. Academy depicts itself as "an alternative to the single Diocesan Catholic high school" in the area (website). Originally, its stakeholders were regarded by the Catholic community as those who favor a more traditional approach to their faith. However, the school's population is now comprised of approximately 20% non-Catholics. This change in demographics may have had a corresponding effect on the community's perception of the school. The more entrenched Bishop X encompasses a broad range of students and their families, who could be characterized as being located on various points on the spectrum of faith.
Both of the sites chosen are located within the geographical limits of the Diocese of Raleigh, one of the two Catholic Dioceses into which the state of North Carolina is divided. The Diocese of Raleigh is one of the largest in the country in terms of area covered, located geographically "from Burlington on the western border to the coast of North Carolina on the east" (Diocese, 2010). The Diocese serves 8,000 students throughout its 24 elementary and high schools in eastern and central North Carolina. The size of this Diocese is representative of the state's trend regarding Catholic enrollment. The fastest growing among the state's larger denominations was the Catholic Church, which more than doubled the number of its adherents between 1990 and 2000. This increase in the number of adherents caused the Catholic Church's share of the state total population to rise from 4.7% to 8.6%. While the amount of Catholic adherents grew rapidly, the number of congregations in which they worship increased by one five, from 175 to 180. As a result, the average congregation size increased dramatically, from 854 adherents in 1990 to 1,753 in 2000. This was far larger than for any of the other larger denominations in the state (Marty, 2004).

While the schools have, in the past, drawn from those who are a part of this swell in the Catholic Church, they have also benefited from those who are not affiliated with the Church. These represent former public school students who are disenchanted with the local public school system's performance on testing or the Wake County Public School System's redistricting policies (Woodhouse, 2006).

As schools that are located within the second largest public school district in the state of North Carolina, the Catholic high schools are the recipients of an influx of nontraditional students driven from the Wake County schools due to discontent with student reassignment
and uncertainty about the schools' future direction. Though the goals of reassignment, which are focused on promoting diversity, may be admirable some parents prefer to remove their children from the public schools to avoid the possible reassignment to schools that may be far from the neighborhoods in which the families reside. These parents, in many cases, are choosing to send their children to some of the Catholic schools located in the Raleigh/Cary area. Due to this increase in non-Catholic students, Catholic schools in the area are experiencing the type of changed population that this study seeks to address through its examination of the effects of the changing demographic on the expression of Catholic identity.

This changing demographic in student population is a phenomena experienced by Catholic schools nationwide. Although in the mid-1960's almost all of the students enrolled in Catholic schools were Catholic, by 2008 Catholics comprised only 1.6 million of the 2.2 million students enrolled in the schools (Convey, 2010). O'Keefe (2010) refer to the circumstances accounting for this demographic shift as a perfect storm created by a mixture of factors such as an increasing sense of disenfranchisement from the Church among affluent white Catholics, a climate of educational policy in Catholic schools that has not evolved and a weak infrastructure unprepared to support the changes created by their altered student demographic.

**Case Study Methodology**

The comparative case study research method was selected because, as depicted by Flyvbjerg (2006), the case study provides a proximity to reality that allow the researcher to access a deeper level of understanding. Further, as portrayed by Yin (2003), the case study
research method excels at bringing us to a better understanding of a complex issue. This indicates that the method is one that may best generate data necessary to understanding the issues underlying the development of strategies by the schools for dealing with the seemingly contradictory demands of progress and tradition on their Catholic identity and its expression.

Case study research means conducting "an empirical investigation of a contemporary phenomenon within its natural context using multiple sources of evidence" (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006, p. 15). The case study approach, though considered to be less "generalizable" than other forms of research, can result in a detailed and nuanced understanding of a specific location and subject. This view may be both intimate in its depth of understanding and broad in terms of the amount of detailed information accrued. However, this information can then be used to build theories that can make a true contribution to an understanding of the subject and the literature that surrounds it (Eisenhardt, 1989).

**Data Collection**

As depicted by Axinn and Pearce (2006), "High quality data collection is fundamental to the advancement of knowledge" (p. 1). Further, Axinn and Pearce suggest that a mixture of data collection methods among different data sources is best to "elicit important new insights into the causes and consequences of beliefs and behaviors" (p. 1).

Consistent with this suggestion, I used different methods of data collection from a combination of sources at the sites including the schools' administrators and a sampling of students and teacher affiliated with each of the two schools selected. I interviewed the administrators involved, using a loosely constructed interview format. "In qualitative
interviewing, interviewers can depart significantly from any schedule or guide that is being used. They can ask new questions that follow up interviewees' replies and can vary the order of questions and even the wording of questions" (Seidman, 1998, p. 5). This type of interview format seemed best suited to the nature of the study, in that it generated unexpected aspects of the identity struggle. Taking notes during the interview also served as a reminder of what information to follow up on and acted as an indicator that clarification was needed (Miles & Huberman, 1984). Using audio tape recording during the interviews also aided in improving accuracy when portraying the subjects' responses.

Principals were provided with the topics to be discussed in advance, to reduce any level of anxiety they may have had regarding the interview and to allow them to consider their positions. Additionally, since the interviewer is a colleague with a number of years working within the Diocese of Raleigh and therefore one who shares a common "language", some level of rapport seemed likely to develop. This rapport may have resulted in a higher level of cooperation (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998).

Separate teacher and student focus groups were used at each research site. These groups consisted of ten participants for the faculty groups at both sites and ten and twelve student participants, with the larger student group found at T.M. Academy. These participants were selected through purposive sampling within the specific parameters of student grade level with a representative sample of Catholic and non-Catholics, data that was attained through the admissions office. By having students from each of the four grade levels present at the session it was possible to represent the schools' evolution of changing practices
and priorities and varying degrees of awareness of those practices/priorities. It also reflected the degree to which the composite of the school demographic is changing.

Similarly, those who represented the faculty at the focus group were selected to best provide a cross section of the religious composition of the schools' total faculty. I asked for teachers to volunteer with the knowledge that I was interested in selecting those who represent this cross section. This representation, allowed for the open discussion of specific expectations that they feel are placed upon them in terms of addressing their own religious beliefs or remaining silent about them. This also provided insight into the way in which the schools are dealing with changes to their work force. In the past, Catholic schools employed only those who were practicing Catholics. Even today, Catholic school principals must be Catholics who are in good standing with the Church.

Both teachers and students were solicited to participate in the focus groups through invitation. A focus group is a technique involving the use of in-depth group interviews. Participants in this type of research are, therefore, selected on the criteria that they would have something to say on the topic under discussion (Richardson & Rabiee, 2001). This method of attaining data seemed particularly well suited to the topic of the challenges to Catholic identity because focus groups "provide information about a range of ideas and feelings that individuals have about certain issues, as well as illuminating the differences in perspective between groups of individuals" (Rabiee, 2003, 656). Questions used in the groups are found in the appendices.

Because the participants in the group were chosen purposefully, the data that they provide was particularly useful. A purposive sample is one that is selected deliberatively with
a specific goal in mind (Miles & Huberman, 1984). Morgan and Scannell (1998) advise, "In a focus group, for example, you may want to consciously seek out respondents at both ends of the spectrum" (p. 10). By selecting a range that represents that found in each school's population it was possible to provide data that addresses many of the opinions found among stakeholders.

The use of the focus groups "capitalizes on communication between research participants in order to generate data" (Kitzinger, 1995, p. 6). Through the group members' responses to open-ended questions, data can be collected. To ensure accurate collection, two tape recorders were used during each session. Each focus group session was limited to one-hour to one and one half hour in duration in order to maximize comments' relevance (Simon, 1999).

I chose to use focus groups of students rather than their parents because, although I acknowledge that parents are a part of the stakeholder category, and, as such, have a strong voice in selecting the school which their child attends. I believe that high school students have a dominant role in the selection of a high school. Additionally, I feel that the students are more likely to be honest in the responses given during the focus groups than their parents would be. The students are less likely to seek to "please" the researcher, realizing that there are no repercussions to be generated by their honesty. Parents might want to ensure their children's ongoing "favor", by giving the researcher those responses that they perceive to be desired.

The interview questions used in both the focus groups and in the principal interviews were influenced by Dr. Angelo Belmonte's *Voices of Catholic School Lay Principals:*
Promoting a Catholic Character and Culture in Schools in an Era of Change, which addresses the need to redefine Catholic identity in today's schools. Additionally, the development of the interview questions was impacted by McShane's (2010) The Challenges of Catholic Education: Past, Present and Future.

The final source of data collection was found in existing school documents, particularly those used in public relations and admissions for both schools. Because Catholic schools are experiencing some internal pressure to increase their enrollment in order to deal with increasing demands on their budget, the way in which the schools portray themselves when trying to generate enrollment may be particularly telling. I analyzed these documents for specific wording and themes that may indicate a focus that is specifically religious or primarily secular in nature.

By varying my approach to data collection it was possible to gain greater insight into the varying attitudes of the Catholic school community toward the challenges brought by their changing demographics. This resulted due to the provision of information using one approach that was not attained by an alternative approach, reduction in error by providing redundant information from multiple sources, and avoiding potential bias by using multiple approaches to compiling data (Axinn & Pearce, 2006).

Data Analysis

Qualitative research results in "large amounts of contextually laden, subjective, and richly detailed data from notes taken during focus groups and interview transcripts. This data must then be reduced to themes and categories that describe the topic of the research. This process is data analysis" (Byrne, 2002, p. 1). The purpose behind this process is to bring
order and clarity to the research that will aid the researcher in understanding how the data responds to the research question. Krueger and Casey (2000) caution that the analysis should be done in a systematic fashion to avoid the introduction of bias into the data. By providing clear documentation of the analysis done it should be possible to ensure a degree of verifiability.

According to Patton (1990), "The first decision to be made in analyzing interviews is whether to begin with case analysis or cross-case analysis" (p. 376). This study used a cross-case analysis. This type of analysis examines data from different settings or groups at the same point in time or from the same settings or groups over a period of time to identify similarities and differences. "All qualitative analysis methods involve coding data into themes, then categories, to form conclusions" (Hewitt-Taylor, 2001, p. 39).

