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The Challenges of Catholic Identity in American Catholic University A Case Study of DePaul University

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The Challenges of Catholic Identity in American Catholic University A Case Study of DePaul
University

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Graduate Division of
Educational Leadership and Administration

College of Education

DePaul University

In Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

By

Andrew Ezechiugo

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DePaul University

Chicago, IL

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to God almighty who made the completion of my master's program possible.

Acknowledgment

I wish to thank the almighty God and the Vincentian community western province of the United States for the opportunity given to me to have this educational experience. I thank Dr. Barbara Rieckhoff my chair for the support she gave to me in completing this thesis. I wish to also thank Sr Mary Paul for her contributions to this thesis and all those who have helped me in one way or another. May God bless you all.

Abstract

This research paper examines the challenges of Catholic identity in American universities using DePaul University as a case study. Carrying out the research, two research questions were posited: 1. What is the perception of Catholic identity presently at DePaul University? 2. What are the challenges of Catholic identity at DePaul? To answer the questions an interview and survey were conducted among a selected group of faculty and students at the university. The interview and survey centered on the experience of Catholic identity, elements of Catholic identity, and the challenges of Catholic identity at DePaul. Five challenges of Catholic identity were reviewed in the literature review. These five challenges were used in the survey to understand the challenges of Catholic identity at DePaul.

The results from the interview and survey showed that Catholic identity at DePaul University is stronger in extracurricular affairs (outside the classroom) than in curricular affairs (inside the classroom). The interview and survey also showed that out of the five challenges mentioned in the literature review, three are present at DePaul. These include fewer Catholic faculty, research interests (Catholic curriculum), and finance. The results suggested that more attention is given to Catholic identity outside of the classroom than in the classroom. This can be attributed to the effect of the work of the mission and ministry department. However, though the figures of the presence of Catholic identity in the classroom are good, they can be made stronger.

Keywords:

Catholic identity, Challenges of Catholic identity, and DePaul University.

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Chapter I

Introduction

Education is a crucial part of the formation of a human person. The Catholic church has over the years engaged in the establishment of schools (Walch, 1996). Catholic schools are a means of education and evangelization. It is the church's commitment to the welfare of the human person both temporal and spiritual. According to Paul IV (1965) in a declaration on Christian education (*Gravissimum educationis*):

To fulfill the mandate, she has received from her divine founder of proclaiming the mystery of salvation to all men and of restoring all things in Christ, Holy Mother the Church must be concerned with the whole of man's life, even the secular part of it insofar as it has a bearing on his heavenly calling. Therefore, she has a role in the progress and development of education (p. 643).

Catholic education serves both the church and society. Catholic education spans from grade school to university education. Catholic education brings about diversity in education. Catholic schools give both academic, human, and spiritual formation (Miller, 2006). Catholic schools teach students how to participate actively in the church and society. Attending a Catholic school gives a different experience from a public school or other religious schools because of their unique and Catholic approach to the formation of students. The uniqueness of the Catholic education is what is called the Catholic identity. Catholic identity forms the bedrock of the Catholic school system. It is a mark that needs to be preserved. However, this mark of Catholic identity in some Catholic schools especially in Catholic universities is gradually fading away. Some Catholic universities are facing challenges to Catholic identity. According to O'Connell,

(2023) “Catholic higher education in the US needs more guidance because of ‘confusion’ about Catholic identity (para. 1). Hence, it is important to research the topic of the challenges of Catholic identity in American Catholic universities because identity is crucial to existence. Losing your identity is like losing who you are (Keating, 2023).

Research Topic

According to Walch (1996), the foundation of Catholic schools in America was born out of the desire of the early immigrant Catholics. They wanted school to train their children devoid of Protestant influence. This desire has since grown into a massive network of Catholic schools all over America. Over the years the Catholic school system has faced numerous tests and challenges. One of the challenges it has faced is maintaining its own identity (Catholic identity) amidst the Socioeconomic/religious changes of our time. This challenge has become more worrisome since the 1900s (Reilly, 2020). Despite this, not much is discussed about it, especially at the university level. According to Hunt, Joseph, and Nuzzi (2004), “Catholic universities worried more about the quality of their education, about the professional preparation of their teachers, and about the money needed to support them than about who they were” (p. 103). However, the quality of education and professional preparation of teachers for Catholic schools is not bad but the Catholic identity of Catholic schools should not be neglected. This thesis is about the challenges of Catholic identity in an American Catholic university, with a case study of DePaul University.

Research Purpose

The story of DePaul University's Catholic identity may not be different from some other Catholic universities in the United States. While all may have some general challenges each

university may have its unique challenge. According to the 100th anniversary document published by DePaul University “*DePaul University Centennial Essays and Images*”,

Throughout its history, DePaul has been a Catholic institution. The meaning of the university’s religious identity has changed significantly from one decade to the next, both because of the evolution of the church itself and due to the following: Growing ecumenism/ secularism, Leadership changes, Growing professionalization of the faculties, University’s movement toward research, and Finance. (Krotseng, Rury, & Suchar, 2000, p. 4)

The purpose of this research was to investigate the challenges of Catholic identity at DePaul University.

Research Questions

Coming from the conviction that there are challenges facing Catholic identity in American Catholic universities (ACCU, 2023), using DePaul University as a case study, this thesis explores the following research questions:

1. What is the perception of Catholic identity presently at DePaul University?
2. What are the challenges of the Catholic identity at DePaul University?

Rationale and Significance

Research on the Catholic identity of American Catholic universities is crucial to the survival of the mission and purpose of Catholic universities (Cardinal Newman Society, 2011). The Catholic church in America has been strengthened and benefitted through university education. Local dioceses and religious orders are responsible for establishing many universities

which has helped education and evangelization. From my perspective as a DePaul University international Vincentian scholarship student after more than a year of academic study, I feel very fortunate to have completed this study and have firsthand experience of Catholic identity.

According to Krotseng et al., (2000), different challenges have brought about a less obvious religious identity at DePaul University. Therefore, it is imperative to look at the Catholic identity and the challenges of Catholic identity at DePaul University. This research will help the Vincentian community to understand the present situation and the challenges of Catholic identity at the university.

Definition of Key Terminology

It is important to explain the following terms because they will be used throughout the paper and are interrelated.

Catholic Identity – Catholic identity is a phrase that refers to the distinctive characteristics of Catholics, such as beliefs, values, practices, and communities (Hunt et al., 2004). It refers to the things Catholics believe and do. The Catholic identity of Catholic schools signifies the essence, character, and purpose of Catholic schools (Cook, 2008). Catholic schools are faith communities set apart to promote both social and academic reform along with Christian values and mission. They also promote the personal sanctification of the students through spiritual devotions and sacraments (NSBECS, 2022).

Catholic schools are part of the entire mission of the church towards the evangelization of all people. They have a unique identity that distinguishes them in character and formation. The Catholic identity of Catholic schools is not all about the pictures of saints on the walls of Catholic schools, but the role Catholic schools play in helping people deepen their relationship with God and the knowledge of truth and salvation (NSBECS, 2022). Catholic identity is a call

to Christian witnessing through schools. Catholicism aims for an understanding of the world around us, to bring people closer to God (ACCU, 2023).

Mission – Everyone has his or her special vocation or purpose in life. The way we carry out a concrete assignment shows who we are. Our purpose in life and how we pursue it is our mission. Our mission in life is unique to each of us as human beings. No two persons can accomplish the same task in the same way (Ramphele, 2015). Different schools have different missions in education and how they accomplish them. Catholic schools have unique missions distinct from other schools. The goal of the Catholic mission is centered on the teachings of Jesus Christ and the doctrine of the church (NSBECS, 2022).

Charism – Charism is hard to define because it could be understood differently in different contexts. In simple terms, a charism is a gift of God for the church and the world, given in different ways (Klapheke, 2020). Charism is mostly associated with religious life and the gift of the Holy Spirit. However, because of the connection of some Catholic schools to the charisms of their religious founders, it is important to define it. The charism of a school can be defined as the spirit behind its foundation. Some Catholic schools and universities have reasons for their establishment. DePaul University was founded for the Catholic and Jewish immigrants of the north side of Chicago at a time when it was difficult for them to access college (Dosen, 2009). Mission and charism sometimes are behind the way and manner different Catholic universities operate. DePaul University promotes equity and diversity because of its mission and charism.

A Background to DePaul University

DePaul University, founded in 1898, is a Catholic University in its principles, mission, and core values (Krotseng et al., 2000). DePaul is also a multifaith, multicultural, and multiethnic community. The beautiful diversity of DePaul University and its inclusiveness of

people from all backgrounds reflect the best of its Catholic Church spirit. DePaul is deeply committed to the complementary values of faith, critical reasoning, intercultural dialogue, and academic freedom (C. Guillermo, personal communication, November 7, 2023).

From the Catholic-Vincentian perspective, education is a disrupting factor in the pervasive cycle of poverty. Access, equity, and quality go together in our Catholic-Vincentian model of education which is founded in our original intuition and that is trying to respond proactively to what is coming from the heart of the Church (Pope Francis' calls) right now to intentionally respond to the challenges of our times: global inequities, climate change, and violence (C. Guillermo, personal communication, November 7, 2023).

