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Faith-Based Praxis: Perceptions Held by Graduate Faculty at a
Catholic International University

Michelle Antoinette Straub

FAITH-BASED PRAXIS: PERCEPTIONS HELD BY GRADUATE FACULTY
AT A CATHOLIC INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in

Leadership and Education in

the Adrian Dominican School of Education of

Barry University

by

Michelle Antoinette Straub, M.B.A.

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Area of Specialization: Leadership

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ABSTRACT

FAITH-BASED PRAXIS: PERCEPTIONS HELD BY GRADUATE FACULTY AT A CATHOLIC INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

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Barry University, 2008

Dissertation Chairperson: Joseph S. Maddox, Jr., D.C., Ph.D.

Purpose: The purpose of this research study was to discover and give voice to graduate faculty members' opinions and beliefs regarding their experience at a faith-based Catholic international university. Understanding faculty members' perceptions and lived experiences while teaching at the graduate level may provide administrators with insight into the distinguishable nature of graduate level higher education at a Catholic university. Fostering an understanding and awareness of faculty experiences and educational practices within the climate of a Catholic international university may offer substantive descriptions about faith-based academe and the alignment of graduate faculty experiences with the university's mission.

Method: This phenomenological qualitative study was conducted with twelve (12) purposively selected full-time graduate faculty members at one Catholic international

university in South Florida. Participants were asked to provide their insights, perceptions, and beliefs using an online questionnaire that included ten (10) open-ended questions. Responses to the questionnaire were completely anonymous. Participants were asked to describe and explain, from their perspectives, their experiences as graduate faculty at a Catholic international university. Responses included, but were not limited to, opinions and experiences with regard to seeking employment, faith, instructional strategies, curricula, classroom management, and administration, while teaching graduate level courses at a Catholic university. Moustakas' (1994) seminal work describing the phenomenological approach in qualitative research scripted the methods followed throughout the data collection, data processing, and data analysis of this investigation. Using an inductive process based on the descriptions provided by participants, concepts were outlined and themes were identified.

Major Findings: Participants expressed diverse, and often polarized experiences as graduate faculty members at a Catholic international university. Most believed that the driving force that brought them there, and kept them there, was the university's core commitment to social justice. Graduate faculty members' opinions were mixed as to the degree by which the university actually practiced what it preached, especially in the area of gay/lesbian/transgender issues. Participants expressed a variety of reservations about teaching at a Catholic international university, included the potential for discrimination and the imposition of religious content on the curriculum.

Participants stated that they highly valued scholarly collaboration, including research, both internal and external to the institution, but felt it wasn't a high priority to

the university or specific schools within the university. Intense workloads and the lack of necessary resources, such as time and funding, were viewed as obstacles to conducting such activities. Some graduate faculty members expressed the desire for transparent governance with objective accountability measurements to align the university's faith-based mission with daily activities performed by graduate faculty.

Participants embraced the integration of the university's faith-based mission and Aristotle's concept of Praxis, which described the actions that embody certain human qualities specifically including a deep commitment to human life, the search for truth, and the respect for others. All participants described themselves as persons of faith and valued the freedom to openly discuss faith as a vital thread to the human experience, and the distinguishable nature of Catholic education.

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DEDICATION

This is dedicated to the ones I love.

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM

Introduction

Most American institutions of higher education were founded and sponsored by faith-based communities or churches (Burtchaell, 1998; Gleason, 1995; Marsden, 1994; Sloan, 1994). In creating institutions of higher education, the founders believed that faith harmonized with all aspects of learning and the ultimate goal was to glorify God (Lyon, Beaty, & Mixon, 2002). Prior to the American Civil War, many of America's most prestigious universities began with a deeply seeded evangelical Protestant identity. Although many of the earliest colleges and universities survived the societal shifts and challenges over the past two centuries, most no longer claim any relationship or linkage with a church or denomination (Lyon, Beaty, & Mixon, 2002). Additionally, as noted by Lyon, Beaty, and Mixon, many of the churches that still list campuses as their affiliates have but mere sad thoughts of what has been lost in the modernization of American society and the recalibration of the country's moral compass. As documented by Burtchaell, Catholics were slower to seriously enter into higher education in numbers, but after 1920 flourished quickly and had grown to sponsor the largest array of colleges and universities in the country.

Throughout the twentieth century, American higher education became increasingly secular (Burtchaell, 1998; Gleason, 1995; Marsden, 1994; Sloan, 1994). As secularization progressed, many faith-based colleges and universities found it difficult to differentiate their mission and purpose with that of secular institutions. The founding

belief that faith and knowledge were synergistically correlated was no longer held providential, but instead had been disassociated and trivialized. Faith was separated from the academic goal of learning and consequently led to a marginalization of faith-based higher education (Lyon, Beaty, & Mixon, 2005).

Statement of the Problem

Controversy and debate over the extent to which Catholic colleges and universities specifically maintained their faith-based identities in an increasingly secular world has been on-going for well over half a century (Burtchaell, 1999; Gleason, 1995; Marsden, 1994; Sloan 1994). Considerable research and disagreement existed over the degree to which faith-based colleges and universities differed from secular institutions (Lyon, Beaty, & Mixon, 2005). The discourse on differentiation was heated and constructive in its efforts to better understand how the American society valued faith-based higher education juxtaposed with the changing dynamics of the country.

As Lyon, Beaty, and Mixon (2005) described, “Despite these studies, many scholars now argue that it is not inevitable that religious colleges and universities must be transformed into secular institutions in order to achieve academic quality” (p. 62). Contrary to historical research in academe, new emerging research showed that faith-based education was not necessarily inferior to secular higher education (Benne, 2001; Hughes & Adrian, 1997; Mixon, Lyon, & Beaty, 2004). As pointed out by Lyon, Beaty, and Mixon, “still, it does not follow that because religious colleges are not inferior to their secular counterparts, religious higher education is essentially different, either in theory or practice” (p. 62). Hence the questions: How were faith-based institutions of

higher education different from secular schools? What did it mean to be a Catholic university? Were faith-based praxis expected of the faculty at religious institutions? Should faith and learning be integrated into the curriculum across all disciplines and at all levels across the university? How were faith-based traditions transferred from the university's mission into the learning environment at both the undergraduate and graduate level? How was the Catholic character perceived within the culture of the university by Catholics and non-Catholics? Although these questions were all pertinent to the issue, the purpose of the present study was to intentionally narrow the scope of inquiry and to focus on the lived experiences of graduate faculty at a Catholic international university in Florida.

Purpose of the Study

Morey and Piderit (2006) concluded that there was no single way for a Catholic college or university to understand and actualize its Catholic mission. The culture was greatly affected by the means in which the mission was understood and implemented at all levels of the organization including administration, trustees, faculty, staff, and students (Hollerich, 2000). The depth and breadth of the Catholic character within the culture was the medium from which organizational identity organically grew (Hollerich, 2000). If the organization was not in agreement or could not clearly define its own Catholic character and identity, it was reasonable to ask how its mission could be executed.

As described by Morey and Piderit (2006), organizational culture resulted from the complex interaction of actions and inheritance. Actions were described as the

decisions people within the culture made about activities that included what to do and how to do it. Inheritance referred to the desired effect of ones actions that resulted from decisions previously made; historical in context. Morey and Piderit posited that if cultural actions were consistent with cultural inheritance, the culture solidified and intensified. If the actions were contrary to the inheritance, inheritance was at risk and challenged. Hence, administrators, trustees, faculty and students of Catholic colleges and universities across the country were faced with this challenge – to better understand what Catholic identity meant, how it was put into praxis, and why it became such an important issue.

The issue of Catholic identity had taken on greater urgency of late for a number of reasons. One of the reasons Catholic identity had become an issue came about in the 1970s with the opportunity to receive public funding. This funding issue brought Catholic identity to the forefront and challenged what it meant to be a religiously affiliated institution. Even then, identity was taken for granted and was not a burning issue (Wilcox, 2000). Another reason for concern about identity was the rapid decrease in the presence of founding religious orders and diocesan clergy in the classrooms and on the campuses (Gleason, 1995). Additional concern about linkages between Church and academe came about in 1990 when Pope John Paul II promulgated *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, which literally meant from the heart of the Church, as an Apostolic Constitution. *Ex Corde* was written by Pope John Paul II as an attempt to reinvigorate the debate over how Catholic colleges and universities could remain true to their religious missions while being viable institutions of higher learning where faculty members were free to work as researchers and teachers who could meet the same objective performance evaluation

criteria as their professional colleagues in the world of academics (Russo & Gregory, 2007). Furthermore, market pressures such as the high cost of private higher education, competition for a diverse student body, and the imperative of educational excellence, stimulated Catholic higher education to be more competitive with other private colleges and universities and the lower-costing public schools.

As an unintended consequence of market pressures, Wilcox (2000) stated that many Catholic institutions emulated secular standards in hiring practices and research without regard to the faith-based mission intrinsic to the Catholic identity. Retention of a critical mass of administrators and faculty committed to the maintenance and enhancement of Catholic identity became another dimension of the problem. As Wilcox described, the problem was further amplified with a high proportion of admissions of Catholic students who were unchurched or theologically ignorant of their own faith. These, along with a high percentage of non-Catholic students and faculty made attention to religious identity an imperative to many scholars.

Prior to the academic revolution of the late 1960s and 1970s, the roles of faculty members were to serve as examples of moral integrity for students and hiring virtuous, servant-minded faculty members (Bok, 1982; Greenleaf, 1977). These were also the primary means by which institutions maintained their identity. The purpose of this research study was to discover and give voice to graduate faculty members' opinions and beliefs regarding their experience at a faith-based Catholic international university. To investigate this phenomenon, graduate faculty members were asked to answer an online open-ended questionnaire. To foster honest and forthcoming responses, the questionnaire

was anonymous with no linkages to the identity of the participants. The participants were purposefully selected as full-time faculty members teaching in graduate or doctoral programs at a Catholic university in Florida.

Theoretical Framework

The primary theoretical framework that guided this study was servant leadership as defined in the seminal writings of Robert Greenleaf (1970, 1977). A secondary theoretical framework that supplemented servant leadership was praxis, a concept taught by Aristotle. Greenleaf believed that a teacher, at any level or in any discipline, should always seek to become a servant leader. However, as he posited, there were many obstacles that made teaching as a servant leader a difficult endeavor. Developed within the context of other leadership theories of the time, servant leadership theory emerged as a paradoxical approach to leadership (Northouse, 2007). Historically most leadership theories focused on the specific skills, styles, and traits held by leaders. As Northouse described, such theories focused on the qualities of a leader and how, or if, leadership was teachable or transferable into a variety of situational contexts.

Servant leadership shifted the focus off of the leader's individual traits and qualities and paradoxically onto the leader-follower relationship within the context of transformational leadership. In his writings on servant leadership, Greenleaf (1977) provided the following description of who the servant-leader was:

The servant-leader *is* servant first... It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve *first*. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. That person is sharply different from one who is *leader* first, perhaps because of

the need to assuage an unusual power drive or to acquire material possessions...The leader-first and the servant-first are two extreme types.

Between them there are shadings and blends that are part of the infinite variety of human nature. (p. 27)

Northouse (2007) described servant leadership theory as having strong altruistic overtones. Greenleaf (1977) emphasized that leaders should be attentive to the concerns of their followers first. Leaders should care for their followers, empathize with them, and nurture their personal growth. Greenleaf (1970) posited that leaders should forget themselves and become attentive to the needs of others; ultimately enriching others by their presence. He argued that leadership was bestowed on a person who was by their very nature a servant to others by ensuring people's highest priority needs were being served.

How did one know that other's highest priority needs were being served?

Greenleaf (1977) suggested the following:

The best test, and difficult to administer, is: Do those served grow as persons? Do they, *while being served*, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? *And*, what is the effect on the least privileged in society? Will they benefit or at least not be further deprived? (p. 27)

Complementing servant leadership in guiding this study was Aristotle's concept of Praxis. Praxis referred to the process or activity by which a theory, lesson, or skill was used and practiced (Schwandt, 2007). Praxis was often juxtaposed with theoretical knowledge as it involved the practical act and the application of something such as a

professional skill, opposed to just a theory. However, the application of theory put into practice such as a professional skill by a practitioner did not fully capture the essence of the term praxis either. A more clear understanding of praxis may be extracted by reviewing its Greek origins.

The term praxis, as taught by Aristotle, described actions that embodied certain qualities specifically including a deep commitment to human life, the search for truth, and the respect for others. Praxis was the process or activities by which a theory, lesson, or skill was used and practiced within a tradition of communally shared understandings and values. Aristotle (1976) posited that praxis was guided by a moral disposition to act truly and rightly with a genuine concern to improve human well-being and to live the good life. In order to do so, a certain type of knowledge was requisite. The Greeks referred to this type of knowledge as phronesis, or practical wisdom, and it required a deep awareness and understanding of other people. Phronesis was not a technical knowledge or skill, but instead, was a part of one's inner most being or a piece of one's character. It could not be separated from the person, as it was that which made the person who they were (Dunne, 1993).

Research Question

In phenomenological research the overarching research question grew out of an intense interest in a particular problem or topic (Moustakas, 1994). From there, the researcher's passion and curiosity motivated the inquiry. A major characteristic of human science research was to reveal more fully the essences and meanings of the lived experience (Creswell, 2007). To focus the qualitative inquiry, Creswell (2003)

recommended that the inquirer asked one or two central research questions followed by no more than five to seven subquestions; specifically in phenomenology, the questions might be broadly stated without reference to the existing literature. The overarching question explored in this study was:

What perceptions of faith-based praxis are held by graduate faculty within a Catholic international university?

Significance of the Study

Understanding faculty members' perceptions and lived experiences while teaching at the graduate level may provide administrators with insight into the distinguishable nature of graduate level higher education at a Catholic university. Fostering an understanding and awareness of faculty experiences and educational practices within the climate of a Catholic international university may offer substantive descriptions about faith-based academe and the alignment of graduate faculty experiences with the university's mission.

Origins of the Researcher's Interest in the Topic

Born into the Catholic tradition, I have been familiar with Catholicism my entire life. Schooled in the high-ranking public school districts of suburban Chicago, my family and friends were actively involved with the local Catholic community. Throughout my informative years, I regularly attended Mass with my family and attended requisite Catholic education classes one night a week, commonly known as CCD, which was designed for students who attended the public school system. Technically known as Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, CCD was designed to teach school-aged children

about the Catholic tradition and to learn the roots of their faith. The degree of success of the education in accomplishing its said objectives will need to be left for another time and a different dialogue. However successful, it is worthy to note that the years of Catholic familial tradition planted a seed in my heart to learn more about faith, tradition, and education as major components of the human experience.

In the late 1980s, as an undergraduate student at a Jesuit Catholic university in Illinois, I experienced cognitive dissonance with the liberal arts curriculum as a means of preparing for a chosen vocation or career track. Feeling isolated, disconnected, and unequipped to maturely resolve the inconsistencies; I opted to leave the faith-based university and attended a secular institution that provided a curriculum focused on the disciplines of information technology and business. The curriculum was very focused, the coursework was intense, and the undergraduate faculty was distant and consumed with research projects and authoring professional journal articles. Shortly thereafter, I began a career in the technology field with the worldwide leader of business information systems, International Business Machines (IBM) Corporation. IBM was both an institution with rich tradition and a distinct culture; and, a fraternal nepotistic organization that fostered familial respect for its members.

After several years of experience in the technology industry, I enrolled in a graduate program offering a master's degree in business administration (M.B.A.) at a private liberal arts college in Central Florida. Originally founded in 1885 by New England Congregationalists, Rollins College had long since distanced itself from its faith-based origins. The executive M.B.A. (EMBA) program was specifically designed for

existing and future executives with several years of experience in management within their field.

The two-year program utilized a cohort model in which all thirty students took the same classes together and graduated together. The thirty-member class was subdivided into six five-person teams that worked together on all projects, cases, and assignments for a full year. In the process of accomplishing the various academic assignments, many of the team members created friendships and bonds that transcended beyond any particular course objectives. At the end of the first year, the faculty created new five-person student teams with very minimal student input. Instead, the faculty relied on their own observations of individual behaviors, group dynamics, and personal interaction with the students. By design, changing the membership of the teams was a difficult transition for many of the students as they were comfortable with their previous team and the old way of accomplishing the coursework. Through the transition to the new teams, the faculty frequently encouraged group members to serve one another as a means of connecting and building meaningful relationships. These were not just words of encouragement that they provided, but instead were words that they lived by and demonstrated through praxis. Consequently, the newly formed teams progressed quickly and productively through the phases of team building.

My life growth was dually fostered by formal and informal educational, and being surrounded by people who had a genuine care and respect for my spirit. I have grown to realize that family, community, faith, and education all have a common thread – meaningful relationships and service to others. Through discourse with a variety of

professionals in diverse disciplines such as business, medicine, law, engineering, and education, the question frequently arose as to the role and commitment of higher education in the development of ethical and moral practitioners to lead their respective fields into the future. Albeit informal dialogue, it was the common consensus that faculty at colleges and universities significantly influenced their students' ethical and moral development within the respective discipline. More specifically, the influence was intensified with those that attended graduate school. Intentional or not, graduate faculty were considered role models and exemplars within their discipline and demonstrated how the student should and could integrate their morals and value system in their own professional practice. As a result, this piqued my interest in learning more about graduate faculty experiences and faith-based praxis.

Research Design

The qualitative design was utilized when the researcher was seeking answers pertaining to feelings, emotions, and meanings of individuals who were familiar with the phenomenon being studied (Patton, 2002). In sharp contrast to quantitative research, qualitative inquiry was less concerned with statistical data. Instead, it focused on identifying emerging common themes by systematically exploring variations in the human experience.

When stating the purpose of the study, the qualitative researcher began with a general purpose and an overarching question designed to assist the researcher in acquiring an improved understanding of the phenomenon. Patton (2002) advised that qualitative researchers began their study by focusing on open-ended questions rather than

deductive theoretical questions. For the proposed study, the use of the qualitative research design was justified further by the researcher's interest in seeking to improve knowledge and understanding of the subject of faith-based praxis held by graduate faculty at a Catholic international university.

Definition of Terms

Qualitative research design is an inductive and emerging study that may not yield an exhaustive list of definitions of terms during the proposal phase; however, the list tends to expand after the data collection phase (Creswell, 2003). The following is list of definition of terms germane to the study:

Faith-Based Education – Schooling that is affiliated with or sponsored by a church or other religious organization.

Laicization – The process whereby Catholic institutions of higher education gained more or less complete autonomy from their sponsoring religious bodies by adding sizable numbers of lay persons to the board of trustees that held the ultimate authority over the institution (Gleason, 1995).

Praxis – The process or activity by which a theory, lesson, or skill was used and practiced within a tradition of communally shared understandings and values (Dunne, 1993). Carr and Kemmis (1986) suggested that one should not think of praxis as simply as action based on reflection. They described it as action that embodied certain qualities specifically including a deep commitment to human life, the search for truth, and respect for others.

Secularization – The process in which a society migrated from close identification with faith and God to a more distant relationship; and sometimes a practical exclusion of God from human thinking and living (Chadwick, 1975; Gleason, 1995).

Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations

By the very nature of their subjective design, qualitative research studies had inherent limitations (Greene, 1988). Creswell (2003) discussed potential limitations of any study as methodological weaknesses related to the data collection and analysis process. Limitations identified factors that restricted the scope of the project. A possible limitations of the present study included generalizability since the participants are full-time graduate faculty from one Catholic university in Florida. This may place a potential limitation on how well the study represents faculty in similar programs and institutions across other regions. As with any qualitative study using purposeful sampling, the procedure may decrease the generalizability of reported outcomes.

Delimitations

Delimitations were established limits or boundaries that intentionally constricted the scope of a study (Creswell, 2003). The present study did not go beyond the boundaries of one international Catholic university. Additionally, it did not involve undergraduate faculty perceptions of faith-based praxis, but rather was intentionally confined to the graduate faculty within the schools of the university that award Ph.D. degrees. The three schools within the university that awarded Ph.D. degrees included: (1)

the Adrian Dominican School of Education; (2) the School of Social Work; and, (3) the School of Nursing.

Organization of the Study

The organization of the study consists of five chapters. The first chapter introduces the subject matter of the research investigation and provides details regarding pertinent issues relating to the study, the statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research question, background and significance of the study, why this study is of interest to the researcher, an overview of the research design, definition of terms, limitations and delimitations, organization of the study, and a chapter summary. The second chapter provides a review of areas in the literature that were relevant to this study. The third chapter details the organization and administration of the chosen research method, philosophical framework, rationale for a qualitative study, rationale for a phenomenological study, research questions, methodology, quality and verification, ethical considerations, and chapter summary. Chapter four describes the results of the study by providing the reader with rich, thick narratives of the investigated phenomenon as described by the participants. Chapter five summarizes the parameters of the study juxtaposed of the purpose of the study with conclusions drawn from the results and findings, and offers recommendations for further research.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the issue of faith-based institutions of higher education becoming largely indistinguishable from their nonreligious counterparts. As a result, research was needed to better understand this phenomenon. The purpose of this research

study was to discover and give voice to graduate faculty members' opinions and beliefs regarding their experience at a faith-based Catholic international university. To investigate this phenomenon, twelve (12) graduate faculty members were answered an anonymous online open-ended questionnaire. The participants were purposefully selected as full-time faculty members teaching in graduate or doctoral programs at a Catholic international university in Florida.

The theoretical frameworks that will guided this study were servant leadership as defined by Robert Greenleaf and Aristotle's concept of Praxis. Limitations and delimitations of this study have been explored and stated. This study contributed to the scholarly research by achieving a better understanding of how graduate faculty members perceived their lived experiences at a Catholic international institution of higher education. Carr and Kemmis (1986) suggested that one should not think of praxis as simply as action based on reflection. They described it as action that embodied certain qualities specifically including a deep commitment to human life, the search for truth, and respect for others.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

The purpose of this literature review was to describe in detail the concept of faith-based education, its history, current issues, and the role of faculty at a faith-based institution of higher education. As discussed by Creswell (2007), it was important in qualitative research to provide a rationale for studying the problem through a review of the scholarly literature. From the literature review, an inquirer added to or filled in a gap in the realm of scholarly work. Or, as Creswell continued, an inquirer established a new line of thinking or assessed a new population overlooked in previous research. Complementarily, Patton (2002) suggested that a review of the relevant scholarly literature brought focus to a study because it identified what was already known and what was not. It also identified the relevant theoretical issues related to the topic of inquiry. Patton also suggested that because it was possible that the literature review created biases, sometimes the literature review took place after data collection or simultaneously with fieldwork.

The Conception of Faith-Based Education

Faith-Based Education Defined

The descriptive term *faith-based* entered the lexicon of mainstream American culture with the formation of the White House Office of Faith-based and Community Organizations (FBCOs) by the current Bush administration. In January, 2001, the White House Office of Faith-based and Community Initiatives and Centers for Faith-Based and

Community Initiatives were created in eleven Federal agencies to strengthen and expand the role of FBCOs in providing social services (The White House, n.d., webpage). Through an array of regulatory and policy reforms, legislative efforts, and public outreach to FBCOs, the Federal government pursued to accomplish the mission. Additionally, by making information about Federal grants more accessible and the application process less burdensome, the Initiative had empowered FBCOs to compete more effectively for funds. According to the White House, the ultimate beneficiaries were America's poor, who were best served when the Federal government's partners were the providers most capable of meeting their needs.