Because I used Bolman and Deal's four frames as my conceptual framework, I also utilized this structure to organize and code the acquired data. Bolman and Deal present four frames or perspectives through which to regard an organization and/or its leadership. These frames include the structural, the human resource, the political, and the symbolic. Within the structural frame, leaders will attempt to "design and implement a process or structure appropriate to the problem and the circumstances" (Bolman & Deal, 1991, p. 355). The authors further advise that, within the political frame, conflict within the organization is acknowledged as an unavoidable reality. Having accepted that conflict is a natural result of differing agendas, the successful organization or leader will work to challenge those differences into support for a common purpose that can lead to the increased strength of the organization. By helping all in an organization feel that their work is purposeful and
valuable, as indicated within the human resource frame, members of the group can develop that shared sense of purpose that is essential to the organization.

Finally, according to Bolman and Deal, symbols play an important role in establishing and expressing the beliefs upon which an organization is centered. An awareness of this importance, and the recognition that symbols/beliefs found within an organization are not always consistent with the stated objectives and official beliefs of the organization, enabled me to identify inconsistencies in the schools under study. These inconsistencies, both in the views of those interviewed and in the artifacts examined, helped indicate areas of challenge between Catholic identity and the stakeholders' priorities.

"Data analysis involves organizing what you have seen, heard, and read so that you can make sense of what you have learned" (Glesne, 1999, p. 130). At this point, using the conceptual model, category indicators were coded and codes compared for consistencies and inconsistencies. Both formative and summative checks were made for reliability. Also, member checks were done with interview participants to avoid any ambiguity or inadvertent misrepresentation.

**Research Validity and Reliability**

Because qualitative research involves "any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 17), the issues of validity and reliability are dealt with in a manner that is different from quantitative research. "To ensure reliability in qualitative research, examination of trustworthiness is crucial" (Golafshani, 2003, p. 601). When considering that, in qualitative research, the researcher is the instrument, this issue of trustworthiness is
particularly significant. To establish such trustworthiness, the researcher must be both scrupulous and rigorous in his/her research methodology and documentation, as well as forthcoming regarding his/her own subjectivity.

Some qualitative researchers prefer to replace the term "validity" with a combination of "credibility" and "transferability". This, they feel, better represents the internal realities on which qualitative research is based. Similarly, "reliability" from their perspective, is better expressed as "confirmability" and "dependability" (Trochim, 2006). Though there is a great deal of discussion over the terminology involved, there is a general consensus that triangulation in methodology can corroborate findings and therefore improve qualitative research. Triangulation refers to the "use of multiple data sources with a similar foci to obtain diverse views about a topic for the purpose of validation" (Kimchi, Polivka, & Stevenson, 1991, p. 364). It provides a means of crosschecking information in order to verify its legitimacy. Since, logically, this can only be done if the researcher comes to the work from "a positivistic frame of reference which assumes a single (undefined) reality and treats accounts as multiple mappings of that reality" (Silverman, 1985, p. 105), this would prove difficult for a constructivist study. However, it is possible to apply the intentions of triangulation to the study and be rigorous and comprehensive in all phases of data collection and analyses in order to best approximate these intentions.

To this end, full disclosure of the goals of the research and employing member checks by interview subjects can aid in verifying the information attained in the interviews. Providing complete information about the study in the form of a written contract is the first step in establishing a relationship of trust between the researcher and the interview subject. It
protection of both parties and informs the subject of his/her rights. Also, though member checks, giving the data collected to the source of that data for verification, can create a problem if the data source becomes uncomfortable with what has been said, they are "key to establishing accuracy and credibility in qualitative research" (Bradshaw, 2000, p. 203). Additionally, maintaining the confidentiality and security of the data provided through all methods used is essential to the quality of the research. Rigorous application of these standards of use improves both the validity and the reliability of the study.

**Limitations and Assumptions of the Study**

A study of Catholic schools draws from a context of a religious institution that is both complicated and, at times, contradictory. "Catholicism is an old, variegated, complex religious heritage. Many different cultural streams have emptied into its vast rivers. New ones still pour into it today" (Greeley in Leach & Borchard, 2000, p. 3). Within that context, there is a need to be both respectful of the years of tradition and faith that inform Catholicism, yet to be analytical and objective regarding the degree to which Catholic schools' mission is responsive to and aware of the needs of the people whom they currently serve. For those stakeholders for whom Catholic schools address a need that is tied to faith, an examination of the schools' effectiveness is complicated by a sense of disloyalty when applying objective criterion for evaluation. Catholics' ability to transcend the tangible is both one of the faith's greatest strengths and one of the greatest roadblocks in attempting critical analysis.
Although many are critical of the Church, particularly when its rulings come into conflict with issues of modern life, there is a loyalty to the faith that may create problems with analysis, just as it creates problems for those Catholics who consider leaving their faith.

Catholics stay in the Church because they like being Catholic, because of loyalty to the imagery of the Catholic imagination, because of pictures of a living God present in creation, because of the spiritual vision of Catholics that they absorbed in their childhood, along with and often despite all the rules and regulations that were drummed into their heads. They leave, or think of leaving, because of the failure of church leadership to live up to that spiritual vision. (Greeley, 1990, p. 63).

In addition to conflicts created by loyalty, this study's use of sites that are located in North Carolina, a state that ranks only forty-first in the number of Catholics in residence (Fisher, 2000), may limit its relevance for those areas that are more heavily populated by Catholics. This dearth of Catholics may also impact the study by bringing in a level of antagonism or mistrust by the more prominent religious groups residing in the state, simply due to lack of exposure to and familiarity with Catholics. Also, although there are still few Catholics in North Carolina, the majority are found in urban areas such as Raleigh, which is the location of both of the sites used in the study. The data accumulated if the study had been completed at Catholic schools located in more rural sections of North Carolina, where fewer Catholics reside, might be quite different from that compiled here.

It is also important to mention that Catholic schools in some urban locations are redefining themselves by becoming an educational resource for minority populations. There
is much debate about the effectiveness of the schools in increasing engagement and improving academic mastery in these schools (Keith & Page, 1985). In fact, as presented by Bryk, Lee, and Holland (1993), "The accumulated evidence indicates that average achievement is somewhat higher in Catholic high schools than in public high schools, and it also suggests that Catholic high schools may be especially helpful for disadvantaged students" (p. 58). Although this may provide some insight into the way in which some Catholic schools are choosing to redefine their mission, this is not an avenue that is currently one that has been chosen by the sites included in the study, and is therefore not examined in this study. Finally, the Catholic Church itself is currently experiencing profound change created by a dilution of Catholic identity, falling Catholic birth rate, a lack of confidence in the Church, and a general feeling that Catholicism is no longer relevant (Goldberg, 1988). Although the greatest strain on Catholic identity derives from the increasing number of non-Catholic stakeholders, the lack of confidence on the part of Catholics further increases the schools' vulnerability to an unwilling redefinition of their mission.

There may be a limit to the pertinence of the study for many, due to the recent national increase in the number of Catholic schools that are closing their doors, with a 17.5% decline in the number of Catholic schools operating in the United States between the years 2000 and 2009 (NCEA, 2010). However, the fear of closing may conversely create an increase in its pertinence for religious schools, especially other Catholic schools. Similarly, as a qualitative study that addresses a somewhat limited population, conclusions reached will not be generalizable.
Another limitation of the study may be found in the nature of those more traditional stakeholders who may be involved in the study. As has already been discussed in Chapter Two, the attitude of these stakeholders tends to be one that is uncomfortable with questioning matters associated with the Church. This population may find it difficult to be open in responding to questions regarding Catholic identity. This may be particularly true on the part of the administrators, who may feel pressured to portray a sense of identity that is unassailed by outside forces. This pressure may also come from awareness of the centuries of tradition upon which their faith is founded. It is important that I, as the researcher, be aware of these pressures and that I attempt to alleviate them. I may be able to do this by using my own position as a Catholic administrator feeling similar pressures. Any lack of candor on the part of those interviewed may affect the data collected for this study.

Additionally, the research sample involved may not be typical of Catholic schools nationwide. Schools in the Diocese of Raleigh are strongly impacted by the high level of population growth experienced by the area generally. For that reason, Catholic schools in other parts of the nation may not experience the influx of students to the schools in the sample. Without that influx of nontraditional students, the challenges to traditional Catholic school policy and policy-making processes may not be as significant.

Similarly, though the Catholic population is experiencing growth in North Carolina, and particularly in the Raleigh area, the number of Catholics found in the state is still low. Currently, North Carolina's ranking of forty-first in the United States for number of Catholics in residence reflects a population that is comprised of only 10% Catholics (StateMaster.com, 2009). This statistic may render the study's results atypical.
As an increasing number of Catholics lose faith in their Church, they reflect that loss by turning their backs on Catholic schools. Catholic school administrators who seek to remedy this loss must help their schools distance themselves from the problems faced by the Church, as the Church itself formulates a plan to address the issue. Yet, how to maintain Catholic ethos while doing this presents an overwhelming challenge.

**Subjectivity Statement**

Also, because qualitative research uses the researcher as the primary instrument in the collection and analysis of data (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993), it is necessary to acknowledge any way in which the researcher's own background or attitudes could impact the data. As both a Catholic and an administrator in a Catholic school in the Diocese of Raleigh for the past six years, it is important to acknowledge a level of involvement in the topic of Catholic school identity. This involvement has allowed me to witness the role of Catholic identity at four different Catholic schools in the United States as a teacher, instructing in all levels of high school English. In this role, I have worked under both lay and religious administrators. I have also served as an administrator in two different Catholic schools in North Carolina, one a high school, the other an elementary school. Further, as a parent of three Catholic school students, I have experienced Catholic identity as interpreted both by lay and by religious administrators and teachers.

Though my positionality can provide insight, it may also bring with it a degree of subjectivity. Having experienced both the traditional Catholic school population as a student and as a teacher and the nontraditional population as both a teacher and an administrator, I have formed attitudes that may, at times, help me to understand the challenges of today's
Catholic school administrator and the stresses that exist between tradition and progress within the schools. Similarly, as an administrator I can understand the economic necessity that may underlie the need to appeal to a nontraditional population. I can also appreciate the beauty of the religious faith upon which Catholic schools were founded. Conversely, however, these same attitudes put the study's objectivity in peril and must be guarded against when they begin to drive the research in a particular direction.

