The Impact of Organizational Culture, Feminist Theory and Leadership of the First Seven Presidents on the Historical Development of Mercyhurst College (1926-1972)

Mary Lee Lynch

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THE IMPACT OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE, FEMINIST THEORY
AND LEADERSHIP ON THE FIRST SEVEN PRESIDENTS ON THE
DEVELOPMENT OF MERCYHURST COLLEGE (1926 – 1972)

by

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by

Mary Lee Lynch

2007
Abstract

The religious heritage and ideals of many American Catholic colleges and universities are associated with the orders of women religious that established women’s colleges in the 19th century and served them through the 20th century. The social histories of their individual colleges are just beginning to be written. This study provides historical information on the first seven Sister of Mercy presidents of Mercyhurst College in Erie, Pennsylvania. It searches out the role each of these presidents played, not just in maintaining the culture of the institution, but also in making significant adaptations to it. The study focuses on female-centered leadership and investigates alternative forms of organization of an institution by giving attention to current literature related to transformational and transactional leadership styles. A determination of the extent to which each woman leader is a “transformational” leader is an ultimate objective of the study.

This researcher uses the case study method and historical approach, which require the analysis and interpretation of archival documents, including biographies and personal communication, and of information accessed through interviews gathered from people who knew the female presidents of the college. In looking closely at the female leadership of Mercyhurst College, this researcher seeks to offer insights into organizational culture, feminist theory, and the leadership styles of the college’s women religious presidents. Ultimately, this researcher aims at constructing a study that models feminist theory in its respect for written documents and a spirit of dialogue.
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DEDICATION

To the men in my life

Dan, Ryan, Patrick and Daniel

May this work serve as a gift of appreciation for their smiles,

their laughter,

their strength,

their patience,

And most of all,

their love.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION
Recollection

I have often wondered about the origin of Mercyhurst College. The English Gothic design and the stateliness of the buildings resemble the medieval castles pictured in travel brochures. The four-story bell tower stands against the Lake Erie winds as a sentry guarding the expansive grounds, while the massive wrought-iron gates stand open to welcome students and visitors. Cobblestones outline the manicured lawns and the cast-iron Canterbury clock chimes in the college park. Even the name, “Mercyhurst,” conjures up curiosity. Archival facts note that “Mercy” stands for the founders of the college, the Sisters of Mercy, and “hurst” is old English for wooded hilltop (http://www.mercyhurst.edu). This picturesque campus, unique in the regional landscape, has stimulated the historical interest of many researchers, myself included.

As an undergraduate student of Mercyhurst, I had marveled at the beauty of the architectural designs, delighted in the numerous national Irish paintings hanging in the spacious hallways, and grown curious while inspecting portraits of its founders. It was such observations as these that led me to explore the history and specifically the role of Catholic nuns in founding and developing Mercyhurst College.

Background

The religious heritage and ideals of numerous American Catholic colleges
and universities are associated with the orders of women religious that established and served these institutions (Morey, 2002). According to Hellwig (2002), communities of women religious were obvious groups to undertake education because their community life offered a stable foundation for collaborative work. Even in the early Christian centuries monastic life provides evidence that community life created scholarly traditions. Research reminds us of traditions that involved a definite ethical and communal order that members of religious congregations practice. Gall, Gall and Borg (2003) write, “Many religious and ethnic groups seek to keep their collective past alive through ritual and documentation in an attempt to preserve that sense of moral and social order” (p. 516). The founding of higher education institutions, “...was predicated on particular values and a view of society, the study of which can inform the way in which we view and judge these institutions as they exist today” (Gall et al., 2003, p. 517). In the twentieth century, the study of feminism has led female members of religious orders to prefer the term “woman religious” to the informal title “sister” or the monastic term, “nun.”

Hellwig (2002) notes that religious congregations shaped educational ideals and sustained Catholic traditions. The Sisters of Mercy, the order founded 175 years ago in Dublin, Ireland, had a specific concern for the traditional works of mercy, especially for instructing the uneducated. These educationally minded communities developed a feminist climate because women traditionally occupied the role of the scholar (Schier & Russett, 2002). For these women religious, education was a work of charity, service and nurturance and not an opportunity
for personal success or prominence. The religious who developed and taught in their learning institutions did so because they were assigned and they perceived it as a vocation. Sisters did their work well and as collaboratively as possible because it was the mission of their orders. Their example benefited their students and strengthened the fabric of a Catholic society. Moreover, these women, who were administrators, organizers and archivists of their colleges, fashioned the character, spirit and tradition of the institutions. Hellwig (2002) summarizes the role women religious held in their institutions, stating that “...collaboration was more important than competition, good work was valued above quick achievement, scholarship was rooted in contemplation, teaching was grounded in charity and excellence was not confused with prestige” (p. 24).

As Schier and Russett (2002) note, the social histories of individual colleges are just beginning to be written. Social history explores a particular era and attempts to understand the prevailing values and beliefs of an organization by examining the events of the period. Such accounts are vital and contribute to the understanding of how these institutions developed. The Catholic community in the 19th century determined that its best interests would be served by sponsoring women’s colleges. It was the confluence of three factors that gave rise to the educational opportunities for women in America. These factors were need, consensus, and legacy (Mahoney, 2002).

The first factor in the decision to establish women’s colleges was need. Many women religious and middle-class Catholic women wanted and often needed to go to college. Education provided an advantage in the workplace and in
society. Women had to be prepared to take their place in the world. They also
found that knowing how to manage the finer things in life would give them a
social advantage. The early American women’s colleges “began as either nursing
schools or as teacher-training colleges, catering to the two professional fields into
which young women from poorer families could more easily enter and which
were much needed by immigrant and poorer populations” (Mahoney, 2002,
p. 20). Intellectual standards for women increased and subsequently educated
women affected the social order of the new middle-class in America.

The second factor was consensus. During the late 19\textsuperscript{th} century, the
Catholic educational community, whether consisting of liberals or conservatives,
viewed women’s education as advantageous. Liberals sponsored women’s
colleges because higher education was consistent with their progressive views of
women’s intellectual capabilities, women’s role in the new social order, and the
church’s relationship with the modern world. Conservatives found Catholic
women’s colleges attractive because they isolated Catholic women from the
spiritual changes of non-Catholic colleges, shielding and inspiring the Catholic
women.

The third factor attributing to the creation of women’s colleges was
legacy. The Catholic educational community was prepared to move into higher
education for women because there existed a long legacy of women religious as
scholars and educators dating back to the Middle Ages. Within some convents,
education endeavors were casual, comfortable, and often conducted out of
financial necessity. Yet, other convents operated well-established schools where
girls learned Catholic devotions and prayers, as well as skills expected of gentlewomen. These skills were good manners and fine needlework. Additionally, girls learned to read, write and had studies in French, Latin, medicinal arts, music and Scripture (Mahoney, 2002). Catholic women religious had opened hundreds of female academies, providing the foundation for their venture into higher education. Girls and women continued to patronize these academies and convent schools, whereas, boys and men were attracted to cathedral schools and universities (Mahoney, 2002).

Purpose

In this study, the researcher examines female leadership theories and organizational culture of the 20th century and applies them to the leadership styles of the past female presidents of Mercyhurst College. In 1926, the Sisters of Mercy, under the leadership of Mother M. Borgia Egan, founded Mercyhurst College in Erie, Pennsylvania. The seven presidents of Mercyhurst that will be explored in this research are (1) Mother M. Borgia Egan (1926-27), (2) Sister M. de Sales Preston (1927-33, 1939-45, 1948-54), (3) Sister M. Agnes Marie Sweeney (1945-48), (4) Sister M. Xavier O’Neil (1933-39), (5) Sister M. Eustace Taylor (1954-60), (6) Sister M. Loretta McHale (1960-63) and (7) Sister Carolyn Herrmann (1963-72). Biographical and personal documents will be used to understand the lives of these women religious and to provide information to identify the values, expectations and the conflicts of their times and culture. As first person narratives, the personal documents serve as a means to describe their individual actions, experiences and beliefs (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). Such
documents may reveal the inner meaning of everyday events or may yield descriptions of “rare and extraordinary events in human life” (Sellitz, Jahoda, Deutsch & Cook, 1959, p. 327). Biographies of these women religious who served as the first seven presidents of the college, including background in their spirituality, education and administration, documents how they met the challenges of educational change and “functioned as engines of social mobility for a Catholic population moving beyond its immigrant roots but still devoted to its faith tradition” (Schier & Russett, 2002, p. 5).

This qualitative case study provides a holistic description and holistic analysis (Merriam, 1988) of a small Catholic college and its first female presidents. Data collection involving multiple sources of information will develop into the case study. As a research tool, this case study method will recognize the value of the complexity of organizational phenomenon (Yin, 1989).

Theoretical Framework

It is expected that this case study will provide historical information on Catholic nuns who “were America’s first feminists battling for the rights and opinions of women” (Fialka, 2003, p. 1). Fialka (2003) argues that “nuns became the nation’s first cadre of independent, professional women” (p. 232). They provided an immense contribution in the structure of American society. This research, therefore, examines female leadership and feminist theories that impact the culture of an organization, specifically Mercyhurst College.

The role of the female college president as an educational leader is a major component within this research. As college president, each woman religious
became a vital component within the Catholic educational system. This small Catholic college in northwest Pennsylvania has become a major player in the educational environment of the region. According to the 2005 college website, (http://www.mercyhurst.edu), Mercyhurst College is ranked among the top comprehensive colleges in the North by *U. S. News & World Report Best American Colleges Guide*, and named as a top 10 “Best Value” by the same guide. Mercyhurst is named by *The Princeton Review* as one of “The Best Northeastern Colleges” in one of the five *Princeton Review* regional guidebooks. The Mid-Atlantic volume includes it among the “98 great schools to consider.” Mercyhurst is also named among 16 colleges of distinction by College of Distinction.com. Mercyhurst College is the second largest of the 16 four-year Mercy colleges in the country.

Referring to archival information obtained from the Sister Mary Lawrence Franklin Archives at Mercyhurst College, it can be noted that the past female presidents were members of the Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy. It is evident that each had a personal style and yet shared a single motivation: to make Mercyhurst College a reality and to guide its growth into the twenty-first century. It may be assumed, that each woman will, in varying degrees, have the skills to articulate an educational vision, to establish creative decision-making and to foster personal, professional, organizational and systemic growth and improvement for this institution of higher learning. Each in some way would have had to identify the social challenges and seek to resolve community difficulties. Updike (1980) wrote, “a leader is one who, out of madness or
goodness, volunteers to take upon himself, the woe of a people in order to advance education to a higher level,” (p. 174) just as these women needed to do.

The Mission Statement of the college, last revised in 1991, reflects the values of the Sisters of Mercy:

Mercyhurst is a Catholic institution steeped in the liberal arts tradition. As a community of learning founded by the Sisters of Mercy, it is dedicated to the lifelong development of the whole person. It integrates a strong foundation in the arts and sciences with focused programs in career preparation to challenge the students to think critically, to comprehend the richness of a global community and to work for positive change. Mercyhurst holds the qualities of excellence, compassion, creativity and service to others in the highest esteem and promotes the values of truth, individual integrity, human dignity, mercy and justice (http://www.Mercyhurst.edu).

This statement embodies the visionary testament that the Sisters of Mercy held for the college. It captures the commitment to a project of the Sisters of Mercy and to their constituents. Decades later, the founding spirit of the order remains operable and creates a vision for the future. Through the leadership of the various presidents of the college a continual evolution has occurred, one that remains compatible with the old culture.

Research Questions

Three research questions are addressed in this case study.

RQ 1: What leadership theories are reflected in the presidencies of the seven
women religious of Mercyhurst College?

RQ 2: How did the leadership of each of the female presidents affect the organizational culture of Mercyhurst?

RQ 3: How did the past female presidents vary from or conform to the leadership theories as viewed through a feminist lens?

Operational Definitions

There are several operational terms used in this study:

**Case study** is an in-depth, multifaceted investigation using qualitative research methods in the examination of a single social phenomenon. It is a systematic inquiry into an event or a set of related events that intend to describe and explain an identified phenomenon.

**Feminist theory** has diverse definitions associated with fields of study. The focus for this study is on collaborative group learning which occurs as the result of women connecting with each other around shared experiences. These shared experiences do not arise from competition but rather identify a mutual respect, endorse a common experience and promote a personal friendship.

**Historiography** is the study of the way history has been and is written, the history of historical writing. In a more specific sense, it can refer to writing about rather than of history. Historiography is described as a comprehensive study with a focus on past events that can be defined in a specific time and place, as social in character and significance.

**Leadership style** is a term that refers to the process of leading people. Two specific styles are identified as transactional and transformational. The
transactional leader approaches the constituents with a task and gains compliance in exchange for expected rewards, whereas the transformational leader has the capacity to motivate and inspire followers to look beyond self-interest and focus on organizational goals.

Mother Superior or General Superior is a title that identifies the highest authority in many religious orders before the close of Vatican II (1965) in the Catholic Church.

Organizational culture is the pattern of values and beliefs held in common that lead to certain standards of behavior (Oswald, Kolb & Rubin, 2001). Culture is a holistic term that includes the “shared ideas, customs, assumptions, expectations, philosophy, traditions, mores, and values—[all] that determine how a group of people will behave” (O’Toole, 1995, p. 72).

Qualitative method is an approach to gathering data from observations, interviews, or verbal interactions and focusing on the meanings and interpretations of the participants. The information sought is about how something is experienced and not specifically about facts and figures. The emphasis is on the quality and depth of information.

Sisters of Mercy Congregation is an order of women religious recognized within the Catholic Church for its vowed life and apostolic works. Catherine McAuley founded the Sisters of Mercy in 1831.

Woman religious is a term that identifies a member of a female religious order. In the twentieth century, the influence of feminism has led female members of
religious orders to prefer the term “woman religious” to the informal title of “sister” or the monastic term, “nun.”

Limitations of the Study

This researcher encountered several limitations in this study. Obviously, the deaths of the past female presidents, as well as of significant members of the Mercy congregation and college staff, limited first-hand knowledge for this study. Personal recollections and interviews recorded for prosperity’s sake prior to these deaths were used; however, these second-hand accounts may magnify or elaborate small details in order to make personal narratives more appealing (Airasian & Gay, 2000). Poetic license may also have caused inaccuracies in information and even in records of events. Bias is a possibility because “stories that tell history are always biased; none can ever document the truth” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 375). Memory lapses too likely occurred as interviewees were asked to recall events that happened from many years before.

Libraries and archives contain various types of reference materials that require different methods of storage and classification. Libraries contain published materials that are often used as secondary materials and can be circulated (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2003), whereas archival materials remain on-site and contain unpublished materials, considered to be primary source materials, such as the official records of an organization or of persons. These materials are preserved because of the value of the information they contain (Gall et al., 2003). To collect data in most archives, researchers may only use pencil and paper to collect data; other archives sanction the use of a laptop computer. Newer
technological advances have enabled researchers to use handheld scanners in conjunction with their laptop computers (Lash, 1997). Many archives provide materials and memorabilia which researchers may use in exhibitions as in the history of an organization or an individual, yet the availability of the memorabilia is a limitation as was the case in this study.
CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This literature review serves as a launching point for an exploration of the history of Mercyhurst College and the leadership styles among past female presidents at the college. Specifically, the review focuses on three distinct but related theoretical areas. First, the review examines the existing relevant research on organizational culture. This serves to discuss the concept of organizational culture and its role in an organization. Second, this review examines the literature on leadership styles. In particular, attention is focused on the literature related to transformational and transactional leadership. Finally, the study investigates female-centered leadership. This area is essential for analysis because it provides background on female leaders and alternative forms of organizing. The review of literature concludes with a summary linking these three theoretical areas.

Organizational Culture

Theorists and researchers have studied the phenomenon of organizational culture for the past 25 years. Organizational culture has been the subject of much academic debate which is a good indicator of its significance. However, these debates pose difficulties for the theorist and the practitioner because the organizational culture definitions are unclear and inconsistent. Researchers cannot agree on specific approaches to defining and studying this concept (Barley, Meyer & Gash, 1987; Martin, 1991; Ott, 1989; Smircich & Calas, 1987).

Oswald, et al., (2001) referred to organizational culture as the pattern of values and beliefs held in common that lead to certain standards of behavior in an
organization. It characterizes the unwritten, feeling part of the organization (Daft, 2002), and focuses on the organization’s personality (McNamara, 1996). Various aspects of culture include examinations of organizational rites and rituals (Trice & Beyer, 1984), heroes and villains (Smith, 1990), manner of dress, and symbols and artifacts (Daft, 2002). Artifacts are the visible effects of the group and include the architecture of the physical environment, clothing, manner of address, and published lists of values and ceremonies. Organizational culture includes the visible behavior and the practices that become routine within the organization.

Morgan (1997) described culture as a living phenomenon through which people create and recreate the worlds they live in. This patterning or integration is at the heart of what we call culture. Certain values, rituals and beliefs represent a shared thinking and a shared venture that creates a collective effort by individuals as Morgan (1997) explains:

We choose and operate in environmental domains according to how we construct conceptions of who we are and what we are trying to do. And we act in relation to those domains through the definitions we impose on them. The beliefs and ideas that organizations hold about who they are, what they are trying to do, and what their environment is like have a much greater tendency to realize themselves than is usually believed. (p.149)

Schein (1992) defined the culture of a group as:

A pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration that has
worked well enough to be considered valid and therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems. (pp. 373-374)

Culture Formation

Schein (1992) suggested that culture formation originates from three sources: (a) the founders assumptions, beliefs and values; (b) the group members’ learning experiences as the organization develops; and (c) new members and leaders assumptions, beliefs and values that are graduated into the organization. Though each of these sources performs a vital function, the impact of founders is the most important for cultural beginnings. Founders reflect the original values and convey a sense of what ought to be. The founder imposes assumptions, selects a mission, provides an environmental setting, and accepts the group members.

As such, founders play a vital role in defining and resolving internal integration and external adaptation issues. The founders “bias the original responses that the group makes in its efforts to succeed in its environment and to integrate itself” (Schein, 1992, p. 212) as Schein remarks regarding founders:

Because they had the original idea, they will typically have their own notion, based on their own cultural history and personality, of how to fulfill the idea. Founders not only have a high level of self-confidence and determination, but they typically have strong assumptions about the nature of the world, the role that organizations play in that world, the nature of human nature and relationships, how truth is arrived at,
and how to manage time and space (Schein, 1992, pp. 212-213).

Organizational Culture Functions

A function of a culture is to ensure that members fit within the organization. Culture promotes people to work together toward desired outcomes and requires members, especially leaders, to acknowledge the impact of their behavior on the organization (Schein, 1992). Anyone new to an organization will need to learn its social expectations. The relationship between culture, environment and its members warrants careful study (Kotter & Heskett, 1992) since the aim of organizational design is to couple people with tasks that inspire them and best utilize their talents. Culture also aims to develop tasks and strategies that can enable people to meet “environmental demands and opportunities” (Collins & Poras, 1994).

Research has found that organizations with a strong culture perform better and members demonstrate a high performance level. In fact, “consistency” is crucial to the management of a given culture (Trice & Beyer, 1984). As the success of an organization is dependent on the success of the members, the constituents need to be comfortable and experience satisfaction in order for peak performance to occur.

Schein (1992) shared that as a collective body evolves over time, the members deal with two fundamental challenges: first, individuals uniting into an effective whole and, second, members adapting successfully to the external environment to assure the groups’ survival. Over time, as groups find solutions to
problems, members engage in a kind of collective learning that forms the set of shared assumptions and beliefs identified as “culture.”

A practical approach to culture is to observe the collective shared learning of a group, including behavioral, emotional, and cognitive elements. For shared learning to take place, there must be a history of shared experience, which involves some stability of membership in the group. Given such stability and a shared history, the human need for parsimony, consistency, and meaning will bring about the various shared elements to form into patterns that in time can be called a culture (Schein, 1992). Any group with a stable membership and a history of shared learning will have developed some degree of culture.

Once a culture exists, it determines the criteria for leadership and decides who will or will not lead. Leaders within an organized culture use clear messages to convey the values they expect. Charisma is the simplest explanation of how leaders express these messages. Charisma is a leader’s ability to communicate major assumptions and values in a vivid and clear manner (Schein, 1992). History records that charismatic leaders are few in number. Kunda (1992) noted that leaders communicate their beliefs, values, and assumptions as conscious, deliberate actions; others are unconscious and may even be unintended. Leaders who communicate with optimism and enthusiasm create a new vision (Kotter & Heskett, 2001). However, continuity and the ability to honor the past remain significant, for they preserve key aspects of a culture (Wilkins, 1989).
Culture and Leadership

Culture is deeply rooted in an organization’s history and the collective experiences of its members. Although changing a culture requires time and resources (Schein, 2002), altering an organizational culture involves a participative leadership style, for it is the leaders who “create and transmit organizational culture” (Schein, 2002). Successful cultural changes involve effective leaders that seize the opportunity to organize support for cultural change. The key factor is that leadership initiates the change process.

Daft (2002) explained that an examination of organizational culture is seen through four lenses: 1) adaptability; 2) achievement; 3) clan; and 4) bureaucratic. First, an ‘adaptability’ culture is one that is characterized by values that sustain the organization’s ability to interpret and translate signals from the environment as well as provide new responses and reactions. Therefore, leaders within the adaptability culture, are described as creating change by encouraging experimentation, rewarding creativity, and experiencing risk-taking. Followers encounter an autonomy that emphasizes the value of awareness, empowerment, flexibility, and responsiveness (Duffy, 1999).

Second, an ‘achievement’ culture is characterized by a clear vision of the organization’s goals as well as the leader’s focus on specific targets (Daft, 2002). Aggressiveness, competitiveness, and personal initiative are observable characteristics of this type of culture. Achievement cultures show a willingness to work long and hard to achieve goals.
Third, the ‘clan’ culture is distinguished as having an internal focus on member involvement to meet changing expectations from an external environment (Daft, 2002). A clan culture values a family concept where the environment is friendly and supportive. Members are encouraged to lead a balanced life and refrain from excessively long work hours. Leaders emphasize cooperation and consideration, rather than competition.

Finally, a ‘bureaucratic’ culture supports a systematic, coherent, and organized approach to doing business. The organization succeeds by being integrated, thrifty, and efficient. A bureaucratic culture closely controls its employees by limiting coffee breaks and regulating how people dress. Another significant aspect of this culture, however, is the fact that reliability is highly valued and extra work is not mandatory. Thus, a “bureaucratic culture is described as an internal force with consistency designed for a stable environment” (Daft, 2002, p. 527).

Each of the four cultures can be successful, as Daft (2002) makes clear. Leaders might prefer and work from the values of these four cultures, but they also draw on the values of other cultures if an organizational need arises. Leader adaptability is an essential quality that inspires new cultural values to move beyond past practices (Daft, 2002).

Traditional Leadership Theories

Decades of academic research, as well as numerous empirical investigations, have provided a variety of definitions and theories of leadership. Although no clear and unequivocal meaning exists, the definitions are similar
enough to assume that leadership is an attempt to influence and has the power to induce compliance (Wren, 1995).

The study of leadership has roots since the dawn of civilization, that is, Egyptian rulers, Greek heroes, and Biblical patriarchs all identify leadership as a common trait. Since the focus of leaders varies over time, it has influenced and shaped the development and progression of leadership theories.

Leadership Defined

Northouse (2004) writes that “leadership has been conceptualized, and the following components can be identified as central to the phenomenon of leadership: (a) leadership is a process, (b) leadership involves influence, (c) leadership occurs within a group context, and (d) leadership involves goal attainment” (p. 3). Referring to these components, Northouse provides the definition of leadership as a “process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal” (p. 3).

Identifying leadership as a process implies that it is not a trait or quality that exists in the leader, but rather a transactional event that happens between the leader and the followers. Both leaders and followers are involved. Leaders need followers as well as followers need leaders (Burns, 1978; Heller & Van Til, 1983; Hollander, 1992; Jago, 1982). Process implies that the leader affects and is affected by followers. It emphasizes that leadership is an interactive event, however, “it is the leader that initiates the relationship, creates the communication linkages, and carries the burden for maintaining the relationship” (Northouse, 2004, p. 3).
Leadership involves influence. It relates to how the leader affects followers. Northouse (2004) writes, “influence is the sine qua non of leadership, without influence, leadership does not exist” (p. 3). Research found that leaders must absorb and contain anxiety that arises when things do not work as they should (Hirschhorn, 1988; Schein, 1983). Leaders must provide stability and emotional reassurance. Thus, leaders may “assume a perpetual supportive role” (Schein, 1992).

Northouse (2004) reveals that leadership occurs in groups. A group can be defined as a small task party or a large organization with a common purpose. Groups are the context in which leadership occurs. Leadership is accessible and is not confined to only the formally designated leader in the group (Northouse, 2004) but rather available to all. As groups develop, the leader must not only possess a vision but must be able to impose it and develop it further as external conditions change (Schein, 1992).

Leadership includes attention to goals. It requires directing a group toward achieving a task. Leaders direct their energies toward followers who are attempting to mutually accomplish something.

Trait Theory

Early leadership research in the 1920’s and 1930’s focused on identifying certain physical, social, and personal characteristics to define a leader. These characteristics or traits differentiated leaders from followers. This approach, known as the trait approach or the ‘Great Man Theory’ focused on “what” an effective leader is rather than on “how” to effectively lead. The trait approach

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described a leader in terms of height, weight, education, and social standing. These traits tended to mix various qualities, behaviors, skills, temperament, and intellectual ability into one inexhaustible inventory. In its most extreme form, the ‘Great Man Theory’ endorsed the notion that leaders were born, not developed. Daft (2002) theorized that “the diversity of traits that effective leaders possess indicates that leadership ability is not necessarily a genetic endowment” (p.43).

As the field of psychology progressed in the 1940’s, researchers examined personality traits and found only a weak link between personal characteristics and leader success (Yukl, 1989). “Effective leaders were often identified by exceptional follower performance, or by a high status position within an organization and a salary that exceeded that of one’s peers” (Yukl, 1989, p. 254). In addition, surveys conducted by Stodgill (1948) and Mann (1959) recounted that many studies identified personality characteristics that appear to distinguish leaders from followers. However, Wright (1979) commented “… others found no differences between leaders and followers with respect to these characteristics, or even found people who possessed them were less likely to become leaders” (p. 34).

Stogdill’s research, which expanded over a 30 year period, found that the significance of a particular trait was relative to the situation. “Initiative, for example, may contribute to the success of a leader in one situation, but it may be irrelevant to a leader in another situation. Thus, possessing certain personal characteristics is no guarantee of success” (Daft, 2002, p. 44). The importance
and value of a leader’s traits vary, depending upon the situation within an organization.

More recently, leadership scholars have become interested in emotional intelligence which includes such traits as self-awareness, the ability to manage one’s emotions, the capacity to be hopeful and optimistic despite obstacles, the ability to empathize with others and strong social and interpersonal skills (Daft, 2002).

Goleman (1994) identifies and develops these emotional intelligence characteristics. Self-awareness is knowing your emotions and recognizing feelings as they occur, and discriminating between them. Mood management is handling feelings so they are relevant to the current situation and you react appropriately. Self-motivation is “gathering up” your feeling and directing yourself towards a goal, despite self-doubt, inertia, and impulsiveness. Managing relationships is handling interpersonal interaction, conflict resolution and negotiations (http://www.funderstanding.com/eq.cfm). Researchers have concluded that leaders who manage their own feelings well and deal effectively with others are more likely to be successful leaders. Emotional health is fundamental to effective learning and leadership.