As stated by The White House (n.d.), there were four foci for the Faith-based & Community Initiative, they included: (a) identifying and eliminating barriers that impeded the full participation of FBCOs in the Federal grants process; (b) ensuring that Federally-funded social services administered by State and local governments were consistent with equal treatment provisions; (c) encouraging greater corporate and philanthropic support for FBCOs' social service programs through public education and outreach activities; and (d) pursuing legislative efforts to extend charitable choice provisions that prevented discrimination against faith-based organizations, protected the religious freedom of beneficiaries, and preserved religious hiring rights of faith-based organizations. With that as the backdrop, faith-based education in America referred to schooling that was affiliated with or sponsored by a church or other religious organization. Being affiliated with a church or religious organization distinguished faith-based education from governmental, public or private secular schooling. Prior to the

creation of the White House Office of Faith-based and Community Initiatives, faith-based education in America was commonly called parochial education.

The History of Faith-Based Higher Education In America

In ancient civilizations, formal schooling, as we know it today, did not exist (Sharpes, 2002). According to Sharpes, two phenomenon originating among ancient peoples that have forever influenced education of the young. The first phenomenon was mere survival in a harsh and demanding environment. The second was the roles of religion and religious rituals in daily life. Training for survival typically meant occupational instruction for skilled workers or vocational education for the chosen elite whom had the potential to become religious leaders and scribes. Moorey (1994, as cited by Sharpes) explained that one could only speculate how children were taught in ancient societies based on knowledge and few excavated artifacts.

The American university system was built on a foundation of evangelical Protestant colleges (Marsden, 1994). Most of the major universities evolved directly from such nineteenth-century colleges. As late as 1870 the vast majority of these were remarkably evangelical. Most of them had clergymen as president who taught courses defending Biblicist Christianity and the literal translation of the Bible. They also encouraged periodic campus revivals. Yet within half a century the universities that emerged from these evangelical colleges, while arguably carrying forward the spirit of their evangelical founders, had become conspicuously inhospitable to evangelicalism. By the 1920s the evangelical Protestantism of the old-time colleges had been effectively excluded from leading university classrooms.

During the next half century the paradox turned into an irony. Many of the same forces set into motion by liberal Protestantism, which rooted out traditional evangelicalism from university education, were eventually turned against the liberal Protestant establishment itself. While it was the spirit of liberal Protestantism that arguably survived, normative religious teaching of any sort had been nearly eliminated from standard university education.

The History of Catholic Universities in America

Rashdall (as cited in Heft, 2003) stated that by the thirteenth century, institutes of learning were called universities mainly because they drew students from all parts and provided higher education. The education typically centered on the professions of law, medicine, and theology and the universities were typically connected to cathedrals. Heft supposed that it might be said that in the West the Church gave birth to the universities.

By the late seventeenth century, two distinct models for universities took form in Germany and in England. In Germany, the emphasis was on research and the production of new knowledge, and focused primarily on the role of the professor. In England, the emphasis was on the undergraduate experience that typically took place in small college communities where students lived and learned together. Colleges in the United States typically started out as residential high schools, something akin to the English college, but for younger boarders. Only since the Civil War did significant numbers of the U.S. colleges begin to take on the German emphasis on research (Heft, 2003).

In the colonies of the New World, the first colleges were founded in the seventeenth century by specific religious communities who had come to the New World

to enjoy religious freedom. At the beginning of the colonial period, Catholics, few in number, founded their first college, Georgetown College, only in 1789. Not for another hundred years did the bishops of the country decide that a national Catholic university should be established, the Catholic University of America. (Heft, 2003). Bishops encouraged numerous religious communities, of both men and women, to found boarding schools that were, at the beginning, little more than high schools. Over time, many of these schools became colleges. Not long after the Civil War, only about five percent of the boarding students finished the college degree. Bishops first located their seminaries at some of these colleges, which the religious communities dominated (Heft, 2003).

Until the late nineteenth century, most of these institutions concentrated on the moral formation of their students (Gleason, 1995). The members of the faculty, mainly clergy and religious, were for the most part generalists as teachers and scholars. John Carroll, the first American bishop, stated that the main reason for the founding of Georgetown was the recruitment and formation of priests (Heft, 2003). By 1840, the Jesuits, Sulpicians, Dominicans, and Vincentians had all established colleges. A dramatic increase in the number of Catholic immigrants drove the expansion of the number of Catholic colleges. According to Gleason, during the mid-1800s the number of immigrants increased three and a half times faster than the overall population.

Since the vast majority of the people in the United States were Protestants, these educational institutions were also intended to insure that the children of the immigrants would receive a Catholic formation and education. The Third Plenary Council of Baltimore decreed in 1884 that every Catholic parish should also establish a grade school.

It also decided to found the Catholic University of America, and to provide uniform religious education by commissioning the writing of what became known as the Baltimore Catechism (Heft, 2003).

By the late nineteenth century it had become evident that the old European system of a six-year college program did not fit the American system that allotted four years for high school and four for college. From the 1890s to the 1930s, Catholic colleges went through the process of restructuring their programs to fit the American practice as their transcripts were consistently misunderstood by secular graduate schools. The needed changes were completed by the mid-1930s (Heft, 2003). At the beginning of the twentieth century, women's orders began to establish colleges for women in such numbers that by 1926 twenty-five of them made for more than a third of the sixty-nine colleges accredited by the Catholic Educational Association, which was founded in 1904 (Heft, 2003).

Partly on account of the Americanist controversy at the turn of the 20th century and the vigorous promotion, supported by Leo XIII in 1879, of Thomistic philosophy and theology, Catholic colleges in the United States solidified their mission in a typically counter-cultural stance (Heft, 2003). Quoting Gleason (1995), "neo-scholastic philosophy formed the cognitive framework around which the whole intellectual edifice of Catholic higher education was built from the 1920s through the 1950s" (p. 253). Catholics opposed the secularism and materialism of American society and remained vigilant not to mix with Protestants. Since the Russian Revolution in 1917, they opposed atheistic communism and prayed for decades for the conversion of Russia. Heft explained that in

the midst of these cultural and religious threats, Catholic immigrants continued to send their sons and daughters to college to enter the middle class.

Convinced of the truth of their religious and intellectual position, the restructured Catholic colleges grew rapidly after World War I and moved into the postwar era with enhanced self-confidence (Gleason, 1995). During the 40 years from 1920 to 1960, the number of Catholic colleges grew from 130 to 231 and their total enrollment increased from 34,000 to over 300,000 (Gleason, 1997). This explosive growth forced Catholic educational leaders to professionalize their institutions. As they grew in size and complexity, more lay persons became members of the faculty. Of the institutions characterized as Catholic universities in 1920, three-quarters of the faculty were laypersons. Academic programs multiplied; including those that awarded masters degrees. More faculty realized the need to have graduate degrees themselves. The undergraduate curriculum took shape in a relatively coherent fashion around required courses in religion. The teaching of theology and philosophy to undergraduates did not become common until the 1950s and into the 1960s. By the end of the 1950s Catholic educational leaders had built an impressive number of colleges and universities and at the undergraduate level provided an integrated curriculum with requirements and electives that communicated a distinctive sense of Catholicism. In stark contrast, graduate programs were increasingly taught by laypersons whose graduate education was obtained from secular universities and resulted in programs that looked very similar to those offered at secular institutions (Heft, 2003).

The 1960s constituted a turbulent period in the nation's life. The baby boomers' cultural revolution of rock-n-roll and drugs, the sometimes-violent opposition to the Vietnam War, the assassination of John F. Kennedy in 1963, and in 1969, Martin Luther King and Bobby Kennedy, all converged in a single decade to cause considerable upheaval. For American Catholics, the Second Vatican Council introduced an additional set of profound changes. It committed the Church to ecumenism and underscored certain values of pluralism, which saw the world in a much more positive light than in the previous four hundred years (Heft, 2003). It introduced far-reaching changes in the liturgy, and asked scholars to develop more historical and biblically-based approaches to morality and doctrine. Some scholars opined that this aided in the collapse of the neoscholastic synthesis that had supported the Catholic identity and mission of higher education for the previous half century.

Crisis and conflicts over academic freedom flared up on several Catholic campuses in the late 1960s. Largely lay faculties who in growing numbers possessed Ph.D. degrees demanded a greater participation in university governance. The number of religious who until then led these institutions with a firm hand dramatically decreased (Heft, 2003; Hollerich, 2000). Heft explained that the rapidly increasing number of students, many seeking student deferments from the war, required a proportionate increase in the number of faculty.

Throughout the 1960s, a number of court cases defined the explicit practice of hiring Catholic faculty as establishing an institution as legally sectarian and therefore ineligible under the First Amendment to receive state or federal aid (Gleason, 1995; Heft,

2003). Consequently, leadership of some Catholic institutions expressed the need to prove they were not pervasively sectarian in order to survive financially (Heft, 2003).

During this same period, many of the religious leaders of these institutions interpreted Vatican II as calling for greater lay leadership (Gleason, 1995; Heft, 2003). In 1967, a group of prominent Catholic educators met at a northern Wisconsin vacation lodge belonging to the University of Notre Dame. As Gleason described, albeit a self-selected group, the Land O'Lakes group was fairly representative of the leading sector of American Catholic higher education at the time. The purpose of the invitation only seminar was to discuss and prepare a preliminary position paper for a meeting of the International Federation of Catholic Universities (IFCU). Father Hesburgh was president of the IFCU and led the seminar. The resulting document became known as the Land O'Lakes Statement. It was the first in a long series produced by subsequent IFCU meetings and later exchanges with Rome. As described by Gleason, the document "took on a life of its own as a symbolic manifesto that marked the opening of a new era in American Catholic higher education" (p. 317). As explained by Gallin (1992), the document proclaimed that "a Catholic university must have a true autonomy and academic freedom in the face of authority of whatever kind, lay or clerical, external to the academic community itself" (p. 7). These were, the statement continued, "essential conditions" to the life, growth, and survival of Catholic universities. Quoting Gleason:

What made Land O'Lakes news were its radically novel claims for "institutional autonomy and academic freedom." Issued against the background of academic freedom crises, theological dissent, student unrest, and the change to lay boards of

trustees – and coming as it did from a group of prestigious Catholic educators – the Land O’Lakes statement was, indeed, a declaration of independence from the hierarchy and a symbolic turning point. It confirmed at the college and university level what John Cogley told Catholic educators the year before: the church’s future path might remain unclear, but her “cold war with modernity” was definitely over. (p. 317)

In the years following, most Catholic colleges and universities appointed largely lay board of trustees, many of them alumni, expected to benefit from their competence in managerial and financial matters as well as their loyalty to the institution (Heft, 2003). Gleason (1995) used the word laicization as a shorthand term that described the process whereby Catholic institutions of higher education gained more or less complete autonomy from their sponsoring religious bodies by adding sizable numbers of lay persons to the board of trustees that held the ultimate authority over those institutions. Gleason described the events of the 1960s as a major turning point, an era in which Catholic educators were no longer challenged with modernity; but instead, he posited that they had accepted modernity.

In 1985, an internationally public discussion on the nature and mission of Catholic higher education began (Heft, 2003) and led to the promulgation in 1990 of John Paul II’s apostolic constitution, *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*. As Heft described, years of debate between bishops and the leaders of Catholic higher education in the United States on how best to implement the apostolic constitution. In 1999, the bishops agreed upon an application. Given that so large a number of Catholic colleges and universities were

located in the United States, and among them some of the most prominent in the world, the length of time needed for agreement on how *Ex Corde*'s norms should be understood was not a surprise. The stakes were high, and the consequences would become obvious only with the passage of time. As Heft concluded, the mission and identity of Catholic colleges and universities became conceptually more precise in terms of their relationship to the larger Catholic Church.

Ex Corde consisted of an introduction, two major parts, and a brief conclusion. Part I discussed the identity and mission of Catholic universities but did not use the term colleges, since outside of the United States many nations use the term college to refer to what are either secondary or post-secondary institutions that are not on the same level as universities. Part II discussed general norms. As described by Russo and Gregory (2007), *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* expressed legitimate concerns that all faculty members, Catholic and non-Catholic, who worked in Catholic environments, regardless of their personal value or faith systems, respected the Church's teaching and traditions. Some academicians viewed it as an infringement on academic freedom. However as asserted by Kinney (2000), faculty in every discipline working at a Catholic university had a duty to meet and respect the needs and nature of their employer just as the Catholic Church had made an effort to meet and respect the needs of its faculty.

The majority of the controversy in the United States around *Ex Corde* was centered on Catholic theologians in particular. *Ex Corde* required those who taught theological disciplines at any institution to be faithful to the Magisterium, or teaching authority, of the Church as the authentic interpreter of Sacred Scripture and Sacred

Tradition. Russo and Gregory (2007) stated that controversy was consistent with the Roman Catholic Church's code of canon law and opined that Ex Corde did not mean to stifle legitimate dissent or impose bounds on academic freedom. Instead it was designed to ensure that when theologians who occupied special places in Catholic universities disagreed with Church teaching, they were required to do their best to explain the Roman Catholic Church's official magisterial position accurately, making it clear that they spoke in their own names and not that of the Church.

Together, these social trends became a powerful force in academia in general, and Catholic higher education specifically (Kinney, 2000). The irony in these developments was that it was often the most radical members of a given university's faculty who demanded and received the greatest amount of academic freedom from their faith-based employer. However, it was often the same faculty who espoused philosophies that showed little tolerance for religion. As stated by Kinney, one could well argue that Catholic and other faith-based universities had bestowed far more respect to their faculty than some faculty members were willing to contribute to the missions of their employer. Also ironic was that many of the same academics enthusiastically embraced the current movement for diversity, and yet not acknowledge the contribution Catholicism made toward the diversity of society. Kinney argued that the attempts to secularize the Catholic university were an attack on the very diversity that such persons claimed to advocate.

Faith and Learning

Over one hundred years ago, Irish comedic playwright and self-proclaimed socialist, George Bernard Shaw, thought that the idea of a Catholic university was a

contradiction in terms (O'Brien, 2002; Roche, 2003). Although Shaw's comment was intended to project humor through sarcasm by emphasizing the dichotomy between the intellectual freedom prevalent within a university and the dogmatic tradition of Catholicism, Roche suggested it might be wiser to consider the idea of a Catholic university a rhetorical tautology. A tautology referred to the use of different words to effectively say the same thing twice. The word Catholic and the word university had the same root meaning. As Roche described, the two words also had a historical connection since the first universities originated in Catholic Europe. Additionally, the Catholic tradition had much in common with the ideals of a university.

In modern society a widespread attitude existed which suggested that educated persons, scholars, and intellectuals could not be religious nor consider themselves as people of faith. Or, if they were religious, or people of faith, then they didn't take their faith very seriously (Carter, 1993; Roche, 2003). Supporting Shaw's comment, this stance contributed to modern skepticism concerning the idea of a religious, or faith-based university of any kind. Carter explained that because the idea of a Catholic university had deviated from the norm of society, even the most devout supporters were embarrassed when articulating the idea of Catholic character and tradition to skeptical academic audiences. In such a climate, as Roche suggested, those who supported the idea of building Catholic universities needed to work harder at finding a vocabulary that articulated the distinct mission of a Catholic university in such a way as to be both true to Catholic tradition and inviting to nonreligious intellectuals, whether at Catholic or at

secular universities. Hence, Catholic academic literature was abundant with substantial and diverse attempts to articulate the distinctive nature of Catholic higher education.

In contrast to the most positive aspects of Catholicism, one must also recognize and acknowledge the darker moments in Catholic history. Although Christianity inspired the concept of equality, Church doctrine had not always been in alignment with reason. A history of gender inequality, corruption and authoritarianism, undermined the concept of individual responsibility. Quoting Roche (2003), the Church “acted irrationally in the face of the advances of science, failed to rise to the challenges of the modern world, and fallen short of its own moral ideals” (p. 2). Many people, even today, have suffered from these moments of regression and as Roche states, the Church has often been its own worst enemy.

Fortunately, as a result of Vatican II, the Church made an effort to acknowledge and learn from past shortcomings and failures. Although Catholic universities in the United States tended to avoid discussing the darker sides of Catholicism, it was through the awareness of the Church’s dark history, and the Protestant break from Catholicism, that led academic freedom to be a key element of American Catholic higher education. Quoting Roche (2003),

Academic freedom is not just an anomaly that happens to be part of the American scene, it is the heart and soul of what make American universities great. To allow for independent Catholic universities that can compete with the most outstanding non-Catholic universities in the world is in Catholicism’s best interest. (p. 3)

Education was the core activity of Catholic colleges and universities (Heaney, 2000; Morey & Piderit, 2006). Said another way, a university was a locus of education. Often discussed in the literature was the concept of Catholic higher education and distinguishability from its secular counterparts. Heaney stated that in order for distinguishability to be fulfilled, students must become acquainted with Catholic teaching and practice. Morey and Piderit posited that among the many things have been done to promote and nurture the Catholic culture on campus, none was more important than making sure students gained knowledge about the Catholic tradition and that sufficient faculty were prepared to present that knowledge.

Current Issues

Catholic higher education in the United States was undergoing dramatic changes (Gleason, 1995, 1997; Heaney, 2000; Morey & Piderit, 2006). A visible change was evident by the drastic decline of nuns, sisters, brothers, and priests from Catholic university campuses across the country (Hollerich, 2000). Additionally, Catholic colleges and universities were dealing with critical questions about what constitutes Catholic collegiate identity; including: (1) what were appropriate ways to engage the Catholic tradition across all disciplines and levels within the university?; (2) what constituted a critical mass of committed and knowledgeable Catholics necessary to maintain religious identity?; (3) what was an appropriate level of knowledge and religious commitment for those who led, governed, and taught at Catholic institutions and how did they acquire it? Many people had strong, and strongly differing, opinions about the current and future state of Catholic higher education.

To better understand the dynamics of cultural change within American Catholic universities, a seminal study was conducted by Morey and Piderit (2006), which studied 124 senior administrators at 33 Catholic colleges and universities across the United States. In the extensive study, the researchers described the current situation and offered concrete suggestions for enhancing Catholic identity, culture and mission at all Catholic colleges and universities. Critical issues were defined and analyzed and addressed them by using the rich construct of organizational culture. They provided four different models of how Catholic colleges and universities operated and successfully competed as religiously distinctive institutions in the higher education market. After they identified the content of the Catholic tradition; specifically, intellectual, moral, and social, performance was analyzed among institutions in all four models. Criteria were developed for identifying religious cultural crisis at institutions and specific policy proposals for enhancing religious culture were provided. They also suggested principles for effectively leading and managing cultural change.

Contemporary Catholic higher education finds itself at a crucial crossroad (Hesburgh 1994). The issues were many and complex. How was the Catholic character of the university to be preserved and fostered while avoiding secularization on the one hand and insular sectarianism on the other? Must a majority of the faculty in a college or department be Catholic to carry out its Catholic mission? How was Catholic to be defined in terms of culture, belief, or practice? What were the level of commitment to intellectual inquiry and the possibility of dissent that needed to be present on a Catholic campus?

Scholars explored these issues from a wide variety of religious and academic perspectives, and although their backgrounds and fields of study differed widely, they agreed on a number of points (Hollerich). First a great Catholic university began by being a great university that was also Catholic. Second, the catholicity, or universality, of a Catholic university fostered the centrality of philosophy and particularly theology as legitimate intellectual concerns, especially as they approached the challenges of the world in defining truth (Heaney, 2000). Finally, how a Catholic university was seen as a community of service was also examined in both its intellectual and practical applications. Scholars described a university community where reason and faith intersected and reinforced each other as they grapple with all the problems that faced the transmission and growth of knowledge and the multiplication of new and complex moral problems.

Religious Orders and Education

“The history of Catholic institutions of higher education in the United States has always been inextricably linked to that of religious orders” (Wittberg, 2003). The highest priority for religious congregations of men and women was the training of their new members (Morey & Piderit, 2006). As described by Van Egen (1994), Christianity has a vested interest in education because believing is not alien to learning or learning to believing. The Christian community inherited the concern for rearing its young in faith from Judaism. Congregants’ families and generous donors made financial resources and the best people were selected to train the young sisters, brothers, and seminarians. The religious superiors selected the most talented people for teaching in seminaries or houses

of formation. As Morey and Piderit described, even though they interacted with a relatively small number of novices, seminarians, or religious-in-training, faith-based educators, had a multiplicative impact since their students went on to teach and interact with thousands of other people. Statistics provided by Wittberg stated that all but sixteen of the 230, or 93 percent, Catholic colleges and universities currently operating in the United States had been connected with a religious congregation. Eighty eight percent are still linked. Wittberg stated that the most heavily involved communities were the Jesuits with 28 institutions of higher education and the Sisters of Mercy with 19. The Franciscans, the Dominicans, the Ursulines, the Sisters of St. Joseph, and others, had also lent their distinctive charisms to the mix of Catholic colleges and universities.

Particularly in the case of women religious, their vowed life had given them a freedom to observe the needs of people at various times and places and they reached out and responded in unique and creative ways (Ashley, 1990; McGreal, 1997; Foley, 1999). Specifically in the areas of health care, social services, and education, their efforts had given rise in American society to unparalleled developments. Their energy and unwavering enthusiasm led them across national borders to people and cultures throughout the world. Quoting Foley, “The result has been an accumulation of experience among the members that has provided knowledge and insight into their reality as women religious within the church, as well as into global situations far removed, geographically, politically, and socially, from their origins” (p. 12).

St. Dominic and The Dominican Order

As scholarly historians, Hinnebusch (1965), McGreal, (1997), and O'Connor (1922) all noted that Dominic de Guzman was born of wealthy Spanish nobility. His mother was Blessed Joan of Aza who, when pregnant, had a vision that her unborn child was a dog who would someday set the world on fire with a torch it carried in its mouth. Later, a dog bearing a torch in its mouth became the symbol of the Dominicans and the Order of Preachers (Dorcy, 1982).

When he was 26, Dominic became one of the canon regulars who formed the cathedral chapter at Osma. While traveling through southern France with his bishop, Diego of Osma, Dominic came upon a population almost entirely enslaved by the dualistic heresy known as Albigensianism. Albigensians, also known as the Cathari, taught a doctrine of the evil of created matter denying the goodness of God's creation. It was this encounter that sparked Dominic's mission in serving God. He was called to bring an end to heresy (Hinnebusch, 1965; O'Connor, 1922; Van Egel, 1994).

Members of the Dominican Order (Order of Preachers) have been on mission in the United States for more than two centuries (McGreal, 1990). The mission given them by Dominic de Guzman (1170-1221) from the founding of the order was to proclaim the word of God by preaching, teaching and example, while living a common life (Ashley, 1990). An emphasis on study had always been an integral component of Dominican formation and tradition (Dorcy, 1982). However, the overarching mission of the Order of Preachers included many ministries. These ministries were developed as needed to bring the word of God to people in a variety of societies and circumstances. St. Dominic had

this in mind when he urged the first members to identify with each culture through the use of the vernacular languages, the everyday common language of the people in a particular country or region, as opposed to the official or formal written language.