DePaul University derives its title and fundamental mission from St. Vincent de Paul, the founder of the Congregation of the Mission, a Catholic society of apostolic life whose members, Vincentians, established and continue to sponsor DePaul. Motivated by the examples of Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac, who instilled a love of God by leading their contemporaries to serve urgent human needs, the DePaul community believes the mission as an educational institution is to foster integral human development, social mobility, and social transformation.

DePaul University Mission Statement

“Guided by an ethic of Vincentian personalism and professionalism, DePaul compassionately upholds the dignity of all members of its diverse, multi-faith, and inclusive community. Through education and research, the university addresses the great questions of our day, promoting peaceful, just, and equitable solutions to social and environmental challenges. Since its founding in 1898, DePaul University has remained dedicated to making education accessible to all, with special attention to including underserved and underrepresented communities” (Division of Mission and Ministry, 2021).

Chapter II

Literature Review

Introduction

The challenge of Catholic Identity in Catholic universities started gaining relevance among authors about five decades ago (Hunt et al., 2004). This literature review will begin with a chronology of the three major documents on the Catholic identity of Catholic universities e.g., *Vatican II Council document on Christian education (Gravissimum Educationis)*, *Land O'Lakes*, and *Ex Cordes Ecclesiae*. Then a review of the thoughts and contributions of some authors to Catholic identity. This will be followed by a review of the two philosophies on Catholic identity e.g., Traditionalists (conservationists) and the Progressives. Further, the review will look at the four standards of the K- 12 Catholic schools and the five essential marks of Catholic schools. Next would be the elements of Catholic identity in Catholic universities, the challenges of Catholic identity in American Catholic universities, and lastly a conclusion.

Three Major Documents on Catholic Identity of Catholic Universities

Second Vatican Council Document on Christian Education (Gravissimum Educationis)

The Second Vatican Council according to (Dulles 1997 as cited in Garrett, 2006) “was convened from 1963 to 1965 to involve Catholics in contemporary culture and bring the church out of isolation into the modern world” (p. 238). John XXIII decided to move the church from a position of isolation from the modern world to one of involvement in contemporary culture (Garrett, 2006, p. 238). The council is particularly seen as the opening of the windows of the church to the modern world. One of the documents that came out of the Vatican II council is the document on Christian education (*Gravissimum Educationis*) (Paul VI, 1965).

The Vatican II document on Christian education encouraged the establishment of Catholic schools. Catholic schools and universities around the world saw a new surge in growth and development. Many Catholic universities started competing with their secular counterparts (Garrett, 2006). Some Catholic universities began to advocate for a divorce from the institutional church and foundations. Faculties began to advocate for academic freedom and independence. This advocacy led to the gathering of some Catholic university presidents at Land O'Lakes in 1967 (Reilly, 2020).

Land O' Lakes

The wave of the Vatican II Council did not stop at the institutional church. The International Federation of Catholic University Presidents' gathering in 1967 marked the first official effort made by a broad group of Catholic educators to define the nature of Catholic universities (Garrett, 2006). It was a gathering of different universities to deliberate on the future of Catholic universities in America. The gathering happened at Land O' Lakes Wisconsin which is why the statement released is called the Land O' Lake's report. Part of the report states,

The Catholic university today must be a university in the full modern sense of the word, with a strong commitment and concern for academic excellence. To perform its teaching and research functions effectively the Catholic university must have true autonomy and academic freedom in the face of authority of whatever kind, lay or clerical, external to the academic community itself. To say this is simply to assert that institutional autonomy and academic freedom are essential conditions of life and growth and indeed survival for Catholic universities as for all universities. (McCarrick, Campbell, & McCluskey, 1967, para, 1)

Since the release of this statement, the operation of Catholic universities in America changed. This document is one of the most controversial documents on the Catholic identity of Catholic Universities (Garrett, 2006). According to Jenkins (2017), although most agree that the Land O' Lakes Statement has had a pervasive influence on Catholic higher education over the last 50 years, many have seen its influence as unconstructive or simply pernicious (para. 3).

Ex Corde Ecclesiae

According to Garrett (2006), "Some experts believe the Land O'Lakes statement initiated a movement among Catholic conservatives that eventually led to the historical *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*" document by Pope John Paul II (p. 240). Rittof states that (as cited in Garrett 2006, p. 241) "*Ex Corde's* purpose was to clarify Catholic character and identity in higher education". Most often especially in modern culture, there is a growing perception that faith is antithetical to reason. John Paul II (1990) wanted to reiterate this argument in one of his documents *Fides et Ratio*, which means faith and reason. He opined that "every Catholic University, without ceasing to be a university, has a relationship to the church which is essential to its institutional identity" (John Paul II, 1990). He said, like Aquinas, that faith builds on reason.

Furthermore, he stated that,

Since the objective of a Catholic university is to ensure institutionally a Christian presence in the university world, confronting the great problems of society and culture, every Catholic university as Catholic must have the following essential characteristics:

1. A Christian inspiration not only of individuals but of the university community as such.
2. A continuing reflection in the light of the Catholic faith within the growing treasury of human knowledge, to which it seeks to contribute by its research.
3. Fidelity to the Christian message as it comes to us through the Church.

4. An institutional commitment to the service of the people of God and of the human family in their pilgrimage to the transcendent goal that gives meaning to life. (John Paul II, 1990)

The document also indicated that the nature of a Catholic university is to make known its Catholic identity, either in a mission statement or in some other appropriate public document (John Paul II, 1990, Art. 2&3). “The university, particularly through its structure and its regulations, is to provide means which will guarantee the expression and preservation of this identity” (John Paul II, 1990, Art2&3).

John Paul II in *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* stipulated that every Catholic university’s theology faculty should receive a mandate from the bishop to teach (Garrett, 2006). For the people who think that Catholic universities should move away from the institutional church, it was hard to swallow. However, not the same for those who believe the church’s authorities still have a stake in Catholic universities. They believe bishops still have the responsibility to watch over the preservation and strengthening of the Catholic character of Catholic universities. (Garrett, 2006, p. 243). Because all Catholic schools are in a diocese at the invitation of the ordinary.

Authors' Thoughts and Contributions to Catholic Identity

Identity is who we are, mission is what we do. Catholic identity is the mark of Catholic character in a Catholic school. It is the uniqueness and the Catholicity of a Catholic school. Catholic identity is what distinguishes Catholic schools from other schools. The mission and charism of Catholic schools help to form a general view of their Catholic identity.

Engel, Brock, and Cook (2020) talked about the issue of maintaining Catholic identity as faced by many Catholic schools. They argued that maintaining the charism and mission of a Catholic school helps to maintain the Catholic identity. Using the National Standards and

Benchmarks for Effective Catholic Schools (NSBECS) e.g., mission and Catholic identity, governance and leadership, academic excellence, and operational vitality, they identify the mark of Catholic identity in Catholic Schools. Engel, et, al. (2020) linked the marks given by NSBECS to the Nicene Creed of one, holy, Catholic, and apostolic church. They used the four points of the creed as the basis of the Catholic identity of Catholic schools. Though, this is a way to explain and encourage Catholic schools to investigate their Catholic identity using the four points of the Nicene Creed. However, I quite disagree with their analyses because the NSBECS standards of Catholic schools did not match the four points of the Nicene Creed.

Another author who talked about the charism and Catholic identity of parish schools is Timothy (2015). His insights focused on the need to cultivate an authentic identity among Catholic schools. Catholic identity is very important, especially at this time when Catholic schools face competition due to more educational options like Charter schools (Timothy, 2015, p. 33). Addressing the challenge of Catholic identity in Catholic schools he talked of school charism and culture. Having school charism and culture is a way a school can participate in new evangelization and develop a unique brand. It means that the development of school charism and culture promotes Catholic identity. School charism and culture should be in line with the gospel of Christ, the teaching of the church, and the message of the new evangelization (Timothy, 2015). Nurturing faith and maintaining a Christian presence in the academic world, is a charism all authentic Catholic schools should have that distinguishes them from public schools (CCE, 1977).

Groome, (2021), stated that maintaining the Catholic identity of the Catholic worldwide network of schools more than ever now needs to be deliberately chosen and crafted (p. 108). He continued,

Many distinguished American universities were originally sponsored by a faith community: Yale by Episcopalians, Princeton by Presbyterians, Boston University by Methodists; etc. Today, such institutions vehemently claim no religious or spiritual identity. They assiduously avoid such association, embracing the enlightenment posture. They say that any semblance of faith would prove inimical to their academic freedom and the critical rigor of their scholarship. Hence, great American Catholic universities like Notre Dame, Boston College, Georgetown, Fordham, and others, how might they avoid going the same route and still rise in our time to the challenges of continuing to offer a faith-based formative (yet fully enlightened) university education? (Groome, 2021, p. 113).

As a solution to the problem of Catholic identity in Catholic schools, Groome (2021) advocated for a movement with a commitment to Catholic pedagogy. A pedagogy that should permeate Catholic education, shaping how its teachers teach and how its students learn across the entire curriculum.

In line with Groome's idea, Heft (2021) also proposed Catholic pedagogy as the way forward for Catholic universities in America. He distinguished three different models that Catholic universities have taken in the United States about Catholic identity and pedagogy.