The trait approach has been criticized for its failure to both define and limit a list of leadership traits. This approach has resulted in subjective lists which are not necessarily grounded in reliable research. Equally important, this approach failed to consider the impact of certain situations and failed to take into account group and team performance. The trait approach was not applicable or
effective for the training and development of leadership education programs because individual personal characteristics are not amenable to change (Northouse, 2004).

The trait approach has also been criticized along gender lines. Rosener (1997) found significant patterns that emerged as men and women were interviewed on the trait characteristics. The identified attributes associated with trait approach were often viewed as gendered. Male qualities were viewed as superior and female values and experiences were viewed as inferior. Thus, the trait theory produced an apparent “maleness” or gendered perspective.

Skills Approach

According to Katz (1955), leadership is a set of developable skills. Thus, the skills approach’ emphasizes skills and abilities that can be acquired, learned, and developed. While the trait approach focuses on who leaders are, the “skills approach” focuses on what leaders can accomplish. Northouse (2004) noted that the foundation for the skills approach “is the leader’s ability to use one’s knowledge and competencies to accomplish a set of goals or objectives” (p. 36).

Katz (1955) identified three administrative skills: technical, human, and conceptual. In a general sense, technical skill deals with things, human skill deals with people, and conceptual skill involves the ability to work with ideas. Conceptual skill shapes the meaning of an organization or policy issues and is the most important in high management levels. Human skill creates an atmosphere of trust, comfort, compatibility, and sensitivity, while technical skill “requires
competencies in a specialized area, analytical ability, and the ability to use appropriate tools and techniques” (Katz, 1955, p. 36).

The skills approach is naturally attractive since it depicts skills as competencies that everyone can learn and develop. This approach implies that leadership is a learning process and that leaders may practice the skills they need to improve job performance. This approach can help identify strengths and weaknesses in the leader’s basic competencies. Individuals can gather insight into their leadership competencies by completing a “skills inventory,” a questionnaire that constructs a skills profile.

In addition, the skills approach incorporates a multitude of components, “including problem-solving skills, social judgment skills, knowledge, individual attributes, career experiences, and environmental influences. Because it includes so many variables, the skills approach can capture many of the intricacies and complexities of leadership not found in other models” (Northouse, 2004, p. 51). Finally, the skills approach helps to frame the curricula of leadership education and development programs. The curriculum content directly reflects problem solving, conflict resolution, and teamwork.

On the negative side, the skills approach has specific weaknesses. The scope of the skills approach extends beyond the boundaries of leadership and addresses components other than simply leadership. For example, Northouse (2004) writes, “An example of the model’s breadth is including two types of intelligence (i.e., general cognitive ability and crystallized cognitive ability).
Although both areas are studied widely in the field of cognitive psychology, they are seldom addressed in leadership research” (p. 51).

Another weakness is that the skills approach does not explain how skills lead to effective leadership performance. Theorists perceive this approach as weak in predictive value. This approach might suggest that a component such as problem-solving affects performance but does not generally describe how this occurs. In addition, the skills approach claims not to be a trait model yet individual attributes, such as motivation and personality characteristics, are trait variables. This shifts the approach away from being completely a “skills” model for leadership (Northouse, 2004).

The final criticism of the skills approach is that it may not be appropriate for all organizations. This approach originated as a study of military personnel and their performance in the armed services. The specificity of this origin creates an uncertainty that the findings can be generalized to other groups or organizations.

**Style Approach**

In the 1950’s and 1960’s, organizational leadership was approached through patterns of behavior. This way of thinking evolved into what is now known as the style approach which focuses on what leaders do and how they act. According to Northouse (2004) the style approach can be distinguished from the trait approach, which emphasizes personality characteristics, and the skill approach, which emphasizes the leader’s capabilities in that it focuses exclusively on what leaders do and how they act by describing the major components of
leader behavior. The style approach broadens leadership study to include the actions of leaders toward subordinates and how the leader behaves in various situations. “It reminds leaders that their impact on others occurs through the tasks they perform as well as in the relationships they create” (Northouse, 2004, p. 74).

Leadership style theorists observed that leadership is composed of two general kinds of behavior: task behaviors and relationship behaviors. Task behaviors promote goal accomplishment and aid followers in achieving their objectives. On the other hand, relationship behaviors foster a comfort level for the follower (Northouse, 2004). The style approach reminds leaders that their actions toward others occur on these two levels. The key to being a successful leader depends on how the leader balances these two behaviors.

Northouse (2004) described the style approach as a good model for training and development. For example, the style approach serves as a conceptual framework for programs that deal exclusively with leadership styles, such as Blake and Mouton’s Leadership Grid seminar. Grid seminars, such as these, promote activities like increasing productivity, improving morale, and gaining employee commitment. As Northouse (2004) wrote, “At grid seminars, through self-assessments, small-group experiences, and candid critiques, managers learn how to define effective leadership, how to manage for optimal results, and how to identify and change ineffective leadership behaviors” (p. 76).

On the negative side, Yukl (1994) reported wide inconsistencies within studies. However, the research outcomes are insightful and are substantiated by multiple research studies (Blake & McCanse, 1991). The styles that leaders adopt
are more affected by those they are working with and the environment they are operating within than researchers had originally thought (Wright, 1979).

**Situational Approach**

Hersey and Blanchard (1982) developed the situational theory, which focused on the work situation and its effects on leaders and followers. This approach indicates that the reactions of human beings influence their work activities as much as the formal design and structure of the organization (Daft, 2002). Also, this approach concentrates on follower characteristics as the important element of the situation and consequently of determining effective leader behavior (Daft, 2002). The premise of the theory is that followers differ in readiness levels. For example, Hersey and Blanchard (1982) note that individuals low in task readiness, because of limited ability, inadequate training, or insecurity, require a more diverse leadership style than those who are more prepared and have good ability, improved skill, assured confidence, and a to work. willingness

Leadership style is based on a combination of task behavior and relationship behavior. Daft (2002) describes Hersey and Blanchard’s situational leadership and the four leader behaviors as “telling, selling, participating and delegating” (Daft, 2002, p.86). First, ‘telling’ is an exact, specific, directive style and involves giving explicit directions on how tasks should be accomplished as well as closely supervising follower performance. The ‘telling’ style is directed toward low-readiness followers because these people are unable or unwilling to take responsibility for their task behavior. Second, ‘selling’ involves giving direction, but also includes seeking input and contributions from others before
making decisions. A ‘board of directors’ concept or ‘member checking’ provides input, suggestions, and an opportunity for clarification prior to making decisions and establishing direction. Third, the leadership style of ‘participating,’ focuses on supporting the growth and improvement of others by channeling skill development and acting as a resource for advice and information. Both the ‘selling’ and the ‘participating’ styles work for participants with moderate readiness. Finally, ‘delegating’ is a leadership style that allows little direction and little support for followers, who assume responsibility for their performance and for the success of their organization. Usually these followers have experience and a vested interest within the organization. The ‘delegating’ style is appropriate for participants with high readiness as Daft (2002) explains:

If one follower is at a low level of readiness, the leader must be very specific, telling them exactly what to do, how to do it, and when. For a follower high in readiness, the leader provides a general goal and sufficient authority to do the task as the follower sees fit. Leaders can carefully diagnose the readiness level of followers and then tell, sell, participate, or delegate. (p. 88)

Contingency Theory

Daft (2002) wrote that “over the years, researchers have observed that leaders behave situationally—that is, they adjust their leadership style depending on a variety of factors in the situations they face” (p.78). Since researchers failed to find “universal leader traits” a new focus identified the situation in which leadership occurred. Fiedler & Garcia (1987) matched the style of the leader with
a situation. “The basic tenet of this focus was that behavior effective in some circumstances may be ineffective under different conditions. Thus, the effectiveness of leader behavior is contingent upon organizational situations” (Daft, 2002, p. 79). Contingency refers to one thing being dependent on other things, or simply put, “it depends.” Daft (2002) argued further that “for a leader to be effective there must be an appropriate fit between the leader’s behavior and style and the conditions in the situation. A leadership style that works in one situation may not work in another situation” (p. 80). Thus, no single best style of leadership exists.

Fiedler & Garcia (1987) began to observe the process by which leaders emerge in different circumstances. The contingency approach was dependent on two interacting factors: leadership style and the degree to which the situation gives the leader control and influence. Additionally, this approach emphasized the value of focusing on the relationship between the leader’s style and the demands of various situations (Northouse, 2004). The contingency model presents the leadership situation in terms of three elements or situation variables: the quality of leader-member relations, task structure, and position power (Daft, 2002).

First, the leader-member relations are good when followers trust, admire, and show confidence in the leader. Leaders are more likely to have the support of others if they are liked and respected. Second, task structure is favorable when tasks are defined and become routine. Leaders can exert influence when the structure of the task is spelled out as to goals, methods, and standards of performance (Fiedler & Garcia, 1987). Third, position power is high when the
leader has the power to plan and direct the followers, evaluate the work, and reward or punish them. A leader with good interpersonal skills can influence a positive group atmosphere that will improve relationships, clarify task structure, and establish position power (Daft, 2002). For example, if an organization or group grants power to the leader for the purpose of completing a job, then this will increase the influence of the leader (Fiedler & Garcia, 1987).

Northouse (2004) wrote that the ‘contingency theory’ is predictive and can determine the probability of success for a given individual in a given situation. Moreover, the ‘contingency theory’ does not require that leaders be effective in all situations. This approach supports that leaders should be placed in optimal situations, that is, in situations which are ideal for their leadership style (Northouse, 2004). The leader and the situation should complement each other. Nevertheless, this theory does not require that the leader fit every situation.

Although this approach does not provide leader adaptations, it does advocate changing situations to fit the leader, which sometimes creates significant flexibility problems for an organization. Also, this contingency perspective indicates male gender characteristics. The leader-member relationship demonstrates an autonomous behavior of the leaders toward the followers. An authority relationship exists between the leaders and subordinates. The organizational principles and structure are reflected as hierarchical, analytical, and autonomous (Breslin, 1993). The task structure implies certain behaviors as task oriented and reflects a rigid and hierarchical organizational structure. To get the desired results, leaders make the decisions while followers implement them.
Finally, position power puts the leader in the position of analyzing strengths and weaknesses, providing training, arranging work schedules, and establishing performance goals.

Fiedler & Garcia’s (1987) contingency theory made a major impact as it influenced researchers to consider situational factors. Since the introduction of contingency approaches, theorists have developed numerous situational theories.

Path-Goal Theory

In the path-goal theory, leaders motivate followers to accomplish designated goals. This theory appeared in leadership literature in the 1970’s in the works of Evans (1970), House (1971), House and Dessler (1974), and House and Mitchell (1974). Northouse (2004) explained that the goal of this leadership theory was “to enhance employee performance and employee satisfaction by focusing on employee motivation” (p. 123). Path-goal theory underscores the association between the leader’s style and the characteristics of the subordinates and the work atmosphere.

The fundamental principle of path-goal theory suggests that followers will be motivated if they believe they are capable of performing their work, if they think their efforts will result in a certain outcome, and if they feel that the payoffs for doing their work are worthwhile (Northouse, 2004). Leaders improve the goal achievement of their followers by supplying information or rewards in the work environment (Indvik, 1986). In this way, leaders give subordinates what they need to obtain their goals. ‘Path-goal theory’ specifies four conceptually
distinct varieties of leadership (e.g., directive, supportive, participative and achievement oriented).

**Leader-Member Exchange Theory**

‘Leader-member exchange (LMX) theory’ characterizes leadership as a process that has an interaction between leaders and followers as its focal point. The ‘LMX theory’ was described in the research of Dansereau, Graen, and Haga (1975), Graen and Cashman (1975), and Graen (1976). These theorists found that within an organization, members existed in two general types of leader-member exchanges: “those that were based on expanded and negotiated role responsibilities, which were called the in-group, and those that were based on the formal employment contract, which were called the out-group” (Northouse, 2004, p. 148). Dansereau et al., (1975) found that leaders established in-group exchange relationships with members sharing similarities in background, values, and interests.

As Northouse (2004) writes, LMX theory works in two ways: It prescribes leadership and it describes leadership. It is a dyadic relationship that the leader forms with each of the followers. Leaders and subordinates relate to each other within prescribed organizational roles (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). A strength of the LMX theory found that the leader’s ability to nurture a positive relationship with followers improved team performance. This interaction resulted in clear outcomes for leaders and the organization. In-group members “received more information, influence, confidence and concern from the leaders than did out-group members” (Dansereau et al., 1975, p. 150 ).
However, the obvious criticism of the LMX theory, according to Northouse (2004) was the discrimination between the in-group and the out-group. McClane (1991) found that the process of working closely with a select cadre of followers had an adverse effect on the organization as a whole. Overall, LMX appeared to sponsor and maintain privileged people in the workplace, thus, contradicting the notion of fairness. Additionally, the specific relationship behavior between leader and follower lacked consideration and growth.

**Servant Leadership**

In the past 20 years, the “caring principle,” or the servant leadership theory, has been recognized as a predominant leadership approach. Robert Greenleaf’s (1977) servant leadership theory perpetuates itself through service. This approach contains strong altruistic and ethical overtones, emphasizing that leaders be cognizant to the concerns of their followers. Servant leadership is characterized by elements of sincerity, humility, and passion. A person who exercises the opportunity to apply this leadership style to their situation has the desire to serve. Leaders such as this see no reward for their efforts except the satisfaction and personal pleasure of knowing that they have performed a good job and that their example will be emulated. Furthermore, servant leadership is characterized by the notion that leadership development is an on-going, life-long learning process.

Greenleaf (1977) found that servant leaders have identifiable characteristics. These leaders are receptive and genuinely interested in others. They make an effort to understand and empathize with the circumstances of
others. They are approachable, keep informed, and seek to convince others to perform rather than relying on formal authority. Overall, they are more persuasive than forceful and value the creative process.

In addition, servant leaders possess a strong sense of stewardship and desire to help their organization contribute to the good of society and make a positive difference in the future. Brady (1999) noted that the servant leader maintained an “ethic of caring,” which is the stimulus in building trust and cooperative relationships in an organization.

Another notable quality of servant leaders is that they have a strong sense of community spirit. They recognize their social responsibility to be concerned with equal stakeholders in the life of the organization. Graham (1991) found that servant leaders try to remove social injustices and inequalities by using less institutional power and less control. “Servant leadership values everyone’s involvement in community life because it is within a community that one fully experiences respect, trust, and individual strength” (Northouse, 2004, p. 309). Additionally, Greenleaf (1977) also emphasized an “unconditional acceptance” of others.

_Transactional Leadership Theory_

In the 1970’s, leadership theory research moved beyond merely focusing on situational supervision. At this time, many leaders turned to a transactional leadership concept, (Behling & McFillen, 1996) which has since become the most prevalent method of leadership observed in today’s organizations (Avolio, 1991; Bass, 1990). Transactional leadership is significant in that it involves using
specific incentives to motivate (Bass, 1990). The foundation of this leadership theory was that leaders exchange rewards for employees’ compliance. Bass (1990) identified examples of rewards given to those who perform well, such as employee recognition, salary increases, and promotions or advancements. A key point of the transactional leadership concept is that it is based on bureaucratic authority and brings about a leader’s legitimacy within an organization (Yukl, 1999).

Specific interactions between leaders and followers are the primary focus within the transactional leadership theory (Burns, 1978). These transactions make it possible for an individual to gain influence and sustain it over time. Moreover, reciprocity is at the heart of the transactional process. Burns (1978) found that leaders not only influence followers but are also under the influence of their followers. Therefore, a leader earns influence by adjusting to the expectations of followers.

Transactional leadership focuses on the status quo and the daily operations of an organization. Avolio (1999) concluded that the transactional leadership theory is limited for the reason that it does not focus on the identification of an organization’s goals. Nor does it take the entire situation, employee, or the future of the organization into consideration when offering rewards. Finally, transactional leadership focuses on control rather than on adaptation.

*Transformational Leadership Theory*

Research conducted by Burns (1997) identified two forms of leadership: transformational and transactional. As stated above, transactional leadership
occurs when a person interacts with another person for the purpose of exchanging valued things with no mutual pursuit of a higher purpose. Conversely, transformational leadership occurs “when one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality” (Burns, 1997, p. 382).

Additionally, Geijsel (1994) described a transformational leader as one who possesses a clear vision, a charismatic personality, innovative style, motivational technique, and persuasive attitude. Furthermore, the transformational leader shared responsibilities and encouraged collaboration. Motivation and encouragement were spurred on by the use of best practices (Geijsel, 1994). Leaders emphasize active participation and intellectual stimulation of employees and encourage their involvement in decision-making (Johnson, 2001; Komives et al., 1998). Such transformational leadership has been suggested to be both more morally and ethically aware and appropriate than transactional approaches (Bass, 1990), leading to claims that transformational leaders are more “effective” in developing supportive relationships with those around them and developing learning organizations (Aspinwall, 1998).

Druskat (1996), in his study of religious orders, found that supporters or constituents of female leaders rated women religious as more transformational and less transactional than other leaders. Thus, the distinction between ‘transactional’ and ‘transformational’ leadership influences this study. Silins (1994) distinguished these approaches:

Transactional leaders have been characterized as focusing on the basic
needs and intrinsic rewards as a source of motivation and basis for management. The leader approaches the followers with some transaction in mind and obtains compliance (effort, productivity, loyalty) in exchange for expected rewards (economic, political or psychological). Transformational leaders not only recognize followers’ needs, but attempt to raise those needs to higher levels of motivation and maturity while striving to fulfill human potential. (pp. 273-274)

Transformational leadership refers to a personal quality, an ability to inspire others to look beyond self-interest and focus on organizational goals (Lashway, 1996). Transformational strategies rely on persuasion, idealism, intellectual excitement, and motivating others through values, symbols, and shared vision (Daft, 2002).

According to Keithwood (1993), transformational leaders foster the acceptance of group goals, convey high performance expectations, create intellectual excitement, and offer appropriate models through their own behavior. These leaders have the capacity to motivate and inspire followers, especially when the organization faces major change. Additionally, they provide a sense of purpose and meaning that can unite people in a common cause (Lashway, 1996). Moreover, transformational leaders “articulate a vision, use lateral or non-traditional thinking, encourage individual development, give regular feedback, use participative decision-making, and promote a cooperative and trusting work environment” (Carless, 1998, p. 888).
Female-Centered Leadership

Linking organizational culture with gendered experience is recognized as crucial to the understanding of women’s experience in organizations. Organizational analysis is complex because diverse images of masculinity and femininity can be identified in organizations. However, as the leadership characteristics are identified, commonalities between genders become apparent. The impact of the gendered nature of organizational cultures on experiences of women leaders has only begun to be investigated (Green & Cassell, 1996).

According to Conley & Goldman (1994), women can learn with their professional peers in all-female settings that build special bonds of connection and trust. This type of opportunity encourages risk-taking and collaborative group learning, much of which occurs as the result of women connecting with each other around shared experiences. These shared experiences do not arise from competition but rather from a mutual respect, common experience, and personal friendship.

Leading requires the ability to align people for a common purpose, manage group performance, and motivate individuals to perform to their fullest potential (Flannery, 2004). Conley & Goldman (1994) emphasized the importance of trust, “a letting go of control and an increasing belief that others can and will function independently and successfully within a common framework of expectation and accountability” (p. 43).
The structures of female organizations are inspired by cooperative, feminist, or women-centered philosophies (Buzzanell, 1994). “Feminist theories have emerged as viable frameworks for challenging taken-for-granted assumptions of organizational life, particularly in seeking more responsible and responsive organizations” (Gibson & Schullery, 2000, p. 194). Feminist theory sees the need to connect work and family interests in order to create more balanced lives for both men and women. Traditionally, women have been expected to subordinate personal and family concerns to the goals of the organization (Nippert-Eng, 1996), whereas Sergiovanni (1994) suggests that thinking of an organization as a ‘community’ emphasizes the importance of shared values, commitments, and interpersonal relationships. The notion of shared values promotes a dialogue among all participants linking ideals, ethics, and the culture of the organization, as well as its challenges. An organization with shared values is one with moral leadership and an atmosphere of mutual trust at all levels of the organization.

Buzzanell (1994) proposed three themes of feminist leadership in organizations: (a) cooperative enactment, (b) integrative thinking, and (c) connectedness. Cooperative enactment refers to finding more supportive solutions to organizational problems (Gibson & Schullery, 2000). In the traditional, male-oriented view, organizations are embattled internally as well as externally, resulting in problems like distrust, lower self-esteem, neglected family and friendships, and health problems (Buzzanell, 1994). Feminist theories focus on a
collaborative process and “the sharing of power and tangible resources” in organizations (Natalle, Papa & Graham, 1994, p. 262).

The emphasis of integrative thinking is to encourage society, promote value and integration, and sponsor alternatives. “To do so is to invite decision making that is only more inclusive, but might well be more effective in meeting stakeholders’ interests” (Gibson & Schullery, 2000, p.196). Overall, integrative thinking is an approach to problem-solving that keeps the ‘big picture’ in mind, while focusing on all elements individually, refusing to accept alternatives in the problem resolution, and turning obstacles into opportunities (Martin, 2002).

Connectedness refers to merging those areas of separation that can exist in an organization (Gibson & Schullery, 2000). Feminist theories seek to change the pattern of organizational life to promote diversity and connectedness (Buzzanell, 1994), which will in turn, bring about follower satisfaction and allow them to feel connected to the physical location of the organization, to the group of people involved in the organization, and to a shared past or heritage.

The benefits of feminist organizing are collaborative ventures. According to Buzzanell (1994), these ventures are profitable for the organization and performance enhancing for the individual members. They focus on balancing life and work priorities that form legitimate goals and outcomes (Buzzanell, 2000).

Farrell (1998) suggested that feminist organizations are those that seek to implement and appreciate forms of egalitarianism, consensus, and inclusivity. Feminist organizations are collective-democratic and authority resides within the collectivity rather than with the individual. “Collective-democratic organizations
seek to eliminate hierarchies, circulate knowledge among all its members, equalize rewards, and place value in personal relationships” (Farrell, 1998, p. 39).

Certain defining features make feminist research uniquely feminist. According to Brayton (1992), feminist research utilizes the concerns and beliefs as well as the perspectives of women to explore and investigate social dynamics and relationships. As women refuse to accept the patriarchal social structure, feminism becomes a clear commitment to social change. Similarly, feminism addresses the power imbalances that exist between women and men and seeks to focus on the unique meaning women give to their world.

Feminist research utilizes feminist principles throughout every stage of research, from the topic choice to the data analysis. Recognizing differences and allowing for diversity are key aspects of feminist thought. By presenting multiple and subjective research methods, the feminist researcher disputes the patriarchal belief that there is a singular, totalizing, and objective theory. Moreover, feminist research provides new knowledge gleaned from the realities of women’s experiences (Brayton, 1992).

Contemporary literature reveals those internal conflicts that women encounter as they move into traditional male roles. This literature supports the notion that men occupy the most prestigious positions. Shakeshift (1987) asserted that while there are differences among societies and cultures, labor is often divided on the basis of gender. Male tasks tend to be valued more; this male worldview, known as androcentrism, elevates masculine pursuits as an ideal. Androcentrism stresses male superiority and masculine values while scrutinizing
female behaviors, experiences, and values as inferior. Traditionally, research reflects a male worldview (Shakeshift, 1987; Sergiovanni, 1999) that rewards competition and winning.

Various authors refer to the feminist leadership style as transformational, visionary, charismatic, or inspirational leadership (e.g. Bryman, 1992; Conger & Kanungo, 1998). Transformational leadership style can also be depicted as feminist leadership style because of its emphasis on the leader’s intellectual stimulation and the consideration given to individual followers. These characteristics of transformational leadership resemble those stereotypically attributed to women.

Many authors explicitly refer to transformational leadership as a ‘feminine’ leadership style (e.g. Carless, 1998; Helgesen, 1990). In fact, the feminine style is stereotypically esteemed for its “nurturing of interpersonal relationships” (van Engen, van der Leeden & Willemsen, 2001, p. 582). These styles are related because of the stereotypes people have of women as sensitive, warm, tactful, and expressive (Helgesen, 1990).

Summary

The review of the literature has sketched out three distinct theoretical areas; organizational culture, leadership styles, and feminist theory which will provide a foundation for this study. The study will explore the dominant organizational culture of Mercyhurst College as the Sisters of Mercy created it during the first 46 years of its existence. It will also aim to determine the role each of the seven female presidents played in both maintaining and adapting the
culture of the institution. Of particular note will be significant cultural adaptations or changes within the institution, since moments of change can serve as optimum focal points for examining the style of a leader. In light of feminist leadership theory, a determination of the extent to which each woman leader can truly be viewed as transformational will be an ultimate outcome of the study.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The goal of this study was to understand the past from a feminist leadership perspective. Historical researchers seek to discover meaning in the past, sift through data, and examine each piece closely for clues. Harding (1987) refers to “methodology [as] a theory and analysis of how research does and should proceed” (p. 3). Research can be described as the tools and techniques employed to gather evidence, information and data. Their methods must exhibit more than a curiosity about the past, for the chronological ordering of events alone does not explain relations. Now the researcher must turn to methods in order to investigate and represent this particular phenomenon.

An overview of the qualitative research paradigm has led to the selection of the case study approach, which was used to examine a sequence of seven different presidents, and to a qualitative, rather than quantitative, design for the study, since it allowed the researcher to draw on a variety of interpretative strategies. Historical researchers aim to be objective and ethical in handling privileged materials and protecting their participants’ rights. These aims required attentiveness to the procedures of the analyses. Indeed because I loved my college years spent at Mercyhurst, have remained an active alumna, and continue to hold the Sisters of Mercy in deep respect, I needed to scrutinize my role as researcher and sought a high level of verification of my findings and interpretations.
Overview of the Qualitative Research Paradigm

The term “qualitative research” has different meanings in different fields. In the social sciences, qualitative research is a broad term that describes research that focuses on how individuals and groups view and understand the world and construct meaning out of their experiences. It is an investigative process that examines a social and cultural phenomenon. Typically, qualitative research refers to the collection and the analysis of data that the researcher uses to discover meaning and understanding of experience. It is thought to value subjective, personal meaning and definition, and commonalities, as well as to provide a voice to the oppressed.

Its goal is to have the meaning and experience of an event conveyed in the most realistic manner rather than having them estimated through a statistical approach. The data that emerges from qualitative study is descriptive and primarily represented in the participant’s words (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1990). Traditionally, qualitative research strategies include techniques such as participant observations, content analysis, interviews, documentary materials, texts and oral histories along with the researcher’s impressions and reactions (Berg, 1995). Marshall and Rossman (1989) suggest that this qualitative process immerses the researcher into the everyday life of the site selected for the study; the researcher enters the participants’ world and through continuous communication, seeks the participants’ perspectives. Thus, qualitative research occurs in natural settings, where behaviors and events occur. Qualitative research is not constructed in
terms of the collection and analysis of such numerical data as testing, questionnaires, surveys, rates and relationships between social factors. Nor is qualitative research constructed in terms of testing theories and making predictions in an objective way where the researcher is detached from both the participants and the research process (Brayton, 2005).