McGreal discussed that for the same reasons, St. Dominic asked the preachers to meet all people as mendicants, to always be ready to exchange gifts and necessities with others in the spirit of Jesus and the apostles. The preachers, known in the Dominican tradition as friars, were missioned with spreading the good news of the Gospels through preaching and teaching in a way that lay men, women and children could understand (Hinnebusch, 1965).

Although preaching was typically performed by bishops, Pope Innocent III authorized the friars to fulfill their mission and to protect the future of the Roman Catholic Church in distant lands (Hinnebusch, 1965; O'Connor, 1922). The order was officially approved by Rome in December 1216. In August of the following year, the order was disseminated across France, Spain and Italy to preach the gospels (The Order of Preachers, 2008). Shortly thereafter, the order continued to spread across Europe. Although many of the friars initially did not want to be sent out, Dominic sustained them by asking them not to oppose him, but instead to trust that God would multiply their works for the benefit of many. In time, his prophecy proved true and the order grew rapidly, and its fruit likewise multiplied (Dorcy, 1982) across the world.

Adrian Dominican Sisters

The Adrian Dominican Sisters share in the tradition of the international Dominican order known as the Order of Preachers, founded by St. Dominic Guzman in

the thirteenth century in France (Dorey, 1982; Hinnebusch, 1965). Also known as the Dominican Sisters of the Congregation of the Most Holy Rosary, Adrian, Michigan, the sisters trace their origin to Holy Cross Convent in Regensburg, Bavaria, established in the thirteenth century. Responding to a need for education for German immigrants, in 1853, three Dominican sisters were sent to New York to provide religious education to immigrant children and the first Dominican sisters to be sent to America. While they continued to serve the immigrant community in New York, a group of sisters from the same congregation were sent to Adrian, Michigan, to establish a hospital for injured railroad workers (Foley, 1999). As the need for the hospital diminished, the sisters responded to other needs of the community in which they served.

Consistent with the Dominican tradition, the sisters focused on meeting the needs of the poor and oppressed through education (Foley, 1999). In the late 1800s they opened and operated St. Joseph Academy and it became a successful boarding school. In 1923 the Adrian Dominican Congregation earned independence from the New York Congregation and continued to grow and flourish in its service to the community. Education continued to be a major focus of the Congregation. Complementing faith-based education, new social service ministries were formed particularly in the area of parish visitation. During World War II, the Congregation opened three hospitals, two in California and one in Nevada. In 1940 under the leadership of Mother Gerald Barry, the Congregation built a house of studies at the Catholic University in Washington, DC and opened Barry College (now Barry University) in Miami Shores, Florida. Also under the leadership of Mother Barry, the Congregation extended its ministries overseas to the

Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, and Peru, Malawi, Kenya and South Africa. The Congregation earned pontifical status as officially recognized and approved by the Holy See in 1944. During the last century, the original Regensburg, New York Congregation has seen fruitful success of their efforts to meet the needs of the poor, uneducated European immigrants (O'Reilly, 1999) by branching out to eleven separate and independent congregations from their beginning in Newburgh, New York, including the Adrian Dominicans (Adrian Dominican Sisters, 2006).

Barry University's Mission

Barry University's Mission Statement (n.d.) was, "to foster individual and communal transformation where learning leads to knowledge and truth, reflection leads to informed action, and a commitment to social justice leads to collaborative service" (web page and Appendix H). Anchored within the ancient Judeo-Christian heritage of Dominican tradition (Adrian Dominican Sisters, 2006), Barry University was steeped in the practice of offering a quality education to its students so they may impact their communities for the good of humanity. The University's mission statement positioned students to have positive effects on the community through its core commitments of knowledge and truth, an inclusive community, social justice, and collaborative service. Barry University's diverse demographics had attracted students to serve their communities as doctors, lawyers, educators, administrators, environmentalists, biologists, writers, preachers, and laypersons. Catholic intellectual and religious traditions guided the fulfillment of the university's mission.

Faith-Based Higher Education Faculty

Catholic Higher Education Faculty

Because Catholic universities in the United States competed with Protestant and secular universities, they often assimilated their best aspects (Roche, 2003). Not only did Catholic universities integrate their ideas and strategies, they also sought out faculty members who were not Catholic but who felt very much at home at a faith-based university. As Protestant universities had divested themselves of their Christian heritage, the Catholic university had become one of the few places where religious scholarship could truly flourish alongside secular scholarship. Consequently, Catholic universities became increasingly attractive to religious intellectuals of all kinds, and some of the most distinguished professors and highest academic leaders at American Catholic universities were non-Catholics.

Many scholars have researched the impact of the political radicalism of the 1960s on academia in general and Catholic universities in particular. Gleason (1995) described the time period as a cultural earthquake that could not help but to add to the identity crisis within Catholic universities. Catholics heard that their church was corrupt and its leaders were bankrupt while also hearing that their country was an imperialist monster and its leaders were war criminals (Gleason, 1992). Gleason concluded that this led to a general erosion of the respect that such institutions had previously held in society. This erosion affected academia. Faculty and students frequently questioned or challenged the authority and validity of various aspects of academic operation including institutional mission that was the heart of a Catholic university (Hollerich, 2000).

Burtchaell (1998) proposed that Protestant universities were the first to feel the impact of this trend in the mid 1970s, but he concluded that Catholic universities were secularizing in a similar manner but at a slower pace. Most Catholic institutions survived the identity crises of the 1960s. In most cases academic standing improved while only a handful completely abandoned their Catholic character (Gleason, 1995).

The identity problem that persisted was not institutional or organizational, it was ideological and was based on a lack of consensus to the substantive content of what were the religious beliefs, moral commitments, and academic assumptions that supposedly constituted Catholic identity (Hollerich, 2000; Gleason, 1995). Simply put, the crisis was not that Catholic educators did not want their institutions to remain Catholic. Instead, they were no longer sure what remaining Catholic really meant and what role they were to play in the making of a great Catholic university.

Hesburgh (1994) suggested that what made a great university in the ancient and modern tradition was that it must be a community of scholars, young and old, teaching and learning together and committed to serving the needs of mankind of that particular time. It was hoped that within a university the young drew perspective from the old and vice versa. Additionally, it was hoped that the faculty grew wiser as it confronted the questioning, idealism, and generosity of each new generation of students. Haughey (1996) ascertained that many faculty members felt called into their academic careers and the education profession in academe. Hesburgh opined that a university was a place where all the relevant questions were asked and where answers were elaborated in an atmosphere of freedom and responsible inquiry. He added, that a university was a place

where the young learned the great power of ideas and ideals and where the values of justice and charity, truth and beauty, were both taught and exemplified by the faculty. Hesburgh believed a great university was a place where both faculty and students were seized by a deep compassion for human anguishes and were committed to offer a helping hand, wherever possible, in every aspect of one's material, intellectual, spiritual, and cultural development.

In that paradigm, a Catholic university offered its faculty and students the advantage and opportunity of being able to move more quickly and more frequently to deeper and more detailed levels of discussion (Roche, 2003). He posited this to be the case because of its emphasis on received wisdom and its relationship to the Catholic tradition and the mission of the Church. The Catholic tradition offered a range of viewpoints with which to analyze contemporary value questions. Roche contended that these viewpoints were extended into the Catholic university setting for dialogue and contemplation by faculty and students. The richness of the tradition and the Christian elevation of reason gave Catholic universities a certain confidence when confronting some of the anti-rational tendencies that had made their way into many of America's best secular universities. The Catholic institution of higher learning was one that should strive for inclusively, for a permeation of the whole, for connection and relationship between and among cultures, races, ideas, and fields of study (MacKenzie, 2000).

Graduate and Professional Studies

Undergraduate education within an institution – Catholic and non-Catholic – is the sector that has traditionally provided the institution with its dominant culture and

character (Morey & Piderit, 2006). Therefore the vast majority of research and academic literature focuses on the undergraduate framework. Despite this focus, Morey and Piderit concluded that graduate and professional programs offer excellent opportunities to address significant aspects of the Catholic intellectual tradition.

Graduate and professional programs were remarkably well focused (Morey & Piderit, 2006). In many programs, most of the courses that students needed to take in their first full year of studies were prescribed by the faculty; graduate students enjoyed less choice in their first year of studies than undergraduate students. Because faculty members had a very clear idea of what students must know and experience in order to be properly prepared to function in their discipline, they limited choice in this first year. Both knowledge and training were important in graduate studies, and academic programs were structured to reflect this dual emphasis. Would it be unusual if Catholic graduate programs did not offer some courses relating to the Catholic tradition or offer treatment of some themes about which Catholic thinkers have made important contributions over the centuries? Having a Catholic culture at the graduate and professional level required some significant analysis of the Catholic intellectual heritage at a level consonant with graduate and professional study.

Secular graduate and professional education programs had more stringent norms and expectations than secular undergraduate programs (Morey & Piderit, 2006). Students had less choice, were expected to be more focused on collaborative work with faculty members, and, at least in many programs, were also expected to progress in their studies in small groups. Even though at many institutions the faculty members teaching at the

graduate and professional level also taught at the undergraduate level, the purely secular graduate culture made more specific demands, and not merely with respect to how much knowledge was accumulated.

The emphasis at the graduate level was on preparing students for applying the knowledge of their particular discipline (MacKenzie, 2000; Morey & Piderit, 2006). As research in disciplines explored areas in increasingly greater depth, faculty members exerted pressure to introduce more required courses to cover relatively new areas of exploration. Consequently, there was a natural tendency for disciplinary demands and developments to crowd out treatment of academic issues related to the Catholic tradition. But the question was, did faculty at Catholic universities teach their discipline any different than faculty at secular universities? In many instances the strength of the Catholic intellectual tradition came to the forefront when specific issues were addressed with respect to ethics, social organization, and the public practice of religion. Disciplines such as law, history, ethics, art, philosophy, sociology, literature, education, social work, and of course, theology included broad areas where Catholic thinkers have contributed important insights over many centuries.

Introducing Catholic subject matter into specific disciplines, where appropriate, was part of the process of coming to terms with specialization in discrete disciplines, a process that has been continuing for over a century (MacKenzie, 2000; Roberts & Turner, 2000). The history of this process suggested that separate disciplines regained some of their natural connectivity through both theology and philosophy.

As faculty and institutions increasingly emphasized research and publications, it was appropriate that Catholic institutions found reasonable ways to favor research related to the Catholic intellectual heritage. Not only did such research contribute to the ongoing development of the Catholic tradition in a particular area, but it usually also involved graduate students that worked closely with faculty. The more significant the research undertaking of an institution was, the more appropriate it was that special institutes or research projects explored issues in various ways related to the Catholic tradition.

Only a few Catholic universities have staked out territory within the Catholic intellectual tradition where they publicly stated that they would like to have made a significant contribution for understanding Catholic culture in graduate and professional education (Morey & Piderit, 2006). Those who made a claim to specializing in various Catholic issues usually did so through special research institutes and centers. These universities had interesting programs relating aspects of professional disciplines to the Catholic intellectual heritage, and the trend of having special Catholic institutes as loci for research on Catholic issues may further develop in the coming decades.

Praxis

Praxis referred to the process or activity by which a theory, lesson, or skill was used and practiced (Schwandt, 2007). Praxis was often juxtaposed with theoretical knowledge as it involved the practical act and the application of something such as a professional skill, opposed to just a theory. However, the application of theory put into practice such as a professional skill by a practitioner did not fully capture the essence of

the term praxis either. A more clear understanding of praxis may be extracted by reviewing its Greek origins.

In Ancient Greek the word praxis referred to activity or action engaged in by free men. It was the essence of how one conducted himself or herself in life as a free member of society (Carr & Kemmis, 1986). Praxis entered the philosophical literature as a quasi-technical term used by Aristotle to differentiate the act of doing rather than making something (Honderich, 2005). Aristotle held that there were three basic activities of man: *theoria*, *poiesis*, and *praxis*. Each activity had a corresponding type of knowledge: theoretical, in which the end goal was truth; *poietical*, to which the end goal was production; and practical, to which the end goal was action.

According to Aristotle (1976) *theoria*, or theory, was an activity that began in a life of contemplation and observation. Gadamer (1981) and Habermas (1973) explained that theory was separate from being practical and productive in everyday life as a member of society. The separation of theory from the practical was critical because theory yielded knowledge and truths that were eternal and thus unattainable in a practical culture or society that was inherently changeable.

The second form of activity as Aristotle (1976) described was known as *poiesis* or production. A productive activity referred to the making or fabricating of something (Schwandt, 2007). The act required a skill or knowledge and the end result was a product or result from the activity. Gadamer (1981) and Habermas (1973) explained that, like theory, a distinctive separation also existed. With productivity the product or result was separable from the one who produced it. Furthermore the skill was separable from the

one who held the knowledge to perform it. In ancient Greek the technical skill or practical knowledge was known as *techne*. Aristotle perceived *techne* as a means to an end. The mean was the practical knowledge and the end was the final product created from the activity (Gadamer, 1981; Habermas, 1973).

Aristotle (1976) differentiated the activity associated with *praxis* from that of *theoria* and *poiesis*. He postulated that the activity of *praxis* left no separable outcome as its product. Therefore the end result of the activity was realized in the very doing of the activity itself. It was about doing the right thing in a given situation with fellow humans and doing it with the utmost of good intentions for the sake of human well being. Carr and Kemmis (1986) suggested that one should not think of *praxis* as simply as action based on reflection. They described it as action that embodied certain qualities specifically including a deep commitment to human life, the search for truth, and respect for others.

In stark contrast to the practical activity of *poiesis*, *praxis* did not allow one to set the activity aside or to rest from it at will. Quoting Dunne (1993) *praxis* was the,

Type of human engagement that is embedded within a tradition of communally shared understandings and values, that remains vitally connected to peoples' life experience, that finds expression in their ordinary linguistic usage, and that, rather than being a means through which they achieve outcomes separate from themselves, is a kind of enactment through which they constitute themselves as persons in a historical community. (p. 176)

Aristotle (1976) posited that praxis was guided by a moral disposition to act truly and rightly with a genuine concern to improve human well being and to live the good life. In order to do so, a certain type of knowledge was requisite. The Greeks referred to this type of knowledge as phronesis, or practical wisdom, and it required a deep awareness and understanding of other people. Phronesis was not a technical knowledge or skill, but instead, was a part of one's inner most being or a piece of one's character. It could not be separated from the person, as it was that which made the person who they were (Dunne, 1993).

Bernstein (1983) stated that phronesis was a practical-moral knowledge applied via praxis without prior knowledge of what the end goal should be. For it was through the act of praxis in which the situational deliberation occurred. Quoting Schwandt, "phronesis is intimately concerned with the timely, the local, the particular, and the contingent (e.g., what should I do *now*, in *this* situation, given *these* circumstances, facing *this* particular person, at *this* time)" p. 243.

Friere (1972) described praxis as a dialogic action of people who were free and who were able to act for themselves, hence praxis was value-laden. Carr and Kemmis (1986) opined praxis as risky because it required that a person assessed the specific situation and made a wise and prudent practical judgment about how to act in that moment. Praxis was not value neutral, as it comprised the ethical and political life of man.

Chapter Summary

The review of the literature covered the concepts of faith-based education, its history, current issues, and the role of faculty at a faith-based institution of higher education. As discussed by Creswell (2007), it was important in qualitative research to provide a rationale for studying the problem through a review of the scholarly literature. From the literature review, the inquirer attempted to add or fill in a gap in the realm of scholarly work as it relates to graduate faculty experiences and perceptions of faith-based praxis at a Catholic international university. As the inquirer found in the literature review, very limited focus has been placed specifically on graduate level faith-based education. Therefore, as Patton (2002) suggested, the review of the relevant scholarly literature has brought focus to the proposed study by identifying what was already known and what was not. The review of the literature identified the relevant theoretical issues related to the topic of interest. As advised by Patton, the inquirer recognized that the literature review might create biases and therefore, the literature review may be expanded during data collection or simultaneously with fieldwork.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

Introduction

Chapter III explains the methods and methodology used to conduct the research study. This section provides a summary regarding the philosophy, the chosen paradigm and methodology, and the methods employed in the study. The summary includes the explanation and rationale for the research design and chosen qualitative structure, the sample and sampling technique used, the research question, the data collection and analysis methods, the standards of quality and verification, and the ethical considerations of the study.

The study contributes to the body of knowledge and may heighten the understanding of graduate faculty perceptions and lived experiences while teaching at a faith-based Catholic international university. Understanding faculty members' perceptions and lived experiences while teaching at the graduate level may provide administrators with insight into the distinguishable nature of graduate level higher education at a Catholic university. Fostering an understanding and awareness of faculty experiences and educational practices within the climate of a Catholic international university may offer substantive descriptions about faith-based academe and the alignment of graduate faculty experiences with the university's mission.

Philosophical Framework

A paradigm was a set of basic beliefs that ultimately represented an individual's worldview. It represented the nature of the world, the individual's place in it, and his or

her possible relationship with that world (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Kuhn, 1996). Because beliefs were personal and individual in nature, they were not open to proof in any conventional sense and there was no logical or meaningful way to prioritize one over another.

The purpose of the study was to explore the lived experiences of graduate faculty members and to convey the meaning of their understanding and perceptions of their experiences as graduate faculty at a Catholic international institution of higher education. To develop the research methodology for this study, a philosophical framework needed to be selected. A philosophical framework was a philosophical model that provided a basic set of beliefs that guided the study (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994) and supported the use of the particular chosen tradition (Creswell, 1998; Crotty, 2003; Patton, 2002).

Phenomenology was the philosophical framework chosen to guide this research project of exploring graduate faculty perceptions of faith-based education praxis within a Catholic international institution of higher education. Phenomenology as a philosophical approach played a critical role in social science research because it gave a detailed description of truth and knowledge that could be developed only by interaction with people through language and shared experiences (Crotty, 2003; Patton, 2002). Slife and Williams (1995) stated that phenomenologists relied heavily on verbal or written accounts of experiences to understand the individual private meaning of the experience and the more general meaning of the human experience in a wider, collective context of people and situations. For this reason, phenomenology was chosen as the guiding philosophical framework for this study.

Phenomenology was the study of the meaning of concrete human experiences and was originated in the works of the German philosopher, Edmund H. Husserl (1859-1938) around the year 1900 (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003; Slife & Williams, 1995). Moustakas (1994) described Husserl's work as a radical approach to science in his day. He was often criticized and even laughed upon. In spite of such criticism, Husserl continued to expand his ideas of phenomenology through personal reflection and deep philosophical inquiry primarily influenced by the writings of Kant and Descartes. Moustakas ascertained that Descartes' concept of doubt was the primary influence that specifically led to the development of Husserl's concept of epoche.

Husserl's (1970) concept of epoche proposed that the investigator needed to bracket out the outer world as well as individual biases in order to successfully achieve contact with essences. An accurate account of the participants' experience required deep involvement in the nature of the phenomenon and biases must not have influenced the investigator. According to Creswell (1998), phenomenology was the best philosophical framework for studies that explored the true meaning of participants' lived experience through their perceptions. A phenomenologist endeavored to understand an individual's perceptions, outlook, and understanding of a particular experience. In other words, phenomenology was the philosophy that contemplated the meaning of one's conscious experience (Moustakas, 1994). Quoting Moustakas (1994), "Phenomenology is committed to descriptions of experiences, not explanations or analyses" (p. 58.). Therefore, for the present study of perceptions and lived experiences of graduate faculty

at a Catholic international university, phenomenology was a well-suited philosophical framework.

Osborne (1994) posited phenomenology as descriptive and focused on the structure of experience, the organizing principles that gave form and meaning to the life world. It sought to explain and clarify the essences of structures as they appeared in consciousness, by making the invisible visible. Osborne's position paralleled Husserl's (1970) belief that individuals were capable of a direct grasping of consciousness.

A philosophical framework created the foundation of assumptions upon which the study was designed and will be conducted (Creswell, 1998; Patton, 2002). As explained by Creswell, embedded in every philosophical paradigm were the following five assumptions: ontological, epistemological, axiological, rhetorical, and methodological. Subsequently, a researcher made a variety of claims about knowledge. Specifically, the researcher defined what was knowledge, the ontology; how we knew it, the epistemology; what values went into it, the axiology; how we wrote about it, the rhetoric; and the processes for studying it, the methodology. Creswell (2007) explained that these five philosophical assumptions led a researcher to choose qualitative inquiry and will guide the research methodology.

Ontology was the study of reality, of being, of the nature of whatever was, and of first principles (Schwandt, 2007). Therefore, ontological assumptions related to the nature and characteristics of reality. Using a phenomenological framework, multiple realities existed (Creswell, 1998). These multiple realities included realities of the researcher, realities from each of the participants contributing to the research, and

realities of the audience or readers of the study (Creswell, 1994). Reality was subjective and was determined by the participants in the study. Moustakas (1994) stated that a phenomenological researcher reported how participants being studied viewed, or perceived, their experiences differently.

Epistemology was the study of the nature of knowledge and justification (Schwandt, 2007). It addressed the relationship between the researcher and what was being studied. Epistemological assumptions referred to the relationship between the researcher and the participants of the study. Qualitative researchers conducted their studies in the field, in the natural settings in which the participants lived and worked (Creswell, 2007). This was important as it allowed the researcher to share in the lived experience by creating a closer connection with the environment. Ultimately, this connection allowed the researcher to better understand the participant's words describing the phenomenon. In qualitative inquiry, "the longer researchers stay in the 'field' or get to know the participants, the more they 'know what they know' from firsthand information" (p. 18). Epistemologically, the researcher should have made every attempt to remove all barriers that caused distance between the researcher and the participant (Guba & Lincoln, 1988).

Axiological assumptions referred to the role of values in a study. Creswell (1998) stated, "In a qualitative study, the investigator admits the value-laden nature of the study and actively reports his or her values and biases as well as the value-laden nature of information gathered from the field" (p. 76). In this study, the research is considered to be value-laden and the researcher openly acknowledges values and biases related to graduate

faculty perceptions of faith-based education praxis within a Catholic international institution of higher education. These biases are discussed in the methods section of the study and will not be discussed with the participants. By intentionally acknowledging and bracketing out these biases, the researcher hopes to not allow biases to influence the outcome of the study.

Rhetoric referred to the art or technique of persuasion especially through language (Schwandt, 2007). Rhetorical assumptions in a phenomenological philosophical framework referred to the use of unique language and specific terms to guide the research. Creswell (1998) stated, “words such as *understanding*, *discover*, and *meaning* form the glossary of emerging qualitative terms and are important rhetorical markers in writing purpose statements and research questions” (p. 77). Rather than words being defined at the beginning of a study, the language of qualitative studies emerged and became personal as a study progressed. Words take on specific meaning only defined within the context of the participant’s lived experience. Quoting Patton (2002), “this is because discovering the ‘true nature of reality’ is not the real purpose of language; the purpose of language is to communicate the social construction of the dominant members of the group using the language” (p. 101).