1. The university as a marketplace of ideas. The marketplace metaphor suggests that all ideas are examined and debated, and the institution takes no position. This model appeals to those Catholic universities that aspire to be open to research like the elite secular universities.
2. As a closed circle (Catholic universities who want to operate as a sectarian university that welcomes only faculty and students from the same faith community). It is a very different way of thinking about Catholic universities whereby everything is subjected to the fidelity of Catholic tradition and the

magisterium. Little or no chance is given to diverse ideas or publications. 3. An open circle (a model that offers a Catholic university a chance to be both a university and Catholic). This is a middle ground between the first two extreme positions (Heft, 2021, p. 126). The last approach strikes a balance between the university as the marketplace of idea model and the closed circle model. While the closed circle model leads to sectarianism, the marketplace of idea model leads to secularism. If American Catholic universities must avoid the danger of going secular which has happened to the earlier universities founded by the evangelicals, they must maintain their identity as Catholic avoiding extremes. The maintenance of this identity must be carefully and consciously done. Heft (2021) stated that the desire for Catholic universities with peculiar foundations and missions to become like every other public university is very challenging and will kill academic and institutional diversity.

Many Catholic educational institutions have found that efforts to become more mainstream, to open to the larger world of higher education, and to increase the quality of their instruction have had the unintended consequence of sidelining or diluting their Catholic character and identity. The forces of secularization have been and remain very powerful. At the other extreme, the forces of isolation and narrowness are also very powerful. So how can Catholic universities proceed to build themselves in ways that are educationally engaged, excellent, and authentically Catholic at the same time? (Smith & Cavadini, 2014, p. 30)

Speaking on striking a balance between educational excellence and Catholic identity, Smith and Cavadini (2014) stated that having a strong mission statement and going ahead to hire faculty who believe in helping the university realize this mission whether Catholic or non-Catholic or no religion is the way to go using Notre Dame University as an example.

Smith and Cavadini (2014) went further to say that “without the right kind of faculty in place, Catholic higher education will be crippled. But with the right kind of faculty, Catholic higher education can thrive. So, the right kind of faculty needs to be carefully recruited, cultivated, and built up over time” (p. 94). This dimension of recruiting the right kind of faculty by Smith and Cavadini (2014) could raise a lot of fears and questions among people. The first question could be the criteria for knowing the right kind of faculty to be recruited. Second, how can this be done without falling into the danger of discrimination? However, I agree with Smith & Cavadini (2014) that for any institution to thrive and achieve its goals, it must be able to hire and coordinate people who are ready to share and work towards the goal. For Catholic universities, this goal (Catholic identity) must be carefully specified and pursued to maintain Catholic identity.

Dosen (2009) discussed in detail the challenge of Catholic identity in Catholic universities and identified the issue of governance as one of the things that precipitated this challenge. He used for example the evolution of governance in six Catholic universities: DePaul University, St. John University, St. Louis University, Wester College, St. Mary’s College, and Notre Dame University. Bringing a new dimension to the issue of Catholic identity, his research showed how some of the universities struggled to maintain their Catholic identity because of different leadership changes both Catholic and non-Catholic. Dosen (2009) made clear the role the University’s leadership and founding congregations play in directing their universities to its mission. Catholic university administrators have this as part of their responsibilities.

Highlighting the importance of leadership and the challenges that face Catholic universities and colleges, the *National Catholic Reporter* in its edition of *The Catholic Campus*, interviewed six Catholic universities and college presidents on the challenges facing their

institution (Heather, 2007). These higher educational institutions included the following DePaul University (Fr Dennis Holtschneider), Anna Maria College (Jack P. Calareso), Neuman College (Rosalie Mirenda), Mount St Mary's College (Jacqueline Powers Doud), St Mary's College of California (Christian Br. Ronald Gallagher), and Bary University (Dominican Sr. Linda Bevilacqua). All agreed that there are challenges of identity that face their institutions (Heather, 2007). They stated that they grapple with the challenge of religious identity and how what they do connects to the larger church (Heather, 2007). These presidents believe that the issue of identity is paramount to the existence of Catholic higher education. According to the president of Anna Maria College (Jack P. Calareso), "there's a general perception that Catholic higher education is quality education. One reason we have so many non-Catholics attending our schools is that there is an understanding that Catholic universities teach and model good ethical and moral values. But we can't simply live off our reputation" (Heather, 2007, p. 11). There is a need for Catholic universities to maintain the Catholic identity exclusive of other higher educational institutions. Catholic identity in its sui generis is not just about the religious affiliation of Catholic schools but the values and spirit which they uphold which are deep rooted in the gospel of Christ and the principle of Christian living.

Philosophies on Catholic Identity

The issue of Catholic identity in Catholic universities has been a concern and discussion among Catholic intellectuals, educators, and the hierarchy of the church (Rizzi. 2019). Catholic universities have shown remarkable growth over the years, some competing with secular higher institutions. Many Catholic universities boast of strong endowments and professional faculties. Some have turned into research universities and institutions. This new era of growth of Catholic universities has raised some mixed feelings among Catholic intellectuals and the hierarchy of the

church. Some think that some of the universities are quickly losing their identities and missions. They are becoming like secular universities. The dilemma was worsened by the advocate for the autonomy of Catholic Universities in the Land O'Lakes report. The scenario divided the Catholic intellectuals and hierarchy into two philosophies, the traditionalists, and the progressives.

Traditionalists – Among the Catholic intellectuals and hierarchy, some believe that Catholic Universities should maintain the status quo of Catholic universities. They are the traditionalists also called the conservatives. The status quo according to Rizzi (2019) is the “good old days” when Catholic institutions existed primarily as citadels of Western culture, and when religious practice was incorporated unapologetically into the classroom. The traditionalists form a small group of authors and scholars who want Catholic academic institutions to be truly “Catholic” in all ramifications. However, the counterargument as posited by the progressive group is that Catholic academic institutions cannot remain the same, especially in the wake of the cultural and social evolution faced by society.

Progressives – This group can best be seen from the perspective of those who are advocating for the academic and institutional autonomy of Catholic Universities. This was buttressed by the gathering of some university presidents at Land O' Lakes, Wisconsin in 1967 to articulate their vision for “modern” Catholic university education (Reilly, 2020). According to Rizzi (2019),

Scholars in the progressive camp are not true opposites of the traditionalists, since both groups tend to care deeply about Catholic education, and hardly any scholar has argued publicly that Catholic universities should abandon their religious identities. Nor do progressives necessarily see the Catholic culture on campus as doomed to irrelevance, they simply accept that the nature of Catholic education has changed, and they try to

identify ways in which it can evolve pragmatically while maintaining its core values whatever those are defined to be (p. 5).

The core value of Catholic identity is one of the major discussions about the Catholic identity of Catholic schools and universities.

Four Standards and Five Essential Marks of Catholic Schools

The four standards and five essential marks of Catholic schools were outlined by NSBECS and Archbishop Micheal Miller CSB respectively. While the four standards are for the K-12 schools, the five essential marks are for the general Catholic school system. However, both have addressed important issues in the Catholic identity of Catholic schools strongly from different perspectives. This is why we cannot just omit them in this study. A good understanding, combination, and practical implementation of them will give an authentic identity to any Catholic school both elementary, secondary, and university.

Four Standards of Catholic Schools

Governance and Leadership.

“Central to the mission of the Catholic church is Catholic education” (NSBECS, 2022). Achieving the aim and mission of Catholic education cannot be possible without effective governance and leadership. Catholic school governance and leadership provide the direction schools follow and ensure success. It promotes and protects the responsibility and rights of the school community. Catholic school governance and leadership ensure faith formation and Catholic identity. “Although governance models vary based on the sponsorship of the school, those who serve on the governing body or leadership team in Catholic schools should provide an environment for the teaching of doctrine and sacred scripture, the building and experiencing

community, the serving of others, and the opportunity for worship” (NSBECS, 2022). Through effective governance and leadership, Catholic education prepares people to become good citizens with high moral and social standards. This is part of the reason parents prefer Catholic school to public school. In Catholic schools, the standard of moral and religious training is very high. It shows in the civil and religious responsibility of those who attended Catholic schools. Education transcends intellectual ability but also encompasses a well-trained moral, social, and spiritual personality. Through effective governance and leadership, Catholic schools should ensure holistic education.

Mission and Catholic Identity.

Mission and Catholic identity in the standards of Catholic schools help Catholic children young and old learn to deepen the Catholic faith (NSBECS, 2022). Catholic schools serve as a bridge between the family and the church. Education is a continuum therefore Catholic Education deepens the spiritual and moral training that children receive from their families. Many parents prefer Catholic schools because it is where attention is given to their children’s spiritual well-being. Many Catholic schools have chaplaincies and spiritual programs that support the spiritual needs of the students. Catholic school environments are usually conducive to spiritual development. With the way the world is evolving, many school environments are becoming anti-religion. The school curriculum has moved away from any link to religion. Often children are taught different ideologies and philosophies that may be detrimental to their faith. Catholic schools unlike public schools give room for religious instruction and discussion in education.