Researchers working within a naturalistic framework primarily use inductive reasoning, which involves moving from a specific case to a more comprehensive generalization about the phenomenon under study (DePoy & Gitlin, 1998). Attention is paid to particulars; and data are interpreted in regard to the particulars of a case rather than generalizations (Creswell, 1994, 1998). Merriam (1988) observed that qualitative research is an emergent design. “meanings and interpretations are negotiated with human data sources because it is the subject’s realities that the researcher attempts to reconstruct” (p. 162).

Historiography

Denzin and Lincoln (1994) underscored the qualitative nature of historiography: “This research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials: case study, personal experience, life study, interview, observational, historical, interactional and visual texts that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals’ lives” (p. 2). The interpretive practices of historiography helped the researcher gain an accurate insight into questions posed in the study. The case study methodology also had wide applications since it was used to evaluate separate and distinguished histories in education, social work, communication, psychology, history, organizational
studies, medical sciences, anthropology and sociology (Yin, 1994). According to Denzin and Lincoln (1994) qualitative methods are being employed more often for educational research.

Therefore, the method for this study employed qualitative, or interpretive, analyses of private letters, personal journals, books, magazines, professional journals and newspapers. As researchers seek to discover meaning in the past, sift through data, and examine each piece closely for clues, the historical methods must exhibit more than a curiosity about the past, for the chronological ordering events alone does not explain the relations. As researchers pass through time, they explore these materials, seeking a relationship among ideas, events, institutions and people. Flick (1992) notes that the historical researcher blends “multiple methods, empirical materials, perspectives and observes in a single study . . . that adds rigor, breadth and depth to any investigation” (p. 194). From historical documents, they derive insight from past-lived experiences that they can adapt to generate new ideas (Barzun & Graff, 1985) while dealing with various facts.

The concept of building upon each fact is identified as a constructivist paradigm, a level within qualitative research. As this researcher speculated on the relationship among feminist theories, organizational culture, and leadership styles of the past women religious presidents of Mercyhurst College, the constructivist paradigm identified the influence of values, the historical nature of the investigation, and the experience of the participants including the experience of the researcher. A constructivist approach was used with established theoretical
models and was applied to situations where the processes were likely to occur (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).

Case Study Method

Bromley (1990) described the case study method as a systematic inquiry into an event or a set of related events that intend to describe and explain an identified phenomenon. It is a comprehensive, many-sided investigation level of the qualitative research methods in the examination of a single social phenomenon (Feagin, Orum & Sjoberg, 1991). Generally, a case study examines characteristics that may be an individual, an organization, an institution or a country (Sjoberg & Vaughan, 1991).

As an institution, Mercyhurst College and its founding women religious meet the criterion for a case study. Case studies rely on primary and secondary sources of data which were obtained from archival documents. In this study, the researcher interviewed five Sisters of Mercy who knew the first presidents of the College and archivists at the Mercy Motherhouse and the college archives. Thus, archival documents and verbal data provided the data.

The case study approach applied to the origin and development of Mercyhurst College and its founding women religious for three reasons. First, a goal of this research provided knowledge of the experiences of the founding women religious of Mercyhurst College. Firsthand information provided by members of the Sisters of Mercy about the founding of this Catholic institution was supported by written and verbal data.
Second, the focus of case study research is on one phenomenon of interest, such as a particular individual, event or institution (Merriam, 1988). For this study, the focus was on Mercyhurst College and each of its first seven women religious presidents, which rendered this historical study acceptable as a case study.

Third, the case study is the preferred strategy when “how” and “why” questions are being presented (Yin, 1989). To obtain data for this research, “how” and “why” questions dominated the analysis of the written materials as well as the interviews. For example, this researcher asked how each past founding woman religious varied from and conformed to leadership styles viewed through a feminist lens. The researcher confirmed the individual responses through documentation obtained in the archives. Thus, the study of the organization of Mercyhurst matched all criteria of a case study.

Yin (1989) states there are three types of case study designs: exploratory, descriptive and explanatory. This study of the Mercyhurst organizational culture was both exploratory and descriptive. As previously stated, the goal of this study was to explore the organizational culture of Mercyhurst and the feminist theories that emerged through the investigation from the leadership styles of the past women presidents. This investigation provided a description of the experiences of those who participated in the organizational process of the college. Understanding the experiences of the women religious illustrated the usefulness of the qualitative case study method in studying feminist theories.

The Historical Approach
The case study method was used as the foundation for this study; however, the historical approach was the most appropriate course for achieving the goals of this research. Historiography, as defined by Carr (1967), is the study of the way history has been and is written, is, in effect, the history of historical writing. When the researcher studied various historical documents, it was not the events of the past that were directly focused on, but the changing interpretations of those events in the words of individual historians (Furay & Salevouris, 1988). In a more specific sense, it can refer to writing about rather than of history.

Historiography has its beginnings with E. H. Carr’s 1967 work, *What is History?* This British historian challenged the traditional belief that the study of the methods of historical research and writing were unimportant. Historiography demands a critical approach that goes beyond the mere examination of historical fact. It considers the source, often by researching the author, his or her position in society, and the type of history being written at the time. Consistent with Carr’s view, Gall et al., (2003) define historical research as a “process of systematically searching for data to answer questions about a past phenomenon for the purpose of gaining a better understanding of present institutions, practices, trends, and issues in education” (p. 514).

According to Garraghan (1946), historiography is described as a comprehensive study with a focus on past events that can be defined in a specific time and place, as social in character and significance. The historical methodology is associated with investigating and recording past events and their development and then interpreting these activities. It cannot, as must be
emphasized, simply describe and record what has happened in the past (Rury, 1993).

There are three major types of historical research: narrative, didactic and genetic. The narrative approach provides a story; the didactic style studies the past to explain an action, and the genetic method uses the concept of progression or development of history. For this study, the successions of Mercyhurst’s past female presidents were characterized as a genetic approach. Garraghan (1946) explains the genetic style as:

> Historical events and conditions grow, develop and evolve out of those preceding. It is the function of the genetic historian to search out this growth, development, evolution and to present it as the very core of history. In doing so he employs a rigorous method which more than anything else is what makes history a science (p.18).

Each type of historical method involves critically examining and analyzing sources that are extensive and assorted including written data, oral customs, photographs, organizational documents, diaries and correspondence (Gay & Airasian, 2000).

The initial steps in historical research are to develop a clear question or topic to be examined that is agreeable to an historical approach. Where an historian does not begin with hypotheses, he should have an idea or intuition about the causes or circumstances of the event he is examining (Rury, 1993). His hunch is significant and may well have an influence on the interpretive process. Rury (1993) notes that the second step in the historic exploration is to realize what
other researchers have to share about a topic. These researchers’ contribution to history through narration and recording provides authenticity.

The Researcher’s Role

Research paradigms determine the research methods used, as well as the purpose of the research and the roles of the researcher (Firestone, 1987). Glesne & Webb (1993) identifies that the researcher’s role is to observe and measure, thus “the researcher becomes the main research instrument as he or she observes, asks questions, and interacts with research participants” (p. 5). The researcher is the primary instrument in data collection rather than an inanimate mechanism (Eisner, 1979).

Moustakas (1994) notes that qualitative research promotes a confidential alliance and supports collaboration between the participants and the researcher. As women, both researcher and participant share a commonality on the basis of their gender and can communicate on the basis of this similarity. As part of the research process, the researcher must address the motivations of the study. However, the researcher must remain objective. “Qualitative research is interpretative research. As such, the biases, values, and judgment of the researcher become stated explicitly in the research report. Openness is considered to be useful and positive” (Locke, Spirduso & Silverman, 1999).

The role of the researcher included the recording of data. According to Glesne & Webb (1993), the field notebook, was the primary recording tool of the qualitative researcher. For this case study a spiral-bound notebook was used. Research participants remained anonymous. This notebook contained descriptions
of people, places, events, activities and conversations. Also, the notebook included ideas, reflections, hunches, and notes about patterns that seemed to emerge. Personal communications were documented and a professional transcriber recorded the information. This notebook was secured in a locked cabinet.

Site and Participant Selections

This study was restricted to one particular situational context; Mercyhurst College and the seven past female presidents. Participants in this study included five Sisters of Mercy who actually knew the women religious presidents of the college and two archivists from the Mercy Motherhouse and the Sister Mary Lawrence Franklin Archives on the college campus. These women, Sisters of Mercy and archivists, ranged from 51 to 85 years old. They have been employed at the archives or have lived in the community of the Sisters of Mercy for an extended time. According to Moustakas (1994) the participants need to know that their contributions are valuable to the topic and offer worth to the research inquiry. For the purpose of this study, the researcher identified the seven interviewees with a pseudonym to allow for flow in writing and to protect confidentiality.

Historical Sources

Researchers need to have an idea of what they are looking for before they begin to search for sources that provide the required data. Brooks (1969) suggests the following approach for a search for historical sources:

Resourcefulness and imagination are essential in the preliminary
exploration as well as in the later actual study. One can suppose that certain kinds of sources would exist if he thinks carefully about his subject, the persons involved, the government or institutions concerned, and the kinds of records that would naturally grow out of the events that he will be studying. He should ask himself who would have produced the useful documents in the transaction he is concerned with. What would be the expected flow of events? What kinds of records would have been created? What would be the life history of the documents, from their creation through current use, filing, temporary storage, and eventual retention in a repository where he can consult them? What kinds of materials would one expect to be kept rather than discarded? (pp. 19-20)

A primary source is a direct report of an event by an individual who actually observed or participated in it. Autobiographies, personal letters and journals, as primary sources, show the values, expectations, tensions and the conflicts of the time and culture within which a person lived (Morrow et al., 1994). People directly involved in an event speak or write primary texts; they are more exact and preferred.

Secondary sources, such as biographies and newspaper articles, are materials that cite opinion and present interpretations. Secondary sources may be used when primary sources are unavailable. Often, a secondary source may offer more accurate information because the author may have been able to gather evidence from other sources that were not available at the time of the event
(Garraghan, 1946). The secondary sources will also include the understandings of other researchers who have reported on or analyzed an issue (Rury, 1993).

Criteria for Assessing Quality of Research Design

The value of a historical study is determined by the researcher’s ability to judge the authenticity and validity of the sources while in the process of performing the study. Concern with the authenticity of the source is considered to be external criticism and its validity, internal criticism. “External criticism is the process of determining whether the apparent or claimed origin of a historical document such as the author, place, date and circumstances of publication corresponds to its actual origin” (Gall et al., 2003, p. 525). External criticism examines an historical source as genuine or forged. According to Gall et al., (2003), a “forgery is a fabrication claimed to be genuine, that is, the documentation was written by someone other than the person whose name appears as the author” (p. 526).

Internal criticism is concerned with the validity or accuracy as well as the worth of historical statements. Internal criticism is more complex than external criticism because it includes the participant’s judgment about the truth of statements in a historical source and also an evaluation of the person who wrote them (Gall et al., 2003). For example, it is important to know whether the writer or recorder is a competent observer of the events to which she refers. Many studies in psychology have demonstrated that eye-witness reports can be unreliable or inaccurate, especially if those reporting information are emotionally engaged or under scrutiny at the time of the event or recording the event. Gall et
al., (2003) observe that an individual with limited expertise might be prone to overlook or misinterpret certain details of a situation. Also, if the writer has a personal stake in the events being studied, she may be motivated to distort or exaggerate what actually occurred. Even if witnesses are truthful and competent, there may be various versions of an event. Information can be limited by participants’ knowledge, memory and the ability to convey information clearly and accurately.

Also, the existence of variant sources may present a problem in judging the genuineness of a primary source. “Variant sources are documents that have been altered in some way from the original document” (Gall et al., 2003, p. 526). For example, the writer of a memo might add a different birthplace to a news article. Thus, there is a different version. In this situation, both versions of the article can be considered original primary sources, each of which reveals relevant, yet different information (Gall et al., 2003).

Because the female college presidents in this study are deceased, the researcher depended on interviews with women religious, archival materials and document collection as the most practical methods of gathering information. This researcher was able to access oral history, popular among feminists (Gluck & Patai, 1991), from those women religious who actually knew the college presidents. Reinharz (1992) summarizes women’s approach to and understanding of the uses of primary and secondary sources in the data collection process: “This method of collecting data reconnects to the women missing in history and the women who are missing in their own histories, to capture the work of women, the
lives and experiences of women and the social and personal meanings of women” (p. 32).

**Ethical Issues**

Ethical standards for case study research are continuously studied and debated. Flinders (1992) identifies four types of ethical perspectives that arise in case study research: utilitarian, deontological, relational and ecological.

Utilitarian ethics judges the morality of a researcher’s decisions and actions by considering the consequences. Utilitarian ethics is difficult to apply in case study research because it is difficult to predict the consequences of a case study while it is in progress. In deontological ethics, researchers judge the morality of their decisions and actions by referring to absolute values, such as honesty, justice, fairness and respect. Flinders (1992) observes from a deontological perspective that deception violates basic values of treating others fairly and with respect.

In relational ethics, researchers judge the morality of their decisions and actions by the standard of whether decisions reflect a caring attitude toward others. Relational ethics require that the case study researcher be a sensitive, engaged member of a participants’ community rather than a detached observer. In ecological ethics, researchers judge the morality of their decisions and actions in terms of the participants’ culture and the larger social systems of which they are part. Thus, whereas the other three ethical perspectives consider each case study participant as an individual, ecological ethics consider the participant as a member of a larger cultural and social system. Flinders (1992) continues that the ecological perspective for the researcher is to consider the larger implications of
her local decisions and actions. This researcher used an ecological perspective as she researched the biographical information and the emerging feminist themes gleaned from the experiences of the past presidents and informants.

An additional consideration was the institutional review board which is a necessary component in research study.

An institutional review board (IRB) is a group of individuals who are authorized by an institution to determine whether research studies by colleagues affiliated with the institution comply with institutional regulations, professional standards of conduct and practice and the human-subjects provisions of the Code of Federal Regulations for the Protection of Human Subjects. (Gall et al., 2003, p.66)

Most institutions require proposed research projects, including those to be conducted in educational settings to undergo an IRB review. The IRB may expedite the review process for an educational research study because the risks to participants are typically minimal. Adequate protection for research participants must satisfy the IRB committee. However, “Even if an IRB approves a proposal, it cannot take away the rights of an individual to be informed of the study’s purpose and to freely choose to decline participation without penalty” (Gall et al., 2003, p. 69). This study was authorized by the IRB committee at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Researchers must inform each participant about what will occur during the research study, the information to be disclosed to the researcher, and the intended use of the research data that is to be collected. Adults as participants must give
their consent. Informed consent is an agreement between the researcher and human participants. Informed consent assures that participants or informants will retain their autonomy and “judge for themselves what risks are worth taking for the purpose of furthering scientific knowledge” (Howe & Dougherty, 1993, p. 19).

Access to information is vital and demands a critical and cautious approach. The researcher sought the approval of the archivists at both the Sisters of Mercy Motherhouse and the Sister Mary Lawrence Franklin Archives on the Mercyhurst College campus. To fulfill the requirements of the Duquesne University Institutional Review Board, letters were prepared by the researcher. The first letter, (Appendix C), requested permission to use the archival facilities. The second letter, (Appendix D), was “Consent to Participate in a Research Study.”

Data Collection

History and case study were qualitative methods that were selected for their capacity to achieve a thorough understanding of one institution over time. It is important for qualitative researchers to use and interrelate a wide range of interpretive practices, to grasp their subject matter (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). According to Creswell (1994), the “data collection steps involve setting the boundaries for the study, collecting information through observations, interviews, documents and visual materials and establishing the protocol for recording information” (p. 148).
The first step in this study identified the parameters for the data collection. In qualitative research, Creswell (1994) states, “no attempt is made to randomly select informants” (p. 148). Informants were purposefully identified because they best answered the research questions. Additionally, researchers, Miles and Huberman (1994) offer four parameters: the setting (where the research took place); the actors (who was interviewed); the events (what the actors were interviewed about); and the process (the evolving nature of events undertaken by the actors within the setting) (p. 149).

**Interviewing**

The interview, as a data collection method, is commonly used in qualitative research since it allows an open-ended examination of topics and encourages responses. Interviews usually involve individual respondents and the interviewer is principally in control of the response situation. Scheduling with the participant at a convenient time and place was advantageous as well as controlling the question pace and sequence to fit the circumstances of the situation (Fowler, 2000). The use of interviews had several advantages; they are “inexpensive, data rich, flexible, stimulating to the questioner, cumulative and elaborative” (Fontana & Frey, 2000, p. 365).

Patton (2001) described three basic approaches to collecting qualitative data through open-ended interviews. These approaches were the informal conversational interview, the general interview guided approach, and the standardized open-ended interview. First, the informal conversational interview relied entirely on the spontaneous and natural interaction of the participants. The
research participants may not even realize that they were being interviewed. Second, the general interview guided approach required a set of topics to be outlined and explored. These topics were organized but the wording of the questions was not predetermined. Third, the standardized, open-ended interview, which was used in this study, included a predetermined sequence and wording of the same set of questions asked of each participant. This open-ended method minimized the possibility of bias. It was also particularly appropriate when several interviewers were used to collect data.

The formulation of good and meaningful questions for structured interviews was vital. Each question was specific, in sequential order and the researcher had an introduction and closure comment prepared for each interview. Perhaps the most important criterion was the researcher’s ability to relate to participants in a positive and supportive manner.

The use of an audiotape recorder to collect data was beneficial. The tape was replayed for careful study and at convenient times. An audiotape recorded the interviews for this study. A professional transcriber completed the transcription of the interviews.

Data Analysis

This case study generated a great many pages of observational notes, interview transcripts, and documents obtained from the archival collection sites. Analyzing data in historical and qualitative research was performed concurrently with the collection of data, the management of the data, and the examination of the data (Gay & Airasian, 2000). It must be understood in the context and
conditions of its production and reading (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). The researcher, for example, determined “whether a text was written as a result of firsthand experience or from secondary sources, whether it was solicited or unsolicited, edited or unedited, anonymous or signed, and so on” (Webb, Campbell, Schwartz & Sechrest, 1996, p. 394). The collection of data in its various forms was valuable for securing an interpretation of the experiences of the past female presidents, as well as those involved with Mercyhurst College. The interviews as verbal data helped substantiate the researcher’s interpretation of documents; presenting historical and demographic information confirmed or contested any assumptions (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). Ultimately, as Stacey (1996) notes, all research is a document, a written text, “structured primarily by a researcher’s purposes, offering a researcher’s interpretations, registered in a researcher’s voice” (p. 92).

Through the data analysis, it was assumed that feminist themes began to emerge which this researcher was able to identify from her extensive readings of feminist theory. Sorting out the data and looking for similarities and differences helped to develop a theory of feminist leadership within an educational organization. This research, provided evidence that women are writing their own destiny. According to Gluck (1984), women are now creating their own history, using their own voices and relying on their own experiences.

Verification

Creswell (1998) defines verification as “a process that occurs throughout the data collection, analysis, and report writing of a study and standards as criteria
imposed by the researcher and others after a study is completed” (p.194). In addition, Creswell (1998) recommends that qualitative researchers engage in at least two verification procedures in any given study. One procedure used in this case study was triangulation. Gall et al., (2003) define “triangulation as the process of using multiple data-collection methods, data sources, analysts, or theories to check the validity of the case study findings” (p. 464). Triangulation involved substantiating emerging findings by using multiple sources, methods, and investigators.

External auditors, as a second verification procedure, appraised both the process and the result of the study’s outcome, assessed whether the findings, interpretations, and conclusions were supported by the data. For this study, three auditors, experienced qualitative research methods, exist in the formation of a Dissertation Committee.

Summary

This chapter outlined the historical, and specifically, the qualitative methodology that was used in the case study. Interpretation of the historical data and personal communication was its crucial components. In looking closely at the female leadership at Mercyhurst College, this researcher sought to offer insights into organizational culture, feminist theory and the leadership styles of the college’s women religious presidents. Moreover, this researcher tried to access the historical materials and constructed a study that modeled feminist theory in its respect for written document and a spirit of dialogue.
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS: HISTORICAL FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter presents an introduction to the founder of the Sisters of Mercy, Catherine McAuley, from whom the Sisters of Mercy have received and continue to receive their inspiration. It moves on to an overview of the history of Mercyhurst College and concludes with biographical sketches of each of the seven women religious leaders who presided over the college in its foundational years. The historical and biographical details help to fill in background on the college and its seven presidents, providing information that is not directly germane to the examination of each president’s leadership style.

Organizational History

In the later part of the eighteenth century, Ireland was a place where men hollowed out a living by tilling tiny plots. Wealth was measured in potatoes or, for the more fortunate, in pigs. According to Fialka (2003), apart from death, women seldom had anything to hope for and to be a Catholic in Ireland was estimated in pain, poverty and peril.

Catholic education was prohibited. Catholics could send their children to state sponsored schools where the curriculum was designed to compel them to become Protestants. Over time the final outcome was an even deeper deprivation as Irish Catholics shunned schools and took their religion underground as a way
of life. Fialka (2003) notes, “There were secret ‘penal walks’ that led to guarded ‘mass fields’ where Sunday services were celebrated. There were ‘hedge schools,’ a sporadic, floating system of outdoor education usually held on high ground so the teacher could see his jailers coming” (p. 22). A broad gap between the literate and the illiterate developed. The social impact of such a gap was profound and lasting. Catherine McAuley, the founder of the Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy, emerged from this bleak background.

*Sisters of Mercy Founder*

Catherine McAuley was born at Stormanstown House, Dublin, Ireland on September 29, 1778. She was the third child of James and Elinor McAuley. At the turn of the century, Catherine’s father, James McAuley, an Irish house builder and devout Catholic, openly invited the poor into his home for religious education. Fialka (2003) describes James McAuley as possessing a “quiet sense of courage and the steely determination to make things change” (p. 23).

In 1767, Catherine’s father, James, leased the Queen’s Head Tavern. This establishment was situated in the oldest and most impoverished section of Dublin, on the south side of Copper Alley and Fishamble Street. The family resided in this location until James McAuley died in 1783. Catherine was five years old at the time of her father’s death. After her husband died, using an estate settlement, Elinor McAuley moved her family to Queen Street, a fashionable section of Dublin. Catherine was educated in the Protestant schools and skilled in social graces.
In 1804 after her mother’s death, a childless Quaker couple, Mr. and Mrs. William Callaghan ‘adopted’ Catherine, then 26 years old. She was invited to live with them when they bought Coolock House, a suburban mansion in 1809. She was a bright, well-read, capable woman who could help manage their affairs (Fialke, 2003). When William Callaghan died in 1822, Catherine was named beneficiary of the Callaghan estate, an estate worth more than $1 million in today’s currency. This legacy permitted Catherine to purchase land in the prestigious Dublin area called Baggot Street. She built a large house, noticeably similar to that of a “convent” (Fialke, 2003). In spite of social complaint, Catherine opened the House of Mercy on September 24, 1827. During the next few years, many young women arrived at Baggot Street to serve the poor, sick and uneducated. The sisters became known as the “Walking Nuns” because of their routine practice of leaving the confines of their convent, an innovation not done by nuns in their day, and administrating to an urbanized population.

Catherine McAuley set education as a priority. She was interested in successful teaching methods and made observations in reputable schools in Ireland, England and France. She sought to provide exceptional educational opportunities, especially for women thus providing a service to the Catholic church. “Teaching became a more important part of women’s religious experience, eventually becoming a hallmark of their lives and service to the church” (Mahoney, 2002, p. 33). Secular schools were not to be considered superior to schools conducted by women religious.

*Establishment of the Sisters of Mercy*
To insure the continuation of her ministry, Catherine McAuley, at the request of church officials, established a religious order, founding the Sisters of Mercy at the Baggot Street house on December 12, 1831. She was 53 years old. The Sisters of Mercy grew rapidly during her lifetime establishing 11 convents in Ireland and England. In addition to the three vows of poverty, chastity, obedience taken by most religious orders, the Sisters of Mercy professed a fourth vow to the “service of the poor, the sick and the ignorant.” Catherine McAuley’s tenet reads:

By our vocation to the Order of Mercy, and by a most sacred vow at our Holy Profession, we are engaged to comfort and instruct the sick poor of Christ. This is the principal reason why we are called ‘Sisters of Mercy’ and why, to the faithful discharge of this duty, so many graces are annexed. Remark the words of Our Blessed Lord, quoted in the first section of this Rule: ‘Amen, I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me.’ Oh! What an ineffable consolation to serve Christ Himself, in the person of the poor, and to walk in the very same path which He trod! And this happy vocation is ours, all unworthy as we are of such a grace. Should not our hearts be replenished with love and gratitude to our Spouse, for allowing us so graciously to aid Him in the person of the sick.

(Catherine McAuley, 1828, np).

Just ten years after founding her institute, Catherine McAuley died on November 11, 1841 and is buried in the Sacred Garden of the foundation house on Baggot Street, which today is known as the Mercy International Centre in Dublin. On
April 9, 1990, Pope John Paul II declared Catherine McAuley “Venerable,” the first step in her ascent to canonization.

When the Mercy Congregation in Ireland traveled to America in 1843, the sisters brought with them a desire to educate women through the creation of Catholic colleges (Sullivan, 2004). Because the convent offered women an opportunity for an intellectual life, the longstanding relationship between women’s religious orders and teaching began within the convent walls (Ferrante, 1980). The convent was the first Western learning institution regularly providing women with formal instruction (Mahoney, 2002).

The Move to Northwest Pennsylvania

The stimulus that brought the Sisters of Mercy to northwest Pennsylvania in 1843 was a request by Bishop Michael O’Connor, the first bishop of Pittsburgh. Seven women religious, under the direction of Mother Frances Warde, traveled to America and served in the Pittsburgh diocese. Twenty-six years later, Mother Nolasco Kratzer and her successor, Sister M. Celestine Rafferty and five Sisters of Mercy from the Pittsburgh Motherhouse, responded to an invitation of Bishop Tobias Mullen, the third vicar of the Erie Diocese to serve in northwest Pennsylvania. This connection was made as Bishop Mullen had served as a seminarian who had accompanied Bishop O’Conner and the seven pioneer Mercy sisters on the original voyage to Pittsburgh in 1843. In 1870, Bishop Mullen, requested the Mercy Sisters care for the needs of families who were crowding into Titusville, Pennsylvania due to the oil rush there.
Barcio (1991) notes that Bishop Mullen made his appeal to the Mercy Sisters after the Brigittine Religious Order disbanded. The Brigittine Sisters arrived in Titusville in 1866 from Grand Rapids, Michigan, by previous arrangement of Bishop Young, second vicar of the Erie Diocese. This religious order was small in members and was exceptionally poor. For unknown reasons, although likely because of anti-Catholicism prevalent in America during the mid-19th century, this small religious community had severed all association with their motherhouse in Ireland and by all accounts was not well received in Titusville. Several attempts had been made to burn the Brigittine convent before it actually happened in 1869. “Shortly thereafter, Sister Evangelist Kinsella, the Mercy Superior of Pittsburgh, complying with the request of Bishop Mullen, accompanied seven Sisters of Mercy to Titusville on September 24, 1870” (Barcio, 1991, p. 200).

The Mercy Sisters opened a convent in Titusville. Small parishes on the western edge of the Appalachians in central Pennsylvania set up schools staffed by the Mercy Sisters from the Titusville convent; they included Brookville, Titusville, Farrell, Frenchville, DuBois, Punxsutawney, Delancy, Franklin, Greenville, Sharon, Coalport, Corry and Pittsburgh (Nolan, 2006). The convent also opened a boarding school, called Saint Joseph’s School for Girls. There were 400 students enrolled in 1870. The Sisters of Mercy endeared themselves to the citizens of Titusville, especially through their heroic work during a wide-spread fire that burned most of the city in 1880. With this success, Bishop John Mark
Gannon in 1917 requested that the Sisters of Mercy staff Holy Family School in Erie, Pennsylvania (Barcio, 1991).

