What's the Story Here?
How Catholic University Leaders are Making Sense of Undocumented Student Access

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
(Higher Education)
in the University of Michigan
2015

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To all who yearn for higher education.

Acknowledgments

I am deeply grateful for all who have supported this research and my time away in studies. Thanks to the participants of this study and to the many administrative assistants who helped coordinate the interviews. Thanks to the members of my cohort for walking this journey with me. Thanks to the St. Mary and St. Thomas parish communities to whom God sent me so they could keep an eye on me. Thanks to Linda and Melinda for your constant good cheer and for understanding that I don't want to go on the cahht! Thanks to my colleagues at the National Forum who broadened my thinking. Thanks to Rasu and Bill, George and Aaron, Todd and especially Lew who saw me through some dark times. Thanks to Mike for challenging me to be my best; to Karl for helping me see the world in a new way; to Kim for your enthusiasm and faith in me; and to John, my advisor, mentor, and friend, who somehow figured out a way to make me into a Michigan Man. Thanks to the members of my family who have been so patient during my college marathon. And thanks to my brothers in Holy Cross for your love, support, and a few swift kicks when they were warranted—I am truly happy to finally be rejoining you in ministry again!

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List of Abbreviations

ACCU ....Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities
AJCU ....Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities
CCHD ....Catholic Campaign for Human Development
CSC...........................Congregation of Holy Cross
DACA ....Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals
HIS ....Hispanic Serving Institution
IPEDS ....Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System
SES...........................Socioeconomic Status
SIT............................Social Identity Theory
SPTF ....Strategic Planning Task Force
SUV ....Sports Utility Vehicle
USCCB ....United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

Chapter 1: Introduction

Well over fifty years ago, on September 9, 1957, President Eisenhower signed the Civil

Rights Act of 1957 ("Creating the Commission on Civil Rights," 2012). The Act was significant

not only because it was the first of numerous legislative acts to address issues related to civil

rights in the United States, but also because it created the nation's first Civil Rights Commission.

Particularly noteworthy is the fact that three of the original six commissioners were affiliated

with academic institutions. John Hannah, president of Michigan State University, was named

chair and was joined by George Johnson, dean of Howard University's law school, and Fr. Ted

Hesburgh, C.S.C., president of the University of Notre Dame. The Commission was sworn in on

January 2, 1958 (Hesburgh & Reedy, 1990); they and their successors would work for many

years to fulfill the charge given them by the president, making sense of the civil rights issues of

the time.

In a very real sense, the President was asking them, "What's the story here?" This

question was not easily answered, as concerns regarding race relations, long a painful and very

troubling aspect of the nation's history, were becoming increasingly evident. So the

commissioners planned a series of hearings across the country that provided a safe space for

citizens to tell their stories. To protect those who came forward to speak at the hearings, the

commissioners issued federal subpoenas to every single one. Through this process of listening,

the commissioners came to understand that, among other injustices, blacks were being refused

the right to vote through numerous and varied methods in the South. After months of hearings,

Hesburgh and his colleagues presented Eisenhower with a list of 12 recommendations, 11 of

which were unanimously backed by all six—the commissioners were evenly split between Republicans and Democrats, and between Northerners and Southerners, so their unanimity surprised the President (Hesburgh, 2011).

We will likely never know why Eisenhower chose to appoint three academic leaders to serve as founding members of a commission charged with exploring such an important matter for our country. Perhaps he meant to signal that the commission's work would be guided by rigorous empirical methods, or that its work should not be bounded by political structures. Perhaps he perceived that university leaders were accustomed to making sense of complex issues and crafting compelling explanations for diverse constituencies. Whatever his reasoning, these individuals and their counterparts were instrumental in changing American law and giving voice to the needs of a silenced American demographic. The membership of the commission also had the effect, intended or not, of linking civil rights and educational issues in inherently related ways for the next fifty years, as Eisenhower's selection brought into contemporary focus a long-standing expectation that college presidents had a role in leadership both on and off campus. Since the earliest colonial colleges, deans and presidents have represented a moral authority, first in their roles as ministers, parental-surrogates, and spiritual leaders, and later as the personification of institutional missions, values, and ideals.