Methodology was a theory of how inquiry proceeded (Schwandt, 2007). The methodological assumptions referred to how the research process was conceptualized. The holistic representation of a study was conceptualized by the way it described the formation and characterization of knowledge and reality, the relationship between the researcher and the participants, the role of values, and the emerging rhetoric (Creswell,

1998). As with most qualitative research, an inductive approach was used to develop meaning clusters and themes as they emerged in the data rather than beginning the study with pre-supposed categories. The present research study began inductively with a narrow focus and general questions and continued by following the steps outlined in Moustakas' Transcendental Phenomenological methodology. However, as Denzin and Lincoln (1998) opined:

The ultimate decisions about the narrative reside with the researcher. Like the choreographer, the researcher must find the most effective way to tell the story, to convince the audience. Staying close to the data is the most powerful means of telling the story, just as in dance the story is told through the body itself. As in the quantitative arena, the purpose of conducting a qualitative study is to produce findings. The methods and strategies used are not ends in themselves. There is a danger in becoming so taken up with methods that substantive findings are obscured. (pp. 47-48)

Rationale for a Qualitative Study

A qualitative approach was selected because the topic explored – graduate faculty perceptions of faith-based education praxis within a Catholic international university – was most applicably approached using an inductive research method. Qualitative methods of inquiry utilize an inductive approach through the use of fundamental design strategies, data collection and fieldwork strategies, and analysis strategies (Patton, 2002). With a clear idea of the purpose of the study including the underlying research question and awareness of the major themes and strategies of qualitative inquiry, the researcher

chose to perform a qualitative study. This section details the rationale by highlighting some of the major themes and strategies that solidified the decision to conduct a qualitative study.

The first of the three qualitative design strategies Patton (2002) described was naturalistic inquiry. Naturalistic inquiry referred to studying real-world situations as they unfolded naturally, meaning they were not manipulated or controlled. Within the qualitative research design openness existed. The concept of openness referred to the notion that there were no predetermined constraints on the potential findings and therefore, allowed the inquiry to be centered on the participants' responses as they developed and emerged. Patton defined this ability to adapt as emergent design flexibility.

In stark contrast to the calculated precision and inflexible nature of quantitative inquiry, albeit appropriate and purposeful in certain research scenarios, the flexible nature of qualitative inquiry allowed the research to respond dynamically to changing patterns that emerged in participant responses (Best & Kahn, 2006; Patton, 2002). In doing so, the researcher was able to further investigate the specific lived experience of the participant at a deeper, more connected level of inquiry. Patton (2002) described emergent design flexibility whereby "the researcher avoids getting locked into a rigid design that eliminate the potentiality to pursue new paths of discovery as they emerge" (p. 40) and provided new insight into the phenomenon.

Patton (2002) described data collection and fieldwork strategies for natural inquiry. The first strategy seemed obvious; nevertheless it was important to be explicit.

The data must have been qualitative. Qualitative data was typically obtained through in-depth interviews that capture direct quotations about the participant's personal perspectives and experiences (Slife & Williams, 1995). The data was typically rich and thick in describing the experience in the participant's own words. Denzin & Lincoln (2000) explained that data could also be collected by observation, open-ended questionnaires, videotaping, document review, and other methods designed to improve the understanding of humans through commonalities or culture. Qualitative data told the participant's story. For the study of exploring graduate faculty perceptions of faith-based education praxis within a Catholic international university, an online, open-ended questionnaire was utilized to collect data which yielded detailed descriptions of the participants' lived experience.

Qualitative inquiry permitted the researcher to become a fundamental element in the research process (Moustakas, 1994). Given the foundation of Gilligan's (1982) seminal research in feminist theory, which brought an enlightened understanding of the complex and consequential relationships between consciousness, language, and voice, qualitative researchers identified and acknowledged gender biases and limitations in the research process. Likewise, qualitative researchers clearly identified suggestions or theories the researcher puts forward as one's own. As Patton further explained, the researcher was challenged "by owning our own perspective and by taking seriously the responsibility to communicate authentically the perspectives of those we encounter during our inquiry" (p. 65) in an empathic and mindful manner. With that said, the study

of perceptions held by graduate faculty at a Catholic international university was conducted from a postmodern feminist perspective.

Patton (2002) described empathic neutrality and mindfulness as “an empathic stance in interviewing seeks vicarious understanding without judgment (neutrality) by showing openness, sensitivity, respect, awareness, and responsiveness; in observation it means being fully present (mindfulness).” By the very nature of naturalistic inquiry, the researcher was put in close contact with people and their problems. Patton suggested neutrality as the “middle ground between becoming too involved, which can cloud judgment, and remaining too distant, which can reduce understanding” (p. 50). Neutrality facilitated empathy, which communicated understanding, interest, and caring.

When the qualitative data was analyzed, Patton (2002) proposed that each case be treated as special and unique. The researcher was respectful and true to the participant and the data and captured the details of the individual cases being studied. During data analysis, the researcher practiced context sensitivity by “placing findings in a social, historical, and temporal context” (p. 41). Through inductive analysis, the details and specifics of the data uncovered emerging themes and patterns.

The qualitative paradigm allowed an opportunity to focus on the experience from a holistic perspective rather than its parts, to search for meanings instead of measurements, and described experiences through conversational first-person accounts in their own voice, from their own perspective (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002). With this in mind, the qualitative inquirer rejected the idea that the social sciences could be studied with the same methods as the natural or physical sciences. For

the reasons aforementioned, qualitative analysis and naturalistic inquiry guided the investigation and exploration of graduate faculty perceptions of faith-based education praxis within a Catholic international institution of higher education.

Rationale for a Phenomenological Study

Within the qualitative inquiry paradigm, Creswell (1998) described five traditions, or types of studies. Based on the intended purpose and nature of the research questions, the appropriate tradition best suited to meet the needs of the issue was selected. Creswell's (1998) five traditions included: biography, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study. The tradition of phenomenology most closely aligned with the purpose of exploring graduate faculty perceptions and lived experiences within a Catholic international University.

Creswell (2007) stated "a phenomenological study describes the meaning for several individuals of their *lived experiences* of a concept or phenomenon" (p. 57). "Understanding the 'lived-experiences' marks phenomenology as a philosophy and as a method, where the procedure involves studying a small number of subjects through extensive and prolonged engagement to develop patterns and relationships of meaning" (Moustakas, as cited in Creswell, 2003, p. 15). Therefore, the phenomenological tradition was chosen for this study of twelve graduate faculty members to explore the essence of their lived experiences at a Catholic international university.

The specific type of phenomenology chosen for the present study was labeled as transcendental phenomenology and traced back to Husserl's philosophical work around the year 1900 (Moustakas, 1994). The concept of epoche was central to transcendental

phenomenology and was rooted in the Greek word meaning “to refrain from judgment, to abstain from or stay away from the everyday, ordinary way of perceiving things” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 33). Throughout the research process, the researcher intentionally looked within and become aware of her personal biases in order to gain clarity and attempted to eliminate any preconceived notions regarding the subject being researched. Judgment was suspended and an open mind was created; hence, attempting to create the proverbial clean slate. Although rarely perfected, practice of the epoche process increased an inquirers competency and skills in removing external presuppositions. The removal of external presuppositions was vital to successful phenomenological inquiry (Moustakas, 1994).

The four primary steps in the transcendental phenomenological model offered a systematic method to follow. Prior to following any method, as stated by Moustakas (1994), “the first challenge of the researcher, in preparing to conduct a phenomenological investigation, is to arrive at a topic and question that have both social meaning and personal significance” (p. 104). From this topic, a comprehensive review of the professional and research literature was conducted which led to a purpose statement and ultimately a central research question. Unlike quantitative studies, in which the investigator used narrowly focused research questions and hypotheses to predict outcomes, the qualitative investigator used very broad research questions which allowed the participant to freely describe their lived experience (Creswell, 2003).

According to Moustakas (1994), the central tenets of a phenomenological study were to determine what an experience meant for the persons involved and to provide a

comprehensive description. General meanings were then derived from the descriptions. Therefore, the research question was explored through the experiences of graduate faculty in a Catholic international university.

Research Question

In qualitative inquiry, research questions assumed two forms: a central question and associated sub-questions (Creswell, 2003). Qualitative research questions are open-ended, evolving, and nondirectional. The questions, which were few in number, typically started with a word such as what or how rather than why (Creswell, 2007). The questions could be broad and may even be grandiose; however, they were often times more specific and focused. Creswell recommended that a researcher reduced the study to a single, overarching question and a few sub-questions when necessary. “To reach the overarching question, I ask qualitative researchers to state the broadest question they could possibly pose about the research problem” (p. 108).

The overarching question for this research study was:

What are the perceptions and lived experiences of graduate level faculty members at a Catholic international university?

Method

The purpose of this section is to provide direction regarding the research design and rationale for the design selected for this study. The method includes the role of the researcher, sampling, instrument, data collection procedures, and data analysis procedures.

Role of the Researcher

In qualitative studies, the role of the researcher was a critical methodological consideration due to the close connection between the researcher's knowledge and direct participation as participant/observer in the study (Creswell, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Patton, 2002). Given this close connection, the role of the researcher was crucial to the credibility and reliability of the study. Denzin and Lincoln explained that the researcher's role, as well as strategies for conducting the study, determined the degree to which the study was both credible and reliable.

In order to have a better understanding of the participants' lived experiences, the researcher interacted with the participants by taking on an insider's (emic) role during the investigation (Creswell, 1998). According to Moustakas (1994), all prejudgments were set aside and personal experiences with the phenomenon were bracketed out of the process. To become more aware of personal biases, the inquirer used reflexivity.

Reflexivity referred to the process of critical self-reflection on one's biases, theoretical predispositions and preferences (Schwandt, 2007). As explained by Schwandt, in a methodological sense, reflexivity signaled more than inspection of potential sources of bias. It also pointed to the fact that the inquirer was part of the setting, context, and

social phenomenon she sought to understand. Reflexivity reminded the qualitative inquirer to be attentive to and conscious of the cultural, social, gender, class, linguistic and ideological origins of one's own perspective and voice in addition to those one interviewed and those to whom one reported (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2002; Schwandt, 2007).

According to Patton (2002), "voice is more than grammar. A credible, authoritative, authentic, trustworthy voice engages the reader through rich description, thoughtful sequencing, appropriate use of quotes, and contextual clarity so that the reader joins the inquirer in the search for meaning" (p. 65). As explained by Schwandt (2007), two overlapping uses of the term *voice* were important in contemporary qualitative inquiry. One use of the term stemmed from the literary turn in the social sciences and reflected the assumption that writing was central to what social inquirers did. Writing about others was part of the complex process of social construction and reconstruction of reality and was shaped by rhetorical, political, institutional, and disciplinary conventions. The other use of the term *voice* stemmed from feminist philosophy and was concerned with the connection between that who spoke, who was heard, and what was voiced or given a voice. Patton described the synthesis of these two important uses of voice in qualitative inquiry as a potential challenge to the naturalistic inquirer and recognized the seminal work in feminist theory, specifically that of Gilligan (1982) and Minnich (1990) for "highlighting and deepening our understanding of the intricate and implicate relationships between language, voice, and consciousness" (p. 65).

Sample

In qualitative inquiry, new insight into a phenomenon was enabled vis-à-vis purposeful sampling (Best & Kahn, 2006; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2002). Purposeful sampling referred to how and why participants were selected for the study. In qualitative studies, the participants were selected because they offered “useful manifestations of the phenomenon of interest” (Patton, p. 40). In their discussion on sampling, Lincoln and Guba stated, “the object of the game is not to focus on the similarities that can be developed into generalizations, but to detail the many specifics that give the contexts its unique flavor” (p. 201). In agreement with Lincoln and Guba, Patton discussed the goal of purposeful sampling to be “aimed at insight about the phenomenon, not empirical generalization from a sample to a population”. In the present study, the sample population was graduate faculty members at a Catholic international university. The total faculty population at the chosen institution for the fall 2007 term and spring 2008 term was 345 and 425 respectively (personal communications, M. Soto).

In qualitative inquiry, there were no strict rules regarding the sample size (Creswell, 1998; Patton, 2002). However, Patton recommended that a strong sample size for phenomenological studies consisted of up to 10 participants. Additionally, Patton recommended selecting a random sample “in which each individual in the population has an equal probability of being selected” (page 156). Patton reminded that a purposeful random sample was not a representative random sample and emphasized, “the purpose of a small random sample is credibility, not representativeness” (p. 241). The sampling

strategy to be deployed in the study of graduate faculty perceptions at a Catholic international University will utilize purposeful random sampling.

At the time of the present study, there were sixty-eight graduate degree programs, with master's, specialists, doctoral, and professional degrees awarded at the Catholic university where the study will take place. These graduate programs are grounded in ten different schools within the university. For further refinement, the study will focus on the schools offering programs that awarded Ph.D. degrees. This narrowed the selection criteria to the graduate faculty in three schools within the university; specifically the School of Education, the School of Social Work, and the School of Nursing. The total population of full-time graduate faculty in these three schools for the fall semester of 2007 was 104 (personal communications, M. Soto).

After receiving permission from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Barry University, the primary investigator will began seeking participants for the anonymous study. Faculty members were sent an email from the primary investigator asking for their participation in the anonymous study. The email included a description of the study and provided specific details to describe what they will be asked to do if they decide to participate. A copy of the Participant Recruitment Email can be found in Appendix A.

Instrument

The study was conducted via the Internet using an online open-ended questionnaire managed by surveymonkey.com. Respondents were directed to the appropriate website with unlimited front-end access. Respondents were electronically presented with a detailed cover letter (Appendix B), as described in the data collection

and processing procedures section, and guided through two inclusion criteria questions to determine eligibility (Appendix C). A person became eligible to participate in the study if they were considered full-time graduate faculty in one of the three schools that award Ph.D. degrees. Once eligibility was confirmed, the participant was presented with a demographic questionnaire (Appendix D); the ten (10) open-ended research questions (Appendix E); and a thank you screen (Appendix F). All instruments were completely anonymous with no linkages to the identity of the respondent.

Although several authors proposed various techniques to collect data (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2002), emerging qualitative trends in the data collection process included technology such as email, the Internet, and other computer software (Creswell, 2007). Creswell acknowledged web-based data collection processes as popular methods of data collection. Due to the sensitive nature of this study, the online format was most appropriate because it could be completed with anonymity. Using an online, open-ended questionnaire prohibited the ability to discern or identify individual responses. Additionally, questionnaires provided a dexterous data collection process and were often more effective than telephone and face-to-face interviews (Patton, 2002) by allowing participants to provide lengthy, in-depth responses, and requiring participants to answer all research questions prior to electronic submission. The instrument was accessible from any computer with Internet access, which allowed participants to complete the questionnaire at a time and place that was convenient for them.

An argument could be made about the potential weakness of this instrument for data collection. One such argument was the lack of flexibility due to the absence of

synchronous dialogue exchange. The researcher recognized this as a potential shortcoming to the study and weighed the weakness against the potential benefits. The two strongest benefits were the convenience of time in which the participant will have for reflection on their lived-experience and increased trust of protecting the participant's identity through anonymity. This may have provided a more relaxed setting and may have increased the probability of obtaining thoughtfully framed responses that yielded rich, thick descriptions of the phenomenon as experienced by the participant.

As previously stated, the present study of perceptions held by graduate faculty members within a Catholic international university engaged participants using an online open-ended questionnaire. In an attempt to remove the barrier of distrust or the fear of retaliation from their employer, the questionnaire was conducted anonymously. The intent of this design was to protect the participants by mitigating potential discomfort and to increase the likelihood of gaining a better understanding of their perceptions. The researcher ensured complete anonymity of participants and their responses using the anonymous survey collector feature offered by surveymonkey.com. The researcher configured the survey to collect anonymous responses only. The online survey collection tool did not capture any personal tracking information including, but not limited to, names, email address, and Internet Protocol identifiers, on any of the instruments used.

The online data provided by participants was encrypted and stored electronically on surveymonkey.com data servers in the United States. As stated in their privacy policy, surveymonkey.com will not use the data for their own purposes. The servers were kept in locked cages that require a keycard and biometric recognition for entry and are monitored

24/7 via digital surveillance equipment. A firewall restricted access to network ports and network security audits were performed quarterly. The data will be stored for five (5) years and then destroyed.

Data Collection and Processing Procedures

In naturalistic inquiry, the inquirer was the instrument of data collection and analysis (Creswell 1998; Patton, 2002). The data collection process was a combination of interconnected activities aimed at compiling information to answer the research questions. An important aspect of the data collection procedure was to create a trusting atmosphere. This trusting atmosphere allowed the participants to feel comfortable with providing rich data. Moustakas (1994) contended that phenomenology tried to determine what an experience meant for the persons who have had the experience and were able to provide a comprehensive description of it. This study utilized an anonymous online open-ended questionnaire to obtain a comprehensive description of graduate faculty perceptions and lived experiences at a Catholic international university.

The online content included a cover letter (Appendix B) that described the: (a) the name of the researcher and the dissertation topic and title; (b) the purpose of the survey; (c) anonymity (d) the estimated duration of the time required to complete the questionnaire; (e) the specification that only voluntary participants will be considered. In addition, the cover letter clearly followed the recommendations set forth by Barry University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) and presented: (a) the data collection protocol; (b) areas of importance; (c) how and where the data might be shared; and, (d) what risks and benefits were important for participants to consider.

After reading the cover letter, respondents confirmed their interest and informed consent to participate in the research project by selecting the option to participate or selecting the option to not participate and exited from the instrument. If the participant selected the option to not participate, a thank you screen (Appendix F) was presented. If the participant selected the option to participate in the study, two inclusion criteria questions with embedded logic were presented (Appendix C). If both inclusion criteria questions were satisfied, the participant was presented with the demographic survey (Appendix D), followed by the open-ended questionnaire (Appendix E). If both inclusion criteria were not satisfied, the participant was presented with the thank you screen (Appendix F).

The participants were reminded that the study was anonymous and would not collect any identifying information that could link responses to an individual. In addition, the participants were explicitly reminded not to provide any names or identifying characteristics to themselves or others in their written responses to any of the open-ended questions.

The first twelve (12) participants who complete the questionnaire in its entirety were included in the study. A completed questionnaire was one in which a response was provided for each of the ten (10) open-ended questions. Since twelve (12) completed surveys were not received two (2) weeks after sending the initial email, the investigator sent a follow-up email again requesting participation. After twelve respondents completed the study in its entirety, the study was closed to accepting further data. Data

collection lasted three weeks in duration. As a doctoral student, the primary investigator did not have any influence, power, or authority over potential participants in the study.

As suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994), Patton (2002), and Rubin and Rubin (2005), this method of data collection was appropriate for this study because of the disparate site locations and the objective of gathering thick narrative from the purposive sample of graduate faculty within a Catholic international university. In alignment with the aforementioned, the use of an anonymous online questionnaire was appropriate for this phenomenological qualitative study because it aspired to obtain honest and truthful responses from participants and enhanced credibility.

The study of perceptions held by graduate faculty members at a Catholic international university was conducted at one university in Florida. To gain permission to conduct a study of graduate faculty perceptions at this university, the researcher submitted the proposal and protocol to the Barry University Institutional Review Board (IRB) for approval prior to beginning the data collection process. The researcher sought and was awarded exception status for this study under research category one, which included research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings involving normal educational practices.

Data Analysis Procedures

Epoche will be the first analysis process performed by the researcher and aided by a method known as bracketing. Bracketing was the method used to aid and assist the researcher as she attempted to filter out preconceived notions about the subject matter

and sought to interpret the data in pure form, not influenced by any standard, worldly meaning. However Moustakas (1994) explained that,

Despite practice, some entities are simply not 'bracketable'. There are life experiences that are so severe, intense, and telling, some things that are so ingrained, and some people so attached to or against each other and themselves that clear openness or pure consciousness is virtually an impossibility. (p. 90)

Furthermore, Moustakas posited, "with intensive work, prejudices and unhealthy attachments that create false notions of truth and reality could be bracketed and put out of action." Ultimately, the removal of prejudices elevated the epoche process as a vital resource for potential renewal by lighting the way for researchers to see knowledge and truth.

Transcendental-Phenomenological Reduction was the next step in the process. The goal of Transcendental-Phenomenological Reduction was to uncover the essence of the faith-based education praxis based on the idea that "things become clearer as they are looked at again and again" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 93). This process of reflection allowed illusions to fall away and new ideas to emerge. It was possible "some new dimension becomes thematic and thus alters the perception of what has previously appeared" (Moustakas, p. 93). This process considered each experience separately, in and by itself. Moustakas described this as a "process of setting aside predilections, prejudices, predispositions, and allowing things, events, people, to enter anew into consciousness, and to look and see them again, as if for the first time" (Moustakas, p. 85). During that time, the data were considered separately but with equal value. Patton (2002) described

the data as being “horizontalized” (p. 486) whereby the experiences were spread out for examination. The data was organized into meaningful clusters, overlapping or duplicate data was eliminated and the researcher identified invariant themes within the data. From that reductive process, a structural description of the experience began to emerge.

The process of developing a structural description of the phenomenon was known as “Imaginative Variation” (Patton, 2002, p.486). During that stage of analysis, the researcher developed expanded versions of each of the invariant themes by looking at the phenomenon from a variety of angles and perspectives and varying the frames of reference (Moustakas, 1994). The result of that phase of analysis was a composite structural description that identified the scaffolding, or the walls of the experience, through the eyes of the participants as a group. Moustakas described the composite structural description as the “way of understanding *how* the co-researchers as a group experience *what* they experience” (p. 142).

The final step of the phenomenological model was the synthesis of the composite textual and composite structural descriptions. “It is the intuitive integration of the fundamental textural and structural descriptions into a unified statement of the essences of the experience of the phenomenon as a whole” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 100). Ultimately, the data provided meanings and essences of graduate faculty perceptions of faith-based education praxis within a Catholic university. In summary, Moustakas’ transcendental phenomenological model was outlined by its four primary steps, which included: epoche, phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and the synthesis of textural and structural descriptions of the phenomenon (Patton, 2002).

Standards of Quality and Verification

All research has standards through which it was evaluated. In every study, the researcher ensured that standards of quality and approaches to verification were implemented (Creswell, 1998). In order for a study to be considered accurate, it must be considered credible and dependable. During or after a study, qualitative researchers asked, “Did we get it right?” (Stake, 1995, p. 107) or “Did we publish a wrong or inaccurate account?” (Thomas, 1993, p. 39). Seidman (1998) stated the goal of the interview process was to understand how our participants’ understand and made meaning of their experience. “If the interview structure works to allow them to make sense to themselves as well as to the interviewer than it has gone a long way toward validity” (p. 17). A number of qualitative procedures were employed to enhance the credibility of the present study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested four quality criteria that established rigor and trustworthiness in a qualitative study. These criteria included: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Creswell (1998) discussed eight verification procedures which, when operationalized, fulfilled the four quality criteria presented by Lincoln and Guba.

Credibility in qualitative research was similar to, or paralleled, what was known as internal validity in quantitative research. Credibility referred to the issue of the inquirer providing assurances of the fit between respondents’ views of their life experiences and the inquirer’s reconstruction and representation of the same. A qualitative study was said to be credible when it presented accurate descriptions of human experiences (Creswell, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In attempt to enhance the credibility of a study, multiple

techniques might be used. According to Creswell, those techniques included: prolonged observation, triangulation, peer review, addressing researcher bias, member checks, thick descriptions, and external audits. For enhanced credibility of a qualitative study, Creswell recommended a minimum of two of the noted procedures.