Additionally, as a Catholic school administrator working in an area in which few Catholics reside, I am familiar with the moral dilemma that results from trying to attract students to our school by limiting the references to the faith that drives the school. During this study I must constantly be aware of the ambivalence that I have experienced as an administrator, when faced with the conflict that results from trying to appeal to the public while maintaining loyalty to my faith. The conflict that results due to the need to attract more students in order to keep my school open is something that I must consider when analyzing the data that results from this study.

**Ethical Considerations/IRB**

IRB approval is necessary for the protection of human research subjects under Title 45 of the code of federal regulations. IRB, or Institutional Review Board, approval indicates that it is the determination of the IRB that the research has been reviewed and may be conducted at an institution within the constraints set forth by the IRB and by other institutional and federal requirements (www.hhs.gov). The IRB is responsible for the protection of both the welfare and the rights of those who participate in research studies.
In applying for IRB approval, it is necessary to safeguard the confidentiality of the data as well as to provide protections for the underage study participants. The data will be coded to maintain confidentiality, and will be kept in a locked file. Upon completion of the study, interview tapes and transcripts will be destroyed. Also, in scheduling the student focus groups, parental consent will be necessary. The findings of the focus group and interviews will be reported in a manner that gives no hint of the participants' identity.

**Summary of Chapter**

This chapter discussed the methodology to be used throughout the study. It explained the researcher's epistemology, acknowledged her biases, and clarified the attempts that will be made to minimize those biases while utilizing the theoretical framework. The chapter also clarified the research methodology selected, with accompanying research context provided.

Finally, the chapter acknowledged the limitations intrinsic in the study. Though admittedly, there is little that would render the study pertinent for public schools, it may provide some insight into the emerging policy for Catholic administrators and into the direction of future decisions that involve Catholic identity. Most significantly, it may provide an indication of the crisis of identity currently faced by many Catholic schools as they struggle to address one of the tangible indicators of progress, their own changing student population.
CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Introduction

Because Catholic schools have historically been responsive to the needs of the society that the schools serve, it should logically follow that any changes in that society and its needs will impact the schools. Developed with a mission of protection for immigrants and evolving into a response to the needs of the poor and marginalized in American society, Catholic schools are now at a crossroads (Youniss & Convey, 2000). As their student demographic changes to accommodate an increasing number of non-Catholics, combined with a base population of Catholics who no longer seek shelter and guidance from their faith, Catholic schools are faced with an identity crisis that is unprecedented in the schools’ history. Further complicating this dilemma of identity is the economic drain created by the dearth of priests and nuns available to serve as teachers and administrators. Without this resource to man the schools at little cost, the expense of running Catholic schools has inflated significantly (Schoenherr, Young & Cheng, 1993). If Catholic schools are to survive, it is necessary for them to continue to build student enrollment in order to meet rising costs. To do this effectively they must first become familiar with their changed student demographic and their stakeholders’ needs. By recognizing that these needs are not identical to those of the stakeholders of years past, it may be possible for Catholic schools to redefine themselves and their mission in the hope of remaining relevant, despite their changed population. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine the disparity between the traditional values upon which Catholic schools were based and the values of Catholic school stakeholders today, in order to determine the future mission of Catholic schools.
Findings are presented in this chapter as answers to the research questions that guided the study. These questions are:

1. How are students in K-12 Catholic schools in the United States today different from those of past years?
2. What are today’s stakeholders’ specific priorities?
3. What changes need to be made in Catholic schools’ mission in order to address these needs?
4. How will making relevant changes to address stakeholders’ needs impact Catholic identity?

**Study Sample Demographics**

**Students of Bishop X**

Focus group participants from Bishop X were selected to represent the school’s current student demographic. As viewed by Daly (2007), focus groups are an ideal forum for observing the interactions of those who share a similar experience and obtaining their views on that experience. The group was composed of ten students, grades nine through twelve, with five male and five female participants. Within this group there were four students who had attended a local Catholic middle school, although only two of the four had attended Catholic school throughout their entire elementary education. A fifth student had attended Catholic middle school in a northern state, where Catholic schools are more prevalent.

The focus group also included one student who had been home schooled throughout both his elementary and his middle school years. Another member of the group had attended an international school for many of his elementary and all of his middle school education,
having resided with a parent who was transferred frequently to countries in Asia and Europe as part of his employment. The remaining three students in the group had attended public schools for all of their previous years of education. A breakdown of the student focus group is found on Table 1.

Among the group, four of the students characterized themselves as being Catholic, although only two of this four had attended Catholic school previously. The remaining two of the Catholic middle school attendees considered themselves to be spiritual but not necessarily Catholic. They acknowledged that their parents would not necessarily agree with this depiction, and in one case specified that this topic was one of great debate in her household. Despite the controversial nature of her religious characterization, this student stated that she was very excited to attend Bishop X and felt that her decision to attend the school, in large part, mitigated for her parents her refusal to label herself as Catholic.

**Faculty of Bishop X**

The participants in the faculty/staff focus group were also selected to provide a representative sample of the demographic makeup of the school’s employees. Participating were six Catholics and three non-denominational Christians and one member who identified herself as non-affiliated. The group included three members who had been employed at the school for less than three years and one who had been there for over twenty-five years. This faculty member is the self-identified non-affiliated participant. Of the employees who had been with the school for less than three years, two were non-Catholic. One member had been with the school for four years and was Catholic. The remainder of the group had been employed at the school for between seven and fifteen years. This group included one non-
Catholic, with the remaining five members being Catholic. Table 2 demonstrates the demographic breakdown of the faculty group.

**Principal of Bishop X**

The principal of Bishop X is a male layperson. Consistent with hiring policy for schools within the Catholic Diocese of Raleigh, the principal must be “a practicing Catholic who is in good standing with the Church” (Diocesan, 2009). Since Bishop X is a diocesan school, it is not affiliated with one particular parish. For this reason, the principal is a member of the congregations of one of the parishes whose schools serve as “feeder schools” for the high school. About eighty percent of Bishop X’s student body comes from these feeder schools.

The principal has been in the administrative position for the past five years, having served as one of three assistant principals for three years prior to that. He had also been a member of the faculty at Bishop X for three years before becoming an administrator. Before moving to Raleigh, he was employed as a teacher in a Catholic school in another state. In his current position, he succeeds a Franciscan Brother, who held the administrative role for twelve years. A religious assistant principal joined the administrative team one year after the current principal began his tenure, due to concerns regarding Catholic identity voiced by members of the school’s Board of Directors.

**Students of T.M. Academy**

The students selected for participation in the focus group were, like the students of Bishop X, chosen as a representative sample of the demographic makeup of the student population of the school. As such, the group was comprised of twelve students, including
representatives from each grade level, nine through twelve. Four girls and eight boys were included in the sample.

The group’s educational background reflected that of the general student population. It included two international students who had attended private schools in their native countries. The remaining ten members of the sample included four students who had attended Catholic elementary schools, two of whom had transferred from out of state. Four members had been home schooled previously and two had attended public elementary and middle schools. The group’s demographics are represented on Table 3.

In describing their religious affiliation, eight students considered themselves to be practicing Catholics, while two stated that they “weren’t really anything”. The remaining two students characterized themselves as Christian. Only one of the students, who self-identified as a practicing Catholic, remarked that he considered his faith to be a vital part of his identity.

**Faculty of T. M. Academy**

The faculty sample is also representative of the entire faculty. As such, it is comprised totally of Catholics, all of whom stated that they currently consider their faith to be a vital part of their identity. One faculty member mentioned that his faith has become important to him only recently, and that he attributed his employment at T. M. Academy with this development.

Of the ten faculty participants, the school had employed only one for more than five years. Two of the group had been there for four years; five had been at T.M. Academy for two or three years. The final two were in their first year of teaching at any location.
Only one of the faculty members had worked at a Catholic school previously. Two had been employed by public schools in other states. One of the group who had been at the Academy for two years had come to the school after spending some time as a Catholic missionary. Only one of the faculty members had had a child of his own attend the school. Table 4 depicts the demographic of the group.

**Principal of T. M. Academy**

The head of T. M. Academy, like the head of Bishop X, is both male and a layperson. He is a practicing Catholic, and member of a local parish. This is in accordance with the school’s hiring practice for administrators. T. M. Academy, although a Catholic school, is not a diocesan school and is exempt from diocesan policy. Despite this exemption, however, the school requires the approval of the Bishop of the diocese for matters of policy when it pertains to religion.

The head of school has held the position for the past four years, coming to the field of education after a career in the corporate world. He succeeds another layperson, who left the position due to a disagreement over the direction that the school should take in the future. The current administrator was involved with the school during that point as the parent of a student enrolled in the high school. He was hired for the position by the school’s founder, a local entrepreneur. The founder began the school in order “to provide an outstanding and affordable college preparatory education in the Catholic tradition for North Raleigh and its surrounding areas” (website). This was done with the permission of the Bishop of the Diocese of Raleigh at that time, Most Reverend F. Joseph Gossman. However, T. M.
Academy remains a Catholic school that is non-diocesan. As such, no religious person is currently a part of the regular staff or administrative team.
Table 1: The student sample demographic at Bishop X.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Elementary</th>
<th>Middle School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>spiritual</td>
<td>public</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bob</td>
<td>spiritual</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carly</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>public</td>
<td>public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>public</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erin</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>public</td>
<td>public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lynn</td>
<td>not sure</td>
<td>public</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mike</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rob</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>public</td>
<td>public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>home school</td>
<td>home school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will</td>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>international</td>
<td>international</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The students participating in the focus group were selected to represent the demographic makeup of the total student body.

*Students are identified by pseudonyms to maintain confidentiality.*
Members of the faculty focus group were selected to represent the demographic makeup of the school’s faculty.

Participants are identified by gender in order to maintain confidentiality.
Table 3: The student sample demographic at T.M. Academy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Elementary</th>
<th>Middle School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Allan</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>home school</td>
<td>home school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ben</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>international</td>
<td>international</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curtis</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>public</td>
<td>public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dianne</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>public</td>
<td>public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>international</td>
<td>international</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry</td>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irene</td>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>home school</td>
<td>home school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jim</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>home school</td>
<td>home school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kevin</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>home school</td>
<td>home school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lisa</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The students participating in the focus group were selected to represent the demographic makeup of the total student body.