According to Williams and Antonio (1988), “Christian formation given in childhood and early adolescence is not always proof against the influence of the environment.” This means that

greater attention should be paid to the spiritual formation of Catholic universities. Many challenges and shortcomings of Catholic teens pointed out in Topping's (2015) data analysis and comparisons are traceable to the quality of schools run by Catholics today. "An excellent Catholic school adhering to mission provides opportunities both within and outside the classroom for Christ-centered student faith formation, participation in liturgical and communal prayer, action in service and social justice" (NSBECS, 2022). There should be a mark of spiritual distinctiveness of Catholic schools from other schools. This is important because of the church's call for Christian evangelization of which school is an aspect (Paul VI, 1975).

Academic Excellence.

Academic excellence and achievements are the hallmarks of Catholic schools (NSBECS, 2022). Catholic schools keep their academic standards high because of their identity. Catholic schools stand out in everything that they do even in academics. Priests and religious who often oversee these schools are trained to promote and maintain excellence. There are many reasons Catholic school maintains academic excellence:

1. Catholic school curriculum adheres to appropriate, delineated curriculum standards in every subject area, and is vertically and horizontally aligned to ensure that each student completes a rigorous and coherent sequence of academic courses based on the curriculum. It maintains a Catholic worldview towards spiritual, moral, and ethical dimensions of learning in all subjects (NSBECS, 2022).

2. Catholic schools maintain academic excellence because it is a non-government-funded institution. Its viability lies in the ability to attract students who must see a reason to come. Most parents apart from other reasons choose to send their children to Catholic schools because of the quality of Catholic school's academic performance. Catholic schools in the US are rated among

the schools with the highest retention and graduation (NCEA, 2023). Despite the challenges of employing and retaining teachers, Catholic schools stand out in academic performance. Teachers who work in Catholic schools make a lot of sacrifices to see their schools excel (Walch, 1996).

3. Another reason for the academic excellence of Catholic schools is the quality of the intakes. Many Catholic schools set the standard of entry very high so that only the best candidates get admitted (NCEA, 2023). This means that the quality of students admitted is superb. Those who attend Catholic schools come out with the best results.

4. The fourth reason for the academic excellence of Catholic schools is the ability of the students to make individual connections with the teachers. Catholic school's classroom instruction actively engages and motivates each student to learn (NSBECS, 2022). Many times, the number of students in each school classroom is sizeable making it easier for the teachers to attend to the needs of each student (Walch, 1996).

Operational Vitality.

Operational vitality entails the ability of Catholic schools to sustain their operations, how the schools work, and how it is supported. The operational vitality of Catholic schools looks at four different key areas, finances, human resources/personnel, facilities, and institutional advancement. A Catholic school can only function effectively if it maintains its operational vitality. When a school does not maintain the standards of operational vitality, the continuation of academic excellence is in grave jeopardy (NSBECS, 2022).

“An excellent Catholic school develops, carries forward, and monitors a feasible three- to five-year plan, including both current and projected budgets that are the result of a collaborated process emphasizing faithful stewardship and sustainability” (NSBECS, 2022). Finance is very

crucial to the survival and sustainability of any institution. School leadership/team helps in financial planning. Financial plans delineate all costs for key target areas including salaries, instructional programs, equipment and facilities, capital projects, and other identified categories (NSBECS, 2022).

Institutional advancement means good management of resources. School leaders should collaborate with the governing body to ensure that key strategies and metrics are in place to identify, cultivate, analyze, and maintain significant funding sources for facility development and institutional advancement.

Five Essential Marks of Catholic Schools

It is also important to highlight these five essential marks of Catholic schools. According to Miller (2006),

Like the marks of the Church proclaimed in the Creed – one, holy, catholic, and apostolic – so, too, does the Holy See identify the principal features of a school as *Catholic: A Catholic school should be inspired by a supernatural vision, founded on Christian anthropology, animated by communion and community, imbued with a Catholic worldview throughout its curriculum, and sustained by gospel witness. These benchmarks help to answer the critical question: *Is this a Catholic school according to the mind of the Church?* (Para. 1)*

Inspired by a Supernatural Vision.

The church sees education as a process that leads to the fulfillment of not just the natural destiny of man but also the supernatural destiny. Catholic education forms the whole person with a goal towards heaven. The special purpose of Catholic education is the formation of persons who care for the good of mankind. People who will be good citizens of society and ambassadors

of heaven (Miller, 2006). This first essential mark correlates with the second standard of Catholic schools (mission and Catholic identity) in the sense that both look at the deepening of Christian spirituality in Catholic schools.

Founded on a Christian Anthropology.

The natural complements the supernatural. Christian anthropology is built on the understanding of man as an image of God (cf. Gen. 1:26-27). The supernatural destiny of man brings with it a respect for the dignity of the human person. "Catholic theology teaches that grace builds on nature. Because of this complementarity of the natural and the supernatural, Catholic educators should have a sound understanding of the human person that addresses the requirements of both the natural and the supernatural perfection of every person entrusted to their care" (Miller, 2006, para. 7).

Animated by Communion and Community.

The Catholic school is marked by a strong sense of community built on Christian faith. Communion and community show the social dimension of Catholic school which is very important for human interpersonal development. The Catholic school is a home for all. There should be no discrimination or marginalization of any person or group of persons. Cooperation and collaboration of Catholic educators, parents, and bishops is important to building a Catholic school. Interaction of students with their teachers ensures a healthy school community. "A school's physical environment is also an integral element that embodies the genuine community values of the Catholic tradition. Since the school is rightly considered an extension of the home, it ought to have "some of the amenities which can create a pleasant and family atmosphere." This includes an adequate physical plant and adequate equipment" (Miller, 2006, para. 29). All these

put together make up a Catholic school community animated by faith and respect for the human person.

Imbued with a Catholic Worldview Throughout its Curriculum.

Catholic schools should be marked by a “light of Catholicism” that permeates the entire curriculum. Catholic schooling is education that is constantly inspired and guided by the gospel principles. It is an integral education that aims at the gradual development of every capability of every student: his or her intellectual, physical, psychological, moral, and religious capacities (Miller, 2006). Authentic love for wisdom and passion for truth anchored on God should guide the Catholic school curriculum. A Catholic school worldview should be centered on transmitting faith, culture, and life in line with the light of the gospel. A holistic Catholic curriculum that ensures strong intellectual development gives rise to academic excellence in line with the third standard of Catholic school.

Sustained by Gospel Witness.

The Christian life is a life of witnessing, in line with Christ’s mandate of witnessing the gospel all over the world (cf. Acts 1:8). Catholic schools participate in the church’s evangelizing mission. Both the Catholic school leadership and the teachers have a responsibility to create a Christian school climate. “The nobility of the task to which teachers are called demands that, in imitation of Christ, the only teacher, they reveal the Christian message not by word but also by every gesture of their behavior” (Miller, 2006, para. 48). This means that Catholic schools should pay more attention to hiring for mission if this responsibility is to be fulfilled.

Elements of Catholic Identity in Catholic Universities

Many authors and groups have done research and documentation on elements of the Catholic identity of Catholic universities. According to Miller (2006), “Should not Catholic

schools, precisely insofar as they claim to be specified by their catholicity, do something along the same lines? They too could engage in quality assurance – that is, assurance of their Catholic identity” (para. 75). Thus, Miller (as cited in Cardinal Newman Society, 2011, p. 6), states that there are “elements of Catholicity” that Americans Catholic university leaders can use to identify Catholic identity in Catholic universities.

Concern for Social Justice

The concern for social justice is one of the major hallmarks that is championed by different Catholic universities especially those that are founded by religious congregations e.g., DePaul University founded by the Vincentian Fathers and Brothers, Loyola University founded by the Jesuits, etc. The charism and mission of the religious orders are about helping the poor, marginalized, and vulnerable groups in society. Because of this, their universities are deeply concerned with social justice and academic equity. Many Catholic universities give priority to social justice and academic access to underserved populations.

Sacramental and Devotional Life

Overstreet (as cited in Rizzi, 2019, p. 16), stated that “a final element of student life at Catholic universities is the ability to practice one’s faith on campus, regardless of the institution’s religious preference”. Religious practice in many universities can sometimes be challenging (Rizzi, 2019). However, Catholic universities provide a slightly more conducive environment for faith development than non-Catholic universities. Faith development is very important for Catholic university students.

Having an opportunity to go to mass, receive the sacrament, and have devotional gatherings while on campus gives ground for students to grow their faith while in the university. Catholic universities pay great attention to their campus ministry. Many Catholic universities

have chaplains, priests, and religious leaders who devote their time to the nurturing of faith in the students. Some Catholic families and parents prefer to send their children to Catholic schools because of the freedom and opportunity to grow their faith.

Curriculum

One of the major points of discourse in the Catholic identity of Catholic universities is the curriculum. What should the curriculum for Catholic higher institutions look like? Should it reflect Catholic intellectual tradition, or should that be left only for the theology department? A curriculum that reflects Catholic intellectual tradition is important in Catholic universities because it is part of the duty of these institutions to teach their students about Catholicism.

Catholic schools as well are avenues through which the church communicates her faith and tradition. Several Catholic universities have begun to add “Catholic studies” to their lists of major offerings (Rizzi, 2019). Nonetheless, the trend has not been without its detractors. But it stands to reason that a Catholic university should provide its students with an opportunity to learn about Catholic history, Catholic culture, and Catholic theology no matter how small (Rizzi, 2019, p. 9).