Creswell (1998) described prolonged engagement and persistent observation as techniques that allowed the researcher to build trust and credibility. These techniques allowed the inquirer more time to understand and learn the culture; and thus, was better equipped to decide what was salient and relevant to the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As a doctoral student at the faith-based university in which the study will be conducted, the inquirer has been a member of the graduate student body within the culture of the university throughout her studies. That experience assisted the researcher in selecting the salient and relevant topics for consideration. Additionally, based on the personal and intimate nature of the topic of study specifically about one's employer and having the utmost respect for creating a trusting environment in qualitative research, the study has been designed to collect anonymous responses. Per Creswell, and Lincoln and Guba's recommendations, these factors should all contribute to enhancing the credibility of the study.

Triangulation referred to making use of multiple sources and methods to confirm meaning units, themes, and the overall essence of the experience (Creswell, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1994). The researcher attempted to accomplish this through the initial selection of participants, graduate faculty from three different, yet specific, schools – education, nursing, and social work – within the

university. With this variation, the participants brought their own unique experiences, practices and biases, which assisted in identifying the salient perceptions of the lived experience. Seidman (2006) stated that information extracted from the literature review might also aid in the triangulation process as an additional corroborating source of evidence.

Peer review or debriefing was an external review of the research process by a disinterested peer (Creswell, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Creswell stated that the reviewer acts as an advocate for the actual research process and asks difficult questions about the methods, meanings and interpretations. Quoting Lincoln and Guba, the peer reviewer makes sure “that the investigator is as fully aware of his or her posture and process as possible” (p. 308). For the present study, the researcher worked with a doctoral colleague trained in qualitative techniques to question methods, discoveries, and interpretations of the data, themes, and the essence of the lived experience.

A potential pitfall to credible qualitative work stemmed from the suspicion that a researcher’s biases and presuppositions might have shaped the findings (Patton, 2002). To counter the suspicion Creswell (1998) and Patton argued the importance of clarifying researcher bias from the beginning of the study so that the reader understood the inquirers positions, biases, or assumptions that impacted the study. This strategy involved discussing the predispositions and making the biases explicit. In the present phenomenological study of graduate faculty perceptions of faith-based praxis, the researcher’s biases were covered extensively in the Role of the Researcher sub-section.

Member checking was sometimes performed in qualitative research by soliciting feedback from respondents on the inquirer's findings. On the surface, member checking seemed like a measure of quality assurance; however, seminal researchers (e.g., Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Schwandt, 2007; Stake, 1995) warned that member checking was problematic in several respects. Schwandt detailed three reasons why member checking may be problematic. First, it was not clear how the procedure actually helped establish the truth of findings. Specifically, this became an issue if the respondent disagreed with the inquirer's findings or interpretation. Even if the respondent agreed that the lived experience was accurately represented, disagreement might occur if the respondent sought to protect something or if the respondent did not want information to be publicly exposed through the research. The second reason member checking was problematic, as described by Schwandt, was that member checking may have been coupled with the assumption that researcher effects must be minimized. This required the researcher to guard against doing anything in the field that influenced respondents or changed their natural behavior or opinions, the very ones being studied. Third, member checking may have been more of an ethical act than an epistemological one. It may have been the civil and courteous thing to do for those who provided their time and access. That said, member checking wasn't viewed as an act of validation, but instead was an act of honoring the respondents' right to know. As quoted by Schwandt, "the consensus seems to be that member checking is not profitably viewed as either an act of validation or refutation but is simply another way of generating data and insight" (p. 188). For the present study, the researcher carefully considered the benefits and potential shortcomings

of member checking in light of the intimately personal nature of the topic being studied. Since the inquirer has intentionally chosen to completely protect the identity of the participants using an anonymous collection method and member checking could compromise the participants identity, the inquirer did not use member checking in the present study. As it relates to credibility, Creswell (1998) recommended a minimum of two procedures to enhance the credibility of a qualitative study; the present study employed six of Creswell's eight procedures.

Rich, thick description referred to a detailed and extensive account of the phenomena under review. This level of detail allowed evaluation of transferability of the results of the study (Creswell, 1998). The researcher provided embedded quotations, participant observations, and thematic collation to detail the phenomena being studied. According to Guba and Lincoln (1985), this will "enable someone interested in making a transfer to reach a conclusion about whether transfer can be contemplated as a possibility" (p. 316).

Transferability referred to the degree to which the findings were applied to other setting, contexts, or with other groups. In quantitative research, Guba and Lincoln described transferability as being similar to external validity of empirical studies and dealt with the issue of generalizability. In this particular qualitative phenomenological study of graduate faculty perceptions of faith-based praxis within a Catholic international university, purposeful sampling was utilized to ensure that all individuals studied represented people who have experienced the phenomenon being studied, as suggested by Creswell. Additionally, the methodology ensured that the participants all met the

necessary criteria for quality assurance. Sufficient descriptive data was presented to enable the reader to determine if the findings can be transferred to other settings.

As an additional method of improving credibility, the inquirer allowed an external auditor to assess all facets of the research. As Creswell (1998) suggested, the auditor examined whether or not the findings, interpretations, and conclusions were supported by the data. The auditor will had no connection with the study and was trained and experienced in naturalistic inquiry.

Dependability referred to the consistency of the data if replicated. Dependability paralleled the quantitative aspect of reliability. In qualitative studies deemed dependable the inquirer ensured the research process was logical, traceable, and documented. If a study was dependable, it was consistent. In naturalistic inquiry, this was accomplished by providing the reader with sufficient descriptive data as previously discussed. This strengthened the dependability of the study and allowed for comparison and replication (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Confirmability related to the freedom from bias in procedures and results. In quantitative research, confirmability paralleled objectivity. Lincoln and Guba (1985) contended the emphasis of neutrality in qualitative research was on the data, and not on the researcher. Therefore, in order for the data to be free from bias, strategies of credibility and transferability were implemented. The strategy to be used to ensure that form of credibility was reflexivity. As discussed previously, reflexivity referred to the process of critical self-reflection on one's biases, theoretical predispositions and preferences (Schwandt, 2007). As explained by Schwandt, in a methodological sense,

reflexivity signaled more than inspection of potential sources of bias. It also pointed to the fact that the inquirer was part of the setting, context, and social phenomenon she sought to understand. Reflexivity reminded the qualitative inquirer to be attentive to and conscious of the cultural, social, gender, class, linguistic and ideological origins of one's own perspective and voice in addition to those one interviewed and those to whom one reported (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2002; Schwandt, 2007). In this study, reflexivity was implemented by utilizing a critical self-reflection process. Personal notes were taken and biases were identified.

To summarize, Creswell (1998) recommended a minimum of two procedures to enhance credibility of a qualitative study. This project employed six of the eight recommended by Creswell, omitting only negative case analysis; and due to the intimately personal nature of the research topic, and the importance of protecting anonymity, member checking will also be omitted. Using an online questionnaire further reinforced the concept of procedural reliability as discussed by Flick (2002) and Yardley's (2002) characteristics of good qualitative research including: sensitivity to context, commitment and rigor, transparency and coherence, and impact and importance (Chart, p. 219). This research study has met the standards for quality and verification recommended by experts in the field of qualitative research

Ethical Considerations

Research studies must be conducted in an ethical manner. Participants must be confident that the researcher will follow the proper procedures to ensure that his or her identity will be protected. Quoting Shank (2006), "a good researcher is an ethical

researcher” and “becoming an ethical one is a lifetime learning process” (p118). In attempt to simplify a complex and serious matter such as ethical research practices, Shank recommended that all researchers began a project with four general notions: 1) do no harm; 2) be open; 3) be honest; and, 4) be careful. Beginning every project with these principles, a researcher began the complex journey of mastering ethical issues that pervaded all of qualitative research.

In the context of qualitative research, Birch, Miller, Mauthner, and Jessop (2002) claimed ethics “has largely been associated with following ethical guidelines and/or gaining ethics approval from professional or academic bodies before commencing data collection”; however, they followed up that claim by adding that ethical considerations encountered in research are “much more wide-ranging than this: they are empirical and theoretical and *permeate* the qualitative research process” (p. 1). Miller and Bell (2002) argued that, “satisfactorily completing an ethics form at the beginning of a study and/or obtaining ethics approval does not mean that ethical issues can be forgotten, rather ethical considerations should form an ongoing part of the research” (p 53).

Regardless of the chosen tradition, a qualitative researcher faced a variety of ethical concerns at every stage of the research process. Ethical considerations requiring specific focus included protecting the rights of human participants, confidentiality or anonymity, informed consent from each participant, and approval of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the researcher’s institution of higher learning (Creswell, 1998; Patton 2002; Shank, 2002).

In a general sense, all qualitative research should be honest and truthful in design and in discussion of findings. Qualitative research studies must earn the trust and respect of the readers by ensuring the findings are trustworthy. The results should be authentic and should guide legitimate action (Shank, 2002).

Chapter Summary

This qualitative research study was designed to explore and give voice to perceptions held by graduate faculty at a Catholic international university. The philosophical framework for this study was centered on phenomenology. The researcher utilized the Husserlian phenomenological viewpoint, which sought to understand the essence of what individuals experienced and how they experienced the phenomenon. Phenomenology was the best-suited tradition within the qualitative paradigm as it focused the research on understanding the views and perspectives of the participants, giving voice to their experiences. The twelve participants for this study were purposively and randomly selected graduate faculty at a Catholic international institution of higher education. Eligibility to participate in the study included full-time faculty from schools within the university that awarded Ph.D. degrees. Three schools within the university that awarded Ph.D. degrees were the school of education, the school of social work, and the school of nursing.

Data was collected using an anonymous online open-ended questionnaire accessed through the Internet and managed by surveymonkey.com. No information was captured that might have allowed the researcher to identify the participants individually. The researcher provided complete anonymity to all participants. Aside from the potential

discomfort of sharing lived experiences, there were no known risks associated with the involvement of this study. The needs and best interests of the participants were the highest priority at all times during the course of this study.

The researcher analyzed the data analysis utilizing the transcendental phenomenological procedures outlined by Moustakas (1994). The analysis included bracketing out the researchers preconceived notions about the subject matter, reduction of the data by horizontalizing, identifying concepts and themes, and synthesizing the data to develop a comprehensive description of the participants' experience.

The naturalistic inquirer sought to produce accurate and reliable findings. In the present study, the investigator integrated procedures into the design to yield valid and reliable results. Rich, thick narratives were used to describe participants' lived experiences. After the first reading of each participant's narrative the researcher recorded her biases. To check validity of both the research process and the research product, an external auditor was consulted and a peer review was performed.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Introduction

The goal of this qualitative study was to explore the lived experiences of graduate faculty members at a Catholic international institution of higher education. The study attempted to convey the meaning of their perceptions, beliefs, and opinions related to their employment and the faith-based mission within the cultural context of the university through the identification of prevailing themes. Four prevailing themes emerged from the data that included: Faith-Based Mission, Values and Core Commitments, Culture, and Learning and Knowledge. Each of these major themes are discussed in detail in this chapter.

In addition to the four major themes that emerged from the data, the scholarly literature provided a wealth of information specific to the historical foundations of Catholic higher education, challenges of the past and present, and the importance of faculty engagement in guiding a university's mission. Understanding faculty members' perceptions and lived experiences while teaching at the graduate level may provide administrators with insight into the distinguishable nature of graduate level higher education at a Catholic university. Fostering an understanding and awareness of faculty experiences and educational practices within the climate of a Catholic international university may offer substantive descriptions about faith-based academe and the alignment of graduate faculty experiences with the university's mission.

Moustakas' (1994) seminal work describing the phenomenological approach in qualitative research scripted the methods followed throughout the data collection, data processing, and data analysis of this investigation. A phenomenological approach was used to obtain a deeper understanding of perceptions, beliefs, and opinions regarding graduate faculty experiences and faith-based praxis. An internet-based online service was utilized to host the study. As explained in detail in the previous chapter, the study was conducted anonymously with no linkages to the identity of the respondents. The results and analysis of the qualitative study are reviewed in this chapter and include: (a) demographic data about the participants; (b) the data analysis and coding process; (c) the emerging themes; and, (d) a summary of the findings.

Demographics of Participants

Participants Contributing to Demographics

A total of 15 people accessed the online study. After reading the online cover letter (Appendix B), 14 (93.3%) respondents consented and agreed to participate in the anonymous study. After agreeing to participate, all 14 (100%) satisfied the inclusion criteria questions (Appendix C) and were presented with the demographic questionnaire (Appendix D).

Participant Demographics by Age

Participant age was collected using an age range instead of exact age. For ease of response, ages were ranked by a range of ten years. Seven (50%) of the participants in the study reported that they were 50 to 59 years of age. One (7.1%) was between the ages of

30 and 39; three (21.4%) were between 40 and 49; and the remaining three (21.4%) were between 60 and 69 years of age. These ranges are reported in Figure 4.1.

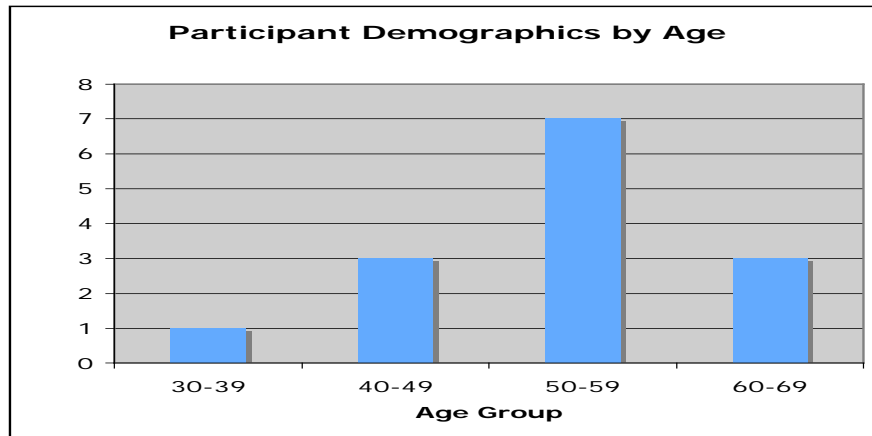


Figure 4.1. Participant demographics by age

Participant Demographics by Gender

Of the 14 participants, eight (57.1%) reported to be female and six (42.9%) reported to be male. The percentages are reported in Figure 4.2.

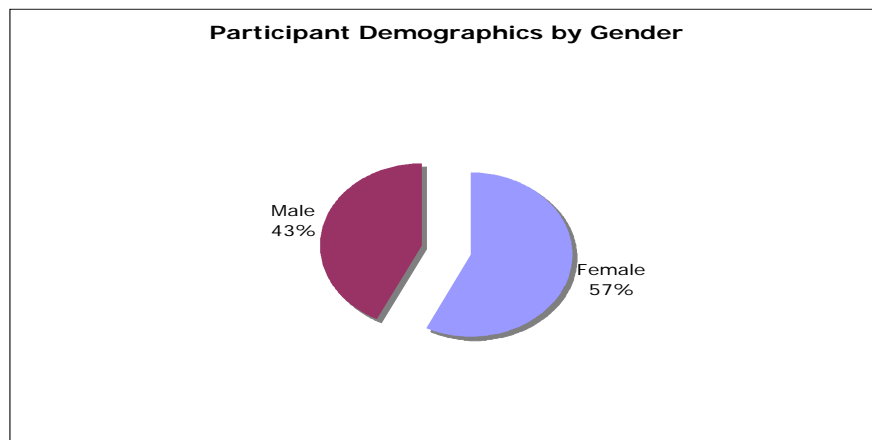


Figure 4.2. Participant demographics by gender

Participant Demographics by Marital Status

Seven of the participants in the study reported to be married and four reported to be single. One participant reported to be a widow and the remaining two reported to be divorced. Marital status is represented in percentages in Figure 4.3.

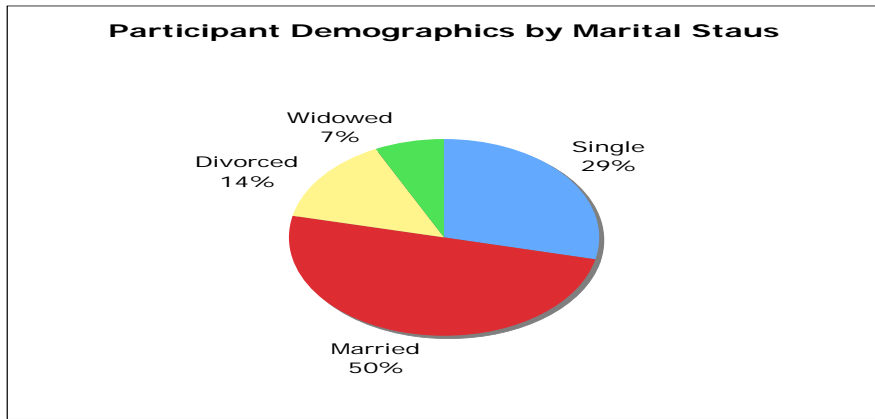


Figure 4.3. Participant demographics by marital status

Participant Demographics by Ethnicity

Ten (71%) of the participants reported that they were of Caucasian ethnic origin. Three (21.4%) were African-American and one (7.1%) reported to be Hispanic.

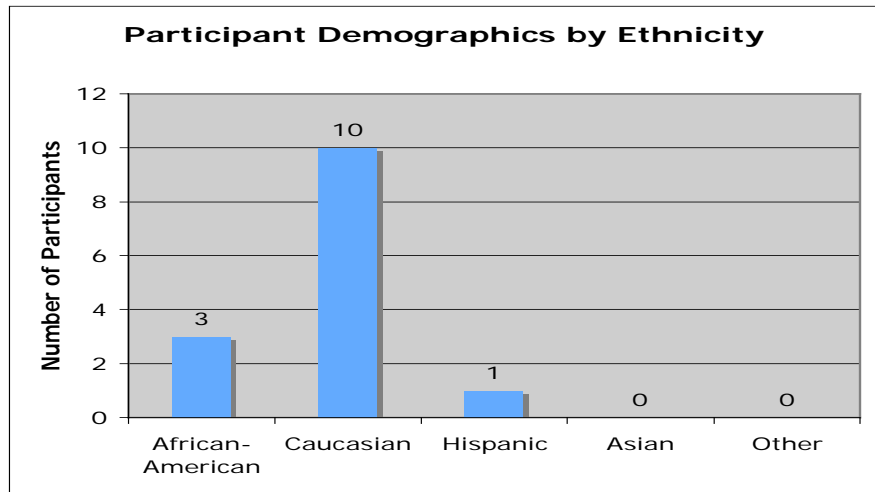


Figure 4.4. Participant demographics by ethnicity

Participant Demographics by Educational Degree

Most (92.9%) of the participants reported that the highest degree they had earned was an advanced doctoral degree such as the Ph.D. or the Ed.D. One (7.1%) participant reported the highest degree earned to be a Master's degree.

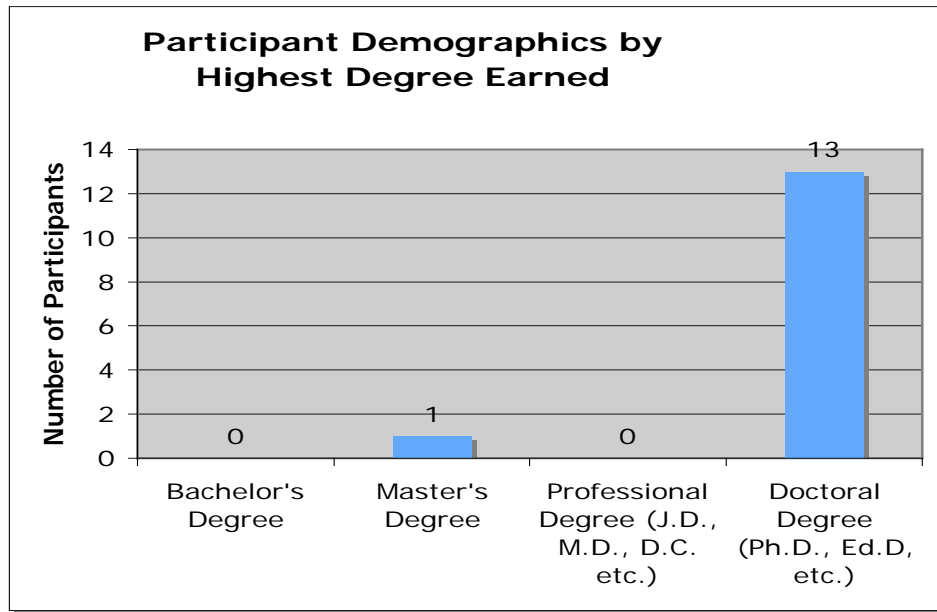


Figure 4.5. Participant demographics by highest degree earned

Participant Demographics as a Student

Eight participants (57.1%) reported to have attended a Catholic college or university as a student. Four (28.6%) reported to have attended Catholic high school and two (14.3%) reported to have attended Catholic elementary school. Six participants (42.9%) reported that they never attended a Catholic school at any level of their educational pursuits.

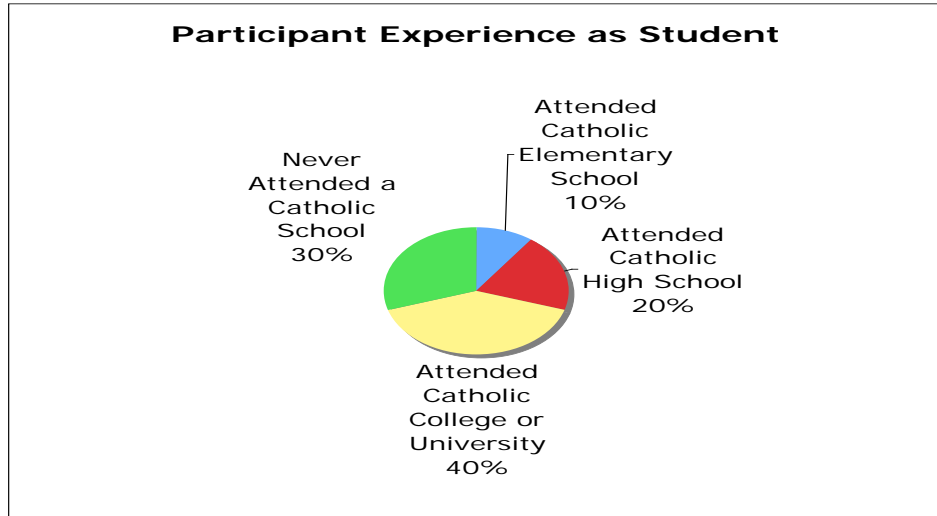


Figure 4.6. Participant experience as student

Participant Demographics by Years Teaching at the Graduate Level

Six (42.9%) participants reported having six to ten years of experience teaching at the graduate level and four (28.6%) participants reported more than 15 years of experience. Three (21.4%) reported less than five years of experience. Participant years of experience are illustrated in figure 4.7.