*Students are identified by pseudonyms to maintain confidentiality.*
Table 4: The faculty sample demographic at T. M. Academy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Years employed at T. M. Academy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M 1</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>more than 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M 2</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F 1</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F 2</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>2 or 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M 3</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>2 or 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M 4</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>2 or 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M 5</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>2 or 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M 6</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>2 or 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M 7</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F3</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Members of the faculty focus group were selected to represent the demographic makeup of the school’s faculty.

Participants are identified by gender in order to maintain confidentiality.
Factors Impacting Bishop X Students’ Selection of Catholic High School

Family

There are many factors to consider when selecting a high school for your child. As indicated by Kennedy (2011), some parents shop for the school that will be the “best fit” for their child so that their children can avoid painful experiences that the parents themselves may associate with their own high school days. Others seek to assure their children a successful high school experience, defining a school’s success by the caliber of colleges into which graduates are accepted. Further, parents may be looking for a high school that provides classes that are small enough to ensure personal interest on the part of the faculty. For some parents, a program that offers exposure to and participation in the arts is desirable. Still other parents are interested in a school that offers a fully developed program of sports and extracurricular activities. While a percentage of parents prefer a school with a reputation for academic rigor, most parents are more focused on finding an academic environment in which their child can “excel and develop confidence in their abilities” (Bainbridge & Sundre, 1991, p. 2).

In response to the question, What made you select this school? students at Bishop X indicated that the decision was strongly impacted by both parents and siblings. Each of the students in the group indicated that there had been a certain amount of dialogue between them and their parents. Those who had older siblings were often influenced by those siblings’ choices, whether positively or negatively.

One student indicated that she was the only one of three siblings to attend a Catholic high school:
I wanted to avoid some of the bad things that happened to them. I’m not saying that bad things have to happen at public schools. I had some friends who went to public high schools and nothing bad happened. But both my brothers got into some things that I just wanted to avoid. Plus, I really wanted a drama department and this one is really, really good (Lynn).

Similarly, another student stated that he had already had a brother and sister graduate from Bishop X, and felt that he was already familiar with the environment. To him and to his parents, there seemed to be no other choice.

My brother and sister went here and they really liked it. They took me here to some basketball and volleyball games. I always assumed I would come here, too. I never really thought about going to a public school. I don’t think that I would have been allowed to go, even if I wanted to (Mike).

Although public school may not have been a serious consideration for some families, others used the idea of attending public schools as a threat. As indicated by one student who had attended Catholic elementary and middle school:

Anytime I seemed like I was getting lazy or slacking off, my parents would tell me I needed to do better or they’d send me to public school. I’d never been to public school. I went to Catholic school all my life, so at first I was really scared. I didn’t want to be beat up in the bathroom or anything. Now I know that they’ll never really send me public. That’s just their little threat (Bob).

Yet another student had the opposite position regarding attending public school. She was initially very resistant to attending Bishop X, preferring to continue on in the public school environment that she was used to, maintaining the same set of friends.

I didn’t want to come here. My parents bribed me. They said that if I came here they would give me a car. I think that they were planning to give me the car even if I didn’t agree to come here, but I said I’d come here anyway. I like it. But sometimes I miss my old friends. I don’t really see them much, ‘cause I’m usually doing stuff after school. Clubs and stuff (Carly).

**Activities**

For all members of the Bishop X student group, participation in clubs and sports was
an extremely important part of their selecting the school or in their continued satisfaction with having decided to attend the school. Each member of the group is currently participating in at least two activities and indicated that these activities were important to making friends and experiencing a sense of belonging. As characterized by one boy:

In freshman year you need to choose what sports and clubs you want to be in. This will be who you hang out with most of the time. When you’re a freshman you just want not to seem different so you have to choose something. After that, you can start to look around and be friends with other groups. Everybody mixes here, after freshman year. Even if you are in one group, you still can be with other groups too (Rob).

Another girl agreed with this depiction, saying:

Yeah, that’s what I like about this place. You don’t have to just stick with one set of friends. You can move from one to another. We all support each other. The volleyball team will go to a baseball game together. Then the tennis team will watch a dance team practice. It’s nice (Elizabeth).

Success

The point upon which the students had the highest level of agreement was on the connection between their choice of Bishop X and their perception that this choice was linked to future success. A successful future was defined as being related to going to the college of one’s choice, and then following college with a career that was both respected and lucrative. The belief that the school itself was a success due to its many programs and activities, coupled with a high level of college acceptance, was attractive to both the students and to their parents.

My father kept saying to me: It’s established. It’s successful. That’s the school for you. Look at their scores. Look at their colleges. You’ll be a success there. You can do all the things you like. They have theater, they have sports. They’re established. “Established” was a really big thing for him (Lynn).
Other students in the group also cited the importance of college acceptance in their decision to attend Bishop X. One stated:

My sister got into Notre Dame. Her friends went to UNC, Penn State, Duke. They got accepted wherever they wanted to go. That’s what I want. If I’m willing to take the AP and Honors courses, I want it to pay off. At Bishop X, it does. But it’s rough while you’re in those classes (Mike).

All of the students in the focus group demonstrated a similar awareness that, to tap into the potential for success that their future offers, they themselves must be willing to make choices for classes that would often require a great deal of hard work. As acknowledged by one student:

My friends who go to (the local public high school) think I’m crazy because I get up early to go to the extra AP History session at 7 am. They go out each night and I can’t do that and make it to class. But if I want to pass the AP exam those early sessions are a big help. And when I’m accepted to Duke and they’re going to (the local community college), then we’ll see who’s crazy (Tom).

In fact, this awareness of the requirements for success and of the need for an active pursuit of success was characterized by one student as being an essential characteristic of Bishop X’s school culture:

You know, success is a big part of everything here. We try to be successful at everything we do, whether it’s class, or sports or drama or anything. Even dances and pep rallies. We try to always make it bigger and better. We want everybody to talk about it, to know it. You might say that success is involved in every part of the day. It’s who we are (Erin).

The School’s Mission as Seen by Students of Bishop X

The student group was asked the question What would you say the school’s mission is? Surprisingly, they were very familiar with the concept of mission, acknowledging that references to the school’s mission statement came up frequently in talks given to the student body by the principal. Yet, while they did not seem to disagree with the formal mission
statement, or to feel that it was invalid, they preferred to identify the mission in simpler terms. As the discussion proceeded, one student insisted that the group prioritize their top three selections for what the school’s mission really is. The students came to a consensus that the school’s primary mission was “success”. Next in importance was “kindness” and finally, “developing potential”. Although there was one student who initially insisted upon “kindness” as being most important, she changed her opinion, rationalizing that:

Well, I know what you mean about success. But, when you think about it, kindness is a kind of success. You are successful in getting along with other people and making them feel good. Even if you don’t have anything in common with them, you still can make them feel that they’re successful, too. If you think about it, kindness can be success (Anna).

Factors Impacting Teachers’ Selection of Bishop X High School

The faculty’s reasons for working at Bishop X were primarily practical in nature. Within the faculty group, five had been begun working for the school after having become familiar with it through having their own children who enrolled in the school. This group of five included four Catholics and one non-affiliated. All five stipulated that providing their children with a school where there was an atmosphere that promoted values was their reason for selecting Bishop X for their children.

One member of the focus group who was non-denominational offered that her intention is to enroll her children at Bishop X as soon as they are old enough to attend. She related that she had applied to work at the school because her husband had begun working there and enjoyed it. Another member, who teaches theology classes at the school, said that there really weren’t many options available to her if she wanted to continue teaching this subject matter, since public and non-Catholic private schools do not offer theology classes to
their high school students. Another participant, who came to the school from a position as a principal at a local Catholic elementary school, wanted to continue working in an environment in which she could combine her two major interests. She related that:

I teach science and I love my faith. It is a unique thing to combine the two and yet it works for me here. The kids don’t see anything contradictory about infusing the discussion of science with references to God. Even kids who come to us from non-Catholic families know that that is going to happen here. It’s why I’m still not ready to retire (F3).

The non-affiliated member of the group, who had been employed at the school for longest time, said that she had initially decided to work for the school because teaching jobs in her field were relatively scarce. She said that she had taken the job with some trepidation, fearful that she would not fit into a religious environment. Yet, she had later opted to send her daughters to the school:

I never used to feel that I didn’t fit in. When I sent my own children here I did it because I thought it was a good school academically, and it was very accepting of all kinds of people. I don’t think it’s still that way, though. The academics have improved but I don’t think the feel of the school has (F5).

When asked for clarification, she said:

In the last few years, the school seems to talk more about “being Catholic” and “having values” but something seems off. It feels more like a business, less like a community than it used to. The feeling of kindness just isn’t as prevalent as it used to be. But maybe I’m alone in feeling that way (F5).

Although faith was an important factor in the decision of three of the Catholic members of the group, one quickly distinguished between "being Catholic" and "acting Catholic". To her, an increasing number of students who identified themselves as Catholics were not always acting in ways that she would characterize as consistent with the expressed values of the faith.
She explained:

One day, I was walking around outside during my lunch hour period. I came upon a group of students. One of the girls in the group was a little different, not really someone who seems to fit in. One of the boys was asking her if she would want to go to prom with him. I could tell he didn’t mean it, but she couldn’t. The other kids in the group were giggling, waiting for her answer. I asked them if they thought that was a good way to act. They said no but I don’t know how much good I did. I see that kind of thing happen sometimes (F4).

Following up on this point, the group then turned to the topic of whether the students enrolling in the school had changed and if their values were consistent with those espoused by the school. Initially, one of the group stated that she felt that the quality of the students had improved, as evidenced by the fact that there were more students enrolled in AP classes than ever before. However, the non-affiliated member disagreed, saying:

I think that the quality of the students has gone down. Years ago, when we were really trying to build enrollment, we took anybody who applied, as long as they could pay the tuition. Then, after a while, we started to get better students. But now, I think the quality is going down again. Yes, we have a lot of kids in AP but how are they doing there (F5)?