According to the Sisters of Mercy Community Register, Mother M. Borgia Egan, founder of Mercyhurst College, left DuBois, where she was teaching, for Titusville, where the central Mercy convent was located when she was elected Major Superior. The convent had limited space for the resident sisters and she began planning for a new and improved facility. Referring to a dictated memoir by Mother M. Borgia:

Our first thought was to add a wing to the existing building and an architect had been engaged to draw up plans that would house at least one hundred Sisters. Before these plans could be executed, Bishop Gannon, on a visit to Titusville, said to Mother M. Borgia, “Instead of building here, why don’t you raise $150,000 and come to Erie?” The invitation was proposed to the members of the corporation the following summer and most of the senior members seemed to favor the suggestion. In the first place our headquarters in the Episcopal city would be advantageous. However, ideas came rapidly. Instead of competing on the high school level with the Communities already well established in Erie, it was suggested that we consider the opening of a college for young girls. At that time there were no colleges in Erie. A consensus of opinion was that we lay our proposed plan before His Excellency. This was done by Mother Borgia, then Superior. The Bishop decided to present the plan to his consultor. In a letter addressed...
to the Superior some weeks later he approved the idea of moving our
headquarters to Erie, opening a high school as a means of support and
later opening a college for girls. The plan was received by the
consulters and permission was given to begin the search for a suitable
location and to have plans drawn up.

( Memoirs of Mother Borgia, p.1-2).

The Founding of Mercyhurst College

With the request to staff the Holy Family School, the Sisters of Mercy
voted to accept the invitation and undertook the move to Erie. However, Mother
M. Borgia Egan, had aspirations to build a girl’s college in the region of
northwestern Pennsylvania. The movement to establish women’s colleges and the
challenges of broader educational change were sponsored by women’s religious
congregations at that time. According to Barcio (1991) several women’s Catholic
colleges were established by the Sisters of Mercy; (in 1908), the Georgian Court
College, New Jersey; (in 1912), Saint Xavier College, Illinois and, Saint Joseph
College, Maine (in 1915). According to Schier & Russett (2002), the larger
Catholic institutions modeled themselves after the elite secular women’s colleges,
such as Smith and Wellesley. However, smaller regional colleges began to
develop and expand providing skills and training to young Catholic women of the
lower middle classes, usually the first in their families to attain a college
education. Women’s colleges “began as either nursing schools or as teacher-
training colleges, catering to the two professional fields into which young women
from poorer families could more easily enter and which were much needed by
immigrant and poorer populations” (Mahoney, 2002, p. 20). These regional schools offered courses in teaching and nursing (Schier and Russett, 2002).

Taylor (1976) writes:

A dream was nudged into desire and decision when two persons of note – Most Rev. John Mark Gannon, Bishop of Erie and Rev. Thomas I. Gaston, S.J., director of the construction of Boston College, urged Mother M. Borgia and her counselors to give up thoughts of expansion of the then flourishing Academy they were conducting for girls in Titusville and to move the operation to Erie as part of a College-Preparatory School project. This, of course, would mean establishing their headquarters in the Episcopal City (p. 2).

Accompanied by Sister Collette Brown, Treasurer, and Sister Pierre Wilbert, Assistant Supervisor and Mother Borgia, these Sisters of Mercy undertook the responsibility of finding a suitable site for the perspective college-preparatory project. The Sisters found the Annie Lyon Cornillier farmland in the remote southeastern edge of Erie. The land parcel was 75 acres, had a view of Lake Erie, and sat on a hilltop. The Sisters purchased the farmland for $51,000 on September 30, 1922 (Deed Book 268, 1922, p. 400). The property contained two buildings, a house and a barn but was primarily barren land.

Mother Borgia contacted the Philadelphia architect, Francis Ferdinand Durang, a successful and prolific architect of Catholic projects who excelled in the traditional revival Gothic styles (Merciad, 1943, p. 3). Durang completed the building design in 1922; the Congregation spent two years studying the project
and small model in their recreation room in the Titusville convent. The women religious were encouraged to express their opinions of the design to one another (Merciad, 1943, p. 3). According to Taylor (1976), it was an ambitious endeavor building a structure that would accommodate the new college and, a high school unit, as well as living arrangements for the entire Congregation. The sisters had to “be provided for each summer when they returned from their yearly assignments in parochial convents” (Taylor, 1976, p. 3). Dictated memoirs of Mother Borgia note:

Because of this wide experience in building for the Sisters of Mercy of Philadelphia, Mr. Ferdinand Durang, architect of Philadelphia was selected to draw the plans. These were later approved with minor changes, and a group of buildings to carry on the work planned and to provide a sizable income for the community was approved. It provided facilities for both high school and college classes. The estimated cost was approximately five hundred thousand dollars. (pp. 1-2)

**Financing the College**

History records that World War I began in 1914 and came to an end in 1920. Within a few short years America’s Great Depression began in 1929 with the Stock Market crash and ended in 1941 with America’s entry into World War II. It was a daunting time and the estimated cost of $500,000 was a significant sum for the Mercy Sisters to procure for the construction of a college. Mother Borgia “could work with people—could win their confidence and inner consent without pressure; men of the business, professional and academic worlds readily
gave her their admiration” (Taylor, 1976, p. 6). From her memoirs, (see Appendix F), Mother Borgia recalls:

After studying carefully the income of the Community, it was shown to the satisfaction of the Bishop that the Community could handle this indebtedness. To make the burden of debt as easy as possible, the Bishop insisted that we pay not more than four per cent interest. This was a difficult rate to get as money was very tight at the time. Banks asked six percent as a minimum. In our eagerness to get started, the Community accepted a suggestion of Mr. Frank Wallace, the President of the Second National Bank of Erie, that we float a bond issue of four hundred thousand dollars that would pay four percent interest. He would personally assume responsibility for the bonds, i.e. guarantee their payment. (Bukowski, 1973, p.68)

Because the rate of interest was low, the bonds had to be sold by approaching individuals “friendly to the Sisters.” Borgia (1956) recalls that individual sales came gradually and were largely due to the untiring efforts of Sister M. Collette Brown, Sister M. Monica Fisher, Sister M. Pierre Wilbert, and Sister M. Celestine Weber. These Sisters were able to dispose of a small portion ($100,000) of the bonds by walking on the streets of Erie and other cities approaching prospective buyers (see Appendix F). Since $100,000 of the bonds were sold, the remaining money was used as collateral for bank loans at 5% interest which were necessary for labor payroll and construction costs.
At this time, 1926, after the building was completed, Mr. Joseph J. Weber introduced Mother Borgia to a representative of the Massachusetts Life Insurance Company. This company took over the mortgage, allowing the sisters a long-term settlement. Taylor (1976) writes:

In the course of the years that followed, by good management and refinancing, the Sisters were able to discharge that debt. On a summer evening in 1947, Sister M. Fidelis O’Connor, to celebrate the refinancing of the debt with Northwestern Mutual at 3%, burned the old mortgage with Massachusetts Life, while a large group of Sisters watched in solemn silence. The new mortgage was paid off in 1960. All through these years, Sisters in their small convents and schools were steadily helping the effort of Sisters in administration at Mercyhurst who were managing financial as well as other congregational interests. (p. 5)

The initial college plans consisted of an administration area, classrooms and a dormitory. Plans for a chapel were deferred because of cost. A seven story tower was also abandoned because of cost and Lake Erie’s high winds. Both the chapel and a modified tower would later be built.

Completion of Mercyhurst College

In 1924, a ground breaking ceremony took place, with Mother Borgia turning the first shovel of earth and passing the spade to the other sisters who shared in the historic moment (Bukowski, 1973). The H. J. Conrath Company of Erie was the general contractor for the college’s construction. The proposed
completion date was scheduled for September of 1926. However, winter weather conditions and a strike of construction workers forced Mother Borgia and the sisters of the Congregation to complete the final preparations of painting and decorating the newly constructed school.

“The pitched slate roof, which now gives so much distinction to the main building, has always been regarded by the Sisters as a mark of the determination of that pioneer group” (Taylor, 1976, p. 4). Because of escalating costs, the roof would need to be flat or the pitch reduced. Sister M. Pierre Wilbert pledged, herself, to raise the $10,000 needed and asked for donations from family and friends.

Mercyhurst Seminary, a women’s college and girl’s school, opened on September 7, 1926 meeting the projected date. The grade and high schools were located on the first floor of the newly constructed building where the first 50 students had access to the facility. One lower grade was dropped each year until all students were graduated from eighth grade, leaving the seminary a high school and college institution (Bukowski, 1973). Although Mercyhurst Seminary and Mercyhurst College originally shared the same facilities, a recommendation by the Middle States Association to separate the high school and college facility was ultimately implemented (Lake Shore Visitor, 1963). In 1963, a newly constructed high school, Mercyhurst Preparatory School, opened permitting the original facility to remain as a college (http://www mercyhurst.edu).

_Sister- Faculty_
Years prior to the college’s inception, Mother Borgia, as Superior, sought out the best educational advantages for the Sisters of Mercy and sent them to the finest institutions of learning in preparation for staffing the proposed college. At a time when few women were pursuing higher education, the sisters were prepared. The initial sister-faculty was selected and enrolled in graduate classes at Catholic University, Duquesne University, Michigan University, the University of Notre Dame and the University of Pittsburgh. At a time when few women were pursuing higher education, the sisters were prepared. “Mother Borgia was able to argue that the salaries of the sister-faculty contributed steadily to the operation, would be a guarantee better than dollar endowment” (Taylor, 1976, p. 9). Oates (2002) states “Within the convent culture the sisters enjoyed a collective sense of purpose and mutual support in intellectual endeavor...” (p. 170).

Mother Borgia attended Catholic University of America and graduated with a Bachelor’s of Arts degree in 1926 and a Master’s degree in 1936 from Duquesne University (Alumni Office, Duquesne University). “As Mother Borgia directed the growth of Mercyhurst, she was careful to keep in operation the practice of training young sisters in subject areas and assigning them as understudies to those who headed departments” (Taylor, 1976, p. 6). The college yearbook, *Praeterita* (1939) lists the first faculty which included two Administrators and 18 teaching staff:

Administrators:  Mother Borgia, Dean (Theology); Sister Mary Alice Weber, Registrar. Faculty members: Sister Agatha Hogan, (Latin and Greek); Sister Angelica Cummings (Art); Sister Claudia Rich, (Music);
Sister Clotilda Sullivan, (Mathematics); Sister Collette Brown, (Home Economics); Sister Evangelista Forsythe, (Music); Sister Fidelis O’Conner, (Chemistry and Physics); Sister Liguori Robinson, (Library Science); Sister Mary Anna Clark, (History); Sister Mary Jane Frances Raffetto, (Music); Sister Mary John Brown, (Music); Sister Mercedes Prendergast, (Romance Languages); Sister Philippa Kinnan, (English); Sister Pierre Wilbert, (Biology and Sociology); Mr. Michael J. Relihan, (Education); Reverend William L. Sullivan, (Philosophy and Religion); Sister Suzanne Eimer, (German); Ms Ruth Whalen, (Home Economics). (p. 9)

Despite the Depression, the sisters of the Congregation sent monies they earned from their work within the Erie Diocese to the general Mercy treasury. Oates (2002) states “With few exceptions the collective incomes of sisterhoods came largely from the earnings of sisters teaching in parochial schools, and the stipends they received were very low” (p. 170). The Mercy Congregation pledged full support to the college and all savings from each sister’s stipends represented sacrifice. Often, sister-faculty worked without salaries, with their modest living expenses being covered by their communities (Oakes, 2002).

In the 1920’s, religious Superiors appealed to their entire membership to support their order’s college. Because a women’s college promised not only to advance the reputation of a “sisterhood” or religious community in the field of education it also attracted new and educated members to its order. Also, pastors
were requesting more sister-teachers for parochial schools. Thus, there was a need for educating the young sisters.

*Ex officio and Deanship*

In August, 1927, Sister de Sales Preston was elected Superior of the Sisters of Mercy and succeeded Mother Borgia Egan. Mother de Sales became President, ex officio, of Mercyhurst College. Mother Borgia Egan continued her work at the college as Dean. Oates (2002) notes that professed members of a religious community elected their religious superior and her counselors for specific tenures. When in office, these six or seven women functioned within a hierarchical organization that gave them authority over the lives, resources and endeavors of the entire community. They appointed Superiors in all convents and assigned every sister to a particular employment.

The bureaucratic structure of religious congregations directly influenced the organization of the colleges they founded. As a rule, the religious Superior, as ex officio president of the college, appointed a sister-dean to supervise academic programs and financial affairs of the institution and to make daily decisions. The religious Superior, in addition to her presidential role, also headed the college’s board of trustees, whose members were usually the sisters serving as her elected counselors.

Oakes (2002) further reveals that by the 1930’s, religious Superiors were beginning to appoint sister-educators as college presidents, a method of selection that continued until the introduction of more democratic presidential search procedures in the 1960’s. Until that era, the appointed sister-president exercised
only delegated authority and remained strictly accountable to her religious Superiors. Furthermore, as a member of the religious community at the college, she was subordinate in all nonacademic matters to a local convent Superior, also appointed by religious superiors.

In 1927, Mother Borgia Egan was selected as Dean of Mercyhurst College. She served in this capacity until illness forced her to relinquish that role in 1956. However, she remained close to the college, though not physically active, while recuperating until 1958 when she experienced a debilitating stroke and entered the DuBois Hospital where she remained until her death on February 11, 1962. Mother de Sales, as Superior, showing tremendous ability, “attended to the spiritual, material, and social welfare” (Oakes, 2002, p. 172) of the Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy; oversaw the DuBois Hospital; managed 13 local or branch houses as well as the central Motherhouse; assisted in Diocesan elementary and secondary education endeavors and maintained and supported the growth of the new college.

*School Charter*

According to Bukowski (1973), Mother Borgia and Sister Pierre Wilbert attempted to secure the required charters of authorization for the college from the State Department of Education even before ground was broken. However, at that time, the State did not grant full authorization until the first class had been graduated. In the summer of 1928, the school facilities were improved and expanded with additional dormitory rooms and an art studio. Again the sisters petitioned the Department of Education and presented the Charter petition on
October 5, 1928. The complete Application for a Charter for Mercyhurst College (No. 249, May Term 1927, Book 15, pp. 328-330) (see Appendix E). On June 4, 1929, less than six months after the Charter was accepted, the first class of four girls and eight Sisters of Mercy graduated.

The following year, 1929, the State of Pennsylvania empowered Mercyhurst to grant Bachelor of Science degrees in Home Economics. In 1930, the New York Board of Regents acknowledged the Bachelor of Science degree in Home Economics and West Virginia acknowledged all degrees. In 1931 Ohio acknowledged all Mercyhurst degrees. Also, the Middle States Association of Colleges and Universities admitted Mercyhurst as a member and extended accreditation to the College.

Curriculum

In 1911, Catholic college pamphlets portrayed the exemplary woman graduate as a “woman of culture, of efficiency, and of power—a woman capable of upholding the highest ideals of the home and of the Church, and possessed of the training that shall make her an efficient worker in society and in the professional world” (College of New Rochelle, Catalogue, 1911, p. 7).

Catholic women’s colleges offered opportunities for a practical education through vocational offerings. Although these colleges offered traditionally female subjects, in particular, art and music, most communities did not perceive these areas as “bona fide” liberal arts curriculum. Kennelly (2002) states, “Sisters demonstrated their commitment to the advancement of women through their inventiveness regarding modes of delivering curriculum as much as through the
However, the Mercyhurst curriculum presented a distinction that teaching music and art offered women graduates opportunities for serious professional careers.

Early student catalogs and brochures emphasized that Mercyhurst offered a practical and vital contribution to a home economics curriculum. Mercyhurst’s home economics department occupied a large two story structure, a farmhouse on the property and operated similar to a family home, on the southeast corner of the campus. This was a “Practice House.” Home economics majors had to live for a specified time and learned, in hands-on fashion, the many facets of household management and family care. “Such a program would not only teach women to become better homemakers but also be of assistance to future social workers who needed to know about nutrition and diet” (Contosta, 2002, p. 143). An unnamed, biased archival Protestant journal (1880) naively judged the limits of domestic instruction stating:

...reproved nuns for neglecting the domestic arts in their convent schools. This dereliction showed that, as a group, they were “very far from admitting...that women were created to be wives and mothers....Of housekeeping, cooking, plain-sewing, or, indeed, any single thing as useful as a resource and occupation, the convent graduates are in a state of complete ignorance” for serious professional careers. (No author or nd)

However, undaunted by such critics, “...the Sisters of Mercy, in an effort to publicize Mount Saint Agnes College, Maryland, mailed brochures describing its
program to bishops across the country. Their cover letter reminded readers that ‘our Catholic girls are as anxious as their non-Catholic friends to win and wear a College degree” (cited in Oakes, 2002, p. 176).

Cultural and Religious Events

Mother de Sales Preston served as Superior of the Sisters of Mercy and Mercyhurst College President three separate times (1927-33) (1939-44) and (1948-54) for a total of 18 years. During these terms, Mother Borgia served as Dean and Mother de Sales Preston acted in an ex officio capacity at Mercyhurst. During these tenures, enrollment increased; cultural and religious events, concerts, lectures and social traditions flourished. Archival documents describe that events were “always associated with the belief that a woman’s education required special development of heart and spirit as well as intellect” (Taylor, 1976, p. 9).

Catholic institutions placed emphasis on religious life for their students. Brewer (1987) writes that “nuns made extraordinary efforts to instill a deep religious faith and a fervent piety in their girls by placing religious faith at the center of the curriculum and [by] requiring attendance at numerous services and devotions” (p. 8). The concepts of religion woven into aspects of curriculum and campus life are evidenced in archival photos, college catalogs, and student handbooks found in the archives. A Catholic College student handbook for 1931 highlighted the significance of a “thoroughly Christian education...which...should find its ultimate expression in the clear-minded, right-principled actions of the Christian Catholic woman” (cited in Contosta, 2002, p. 130).
Sister-faculty valued the opportunity to live in female communities, sharing their lives and work. Sisters served as monitors and residence hall supervisors in Catholic college faculties. Oakes (2002) continues, “The fact that students were usually boarders intensified the sisters’ personal and collective influence, and there is ample evidence that the sisters represented a remarkably powerful force in student life” (p. 173).

Religious requirements were typical of most Catholic women’s colleges during the 1920’s and decades later. Students wore their cap and gowns while in attendance at Mass at the beginning of an academic year. Mass on Sunday and on important feast days was mandatory. Even though daily mass was not required, students were encouraged to attend. Students were expected to observe Lent and to attend annual retreats that lasted for several days. Such retreats were at various times of the year, usually prior to Easter and at the beginning of the schools’ second semester.

The Sisters set religious guidelines and planned religious events. For example, a common observance on Catholic campuses was the May Day pageants. Gleason (1987) referred to this religious celebration as “an Elizabethan extravaganza” and explained that “medieval images were particularly potent at Catholic institutions, since they conjured up a time ... when faith and reason had supposedly been one and when the modern world, with its secularism and materialism, had yet to be born” (p. 11). At Mercyhurst, May Day celebrations were held until 1967. At this time, the students chose to discontinue this practice, and claimed that a “worldlier attitude” needed to prevail.
Impressive authors, poets, politicians and national speakers were frequent guests at the college, especially in the late 1920's and decades later. For example, Bishop Fulton J. Sheen, author of *God and Intelligence in Modern Philosophy* (1925) had befriended Mother Borgia and served as a presenter at the college.

A college chaplain was in residence and served on the faculty, as a theology professor. Archival documents reveal that Father William Sullivan, first Chaplain at Mercyhurst and confidant of Mother Borgia, was immeasurable in his contributions in the early years:

Assigned by Bishop Gannon as Chaplain at Mercyhurst, while the building was still under construction, Father Sullivan became the man at large on the premises; he supervised the farm, the making of a Lake to help solve the drainage difficulty—always a problem; he designed and supervised the approaches to the building, laid out the gardens; he designed and built the grotto and its approaches. When Father Sullivan was designing the front drive, he had good assistance from Sister M. Genevieve, who presided grandly for years over the cuisine. Hearing him say that he needed a donor for the four lanterns he was ordering for the upper court, she made and sold candy until she realized the amount that was needed. Those four lights still ornament the front campus and many another generosity of this kind is buried in the lives of those pioneers. (Taylor, 1976, p. 8)

During the Depression era, many men suffered from unemployment. Archival notes record that the Mercy Sisters provided a hot meal to these men everyday at
noon. Father Sullivan chose from these men, as laborers, who would assist him in the smaller construction projects, landscaping, gardens and the difficult work of cutting and setting the fieldstones used for the Grotto.

*Continued Growth of the College*

In 1933 Mother Xavier O’Neil replaced Mother de Sales Preston as Superior of the Sisters of Mercy and ex officio President of the College. According to the personal notes of Mother Xavier O’Neil (1930), the original plans of Mercyhurst College by Philadelphia architect, Francis Ferdinand Durang, had included a chapel. However, the chapel had not been built when the Administration and Residence Halls were completed in 1926. The funds to build the chapel were made available from the estate of oil baron, James Edward O’Neil, brother of Mother Xavier O’Neil and Sister Regis O’Neil. In 1931 new plans were drawn by Erie architect Walter T. Monahan, and ground was broken for the chapel and a four-story bell tower in 1932. The O’Neil Memorial Chapel of Christ the King and the O’Neil Tower were completed in 1933. Bishop John Mark Gannon consecrated the altar, containing relics of the martyrs Christina and Diodora, in 1938. Ovra O’Neil, sister-in-law of Mother Xavier O’Neil, purchased the organ, from the Tellers-Sommerhof Organ Company. Referring to archival notes of Bishop John Mark Gannon to Mother Xavier O’Neil, “a mural in the Sanctuary of Christ the King Chapel was to be designed by the Swedish artist, Stocklassa, the same artist who designed the chapel of St. Joseph Orphanage in Erie” (notation, unknown, 1939).
The Rambusch Company of New York was employed by the Sisters of Mercy to paint the murals and decorate the interior of the chapel. At first, the painting of “The Assumption” was hung on the alter wall. Later, the murals which honoring Christ the King and depicting the history of the Sisters of Mercy were painted there:

The Sisters’ Mission of Mercy, both corporal and spiritual is shown in the lower part of the mural. In the center panel, the Sister clothed in a black habit represents the teaching arts; the Sister in white represents the healing arts; between them, a young girl represents Youth. On the side panels, another Sister represents the art of counseling; and a Sister in white, caring for a soldier, recalls the Sisters of Mercy service in the Crimean and Civil Wars. Behind this a group of three stand with and two figures, Pope Gregory XVI, holding a book which rests a replica of the first convent of the Sisters of Mercy in Dublin, Ireland, gave approval to Mother Catherine McAuley’s Institute of Mercy in Dublin. The other figure, Archbishop John Mark Gannon, approved in 1921, the request of the Sisters of Mercy to move their Motherhouse from Titusville to Erie and to found a college for young women there.

(Sister Mary Lawrence Franklin Archives).

Ovra O’Neil also had a mortuary chapel, The Queen’s Chapel built. Archival notes from Sister Mary Lawrence Franklin (1983) state, “In 1935, at the northeast corner of the chapel an oratory was built.” It was intended to be the burial place
for James and Ovra O’Neil, as well as Mother Xavier O’Neil and Sister M. Regis O’Neil.

Student activities in the early years grew into traditions. There were cultural, religious and social events as well as concerts and lectures. The intellectual atmosphere was rich. The college enrollment steadily increased and to ease the student housing shortage two pre-fabricated houses were built on the rear deck of Egan Hall. In later years these “deck houses” were used as the music department (Taylor, 1976).

In 1950, Brandon Smith, the architect designing the college’s library and Little Theater learned that the gates of the Harry K. Thaw estate in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania were being sold for scrap. The gates were of English design and French craftsmanship. Mother Borgia arranged to purchase the gates. Smith also constructed the accompanying brick and concrete rampart. To this day, the gates welcome students and visitors.

Taylor (1976) writes that two buildings: Weber Hall, the home of the Little Theater and Library, and a Faculty Wing, Preston Hall, were completed in 1953. Weber Hall was a benefaction of two sisters of Mercy, Sister Mary Alice Weber and Sister Mary Rachel Weber. They contributed their combined estates to build a memorial to their father. The Alumnae contributed the Little Theater furnishings while art students decorated the ceiling and walls. The Library was relocated to the second floor of Weber Hall.

Preston Hall was financed by a ten-year interest-free loan from the Erie Diocese. It provided the Sisters of Mercy with an Administration Suite, an
infirmary, bedrooms for the sister-faculty and a Commons Room. This building served as the official headquarters of the Sisters of Mercy until 1968.

Two shrines, Our Lady of Fatima shrine, located on the south campus and Our Lady of Mercy shrine, situated on the front campus were built at this time. The stone used for the shrines were cut fieldstone from the land parcel originally purposed by Mother Borgia in 1924. Prior to 1968 May Day celebrations took place around this latter shrine.

Taylor (1976) writes,

When forty-year federal loans became available for college housing. Mercyhurst had little difficulty qualifying, and a new relationship between the Sisters of Mercy and Mercyhurst College administration began with this transaction. To secure the loan it was necessary that the college indicate on the application form that it could guarantee proper facilities to operate a college. Since the title of the land and of the main complex of buildings (Administration, Egan Hall, Preston Hall, O’Neil Chapel and Tower, Weber Hall ) is held by the Sisters of Mercy, a one-dollar-a-year lease of the land and facilities then in use by the college operation was arranged. Collateral for the loan was also supplied by the Sisters of Mercy. They provided a block of Climax Molybdenum stock (p.13). (see Appendix G)

With the new buildings, the expansion of the college campus approximately doubled by 1959. Mercyhurst Preparatory School was moved to its own building on East Grandview Blvd. in 1963. Four years later, under the leadership of Sister
Carolyn Herrmann, the Zurn Arts and Science Hall was built. Along with the Science, Math, Art and Home Economics departments, the Music department moves into Zurn Hall. Baldwin Hall (1970), the Baldwin Townhouses (1971) and the Sesler Apartments (1972) accommodated increased student housing. The new Learning Resource Center (1971) offered library space for over 65,000 volumes, reading spaces, conference rooms, media-services and an archives area.

In addition to the new building construction during this period, the academic programs flourished at the college. For instance, the Cadet Teacher Program (1954) was introduced. This program offered a full scholarship and a living stipend to students who were willing to accelerate their education by attending summer schools so they were prepared to teach in diocesan schools during the junior and senior years of college, thus relieving the teacher shortage in the Catholic diocesan schools. By 1965, all programs were structured for the Bachelor of Arts. Taylor (1976) writes, “the same time the State Department inaugurated the policy of allowing institutions, after a careful evaluation of their teacher-education programs, to certify their own graduates. Teacher-education programs at Mercyhurst easily qualified for approval” (p. 16).

**Academic Design**

A change in the academic design was initiated in 1967. This initiative introduced a new calendar and curriculum at Mercyhurst. Academic proposals and a time schedule were introduced as Blueprint I. It is a forty-course program and a 3-1-3-3 calendar which replaced the two-semester program.
In 1960, the lay faculty numbered 12, and sisters’ faculty, 25. Administrative officers were women religious. The Ford Foundation (1956) was offering to qualified colleges financial assistance in faculty development. “Mercyhurst’s application brought $138,000; it was stipulated that the interest on that amount be spent on faculty improvement for ten years; after that time the institution was free to use the grant as it chose” (Taylor, 1976, p. 16).