In the present day, many in our country are wrestling with the plight of the undocumented immigrant, "a foreign-born person who doesn't have a legal right to be or remain in the United States" ("Who is an undocumented immigrant?," 2014). Leaders on both sides of the political aisle, along with religious and opinion leaders throughout the country, are calling for comprehensive immigration reform. There are numerous proposals being considered, including amnesty for the undocumented, increased work visas, and various pathways to citizenship; this is

a volatile time to be wrestling with immigration issues in the U.S. Because of circumstances that cause hardships for many people and present significant ambiguity for institutions and their leaders, we have an unusual opportunity to observe sensemaking nearly as it occurs.

The estimated 11.2 million undocumented immigrants in the United States (Passel, Cohn, & Rohal, 2014) include roughly 65,000 high school graduates each year (Passel, 2003). "In many cases, such individuals have resided in the United States for much, if not most, of their lives, and came here as infants and young children with their parents" (Garcia & Tierney, 2011); many of these young people report being unaware of their undocumented status until they learn of their ineligibility for financial aid for college tuition. In the absence of data that suggests otherwise, they tend to have always considered themselves American citizens and many aspire to higher education. When they begin to encounter roadblocks in their pursuit of college degrees, however, they are often forced to seriously reconsider their hopes and dreams for their futures.

Leaders in higher education are among those grappling with immigration issues, including access for undocumented students. They share a common predisposition for increasing access to higher education in general, for a variety of reasons: to provide for a more educated populace, to extend educational opportunities to all capable students, to increase application numbers for universities that are striving to attract more students, or to provide deeper applicant pools for institutions seeking to increase their selectivity and academic profile. When it comes to admitting undocumented students, however, leaders face numerous uncertainties that make policy and practice decisions more complex. Undocumented students, for instance, are ineligible for federal financial aid, even though they typically have little ability to pay for their education. Leaders may also fear that their outreach to undocumented students might inadvertently draw the

students' immigration status—or the status of their families—to the attention of government officials, possibly leading to deportation or other consequences.

Dutton and Dukerich (1991) explain the challenges sensemakers face in encountering such nontraditional issues:

> Some issues are routine and expected and organizational members can easily classify them . . .. Other issues are not as easily interpreted or processed, however. Issues may be problematic because they are nontraditional: they have not been encountered in the past and thus do not easily fit well-used categorization schemes. Alternatively, issues may be problematic because of the feelings they evoke. (p. 519)

Undocumented student access is such a nontraditional issue—leaders have little recourse to precedent to guide their sensemaking.

In Catholic universities, religious charisms and spiritual values may also speak to access for the undocumented. Though there is no universal Catholic position on access for the undocumented, leaders may be surprised by the voracity of their constituents' opinions on the issue, both for and against access. This is not to assert that there is no guidance from the Catholic magisterium—which is the teaching authority of the Roman Catholic Church, embodied in the voices of the bishops and the pope—on how Catholic individuals and institutions should regard the undocumented. In addition to more general teachings on care for the poor, the migrant, and the oppressed, the bishops continue to advocate for comprehensive immigration reform.

In response to President Obama's executive action of November 20, 2014, which outlined a number of initiatives regarding immigration in the United States ("Executive Actions on Immigration," 2014), the bishops ("USCCB Migration Chairman Welcomes Obama

Administration Announcement Of Relief For Immigrant Families, USCCB President Cites Urgent Pastoral Need For A More Humane View Of Immigrants," 2014) expressed their support, alongside their hopes for further and more comprehensive immigration reform. The news release from the bishops stated, in part:

> 'We have a long history of welcoming and aiding the poor, the outcast, the immigrant, and the disadvantaged. Each day, the Catholic Church in the United States, in her social service agencies, hospitals, schools, and parishes, witnesses the human consequences of the separation of families, when parents are deported from their children or spouses from each other. We've been on record asking the Administration to do everything within its legitimate authority to bring relief and justice to our immigrant brothers and sisters. As pastors, we welcome any efforts within these limits that protect individuals and protect and reunite families and vulnerable children,' said Bishop Elizondo. (para. 2)