Another member of the group agreed with this point and added:

And why are so many of them in AP? Not because they’re such good students, but because everybody wants their kids in those classes. Even if they’re stressed out because of the class work and their parents’ expectations. Then they act out and it’s a problem for everybody (M1).

Yet another member of the group sought to clarify the issue of “quality” as it applies to the students:

I thought we were talking about kindness and whether the quality of the kids’ character had improved. Now we’re talking about AP classes. I haven’t been here long enough to know if anything has changed over the years, but I do notice that kids here are no nicer to each other than in any non-Catholic schools I’ve taught in. It’s just that here we can call them on it and know that the conversation of right and wrong is not going to get us called into the principal’s office (F6).
Finally, the teacher group responded to the question of why they think most students are attracted to Bishop X. All stated that they felt that the students were drawn to the school because of its Catholic values.

**The Principal’s View of Bishop X**

The principal of Bishop X High School shared his views on the school in the form of an unstructured interview. Since flexibility is an important component of qualitative interviewing, the interview utilized questions that served as a guide to ensure that the main topics were covered. However, by remaining flexible, it was possible for the interview subject “to lead the interaction in unanticipated directions” (King & Horrocks, p. 36, 2009). This can allow for the inclusion of some unanticipated data.

When questioned about the possibility that the student demographic of Bishop may be changing, the principal professed to believe that very little change had occurred during his tenure:

> The majority of the kids who come here are from the feeder schools, just as they’ve always been. We have noticed a slightly higher enrollment of minority students this year, which is great because this is a demographic that we traditionally have trouble attracting. I can’t really explain this boost, though I wish I could.

However, the principal later acknowledged that, although students from feeder schools received preferential enrollment, no effort was made to distinguish between Catholics and non-Catholics applying from feeder schools. For that reason, changes in the demographic of the feeder schools could be having an unrecognized effect on the demographic of Bishop X. The principal acknowledged this possibility:

> This is actually a sore point for some of our Catholic families from public schools. They say, why does a non-Catholic get preference over my kid, who is Catholic, just
because that other kid goes to a feeder elementary school? And you know they kind of have a point.

For this principal, the topic of Catholic identity is extremely important. He maintains that:

Every decision that we make is weighed against how consistent it is with our mission and identity as a Catholic school. If something just doesn’t seem right, we don’t do it. At this point we have a leadership team that is confident about what the school’s mission is and how to be true to that mission. At this point we don’t have to examine things as much as we did at first. We’re starting to be more comfortable about how it all fits together.

When asked how carefully the school’s Catholic identity was monitored, he said:

Being Catholic is essential to everything that we do here. No matter how big we get, no matter how many awards our students win, being Catholic is why we’re here. And that is something we remind ourselves of every day. It’s the bottom line.

When asked about whether the values that this identity promotes are ever in conflict with those of the stakeholders, the principal acknowledged that this did occur. However, he felt that by maintaining a strong Catholic identity, any dialogue over such as conflict was limited.

Some of the families may disagree with an action we take, for example, in a disciplinary matter. But, because we are always cognizant of our Catholic identity, the action is going to be consistent with that identity. The families who disagree with what we do either realize that we are maintaining values that they’ve signed on for or they don’t and they decide to go somewhere else.

Factors Impacting T. M. Academy Students’ Selection of Catholic High School

Family

When posed the question *Why did you select this school?* 11 out of 12 student participants at T. M. Academy stated that they themselves had had no input into their school choice. In fact, as stated by one student and agreed upon by the remaining 10 of that 11:
I didn’t select it. It was selected for me. My parents wanted me to come here. I didn’t. I wanted to go to the public school or at least a Catholic school that was bigger. I wanted to join sports, have activities. But my parents like the curriculum here, the classical studies. And they like the values. They say that I can do activities after school. But it’s not the same (Dianne).

Another student, who voiced a similar attitude about the selection of the school added:

There are some activities and some sports, but the size (of the school) is really a problem. You see the same people all the time. I like most of these people, but I really wanted a bigger school, more to do. My parents chose this school also because of the price of tuition. It’s a lot lower than the other Catholic school in town. And they would never have gone public (Henry).

In response to a follow up question on why his parent never would have sent him to a public school, he responded:

Are you kidding? My mom stayed home from work to home school me all through elementary school. My parents really think that the public schools have no values at all. I have friends in public schools that are fine, just like me. But my parents would never consider sending me there. They think that there’s too much crime. And the education is not so good (Henry).

The one student who had chosen T. M. Academy for himself offered:

I chose this school for myself. I did all the research, I filled out the application. My older brother went to (the bigger Catholic high school). And it was awful. He flunked out, he got in trouble. I wasn’t doing that. I wanted a school that had strong morals and really good academics. The classical curriculum here is just what I was looking for. And about the activities, we have sports and clubs. I made the baseball team here. I probably wouldn’t have made it at any other school. That’s the way it is for lots of the kids here. We get more opportunities than we would have gotten anywhere else (Allan).

Activities

Although the students agreed that there was chance for all to participate in the school’s activities, one student pointed out that:
Yeah, that’s the point. Everybody makes the team. That’s good for kids who wouldn’t have made the team anywhere else. They get to play and feel good. But if you are a better player who could have made a team at a big school it’s not so great. You have to play with better players if you want to get better yourself. Here, I play all the time and I look really great. But I know that I’m not improving. I don’t have to try too hard in sports. There’s no reason to (Curtis).

For most of the group, the small numbers in both activities and sports were part of the reason that they themselves would not have selected the school. All but the student who had chosen the school for himself acknowledged that they often felt that socially they were not experiencing all that they might have had they gone to another school. As acknowledged by one girl:

I just don’t feel like I’m having the high school experience here. Not the one I wanted I know that I’m getting great academics and all that but this is just not what I hoped for. I thought everything would be bigger and have more participation, be more competitive. I thought I’d be going to parties, doing things with different people all the time (Irene).

Regarding participation in some of the clubs that are available to students at T. M. Academy, one student agreed that there is a detriment to having small numbers but acknowledged that there is also a benefit:

When there are only a few of you in a club, you really have to step it up, particularly if you’re an upperclassman. When you have the kind of responsibility that clubs here expect, you can develop as a leader pretty fast. That’s kind of cool. And it’s something that wouldn’t happen at a school with more kids and bigger clubs (Jim).

Leadership/Formation

Like the student group at Bishop X, this group also voiced a common theme regarding why parents had selected the school. Although characterized by either the word “leadership” or “character formation”, the definition among the students seemed to be the same. As clarified by one student:
Leadership is what this place offers. You get a chance to really become a leader here. You have to take a leadership role in the classroom every day. You have to lead in clubs. In sports. I was always kind of more just a participant, not really a leader, before I came here. But here I can’t really do that, let other people lead. There’s no place to just lay back. I think that’s what my parents wanted. That’s really why they sent me here (Curtis).

Another student agreed, although she identified this characteristic as “formation”:

My parents were afraid that I was just going along with what my friends were doing. They were worried that maybe I would do something stupid just because of that. That I couldn’t stand up and say no when it mattered. So I think that what he’s calling “leadership” is really about character formation (Helen).

This point was echoed by another student who added:

I think that that is why most of our parents sent us here. Even in the classes, we have to be leaders and stand up. There’s always someone asking us what we think, did we consider this, what our opinion is. It’s like they’re getting us ready for some time when we need to have already thought about stuff (Ben).

The School’s Mission as Seen by Students of T. M. Academy

When asked their view on what the mission of T. M. Academy is, the students seemed equally familiar with the idea of “mission” as the Bishop X group. The one student who had chosen the school himself stated that:

The mission here is exactly what they say on the website. I chose the school because the website said that the school was “traditional”, “Catholic”, and that it “trained leaders”. That was what I wanted and that is what they do. I’ll come out of here ready for college. I won’t go like my brother did. I’ll be ready (Allan).

Another student, who had not chosen the school herself, agreed with his characterization of the mission:

I don’t like it here. I still want to go to a big school. But they do a good job of making you into something, of helping you know what you believe. It’s all they talk about in every class. You have to defend your beliefs, so you have to know what they are. So, yeah, I am glad they do that but I still don’t want to be here (Lisa).

Another student added:
Identity at a Crossroads 95

I know what you mean. I miss going to a big school too. I miss the sports. But, I think that one thing I do get here is the whole leadership thing. I can see where, between the academics and the leadership, some of the kids here are going to be somebody when they get out. I think some kids could run for office or something (Kevin).

As a final question regarding the school’s mission, students were asked to prioritize what they viewed as the school’s mission, just as the students of Bishop X had elected to do. After very little dissent, the group agreed that there was one concept, which could be addressed in different ways:

Call it leadership or formation. It’s about making us able to make the kinds of decisions that will help us in the future. Stand up for what we think, and know what we think. It’s about constantly thinking about how we make decisions and how we can tell if they’re good decisions. That’s how we’ll be successful (Marie).

Upon being asked for a definition of “successful” the students again reached a consensus, saying:

Success means not having to think about money. Doing what you want with your life. Going to a good college so you can do what you want and never worry. Live the way you want. Get a job that gives you all the freedom you want, the money you want. Meeting the kind of people you want. That’s success (Ben).

However, one girl who agreed with the depiction of the school’s mission as one of formation, stated:

The most important thing here is that you come in one way and are constantly pushed to leave here different than you started…and better. You can call that formation or character development or even leadership. They’re all about the same thing. You may not like it at the time, but it happens and when you realize it, it feels ok (Dianne).

Factors Impacting Teachers’ Selection of T. M. Academy

Because T. M. Academy has been in existence for only a few years, the faculty has less history with the school. Despite this, however, the group was largely drawn to work at
the school due to its expressed mission statement. As described by one teacher who has been
with the school for two years:

I looked at the mission statements of the schools I was interested in applying to. I had
no high school teaching experience. I liked the emphasis that this school’s mission
statement placed on teaching the whole person within a Catholic tradition. The idea of
forming someone based on Christianity, with a vibrant Catholic emphasis really
appealed to me. I liked the idea that you can tie all subjects back to faith (F2).