For 37 years, the administrative organization of Mercyhurst was run by a corporation of 25 Sisters of Mercy; the Congregation’s Superior was, ex-officio President of the college; and the academic dean, appointed by the Superior, was the chief officer of the college. However in 1963, a reorganization of the Articles of Incorporation resulted in a separation of the titles of the President of the college and the Superior of the Mercy Congregation. Sister Mary Clare McWilliams succeeded Mother M. Loretta McHale as Superior of the Mercy Congregation. Mother Mary Clare became the first Superior not to hold the title of President of the college. She appointed Sister M. Carolyn Herrmann, the first President of the college under the revised Charter. A second revision of the Articles of Incorporation in 1971 provided for a Board of Trustees, one-fourth of which would be Mercy women religious. In addition, a Board of Associates whose function is advisory and supportive was formed. A Chairman served as liaison between the two Boards. Sister Carolyn Herrmann served as college President for 10 years. When she resigned in 1972, Dr. Marion Shane was appointed Mercyhurst’s first layman President.

Biographical Accounts
Using the libraries at Mercyhurst College and the Sisters of Mercy Motherhouse Archives, the repositories of the documents on the first seven presidents, biographical documents were used to introduce, as well as understand, the lives of these women religious and to provide information to identify the values, expectations and the conflicts of their times and culture. The biographical sketches of each of the past women religious contain personal data, family history, education, professional career and death notices.

Mother M. Borgia Egan

According to a Certificate of Baptism from Saint Andrew’s Church in Blossburg, Pennsylvania, Mother Borgia Egan was born Catherine Earnest Egan, on March 23, 1876 in Carbon Run, Bradford County, Pennsylvania. Referring to the Bradford County Historical Society, Carbon Run was a small mining settlement on Barclay Mountain in western Pennsylvania. This mining settlement was primarily home to Irish and Welch immigrants. The houses in Carbon Run were mostly double, two story buildings with cellars yet neighboring homes were log houses and the seams were plastered up with mud (Bradford County Historical Society, 1900). This coal mining community never exceeded 500 inhabitants. LeRoy Mining Company owned, as well as operated, the coal mines.

Catherine was a daughter of Michael and Mary Leary Egan, both Irish immigrants. Michael Egan was a miner at the LeRoy Mines while Mary Leary, his wife, cared for their nine children. Catherine was their second child and the first to be born in the United States. A Bradford County Census card records the family consisted of Patrick, Mary, Margaret, Norah, John, Charles, Jane and
Michael. Catherine received her early education at Saint Catherine Grade and High School in DuBois, Pennsylvania. At the age of 15 years, she entered the Order of the Sisters of Mercy on July 1, 1891 from her home parish of Saint Catherine’s. She received her first veil on January 14, 1892 and professed her final vows on September 24, 1895. Her religious name was selected in honor of Saint Francis Borgia, Italian educator. She attended the Sisters College of Catholic University in 1911 and took courses of collegiate status.

Sister Borgia became a leader in ensuring access to education for the children of immigrants by providing night classes. In 1906 and through 1918, she served as principal of St. Catherine School, DuBois.

Under her direction, this high school became the first parochial school in Pennsylvania to be accredited by the State Department of Public Instruction (Dubois Morning Courier, 2/11/62). Sister Borgia was elected by her Community to be Mother Superior in 1918. Upon her election as Mother Superior she undertook the construction of a college-preparatory project in Erie, Pennsylvania with the college formally opening in 1926. She remained as Dean of Mercyhurst College until illness forced Mother Borgia to relinquish that role in 1956. She suffered a debilitating stroke in 1959 and remained in the DuBois Hospital until her death on February 11, 1962. She was 86 years old and served the Sisters of Mercy for 71 years. She is buried in the Sisters’ of Mercy plot in Saint Catharine Cemetery, Titusville, Pennsylvania.

*Mother de Sales Preston*
Mother de Sales Preston was born Myrtle Jane Preston, on December 1, 1880 in Edenburg, Pennsylvania. Her parents were early settlers in the Pleasantville and Titusville areas in northwestern Pennsylvania. Her father, James Preston was a pioneer in the oil industry. He was an owner and operator of several large land leases and worked in the transportation and distribution of oil. Her mother was Mary Ellen Cain, a Canadian, whose family migrated to Titusville during the oil boom. Jane, as her family referred to her, was the eldest of nine children. They were Marie (Sister Mary Elizabeth, RSM), Florence, Clara, Francis, Louis, John, James and Gertrude. The children received their elementary and secondary education from the public schools in Pleasantville and their religious education was obtained under the personal supervision of Monsignor Joseph Dunn, Pastor of Saint Titus Church.

After the birth of Gertrude, the ninth child, Mary Preston died. Jane took responsibility for the care of the large family. In addition to the family duties, she became her father’s assistant bookkeeper and secretary in his oil business. After seven years of service to her family, Jane entered Saint Joseph Novitiate in Titusville, Pennsylvania on July 5, 1903. She was 23 years old.

After the profession of her first vows in 1906, Sister de Sales had teaching positions in DuBois, Franklin, Punxsutawney and Adrian, all of which are north of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. In 1910, the Mercy Sisters took charge of the DuBois Community Hospital and Sister de Sales received her nursing degree from the hospital’s Training School as a member of its first graduating class. As a
registered nurse, she was appointed operating nurse and doctor’s assistant and served in these positions.

After the death of Mother Camilla Glesey, first Superior of the DuBois Hospital, Sister de Sales was named to succeed her and spent 14 years in administrative work at the DuBois Hospital. In 1924, Sister de Sales was elected by her Community to the office of Mistress of Novices. Following this administrative term, she was elected Mother Superior of the Sisters of Mercy in Titusville.

She was retained as Mother Superior and ex officio President of Mercyhurst College three times, 1927-1933, 1939-1945 and 1948-1954, serving her religious Community for 18 years in its highest administrative position. Mother de Sales died on December 18, 1963. She was 83 years old and served the Sisters of Mercy for 60 years. She is buried in the Congregations’ plot at Saint Catharine Cemetery, Titusville, Pennsylvania.

_Sister Agnes Marie Sweeney_

Sister Agnes Marie was born Marie Sweeney, on July 1, 1892, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. She was one of twin daughters of John S. and Mary Jane Hopkins Sweeney, both of Irish descent. Her father was a trainman while her mother cared for their large family. After the death of John and Mary Jane Sweeney, her maternal aunt, Sister Mary Neri Hopkins of the Mercy Congregation collected the four younger children, Marie, Agnes, Helen and Frances and placed them in the Saint Joseph Boarding School in Titusville. Sister Mary Neri Hopkins, a teacher and accomplished musician, remained close to the
Agnes was her twin sister, and so, in her choice of a religious name she became Sister Agnes Marie. She pronounced her first vows January 3, 1920 and her final vows January 3, 1923. Music became her professional work, and after graduation from Mercyhurst College and Duquesne University, she taught music and presented choral productions within parishes in the Erie Diocese and in Pittsburgh.

In 1937, Sister Agnes Marie returned to Titusville to care for her aunt, Sister Neri Hopkins, in her last illness. Sister Agnes Marie was elected Mistress of Novices in 1942 through 1945. She was elected Superior of the Sisters of Mercy during the post-war years, 1945 through 1948, and in that capacity, served
as ex officio President of Mercyhurst College. However, Mother Agnes Marie chose to leave Mercyhurst College and moved the Motherhouse back to Titusville for the last 18 months of her one administration. Sister Maureen Pyne, her Assistant, accepted the responsibilities at the Erie College.

Mother Agnes Marie also concentrated on improving the physical condition of Saint Joseph Academy which had been her adopted home. Sister Agnes Marie celebrated her Golden Jubilee in religious life in 1969. She was the last surviving member of her immediate family and she died at the age of 93 and served the Sisters of Mercy for 68 years. Burial was in the Saint Catharine Cemetery, the Sister’s of Mercy plot, Titusville, Pennsylvania.

*Mother Xavier O’Neil*

Mother Xavier O’Neil was born Anna (Annie) O’Neil on September 2, 1869. She was a daughter of John and Teresa (Byrnes) O’Neil, both Irish immigrants. According to Titusville Birth Records (1857-1917), John and Teresa O’Neil were parents of nine children, however, not all names of the children are recorded in the census records. Archivists provide data for two sisters, Mary and Lillian (Lilly) and two brothers, George, her twin, and James O’Neil. The 1880 Federal Census and the Crawford County Pennsylvania Deed Book E6, (pp.201-202) records their residence as Titusville, Pennsylvania. Her father, John, was a gardener for several of the oil millionaires during the oil boom. Teresa, her mother, was a housewife.

At the age of 19, Annie O’Neil entered the Sisters of Mercy in 1888, and made her profession of vows in 1890. Although her formal education was
limited, within the 61 years of her religious life, Mother Xavier had held every official administrative position in her community. She served as Mistress of Novices from 1908 to 1912. She was elected Mother General for two six-year terms; first, from 1912 to 1918, and again from 1933 to 1939, during which in the latter tenure she was ex officio President of Mercyhurst College.

She also had been local superior in various branch houses of the Order (Lake Shore Visitor, Dec., 1949). Mother Xavier’s sister, Lilly, entered the Mercy Congregation and was known as Sister M. Regis, stationed at Titusville, Pennsylvania. As a token of affection for Mother Xavier and Sister Regis, the Chapel of Christ the King at Mercyhurst was erected through the beneficence of their brother, James, an oil baron, in Mother Xavier’s incumbency as president of the college.

Mother Xavier and Sister Regis visited their brother James in Caan, France. While in France, the two Sisters of Mercy requested monies from their brother to be used for a chapel and sewed thousands of dollars in the hem seams of their habits and returned to Erie. Mother Xavier was 80 years old at the time of her death on December 8, 1949 and served the Sisters of Mercy for 61 years and was buried at Saint Catharine’s Cemetery in the Mercy plot. Her father, John, and mother, Teresa, as well as her sibling, Sister Regis are also buried in Saint Catharine’s Cemetery in Titusville.

*Sister M. Eustace Taylor*

Sister Eustace Taylor was born Mary Taylor, in Trenton, New Jersey, May 22, 1904, a daughter of John W. and Anna Mary (Conner) Taylor. She grew up as
an only child since Roseanne, an infant sister, preceded her in death. Her father was born in England in 1872 and her mother was born in the United States that same year. Her father was a potter and her mother was a housewife.

She entered the Sisters of Mercy from Epiphany Parish in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, on November 21, 1919. She was 15 years old. She professed her first vows on January 2, 1923, and her final vows on January 2, 1926. She was a member of the first graduating class at Mercyhurst earning a Bachelor of Arts degree both in English and in Latin. She graduated from Duquesne University in 1931 with a Master’s Degree both in English and in Latin. In 1937, Sister Eustace completed her Doctor of Philosophy at the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. She pursued studies at Saint John’s College, Annapolis, Maryland and took a seminar in Shakespeare at Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

She was a secondary teacher within the Erie Catholic Diocese from 1928 to 1934; professor of English and Latin from 1937 until 1974 at Mercyhurst; chair of the English department from 1960 through 1966 and again from 1971 through 1975. Sister Eustace first became involved in the government of the Sisters of Mercy when she became Assistant to Mother de Sales Preston in 1948; serving in this position until 1954. In 1954, Sister Eustace, herself, was elected Mother Superior and was reelected in 1975.

Sister Eustace served as the fifth Mercyhurst President from 1954 until 1960. She again became Assistant in 1963 under the new Mother Superior, Sister Mary Clare McWilliams. Additional administrative positions are recorded as

She died on September 30, 2002 at the age of 98 years. Sister Eustace was in her 83rd year of religious life. She is buried in the Gate of Heaven Cemetery, Fairview Township, Erie, Pennsylvania.

*Sister Loretta McHale*

Sister Loretta was born Susan Differ McHale in Greenoch, Scotland on December 25, 1906. She was a daughter of John “Poddy” McHale and Catherine Brown McHale. Her father was a coal miner and her mother cared for their seven children. Sister Loretta had four brothers, Philip, John, Thomas and Gerald and two sisters, Jane and Sophia. The McHale family immigrated to the United States in 1916 and settled near Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania.

Sister Loretta attended elementary school at Saint Mary’s School, Greenoch, Scotland. Her secondary education was obtained at Saint Adrian’s School in Adrian, Pennsylvania. Sister Loretta entered the Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy on Saint Patrick’s Day, March 17, 1924. She attended classes at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, between 1929 through 1932. She received her Bachelor’s Degree from Mercyhurst College in 1934, a Master’s Degree from Catholic University of America in 1941 and her Ph.D. from Catholic University of America in 1948. Her dissertation was a study of the labor movement as represented in the Order of the Knights of Labor from 1869-1893.
Sister Loretta taught American history and English in several diocesan schools and continued in the teaching profession at the Mercyhurst Seminary, forerunner to Mercyhurst Preparatory High School. In 1937, Sister Loretta began her career as a history professor at Mercyhurst College where she remained for 23 years. In 1960, Sister Loretta was elected General Superior of the Sisters of Mercy. She served three years as Mother Superior, then an additional 6 years, 1963-1969, as a member of the Sisters of Mercy Council.

Sister Loretta returned to the college classroom for an additional three years in 1969 through 1972. Sister Loretta taught history at Cathedral Preparatory School, Erie, Pennsylvania for the next seven years, 1972 through 1979. In 1979, she taught in Volunteers-in-Probation Program for the next seven years, 1979-1986. In 1986 Sister Loretta was named Coordinator for non-medical operations for the Motherhouse Infirmary and served until 2004. Sister Loretta served in the Prayer Ministry at the Mercy Motherhouse until her death on March 18, 2005. She was 99 years old and had served the Sisters of Mercy for 81 years. She is buried in the Mercy plot at the Gate of Heaven Cemetery, Fairview Township, Erie, Pennsylvania.

Sister Carolyn Herrmann

Sister Carolyn Herrmann was born in Erie, Pennsylvania on October 4, 1917, a daughter of Frank W. and Helen E. “Nellie” Hill Herrmann. Her father was an independent grocer and her mother was a homemaker (Erie Morning News, Feb., 1967). Sister Carolyn had two brothers, Francis and Harrison Herrmann. She entered the Sisters of Mercy from Sacred Heart Parish. She was
16 years old and a high school student at Mercyhurst Seminary, the forerunner of Mercyhurst Preparatory School.

She earned a Bachelor of Arts degree both in chemistry and in biology from Mercyhurst, a Master’s degree in biochemistry from the University of Minnesota, and a Ph.D. in organic chemistry from the University of Notre Dame. She did additional work at the Center for the Study of Higher Education at the University of Michigan, Tufts University, and Kansas State University.

Sister Carolyn attended the President’s Institute at Harvard University in preparation to her appointment as the President of Mercyhurst College in 1963. She was awarded an honorary doctorate from Mercyhurst College. She was a teacher in the chemistry and biology departments at Mercyhurst and chaired the Chemistry Department.

Sister Carolyn Herrmann was college president from 1963-1972. During her presidency, the college doubled its student enrollment and physical plant. Sister Carolyn, along with Sister Loretta, restructured the board of trustees to include laymen and women. She initiated the college’s first alumni, public relations and development offices and supervised the college’s first capital campaign in 1966 and the first annual fund in 1970. She initiated a three-term calendar system which replaced the traditional semester system. Under her direction, the college became coeducational in 1969. She amended the school’s charter to admit men and she began an academic program in law enforcement and established the Mercyhurst athletics program.
Sister Carolyn supervised the completion of major construction on the college campus: McAuley Residence Hall in 1960, Zurn Hall of Science and Fine Arts in 1967, Baldwin Residence Hall and Erie’s first indoor tennis courts in 1970, the Hammermill Library and eight student townhouses in 1971, three student apartment buildings and the original Tullio athletic field in 1972.

Sister Carolyn died December 28, 1996. She was 79 years old and served the Sisters of Mercy for 63 years. She is buried in the Sister’s plot at the Gate of Heaven Cemetery, Fairview Township, Erie, Pennsylvania.

Summary

This chapter presented an overview of Mercyhurst College’s rich history and concludes with biographical sketches of each of the seven women religious leaders who presided over the college in its foundational years. The women religious imparted a faith and a desire to provide an excellent educational institution. Taylor (1976) writes, with each generation that “comes to her doors seeking development of mind and heart and spirit. Mercyhurst will ‘work its own perfection’ in a myriad of ways known only to those who, like her founder, reverence the intellect, reverence the sacred” (p. 23).
CHAPTER V
RESULTS: OTHER FINDINGS

Introduction

The data collection process focused on setting the boundaries for the research study, gathering information through observations, interviews, and documents then establishing a protocol for recording the information (Creswell, 1994). Since history and case study are qualitative methods selected for their capacity to achieve a thorough understanding of one phenomenon, it is important to use and interrelate a wide range of interpretive practices (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Because the college presidents in this study are deceased, the researcher relied extensively on archival materials and document collections, as well as on personal interviews as sources of information. The personal interviews included participants who actually knew the past women religious presidents. Data gathered from seven one-on-one interviews as well as information collected and recorded in the researcher’s field notebook as recommended by Glesne & Peshlin (1999) provided “thick descriptions” (Gall et al., 2003) of people, events, conversations and reflections. The Hammermill Library at Mercyhurst College and the Sisters of Mercy Motherhouse Archives, the repositories of the documents on the first seven Mercyhurst College presidents, provided archival information on the values, expectations and conflicts of their times which also served as a data source.

This chapter focuses on the following three research questions designed to explore the organizational culture, feminist themes and leadership styles of the first women religious presidents at Mercyhurst College.
RQ 1: What leadership theories are reflected in the presidencies of the seven women religious of Mercyhurst College?

RQ 2: How did the leadership of each of the female presidents affect the organizational culture and outcome of Mercyhurst?

RQ 3: How did the past female presidents vary from or conform to the leadership theories as viewed through a feminist lens?

Leadership Styles and Mercyhurst College’s Female Presidents

One aspect of this case study is to examine the leadership of the first seven women religious presidents beginning with Mother Borgia Egan, Sister de Sales Preston, Sister Agnes Marie Sweeney, Sister Xavier O’Neil, Sister Eustace Taylor, Sister Loretta McHale and Sister Carolyn Herrmann. Through the participants’ dialogue with the researcher and with use of archival data, the leadership theories were reflected in the presidencies of the past women religious presidents.

Research revealed that the availability of archival documents and printed materials were substantial for Mercyhurst founder, Mother Borgia Egan. Information was obtained through two primary source areas, memoirs and oral addresses, and through multiple secondary sources, such as books, newspapers, magazines, catalogs, public records, college records, state education reports, executive meeting minutes, biographies, photos and scrapbooks. For the last woman religious President Sister Carolyn Herrmann, the researcher found an adequate amount of secondary source information in newspapers, photos, public records, college documents and interviews, although there was no primary source
The personal data obtained for Sister Carolyn came from only three secondary sources; obituary notices, the Congregation’s entrance data and personal communication. No information in the form of memoirs, autobiographical information and personal correspondences were found for Sister Carolyn Herrmann.

The five Presidents serving ex officio between the terms of Egan and Herrmann had a limited amount of archival data, at most, each had four printed items: newspaper articles, including obituaries, religious community records, college files, and a few photos. Of particular note is the published essay, *The History of Mercyhurst College, Golden Anniversary 1926-1976*, written by Sister Eustace Taylor, herself a president from 1954 to 1960. She writes a brief documentary of the college from 1926 through 1976 and includes a “Chronology of Mercyhurst College” which serves as a guide in documenting dates and events.

The data obtained in the personal interviews, along with the limited amount of printed data, indicate that the five Presidents following Mother Borgia might at best be described as supportive and functioning in a maintenance style.

*Mother Borgia Egan’s (1926-27) Leadership Style*

The leadership theory reflected in the presidency of Mother Borgia Egan, founder and long-time, most influential dean of the college (1927-58), clearly show her to be a transformational leader. The style of the transformational leadership involves an exceptional form of influence that moves followers to perform more than what is usually expected of them and often manifests charismatic and visionary leadership (Northouse, 2004). The transformational
leader unites with others and forms a connection that increases the level of motivation for both the leader and the follower. Central to this style are emotional involvements, ideals and long-term goals. The trait theory identifies determination, intelligence and self-confidence (Northouse, 2004) as essential to a leader.

While Mother Borgia’s leadership style was transformational, her personality and carriage situate her well among those who demonstrate the trait approach to leadership, for she possessed a strongly individual set of properties (Jago, 1982) and special innate qualities that differentiated her (Bryman, 1992) from the other Sisters in the Mercy Congregation. Her personal traits included her large physical size, her extroverted and assertive personality, as well as strong written and oral talents, and political and financial astuteness.

Mother Borgia, because of her formal position within her congregation, was an assigned leader. She occupied the highest position in her religious order and held the formal title, “Mother Superior.” She thus derived power from her position. After her tenure as Mother Superior, during the time she continued as dean at the college, her on-going activities and the support she received from the congregation demonstrated that she had something of value to give which is characteristic of an emergent leader. For example, she retained the power to influence others as she selected her sister-faculty. Her leadership offered adaptation and lead to constructive change as the sister congregation moved their headquarters to Erie, Pennsylvania. The selection of the college site and the
Gothic building design suggest her proactive style and emotional involvement that would also place her among emergent leaders (Northouse, 2004).

The following reflections on Mother Borgia, offered during interviews by five participants demonstrate several leadership theories, especially those evident in the transformational style and traits approach. Margaret succinctly captures these theories, stating that “[Mother Borgia] had a pioneer spirit; an overwhelming desire and a formidable will.” Anne reflected on the affect of her stature: “Mother Borgia inspired awe, I’m not sure I’d say reverence but awe.” Catherine amplifies the power of Mother Borgia’s physical attributes and her natural demeanor that enhanced her leadership style. She recalled:

I mean, she was a big woman. You know, as she walked down the hall, the hall of Mercyhurst College, you couldn’t help but be aware of her tremendous presence. But she carried herself very well. At least, you know, in her early days and when I first knew her. And she took great advantage. I think she really played on it, and I don’t know if she did it early on, whether she played on that size. But she certainly was intimidating to a lot of people. Her very presence would have made people sit up and take notice.

Both Anne’s and Catherine’s recollections, immediately focusing on Mother Borgia’s physical size, certainly reflect the trait theory. They found that her bearing intimidated and unsettled others. Apparently, Mother Borgia possessed an awareness of her great size and learned to master her physical bearing so that she
made others aware of her presence. She had strength in her appearance and must have realized how others in her Congregation saw her.

Mother Borgia demonstrated this kind of determination in the initiatives she took, as when she brought the Mercy Congregation to Erie rather than let it remain in Titusville. Erie could support a Catholic women’s college whereas Titusville was dwindling in population and assets. In identifying self-confidence, as well as self-esteem, self-assurance, Northouse (2004) believes that one could make a difference as traits. These were dominating character traits of Mother Borgia. Her self-confidence permitted her to feel assured that her attempts to influence others were appropriate and right. Elizabeth commented, “She had a passion and the sheer dent of her will built Mercyhurst.”

According to Northouse (2004), “Intelligence or intellectual ability is positively related to leadership” (p.19) and Mother Borgia demonstrated her intellectual abilities as she went about securing financial support for the new college. Margaret acknowledges Mother Borgia’s intellectual qualities, calling her “astute and perceptive, especially with finances and politics.” Taylor (1976) writes that the college site took all the surplus money in the sisters’ treasury, yet Mother Borgia resisted pressure from the sisters to purchase only a portion. She bought the entire 75 acres. “That land would provide amply for the expansion of the college during the next fifty years and for the building of a Motherhouse and High School separate from the college buildings, not to mention the establishment of a new parish, St. Luke’s” (Taylor, 1976, p. 3).
According to Daft (2000), the impact of a charismatic personality in organizations has an emotional appeal to both “the mind and heart.” Daft (2002) states that, “used wisely and ethically, charisma can lift the entire organization’s level of performance. Charismatic leaders can raise people’s consciousness about new possibilities and motivate them to transcend their own interests for the sake of the team, department, or organization” (p. 143). In accordance with Daft’s beliefs, Mother Borgia was motivated by the dream and task of founding a Catholic woman’s college and she persuaded, inspired and motivated others to overextend themselves, move beyond obstacles, and make personal sacrifices. Reflecting on the sisters’ sacrifices, Elizabeth remarked that “through the construction years, individual Sisters, whether in their branch houses or parish schools, sent monies to the general Mercy treasury for the construction of the college. Every sister made sacrifices.” Margaret recalled Mother Borgia’s persuasive influence over the sisters when she “began this educational venture.” As she said,

Her great strength was her vision, her being a gambler at heart, her ability to persuade the rest of the Sisters to follow her in this venture. The need to persuade the Sisters was just a tremendous venture that I’m sure many of them had great trepidation about. She was obviously a great leader. She certainly was a great persuader...

This reflection focuses on the methods used to generate participation in supporting the development of a Catholic women’s college. Mother Borgia
interacted within the Congregation and secured the assistance needed to complete her undertaking.

As the elected Superior of the Mercy Congregation, she was also an assigned leader as viewed by her constituents. Her formal position within the religious order, as superior, elevated her status. Position power refers to the authority a person derives from a particular office or rank in a formal organizational system (Northouse, 2004). Thus, Mother Borgia’s leadership was assigned based on occupying the highest position within the religious organization. As a member of the Congregation, a woman religious professed a vow of obedience and the superior was the highest authority in the order. Marie notes, “I think Mother Borgia, as superior, was part of the religious community and obedience was expected.” Marie goes on to add:

...she could manage to make use of all of the assets of the community because she was a Superior, and the community had apparently approved all of the plans, I mean, approved building the college. Therefore, if there are any assets in the community, she could use them if they were needed. Although Mother Borgia occupied the highest position within the sister organization, she used her power, not for personal gain, but to benefit the collective goals of the Congregation in establishing the new college.

Clearly, Mother Borgia was visionary, charismatic, altruistic, motivational and persuasive as a transformational leader. While her constituents recognized her as an assigned leader, she can also be seen as an emergent leader because she had the good of the community in mind and saw the need for the education of
women in the society. As Mahoney (2002) has noted, in describing the factors that led to the decision to establish women’s colleges, a consensus was evident in the Catholic community that a woman needed to be educated and have independence in the home and society. Mother Borgia not only founded Mercyhurst College, she answered a social need and left a legacy to the collegial identity of Mercyhurst and its academic community.

Mother de Sales Preston’s (1927-33, 1939-45, 1948-54) Leadership Style

Mother de Sales Preston was elected superior of the Mercy Congregation and served three separate terms as president ex officio of Mercyhurst College during her three six-year terms of office beginning in 1927, 1939, and 1948. As a rule, the religious superior, as president ex officio of the College, appointed a sister-dean to supervise academic programs and financial affairs of the institution and to make day-to-day decisions. A 1927 College brochure lists Mother de Sales Preston as president of the College and Mother Borgia Egan as dean of Mercyhurst College. Marie remarks on the striking 39-year tenure as dean held by Mother Borgia which began when Mother de Sales appointed her dean:

“...after Mother Borgia became, after she was not the Mother Superior any longer, she was named the dean. And she retained that title, virtually until, well until her death.”