Percentage of Catholic Faculty

The percentage of Catholic faculty is another point of discussion in Catholic identity. The issue is important because John Paul II's (1990) apostolic document “*Ex Corde Ecclesiae*” listed it as one of the Catholic identities of a Catholic University. This means that to maintain an institution’s Catholic identity, a good number of the faculty should be Catholic. It is more significant in the wake of the depopulation of priests and religious who used to staff different schools and universities.

There is the call for the “recruitment for mission”. This call is to ensure that more Catholic faculties are employed in Catholic universities to enable the sustenance and growth of the Catholic identity of Catholic institutions. Aside from recruitment for the mission, there is also an urgent need for Catholic institutions to think towards the training of more Catholic leaders. It is not just an issue for the universities alone but for the entire Catholic school system (Walch, 1996).

Administration

Catholic school administration should be those who understand and are committed to ensuring the mission and identity of a Catholic school. According to Rizzi (2019), “Although academics, research, and student life, etc. are all important elements of Catholic institutional identity, the implementation of all the above falls on the shoulders of the university administration.

Naturally, even the best scholarship on Catholic university identity will be meaningless unless administrators understand and execute it well” (p. 16). Without administrators who know and are willing to communicate the Catholic identity and mission to internal and external audiences, it may be difficult to maintain a Catholic identity in a Catholic institution for a long time. Catholic school administrators should be people who make decisions informed by Catholic values.

Student Life

Student life is very crucial in all levels of education. Academic institutions cannot exist without students. What academic institutions do with their students inside the classroom is as important as what they do with them outside the classroom. “The purpose of Catholic education is not simply to form competent scholars and professionals but also to form men and women

capable of leading full, meaningful lives – spiritually, morally, emotionally, and socially, as well as intellectually” (Rizzi, 2019, p. 14).

The role of student affairs in an institution is very important. Catholic institutions have a unique way of helping their students achieve holistic human development. Students who attend Catholic institutions often than not imbibe the culture and tradition of such an institution. “The Jesuit tradition of *cura personalis* – care for the whole person – is a defining feature of nearly all Catholic higher education” (Rizzi, 2019, p. 13).

Service to the Church

“Through teaching and research, a Catholic University offers an indispensable contribution to the church. By offering the results of its scientific research, a Catholic university will help the church respond to the problems and needs of this age” (John Paul II, 1990, para. 31). The issue of Catholic universities being of service to the church is captured by both the Land O’Lakes document and John Paul II’s document *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* (Rizzi, 2019).

Being in service to the church simply means carrying out meaningful research in theology, arts, and humanities that will help the church. Research is very important for the church as the church functions in a world that is continually evolving. Research could help the church deepen its knowledge and make informed decisions. However, John Paul II (1990) states that “Catholic universities in the recent past have hardly played this role at all. It may well be one of the most important functions of the Catholic university of the future” (para. 5).

Faith-Based Culture/Environment

Culture is commonly described as a people’s way of life. Different institutions have different cultures. Culture helps to preserve the life of a people or an institution. Catholic institutions have their unique culture based on Catholic faith and mission. Faith-based culture

and environment is a major difference between a Catholic university and a secular university. Faith-based culture is not just about having a campus ministry but the ability to translate this into the life of the students. Faith-based culture should first and foremost begin with a faith-based environment.

Catholic universities should have this unique Catholic and religious character within their environment. Someone who enters a Catholic university for the first time should be able to identify it as Catholic or at least a Christian university. The school environment has a great impact on students (Patton, et, al. 2016). Maintaining a faith-based environment will help to accentuate a faith-based culture in an institution. The students should have a feeling of being in a faith-based environment. Through programs and events that promote faith development, a faith-based culture can be built. The Department of Student Affairs / Mission and Ministry in Catholic universities have a great role to play in promoting faith not just in the official school programs but also in the lives of the students.

Challenges of Catholic Identity in American Catholic Universities

Catholic institutions of higher education in the United States are increasingly finding themselves at risk of their identity because of potential threats in five principal areas: 1. Growing ecumenism/ secularism 2. Leadership changes, 3. Growing professionalization of the faculties, 4. University's movement toward research, and 5. Finance (Krosteng, et, al. 2000). There may be other challenges, but a failure to adequately address any of these will pose a serious challenge to the school Catholic university.

Growing Ecumenism/ Secularism

America is a secular state that supports the freedom of religion. Despite the high level of religious observance by the American people, secularity affects public life. Issues of secularity

and religion are sensitive issues in schools. Education institutions respect this fact. Religious schools despite the denomination respect and accommodate other religions (ecumenism).

Catholic schools recognize the freedom of religion and open its doors to everyone. According to statistics, the non-Catholic student population in Catholic schools in America is 24.7% (Hunt, et, al. 2001). This is a welcome idea as well as a challenge.

The challenge is how to accommodate the non-Catholics in a Catholic school while still maintaining Catholic identity without infringing on their religious sensibility. In trying to accommodate non-Catholics some Catholic schools play down or completely obliterate some Catholic traditions, cultures, and marks of Catholic identity. For example, some Catholic universities give up the Catholic way of prayer like beginning a prayer and ending it with the sign of the cross because of religious inclusivity. This issue though sensitive if not well handled could be a challenge to Catholic identity.

The second issue is the growing eagerness of American Catholics to join the mainstream American culture which is secularism. This is well captured in Topping (2015), who said that among the youths he investigated in his data collection, Catholic youths were more susceptible to secular thoughts and behavior than the rest. It is more worrisome when you look at the youth population in the church. There is a widening gap between the number of elders in the church and the young ones. It is not different in the universities. Some of the young people are becoming antithetical to religion. The challenge then for Catholic universities will be how to accommodate and support this group who are anti-religion (both students and faculty) in Catholic universities while still maintaining the institution's Catholic identity.

Leadership Changes

Just as DePaul University experienced a change in the rule for governance agreeing to the possibility of a lay president in 1967 (Dosen, 2009), many other Catholic universities have undergone several leadership changes. In the beginnings of these Catholic universities, there was no issue with leadership structure because the clergy and religious were available (Walch, 1996). However, things have changed over the years, there are fewer priests and religious to help support these universities. Hence, some Catholic universities began hiring lay professionals to lead them. This is one of the major turnarounds for Catholic schools and universities. The board of trustees started to have more laypersons than clergy. The presidency of some of the Catholic universities was now handed over to the laypeople.

These leadership changes in some Catholic universities brought about some challenges. Part of the challenges it brought is the maintaining of the Catholic identity of these universities. A layperson who becomes an administrator of a Catholic school needs to understand and have the zeal to pursue its mission and identity as a Catholic school. In a scenario where the zeal to identify with the mission and identity of a Catholic school is lacking in a lay administrator, the school could be in danger of losing its Catholic identity.

Growing Professionalization of the Faculties

The growing professionalization of Catholic universities' faculties is happening because of the growth and changes occurring through the years in Catholic university education. According to Rizzi, (2019),

As recently as the early 1900s, most American Catholic universities were small, undergraduate-focused institutions offering a six- or seven-year classical curriculum rather than the four-year curriculum familiar to us today. Small staffs of resident priests, brothers, and sisters ran the colleges on shoestring budgets, sharing responsibility for

teaching, administration, discipline, and counseling. Post-World War II increase in enrollment, along with stricter accreditation standards, forced the universities to expand dramatically in the late twentieth century, professionalize their staff, fundraise, and hire large numbers of lay faculty who diluted the presence of the founding religious orders on campus. This has led to interesting questions about what differentiates Catholic higher education from other kinds of higher education today.

The professionalization of the faculties is not bad but there is a challenge that comes with it. Some of the professors who have worked at non-Catholic universities may find it hard to conform to the Catholic intellectual tradition. The big question will be, hiring for professionalism and hiring for mission, which serves the best interest of Catholic higher education? John Paul II (1990) refers to the need to have a critical mass of faculties who are Catholic in Catholic universities. This will help to maintain the Catholic identity of the universities. A Catholic faculty will understand more the need to teach and respect Catholic values and culture than a non-Catholic faculty.

University's Movement towards Research

The idea of a research university is new to American Catholic higher education. It began with the founding of the Catholic University of America (originally a graduate-only institution) and only gained momentum around the middle of the twentieth century (Rizzi, 2019). The transition of some of the Catholic universities into research universities has raised questions among Catholic scholars and the hierarchy of the church.

The Land O' Lakes's report which was signed by some of the Catholic university presidents set the precedent for Catholic universities to do research without recourse to the hierarchy of the church. Formerly, Catholic universities were regulated by the bishops, but with

Land O'Lakes Catholic universities have become independent. The challenge then is to what extent or what kind of research should a Catholic university do. The uniqueness of Catholic universities is very important. Competing with other mainstream universities to become research institutions could lead to a loss of Catholic identity because some research could be against the Catholic moral code and teaching e.g., Some stem cell research, some genetic engineering, etc.