Another teacher who had been employed at the school for an equal amount of time
agreed:

Here it’s all about the formation of the individual. It’s about knowing where each
individual fits in the big scheme. It’s about understanding life and pursuing truth.
Even academics share that goal- the pursuit of truth. That really is the best way to
achieve academic excellence, through that pursuit (M3).

A more experienced teacher interjected:

You really can’t separate the academics from the faith. The student who can place the
two together and understand their relationship...that’s the student who is above the
rest. That’s the one who really gets it. And that’s the one the others will look up to
and try to follow (M1).

A teacher for whom his experience at T. M. Academy was his first exposure to
teaching in a Catholic school added:

I used to work for a public school in another state. When I moved here I decided that
I wanted to teach in a Catholic school. I was sick of the discipline problems, the
parents. I wanted to start teaching kids who would look at school differently, kids
who behaved and listened, who had parents who appreciated what they were getting
(M7).

When asked if the teacher had found these conditions in the Catholic school, he
answered:

Not always, but sometimes. Kids do say that they have been “dragged here”. And in
that first year that’s how they act. But some start to get it after a year or so. They
begin to appreciate what they’re getting. Once that happens it’s a lot better for the
kids, the teachers and the class that the kids are in. But no, not everyone gets it. It’s not for everyone.

Even those for whom faith was not initially a consideration in applying to work at the school said that they found that their own interest in the faith increased after being there a while.

The interplay of subject matter and religion was really not first on my mind when I began here. I was just attracted to the pursuit of excellence that the website mentioned. Then I spoke to the head of the school. At first I couldn’t see how excellence and faith could be related. But he said that excellence is part of the Catholic tradition. Now I can see how the two are in dialogue with each other. It’s strengthened my own faith (F3).

The Principal’s View of T. M. Academy

The principal at T. M. Academy was, like his colleague at Bishop X, questioned about his views in a loosely structured interview format. This interview was conducted face-to-face, which is preferable to other formats in both establishing rapport between interviewer and respondent and in enabling the interviewer to observe as well as to listen (Rudner & Schafer, 1997).

Upon being questioned regarding whether he had noticed any changes in his student demographic, the principal acknowledged that he had:

Our demographic is changing significantly, although subtly. We used to primarily draw from the Catholic population but now our reputation as a challenging academic environment is expanding our applicant base. We have students applying because their parents don’t feel that the students are getting what they need in public school. They are disheartened with the academics, the redistricting, and the violence. Here they know that their kids are safe, they are challenged. As word gets out, the demographic shifts.

Asked about the impact that this shift is having on the school’s expression of Catholic
identity, the administrator states that, as a Catholic school, the identity is unchanged:

Even though faith may not be the thing that gets them in the door, it is why we’re here. Our faculty knows the mission of this school. Look around. There’s no question about who we are. It’s in everything we do, everything we see. People who come here for a tour either see it and can live with it or they see it and leave. Definitely this is not the right place for some. But they usually see that and opt out.

Although he believes that prospective applicants who are uncomfortable with the school’s Catholic identity will usually choose not to enroll, the principal is aware that varying levels of commitment to Catholic values exist in the school community:

Some parents, and not necessarily those who are not Catholic, find that the values here are not the same as those at home. In most cases, I should say, we find out that the values taught at home are not the same as those taught here. Usually, there is some kind of conflict that demonstrates that discrepancy. When that happens, either the parents will support the school’s decisions or they won’t. If they won’t, then it’s best that they go somewhere else.

However, he also acknowledges that not all discrepancies between home and school values will result in conflict:

Often the students are living in two worlds. They have one set of values at home, and another here. This becomes uncomfortable for them though and, I believe, they often choose our values. They see how other kids, those who do live by those values all the time, succeed. So they make a choice to adopt the values they learn at school. I find that those who don’t make this choice don’t ever really find their place here.

**Advertising and Admissions Materials**

**Bishop X**

The principal of Bishop X identifies the school’s website as its primary marketing tool. A check of the site revealed that the school logo, its initials surrounding a cross, incorporated the one religious image on the website’s home page. The page had eight tabs for accessing other pages of the website. Of these eight, seven concerned secular issues such as “student life” or “athletics”, while one tab, “spiritual life” indicated a religious affiliation.
Accessing this tab led to a discussion of the school’s religious philosophy and a calendar of events such as religious retreats. Upon this page, the school pledged its “promotion of Catholic identity” through its Eucharistic celebrations.

The website’s “admissions” tab led to a statement of the school’s admissions policy. The policy states that the school:

mindful of its primary mission as an effective instrument of the educational ministry of on the basis of race, sex, color, or national or ethnic origin in the administration the Roman Catholic Church and witness to the love of Christ for all persons, shall not discriminate of educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship programs, and other administered programs (2011).

Despite this policy, the page also states the school’s intention to reserve seats for minority and non-affiliated students as part of its efforts to encourage diversity within the student body.

In addition to the school website, the school also disseminates an admissions pamphlet. The cover of the pamphlet features three photographs taken at the school. Two of these are of sporting events and the third is a photograph of the Bishop of the Diocese of Raleigh pictured handing a diploma to a graduate. The pamphlet’s cover also has a copy of the school’s mission statement: Bishop X is a college preparatory school of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Raleigh. We embrace the mission of Jesus Christ: to form men and women of faith, service, and leadership in church and community (2011).

The remaining pages inside and the back cover of the pamphlet include information about courses offered, athletic programs and clubs available. It also holds information about
the admissions process and quotes from current and former students of the school. All information inside the pamphlet is secular, as is all but one photograph on the back cover. That picture is one that includes a religious sister with a group of students.

A final advertisement for the school is a booklet that has both the school’s mission statement and information regarding its membership in the National Catholic Educational Association and North Carolina Association of Independent Schools. All other information in the four page booklet pertains to academics, including course of study, SAT and Accelerated Placement statistics, the grading system and colleges to which recent graduates had been accepted.

**T. M. Academy**

T. M. Academy, like Bishop X, considers the school website to be its primary source of communication with prospective students. On the homepage of the website the school identifies itself through its slogan: *Catholic + Classical + College Preparatory*. The page also has two main sections, one which is identified as “Academic” and the other as “Video”. The academic section takes the viewer to a brief overview of the college prep program available, while the video includes footage of four classroom scenes and one scene of students participating in a Eucharistic celebration.

On the “Admissions” page of the website is the school’s policy regarding enrollment. It states “Admission is open to any youth, regardless of race, creed, gender, or economic status. We make reasonable accommodation for students with physical disabilities” (2011). It also cites the school’s ability to develop students of “strong character foundations” and to “support core values”.
The school also publishes a student newsletter, which is given to prospective students. The newsletter is dated, with each edition identifying the saint whose feast day is associated with that date. The content of the newsletter, however, is completely secular including information and photographs from class trips and information about upcoming tests and school events. The final element of the school’s publicity is its distribution of an automobile magnet with the school’s initials highlighted and its full name written below.

Summary

Demographics

The demographic information for both school sites revealed that there is a broad representation of religions found within the student body. However, although both schools are compliant with the Bishop of the Raleigh Diocese’s policy dictating that Catholic schools must have a principal who is a practicing Catholic, there is a degree of difference between the schools with regard to the religious affiliation of faculty employed by the schools. This discrepancy may be explained by size of the student body and the number of teachers employed. The school that had multiple non-Catholic teachers employed more than ten times the number of teachers employed by the other school, T. M. Academy, which had only Catholic faculty members.

Factors Impacting Selection

In selecting the schools to attend, students at both sites were strongly influenced by the opinions of their family. They sought either to replicate good experiences by attending the same school where those experiences took place or to avoid the location of a negative experience. The students were also influenced, both willingly and unwillingly, by what their
parents wanted their school experience to be like and which school their parents felt would be the best fit for them.

Similarly, some teachers and one administrator had also been attracted to working for the schools due to their family connection. Teachers, in some cases, had initially become aware of the schools as parents of students enrolled there and then through that exposure had gone on to apply for employment at the school. This experience was shared by the principal at T. M. Academy, who had never been at school administrator prior to his position at his child’s alma mater.

An additional factor in selecting the schools and in whether the students were happy with the selection was the availability of activities. Students were extremely focused on the need for participation in a variety of different activities, including both clubs and athletics. Having access to a wide variety of sports and clubs and having an active role participating in these sports and clubs was very important to the students’ enjoyment of the school and their belief that its selection had been correct.

Finally, students at both schools selected related concepts as both the reason for their selection and as the school’s mission. Students at Bishop X identified “success” as both a reason for their enrollment in the school, while those at T. M. Academy felt that “leadership” was their reason for being there.

The Schools’ Mission

Interestingly, students at both schools identified their school’s mission as being the same as one of the factors that impacted their selection of the school. However, although the faculty and principals at both schools believed that the mission was about Catholic identity,
neither school’s student representatives agreed. Rather, both student groups felt that the school’s mission was focused on the future, developing students who would be “successful” for one school or “leaders” for the other. At neither site did the connection of mission and Catholic identity arise for students. In fact, although the idea that the two concepts were connected was raised by the interviewer, students at both schools readily rejected the proposed relationship.

This is a particularly interesting factor when one considers the preponderance of reminders of Catholic identity that were found at both study sites. In both buildings, crucifixes and other religious artifacts were hung on every wall. One of the sites used saints' names as identifiers for the various classrooms. The school uniforms, worn by students from both sites and of all faiths, were adorned with religious logos. Also, in both student focus groups, students were overheard referencing prayer in the moments prior to the actual start of the sessions. At Bishop X a student was overheard saying that he had gone to mass that morning because he thought it was the only way he was going to get a chance to play in the game that night. Similarly, a T. M. Academy student was heard telling a friend that, despite having prayed all night, he thought he had failed his chemistry test.

It is apparent from the lack of consideration given to these reminders of Catholic identity that the students are no longer aware of them. Like the schools' formal mission statements, they are factors that the students know exist but which they accept without real examination. However, these are some of the reminders of Catholic identity upon which the schools rely to keep their formal mission alive. As explained by Heather Stoll, vice president
for external affairs with the Catholic Sisters of Charity, these religious logos are symbols of what Catholic institutions are promising their stakeholders (Minda, 2010).