Mother de Sales’ supportive manner enabled Mother Borgia to enjoy a measure of credibility and longevity reminiscent of the trait approach. The two leaders were both congenial and complimentary. As Margaret noted of Mother de Sales, “I would say her laid-back personality probably led to her election as the
mother superior after the strong Mother Borgia.” Several recurrent words, “solicitous,” “trusting,” and “never critical,” seemed to sum up Mother de Sales’ leadership style. It was evident during the interviews that she was well liked by sister-participants. Anne noted that Mother de Sales “wanted the sisters each to have a private room, so that is when Preston Hall was built.” She realized that dormitory living, with four or five nuns in one room on the third floor of Old Main, “was not conducive to people that had to do studying.” In 1952 during her last term as superior, a separate convent was built; later it was named Preston Hall in honor of Mother de Sales.

Mother de Sales Preston’s administration showed a maintenance and strong supportive manner of leadership. As Elizabeth recalls, “[Mother de Sales] performed a balancing act between the Sisters of the Community and Mother Borgia and the new college.” Margaret offered a similar insight: “Mother de Sales would be [regarded] as a bridge... the one to whom you could go for sympathy, advice and understanding.” From this perspective, it appears that the sisters had not only made sacrifices to build the college but had endured many hardships which were mended and alleviated by Mother de Sales. The leadership theory demonstrated by Mother de Sales Preston was two-dimensional, displaying both the style and the situational theories. She facilitated the goal of a woman’s Catholic college as a task behavior and provided relationship behaviors as she assisted the members of the community to feel comfortable with themselves, with each other, and with the situation in which they found themselves (Northouse, 2004). Margaret remembered that:
The Sisters of Mercy, in those days, scrimped and scraped and fasted and went out and raised money every way they could to raise money to build Mercyhurst College so that whoever was the Mother Superior at the time, and therefore, the ex officio president, would have had to certainly encourage and promote this work of the community, which was very hard...infringed even the amount of food they got to eat. I would be sure that not all of the Sisters would have been totally behind this project. Although in general, the Sisters of Mercy did support and promote Mercyhurst College and I’m sure that it was very hard. And so, I would think that the Superior, Mother de Sales had to have a hand in helping.

Anne stressed that, although Mother de Sales was the community superior, she was a professional nurse and had minimal involvement with the college. She enjoyed her relationships with her constituents and radiated a genuine concern for people. She demonstrated a supportive behavior that involved mutual communication and responded with social and emotional support of the sisters. Northouse (2004) lists examples of supportive behaviors as asking for input, praising, solving problems, listening and sharing information about one’s self. Interestingly, the sister-participants spoke of Mother de Sales’s openness to sharing her personal stories of her teenage years when she raised eight brothers and sisters, worked as a bookkeeper and secretary to her father’s oil business, and maintained the family home, after her mother died. While the sister-participants observed Mother de Sales’ natural, reflective nature and ability to speak freely
about her past and other people, they made no mention of such confidences for any of the other presidents.

The situational approach, as illustrated in the model developed by Blanchard (1985) and Blanchard et al. (1985) called the Situational Leadership II model, is a refinement of the original situational leadership model developed by Hersey and Blanchard in 1969. The dynamics of situational leadership can be classified into four distinct categories: (S1) is a directing style, (S2) is a coaching approach, (S3) is a supporting approach, and (S4) is a delegating approach (Northouse, 2004, p. 88). Mother de Sales Preston demonstrated a supportive approach (S3), which requires the leader to take a high supportive-low directive style. The leader focuses on supportive behaviors that enhance subordinates skills around the task to be accomplished. “A S3 leader is quick to give recognition and social support to subordinates. A leader using this style provides subordinates control for day-to-day decisions but remains available to facilitate problem-solving” (Northouse, 2004, p. 90). Confirming her leadership style as highly supportive but not strongly directive, Elizabeth remarked,

Mother de Sales had, you know, when we’re talking about leadership qualities, Mother de Sales was a very loving lady, and that’s why she was elected to be Superior of the community because she was, she was a nurse. She was down in our hospital in DuBois most of her life. But she had to be up here while she was the Superior for those several years. But she, you know, I wouldn’t see leadership in her. She was a loving, kind lady whom the Sisters thought very highly of, but there was, there was no need, there
was no need for leadership in her. You know, we were Sisters in a community.

Marie, in effect, noted her assigned leadership role and her willingness to allow the dean of the college to make decisions now accorded to the president; “I think Mother de Sales’ leadership style as far as the college was concerned was to have regular sessions with Mother Borgia and give general approval to what she was doing and let her go ahead.” As a leader, Mother de Sales promoted the personal worth of her constituents and encouraged good social relations (Blake & Mouton, 1964). Perhaps it was her professional nursing skills that provided her constituents with a great deal of nurturance and support that came to characterize her.

The extent to which Mother de Sales was thought of as the superior of the Congregation but not as the president of the College was expressed by Anne:

Sister de Sales was elected to be the Superior of the Sisters of Mercy.

And therefore, the Superior of the Sisters of Mercy was more or less President, although we’d never really called her that. It was later that they put the pictures out and said they were Presidents, but they didn’t have much to do with the college. Mother de Sales was a nurse, she didn’t know anything about college. So, she kept her hands off.

Margaret remarked similarly that Mother de Sales, as president ex officio, gave Mother Borgia independence to continue with the development and growth of the college:

I would say most of the Sisters who were Presidents, at first, ex officio, let Mother Borgia do her thing, yet, and I suppose one of her, one of Mother
de Sales strengths was having to listen to Mother Borgia to continue to
develop the college.

It appeared that as Mother de Sales’ successor, Mother Xavier may have been
recruited to complete further plans of Mother Borgia in building and securing
Mercyhurst College.

*Mother Xavier O’Neil’s (1933-39) Leadership Style*

The leadership theory reflected in the presidency of Mother Xavier O’Neil
is best described by the contingency theory. This theory provides for effectively
matching the leader to the appropriate situation within the organization (Fiedler &
Chemers, 1974). This theory is called “contingency” because a leader’s
effectiveness relies upon how well the style of the leader fits the circumstances
and is able to “adjust the style depending on factors in a situation” (Daft, 2002).

In developing the contingency theory, Fiedler (1964) analyzed the styles of
leaders and found he could make empirically grounded generalizations about
which styles were positive and which were deficient for a particular
organizational situation (Northouse, 2004). In essence, successful leadership
depends on complementing a leader’s style to the proper setting.

Northouse (2004) notes that “situations can be characterized by assessing
three factors: leader-member relations, task structure and position power” (p.
110). Leader-member relations refer to the group atmosphere and attitude; task
structure refers to the degree to which the requirements of the task are clear;
position power refers to the amount of authority a leader has and includes the
legitimate power acquired as a result of the position held in an organization.
(Northouse, 2004). In the case of Mother Xavier, when she assumed leadership, the sister Congregation was committed to establishing Mercyhurst College. The task structure was the sisters’ collective efforts to provide support for the entire college project.

As a contingency leader, Mother Xavier had taken up the task of assisting in the establishment of Mercyhurst College. In the depression era in which monies were scarce, there were few options to secure the required funds, yet Mother Xavier met the demands of the situation and she demonstrated a “predictive” power as she influenced her wealthy family in securing the finances required by Mother Borgia.

Reflections cited by five participants during the interviews perceived Mother Xavier as a benefactor and her presidency as timely. According to Elizabeth, “Mother Xavier O’Neil certainly aided and abetted Mother Borgia’s cause because her family had money.” Catherine also supported this view: “she was in accord with Mother Borgia and sustained the growth of the college. During the hardest of times, her family provided monies for the chapel and tower.”

The funds to build the chapel and tower were made available by James O’Neil, brother of Mother Xavier O’Neil and Sister Regis O’Neil. Thus, the O’Neil family was able to complete the original building plans of the college as well as support the college’s growth within the early years. Margaret confirms the persuasive role Mother Xavier played in securing the monies for the building,
which supported not only the goals of Mother Borgia but aided the financial situation of the Congregation:

I’m sure Mother Borgia would have persuaded them. It was in the best interest of the community for them to try to gain access to some of that O’Neil money, and they did because...well, it built the chapel and the tower of Mercyhurst. So, probably I’m sure she [Mother O’Neil] must have been in accord with the goals of Mother Borgia and would have supported the things that Mother Borgia was trying to do. And, she [Mother O’Neil] came to the rescue with her family.

Elizabeth spoke of Mother Xavier’s initiative, especially her talent for obtaining the funds necessary to build, and assumed that such initiative carried over into other venues of her leadership:

Mother Xavier had some firmness because she took the initiative and pursued requesting from her brother monies or support of monies to help get things built. She knew that he had the financial ability to do that. She must have had some go-gettedness, for doing that to get monies and help from her brother. I’m sure she also did it in other activities while she was President to make sure the school continued.

In reflecting on Mother Xavier’s role as president, Anne too acknowledges her acquisition of necessary monies; however, she turned to a recurrent idea about the ex officio presidents—that most of them did not assume the role and responsibilities of a college president:
They got the money from him (James O’Neil) and his wife (Ovra O’Neil) to build the chapel. There was interest in the whole place. But as far as the running of the college was concerned; none of those Superiors had anything to do with the running of the college. Mother Borgia all the way, until Sister Eustace.

Mother Xavier’s leadership at Mercyhurst College clearly depended on the situation, especially the financial needs, showing her to be a contingent leader.

Moreover, it is evident from the interviews that Mother Xavier’s very demeanor signified her status—that is, her wealthy status. Anne stated that Mother Xavier was “a tower of strength, stately, distant and reserved. She moved in the circles of the wealthy yet supported Mother Borgia and the college.” Elizabeth focused more on her personality, stating, “She wasn’t a warm person that I could see. She was more dictatorial and she wasn’t open to democracy.” Another contributor, Marie, simply stated, “She was aristocratic.” All these views of Mother Xavier’s status and behavior point to the area paternalism/maternalism within the contingency theory (Northouse, 2004). In referring to this type of leader, Northouse pinpoints the leadership style characteristic of Mother Xavier: “the benevolent dictator who acts gracious but does so for the purpose of goal accomplishment. In essence the paternalistic/maternalistic style treats people as if they were disassociated with the task” (Northouse, 2004, p. 71-72).

The style approach, also evidenced in the leadership description of Mother Xavier, “focuses exclusively on what leaders do and how they act” (Northouse, 2004, p. 65). Mother Xavier provided “initiating structure” (Stogdill, 1974). That
is, she performed task behaviors “including such acts as organizing work, giving structure to the work context, defining role responsibilities and scheduling work” (Northouse, 2004, p. 67). Communicating with subordinates was not emphasized except for the purpose of giving instructions about the task. This style was result driven or authority compliant. “People are regarded as tools and the leader is often seen as controlling, demanding, hard-driving and overpowering” (Northouse, 2004, p. 69).

Mother Xavier, according to the interview participants, seemed to lack behaviors showing consideration. Northouse (2004) defines “consideration behaviors” essentially as a relationship behavior such as camaraderie between leader and followers. Mother Xavier created a distinction between herself and the sisterhood. She promoted a high concern for task accomplishment and a low concern for interpersonal relationships. Her demeanor produced a dictatorial, arrogant and condescending climate. As Marie said, “Mother Xavier was aristocratic.”

**Mother Agnes Marie Sweeney’s (1945-48) Leadership Style**

Quite evidently, the leadership theory reflective of Mother Agnes Marie’s administration is the leader-member exchange theory (LMX). Within this theory, the leader develops high-quality exchanges with a few followers, rather than with all of the organization’s members (Northouse, 2004). In Mother Agnes Marie’s term, there was a high degree of reciprocity between the Mother Superior and an “in-group” of sisters. This leadership style perpetuates inequities and negative
implications for members outside of the in-group and lessens a network of
partnerships throughout an organization (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995).

Anne’s recollection indicated that a dictatorial climate continued in the convent,
not because of Mother Agnes Marie’s leadership style but because an in-group of
two sisters influenced her decision-making and assumed a measure of control:

She had two very good friends, sisters, who were very, what do you call it,
dictatory. That isn’t the right word. Uh, opinionated. And they seemed
to... oh they were, and they were her work...now, she worked with them.
They were her advisors; they were on her so-called “council.” But there
were things that she did that were not “her” and not to the liking of the
nuns. Mother Agnes Marie had a charisma about her..., but when she got
to be President, because of the influence of the two, things turned around.
She didn’t seem to be the same lady anymore, because of their influence.
I would have called her very loving, kind and warm until she was elected
Superior and then these two had her mm-hmm...strangled.

Corroborating Anne’s insight, Margaret referred to Mother Agnes Marie’s
decision to move the motherhouse back to Titusville from Erie and put one of her
two friends in charge of the sisters living and working at the College: “Mother
Agnes Marie made efforts with some of her friends to, uh... you know, make
some shifts in our community in terms of education of young sisters... As for her
friends, she aided and abetted their causes.”

As far as Mother Agnes Marie’s affect on the college is concerned, five of
the participants clearly agreed that she had none. Anne commented, “She really
is unknown at the college.” Margaret similarly noted, “There is no evidence of Mother Agnes Marie on this campus.” And while Marie said, “During Agnes Marie’s time there were no accomplishments at the college.” Elizabeth flatly stated, “I would say her influence on the college was almost nil.” In an observation that sums up these responses in a telling way, Catherine reflected, “She has no memorials, commemorative plaques or anything named after her, actually nothing here at the college.”

These participants indicated a lack of sensitivity and fairness to the congregation as a whole during Mother Agnes Marie’s administration, even though Margaret believed that Mother Agnes Marie was acting out of character. Julie, deliberate in her choice of words, spoke carefully: “Mother Agnes Marie was rather demanding. Because she did a lot of things that a lot of people didn’t like. I mean, not everybody was happy with some of the things she asked us to do in our lifestyle.” Her administration was described from the perspective of negative relationships. Consistently, the interview participants revealed exchanges that showed constituents feeling alienated or ostracized, accomplishing less, and failing to participate or support the organization.

Elizabeth expressed her sentiments concerning challenges that occurred within the community of sisters, especially among those who served in the college:

There sometimes were challenges between Mother Borgia and Mother Agnes Marie. There was the separation of the jobs; the community and the college. This may have created some challenge as she would
have been in charge of the sisters. Mother Borgia would have been very much interested in the education of the sisters, and sometimes there may have been challenges there...

With some hesitation, Marie illuminated the situation that existed in the congregation when its governance and authority ended up in Erie by virtue of Mother Borgia’s influence, not by a decision of the community:

...to put you more into context of the whole community. When the Sisters of Mercy moved up to Erie, one of the things that moved with them was the Superior. So, we were acting as though the headquarters were in Erie. They really were still on the books as Titusville. Therefore, one of the things that Mother Agnes Marie wanted was to regularize our authority and she moved back to Titusville. She was trying to get things in the right place because during the time of Mother Borgia and Mother de Sales, the whole Novitiate was up here in Erie and it belonged in Titusville.

Archival data written by Sister Mary Lawrence Franklin (1960) supports the fact that Mother Agnes Marie and her council returned to Titusville, Pennsylvania, and resided at the motherhouse for the last 18 months of her one term as superior. In light of leadership theory, Mother Agnes Marie’s style was maintenance, that is, she maintained the convent lifestyle of the community, and it was limited in its support of the development of the college.

*Mother Eustace Taylor*’s (1954-60) *Leadership Style*

The leadership theory reflected in the presidency of Mother Eustace Taylor is clearly the transactional approach. The transactional leader is efficient
at traditional management functions such as planning, budgeting and other impersonal aspects of job performance. This type of leader has a commitment to “following the rules,” as well as to maintaining stability within an organization rather than promoting change. Frequently, constituents receive rewards or recognition for job performance while leaders benefit from the completion of tasks (Daft, 2002).

Mother Eustace was known for her intellectual ability and her rigor, both as a leader in the congregation and in the college. Anne, expressing her sentiments about Mother Eustace, tapped her finger to emphasize her words:

She was a transfer to the Sisters of Mercy of Erie from Pittsburgh, and she was extremely bright, extremely well-read and very, very strict. She was unbending and tough. She laid down the laws and she checked on the girls... If any girl went to the town’s curb without a trench coat on, she was checking.

Catherine, agreeing with Anne, added that she was well informed as a leader: “I would have to say that Mother Eustace probably led by knowledge, that she would have been informed or had read or become acquainted with whatever the situation would have presented ... presented to her.”

Mother Eustace was actively involved with the college during her whole religious life, beginning as a graduate of the first class of Mercyhurst and ending as a professor of English. In fact, past 80 years of age, she taught occasional classes in Shakespearean literature. Her booklet, *The History of Mercyhurst College* (1926-1976), written for the 50th anniversary of the college, was used as a
seminal text for this study. While deeply committed to the college, Mother
Eustace’s transactional leadership style focused only on the status quo and daily
operations of the college, as well as the congregation. According to Marie, the
study of science suffered while Mother Eustace was ex officio president, for, as
straightforwardly stated: “Mother Eustace was stiff. There were some points on
which she would be very rigid. She didn’t move an inch on some things. Eustace
promoted literature, music and the arts. She did little in the sciences. She put us
back years, because of her rigidity and failure to move forward.”

Characteristic of transactional leadership, her incentives to motivate
people were based on reciprocity. As Anne explained, she chose and endorsed
preferred constituents: “She selected and promoted certain people over other
people. In other words, she had people that did her bidding, you know, polished
her shoes. They did all of the little menial things for her.” That she had her
favorites, Madeline verified: “Eustace was an excellent English teacher. You
know the girls would come back to the alumna reunions, girls that had her in the
‘30s and ‘40s. They didn’t particularly like her. She was very strict. She was
cold. You didn’t get close to her.” Catherine bluntly concluded: “Mother Eustace
had a superior sense of the religious life, that is, she was better than other people.
She was rigid and had the attitude, ‘it’s my way or the highway.’” No matter
what the situation, she was concerned about the obedience of the sisters and
believed in the rectitude of her authority. Long after her leadership years had
ended, her sense of authority and knowledge of the college’s past gained her the
respect of lay colleagues who turned to her in order to understand the legacy of the college.

*Mother Loretta McHale’s (1960-63) Leadership Style*

The leadership theory, reflected in the ex officio presidency of Mother Loretta, is best described by the skills approach. This model is characterized as a capability model because it scrutinizes the link between a leader’s knowledge and skills and the leader’s performance. Leadership capabilities are developed over time through education and experience (Mumford, Zaccaro, Harding, et al., 2000). This model “describes how career experiences and environmental influences play a direct or indirect role in leadership performance ... Unlike personality traits, skills are competencies that individuals can learn or develop” (Northouse, 2004, p. 50). Mother Loretta’s leadership, even without a natural ability, improved with practice.

In various ways, Mother Loretta was just like “one of the sisters.” She had strong relational qualities, seeing the community as her family. In particular, Madeline reflected on her endearing qualities and desire for the sisters, as well as the students, at Mercyhurst to have a home:

Mercyhurst was her home, her life’s work and all those associated with the school were her family. I know she was much adored. I want to say adored, loved, cared for by many, many alums because...I know this because she would get letters or communication or somebody needed something or needed information or whatever and she would fulfill their
need or write to them or whatever the situation would be. I would see her as a fair person, with some tenderness, but not being taken advantage of.

Even a superior and president, she often acted as a housemother, for like other college sisters, she lived in the dorm, serving as Dean of Residents. As Anne said, “She was a dorm mother or whatever you call it ...She was up all hours of the night making sure the kids didn’t leave their lights on, you know, or sneak out or anything.” While reminiscing about her ordinary behaviors, Anne also recalled her intellectual strength, noting her foresight and the social justice stances: “She was the first one to talk to me about getting rid of the death penalty...She was an activist in regard that she knew government, she was involved in every aspect of city, state, national, and also any politics that were going on at the college.”

While Mother Loretta was well educated, she was not trained to be a leader. By experience, she had to acquire the skills necessary for leadership, and experience taught her what was necessary for the future of the college, as well as the high school. She acted on the Middle States review, which recommended that the college and seminary (high school) be separated. While Mother Loretta made the decision to build a high school on the southwest corner of the campus based on that accreditation recommendation, Marie recalled the decision in light of Mother Loretta’s care for her religious community:

The college was very important to Mother Loretta as was her community. She realized that the Sisters needed to have a place to live separate from the college and Mercyhurst Seminary needed to move out of the first floor
of Old Main into its own facility. The outcome was a new high school and motherhouse. Margaret sums up well Mother Loretta’s skill style of leadership: “Her service paved the way for her successor to reach effective and needed change to the College.” During her short term of office, she reorganized the by-laws of the college which resulted in separating the office of mother general or superior from the president of the college, preparing the way for Sister Carolyn Herrmann who was the first Mercyhurst College president not to be a mother superior of the Mercy congregation.

*Sister Carolyn Herrmann’s (1963-72) Leadership Style*

The leadership theories reflected in the presidency of Sister Carolyn Herrmann, are servant leadership and transformational leadership. Servant leadership perpetuates itself through service. Servant leaders have identifiable characteristics, for they are approachable, persuasive and creative. They have a strong sense of community spirit as well as strong altruistic and ethical overtones. Burns (1978) finds a transformational leader “engages with others and creates a connection that raises the level of motivation and morality in both the leader and the follower” (Northouse, 2004, p. 170). The transformational leader is attentive to the followers needs and tries to assist followers in reaching their fullest potential. The notion of “charisma” is synonymous with transformational leadership. House (1976) suggests that charismatic leaders “act in unique ways that have specific charismatic effects on their followers ...the personal characteristics of a charismatic leader include being dominant, having a strong
desire to influence others, being self-confident, and having a strong sense of one’s own moral values” (cited in Northouse, 2004, p. 171). House (1976) contends that when followers feel distress or find themselves in stressful situations, these followers seek leaders to deliver them from difficulties. The charismatic leader is special and guides the followers with their vision.

It was evident that each of the participants’ responses applied to Sister Carolyn in her capacity as president of Mercyhurst College. Madeline equated Sister Carolyn’s role with that of Mother Borgia: “Sister Carolyn was an outstanding individual. She was a pivotal figure in the history of Mercyhurst. She and Mother Borgia were equals.” While intimating the challenges she encountered as president, Elizabeth, with a broad smile and without any apparent knowledge of transformational leadership literature, described Sister Carolyn as such: “Carolyn was so competent and gifted. She appealed to so many and she had charismatic qualities. She was a visionary. She had high values and she could motivate others to support the greater good. It wasn’t easy for her, but she did it.” In a soft, low, almost reverential voice, Catherine acknowledged: “Sister Carolyn was special and had such high standards. I respected her very much. We [that is, the college and its community] were in good hands with her.”

The few written documents, describing Sister Carolyn’s leadership, verify the quick, positive insights of the participants, making it easy to identify her as a transformational leader. A testimony by an unknown author found in The Erie Times News (1996) calls attention to her leadership for and among women: “She was not only a great educational and spiritual leader, but a wonderful woman.
She had a vision not only for her congregation and the Erie community, but for all women.” A second testimonial, unauthored, in *The Erie Times News* (1996) characterizes her servant role: “She was one of those people who were never remote. If you knew her, she was friend. She had the gift of presence to a person and was never too busy for anybody.”

During Sister Carolyn’s presidency, she appointed the first two laymen to the board of trustees and began capital fundraising. She increased the number of lay faculty, introduced a faculty senate enabling the lay and the sister faculty to share a voice, and brought significant changes to the academic curriculum and calendar. Anticipating educational trends, she recognized the value for coeducation, bringing men onto the campus of Mercyhurst. (The sisters moved out of Preston Hall in order for it to become the first male dormitory.) She also developed the alumni association. She oversaw the construction of a library, a dormitory, a set of student apartments, and a large arts and science facility. The presence of the laity and the introduction of coeducation together proved to be a turning point for the college, leading to its growth and giving it a future. Indeed, Sister Carolyn was a transformational and servant leader.

**Leaders Impact on Organizational Culture**

The second research question of this study queried the effect that the first seven presidents had on shaping and influencing the organization’s culture. As founded by an order of women religious the College was, of course, characterized by a strong set of Catholic values and beliefs, rites and rituals, as well as by
identifiable artifacts. When the by-laws of the College were revised in 1972, at the end of Sister Carolyn’s tenure, the Sisters had a Preamble included that stated:

As the direct responsibility of the Sisters of Mercy, Mercyhurst College has acquired stature as a private institution whose educational philosophy is best described as Catholic Liberal Arts. Two tasks are implied in the term: the maintenance of a curriculum that forms minds to a right view of the universe and of each person’s place in it as a social and intelligent being; and the creation of a milieu in which Judaeo-Christian values are the accepted norms of behavior (By-Laws of Mercyhurst College).

For years the Catholic values were visible in the liturgy on campus, when the student body attended Sunday mass dressed in academic gowns. A priest resided on campus as a chaplain; a priest taught courses in Catholic theology, until a sister received her Ph.D. in theology. Significantly from its early years, Mercyhurst had an ecumenical spirit—Jewish girls, for example, were among the first graduates of the seminary (high school).

Although Mercyhurst was never conceived of as a girls’ finishing school, students received training in certain standards of decorum. A member of the home economics department, for example, taught the young ladies etiquette and other social graces and hospitality was an esteemed value. Once a week the students donned formal attire for an evening meal where they were instructed in the proprieties of setting, serving, and hosting a formal dinner. Mercyhurst girls were renown for always wearing hats and white gloves whenever they ventured off campus to downtown Erie. Many such practices continued into the cultural
revolution of the late 60’s. In her response, Margaret pointed to the foundations of the organizational culture:

Mother Borgia certainly imposed on the college her ideas about education, particularly education of young women in those days, and so, sure, she set the tone for what would become the culture of Mercyhurst. She had her early companions, um, but I’m sure that culture was shaped to a large extent by the fact they were Sisters of Mercy, our culture was shaped by our founder, Catherine McAuley. One of the things we hear about Catherine McAuley was that she thought every Sister of Mercy should be a perfect lady. That was a hope for Mother Borgia.

The culture of the Sisters of Mercy with its own roots in the legacy of Catherine McAuley obviously defined the culture of the organization. The Sisters were imbued with Mother McAuley’s belief that the good of society would best be served by the proper instruction of young women.

Mercyhurst’s early cultural personality (McNamara, 1999) was manifested also in its various sets of artifacts. The most striking feature on the hillside landscape of southern Erie is Old Main, the original English Gothic structure. That building, complemented by the construction of the Chapel and Tower, brought about by Mother Xavier O’Neil, indicated, as Anne observed, that both Mother Borgia and Mother Xavier “promoted the arts and wanted Mercyhurst to be a cultural center for the city and surrounding communities.” A number of the Sisters of Mercy in Erie were educated in the arts to teach at the college. As one participant has noted, Mother Eustace seemed to pay more attention to the study
of literature than to science. The first sister-faculty contained a number of artists, musicians, and dramatists. In the lore of the sisters, it has been said that every Mercy convent had a piano. Music lessons were a source of financial support to the convents.

Although neither Mother de Sales Preston nor Mother Agnes Marie Sweeney were thought to influence the organizational culture of the college, it should be noted that their concern for the well being of the sisters would have affected the college since the whole congregation of the Sisters of Mercy themselves were committed to building and developing the college. As Madeline reflected: “I think Mother Agnes Marie was doing [tasks] like Mother de Sales, being more interested in the Sister community than in the college.” In the city of Erie, the sisters are often still called the Sisters of Mercyhurst.