Finance

Finance is one of the main challenges that different Catholic universities have faced or are still facing to date. Building and maintaining a university requires a lot of money and sponsorship. The government does not fund private schools. Catholic universities operate through funds like tuition, alumni support, endowment, and private or organizational donations (Dosen, 2009). It is quite difficult for Catholic universities to run smoothly and achieve their aims without proper funding. Though some through the years have been able to surmount the challenge of funding, some are still struggling with it. The government and some agencies try to support religious universities but not without regulations (Dosen, 2009). Funding is one of the major challenges of Catholic Universities. Also, some of the criteria and eligibility for receiving funding from the Government or some donor agencies may be a challenge to Catholic identity.

Conclusion

To conclude the literature review, there will be an examination of the gaps in the previous literature. This will be followed by a consideration for future study.

Gaps in Previous Literature

Having looked at the different authors' perspectives on Catholic identity and the challenge of Catholic identity in Catholic universities there are some gaps within some of the literature reviewed.

1. There are multiple definitions and perspectives on Catholic identity without a common agreement.
2. There is no mention if Catholic identity is contextual or not. Can the elements and meaning be the same for all Catholic universities or are there peculiar situations? For example, if a Catholic school is founded to serve diverse religions like DePaul originally founded for the Catholics and Jews (Dosen, 2009).
3. Are there new ways in which we can adapt the Catholic identity of universities beyond the elements and standards listed in the literature?
4. What would be the best approach to resolution of the challenge of Catholic identity amidst the cultural and social evolution and religious sentiments of our time? This is important as the present society has been faced with a neoliberal ideology and a consumerism culture (Lipman, 2011).

Consideration for Future Study

As an issue that involves the resolution of the challenge of Catholic identity, neoliberal ideology, and consumerism culture should be considered for future study. I find it very important because modern society is bedeviled with a lot of political, economic, and religious complexities which also affect the education system.

Neoliberal Ideology and Consumerism Culture.

There is a paradigm shift in the goal of education. Since modern culture moved towards neo-liberalism and consumerism people are more interested in the economic and social capital of education. They care less about the institution's identity or the mission of the university. All they care about is getting the required skills and certification to get a good job. Thus, with the high competition among universities, education has turned into another product in the market.

Education has become 'market-oriented' with the force of demand and supply which has made many universities pay more attention to admission and graduation and less attention to other issues like identity. However, Catholic universities despite the competitive nature of the university education system should not forget to pay attention to their Catholic identity and mission which is also important to their existence (Lipman, 2011).

Chapter III.

Conceptual Framework and Methodology

The conceptual framework of this study looks at the five challenges of Catholic identity among Catholic universities. These challenges are common to all Catholic universities. 1. Growing ecumenism/ secularism, 2. Leadership changes, 3. Growing professionalization of the faculties, 4. University's movement toward research, and 5. Finance (Krotseng et al., 2000). As the variables, these challenges of Catholic identity will be examined at DePaul to know if they are the same challenges experienced at DePaul. The qualitative interview and survey will help to better support this inquiry. The results will show the challenges of Catholic identity that presently exist at DePaul University.

Research Methodology

The methodology used in this research is a qualitative analysis of data collected through qualitative interviews and surveys conducted with a select group of faculty and students at DePaul University. The first approach will help to know and understand some of the studies already done on the topic. The second approach will help to apply it to DePaul University. The permission for a survey on human subjects was also obtained from the DePaul Institutional Review Board (Appendix C). The survey was done using Qualtrics software and was sent electronically which helped to protect the identity of the subjects. The data collected was stored safely in a computer with a password and discarded as soon as the study was completed.

Method of Data Collection

The initial data collected was an online interview conducted with the Vice President of Mission and Ministry whose office supports and nurtures the spiritual and faith life of the

university through ministry and programs offered by the Catholic Campus Ministry. The interview provided an important insight into the discourse on Catholic identity from the perspective of an administrator at DePaul University. The interview questions are shown in Appendix B.

The second data set was collected through a survey. Convenience sampling was used to identify faculty and students at DePaul University. The convenient sample included priests and religious who are also students of DePaul. I reached out to them because of their availability. Another convenient sample was some faculty and students who were available and accessible. The convenient sampling enabled me to manage the time needed to complete the study. The survey aimed to understand their experience of Catholic identity and its challenges at DePaul University. The survey questions are shown in Appendix A.

Method of Data Analysis

The data analysis was done through the content analysis method. The feedback obtained from the interview and survey was based on the names of the different elements and challenges and was not coded. The data obtained was represented in a percentage format of 0% - 100%. The findings will be represented in Likert scales and charts.

Research Limitations

The first limitation is the limited amount of time available to complete the study. The second limitation was the small number of people interviewed and surveyed. These limitations do not allow for the results to be generalized to a larger scale.

Chapter IV

Findings and Discussion

The focus of this study was to learn about the challenges of Catholic identity at DePaul University. The data collection included one interview and surveys. The results and findings will be discussed in this chapter.

Findings

Challenges of Catholic Identity at DePaul University

Interview.

An interview was carried out on the issue of Catholic identity/ challenges at DePaul University with the Vice President of the Office of Mission and Ministry. The interview questions are included in Appendix B and were comprised of two questions. The interview took place online. This individual is a Vincentian priest who has been at DePaul for three years. His responses follow the questions:

1. What are the challenges of Catholic identity at DePaul University?

I want to mention some challenges many Catholic universities face in America, including DePaul. Our Catholic identity is challenged by growing religious disaffiliation of young people (secularism), the crisis and polarization inside the Catholic Church about her identity and mission in this century, illiteracy among Catholic students and faculty, disaffected tenured Catholics, marginalization of the liberal arts by a move toward more professional education, lay leaders not too well versed in Catholicism as an intellectual tradition and not attentive to what is happening inside the Catholic Church today (Synodal Process). A big challenge we share with many other Catholic universities is the

financial sustainability of our institution and the crisis of higher education in the United States.

2. What is your view of Catholic identity at DePaul University?

This is a complex time and only Catholic universities capable of adjusting their mission and identity to the challenges of the times will survive and remain competitive in a consumeristic society in which education is simply another product of the market. Like every other institution, our university is subject to the large forces of finance, government regulations, and broad cultural, political, technological, environmental, and demographic changes. These changes demand a permanent transformation of our structures and culture, and a redefinition of our identity, and mission.

Survey

The survey was on the issue of Catholic identity and the challenges of Catholic identity at DePaul University. In the survey, ten persons including faculty and students from different demographics, priests and religious, Catholics, non-Catholics, and no religion were conveniently selected. The survey was to understand their experience of Catholic identity at DePaul and what they feel are the challenges of this Catholic identity and understand if they align with those mentioned in the literature review.

The survey was comprised of five questions and covered a wide range of topics on Catholic identity and the challenges of Catholic identity (see Appendix A for the survey). The survey was developed and sent in Qualtrics, and the responses were on a range from strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, and strongly disagree. Some answered the same thing in some cases while others answered differently. This makes it possible for an analysis to be done on the responses. Out of the ten persons who were sent the survey, seven

responded. The analyses will be done using a Likert scale and charts for the responses to the experience of Catholic identity and the challenges of Catholic identity respectively.

Perception of Catholic Identity at DePaul University

Table 1

In Curricular Engagement

Perception of Catholic Identity at DePaul	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
University In general,	14%	57%	29%	–	–
College of Education	14%	43%	43%	–	–
Your Department	13%	50%	38%	–	–
The class you teach or enrolled in	14%	43%	29%	14%	–

Table 2

In Extracurricular Engagement

Perception of Catholic Identity At DePaul	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
University's Communications	71%	29%	–	–	–
Symbols around The University	43%	57%	–	–	–
Mass and Sacraments	71%	14%	14%	–	–
Workshops, And symposiums	43%	43%	14%	–	–