In addition to such pastoral leadership from the USCCB, Catholic higher education has a history rooted in immigration. Gleason (1964) explains, "it is noteworthy that immigration and assimilation are singled out as the crucial factors in understanding the development of Catholic intellectual life in the United States" (p. 148). As Catholics were immigrating to the United States, they faced significant obstacles to integrating into the American society; Catholic higher education played a crucial role in providing pathways for Catholic immigrants to incorporate into a populace that largely viewed them with contempt:

> Among the churches of the immigrants, the Catholic Church seemed peculiarly foreign, un-American, and incapable of making a successful adaptation precisely because it was Catholic. For the country was settled overwhelmingly by people who regarded Catholicism with deep religious hostility, convinced that by its very nature it was inimical

to the values of true-blooded Englishmen and the principles of Protestant America. (p.

149)

The history of Catholic higher education is thus inexorably linked to immigration and the fight to

integrate into American society.

A more recent pastoral priority in the Catholic Church has been Catholic social teaching

(CST), which includes a "preferential option for the poor." This body of pastoral teaching

instructs all Catholics and Catholic institutions about how to care for other human beings,

especially the poor. CST has been incorporated into many aspects of Catholic higher education,

from volunteer centers to domestic and international service trips. Professors integrate CST into

courses from a wide range of disciplines, from theology to writing and rhetoric to social

psychology ("Bulletin of information: Undergraduate programs 2014-2015," 2014). Catholic

university constituents manifest these pastoral and religious values in countless ways on their

campuses. Combined with their institutions' likely histories of outreach to immigrants, we might

expect that these values would exert an observable influence on the ways leaders in Catholic

higher education make sense of access for the undocumented.

We are thus witnessing a critical juncture in higher education's engagement of access for

undocumented students. Without normative guidance in higher education more broadly, or in

Catholic higher education more specifically, leaders face considerable uncertainty and risk in

their sensemaking of the issue. This offers us the unique opportunity to witness intense

sensemaking in action and to interrogate how mission and religious values factor into the mix.

The precedents that may one day inform a Catholic position—or a more general approach

throughout all of higher education—on access for the undocumented are still in the process of

being worked out. By paying close attention to how leaders are engaging the issue and by

listening to their stories of grappling with the uncertainties and perplexities of serving this population we stand to grow in our understanding of leader sensemaking in higher education.

Research Questions

This dissertation examines two central research questions: *How are Catholic university leaders making sense of undocumented student access?* and *What role do stories play in the sensemaking of these leaders?* The primary purpose of the study is the first of the two questions, to explore how leaders are making sense of the issue of undocumented student access, examining: their initial interactions with the issue, the various tools they use to make sense of it, the pressures and risks associated with addressing it, and the impact of the Catholic character of universities on their sensemaking. The secondary purpose of the study is to identify the role that stories may play in the sensemaking processes of leaders.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Several bodies of literature form the theoretical basis for this dissertation, including: leadership, boundary-spanning (Tushman & Scanlan, 1981a, 1981b), and organizational sensemaking (Weick, 1995). The literature on narrative theory (Bruner, 1990) informs my secondary research question which examines the role that stories play in leader sensemaking.

Leadership Theory

For nearly a century, scholars have been trying to define the concept of leadership (Fleishman, et al., 1991), yet most still begin their work by admitting that there remains no clear idea of what 'leadership' actually is (Rost, 1991). Bryman and Lilley (2009) interviewed 24 U.K. leadership researchers and found a considerable level of skepticism about the likelihood of "developing prescriptive inventories of what makes for leadership effectiveness" (p. 337), in great part due to variations in situational context. While this difficulty in classifying and defining leadership is certainly related to the complexity of the concept, it has also resulted in the promulgation of dozens of leadership theories.