Each one of the sister-presidents in her own way maintained a commitment to educating sisters for service at Mercyhurst College. Along with Mother Borgia, Mother Eustace stewarded the education of the sisters of community. Anne noted in particular that “Eustace was involved in educating the nuns, you know, and selecting faculty that were strong and excellent teachers.” In 1970 when the Sisters of Mercy celebrated their 100th anniversary in the Diocese of Erie, one-tenth of its 175 professed members taught at the college, with seven of them holding doctorates in philosophy. Among the Sisters of Mercy, the Erie sisters have held education for all their members as one of their highest values. The sisters not only wanted to make Mercyhurst an excellent academic institution, they wanted it to serve children in Catholic schools and to enable young women
who could not ordinarily afford a college education to have an opportunity of
attending Mercyhurst. With these purposes in mind, Mother Eustace introduced
the Cadet Teaching Program in 1954. That program accelerated the preparation
of students by offering them summer school classes, which, in turn, enabled them
to teach within two academic years and three summers. For nearly 30 years, cadet
teachers went out to parochial schools around the diocese with little cost to the
parishes that paid the students’ tuition, provided them room and board in the
home of a parishioner, and gave them a modest stipend.

The organizational culture began to shift in the 1960’s following the
changes brought to the Catholic Church and religious congregations by the
Second Vatican Council. When asked about how Mother Borgia had shaped the
culture, Elizabeth spoke of the challenge of maintaining the values of the Sisters
of Mercy at the college through the board of trustees which is largely a lay board
today:

Mother Borgia had strength. She was a very strong woman, especially in
her ideas. I see her values all of the time. And we keep hoping that...and
that’s why we want to have sisters on the board for the trustees. We have,
I think five maybe, five Sisters on the board and we want them to be on
the board so that our values, which were her values, would be continued.

Both Mother Loretta and Sister Carolyn were instrumental in bringing the laity to
the board. As Madeline noted, Mother Loretta introduced the concept of a lay
board and brought about the separation of the sisters, the high school, and the
college into separate entities:
Mother Loretta affected the culture and outcome of Mercyhurst. She brought the lay people into the leadership positions of the Board of Trustees, and she felt it was very important for the Sisters to have a place to live independent of the college. She conducted a campaign for the Motherhouse and the high school in her time. She encouraged the separation of the college and the high school because Middle States was recommending it.

Sister Carolyn Herrmann furthered the role of the laity at the college by expanding the lay board of trustees and hiring laity, and among them non-Catholics, on the faculty. It is evident even in the change of title that significant changes were occurring in the order. While Sister Carolyn used the title “Sister” as president, it is recorded in the 1968 Chapter of the Erie Sisters of Mercy that the title of “Mother” would no longer be used to designate the leader of the congregation. Thus, Mother Loretta was the last sister-president to carry that little. In photographs of the past sister-presidents after 1968, a series of changes is evident in the sisters’ clothing. After 1968, the sisters changed their dress from the traditional full habit to a modified habit, then to lay dress, all within a matter of three or four years. Sister Carolyn was the only sister-president to have her official presidential portrait done in lay attire.

Sister Carolyn not only pioneered change at Mercyhurst, she encouraged the city of Erie to participate more in the life of the college. In *The Erie Times News*, dated December 29, 1996, a senior vice president of a local industry stated:
I used to marvel at Sister Carolyn’s ability to enlist the greater Erie community in her dreams for Mercyhurst. Sister Carolyn brought an ecumenical perspective to her presidency that resulted in enhanced growth and which opened the gates for all of Erie to be stimulated and inspired. Her sense of humor and wisdom combined with her bold spirit created a true leader.”

Indeed Sister Carolyn’s administration affirmed both the “ecumenical spirit” and a “bold spirit” that existed in the college’s culture from its beginning.

To date, Sister Carolyn Herrmann stands as the last Sister of Mercy to serve as its president. This is not to say that the possibly of another Sister of Mercy serving in the presidency has vanished; however, given the current demographics in the orders of women religious, such as the Sisters of Mercy, where the numbers of members in long-time established congregations have diminished (Morey, 2002), the likelihood of a Sister of Mercy becoming president of Mercyhurst appears to be remote. The Sisters of Mercy look to their co-workers and the laity to carry on their values and beliefs and the legacy of their founder Catherine McAuley.

Through the participants’ dialogue and use of data triangulation, even though the leadership theories identified in the presidencies of the past women presidents showed dissimilarities, the core of the organizational culture of Mercyhurst did not in fact change. As Schein (1992) notes, the moral values of leader and followers directs organizational behavior. As Margaret stated: “…but I’m sure that the culture was shaped to a large extent by the fact they were Sisters
of Mercy.” The sisters’ values supported a continuation in their moral leadership and influence.

Leadership in Relation to Feminist Themes

In addition to the impact of the leadership style and organizational culture, this study examined three feminist themes which were arrived at through a review of the interviews, written memoirs, published articles and organizational newsletters: (1) collaborative venture; (2) connectedness and (3) shared values. Sergiovanni (1994) suggests that thinking of an organization as a ‘community’ emphasizes the importance of shared values, collaboration and interpersonal relationships. The notion of shared values promotes a dialogue among all participants linking ideals and ethics and the organization’s culture and challenges. It supports moral leadership and fosters an atmosphere of mutual trust at all levels of the organization. As a transformational leader, Mother Borgia undertook her venture with the congregation; she worked in and with the ‘community’ of sisters and their shared values in building a Catholic institution of higher education for women. Her leadership style, thus, shows an accord with the three feminist themes identified in the triangulated data and interviews.

The term “collaborative venture” focused on the “sharing of power and tangible resources” in an organization (Natalle, Papa & Graham, 1994, p. 262). “Collaborative” or “joint” venture partnerships develop an understanding of each other, agree on collaborative objectives and create a climate that forms an alliance. Mother Borgia’s transformational leadership style and her desire to create a women’s college coincided with this feminist viewpoint.
A case of a collaborative venture, in a much broader sense, was the Mercy Congregation’s support of Mother Borgia and the members of her Council to undertake the ambitious project of relocating their headquarters to Erie, Pennsylvania. Taylor (1976), who writes of Mother Borgia and Sister Mary Alice Weber, the college’s first Registrar, focuses on the complementary nature of their undertaking: “They worked perfectly as complements to one another, each using her talents to shape a program that would identify Mercyhurst as a place where quality was the end toward which every effort was directed (p.11).

An additional, striking example of a collaborative venture is seen in the formation of a sister-faculty. According to an unsigned notation found in the Sister Mary Lawrence Franklin Archives collaboration occurred within the sisters’ community:

Mother Borgia selected a Sister-Faculty prior to the college’s inception.

Young sisters were sent to graduate classes at Catholic University, Duquesne University, Michigan University, Notre Dame and the University of Pittsburgh. It was a depressed time and few women attended graduate classes. But the Sisters had an understanding that their mission was to teach. Their collaborative objective was to be the Sister-Faculty at the new college and they had an alliance with their religious community.

The second theme “connectedness,” is the belief that one should experience satisfaction from the relationships to people, places and things. Such connections include feeling an important part of a group, feeling one belongs to something, and feeling a connection to a past or a heritage. An example of connectedness
within the religious organization is evident in the archival documents of Saint Catharine Cemetery, Crawford County, Titusville, Pennsylvania. So important was this connection that, according to a 1901 account written by an unidentified St. Titus Church cleric, the bodies of the pioneers of the Sisters of Mercy in Titusville were transferred to a new cemetery:

This beautiful cemetery was presented to St. Titus’ Congregation in 1898 by Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Seep. They purchased a large tract of land about two miles north of Titusville on the Titusville-Hydetown street-car line and they spared neither money nor time to make it one of the finest cemeteries in the State and also provided for its upkeep. A large plot of it was given to the Sisters of Mercy and in the fall of 1900 the remains of the pioneer Sisters were transferred from Calvary to St. Catharine’s Cemetery. Mother M. Nolasco Kratzer had died on Sept. 8, 1872 with the other pioneer Sisters passing before 1898.

With regard to Mercyhurst itself, the connectedness theme is clearly evidenced in the means taken to receive the congregation’s approval of architectural plans for the building. The process to select the best building design was a collective-democratic approach, a characteristic of feminist organizing. Archival information in the Merciad (1943) noted that the sisters spent two years studying the model of the architect’s plan. Expression of opinions of the sisters was encouraged and the final building plans were agreed upon.
Additional evidence of this theme of connectedness is apparent in the writings of Taylor (1976) in the published essay, *The History of Mercyhurst College*:

The Sisters, too, despite the Depression, continued to send from wherever they were working and living in the Diocese to the general treasury all they could manage to save from their earnings—thus aiding the project they had undertaken when the decision to build Mercyhurst was made (p. 8).

Within a few short years of Mercyhurst’s founding in 1926, the Great Depression in America began in 1929 with the Stock Market crash and continued for a decade. It was a daunting time and the estimated cost of $500,000 was a significant sum for the Mercy Sisters to procure for the construction of a college. “Mother Borgia could work with people; could win their confidence and inner consent without pressure; men of the business, professional and academic worlds readily gave her their admiration” (Taylor, 1976, p. 6).

The feminist theory of organizing strives toward finding more supportive solutions to organizational problems (Gibson & Schullery, 2000). This is referred to as “cooperative enactment.” Memoirs of Mother Borgia, as recorded by Sister Mary John Bosco (1956), provide an example of a supportive solution to the financial obstacles faced by the Community. This support came in several ways, that is, from the Bishop, the banker, and the sisters themselves. Mother Borgia recalls:

After studying carefully the income of the Community, it was shown to the satisfaction of the Bishop that the Community could handle this
indebtedness. To make the burden of debt as easy as possible, the Bishop insisted that we pay not more than four per cent interest. This was a difficult rate to get as money was very tight at the time. Banks asked six percent as a minimum. In our eagerness to get started, the Community accepted a suggestion of Mr. Frank Wallace, the President of the Second National Bank of Erie, that we float a bond issue of four hundred thousand dollars that would pay four per cent interest. He would personally assume responsibility for the bonds, i.e. guarantee their payment.... This meant [the sisters’] constant and tiresome walking on the streets of Erie and other cities.... to Mr. Wallace, who negotiated them, were made at five per cent interest.

Mother Borgia’s ability to enlist the cooperation of representative of the ecclesial and financial institutions, as well as the congregation themselves, demonstrates her skill in negotiating these three thematic concepts of the feminist lens.

Leadership Theories Viewed through a Feminist Lens

Research Question # 3 posed, “How did the past female presidents vary from or conform to the leadership theories as viewed through a feminist lens?” This question was applied individually to each of the first seven women religious presidents. A review of the personal interviews and archival documents demonstrate the innate power of the organizational culture of the Sisters of Mercy in Erie, for the college continued to prosper, experiencing no dramatic setbacks or growth spurts during the administration of any sister-president, no matter what kind of leadership style she manifested. The study of the sister-presidents,
beginning with Mother Borgia Egan and ending with Sister Carolyn Herrmann, identifies both as transformational leaders. Various authors, as noted in Chapter 2 of the study, have characterized transformational leaders not only as visionary, charismatic, or inspirational leaders, the authors have also specifically designated their transformational style of leadership as a “feminist” style. The other five ex officio sister-leaders occupying the presidency have been categorized in view of different traditional leadership theories according to their natural talents.

*Mother Borgia Egan*

In founding Mercyhurst, Mother Borgia had the support of an all female setting in the Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy. Special bonds were created between the sisters and the college during its initial building and into the future when it served as the motherhouse of the community. As a woman of her time, Mother Borgia expected women to marry and a woman’s college education to serve her family. According to Marie, Mother Borgia wanted to prepare women for the society of their times and give them a measure of independence to manage on their own if they were left without the support of a husband:

Borgia had in the back of her mind that most of the women who went to the college would one day marry and have a home. She felt that they might have a home where the husband was important in business or something like that. So, she wanted all of the students to be properly dressed on occasion. She wanted them to know how to entertain. She wanted all of these things. So, she got them into the system in some way.
Social events were built into their lives. And in case something happened to the husband, the woman would be prepared to go on.

As a transformational leader, Mother Borgia had the capacity to motivate, encourage, and inspire as well as provide a purpose for them to attend the college. She promoted cooperation in the venture of founding the college and trusted the sisters to maintain the college into the future, thus creating an environment characteristic of a transformational leader (Carless, 1998).

*Mother de Sales Preston*

Mother de Sales Preston’s leadership was identified as the style approach. She showed strength in the feminist leadership in focusing on community and the quality of interpersonal relationships. She appeared to shift the highly concentrated efforts of Mother Borgia as she helped the community of sisters achieve their objectives in a more comfortable and less threatening manner. Relationship behaviors were less stringent, yet the goals of the organization were constantly met. In expressing her thoughts on her leadership qualities, Margaret noted that Mother de Sales “was a nice woman. She was kind and somewhat motherly.” She also noted that “her election as the Mother Superior [occurred as if it offered some relief] after the strong Mother Borgia.”

*Mother Xavier O’Neil*

The contingency theory, which was identified as the leadership approach of Mother Xavier, places emphasis on the relationship between her style and the demands of the situation. Because the situation was predictive, that is, the goal of founding a college was apparent, the probability of success was more likely.
Mother Xavier’s style was a good match for the situation as she had the financial and family support needed to bring the college to fruition, even though her aristocratic bearing set her apart from some of her peers. With Mother Borgia, however, she exhibited cooperation and the mutual respect that the two leaders needed to achieve their shared goal. As Marie concludes, “I’m sure she must have been in accord with the goals of Mother Borgia and would have supported the things that Mother Borgia was trying to do.”

Mother Agnes Marie Sweeney

Mother Agnes Marie’s leadership-membership exchange style created differences in how goals were accomplished using in-groups as compared with out-groups. Her leadership style was compromised by limiting the special bonds of connection and trust, characteristic of feminist leadership, to a couple of the sisters. Within the organizational structure of the congregation (not the college), the sisters in the out-group operated strictly within their prescribed organizational roles rather than trying to do extra work or agree with decisions (Northouse, 2004). They did what was required, and received the benefits of their organization. Because of the reluctance of the sisters participating in the interviews, it remains unclear as to what extent the sisters accepted the move of their motherhouse from Erie back to Titusville. As Madeline first hesitantly, then firmly said, “Mother Agnes Marie was rather demanding. Because she did a lot of things that a lot of people didn’t like. I mean, not everybody was happy with some of the things she asked us to do in our lifestyle.” Collaboration, trust, and independence seemed to be lacking during Mother Agnes Marie’s term of office.
Mother Eustace Taylor

As a transactional leader, Mother Eustace displayed a bureaucratic authority and claimed a leader’s legitimacy within her organization. In this sense, she seemed to be the farthest removed from the transformational, that is, feminist, leadership style. She focused on control not adaptation (Tracey & Hinkin, 1994; Yukl, 1998). She was domineering and did not vary from the context of a transactional leader. Anne indicates that Mother Eustace was capable of holding her own in a male setting, stating, “Eustace was a leader that didn’t need men to tell her what to do. Uh, she felt confident herself, to handle situations. She was in command.” Mother Eustace, however, maintained Mother Borgia’s and the congregation’s goals for the college. She saw to it that the sisters were sent to universities, public as well as Catholic, where they might receive the best education. While she did not let go of her control or authority, she did enable those sisters who were selected for university education. In other words, as Flannery (2004) indicates, she did align them with the common purpose and motivate them to perform to their fullest potential.

Mother Loretta McHale

Mother Loretta McHale has been identified as a skills approach leader. Within this leadership framework, there is a multitude of components, “including problem-solving skills, social judgment skills, knowledge, individual attributes, career experiences and environmental influences” (Northouse, 2002, p. 51). Mother Loretta’s actions and beliefs demonstrated her adaptability. As Anne indicated, “Mother Loretta was sort of self-effacing. I mean, she wasn’t a bragger
by any means. She had been at the college. She taught history there, and she also lived in the dorms....” Not only have feminists addressed the power imbalances that exist between women and men, seeking to focus on the unique meaning women give to their world, they also support others, especially minorities, in trying to change the power imbalances they too experience. Anne recalls that Mother Loretta “wanted to do away with discrimination of any kind, to value the individual, to try to promote Christian values like getting rid of the death penalty and getting rid of segregation in any aspect of it, and getting rid of any restrictions because of race, color, creed, sex.” Mother Loretta was a visionary leader for equal rights in her day, which certainly affected the values and services rendered at the college.

Sister Carolyn Herrmann

Sister Carolyn Herrmann demonstrated persuasive and creative characteristics within her strong sense of stewardship and servant leadership. This stewardship created an “ethic of caring” (Brady, 1999) and served as a stimulus in developing trust and cooperative relationships during her lifetime. As a servant leader, Sister Carolyn valued everyone’s involvement in the life of the college community because “it is within a community that one fully experiences respect, trust and individual strength” (Northouse, 2004, P. 309). In a public interview, Mercyhurst graduate and former Erie mayor Joyce Savocchio (1996) reflected on Sister Carolyn’s influence on her own career:

Sister Carolyn was a role model to every woman at Mercyhurst College while she was president. She had a social conscience, intelligence, dignity
and a tremendous spirit that reached out to all of us. She influenced my life by letting me know that a woman could attain high office.

Sister Carolyn not only encouraged high aspirations in others, she delegated her authority, respecting individual freedom and expecting accountability. She manifested Conley & Goldman’s (1994) observation that leadership embodies “a letting go of control and an increasing belief that others can and will function independently and successfully with a common framework of expectation and accountability” (p. 43). Her presidency, more than any other sister-president of Mercyhurst, emphasized integrative thinking, for as Gibson & Schullery (2000) explain, “To do so is to invite decision making that is only more inclusive, but might well be more effective in meeting stakeholders’ interests.” For Sister Carolyn the stakeholders were the Sisters of Mercy; the board of trustees, faculty. For her, the college’s stakeholders were its multiple constituents. At the time of her death in an interview published in The Erie Times News (1996), Sister JoAnne Courneen, former president of the Erie Sisters of Mercy, described Sister Carolyn as a servant leader:

One of the outstanding characteristics of Sister Carolyn was her ability to adapt to the many challenges that life offered her. She was a woman of many talents and she used all of them. We, as a community, are grateful to her for her work as a Sister of Mercy whether that role was being a teacher, a college president, or advocate for the senior citizen [as she did after retiring from the college].
Wherever she served, Sister Carolyn led by keeping the ‘big picture’ in mind, while focusing on all individual details and turning obstacles into opportunities (Martin, 2002).

Summary

This chapter focused on the three research questions, exploring the leadership style, organizational culture, and implications of feminist theory of the first seven women religious Presidents of Mercyhurst College. Interpretation of the historical documents and the participants’ testimony offered an insight into the character of each woman, the role each played, and the way each met the challenges of broader educational change.
CHAPTER VI

DISCUSSION and CONCLUSION

Overview of Study

An overview of the qualitative research paradigm led to the selection of the case study method, focusing on Mercyhurst College’s first seven women religious presidents, which, in turn, required an historical approach to the College’s first 46 years. As such, this research provided an intensive, holistic description and analysis (Merriam, 1988) of a small Catholic college and its female presidents. The focus for investigation, directed to the first seven women religious presidents of Mercyhurst College and the impact of organizational culture, feminist theory and leadership styles on the growth of the college from 1926 – 1972, allowed the researcher to draw on a variety of interpretative strategies used in current historiography. The data collection process was heightened by one-on-one interviews conducted in natural settings, thus the researcher directly interacted with the interviewees. Peshkin (2000) notes, “It is the researcher’s interpretive acts that give ‘importance, order, and form’ to the study” (p. 441). In this sense, the researcher became the primary “measuring instrument” for the study. Through what are called, “thick descriptions,” that is, “statements that re-created a situation and as much of its context as possible, accompanied by the meanings and intentions inherent in that situation” (Gall et al., 2003, p. 439), salient information emerged.

The research approach taken was based on the life history concept. Gall et al., (2003) refer to an individual’s life experiences from the perception of how one
interprets and understands the world around them. Munro (1998) states that researchers are “drawn to life history and narrative inquiry because of its potential to highlight gendered constructions of power, resistance, and agency...” (p. 7). The research approach of life history can make visible the inner experiences of an individual or a group of individuals. “Life histories raise questions about changing conceptions of gender identity and the role of gender.” (p. 485).

The quantity of archival documents and printed material containing life history data were considerable for Mercyhurst founder, Mother Borgia Egan. She had memoirs, personal reflections and photos, in addition to the historical data, while the remaining six women religious had quite limited information and scant personal contributions. Research did, however, reveal an adequate amount of information for the last woman religious president, Sister Carolyn Herrmann. Even material on Sister Carolyn Herrmann, the seventh president, held in high regard within the college community and Sisters of Mercy for her transformative leadership, was more limited than expected. However, information for the five presidents serving ex officio between the terms of Egan and Herrmann was quite limited in archival data and texts supplying personal information. The lack of information may reflect the self-effacing culture in which the women religious lived. There was an historical narrative account written by Sister Eustace Taylor (1976), the fifth president that the researcher used frequently as a source of data. For the study, the researcher also had to depend significantly on interviews conducted with those who actually knew the women religious presidents. The interviews were tape-recorded and professionally transcribed.
In representing the research, significant features were included to highlight primary source data. Biographical accounts introduced and aided in interpreting the lives of these women religious and providing information needed to identify the values, expectations, and the conflicts of their times and culture. Historical research, according to Mahoney (2002), provides a moral framework for understanding the present and reminds us of traditions that involved a defined moral and social order to which most community members’ pledge. According to Schein (1992) the moral structure of an institution will survive and uphold the values of the organizational culture that identifies it, no matter who leads it.

Discussion

Morey (2002) states that present Catholic colleges founded and served by women religious congregations are among a small cohort of American colleges committed to uniting faith and knowledge. “These two entities continue to be committed one to another, in an ongoing, yet evolving, relationship” (Morey, 2002, p. 278). This relationship of faith and knowledge is evident in the purposes of congregations and colleges. As Morey (2002) states, “the primary purpose of congregations is to facilitate the living of vowed religious life while the primary purpose of colleges is to offer higher education” (p. 295).

Sponsorship

As founding congregations evolved into supporting rather than controlling agents at the colleges, they developed new roles within colleges in the areas of sponsorship, governance, and financial support (Morey, 2002). These roles have been significant in altering the relationships between congregations and colleges.
The first role, sponsorship, can be defined as “support of, influence on, and responsibility for a project, program or institution which furthers the goals of the sponsoring group” (Grant, 1998, p. 4). Grant (2004) concludes that “… the paradigm of religiously-sponsored institutional ministries has been changing to a lay-religious partnership model and most likely will ultimately evolve into an entirely lay-sponsored model (p. 10).

Grant & Vandenberg (1998) explain that women religious in American Catholic colleges and universities have sought innovative ways “to preserve, strengthen and ensure the future viability of services... services which were organized and delivered through institutions or formal organizations” (p. 11). When a congregation works together, as the Sisters of Mercy did in the initial forty-five years of Mercyhurst College, their organizational form “resembles that of a family business” (p. 11). This concept of a family business “serves as an organizing metaphor for religious congregations as sponsors” (p. 13). Theorists have identified a paradigm shift (Grant, 2004) in which four models of sponsorship evolve.

**Grant’s Models of Sponsorship**

The original founders manage the organization, modeling a family-operated business where family members dominate the governance roles in the institution or business. Eventually, the original members begin to disappear, leading to the franchise model, where the founding members of the organization spell out the mission requirements and other conditions that new members must follow to continue and operate the organization. In time, the model further
evolves into the partnership model, which has a “quasi-governance” role for the two groups who act as collaborative partners desiring to create a future together. Over time, the fourth organizational model emerges when sponsorship itself is institutionalized. The sponsor interprets the mission and acts as liaison between the organization and the congregation (Grant & Vandenberg, 1998).

The family business model was the basis for operating Mercyhurst College from 1926 until 1970. In 1963 at the end of her ex officio term, Mother Loretta introduced into the college a board of lay advisors, composed of professional and businessmen and a few women. In 1970, a year after Sister Anne Francis Cavanaugh became General Superior and near the end of Sister Carolyn’s presidency (1963-1972) then in September 1969, at the request of Sister Anne Francis, who was chair of the board, the trustees, then composed of seven Sisters of Mercy and two laypersons (a man and a woman), began discussion of the board’s reorganization. By June 1970, Mercyhurst College had in place a new board of trustees and a new set of by-laws. That board of trustees was composed of seven laymen and four Sisters of Mercy (the superior general, the president of the college, the academic dean, and the treasurer of the congregation).

Since 1970, the working relationship between the congregation and the board of trustees evolved somewhat like a partnership. The board of trustees, however, has held full governing and fiduciary responsibilities for the college. The Sisters of Mercy in Erie held no reserved powers or any corporate membership. In June 2007, Mercyhurst College through the board of trustees plans to become a member of the Conference for Mercy Higher Education. It will
then be one of sixteen colleges founded and sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy in the United States in this sponsorship organization. By entering into the sponsorship model which the Sisters of Mercy have instituted, Mercyhurst College shows its desire to maintain its identity as a Catholic higher education institution in the tradition of the Sisters of Mercy even if none of the sisters serve in those colleges and universities they founded.

Holtzschneider & Morey (2000) state that, “... the relationship between colleges and congregations may well need to shift from a focus on partnership to a commitment to develop and implement a legitimate process that effectively passes the torch to the laity.” (p. 324). Mother Loretta and Sister Carolyn seemed to have anticipated the need for partnership in order to maintain and strengthen the college’s commitment to the mission of education. When done in the spirit and traditions of the founding congregation, partnership is the basis for continuity and relationship between the two entities, the college and the congregation. Grant & Vanderberg (1998) add that partnerships focus “on establishing and maintaining a direction; on succession or continuity of leadership planning; [and] on leadership development” (p. 96).

Historically, Mercyhurst College is following a pattern similar to that of other religiously sponsored institutions. Consistent with Grant’s (2004) paradigm shift in sponsorship roles, Mercyhurst College has slowly evolved into an institution that is different than what the founding women religious created due to a variety of circumstances, especially because of the dwindling number of sisters in the founding congregation. Current Sisters of Mercy membership in the United
States, according to Murphy (2005), is 4,732 Sisters administering to orphanages, schools and hospitals compared to more than three times that number in 1960. The limited numbers of Mercy women religious has irrevocably changed the face of Mercyhurst for fewer and fewer women religious are part of the day-to-day organizational culture. “Culture is a source of great pride and generates a sense of fulfillment among the members. Through culture, history and heritage are preserved and passed on from generation to generation.” (Grant & Vandenberg, 1998, p. 55).