Figure 1

Elements of Catholic Identity at DePaul University

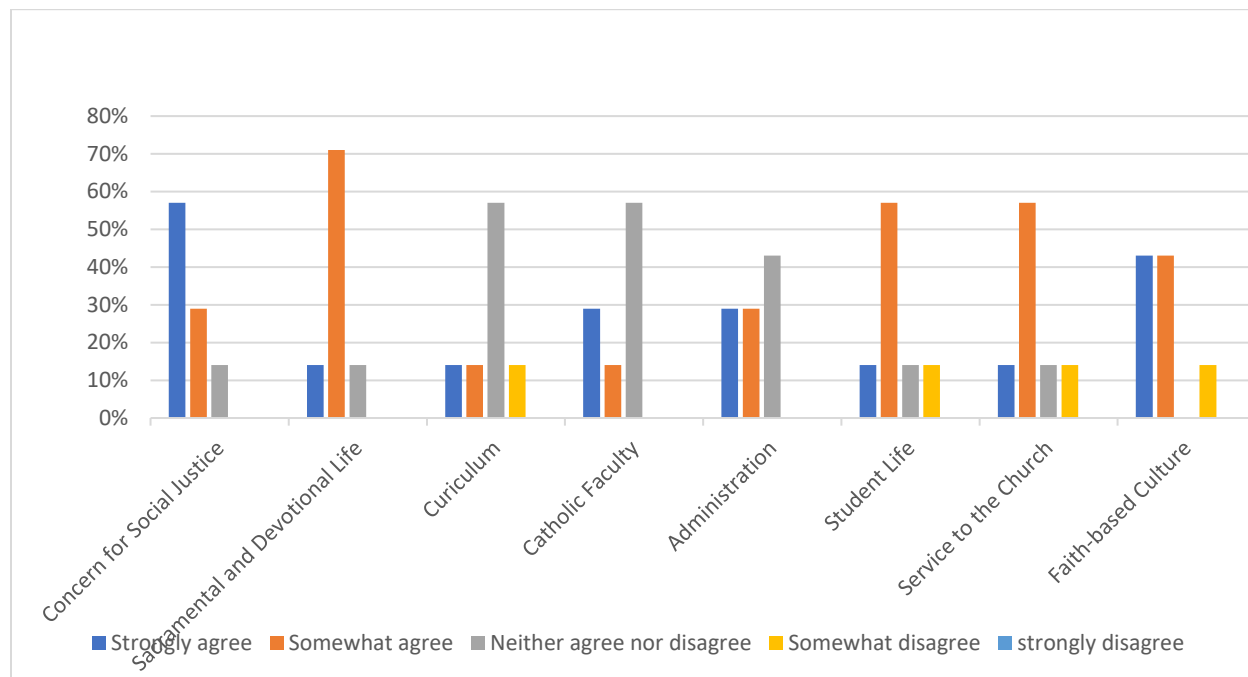
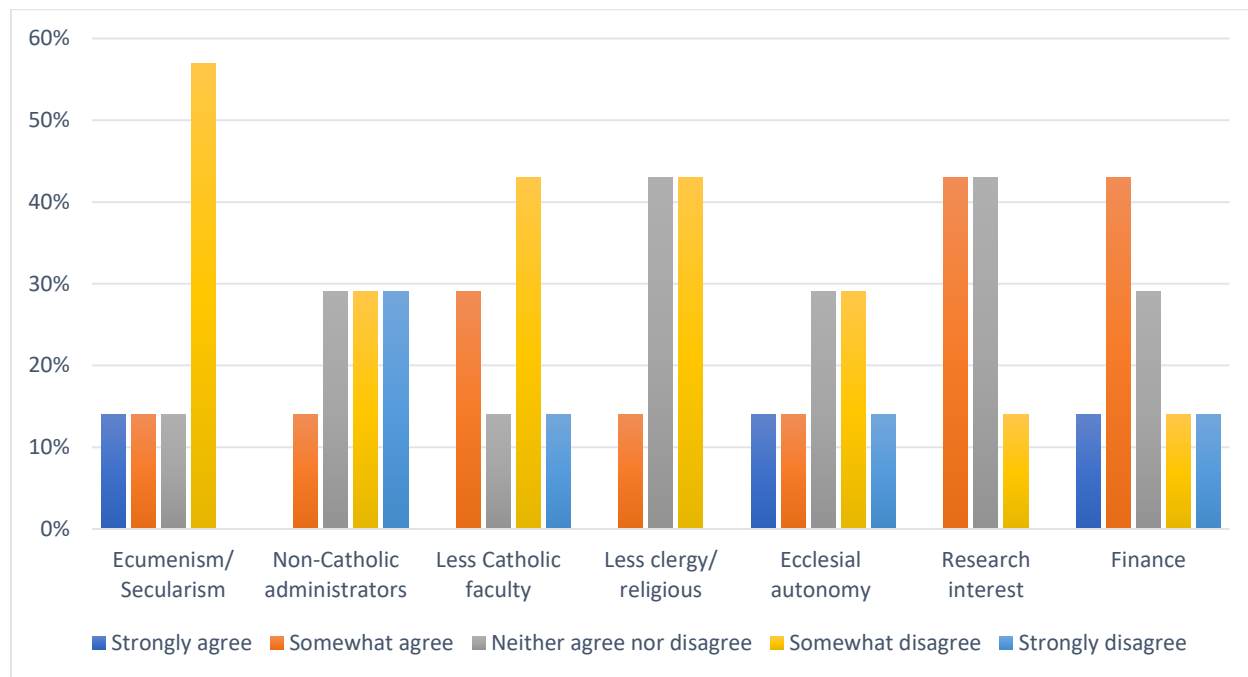


Figure 2

Challenges of Catholic Identity at DePaul University



Discussion

Key Findings

The findings from my study will be analyzed in two categories based on the research questions.

Perception of Catholic Identity at DePaul.

The survey findings show that on average the perception of Catholic identity at DePaul is good. Table 2 shows that this perception of Catholic identity is better pronounced outside the classrooms in extracurricular activities with 5 out of 7 surveys strongly agreeing to it with over 50%. And less obvious within the classrooms and curricular activities in Table 1 with just 55% strongly agreeing. The findings of the survey in table 1 and 2 can be justified because:

1. The presence and activities of the Department of Mission and Ministry are more centered on extracurricular activities. The university has no department to engage what happens in the classroom or curriculum with Catholic identity.
2. From the findings on the elements and the challenges of Catholic identity at DePaul in Figures 1 and 2 respectively, less Catholic curriculum, and less Catholic faculty were observed. Hence, this may also have contributed to the result of Table 1.

Elements and Challenges of Catholic Identity at DePaul.

The survey from Figure 1 shows that on the elements of Catholic identity, two of the least elements perceived to be present at DePaul University are curriculum and Catholic faculty. Out of the eight elements surveyed Catholic faculty and curriculum are seven and eight respectively. This survey result can be justified also by the findings on the challenges of Catholic identity in Figure 2. The survey result in Figure 2 shows that Finance, research interest (Catholic research), and less Catholic faculty are the three top challenges of Catholic identity at DePaul University

with research interest and less Catholic faculty coming second and third respectively. They were also mentioned among the challenges of Catholic identity during the interview with the Vice president of Mission and Ministry with finance taking the lead in both the interview and the survey on the challenges of Catholic identity.

Context

These findings are in alignment with both the interview and the survey conducted in this study.

Curriculum

Some Catholic universities are paying less attention to the issue of curriculum. Curriculum plays an important role in the identity of a Catholic university. Catholic universities distinct from other universities should reflect the richness of the Catholic intellectual tradition. Attending a Catholic university should allow someone to deepen one's knowledge of Catholicism.

Moreover, some Catholic universities have a peculiar mission because of their religious affiliation to the founding order. People should have the opportunity to learn and understand the mission and identity of the university. One of the experiences that prompted my quest into this research was an incident in one of my classes. A professor in a class on service learning explained to the bewilderment of a huge number of the class DePaul University's commitment to social justice as a core value and mission of the university. Many in the class retorted that during all their time at DePaul, they never heard or learned about DePaul's commitment to social justice. This for example shows a disconnect between the university's mission and identity and the curriculum.

Catholic Faculty

The survey did not show a high number of Catholic faculty at DePaul, however, as a caveat this survey does not speak for DePaul University as it does not cover a larger number of subjects. One of the strong points raised by John Paul II (1990) is the presence of a critical mass of Catholic faculty in any Catholic university. This critical mass is to help the university to maintain its Catholic identity. Some universities did not implement the suggestions of that document *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*. This has directly or indirectly affected the Catholic presence in the university's classrooms. It has impact since "*Nemo dat quod non habet*," meaning no one gives what he or she does not have. However, this is not to discriminate against non-Catholics in Catholic universities but according to the document *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, a Catholic university should have a reasonable number of Catholic faculties (John Paul II, 1990).

Finance

Unfortunately, finance in both the literature review, interview, and survey is the main challenge of Catholic universities. Many universities are suffering from this challenge. Private universities need money to run and remain open. Some help or support that comes from the government comes with certain regulations. When a university agrees to receive funds from the government, the university does that knowing that some of its operations as a Catholic university will not remain the same.

Another dimension to the issue of finance in Catholic universities is its impact on tuition. Because of the challenge of finance, many Catholic universities operate on a high cost of tuition. This makes it difficult for the poor to easily have access to Catholic university education making it go against its character and spirit. Catholic university is supposed to service the poor but sometimes the reverse is the case. Some of them end up serving the rich. In my country, Catholic

education is one of the costliest educations to have. Many also have complained saying that the cost of attending school at DePaul University is high.

Suggestion for Further Study

Importantly, the interview pointed to a point that will be good for future inquiry. The point was also mentioned in the conclusion of the literature review. This is the challenge of the social changes of our time as exemplified in the issue of neo-liberalism and the consumerism culture. This is an important aspect to be looked at as this affects many of the universities in America. The high competition among universities calls for continuous adaptation of the universities and their search for relevance. This is one of the current challenges to the identity of Catholic universities. Some universities are changing and abandoning their identity not because they want to do so but because they want to remain relevant. Trying to be like others is one of the strongest and current challenges of Catholic identity. If Catholic universities are going to maintain their Catholic identity, there is a need to avoid unnecessary competition and conformity.

Chapter V

General Conclusion

Conclusion

The challenges of Catholic identity according to Krotseng, et al. (2000) are ecumenism/secularism, leadership changes, professionalization of the faculty, research interest, and finance. The study aimed to know the perceptions of Catholic identity at DePaul University and to understand the challenges of Catholic identity at DePaul. The interview and survey conducted showed that DePaul University has three main Challenges to its Catholic identity which include: 1. Finance 2. Research Interest, and 3. Curriculum.