Chapter Five will include a summary of the findings of the study, a discussion of the implication of those findings and some recommendations for the future of Catholic schools based on those findings.
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

This study has as its goal an understanding of the effect that a changing stakeholder demographic is having on Catholic schools’ expression of Catholic identity and on the mission that guides the schools. Further, the study seeks to understand any existing discrepancies between the values of the schools’ current stakeholders and those that are intrinsic to the schools. Finally, the study seeks to determine whether these discrepancies can be resolved in a manner that can enable Catholic schools to remain both viable and relevant in a society that no longer turns to the schools for the protection, cultural identity, and religious guidance upon which they were founded. Four research questions guided the study in pursuit of its goals:

1. How are students in K-12 Catholic schools in the United States today different from those of past years?

2. What are today’s stakeholders’ specific priorities?

3. What changes need to be made in Catholic schools’ mission in order to address these needs?

4. How will making relevant changes to address stakeholders’ needs impact Catholic identity?

Chapter Five includes a summary of the study, a discussion of the findings identified through the research, the implications for Catholic schools today and recommendations for Catholic schools in the future.
Summary of the Study

This qualitative study used purposive sampling to identify both a student focus group and teacher/staff focus group with which to discuss the participants’ understanding of their schools’ mission and the priorities of the students/staff currently affiliated with the schools. The study also attained data through the use of loosely structured interviews with the principals of both of the study sites utilized in the study. Finally, the study examined the advertising and admissions materials disseminated by the schools, including both schools’ main source of advertising, their websites.

Both schools participating in the study are Catholic high schools located in Raleigh, North Carolina. While one of the schools is under the supervision of the Diocese of Raleigh, the other is considered to be independent of the diocese. However, both are subject to mandates of the Bishop when impacting matters of religious dogma and policy. The schools are markedly different in student population, with one numbering over 1200, while the other is under 150.

The study utilized cross case analysis to facilitate conclusions regarding stakeholder demographics and expression of identity and mission. This method revealed certain conclusions and suggested specific answers to the research questions regarding the demographic profile and mission of Catholic schools today.

Conclusions and Discussions of the Findings

Responses to the four research questions that guided the study provided information on how Catholic schools’ stakeholders have changed over the years, both in demographics and in motivation and goals. While the first question revealed how extensively the schools’
student population has changed, the second question provided an indication regarding the extent to which these stakeholders’ priorities have correspondingly evolved and shifted. As the schools have moved further away from the student population traditionally associated with them, the needs of their new population reflect this change. Today’s Catholic school students are not seeking protection from a hostile society, as their immigrant ancestors did. Rather, they view themselves as full participants in that society, with a desire to be part of its leadership and to share in its success. For these students, there exists in Catholic schools the aim of nurturing “in students the feelings, experiences and reflections that can help them apprehend their relations to all that is around them-both the material world and the social world” (Bryk & Lee, 1993, p. 335).

1. How are students in K-12 Catholic schools in the United States today different from those of past years?

The first research question regards the way in which students of today’s Catholic schools differ from years past. For years, Catholic schools were populated primarily, and at times exclusively, by Catholic children whose parents were seeking to both insulate them from outside influences and more firmly instill in them a firm foundation in Catholic doctrine (Grace, 2002). Today’s Catholic school students, however, may include an almost equal number of Catholics and non-Catholics. They come from educational backgrounds that include public schools, private schools, home schools, and other Catholic schools. Their parents are still, in some cases, seeking to protect them from the outside influences of today’s society, such as overcrowded, violent, or poor quality public schools. Other parents are
seeking to use the schools to provide the moral framework that they recognize is necessary in today’s society, yet are uncertain that they themselves can provide (Bryk, 1988).

However, for most parents the reason for sending their children to the schools is more about instilling in them a desire for and the capability to achieve success than it is about ensuring that they become more conversant with Catholic dogma or establishing a moral code. Parents of the students who participated in this study are believed by their children to be primarily concerned with whether the schools are able to provide their children with the tools necessary to succeed. For some, these tools are primarily seen as being able to attend a prestigious college and attain a lucrative and well-respected job. For others, the tools are viewed as enabling students to accept responsibility for their decisions and as helping them to use that ability to lead others.

Although their Catholic identity may be a factor in the schools’ ability to produce successful students, particularly in the areas of morality and responsibility traditionally featured in Catholic doctrine, few of the study’s participants connected that identity with their reason for attending the schools. Despite the belief held by teachers in the study’s focus groups that this identity was vital to the schools, these teachers also acknowledged that for many students the schools’ Catholic identity did not have any impact on their daily actions or professed values. In fact, although conversant with the schools’ mission statements, both of which reference Catholic identity, the students made a clear and conscious delineation between the schools’ explicit and implicit missions, seeming to regard the two as able to coexist harmoniously or at least benignly. This ability to distinguish between their own personal experience and that of the institutional Church and its schools and yet to reconcile
that distinction is a phenomenon noted by Kennedy (2008) as increasingly characteristic of those who are exposed to contemporary Catholic institutions.

2. What are today’s stakeholders’ specific priorities?

If Catholic identity is not included in the priorities of today’s stakeholders, the second research question provided insight into what those priorities are. For most of the students, the main priority, and what they consider the true mission of their particular school, is to assist students in becoming successful. Although there was some discussion regarding how success might be defined, it was agreed that the schools are expected to provide students with opportunities to take the type of courses that will guarantee them admission into the colleges of their choice. The schools should enable them to develop leadership skills and to form their character. The schools should provide a wide selection of activities and social outlets, so that all can achieve success in some forum. For the students participating in this study, the focus of their high school years is on the immediate future as a tool toward achieving long term goals. Their high school experience is regarded as a necessary stepping-stone in the quest for the job that will ensure that their future is financially secure.

Yet, despite their focus on the future, the students and their families seem to also be aware of the need for them to develop their character in ways that will benefit them now as well as in the years to come. Many of the students made a connection between character formation and the ability to successfully adopt a leadership role at all stages of their lives. While their prospective career paths were varied, students seemed to believe that being self-aware and self-confident was necessary to their development. They also believe that these traits can be fostered by the schools that they are attending and that developing these traits is
both an integral part of the schools’ missions and necessary to their own ability to achieve success. This belief is consistent with the findings of Bagly and Mallick (1997) who identified a significant correlation between Catholic schools and the development of self-esteem, which manifests as success.

In this area, the views of the faculty and administration at each of the study’s school sites most closely replicate those of the students. They too regard the schools as having a mission that involves providing the tools necessary for character formation. However, the factions disagree on the terminology involved, with the adults terming this a part of Catholic (or Christian) identity rather than removing it from the religious framework as the students have done. Further, the adults seemed to be less positive about the success of this aspect of their schools’ mission, seeming to believe that the process of character formation is less linear than the students indicated it to be.

3. What changes need to be made in Catholic schools’ mission in order to address these needs?

The changes that Catholic schools need to make to their mission in order to address the evolution experienced within the demographic makeup and the priorities of their stakeholders may be already occurring, although these changes may, as yet, be unacknowledged. These alterations, in many ways, have already taken place, yet the literature and terminology used by the schools in presenting their mission may not be keeping pace with those changes. Nor may the schools’ faculty and administration be aware of their own implicit acceptance of the changes.
The stakeholders of today’s Catholic schools are searching for an academic environment that will, in every way, prepare the students for the future. They want students to have a strong curriculum which offers numerous accelerated placement courses that will enable to students to successfully pursue admission into the college of their choice. They want schools to provide opportunities for personal growth and the guidance necessary to benefit from those opportunities. Of less importance to parents, but of almost equal importance to students, schools should offer a strong and varied program of extra-curricular clubs and sports so that students can experience both the camaraderie and the competition that these provide.

Both of the sites involved in this study are currently offering, to varying degrees, all of these things. The students are aware of this, as are their parents. For both groups, the understanding that these are components of the school experience was vital to their selection of the school. Further, that these elements have been both incorporated and maintained as essential parts of the school experience and of the advertising and promotion of the schools indicates that they are as important to the faculty and administration as they are to the other stakeholders. As identified by Donlevy (2002), schools, like other communities, share common meanings and values within their language and actions. The legitimization of a community’s values rests not on consent but on what sociologists call the implicated self, an idea that postulates that ‘our deepest and most important obligations flow from identity and relatedness, rather than from consent (p. 103)
Because the schools share the values of their stakeholders, they have made these values inherent in both the way in which they attract students to the school and the way in which they retain those students.

However, the language of the schools’ formal mission statements has failed to keep pace with the schools’ tacit acknowledgement of its own evolution, further supporting Donlevy’s concept of “obligations” that flow from identity, without conscious consent. The mission statements maintain reference to a religious identity which, although not inconsistent with the schools’ informal mission as perceived by their stakeholders, is not experienced as fully as is that less formal statement of identity.

The issue of change, therefore, has less to do with how to present the schools in order to market them while maintaining their current identity and more to do with whether to continue to maintain a formalized connection to the schools’ religious heritage. It also has to do with a determination of whether the current expression of that heritage is sufficiently impactful to necessitate addressing. If, in fact, the values that the schools are transmitting successfully are consistent with their faith and religious heritage, is a mission statement that focuses more on that faith than on the lifestyle and values that it promotes entirely necessary and/or beneficial to the schools? Will attempting to address this faith heritage more aggressively result in the alienation of the schools’ current population or will ignoring the heritage alienate the faculty and administration who cite that faith as important to their decision to work at the schools?
4. How will making relevant changes to address stakeholders’ needs impact Catholic identity?

In a recent speech titled *The Fall of the Christian West* Cardinal Raymond Burke defined true Catholic identity by its opposition to secularist societies, arguing that, when Catholics are influenced by these societies, the result is an erosion of Catholic identity (Hamilton, 2011). However, this position may be one that will result in the necessity for Catholics to eschew their position in society, forcing them to make a choice between being Catholics and being active participants in the world in which they live. As evidenced by the concern for upward mobility and leadership voiced by the students in this study, this is a choice that could have undesirable results for the Catholic Church and for the expression of contemporary Catholic identity. On the other hand, by allowing contemporary Catholics to be both Catholic and full members of today’s society, Catholicism may be able to sustain itself, becoming both revitalized and relevant. Altering the schools’ mission statements to incorporate both worlds may address this issue. However, it is necessary to consider all ramifications of such a paradigm shift.