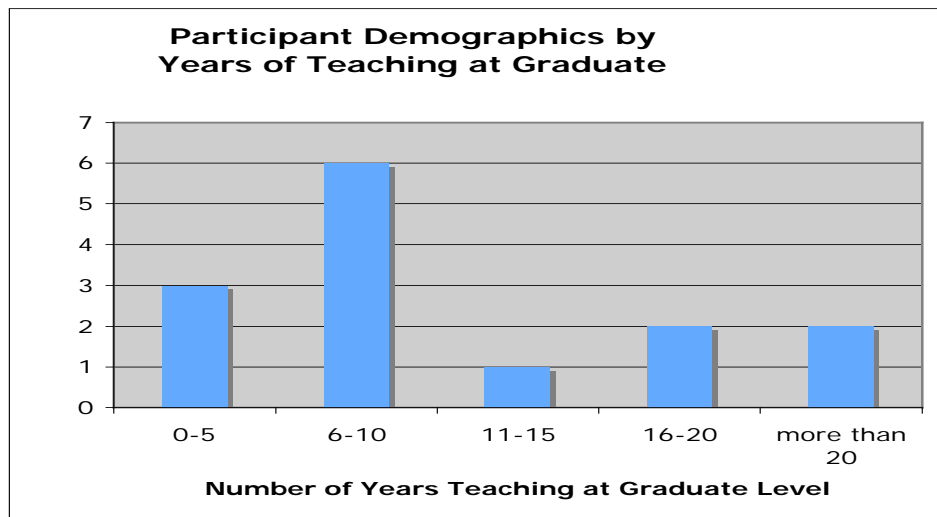


Figure 4.7. Participant Demographics by years of teaching at graduate level

Participant Demographics by Years as Full-Time Faculty at a Faith-Based University

The number of years as full-time faculty at a faith-based college or university was collected using a range of years instead of an exact number. The breakdown of experience as a full-time faculty member at a faith-based institution of higher learning is depicted in figure 4.8.

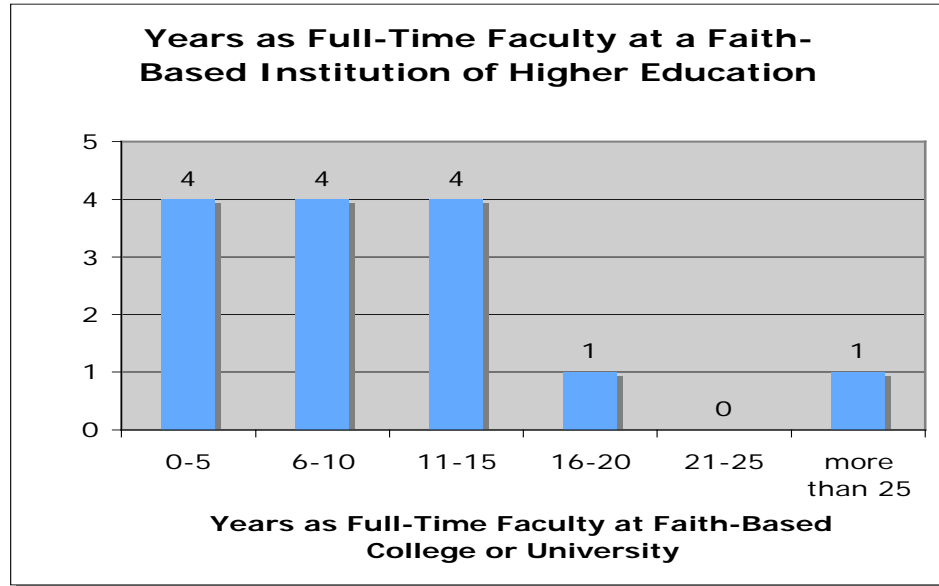


Figure 4.8. Years as full-time faculty at a faith-based institution of higher education

Participant Demographics by Religious Affiliation

All 14 (100%) participants considered themselves to be a person of faith. When asked to identify their religious affiliation, six participants (42.9%) identified themselves as Protestant while four participants (28.6%) identified themselves as Catholic. One (7.1%) was identified as a Buddhist and the remaining three (21.4%) responded as having no religious affiliation. See figure 4.9 for participant religious affiliations.

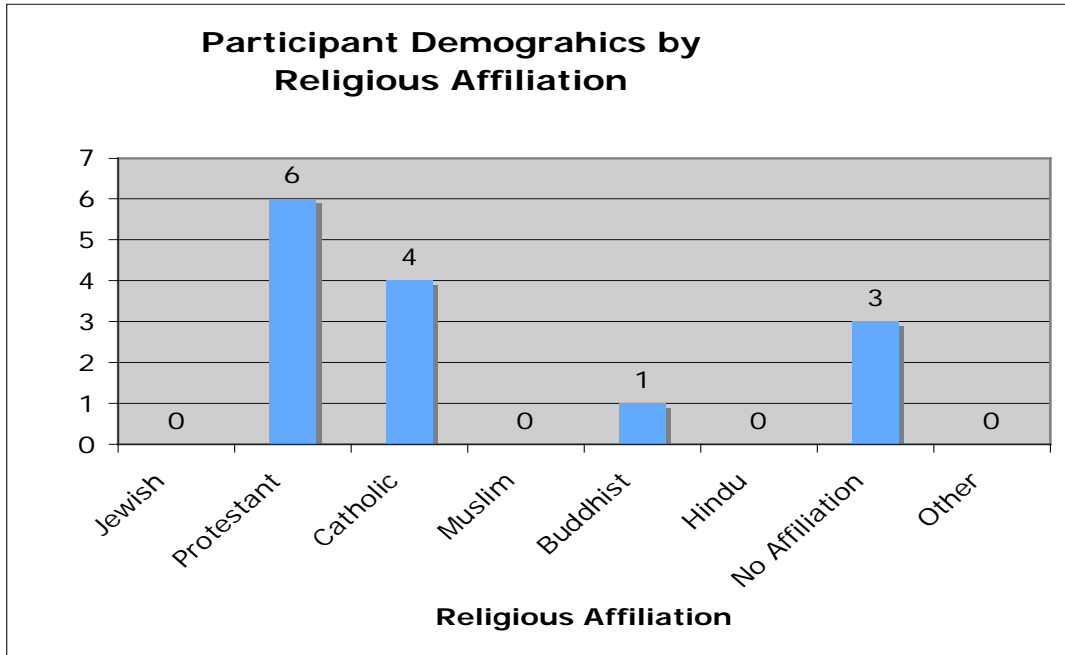


Figure 4.9. Participant demographics by religious affiliation

Data Analysis and Coding Process

This section explains the data analysis process as well as specific information regarding the coding procedures utilized for this study. The study was conducted via a secure internet-based hosting site and the participants digitally entered data using a keyboard. The online tool provided various options for the researcher to sort, filter, and report the data. First, data were categorized according to individual participants to understand and explore personal opinions. Following this, the data were sorted in the order of participant responses to the online, open-ended questionnaire so as to gain an understanding of participant beliefs and opinions as a group. These classification features were instrumental in the researcher's ability to view data from various perspectives.

After the first reading of each participant's response, the researcher composed descriptive notes and reflexive feelings to identify researcher presuppositions and biases.

To validate trustworthiness of the data analysis process and to develop an audit trail, the researcher bracketed her presuppositions, biases, and reflexive feelings about the data. Seeking to interpret the data in pure form, not influence by any standard, worldly meaning, the researcher continued to read individual participant's response numerous times to gain a deep understanding of what each participant was expressing. This phase of reducing the data is the goal of Transcendental-Phenomenological Reduction (Moustakas, 1994). The data were considered separately but with equal value. Patton (2002) described the data as being "horizontalized" (p. 486) where the experiences were spread out for examination. The data was coded and organized into meaningful clusters, from which themes were identified. These clusters and themes developed the individual's textural description of the experience as a full-time graduate faculty member at a Catholic international university. From this reductive process, a composite textural description that included eleven thematic units was developed. To improve credibility, the researcher engaged a peer reviewer to determine if there was agreement with the coding and clustering process.

From the composite textural description of each participant, the researcher next employed Imaginative Variation to construct a composite structural description that represented the participants as a whole. By looking at the themes from a variety of angles and perspectives, the researcher developed expanded versions of each of the themes. The result of this phase was a composite structural description that identified the scaffolding, or the walls of the experience, through the eyes of the participants as a collective group. From the eleven sub themes, four major themes emerged. The prevailing themes

included: Faith-Based Mission, Values & Core Commitments, Learning & Knowledge, and Culture. As summarized by Moustakas (1994), “It is the intuitive integration of the fundamental textural and structural descriptions in a unified statement of the essences of the experience of the phenomenon as a whole” (p. 100).

Summary of Major Themes

It was reported that 15 people entered the online study, 14 (93.3%) completed the demographic information sheet, and 12 (80%) completed the study in its entirety. From the responses of the 12 participants to the anonymous questionnaire (Appendix E), four major themes emerged. This section will discuss each of the four themes and respective sub themes including rich, thick descriptions using the exact words of the participants. Table 1 provides a summary of the major themes and sub themes.

Table 1

Major Themes and Sub Themes

Major Themes	Sub Themes	Description
Faith-Based Mission	Employment	How the faith-based mission influenced the participant when initially seeking employment.
	Reservations	What reservations the participant has with the faith-based mission.
	Impact	The ways in which the faith-based mission impacts work related activities.
Values & Core Commitments	Care and Justice	How the values of care and social justice impact the participant.
	Community	The ways in which the participant perceives community engagement.
	Acceptance	How the participant perceives acceptance as a core commitment.
Culture	Inclusivity & Diversity	How the participant views inclusivity and diversity in the university culture.
	Governance	How governance impacts the university culture.
Learning & Knowledge	Collaboration	How the participant collaborates outside the university setting.
	Academic Freedom	How the participant feels about academic freedom on learning and knowledge.
	Praxis	How the participant perceives praxis in the academic setting.

Faith-Based Mission

The major theme of Faith-Based Mission addresses individual perceptions about the university's identification as Catholic and the faith-based mission. The major theme was broken down into three sub themes: Employment, Reservations, and Impact. The following sections will discuss each sub theme associated with the prevailing theme.

Employment

The sub theme Employment referred to how the identification as a Catholic university, and consequently its faith-based mission, influenced the participant when initially seeking employment. Figure 4.10 depicts the participant's responses

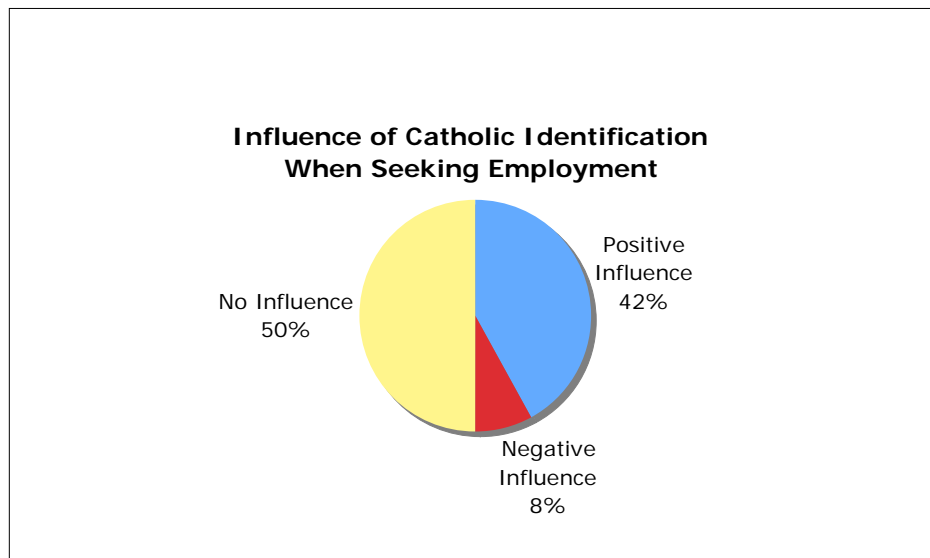


Figure 4.10. Influence of Catholic tradition in seeking initial employment

Five (42%) of the participants stated that their decision to initially seek employment at the university was positively influenced by the fact that the university was Catholic. Participant-1 responded, "Absolutely. It is consistent with my moral and ethical context and in forming future professionals. I sought an environment where my morals

were accepted and welcomed.” Participant-6 added, “The fact that this is a religious-based institution impacted my decision to accept the position when it was offered.”

Participant-12 indicated that ones own Catholic educational upbringing positively influenced the decision to seek employment at a Catholic university by remarking, “ Yes; my entire education has been in the Catholic school system. I believed I had something of value to offer to my students in terms of faith and spirituality.”

One (8%) participant stated that the Catholic tradition was a negative influence in seeking employment. In the response, Participant-5 indicated, “It was more a deterrent than anything else. It was the social justice component of the Adrian Dominican Mission and the mission of my school that attracted me – not that the university was catholic.”

The remaining six (50%) participants shared that they were not influenced by the university’s Catholic identification. Participant-4 responded by stating, “No, not really. A greater influence was the size of the school as compared to secular universities.”

Participant-7 stated, “No, I was not influenced because the university is Catholic. Religion should have no bearing on scholarship.” Participant-9 indicated that the faith-based mission was “... not part of my decision to teach here. I was recruited by former colleagues for my organizational experience.”

Reservations

The sub theme Reservations referred to any doubts or reservations the participant had with the faith-based mission and being a graduate faculty member at a Catholic international university. Six (42%) of the participants stated they had no reservations about being on the faculty of a Catholic university. Four (33%) participant responses

indicated discrimination as a reservation. Figure 4.11 represents the respondent's reservations about being a graduate faculty member at a Catholic university.

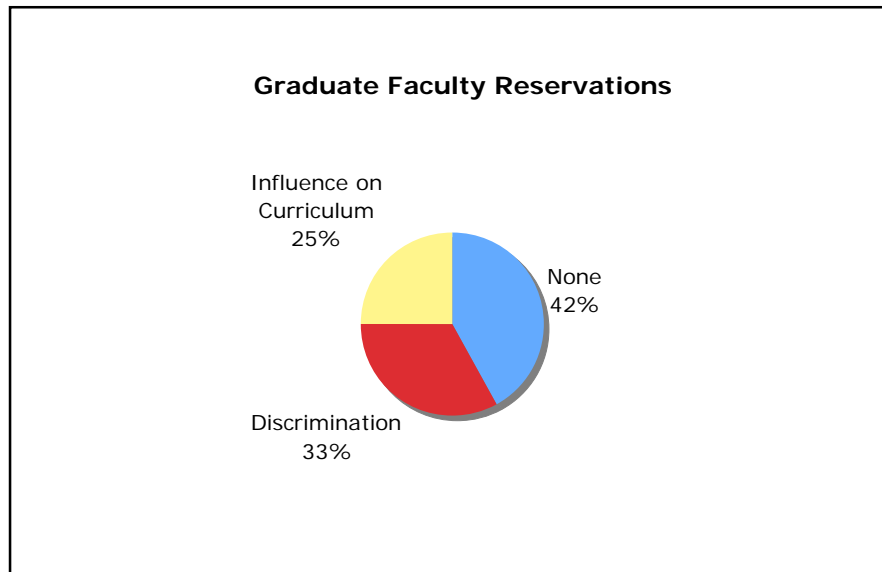


Figure 4.11. Reservations of Graduate Faculty

Although 42% of the participants reported to have no reservations about being on the faculty of a Catholic international university, one-third of the participants expressed discrimination as a potential fear or doubt. Participant-1 remarked:

There is always concern about being open to diversity and the potential of discrimination. As a healthcare professional it is imperative to teach and identify the uniqueness of each individual whether they share the same faith or not. The challenge is to take people with a similar thread and encourage them to be open to others differing views and perspectives

Participant-5 stated "Discrimination." And Participant-10 added:

I dislike the open discrimination against gays/lesbians/transgendered people. I dislike the refusal of the university to grant equal employment benefits to

gays/lesbians, transgendered, or domestically partnered employees, especially in the area of healthcare and insurance benefits. This creates an unfair burden on those people the Church refuses to allow the rights of marriage. It is a catch-22, the church refuses the right to marry, and then disallows benefits based on not being married.

One quarter of the participants stated their reservation was the potential influence of the Catholic Church on the curriculum or course content. Participant-8 stated the “Imposition of beliefs upon curriculum” as a potential threat. Similarly, Participant-11 confided in stating that an “over influence of the religious aspects of the institution might limit my teaching style” while Participant-12 added, “as long as my content was not controlled by the local church hierarchy”.

Impact

The sub theme Impact referred to the ways in which the Catholic identity and faith-based mission impacted work related activities of graduate faculty members. Participant-2 expressed an area of conflict or dissonance with the Catholic tradition by stating, “I provide necessary information to students about birth control, but we also discuss the Catholic position on this issue. Actually, it is beneficial as it opens the door for us to discuss variations in spiritual and personal beliefs for patients and families.” Also from a healthcare perspective, Participant-4 stated:

In the healthcare arena, practitioners and students are often faced with ethical or moral situations in which faith plays a significant role. The students are very curious about how other practitioners handle these scenarios. They eagerly and

passionately express their positions. This has impacted me in a positive way, as it is an opportunity for us all to better understand views that are unlike our own in a respectful and safe environment.

Participant-6 was impacted in a similar way by the increase in religious dialogue as expressed in the commentary:

Initially students did not seem to be any different nor did they act differently in class from my previous years of teaching. However, after I initiated more discussions of the mission of Barry University including some of the historical background and professing my own strong beliefs in God, there seemed to be a gradual increase in openness about religious thought and there definitely was an increase in discussions between students, which included religious commentary.

Concerned for non-Christian students Participant-5 added, “There have been times that I feel uncomfortable, not so much for myself, but for my students where there are prayers or other forms of Christian acknowledgement when a very large segment of our students are non-Christian.”

Values and Core Commitments

The major theme of Values and Core Commitments addressed individual perceptions about how the university’s values and commitments were experienced by the participants. The major theme was broken down into three sub themes: Care and Justice, Community, and Acceptance. The following sections will discuss each sub theme associated with the prevailing theme.

Care and Justice

The sub theme of Care and Justice referred to how the graduate faculty members connected with the values of care and social justice. When discussing the value of social justice, Participant-1 stated, “I take this very seriously. Social justice is a central tenet to evolution of professional identity and success in my field. It must be held to the highest level of scrutiny.” When asked how the value of social justice related to the work of a faculty member, Participant-2 commented, “Fits in perfectly. Nurses and nurse practitioners have grown through providing health care and education to all people. Providing health care to the most vulnerable populations usually provides students with the best possible clinical experiences.” Also referring to the health care sector, Participant-4 added:

Social justice is frequently discussed in the classroom as it is frequently faced in the health care arena. Students share experiences and often support each other in problem solving situations. As a faculty member, I believe it is my responsibility to illuminate social justice issues, as they are pervasive in the health care system, as it exists today.

Reaffirming how personally important social justice was, Participant-5 also remarked that the social justice component of the Adrian Dominican Mission was the value that was personally attractive; and stated, “It is integrated into everything that I teach and to who I am.” And, adding:

The Adrian Dominican Mission is a beautiful Mission. One could remove Catholic from it and apply it to any faith. Yes, Barry is a Catholic institution, but

it is an Adrian Dominican Catholic Institution where social justice and peace are possible for everyone not just those that agree with the establishment- if only it weren't just a mission but also a goal. There are some on campus that embody that spirit and one can feel it when they walk by. They are willing to debate, ponder, be open, be gentle, and to teach, and they do all of those things with respect for the person with which they may or may not agree. If we could take out the mission statement of the Adrian Dominican's the one that I read before I got here and decided to come – and structured our academic setting around that mission – ah – we would really have something... and that is coming from a Buddhist.

Also holding social justice in high import, Participant-6 declared, “Social justice is the utmost hierarchy of educational freedom and as such must be expressed, experienced, and promulgated from the very heart of the institution and its representatives.” And Participant-11 stated, “It is the core of why I entered my profession initially and why I chose to teach.”

Although agreeing with the importance of social justice, Participant-10 shared the perception that social justice was “strongly voiced but weakly lived” and added:

Barry must move beyond the causes of “socially acceptable minorities” (race, ethnicity or religious affiliation) and move to advance social justice for the last group of people for whom open discrimination and hate-politics is still widely and publicly accepted; the gay/lesbian & transgendered individuals in our world. Jokes about male rape in prison, fags and dykes are still socially acceptable.

Evangelical and fundamentalist religious zealots publicly decry the human rights of gays & lesbians to marry, to raise/love children, and to enjoy “equal” rights not “special” rights.

Community

The sub theme of Community referred to the ways in which the participant had experienced the university as a community that engaged and espoused faith-based values. Participant-1 shared specific examples of how these values had been personally experienced:

During 9/11, the faculty prayed together with students, families, and staff. It resulted in the peace pole. On the first World Aids Day we formed a human red ribbon and shared the promise of tomorrow while hearing accounts of those suffering and surviving HIV/Aids. When a student was unable to return home one holiday, the Mission & Ministry team paid for a bus ticket from their emergency fund. When one of my peers died, the comfort of the ministry was immediate and in my years at Barry I have had the privilege of attending weddings, funerals, and baptisms of students, faculty, staff, and alumni. It is very powerful.

Participant-3 and Participant -10 discussed community in the context of the service and contribution to society. Participant-3 ascertained:

Although not required of students at the graduate level, community service demonstrates the values that we as Christians live by. Without giving of one's time and treasures (financial, intellectual, spiritual) we cannot expect a

transformation of the spirit or mind to occur. I strongly encourage my graduate students to serve as an expression of faith and a catalyst for learning and growing. Participant-10 added, “Barry enjoys an outstanding relationship in the community. Hospitals often select our graduates over those of other schools. This is based on excellent experience with previous graduates at many community institutions.”

Acceptance

The sub theme of Acceptance referred to how the participants perceived acceptance toward faiths and values that were not Catholic, as a core commitment within the university. Seven (58%) of the participants’ responses were positive and favorable regarding the level of acceptance displayed within the university. Participant-2 stated, “Excellent. I have been to discussion groups on Islam. I have seen students explore the Jewish historical and health experiences through research. At many public institutions discussions about spiritual beliefs is politically incorrect at Barry it is open and encouraged.” Participant-4 shared, “It has been my experience that the level of acceptance at Barry toward non-Catholic faiths and values is highly regarded and always handled in a respectful manner.” By pointing to one’s own personal faith, Participant-4 also added, “Although I am not Catholic, I am a Christian and feel that my personal religious beliefs and background has been honored and respected. I was initially concerned with being viewed as an outsider but that has not been the case.” Also in agreement, Participant-6 commented, “Due to the high level of non-Catholic students and faculty, my experience has been that there is a very high level of acceptance.”

With dissenting views of a high level of acceptance within the university, five (42%) of the participants expressed a neutral or unfavorable perception of acceptance. Participant-5 explained, “I think that as individuals – on a one-on-one level, people are quite tolerant. However, when it comes to the organization as a whole, I wouldn’t say that there is consideration of other faiths or values. In other words, it is not a matter of tolerance, it is a matter of neglect.” Similarly, Participant-9 offered, “On the surface, I see acceptance, particularly of two of The Abrahamic religions, Judaism and Christianity, but nothing compelling about Islam.” Participant-10 discussed acceptance from a unique perspective that demonstrates acceptance through action, specifically policy:

Barry is open to dialogue, but fails to develop policy and practices that are inclusive, especially employment practices that discriminate against community members living in domestic partnerships, whether or not the individuals are gay, lesbian, transgendered or heterosexual (which are probably the majority).”