**Governance**

The second role is governance. Generally, most of the colleges founded by women religious congregations have now been incorporated separately from their congregations. Many of them also have what it is called a two-tiered board where the board of trustees is responsible to the congregational leadership, known as the corporate members. In such cases, the religious congregation reserves the right to hold certain powers, such as the change of mission, or the sale of property, or the approval of the president. In such cases as that at Mercyhurst, the members of the congregation wish to influence the board and will retain a certain percentage of seats on the board, though not its majority. Authority therefore resides with the board of trustees. Most congregations want to play a role in governing the institution by maintaining a presence on the board of trustees and by having involvement in writing the by-laws.
Morey (2001) notes that by-laws are more than legal umbrellas or collections of protocols:

These documents also tell organizational stories and serve as maps that lead to the buried treasure of organizational culture. Each college has a different history and different needs. Each congregation has its own story and agenda for influence. Every set of by-laws is a unique distillation of these stories and the efforts and compromises by congregations and colleges to maintain mutually beneficial common enterprises. Some by-laws are extremely detailed and others exceedingly spare. No matter what their structure or content, each of these documents is both a set of structures and a series of clues that illuminate a larger reality. (p. 297)

At Mercyhurst College, which has a single board structure composed of 30 lay members and only five Sisters of Mercy, is unique among Mercy colleges and universities. The Erie Sisters of Mercy have a close relationship with the college that is not based on governance but on mutual respect. Their power resides in their moral suasion; in other words, their authority is persuasive, not juridical. The Sisters of Mercy do have a trust agreement with the college, dating to 1993, when they sold Old Main and its surrounding property to the college corporation. This trust agreement, attached to the by-laws of the corporation, addresses the Catholic nature of the college and the rights, privileges, and considerations reserved to the Sisters of Mercy.
**Financial Support**

The third role is financial support. Congregations, at one time, were financially accountable for colleges. Eventually, colleges took responsibility for their own financial welfare. “Today, many congregations openly declare financial independence from the colleges they founded and many congregation heads eagerly point out that ecclesial sponsorship does not imply any financial commitment” (Morey, 2002, p. 304). However, most congregations continue to contribute to the colleges by renting property to colleges far below market rates, lending money at reduced interest, contributing services free of charge, and making donations. At Mercyhurst College, the Sisters of Mercy as trustees make contributions, just as any trustee would be expected to do. The congregation makes contributions to capital campaigns and fundraising events. Over the years the college has worked to increase the sisters’ salaries so they now receive salaries commensurate with lay faculty and administrators. In 1993, the Sisters of Mercy sold Old Main and its surrounding property to the college corporation for half of its value, making a significant gift to the college (Trust Agreement). With foresight and vision, Sister Carolyn Herrmann and the leadership of the Sisters of Mercy made decisions that have enabled the college to evolve from a women’s college of about 500 students in 1970 to a coeducational comprehensive college of 4000 students in 2007. For three decades, Mercyhurst College has been financially independent of the congregation. Its lay leadership has understood, as a board of trustees in a nonprofit institution, the fiduciary responsibility now clearly rests with them.
Seizing Opportunities

While lay board of trustees understand their fiduciary responsibilities in Catholic colleges and universities, they have yet to fully understand and direct their responsibility for carrying on the “Catholic” mission. Largely the mission and identity of Catholic institutions has remained the responsibility of the women or men religious who continue to work in the institutions. Morey (2002) writes that Catholic colleges and their founding religious congregations want to sustain their relationships, especially to maintain the Catholic identity and the congregational legacy of the institutions they have founded. O’Brien (1993) argues that “Catholic colleges should continue to seek a renewal of their historic effort to integrate faith and learning, not by reclaiming the institution, but by persuading colleagues and the public that this is a worthwhile thing to do together” (p.105-106). Therefore, Catholic identity today and in the future has to be concerned for fidelity to a religious heritage and educational mission, not as a preoccupation of power and control (Grant, 2004), but out of a commitment to the values of faith and knowledge. “Fidelity to shared history and the challenges of the future also create bonds between these two organizations” (Morey, 2002, p. 322).

It is a sign of their visionary leaderships that such congregations of women religious as the Sisters of Mercy in the United States have undertaken initiatives to transmit their charism and enduring values to lay leadership. The Sisters of Mercy have created the Conference for Mercy Higher Education as a means not just to maintain but to transmit their Catholic identity and Mercy legacy. The
current members of this conference are both lay and religious men and women. The sisters, however, anticipate a time when the Conference may be composed entirely of lay leadership. As such, the sponsorship model demonstrates the Sisters of Mercy’s transformational vision of leadership.

Conclusion

The Catholic community in the 19th century determined that its best interests would be served by supporting women’s colleges. It was the confluence of the factors of need, consensus, and legacy that gave rise to the unique educational opportunities for women in America (Mahoney, 2002). According to Knoerle & Schier (2002) “these colleges and universities, a century after they first appeared, still respond to needs, reflect a consensus, and live out a legacy” (p. 326). The portraits of the founding presidents of Mercyhurst College, displayed in the spacious hallways of Old Main, still convey the strength and legacy of the organizational culture, as they remind onlookers of the first appearance of the college on a windswept hill in southern Erie, Pennsylvania. Each woman religious president had a personal history and role that came to play in establishing, stabilizing, and maintaining Mercyhurst.

Mother Borgia Egan, first born girl in a large Irish family and raised in the coal mining hills of western Pennsylvania, emerged as the founder of Mercyhurst College. As a Sister of Mercy, she had a special concern for women believing that women needed an education and Mercyhurst could ensure access to that education. She met insurmountable obstacles, yet conquered them by her perseverance and bold spirit so characteristic of a pioneer. Her contribution to the
legacy of Mercyhurst came through her dedication, for she was devoted to her work, her religious community, and most of all, she was passionate about Mercyhurst College.

Mother de Sales Preston, a family caretaker, nurse, hospital administrator, superior, and college president, demonstrated a legacy of service, the charism at the heart of the Sisters of Mercy. Her nurturing service, spanning over 60 years, brought the community through many difficult and strained years when the sisters scrimped and saved everything for the construction of the college. Mother de Sales’ care and support of the sisters sustained the community, enabling Mother Borgia to continue with its expansion.

Mother Xavier O’Neil, the aristocrat, enlisted her family’s wealth guaranteeing the cultural success of the school in its early years and the completion of the original plans to build Christ the King Chapel and the Tower, both tokens of affection from her brother James. Mother Xavier’s resolve with her family brought the college a share in the family’s own legacy, overcoming the financial obstacles that were hindering the growth of the fledging college.

Mother Agnes Marie Sweeney, an orphan who grew up in the sisters’ Titusville boarding school, Saint Joseph’s Academy, became an extremely talented musician in the order. Her love always remained first with the congregation of the Sisters of Mercy, not Mercyhurst. Mother Agnes Marie, however, allowed Mother Borgia to continue to lead the college while she returned the community to the Titusville motherhouse, lifting some of the sisters’ constant burden brought by concentrating totally on the college.
Mother Eustace Taylor, a Shakespearian scholar, teacher and author, indeed an educator par excellence, encouraged academic rigor and excellence. Her legacy showed through her relentless commitment to teaching and endorsement of the liberal arts. For Mother Eustace, Mercyhurst was an educational cradle where excellence was encouraged, literature was abundant, and students were expected to do well.

Mother Loretta McHale, born in Scotland, was a historian and social justice advocate, committed to the inclusion of all people regardless of race, color, creed and sex in the opportunities of American society. Her strong Christian values and clearly articulated beliefs permeated the campus as she mingled with the Mercyhurst students. Because of her progressive mind, she encouraged change, especially by promoting lay board leadership.

Sister Carolyn Herrmann, an Erie native and biochemist, was perhaps the last Sister of Mercy to serve as president of Mercyhurst College. Moreover, she was a pivotal and respected force in the City of Erie, showing strong advocacy for women and opening the gates of Mercyhurst to its citizens. She guided numerous administrative and academic changes at the college, which were highlighted by making it a coeducational institution and promoting lay leadership among all its constituents. She might aptly be called a contemporary pioneer.

The organizational culture of Mercyhurst College is evident in the legacy of the presidents, who in many ways reflect the character and values of their religious congregation. The presidents, as do the Erie Sisters of Mercy, were extraordinarily diverse in their personalities, performance, and even in the
immediate goals to further the growth of Mercyhurst. It was their religious
congregation and the college that brought them together. The Sisters of Mercy,
unlike congregations that created definite customs and culture, have shown a
considerable degree of education, independence, and flexibility. They had the
capacity and education to give transformational leadership to their organizations.

The histories of Catholic women’s colleges reveal institutions that have
come and gone, closed or merge and yet a few have prospered and changed.
Mercyhurst College has prospered because it has changed. As Schein (1992)
states, “once the organization has some stability by virtue of a series of successes,
the dynamics change, but in its building stage the major impact on culture
formation is still the founder leader” (p. 228). Even though the college faced
significant struggles during the mid-1970s when the leadership shifted from the
control of the Sisters of Mercy to lay leadership, the college had already been
situated for change and growth, essentially because Mother Loretta had already
introduced lay leadership and Sister Carolyn Herrmann had fostered it.

Presently, there are more than 110 institutions of higher learning founded
by sister congregations. These women religious have responded to “...the multiple
needs of American society and the role of education in addressing these needs...
and [to] a growing belief that their institutions have demonstrated the ability to
deliver programs that respond to the needs of a new century” (Knoerle & Schier,
2002, p. 325). The Sisters of Mercy have bequeathed a legacy of mutual respect,
commitment, and determination to their lay partners. This legacy has secured the
future of Mercyhurst College. While graduates of the first 46 years may indeed
feel the loss of the sisters’ presence and aura of quiet reverence in the corridors of Old Main, they take pride in Mercyhurst today, where the needs of students in a new century remain paramount and opportunities are seized in the spirit of Mother Borgia Egan.
References


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Durang of Philadelphia to design. (1943, May 1). The Merciad, Section One, p. 3.


Appendix A
Appendix A

Semi-structured Interview Guide

Wherever the phrases, “each college president” or “each woman religious president” is used, the question will be applied individually to each of the first seven presidents in succession, beginning with Mother M. Borgia Egan, Sister M. DeSales Preston, Sister M. Agnes Marie Sweeney, Sister M. Xavier O’Neil, Sister M. Eustace Taylor, Sister M. Loretta McHale and Sister Carolyn Herrmann.

The interview guide will include the following questions:

1. From your perspective, what were the significant accomplishments of each past woman religious president of Mercyhurst College?

2. What particular challenges did women religious encounter during the tenure of each college president?

3. All leaders have their own leadership style. Describe the individual leadership style of each past college presidents.

4. Did the individual leadership style of each past college president affect the culture of the college in anyway? If so, how?

5. Recalling your experience and your knowledge of each college president, how would you describe her values?

6. To what extent, if any, was each college president exposed to what might generally be called “feminist” ideas or activity in her day?

7. Looking to the 21st century, do you see any lasting legacy that the first seven presidents as a foundational group have left to Mercyhurst College?
Appendix B
Appendix B

Request for Information

Mary Lee Lynch  
1270 Taylor Ridge Court  
Erie, PA   16505

December 14, 2005

Dear Sister Edith,

I am a doctoral student in the Duquesne University Interdisciplinary Doctoral Program for Educational Leaders. My dissertation, “Organizational Culture, Feminist Theory and Leadership Styles: Their Impact on Mercyhurst College, 1926-1972” requires archival information on the first seven female Presidents of Mercyhurst. I will need access to materials that will help me explore and understand the leadership style of each sister president, as well as the decisions they made which impacted happenings and changes at the College. As a doctoral dissertation my writing will be published.

I am requesting permission to obtain archival data from the Mercy Motherhouse Archives for my dissertation. Thank you for your cooperation.

Respectfully,

Mary Lee Lynch
Appendix C
Appendix C

Letter of Introduction

Mary Lee Lynch
1270 Taylor Ridge
Erie, PA 16505

May 17, 2006

Hello,

My name is Mary Lee Lynch, a Doctoral student in Duquesne University’s Interdisciplinary Doctoral Program for Educational Leaders. I am contacting you because of your association with the past female presidents at Mercyhurst College.

You are being invited to participate in a research project in which I will investigate the leadership styles of the first seven women religious presidents as well as the decisions they made which impacted happenings and changes at the College during 1926 through 1972.

Should you choose to participate, approximately 45 minutes of your time will be needed for an interview which will be audio taped. Please realize that when audiotapes are transcribed all identifiers of you, and anyone you discuss will be deleted or disguised using pseudonyms. Your name will never appear on any survey or research instrument. Please realize that you may withdraw your consent to participate at any time.

In addition to interviews, documents related to the study such as newsletters, newspapers, diaries and scrapbooks will be studied. Results of this study will be provided freely to you upon your request.

If you decide to participate in this research project, please sign and return the “Consent to Participate in a Research Study” form in the enclosed, addressed and stamped envelope by June 12, 2006. If you choose not to participate, please return the form to me unsigned. I respect your decision and appreciate your consideration of this request.

Please feel free to contact me at 814-833-2037 or email: lynch1270a@aol.com or my dissertation committee chairperson, Dr. Leanne Roberts at 814-824-2448 or email her at lroberts2@mercyhurst.edu should you have any questions regarding this letter.

Sincerely,

Mary Lee Lynch
Appendix D
Appendix D

Individuals: Sisters of Mercy and Archivists and Interview Dates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Interview Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sister Anne</td>
<td>Sister of Mercy</td>
<td>July 6, 2006</td>
</tr>
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<td>Sister of Mercy</td>
<td>July 7, 2006</td>
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<td>Sister Catherine</td>
<td>Sister of Mercy</td>
<td>July 8, 2006</td>
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<td>Sister Margaret</td>
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<td>Sister Julie</td>
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<td>July 18, 2006</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sister Madeline</td>
<td>Sister of Mercy</td>
<td>July 18, 2006</td>
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</tbody>
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Appendix E
CERTIFICATE OF INCORPORATION

To the Honorable, the Judges of said Court:

Agreeably to the provisions of the Act of the General Assembly of the State of Pennsylvania, entitled, “An Act to Provide for the Incorporation And Regulation of Certain Corporations”, approved the 29th day of April A.D. 1874 and the several supplements thereto, the undersigned, all of who are citizens of Pennsylvania and residents of the County of Erie, in said Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, having associated themselves together for the purposes and upon the terms and by the name hereinafter set forth, to the end that they may be duly incorporated, according to law, hereby certify:

FIRST: The name of the intended corporation is MERCYHURST COLLEGE.

SECOND: The purposes for which the said corporation is formed are as follows:
   The establishment and conduct of a college for women, with power to confer degrees in Art, Pure and Applied Science and Literature.

THIRD: The business of the corporation is to be transacted in the City of Erie, Erie County, Pennsylvania.

FOURTH: The corporation shall have perpetual succession by its corporate name.

FIFTH: The yearly income of the corporation from sources other than real estate, shall not exceed the sum of fifty thousand ($50,000.00) dollars.

SIXTH: Said corporation shall have no capital stock.

SEVENTH: The names and residences of the subscribers are as follows:

Sr. M. de Sales Preston   
Erie, PA
Sr. M. Nolasco Hughes   
Erie, PA
Sr. M. Clare Connelly    
Erie, PA
Sr. M. Neri Hopkins      
Erie, PA
Sr. M. Basil O’Brien     
Erie, PA
Sr. M. Joseph Reinsel    
Erie, PA
Sr. M. Borgia Egan       
Erie, PA
Sr. M. Pierre Wilbert    
Erie, PA
Sr. M. Collette Brown    
Erie, PA
Sr. M. Austin Kratzer    
Erie, PA
Sr. M. Teresa Wuenschell 
Erie, PA
Sr. M. Agnes Reid        
Erie, PA
Sr. M. Sebastian Aaron   Erie, PA   Sr. M. Antonia Ferrick   Erie, PA
Sr. M. Patricia Mc Laughlin   Erie, PA   Sr. M. Vincent Aaron   Erie, PA
Sr. M. Aquino Joyce   Erie, PA   Sr. M. Xavier O’Neil   Erie, PA
Sr. M. Bertrand Doyle   Erie, PA   Sr. M. Mercedes Prendergast   Erie, PA
Sr. M. Agatha Hogan   Erie, PA   Sr. M. Loyola Dillon   Erie, PA
Sr. M. Regis O’Neil   Erie, PA   Sr. M. Ildefonse Madlehner   Erie, PA
Sr. M. Callista Mahoney   Erie, PA   Sr. M. Evangelista Forsyth   Erie, PA

EIGHTH: The number of directors is fixed at five, and the names and residences of those who are chosen directors for the first year are as follows:

Sr. M. Borgia Egan   Erie, Pennsylvania
Sr. M. Pierre Wilbert   Erie, Pennsylvania
Sr. Collette Brown   Erie, Pennsylvania
Sr. Mercedes Prendergast   Erie, Pennsylvania
Sr. M. Evangelista Forsythe   Erie, Pennsylvania

NINTH: The amount of assets in the possession of the subscribers hereto which is to be devoted to the purpose of establishing and conducting said college is One Million Six Hundred Thousand Dollars ($1,600,000.00) in land and buildings; Thirty Nine Thousand Dollars ($39,000.00) by the capitalization of contributed services of twelve professors at Twenty Five Hundred Dollars ($2,500.00) per year and six instructors at Fifteen Hundred Dollars ($1,500.00) per year, and in addition thereto the contributed earnings of One Hundred and Twenty Five (125) persons not capitalized. The minimum number of persons whom it is intended to regularly employ as members of the faculty of said corporation is eighteen.

TENTH: That attached hereto and made a part hereof and marked Exhibit “A” is a brief statement of the requirement for admission and of the course of study to be pursued in said college.

WITNESS our hands and seals this tenth day of March 1927.

Sister M. Borgia Egan   (SEAL)
Sister M. Pierre Wilbert   (SEAL)
Sister M. Collette Brown   (SEAL)
Sister M. Mercedes Prendergast   (SEAL)
Sister M. Regis O’Neil   (SEAL)
Appendix F
The Initial Financing of Mercyhurst College

The original Motherhouse at Titusville, Pennsylvania, which has served as the Community Headquarters since 1870, was no longer large enough to house all the Sisters, so it became quite evident to the Superiors that they would have to build. Our first thought was to add a wing to the existing building and an architect had been engaged to draw up plans that would house at least one hundred Sisters.

Before these plans could be executed Bishop Gannon, on a visit to Titusville, said to Mother Borgia, “Instead of building here, why don’t you raise $150,000.00 and come to Erie?” The invitation was proposed to the members of the corporation the following summer, and most of the senior members seemed to favor the suggestion. In the first place, our headquarters in the Episcopal city would be advantageous. However, ideas came rapidly. Instead of competing on the high school level with the communities already well established in Erie, it was suggested that we consider the opening of a college for young girls. At that time, there were no colleges in Erie.

A consensus of opinion was that we lay our proposed plan before his Excellency. This was done by Mother Borgia, then Superior. The Bishop decided to present the plan to his consulter. In a letter addressed to the Superior some weeks later, he approved the idea of moving our headquarters to Erie, opening a high school as a means of support and later opening a college for girls. The plan was received favorably by the consulters and permission was given to begin the search for a suitable location and to have plans drawn up.

Because of his wide experience in building for the Sisters of Mercy of Philadelphia, Mr. Ferdinand Durang, architect of Philadelphia, was selected to draw the plans. These were later approved with minor changes, and a group of buildings to carry on the work planned and to provide a sizable income for the community was approved. It provided facilities for both high school and college classes. The estimated cost was approximately five hundred thousand dollars.

After studying carefully the income of the Community, it was shown to the satisfaction of the Bishop that the Community could handle this indebtedness. To make the burden of debt as easy as possible, the Bishop insisted that we pay not more than four per cent interest. This was a difficult rate to get as money was very tight at the time. Banks asked six percent as a minimum. In our eagerness to get started, the Community accepted a suggestion of Mr. Frank Wallace, the President of the Second National Bank of Erie, that we float a bond issue of four hundred thousand dollars that would pay four per cent interest. He would personally assume responsibility for the bonds, i.e. guarantee their payment.

It is customary to have a bank assume this responsibility, but National banks are not permitted by law to assume such debts. Hence, his suggestion that he personally assume it. Because of the low rate of interest, it was not easy to interest the public in a four per cent bond, so they had to be sold through friendly channels. This entailed approaching individual purchases instead of having the
entire issue sold through a bond company. Sales came slowly. It was largely due to the untiring efforts of Sister M. Collette Brown, Sister M. Monica Fisher, Sister M. Pierre Wilbert, and Sister M. Celestine Weber that were able to dispose of a small portion ($100,000.00) of the bonds. This meant constant and tiresome walking on the streets of Erie and other cities, wherever a prospective buyer could be found. The balance of the issue $300,000.00 was used as collateral for bank loans which he had to contract to meet the monthly payments of the contractors as they became due. These bank loans, thanks to Mr. Wallace who negotiated them, were made at five per cent interest.

It was always the intention of the officials of the Sisters of Mercy of Titusville that once the building was completed, they would seek an insurance company that would take over the mortgage and let the Sisters have the money on long-term mortgage. But insurance companies are not as a rule interested in construction loans. They want the building completed. Their terms are always convenient for religious organizations. They require payments on the principal at stated intervals and annual payment of the interest.

It soon became apparent to the Sisters that some other arrangements would have to be made to meet the monthly payroll. So in consultation with the Bishop, it was decided to borrow on short payment loans from Pittsburgh and other local banks. Through the efforts of Mr. Frank Wallace, this was arranged. The unsold bonds were given as collateral for these loans.

As soon as the work was completed, negotiations were begun with several insurance companies. Many of them were interested in giving a long-term loan, but most of them required a large bonus for the privilege of having the money.

Mr. Joseph Weber, at this point, became interested in our negotiations and began to look into the matter. In conversation with a representative of one of the companies, he learned that the Massachusetts Life Insurance Company was interested in this particular loan and was willing to begin negotiations as soon as the owners were ready. They even volunteered to forego the usual five to six percent bonus and because of the nature of the institution, to set the sum of $7,000.00 as the required bonus. The New York Life was willing to dispense with the bonus completely if Bishop Gannon would use his signature in the transaction. This meant putting the entire Diocesan property as security for the loan. After much consideration, it was decided by the finance committee, that the conditions for such a favor were too involved to make appeal to the Community.
Appendix G
Appendix G

Molybdenum Stock

Background:

Colorado is a mining state now known for having a variety of ores. At the beginning of the twentieth century, however, the chief metal being sought was gold. In 1903 the prospectors were finding something resembling gold which they thought was only “fools’ gold”, a compound of lead. Shortly thereafter the Colorado School of Mines analyzed the ore and found instead that it was an ore of lead’s relative, a rarer element known as molybdenum (from the Greek word for “lead”). This element is used for hardening steel and is useful in building ships, airplanes, engines, stainless steel, etc. This discovery took place in the mountains of Colorado near the town of Climax.

Among the prospectors was a Mr. Weber from Oil City, brother of Sister M. Regina Weber, a member of the Sisters of Mercy in Titusville. In the early 1900’s Mr. Weber told his sister that he thought he had discovered gold and wanted to give her community, a share in his gold mine. He was very discouraged when he thought he had only found “fools’ gold”, but when he heard it was an ore of molybdenum (which the Sisters referred to as “moly”), he was delighted. Whether he had given the Sisters of Mercy shares in his gold mine or whether his sister had persuaded the community that her brother’s mine was a good investment, we are not certain. What we do know is that the Sisters received $600 worth of stock when the Climax Molybdenum Co. was incorporated on January 17, 1918. At this time molybdenum was in demand because of World War I. So far as we can calculate, that $600 gave the Sisters 83 1/3 shares of stock at $7.20 per share.

In April, 1929 there was a 900% stock dividend; in 1935, a 200% stock dividend. The Sisters of Mercy were now holding 1500 shares. Since they had founded Mercyhurst College in Erie, Pennsylvania using most of their funds for land and borrowing beyond their capacity at the time, the regular dividends being paid were often a lifesaver when the interest came due each month.

At one time, the stock was in such great demand that as Mother M. Borgia Egan arrived in the railroad station in St. Louis, she heard herself being paged. Two brokers were looking for her to buy the Climax Stock. Remembering Bishop Gannon’s warning, “Don’t sell THAT stock,” she declined their offer.

Later, in 1953, when it was realized that the estates of Sister Mary Rachel and Sister Mary Alice Weber (who were unrelated to Sister M. Regina Weber) would not quite cover construction costs for the Library and Little Theater, the
Bishop suggested that Mother M. Borgia use the Climax Stock as collateral for an $11,000 loan from the Diocese. This was not done either; the College borrowed from a Sisters of Mercy Legacy Fund instead.

On December 30, 1957 Climax Molybdenum merged with American Metal Company, Ltd. Owners of “moly” received 3 shares in American Metal Climax for each share of “moly” stock; the Sisters now owned 4500 shares.

In 1959, Mercyhurst College needed a new dormitory, McAuley Hall. “Moly” supported the building.
Appendix H
Resolution Adopted at Special Meeting of Mercyhurst College (January 26, 1958).

WHEREAS, Mercyhurst College is in need of additional dormitory facilities to house approximately one hundred forty-two (142) women students, together with appurtenant facilities for a 4-bed infirmary, a dispensary, a nurse and three (3) proctors; and

WHEREAS, under Title IV of the Housing Act of 1950 loans for such facilities are authorized under certain conditions.

IT IS THEREFORE RESOLVED:

1. That Mercyhurst College make application to the United States Government under the provisions of said act for a loan not to exceed Five Hundred Forty Thousand Dollars ($540,000.00) for said dormitory facilities, and any and all actions already taken by the President on behalf of the College in applying for same are hereby ratified, and the President is authorized to continue with any and all necessary actions on behalf of this corporation to effectuate the application of the application and the completion of any acts to effectuate said application and loan.

2. That Mercyhurst College accepts title to the land to be deeded from The Sisters of Mercy of Crawford and Erie Counties, Pennsylvania, if said dormitory loan is approved.

3. That Mercyhurst College enter into negotiations if said loan is approved to construct said dormitory as required by the United States Government, and the proper officers of this corporation are hereby authorized to execute any and all statements necessary to effectuate the same.

4. That Mercyhurst College enter into a first mortgage and bond to the United States Government on said premises to secure said dormitory loan.

5. That Mercyhurst College lease from The Sisters of Mercy of Crawford and Erie Counties, Pennsylvania, the college plant and facilities now owned by the latter corporation for at least the duration of the above-referred-to mortgage, and the proper officers are hereby authorized to enter into any and all agreements necessary to effectuate this lease.

6. That all actions already taken by the officers to effectuate this loan be the same are hereby ratified.

7. That the proper officers are hereby authorized to enter into any and all agreements on behalf of Mercyhurst College and to do any and all things necessary to conclude this dormitory loan and to construct said dormitory at the earliest possible time.

I, Sister Mary Celine Fasenmeyer, hereby certify that I am Secretary of Mercyhurst College, a non-profit corporation organized and existing under
the laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania; that I was present at a special meeting of the members of said corporation held on January 26, 1958, at Mercyhurst College in the City of Erie, County of Erie and State of Pennsylvania; that said meeting was duly called at the request of the President by written notice sent to all members of the corporation more than five (5) days prior to the date of the meeting, which notice contained a statement of the agenda and purposes of the meeting; that a majority of the members of the corporation were present at said meeting; and that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of a resolution adopted at said meeting by the affirmative vote, taken by secret ballot, of more than a majority of the members of said corporation.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the corporation to be affixed hereto this 27th day of January, 1958.

Witness:

Sister M. Gabriel Koch               Sister Mary Celine Fasenmeyer (L.S.)

Secretary of Mercyhurst College
Appendix I
Appendix I

Minutes from the 1963 General Council designating college appointments read:

The General Council met in Mother M. Clare’s office on Thursday, June 27, 1963, at 1:45.

Mother M. Clare announced the following appointments:

- Sister M. Carolyn    - President of Mercyhurst College
- Sister M. Janet      - Academic Dean of Mercyhurst
- Sister M. Gabriel    - Treasurer of Mercyhurst

The General Council voted favorably on each of the above appointments for the college. Mother M. Clare also appointed Sister M. Francesca as Secretary General of the Community. The General Council voted favorably on this appointment. The meeting adjourned at 3:00.