If, in fact, the formal mission statement of Catholic schools is altered to address the evolving needs of the schools’ current stakeholders, this change may have a negative impact on the schools’ tradition of Catholic identity. Not only may the change affect those who select the schools as places of learning or of employment because of their affiliation with the Church, it may also impact the Church itself.

Many Catholic schools are parochial, and therefore under the leadership of both a principal and, in matters of Church policy and parish financial contribution to the schools, the
pastor of the affiliated parish. Without the support of both the pastor and the parish budget that he oversees, many parish schools would fail. However, if these schools move away from a strong statement of Catholic identity, it is likely that most pastors would withdraw their support.

Further, removing some of the more overt references to the Catholic faith that are currently found in the schools’ mission statements may send a message of dwindling power in the Church to those who are vigilant regarding such matters. These changes may indicate a measure of disinterest or of loosening control on the part of the Church. For this reason, the schools may discover that their long-held image as institutions for which discipline is an important hallmark begins to fade. This change in perception may, therefore, impact the schools’ character and culture. No longer tied to the tradition that formed them, the schools may become increasingly generic, resulting in a type of privatization that lacks a specific, unique identity.

However, if a conscious effort is made to connect to the schools’ cultural heritage, while constantly monitoring their policies for contemporary relevance, the schools may be able to maintain both their Catholic identity and their viability. The data acquired through this study does not indicate the need for any changes to be made to the schools’ Catholic identity as found within the day-to-day routines of the schools themselves. Students who participated in the study made no mention of being uncomfortable with attending the schools’ required religion classes or with the practice of celebrating the liturgy as a community. It is also possible that either of these aspects of the schools’ identity may be
sufficient to maintain that cultural tie and even to continue to spark an interest in religious vocations on the part of some students.

**Implications for Catholic Schools Today**

If Catholic schools revise their formal mission statements to keep pace with the needs of their new stakeholders, it is possible that they will experience some implications that reach beyond the schools, into the Church with which they are affiliated. It is unclear whether these implications will be positive or negative.

The Catholic Church has traditionally used its schools as a vehicle to strengthen its children’s foundation in the faith. Further, the schools have often provided and identified young men and women who might be interested in accepting a vocation to the priesthood or some other aspect of religious life. Additionally, as the schools began to attract non-Catholics, they also embraced the idea of evangelization, sometimes experiencing success in converting students to the Catholic faith.

While a change in the schools’ mission statement would not necessarily directly impact any of the Church’s traditional uses for Catholic education, it would symbolically weaken the connection between the Church and its schools. By removing the overt connection to the Church currently found in the mission statements the schools might be sending a message that would offend or concern that dwindling faction of stakeholders whose primary reason for supporting the schools lies in their loyalty to the Church.

Additionally, this would probably alienate members of the Catholic clergy whose focus, in parishes with attached schools, it is to vouchsafe the Church’s identity within those schools. The necessity of maintaining the support of this group is critical to the schools’
Further, it may be argued that the possible reduction in vocations to the priesthood, already dwindling in number, makes support for weakening the schools' connection to the Church unlikely. As many regard the schools as having a responsibility to create a culture of religious vocations (Schnippel, 2011), any impediment to this agenda would be regarded negatively.

However, it is apparent that maintaining the status quo is neither possible nor advisable, based on the weakening connection between the Church and its youth. By accepting that their stakeholders have changed and that with that change has come an opportunity to introduce a more diverse group to Catholicism, Catholic schools may become a vehicle through which the Church can become both more relevant and more viable. By accepting that Catholic schools’ traditional mission must evolve along with its stakeholders, the schools may be able to attract a new clientele through their emphasis on academic success and character formation. This new emphasis may give the schools the impetus they need to redefine themselves for the future.

**Recommendations for Catholic Schools in the Future**

In order for Catholic schools to successfully redefine themselves, it is important for them to become more cognizant of their stakeholders’ current identity and needs. Rather than continuing to assume that their clientele are selecting the schools for traditional reasons, the schools need to become proactive in educating themselves about what has attracted their stakeholders to the schools. Further, they need to identify what areas of the schools their stakeholders perceive as weaknesses. By identifying both strengths and weaknesses, the
schools may be able to make the improvements that will help them to identify a path for the future.

Further, the schools need to establish an ongoing and effective self-monitoring system. That there is a disconnect between their formal mission statements and what their stakeholders believe to be the schools’ mission is evidence that the schools’ communication and self-analysis are not successful. Additionally, the lack of consistency between the schools’ role as it is defined by the faculty and its student body lessens the schools’ effectiveness. The schools need to align the differing perceptions, so that a strong and relevant mission is constructed, transmitted, and lived.

In order for this to occur, it is vital that all concerned with the schools enter into a dialogue about what Catholic identity truly is in today’s society. Rather than continuing to define Catholic identity based on its opposition to the society in which it is lived, as advocated by Cardinal Burke, Catholic schools need to work on finding their own unique role within that society. No longer existing to protect immigrants from an inhospitable and foreign world, Catholic schools can work in cooperation with other societal institutions to develop leaders who both belong to mainstream society and, yet, also belong to the Catholic Church. Because of the history and character of the Catholic faith, it would be essential to the changes’ success that they be consistent with and supported by the views of the Church’s leadership.

The word “Catholic” is defined as “universal” or “all-inclusive”. By focusing on emphasizing the common goals and experiences of their stakeholders while maintaining the values that have made Catholic schools a place where those stakeholders go to provide
character formation for their children, the schools can construct a new niche for themselves. This niche can be broad enough to include both Catholic and non-Catholics.

**Implications for Further Research**

The results of this study suggest that Catholics in the United States no longer identify themselves as marginalized immigrants. Rather, they seem to view themselves as very much a part of the mainstream of American society and wish to accept their role as part of the power structure of that society. Future study might be done to identify the point at which that change in self perception occurred and whether it is pervasive throughout Catholics nationwide.

Further, additional research might be done to determine whether the view of Catholics held by other faiths has also evolved in a similar manner. This type of study might indicate whether or not those of other faiths would be receptive to the type of changes in identity that Catholics seem to be experiencing. It might also indicate the extent to which acceptance of this type is regional.

Finally, continued research might indicate the specific values held by Catholics that are most consistent with those of other faiths. By using these values as a foundation, it may be possible for Catholics to better understand their newly conceived role in American society.

Like all human institutions, Catholic schools were created to meet a need. For many years, the schools acted as a haven for immigrants new to the United States, providing their stakeholders with religious instruction and a sense of belonging in an unwelcoming and alien
world. Affiliated with a minority religion, the schools aided in strengthening faith and in the Church’s efforts in evangelization.

However, although this particular need no longer exists in exactly the same way, the schools have failed to acknowledge the change. Similarly, the stakeholders being served by the schools have also changed. While some practices within the schools indicate that the schools recognize this and are addressing the change informally, no explicit acknowledgement has been made. With no attempt made to update and disseminate their formal mission, there is now a discrepancy between Catholic schools’ mission statement and what students and other stakeholders perceive that mission to be.

Because a discrepancy exists, Catholic schools are not presenting themselves in a way that will allow them to continue to build their student populations as effectively as they need to in order to remain viable in today’s society. Because they have made no effort to present a consistent and updated mission, the schools are in danger of becoming both obsolete and irrelevant, largely due to an antiquated image and lack of self-reflection.

Although I believe that it is both possible and necessary for Catholic schools to make the changes necessary to remain relevant, I am concerned that the leadership of the Church is too insulated from the issues that the schools face to realize that these changes need to be made. Additionally, I feel that the Catholic tradition of hierarchical decision-making will impede Catholic administrators from making changes independent of the Church. For these reasons, I fear that Catholic schools will fail to take the initiative necessary to seize the opportunity to revise their mission in a way that would ensure their longevity.
Yet, the fact that the schools have managed to instinctively adapt to their changing populations provides a measure of hope for their future. In order to best benefit from this adaptation and to formalize it as the future mission of Catholic schools, it is important that the schools work to create and to communicate an updated statement of their mission. This statement should both honor the schools’ unique cultural heritage and allow them to embrace their future in preparing their students for leadership within the mainstream of society. As explained by Fr. Steve Grunow (2010), it is about building a strong and vigorous culture that can sustain a new vision for Catholics and for their schools as fully integrated into American society.
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APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

Interview and focus group questions, like the research questions driving the study, are influenced by E.A. Allen’s (2010) study of Catholic identity in Catholic high schools and by DeFiore, Convey and Shutllofél’s (2009) work which identifies areas that need to be addressed in strengthening Catholic schools.

Focus Group Questions for Students

1. What made you select this school?
2. How involved were you in the selection of a high school to attend?
3. What additional reasons did your parent/guardian have for sending you to this school?
4. In what way are your values similar to those of your classmates?
5. In what way are your values dissimilar to theirs?
6. How does your experience in this high school differ from what you had expected a Catholic high school to be like?
7. In what ways does the school express its Catholic identity?
8. How does the expression of Catholic identity impact your daily experience in school?
9. If you had to sum up the school’s mission, what would you say it is?
APPENDIX B

Focus Group Questions for Faculty

1. Why did you apply to teach at this school?

2. To what extent do you feel that the values promoted by the school are consistent with your own values?

3. When the school’s expressed values are inconsistent with your own, how do you handle the situation?

4. To what extent are most students’ values consistent with the school’s expressed values?

5. What does the school do to resolve those inconsistencies when they arise?

6. How is today’s student community different from the student community at other schools at which you have taught?

7. If you have been employed here for more than five years, how has this school’s student community changed and what impact has this change had on the school?
APPENDIX C

Interview Questions for Principals

1. How has your student population changed during the time that you have been an administrator at this school?
2. How do the school’s policies and practices address the changes in student population?
3. How are stakeholders’ expectations different now than they were when you first became an administrator?
4. What do you think is the primary reason that students come to this school?
5. How important is Catholic identity to your stakeholders?
6. How has your changed student population altered your expression of Catholic identity and how has it changed your perception of the school’s mission?
7. How do you appeal to both Catholic and non-Catholic populations in your advertising materials?
8. When did you last revise your mission statement and what prompted that revision?