Culture

The major theme of Culture addressed the individual attitudes that characterized the lived experience of graduate faculty members at a Catholic international university. The major theme was broken down into two sub themes: Inclusivity and Diversity, and Governance. The following sections will discuss each sub theme associated with the prevailing theme.

Inclusivity and Diversity

The sub theme of Inclusivity and Diversity referred to how the participant perceived the culture of the university as one in which diversity is embraced, including,

how the culture handled views and opinions that differed from the Catholic tradition. All of the participants agreed that diversity and inclusivity were of significant value and was a positive contributor to the university culture. Participant-1 stated, “We celebrate diversity in many ways including faith, gender, religion, and politics.” Additionally, Participant-4 added, “In the classroom, we may have varying views and we are to respect those that may differ from our own. It is often these differences of opinions in which our horizons are expanded and learning is enhanced.”

Although all participants agreed with the philosophical benefit of inclusivity and diversity, concern was expressed by 6 (50%) of the participants regarding the reality of freely expressing views that differed from the university’s culture and the Catholic tradition. Participant-10 stated:

I believe that the commitment to diversity is only open to racial or ethnic diversity. Women still hold second-class citizenship in the “Church” and are barred from priesthood. This is unacceptable and an abomination to full gender parity. The “Church” also fails the needs of those with diverse sexual orientations regardless of the desire of some of these folks to live monogamous relationships that are recognized and supported by God.

When responding to the question of how free one feels to express differing opinions, Participant-3 stated, “Very little without repercussions.” Participant-5 added, “Not free at all at the university level.” Participant-11 expressed, “I feel free, although I am aware that freedom comes with a price.” Likewise, Participant-12 shared, “If I

thought my position would be jeopardized by a differing opinion, I believe I would hold my tongue.”

Governance

The sub theme of governance referred to how organizational structures and policies impacted the participants within the university culture. Although the anonymous questionnaire did not explicitly ask questions regarding governance, six (50%) of participant responses mentioned governance as an element of the culture that impacted graduate faculty in either a positive or negative manner. Participant-2 provided an example stating, “My personal beliefs are toward the area of providing knowledge then encouraging students to take an open and enlightened view of all people – Barry policies support this.”

Conversely, four other participants that discussed governance in their responses posited a disconnection between the university’s core commitments and measurable objectives with accountability and enforcement. Participant-3 commented, “If they are enforced in the treatment of students and faculty, they are of benefit.” Participant-3 further added:

Not on a religious basis, but on a spiritual basis, many of the practices and actions at this university do not nourish the spirit of students and faculty; they take from the spirit and diminish morale. There is a lot more talk than action with regard to practicing a spiritual dimension.

Similarly, Participant-4 stated, “I am just trying to better understand how I can measurably align what I do on a daily basis with the core commitments.”

Participant-6 described a comprehensive and personal perspective of governance related issues and consequences:

The major change I have seen in universities over the past two to three decades seems to be a disconnect between student and faculty. There appears to be so much pressure today to produce a student who will be successful in their community, job, and societal skills. At the same time governance is demanding tremendously time-consuming accomplished outcomes, protocols to be initiated and thereafter, to be precisely followed. This is intrusive and disruptive to the normal practice of teaching within a liberal arts university. The onslaught of technology has not been embraced by Barry University in a fashion that might be considered uniform or university wide supported. Therefore, individual application of technological services and applications becomes laborious and less productive for the student and faculty. Barry University is in the throes of developing Sister Linda's strategic agenda and the turmoil that this has caused is reflected by the continued "silo" isolation of individual departments within the colleges and even individual faculty within those departments.

Learning and Knowledge

The prevailing theme of Learning and Knowledge addressed the perceptions of how learning and knowledge led to truth. The major theme was broken down into three sub themes: Collaboration, Academic Freedom, and Praxis. Each sub theme is discussed individually in the following sections.

Collaboration

The sub theme of collaboration referred to the degree in which the participant worked collaboratively outside the university setting with colleagues and community partners. Ten (83%) of the participants had positive comments to say about the import of collaboration on learning and knowledge either personally or professionally. As Participant-1 described, “Without it you are in a vacuum and can not contribute to affecting change. It is essential to progress.” Participant-6 added, “My colleagues outside the university are always available as a sounding board for positive and negative experiences and collaboration relevant to my faculty responsibilities.” Collaboration within the local community was expressed by Participant-5 stating, “I am on several community organization boards, volunteer to write grants and volunteer for youth groups for HIV risk reduction talks. I am quite active in the community both as a researcher and as a practitioner.” Likewise, Participant-10 commented, “I work in a private medical practice and I teach clinical students in a local hospital.”

When asked to what extent does collaboration with others outside the university play a part in your role as a faculty member, time was expressed as the main obstacle in 6 (50%) of the respondents’ comments. Participant-3 succinctly stated, “Very little-who has the time or energy with this workload?” Participant-11 added, “As large a part as time/responsibility will allow. I love to collaborate with others throughout the university. It is not always as positive an experience as I would like, but I learn a lot.” Participant-12 acknowledged, “There is very little time for regular interaction outside the university. When it does happen, it is invigorating and welcome.”

Academic Freedom

The sub theme of Academic Freedom referred to how the participant felt about academic freedom and its impact within an environment focused on learning and knowledge. Although not specifically asked about their views of academic freedom, 6 (50%) of the participants commented on it either implicitly or explicitly. Participant-4 pointed commented, “The combination of academic freedom and a Catholic university provide an enriched environment for research on matters that relate to faith.” As was previously discussed in the Reservations sub theme under the major theme of Faith-Based, 4 (25%) of the participants perceived the faith-based mission of the Catholic university as a reservation and a potential threat to class content when initially joining the faculty at the university.

Praxis

The sub theme Praxis referred to a concept taught by Aristotle that described the actions that embodied certain human qualities specifically including a deep commitment to human life, the search for truth, and the respect for others. In Ancient Greek the word praxis referred to activity or action engaged in by free persons and required a specific type of knowledge. The Greeks referred to this type of knowledge as phronesis, or practical wisdom, and it required a deep awareness and understanding of other people. Phronesis was not a technical knowledge or skill, but instead, was a part of one’s innermost being, or a piece of one’s character typically. It could not be separated from the person, as it was that which made the person who they were (Dunne, 1993). When asked to comment on praxis, Participant-1 stated that without it, “we would be any other

educational institution. This is the heart of what makes us unique. I am proud of this.”

Participant-1 additionally contributed:

I believe the newly revised Core Commitments celebrate a respect and expectation that each individual must represent their self to contribute to a society that is accountable to all within and beyond Barry. The concept of “care” is strengthened to accentuate personal accountability and lessen the potential to be used as a loophole for lack of integrity or motivation. It serves as strong foundation to guide students in adult learning activities.

Participant-2 stated, “I have found a philosophy of support for peers, staff, and students at Barry that I did not find at local hospitals. I have found a more trusting and open environment at Barry than at local hospitals.”

After reflecting on the concept of praxis coupled with the faith-based mission of the university, Participant-4 commented:

I perceive my role as a faculty member of a Catholic university to be one in which faith is an integral part of how I teach and how I collaborate with others. It is faith that binds us as a community and the strength of faith that provides us with the desire and will to make this world a better place.

Participant-6 added, “The concept of faith-based praxis would not be obvious to most observers internally or externally; however, the religious overtones vibrate within the culture and when they are expressed, they are the best.” Participant-10 summarized the coupling of a faith-based mission with the concept of praxis by stating:

Faculty and students at Barry develop and bring to the greater community a deep sense of understanding of the “human-experience” of the world. We learn and teach that people are humans in some state of transition from wherever the person may be at the moment toward a “higher-level of human being.” This understanding helps our faculty and students see and interact with people with faith and hope for a better future. We as faculty and students also see Barry as a living community also in transition from wherever we are at the present moment toward a high level/form of community in the future.

Chapter Summary

This chapter revealed the findings from the data gathered in this research project. The goal of this qualitative study was to explore the lived experiences of graduate faculty members at a Catholic international university. The study attempted to convey the meaning of their perceptions, beliefs, and opinions related to their employment and the faith-based mission within the cultural context of the university through the identification of prevailing themes. A description of the study and methods was followed by graphic presentations of demographics gathered from the participants.

A total of 15 people accessed the online study. Fourteen consented and agreed to participate in the anonymous study and completed the demographic questionnaire. Twelve of the 14 went on to complete the anonymous open-ended questionnaire. The data was collected, and analyzed according to Moustakas’ phenomenological approach to qualitative research. Four prevailing themes emerged from the data that included: Faith-

Based Mission, Values and Core Commitments, Culture, and Learning and Knowledge.

A summary of the prevailing themes and their associated sub themes were reported.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

Introduction

Most American universities were founded and sponsored by faith-based communities or churches (Burtchaell, 1998; Gleason, 1995; Marsden, 1994; Sloan, 1994). In creating these institutions of higher education, the founders believed that faith harmonized with all aspects of learning and the ultimate goal was to glorify God (Lyon, Beaty, & Mixon, 2002). Prior to the American Civil War, many of America's most prestigious universities began with a deeply seeded evangelical Protestant identity. Catholics were slower to seriously enter into higher education in numbers, but after 1920 flourished quickly and had grown to sponsor the largest array of colleges and universities in the country. Although many of the earliest colleges and universities survived the societal shifts and challenges over the past two centuries, most no longer claim any relationship or linkage with a church or denomination (Lyon, Beaty, & Mixon, 2002).

Throughout the twentieth century, American higher education became increasingly secular (Burtchaell, 1998; Gleason, 1995; Marsden, 1994; Sloan, 1994). As secularization progressed, many faith-based colleges and universities found it difficult to differentiate their mission and purpose with that of secular institutions. The founding belief that faith and knowledge were synergistically correlated was no longer held providential, but instead had been disassociated and trivialized. Faith was separated from the academic goal of learning and consequently led to a marginalization of faith-based higher education (Lyon, Beaty, & Mixon, 2005).

Controversy and debate over the extent to which Catholic colleges and universities specifically maintained their faith-based identities in an increasingly secular world has been on-going for well over half a century (Burtchaell, 1999; Gleason, 1995; Marsden, 1994; Sloan 1994). Considerable research and disagreement existed over the degree to which faith-based colleges and universities differed from secular institutions (Lyon, Beaty, & Mixon, 2005). Hence the questions: How were faith-based institutions of higher education different from secular schools? What did it mean to be a Catholic university? How were faith-based traditions transferred from the university's mission into the learning environment at both the undergraduate and graduate level? How was the Catholic character perceived within the culture of the university? Although these questions were all pertinent to the issue, the present study intentionally narrowed the scope of inquiry and focused on the lived experiences of graduate faculty at one Catholic international university in South Florida.

Summary of the Study

Purpose

The goal of this qualitative study was to explore the lived experiences of graduate faculty members at a Catholic international institution of higher education. The study attempted to convey the meaning of their perceptions, beliefs, and opinions related to their employment and the faith-based mission within the cultural context of the university through the identification of prevailing themes.

In this research, the direct benefit to the participants was knowing that their experiences and opinions truly mattered and that they were being heard. The intended

purpose of this study was to give voice to graduate faculty members' opinions and beliefs regarding their experience at a Catholic international university. Participation in the study may help our understanding of faith-based education praxis at the graduate level and how it might relate and contribute to the university's mission.

Significance of the Study

In addition to the four major themes that emerged from the data, the scholarly literature provided a wealth of information specific to the historical foundations of Catholic higher education, challenges of the past and present, and the importance of faculty engagement in guiding a university's mission. Understanding faculty members' perceptions and lived experiences while teaching at the graduate level may provide administrators with insight into the distinguishable nature of graduate level higher education at a Catholic university. Fostering an understanding and awareness of faculty experiences and educational practices within the climate of a Catholic international university may offer substantive descriptions about faith-based academe and the alignment of graduate faculty experiences with the university's mission.

Restatement of Methodology

The qualitative paradigm allowed an opportunity to focus on the experience from a holistic perspective rather than its parts, to search for meanings instead of measurements, and described experiences through conversational first-person accounts in their own voice, from their own perspective (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002). With this in mind, the primary investigator rejected the idea that the social sciences could be studied with the same methods as the natural or physical sciences.

Moustakas' seminal work describing the phenomenological approach in qualitative research scripted the methods followed throughout the data collection, data processing, and data analysis of this investigation. According to Moustakas, the central tenets of a phenomenological study were to determine what an experience meant for the persons involved, and to provide a comprehensive description. Then, general meanings could be derived from the descriptions. The research question for this project was: What are the perceptions and lived experiences of graduate level faculty members as a Catholic international university?

Participants were purposively and randomly selected full-time graduate faculty members at a Catholic international institution of higher education. Eligibility to participate included full-time, graduate level faculty members from schools within the university that award Ph.D. degrees. At Barry University, the schools that awarded Ph.D. degrees were specifically, the School of Education, the School of Social Work, and the School of Nursing. After receiving permission from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Barry University, the primary investigator sent an email to all full-time graduate faculty members, within the three schools previously mentioned, and asked for their participation in the anonymous study. The email (Appendix A) included a description of the study and provided specific details describing what they would be asked to do if they decided to participate. The email also included the Internet link to the online study.

The study was conducted via the Internet using an online open-ended questionnaire managed by surveymonkey.com. The study was accessed through a standard Internet browser and available 24 hours a day, which provided respondents with

additional convenience of responding at their leisure. Respondents were electronically presented with a detailed cover letter (Appendix B) and guided through two inclusion criteria questions to determine eligibility (Appendix C). A person became eligible to participate in the study if they were considered full-time graduate faculty in one of the three schools that award Ph.D. degrees within the selected university. Once eligibility was confirmed, the participant was presented with a demographic questionnaire (Appendix D); the ten (10) open-ended research questions (Appendix E); and a thank you screen (Appendix F). All instruments were completely anonymous with no linkages to the identity of the respondent.

The researcher recognized the online, impersonal nature of the study as a potential shortcoming and weighed the weakness against the potential benefits. The two strongest benefits were the convenience of time and location, in which the participant had for reflection on their lived-experience; and increased trust of protecting the participant's identity through anonymity. This may have provided a more relaxed setting and may have increased the probability of obtaining thoughtfully framed responses that yielded rich, thick descriptions of the phenomenon as experienced by the participant. Data was collected over a three-week period.

Moustakas' (1994) seminal work describing the phenomenological approach in qualitative research scripted the methods followed throughout the data collection, data processing, and data analysis of this investigation. After reading each participant's response, the researcher composed descriptive notes and reflexive feelings to identify researcher presuppositions and biases. To validate trustworthiness of the data analysis

process and to develop an audit trail, the researcher bracketed her presuppositions, biases, and reflexive feelings about the data. Seeking to interpret the data in pure form, not influenced by any standard, worldly meaning, the researcher continued to read individual participant's response numerous times to gain a deep understanding of what each participant was expressing. This phase of reducing the data was the goal of Transcendental-Phenomenological Reduction (Moustakas, 1994). The data were considered separately but with equal value, where each of the experiences was spread out for examination.

The data was then coded and organized into meaningful clusters, from which themes were identified. These clusters and themes developed the individual's textural description of the experience as a full-time graduate faculty member at a Catholic international university. From this reductive process, a composite textural description that included eleven thematic units was developed. To improve credibility, the researcher engaged a peer reviewer to determine if there was agreement with the coding and clustering process.

From the composite textural description of each participant, the researcher conducted Imaginative Variation to construct a composite structural description that represented the participants as a whole. By looking at the themes from a variety of angles and perspectives, the researcher developed expanded versions of each of the themes. The result of this phase was a composite structural description that summarized the experience, through the eyes of the participants as a collective group. From the eleven

sub themes, four major themes emerged. The prevailing themes included: Faith-Based Mission; Values and Core Commitments; Culture; and, Learning & Knowledge.

Limitations

By the very nature of their subjective design, qualitative research investigations have inherent limitations (Greene, 1988). Creswell (2003) discussed potential limitations of any study as methodological weaknesses related to the data collection and analysis process. Limitations identified factors that restricted the scope of the project. One possible limitation of the present study included generalizability, since the participants were full-time graduate faculty from one Catholic university in Florida. This may have placed a potential limitation on how well the study represents faculty in similar programs and institutions across other regions. This may also place a potential limitation on how well the study represents non-graduate faculty within the specific schools studied, or graduate faculty in the schools not included in the present study. Therefore, purposeful sampling may have decreased the generalizability of reported outcomes.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the present study are a direct result of examining in micro and macro detail the participant' responses to the ten open-ended questions included in the anonymous questionnaire. Out of a total population of 112 full-time graduate faculty members collectively within the School of Education, the School of Nursing, and the School of Social Work, a total of 15, which represented 13% of the total population, accessed the online study. After reading the online cover letter (Appendix B), 14 (93.3%) respondents consented and agreed to participate in the anonymous study. After agreeing

to participate, all 14 (100%) satisfied the inclusion criteria questions (Appendix C) and were presented with the demographic questionnaire (Appendix D). Of the 14 participants that completed the demographic questionnaire, 12 went on to complete the anonymous online questionnaire in its entirety.

The overarching research question asked that perceptions of graduate faculty members at a Catholic international university be discovered from the voices of the graduate faculty themselves. The prevailing themes that emerged from the data included: Faith-Based Mission, Values and Core Commitments, Culture, Learning and Knowledge. The following sections summarize each of the major themes and sub themes identified in the data.

Faith-Based Mission

The major theme of Faith-Based Mission focused on individual perceptions about the university's identification as Catholic and the faith-based mission. The major theme was broken down into three sub themes: Employment, Reservations, and Impact. The sub theme Employment referred to how the identification as a Catholic university, and consequently, its faith-based mission, influenced the participant when initially seeking employment. Five (42%) of the participants stated that their decision to initially seek employment at the university was positively influenced by the fact that the university was Catholic. One (8%) participant stated that the Catholic tradition was a negative influence in seeking employment. The remaining six (50%) participants shared that they were not influenced by the university's Catholic identification.

The sub theme Reservations summarized the doubts or reservations, if any, that the participant had with the faith-based mission and being a graduate faculty member at a Catholic international university. Although 42% of the participants reported to have no reservations about being on the faculty of a Catholic international university, one-third (33%) of the participants perceived discrimination as a potential fear or doubt. The remaining one-quarter (25%) of the participants stated their reservation was the potential influence of the Catholic Church on the curriculum or course content.

The sub theme Impact referred to the ways in which the Catholic identity and faith-based mission impacted work related activities of graduate faculty members. Participants expressed the impact of having faith-based or religious dialogue in the classroom as a benefit. However, it was also mentioned that the Catholic tradition created dissonance when topics such as birth control and HIV prevention came up in classroom discussions. Similarly, prayer and other forms of Christian acknowledgement in the classroom were also provided as examples of potential discomfort for the non-Christian students, which created dissonance for the faculty member.

Values and Core Commitments

The major theme of Values and Core Commitments addressed individual perceptions about how the university's values and commitments were experienced by the graduate faculty member. The major theme was broken down into three sub themes: Care and Justice, Community, and Acceptance. The sub theme of Care and Justice referred to how the graduate faculty member connected with the values of care and justice. When discussing care and social justice, the participants expressed a very high level of

emotional connection as it related to the import of these values on campus and in the community at large. It became evident to the researcher that care and social justice is what led the majority of the participants to their unique discipline and was a driving force that attracted them to a Catholic university. It was also pointed out that even with the faith-based mission of a Catholic university, social injustices were perceived to have occurred in the areas of gender and sexual orientation.

The sub theme of Community referred to the ways in which the participant experienced the university as a community, which engaged and lived its faith-based values both on and off campus. Examples were provided that demonstrated specific ways in which faculty, students, and staff supported one another in difficult times. Participants also shared their perspective of how the university was perceived as a valued partner in the local health care community. However, unlike most undergraduate programs at the university, community service projects are not required of graduate students. This was mentioned as an area of improvement – to remind and heighten the awareness of the importance of serving, as a responsible citizen of a faith-based community.

The sub theme of Acceptance referred to how the participant perceived acceptance toward faiths and values that were not Catholic. Seven (58%) participants responded favorably regarding the level of acceptance displayed within the university. Five (42%) of the participants expressed an unfavorable or neutral perception of acceptance. In the dissenting opinions, the areas specifically mentioned included neglect, or lack of awareness, about faiths that were not of Judeo-Christian origin. Also

mentioned was the lack of policy to support the rhetoric of acceptance, specifically in regard to persons in domestic partnerships or same sex relationships.

Culture

The major theme of Culture addressed the individual attitudes that characterized the lived experience of graduate faculty members at a Catholic international university. The major theme was broken down into two sub themes: Inclusivity and Diversity, and Governance. The sub theme of Inclusivity and Diversity referred to how the participant perceived the culture of the university as one in which diversity was embraced, including how the culture handled views and opinions that differed from the Catholic tradition. All of the participants agreed that diversity and inclusivity were of significant value and was a positive contributor to the university culture. Although all participants agreed with the philosophical benefit of inclusivity and diversity, concern was expressed by 6 (50%) of the participants regarding the reality of freely expressing views that differed from the university's culture and the Catholic tradition.

It was mentioned by participants that the commitment to diversity was only open to racial or ethnic diversity. Gender inequality through the eyes of The Church was mentioned as an example. Sexual orientation was also stated as another area where inclusivity was marginal. Consequently, half (50%) of the respondents replied that they did not feel comfortable in expressing differing views or opinions within the cultural climate.

The sub theme of governance referred to how organizational structures and policies impacted the participants within the university culture. Although the anonymous

questionnaire did not explicitly ask questions regarding governance, six (50%) of participant responses mentioned governance as an element of the culture that impacted them in either a positive or negative manner. Repeated examples were disconnected colleges operating independently, which has led to isolation; the lack of accountability; and the loosely related lack of uniformity and standards regarding the use of technology. Four other participants that discussed governance in their responses posited a disconnection between the university's core commitments and measurable objectives with accountability and enforcement.

Learning and Knowledge

The prevailing theme of Learning and Knowledge addressed the perceptions of how learning and knowledge leads to truth. The major theme was broken down into three sub themes: Collaboration, Academic Freedom, and Praxis. The sub theme of collaboration referred to the degree in which the participant worked collaboratively outside the university setting with colleagues and community partners. Ten (83%) of the participants had positive comments to say about the import of collaboration on learning and knowledge both personally and professionally. When asked to what extent does collaboration with others outside the university play a part in your role as a faculty member, time was expressed as the main obstacle in 6 (50%) of the respondents' comments.

The sub theme of Academic Freedom referred to how the participant felt about academic freedom and its impact within an environment focused on learning, knowledge, and the acquisition of truth. Although not specifically asked about their views of

academic freedom, 6 (50%) of the participants commented on it either implicitly or explicitly. The positive comments related academic freedom to the expression of faith in teaching and research. The negative comments were based on the potential for imposing faith-based beliefs into the curriculum and thus, denying full academic freedom to the graduate faculty.