Understanding the Catholic identity and its challenges at DePaul is of immense help to DePaul as a Catholic university. DePaul University welcomes and encourages inclusivity, diversity, and equity. Inclusivity, diversity, and equity are highly encouraged to be practiced in the university but not to the detriment of Catholic identity. A Catholic university can lose itself (identity) while trying to carry everybody along. With the dwindling of priests and religious in the faculty, the Catholic tradition needs to be upheld. The Vincentians need to rethink their presence at DePaul University to maintain a good number of Catholic faculty. DePaul needs to consider supporting the training of more Catholic faculties who will transmit the Catholic intellectual tradition. These can go a long way to help address the issue of the challenge of Catholic identity at DePaul.

Recommendation

Two recommendations have come out of this research. First, there is no unified template or standard for Catholic university education just as it is obtainable in (K-12 schools). However, there is a current document in this regard been developed by the Association of Catholic

Colleges and Universities (ACCU, 2023). Developing and adopting standards for Catholic universities will help to have a unified template for Catholic universities to operate. Catholic university leaders can work together to adopt a standard that will guide them in directing the affairs of their universities. This will help even Catholic universities who do not have a particular standard they use or who have wandered away from the values and mission of Catholic universities have a working template.

The second recommendation is the creation of a Catholic university curriculum board. This board will help Catholic universities where necessary to create a curriculum that will be reflective of the Catholic academic tradition. They will assist in giving the Catholic university's curriculum a touch of Catholicism. Those who attend Catholic universities must hear about Catholicism. Furthermore, to particularize it to DePaul University, courses like service learning at DePaul should have a touch of social justice. This will help the students who have passed through DePaul to understand their connection with social justice and as an alumnus the need to carry the light of social justice in the society.

Appendix A

INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE RESEARCH STUDY CHALLENGES OF CATHOLIC IDENTITY IN AMERICAN CATHOLIC UNIVERSITIES A CASE STUDY OF DEPAUL UNIVERSITY

Principal Investigator: Name: Andrew Ezechiugo, Department: Educational Leadership and Administration, College: College of Education, School: DePaul University, Graduate Student.
Institution: DePaul University, USA

Faculty Advisor: Barbara Rieckhoff, Associate Professor Department of Leadership, Language and Curriculum.

We are conducting a research study because we are trying to learn more about the challenges of Catholic identity in American Catholic Universities using DePaul University as a case study.

We are asking you to be in the research because you are one of the faculty or students at DePaul University and knowing that DePaul is a Catholic University, we want to know what your experience of Catholic identity at DePaul is like. Anybody from any background, religion, or nonreligion is eligible to participate in the research. However, “You must be age 18 or older to be in this study. This study is not approved for the enrollment of people under the age of 18.

There is no requirement or personal information needed in the research. If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to fill out a survey. The survey will include questions about your experience and the challenges of Catholic identity at DePaul University. If there is a question you do not want to answer, you may skip it. The study should take about seven minutes to complete. Research data collected from you will be anonymous. Since your information is collected online in an anonymous way, we will not be able to link your responses back to you. So, your responses will remain confidential. Your participation is voluntary, which means you can choose not to participate. There will be no negative consequences if you decide not to participate or change your mind later after you begin the study. You can withdraw your participation at any time before submitting your survey. If you change your mind later while answering the survey, you may simply exit or not hand in the survey. “Once you submit your responses to me online, I will be unable to remove your data later from the study because all data is anonymous, and I will not know which survey response belongs to you.” Your decision whether to be in the research will not affect your grades, your status, or your employment at your school DePaul University. If you have questions, concerns, or complaints about this study or you want to get additional information or provide input about this research, please contact Andrew Ezechiugo via 3126785579 or azechiu@depaul.edu or Barbara Rieckhoff via 7733258670 or brieckho@depaul.edu

If you have questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact Jessica Bloom in the Office of Research Services at 312-362-6168 or by email at jlbloom8@depaul.edu. You may also contact DePaul’s Office of Research Services if:

- Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team.
- You cannot reach the research team.

•You want to talk to someone besides the research team.

By completing the survey, you are indicating your agreement to be in the research.

- I agree to participate (click to move onto the research survey).
- I do NOT agree to participate.

A. Please rate your view of Catholic identity at DePaul University in the following places.

The university generally

- Much stronger.
- Slightly stronger.
- No change.
- Slightly weaker.
- Much weaker.

B. The college of education or your college

- Much stronger.
- Slightly stronger.
- No change.
- Slightly weaker.
- Much weaker.

C. Your department

- Much stronger.

- Slightly stronger.
- No change.
- Slightly weaker.
- Much weaker.

D. Class, you teach or enrolled.

- Much stronger.
- Slightly stronger.
- No change.
- Slightly weaker.
- Much weaker.

A. Have you encountered Catholic identity in any of the following at DePaul?

University's communications

- Definitely yes.
- Probably yes.
- Might or might not.
- Probably not.
- Definitely not.

B. Materials made available to current and prospective students and faculty.

- Definitely yes.
- Probably yes.

Might or might not.

Probably not.

Definitely not.

C. Class, you teach or are enrolled in.

Definitely yes.

Probably yes.

Might or might not.

Probably not.

Definitely not.

D. Symbols around the university

Definitely yes.

Probably yes.

Might or might not.

Probably not.

Definitely not.

E. Mass and Sacraments

Definitely yes.

Probably yes.

Might or might not.

Probably not.

Definitely not.

F. Workshops, lectures, and symposiums

Definitely yes.

Probably yes.

Might or might not.

Probably not.

Definitely not.

G. Write-ups, magazines, newspapers, and journals

Definitely yes.

Probably yes.

Might or might not.

Probably not.

Definitely not.

H. Others (please indicate if any)

Which of these elements of Catholic identity do you see present at DePaul?

A. Concern for social justice

Strongly agree.

Somewhat agree.

Neither agree nor disagree.

Somewhat disagree.

Strongly disagree.

B. Sacramental and devotional life

Strongly agree.

Somewhat agree.

Neither agree nor disagree.

Somewhat disagree.

Strongly disagree.

C. Catholic curriculum (if you have taught or taken any)

Strongly agree.

Somewhat agree.

Neither agree nor disagree.

Somewhat disagree.

Strongly disagree.

D. Catholic faculty

Strongly agree.

Somewhat agree.

Neither agree nor disagree.

Somewhat disagree.

Strongly disagree.

E. Catholic administrators

- Strongly agree.
- Somewhat agree.
- Neither agree nor disagree.
- Somewhat disagree.
- Strongly disagree.

F. Student life (faith development)

- Strongly agree.
- Somewhat agree.
- Neither agree nor disagree.
- Somewhat disagree.
- Strongly disagree.

G. Service to the church (Church-related research interest)

- Strongly agree.
- Somewhat agree.
- Neither agree nor disagree.
- Somewhat disagree.
- Strongly disagree.

H. Faith-based culture/mission

- Strongly agree.

- Somewhat agree.
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree.
- Strongly disagree.

Which of these do you think is a challenge to Catholic identity at DePaul at present?

A. Ecumenism (not showing a preference for Catholicism for example during prayer at official university gatherings or celebrations)

- Strongly agree.
- Somewhat agree.
- Neither agree nor disagree.
- Somewhat disagree.
- Strongly disagree.

B. Non-Catholic administrators

- Strongly agree.
- Somewhat agree.
- Neither agree nor disagree.
- Somewhat disagree.
- Strongly disagree.

C. Less Catholic faculty

- Strongly agree.

- Somewhat agree.
- Neither agree nor disagree.
- Somewhat disagree.
- Strongly disagree.

D. Less clergy and religious

- Strongly agree.
- Somewhat agree.
- Neither agree nor disagree.
- Somewhat disagree.
- Strongly disagree.

E. Growing autonomy from the founding congregation (Vincentians)

- Strongly agree.
- Somewhat agree.
- Neither agree nor disagree.
- Somewhat disagree.
- Strongly disagree.

F. Others

Research Interest

Finance (Government
fund or grant)

Others (please
indicate in any of the
boxes below)

Answer 1 (1)

Answer 2 (1)

Answer 3 (1)

Strongly agree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Somewhat agree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Neither agree nor disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Somewhat disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Appendix B

For the Department of Mission and Ministry only

- 1. What are the Challenges of Catholic identity at DePaul University?
- 2. What is your view of Catholic identity at DePaul University?

Appendix C

Greetings

Your initial exempt protocol #2023-1163, entitled "Challenges of Catholic Identity in American Catholic Universities a Case Study of DePaul University", has been reviewed and approved by the DePaul University IRB. You may view your formal approval letter within the eProtocol form's "Event History" tab.

Please note, page 3 of the "Survey on the Challenges of Catholic Identity Version 1, 15 Dec. 2023 (2)" form was administratively edited to replace "consent" with "agree to

participate”. Please ensure the information sheet in Qualtrics is updated to replace “consent” with “agree to participate”. This document is attached here as well as within the eProtocol form's "Attachments" tab, along with all other finalized and approved study documents. Please use these versions for your research and editing upon any potential amendment submissions.

If you have any questions, please contact me at emendo15@depaul.edu

Thank you.

Eduardo Mendoza

Assistant Director of Research Compliance, Office of Research Services

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