The sub theme Praxis referred to a concept taught by Aristotle describing the actions that embody certain human qualities, specifically including a deep commitment to human life, the search for truth, and the respect for others. In Ancient Greek the word praxis referred to activity or action engaged in by free persons and required a specific type of knowledge. The Greeks referred to this type of knowledge as phronesis, or practical wisdom, and it required a deep awareness and understanding of other people. Phronesis was not a technical knowledge or skill, but instead, was a part of one's innermost being, or a piece of one's character typically. It could not be separated from the person, as it was that which made the person who they were (Dunne, 1993). Coupled with the faith-based mission of a Catholic international university, participants commented that the combination of the two defined the distinguishable nature of Barry University. The integration of Aristotle's concept of praxis and the faith-based mission of Barry University, provide a rich, fertile environment for faculty and student to explore the depths of the human experience, to be transformed by truth and to be a catalyst for justice and peace throughout the world.

Conclusions

As one would expect, the lived experiences, opinions, and perceptions of full-time graduate faculty at Barry University was quite diverse and often polarized. However, the results of the study showed many common themes among the participants. One hundred percent of the participants stated they were a person of faith, including one-third identifying themselves as being Catholic. When initially seeking employment, only one-half of the participants were favorably influenced by university's Catholic identity. It is apparent, however, that the participants shared many of the same perceptions about the import of elements within the Catholic tradition, specifically social justice, service and acceptance. However, opinions varied greatly regarding how, or if, these were actually endorsed through policy, implemented, and subsequently measured, across the university. Some participants were not clear as to how the core commitments were linked to performance and accountability. Graduate faculty members expressed the need for tangible governance to support the alignment of everyday activities with the overall mission and core commitments of the university.

Participants expressed reservations when it came to freely expressing their opinions or views that differed either from the Catholic tradition, or common operating procedures within the university culture. It was evident that trust was not solidified throughout the graduate faculty; thus, there was a potential to pay the price professionally or personally by freely expressing one's unpopular opinions or ideas. Some expressed a fear of the Catholic Church imposing values and beliefs upon the curriculum or course content and the potential to infringe upon academic freedom. Most participants believed

the university culture openly welcomed cultural, religious, and ethnic diversity. However, some participants acknowledged the lack of acceptance existed for gays, lesbians, and transgender individuals within the university culture. Inequities regarding insurance coverage and partner benefits were perceived as discrimination, an injustice, and inconsistent with the university's mission to strive for equality.

On a philosophical level, participants stated that they strongly valued collaboration to promote continued learning and knowledge acquisition. However, within the existing cultural climate of the university, participants experienced isolation and the lack of collaboration across schools, and across programs within the same school. Some stated that the present workload overburdened graduate faculty; therefore, it was perceived that the culture did not foster collaborative efforts either internal to the university or externally within the general community. Time, not willingness, was the limiting resource.

As discussed in detail in Chapter II, the term Praxis refers to a concept taught by Aristotle that described the actions that embody certain human qualities specifically including a deep commitment to human life, the search for truth, and the respect for others. In Ancient Greek the word praxis referred to activity or action engaged in by free persons and required a specific type of knowledge. The Greeks referred to this type of knowledge as phronesis, or practical wisdom, and it required a deep awareness and understanding of other people. Phronesis was not a technical knowledge or skill, but instead, was a part of one's inner-most being, or a piece of one's character. It could not be separated from the person, as it was that which made the person who they were

(Dunne, 1993). When the concept of praxis was coupled with the faith-based mission of the university, the graduate faculty expressed hope, fulfillment, and resolve in their experience. Participants reflected and opined about the transformative milieu of a Catholic international university. Through the unique synergistic blend of faith and praxis, graduate faculty acknowledged the distinguishable nature of Catholic higher education and their role as graduate faculty to actively engage, celebrate, and take pride in making this world a better place.

Recommendations

In order for Catholic institutions to remain competitive in the highly competitive marketplace of higher education, data pertinent to the Catholic culture is needed. Specifically, more data about faculty, students, and performance data, relative to the university's mission, are of most import. Findings from this study along with comparative data from similar institutions have potential applications for organizational development and faculty training programs, hiring and retention practices, governance policies and procedures, and leadership engagement.

Benchmarking the data from the present study against other Catholic institutions of higher education can provide valuable insights and might open dialogue to discuss best practices in the area of faculty hiring and retention. Finding an institution of similar size with similar financial resources as a data exchange partner would be most useful. Due to competitive forces, some universities might not be willing to share information, so a focused effort should be put on identifying the most likely and most effective candidates

for data exchange. This relationship may lead to additional collaboration and research related to measuring and monitoring other key areas within the Catholic culture.

It would be helpful to assess how current university-wide priorities, policies, and procedures, align with the university's overall mission. It is suggested that the strength and importance of the university's mission be solidified and substantiated via transparent accountability, the use of acceptable performance measurements, jointly developed by a university-level committee and college-level committees. The result of the joint committees would be mission-based performance criteria unique to each college within the university. The present study found graduate faculty questioning how their daily activities contributed to the university's mission. Through clearly defined mission-based measurements and the appropriate accountability, administrators within each of the colleges can effectively demonstrate how faculty directly participate and contribute to the mission of the university. Involving selective faculty who embrace the faith-based mission and Catholic tradition, could recognize individual efforts and develop leadership qualities that further support the university's mission efforts.

The trickle-down effect of mission-based measurements might warrant released time for full-time graduate faculty to satisfy such requirements, as might be suggested in the area of collaborative service. In the present study, the graduate faculty valued collaboration, but suggested their workload did not allow time for contributive collaboration, nor did the climate within the university support it. Schools were perceived to be functioning independently as "silos", with little need or use for one another. Fostering collaborative research or service projects, involving faculty and

students, or faculty and a community partner, could offer structured opportunity to further scholarly work by graduate faculty. Additional emphasis such as time and funding could be placed on furthering research that relates to the university's mission and core commitments.

Arguably the most multiplicative recommendation is in the area of cultural change. Most would agree that change is inevitable, even within the culture of a Catholic international university. In order to survive and remain distinguishable amid a highly competitive educational marketplace, leadership must be strong yet flexible. Strong, in terms of power and influence to create change, and flexible, in terms of the open-mindedness to shape a culture that not only adapts to the needs of the community it serves, but just as importantly, to do so with inheritability in mind.

Cultural inheritability requires leadership to be connected to the future, as well as the past, giving equal merit to both. To ensure that change in the faith-based culture of a Catholic institution is inheritable, the change must be consistent with the culture inherited from the past. In addition, the changes will not only need to be well received and widely accepted by current stakeholders, but also to future generations of administrators, faculty, staff, and students.

Change of this magnitude requires human catalysts at every level of the organization to be identified and united in a guiding coalition. The change catalysts should possess influence or power to lead change within their respective discipline or functional team. Through genuine openness, constant communication, and an emphasis on broad participation, leaders can build consensus and trust allowing all willing

stakeholders to become citizens of change for the current generation, and generations to come. Balancing the treasures of the past with the treasures of the future poses a unique challenge for the highest levels of leadership at a Catholic university. This balance is something that must be appropriately considered with every administrative level appointment, hiring of every faculty member, and staff placement or promotion.

Further Research

Future study into this area could take many directions. An effort should be made to understand the perceptions of a wider group of graduate faculty within the same university to include participants from other schools or colleges. The present study limited the sample to full-time graduate faculty within three schools within the university. Further research can open the investigation to all schools within the university. It would be interesting to discover to what degree are the findings of a broader population consistent with the more limited, purposeful sampling of the present study?

With the use of adjunct professors on the increase in some graduate schools and colleges within the university, it would be helpful to understand how their experiences compare to that of full-time graduate faculty. It would also be interesting to understand how the university's hiring policies differ between full-time graduate faculty and adjunct professors in graduate schools. To what degrees are the hiring policies and teaching philosophies of adjunct professors in alignment with the university's mission and core commitments?

It would also be helpful to include undergraduate faculty perceptions. Thus, further research should be made to discover the perceptions of undergraduate faculty at

the same university. How do the experiences and opinions differ from the graduate faculty in the present study? How can similarities or differences be explained? How are the faculty impacted by the type of students to which they are teaching – undergraduate versus graduate?

The present study was conducted at Barry University, founded by the Adrian Dominican Sisters. Barry's main campus is located in Miami Shores, Florida. The Sisters also founded Sienna Heights University that is located adjacent to the Adrian Dominican Motherhouse in Adrian, Michigan. Similar research can be conducted at Sienna Heights University to better understand the connected nature to the founding order. How does the mission of the founding order translate to the experiences and perceptions of the faculty at the universities? And, taking the research in a different direction, how does the mission of the founding order influence the opinions of university administrators, board of overseers, and ultimately the students.

An effort should be made to understand the perceptions of all faculty members regarding their awareness and level of knowledge as it relates to the ethos of the Catholic tradition and charism of the founding order. How comfortable are they with their own knowledge and discussion about the Catholic tradition if it comes up in a classroom setting? How does this knowledge, or lack of it, impact the connectedness to the faith-based mission of the university? Is knowledge of the ethos of the Catholic tradition important for academics teaching in disciplines unrelated to philosophy or religion such as education, social work, nursing, or business? If so, how might this knowledge be acquired and shared.

Implications for Practice

The results of this investigation may provide important implications for higher education administrators, faculty, and the board of overseers at a Catholic international university. As previously stated, graduate faculty members' perceptions may garner insights into the distinguishable nature of graduate level higher education at a Catholic university; centered on lived experiences. This insight might allow administrators to discern the climate and prevailing culture within the university through substantive descriptions. Participant responses in this investigation offer concrete examples of how the faith-based mission, values, culture, and locus of learning and knowledge, are experienced by the graduate faculty. Although the major themes shared by participants were common, the opinions were often polarized.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the landscape of a qualitative phenomenological approach to an educational research project. The investigation included the purpose, significance, method, limitations, and findings of a study designed to elicit answers about the perceptions held by graduate faculty members at a Catholic international university. The results harvested from this study included subjective interpretations constructed via the language solicited from a purposeful sample of full-time faculty members who were actively teaching and facilitating graduate students at a Catholic international university.

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to discover and give voice to the role of graduate faculty members within a Catholic institution of higher education. The study attempted to convey the meaning of their perceptions, beliefs, and

opinions related to their employment and the faith-based mission within the cultural context of the university through the identification of prevailing themes. Participant responses revealed four major themes: graduate faculty described how the faith-Based mission influenced and impacted their employment; participants expressed the ways specific values and core commitments impacted them as graduate faculty members; participants acknowledged how the culture of the university was perceived and experienced; and, participants indicated how the previous three themes reflected upon the milieu of learning and knowledge acquisition.

In addition to the research findings and emerging themes, recommendations were suggested to address the results of this study. The first recommendation proposed that the university collect additional data pertinent to the Catholic culture within the university specifically, more data regarding faculty, students, and performance data, relative to the university's mission. The second recommendation involved benchmarking the data from the present study against similar Catholic universities in an effort to open dialogue and discussions of best practices in the area of faculty hiring and retention, and to develop a partnership for data exchange. The third recommendation proposed an assessment of how current university-wide priorities, policies, and procedures, align with the university's overall mission. The fourth recommendation suggested a focus on collaborative service by providing graduate faculty time and funding on furthering research that related to the university's mission and core commitments. And the final recommendation suggested the need for strong leadership and a guiding coalition of human change catalysts that strives for organizational and cultural change that espouses

cultural inheritability – to be connected to the future, as well as the past, giving equal merit to both. This type of deep seeded change will not only need to be well received and widely accepted by current stakeholders, but also to future generations of administrators, faculty, staff, and students.

Recommendations for further research included: conducting a study of this kind on a wider population of graduate faculty for enhanced generalization; conducting a study of this kind on undergraduate faculty members; and, extending this type of study to another university founded by the Adrian Dominican order. An additional area of research would be to understand the perceptions of all faculty members regarding their awareness and level of knowledge as it relates to the ethos of the Catholic tradition and charism of the founding order.

The study contributed to the body of knowledge and provided insight that may heighten the understanding of graduate faculty members' perceptions and lived experiences at a faith-based Catholic international university. Understanding faculty members' perceptions and lived experiences may provide administrators with insight into the distinguishable nature of graduate level higher education at a Catholic university. Fostering an understanding and awareness of faculty experiences and educational practices within the climate of a Catholic international university may offer substantive descriptions about faith-based academe and may provide insight regarding the alignment of graduate faculty experiences with the university's faith-based mission.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Participant Recruitment Email

FULL-TIME FACULTY TEACHING GRADUATE LEVEL COURSES WE NEED YOU!

Your opinions and experiences matter! We are searching for ten (10) full-time faculty members that teach graduate level courses to share their perspectives, opinions and lived experiences as a faculty member at a Catholic international university via an online questionnaire. The study will be conducted anonymously with no linkages to the identity of the respondents.

If you decide to participate in this research, you will be asked to do the following:

- Link to the online instrument by clicking on the following link: https://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=gq_2bt47cK8RBw3KQIb8amqw_3d_3d where you will be presented with a cover letter that will describe detailed procedures of the study.
- After reading the cover letter, if you agree to participate, you will be asked to confirm your interest by clicking on the “Yes, I agree to participate” radio button. Or, if you chose not to participate, you select the “No, I do not wish to participate” radio button and you will be exited from the survey site.
- Once you confirm your participation by selecting “Yes, I agree to participate”, you will then be presented with two qualifying questions to be sure that you meet the inclusion criteria for the study. The first question verifies that you are a full-time faculty member at Barry University in the School of Education, the School of Nursing, or the School of Social Work. The second question verifies that you teach at, or are certified to teach at, the graduate level within your respective school at Barry University. If both inclusion criteria questions are satisfied, you will be presented with a demographic survey immediately followed by the open-ended questionnaire. If both inclusion criteria questions are not satisfied, you will receive a thank you screen and will be exited from the survey site.
- The anticipated time for the entire process should take no more than ninety (90) minutes.

Thank you for your consideration!

Radiantly,

Michelle Straub

Doctoral Candidate and Primary Investigator

APPENDIX B

Cover Letter for Anonymous Study

Your participation in a research project would be greatly appreciated. The title of the study is “Faith-Based Praxis: Perceptions Held by Graduate Faculty at a Catholic International University.” The research is being conducted by Michelle A. Straub, a doctoral student in the Leadership and Education department at Barry University, and is seeking information that will be useful in the field of education. The aim of this research is to explore the lived experience and give voice to graduate faculty members’ opinions and beliefs regarding their experiences at a Catholic international university. The research will benefit the leadership and education fields by adding information to the literature available on faith-based education. Additionally, the research may assist in obtaining a heightened understanding and awareness of Catholic identity in higher education, specifically at the graduate level. In accordance with these aims, the following procedures will be used:

Your participation will involve anonymously completing an online questionnaire to describe your opinions, insights, and perceptions as graduate level faculty at a Catholic international university. Your total time commitment including the anticipated time to complete the questionnaire and a brief demographic information sheet should take no more than ninety (90) minutes. The study has been designed to ensure that participant identity remains unknown and completely anonymous. Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you elect not to participate or to discontinue your involvement in the study at any time, you may do so without consequences. Your participation or decision not to participate in this study will not impact your employment in any way. The anticipated number of participants is ten (10).

In this research, there are no known anticipated risks to you apart from the possibility of the discomfort of being honest in revealing your experiences as a graduate faculty member at a Catholic international university. The direct benefits are knowing your opinions matter and that you are being heard. Your participation may help our understanding of faith-based education at the graduate level and how it might relate and contribute to the university’s mission.

As a research participant, information you provide will be collected and reported anonymously. The online survey collection tool will not capture any personal tracking information including, but not limited to, names, email address and Internet Protocol identifiers on any of the instruments used. The results of the research study may be published. Any published results of the research will only refer to group averages, pseudonyms, alphabetical, or numerical listings only and no, repeat no, real names or email addresses will be used or mentioned in the study, as they will not be collected.

The anonymous online data will be encrypted and stored electronically on surveymonkey.com data servers in the United States. As stated in their privacy policy, surveymonkey.com will not use your data for their own purposes. The servers are kept in locked cages that require a keycard and biometric recognition for entry and are monitored 24/7 via digital surveillance equipment. A firewall restricts access to network ports and network security audits are performed quarterly. The anonymous data will be maintained for five (5) years then destroyed.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the study or your participation in the study, you may contact me, Michelle Straub at (407) 306-8877 (michellestraub@mac.com), my Doctoral Committee Chairman, Dr. Joe Maddox at (321) 235-8422, or the Institutional Review Board point of contact, Ms. Barbara Cook at (305) 899-3020. Thank you for your consideration.

Please chose one of the options below:

- Yes, I agree to participate in the anonymous study.
- No, I do not wish to participate.

APPENDIX C

Inclusion Criteria Questions

1. For the Fall 2008 term, are you considered full-time faculty in the School of Nursing, the School of Social Work, or the School of Education at Barry University?
 Yes
 No

2. Do you teach at, or are you certified to teach at, the graduate level within your respective school?
 Yes
 No

APPENDIX D

Demographic Information Sheet

Please complete the following anonymous demographic data.

1. Your age:
 1. 30-39
 2. 40-49
 3. 50-59
 4. 60-69
 5. 70-79
 6. 80 and higher

2. Gender:
 1. Female
 2. Male

3. Marital Status:
 1. Single
 2. Married
 3. Separated
 4. Divorced
 5. Widowed

4. What is your ethnicity?
 1. African-American
 2. Caucasian
 3. Hispanic
 4. Asian
 5. Other: _____

5. Highest level of education completed?
 1. Bachelor's Degree
 2. Master's Degree
 3. Professional Degree (J.D., M.D., D.C., etc)
 4. Doctoral Degree (Ph.D., Ed.D., D.B.A, etc)

6. Please circle all that apply. During my education, I attended:
 1. Catholic Elementary School
 2. Catholic High School
 3. Catholic College or University
 4. I have never attended a Catholic school

7. Years of experience teaching at the graduate level:
 1. 0-5
 2. 6-10
 3. 11-15

4. 16-20
 5. More than 20
8. Years of experience as a full-time faculty member at a faith-based institution of higher education:
1. 0-5
 2. 6-10
 3. 11-15
 4. 16-20
 5. 21-25
 6. more than 25
9. Do you consider yourself a person of faith?
1. Yes
 2. No
10. What is your religious affiliation?
1. Jewish
 2. Protestant
 3. Catholic
 4. Muslim
 5. Buddhist
 6. No religious affiliation
 7. Other: _____

APPENDIX E

ANONYMOUS QUESTIONNAIRE

Thank you again for your interest in this research study and your willingness to participate. The study has been designed to ensure that participant identity remains unknown and completely anonymous. So, please feel free to thoroughly answer all ten (10) open-ended questions. A completed survey will include a response to every question. Again, thank you for your participation.

1. Did the fact that this is a Catholic university influence your decision to seek employment here? Please explain how this did or did not have an impact on your decision.
2. How did the possibility of teaching at a Catholic university fit in with your religious beliefs and background?
3. What reservations did you have about being on the faculty of a Catholic university?
4. Please explain and describe any situations in which the Catholic identity of the university has impacted you as a faculty member?
5. What is your reaction to the new Mission Statement and Core Commitments that have been adopted by the university? In what ways do you think they might affect your teaching, advising, and other job-related activities at the university?
<http://www.barry.edu/aboutbarry/mission/Default.htm>
6. How would you describe the level of acceptance at this university toward faiths and values that are not Catholic?
7. How free do you feel you are to express your opinions if they differ from the university culture?
8. How does the value of social justice relate to your work as a faculty member?
9. To what extent does collaboration with others outside the university play a part in your role as a faculty member?
10. The term praxis, as taught by Aristotle, describes actions that embody certain qualities specifically including a deep commitment to human life, the search for truth, and the respect for others. Praxis is the process or activities by which a theory, lesson, or skill is used and practiced within a tradition of communally shared understandings and values. With this as a backdrop, is there anything else regarding your lived experience, beliefs or perceptions as a graduate faculty member at this university that you would like to add?

APPENDIX F

Thank You Screen

Thank you for your participation! You have reached this page for one of three reasons. Either you have selected not to participate, you did not meet the qualifications for the two inclusion questions to participate in the survey, or you have completed the study in its entirety. In any case, your time and effort is so greatly appreciated and is truly respected. Thank you for taking the time out of your busy day to contribute. Have a lovely day!

APPENDIX G

Human Participant Protections Education

Completion Certificate

QuickTime™ and a
decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

APPENDIX H

BARRY UNIVERSITY MISSION STATEMENT

Barry University is a Catholic institution of higher education founded in 1940 by the Adrian Dominican Sisters. Grounded in the liberal arts tradition, Barry University is a scholarly community committed to the highest academic standards in undergraduate, graduate and professional education.

In the Catholic intellectual tradition, integration of study, reflection and action inform the intellectual life. Faithful to this tradition, a Barry education and university experience foster individual and communal transformation where learning leads to knowledge and truth, reflection leads to informed action, and a commitment to social justice leads to collaborative service.

Barry University provides opportunities for affirming our Catholic identity, Dominican heritage, and collegiate traditions. Catholic beliefs and values are enriched by ecumenical and interfaith dialog.

Through worship and ritual, we celebrate our religious identity while remaining a University community where all are welcome.

CORE COMMITMENTS

Catholic intellectual and religious traditions guide us in the fulfillment of our mission. The mission and values of the Adrian Dominican Sisters serve as the inspiration for our core commitments.

Knowledge and Truth

Barry promotes and supports the intellectual life, emphasizing life-long learning, growth and development. The University pursues scholarly and critical analysis of fundamental questions of the human experience. In the pursuit of truth, the University advances development of solutions that promote the common good and a more humane and just society.

Inclusive Community

Barry is a global, inclusive community characterized by interdependence, dignity and equality, compassion and respect for self and others. Embracing a global world view, the University nurtures and values cultural, social and intellectual diversity, and welcomes faculty, staff, and students of all faith traditions.

Social Justice

Barry expects all members of our community to accept social responsibility to foster peace and nonviolence, to strive for equality, to recognize the sacredness of Earth, and to engage in meaningful efforts toward social change. The University promotes social justice through teaching, research and service.

Collaborative Service

Barry is committed to serving local and global communities through collaborative and mutually productive partnerships. The University accepts responsibility to engage with communities to pursue systemic, self-sustaining solutions to human, social, economic and environmental problems.

Approved by the President and the Executive Committee of the Administration on May 15, 2008; approved by the Board of Trustees on May 30, 2008; submitted to the General Council of the Adrian Dominican Sisters for final approval; Council approval received via letter from Sister Roasa Monique Pena, OP on June 20, 2008.

APPENDIX I

Follow-up Participant Recruitment Email
(to be sent two weeks after initial recruitment email)

FULL-TIME FACULTY TEACHING GRADUATE LEVEL COURSES WE NEED YOU!

Your opinions and experiences matter! We are searching for ten (10) full-time faculty members that teach graduate level courses to share their perspectives, opinions and lived experiences as a faculty member at a Catholic international university via an online questionnaire. The study will be conducted anonymously with no linkages to the identity of the respondents.

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- The anticipated time for the entire process should take no more than ninety (90) minutes.

Thank you for your consideration!
Radiantly,
Michelle Straub
Doctoral Candidate and Primary Investigator