Fleishman, Mumford, Zaccaro, Levin, Korotkin, and Hein (1991) identified 65 such classification systems and described some of the taxonomic problems that have arisen in trying to examine leadership. In the 20 years since, scholars have stacked numerous new classifications on the theoretical woodpile, including: spiritual leadership (Fry, Vitucci, & Cedillo, 2005), authentic leadership (Luthans & Avolio, 2003a), ethical leadership (M. E. Brown, Trevino, & Harrison, 2005), and charismatic leadership (Conger & Kanungo, 1987).

One of the earliest focused attempts to explore leadership was known as the trait approach, which theorized that leaders are born with their ability. Bass and Stogdill (1990) later identified some individuals who personify the "great man" theory in Lee Iacocca, Douglas MacArthur, John F. Kennedy, and Martin Luther King (p. 38). While a compelling theory, researchers began to question its validity, especially as they identified situations where the "great man" acted more as follower than leader (Northouse, 2007, p. 15). In addition, theorists began to realize that the great man theory focuses solely on the leader, without any real consideration of follower or context. The trait theory of leadership has not been entirely abandoned, however, as numerous modern theories describe unique leader traits, including charismatic leadership (Conger & Kanungo, 1987), authentic leadership (Luthans & Avolio, 2003a), and servant-leadership (Greenleaf, [1970] 2008).

In the 1940's and 1950's researchers began to broaden their scope to explore the behavioral dimensions of leadership, initially utilizing a relatively simple and dichotomous "two-factor conceptualization of leadership behavior" (Yukl & Van Fleet, 1992, p. 157), which examined personal power (the leader's attributes) and positional power (the situation's attributes). Researchers at Ohio State University began a series of studies that developed the Leader Behavior Description Questionnaire (LBDQ), which resulted in the identification of two primary leader behaviors, *initiating structure* and *consideration* (Bass & Stogdill, 1990, p. 511). In short, leaders create structure in their organizations, and they care for their followers.

Around the same time, researchers at the University of Michigan were engaged in leadership studies of their own and identified two additional leader behaviors, *employee orientation* and *production orientation* (Northouse, 2007, p. 71). In contrast to their contemporaries in Columbus, the Michigan researchers conceptualized these orientations as two

ends of a spectrum of leader behaviors. Thus, leaders could be classified according to the behavioral mix of employee and production orientations.

Researchers next began to explore environmental factors that influence leaders and their behavior. An important new theory was Fiedler's (1964) *contingency theory*, which hypothesized that a leader's effectiveness is mediated, and to some extent, dictated by, the environment in which he or she operates. Contingency theory marked an important shift in leadership scholarship because it broadened our understanding of the interaction between leaders and their contexts.

Building off of this expanded paradigm, scholars began to explore the ways leaders motivate followers. House (1971) and others developed *path-goal theory*, which examines the paths leaders create to help motivate followers to achieve organizational goals. This eventually grew into a broader consideration of the social exchange relationships in which both leaders and followers influence each other. Scholars such as Blau (1964), Dansereau (Dansereau, Cashman, & Graen, 1973; Dansereau, Graen, & Haga, 1975), Liden (Dienesch & Liden, 1986; Liden, Erdogan, Wayne, & Sparrowe, 2006; Liden, Wayne, & Stilwell, 1993), and Graen (Graen, Novak, & Sommerkamp, 1982; Graen & Uhl-bien, 1995) developed a theory of *leader-member exchange* (LMX), whereby "both members of the vertical dyad [relationship] become the foci of investigation into the leadership process" (Dansereau, et al., 1975, p. 75).

In many respects, the modern era of leadership research began when James MacGregor Burns (1978) penned *Leadership*. He distinguished between *transactional* and *transformational* styles of leadership and highlighted examples of great leaders such as Gandhi who were able to motivate their followers "to transcend their own self-interests for the good of the group" (Bass & Stogdill, 1990, p. 53). As Burns was writing about transformational leadership, Robert House

(1976) was expanding path-goal theory into *charismatic* leadership. He focused on the ways charismatic leaders inspire and motivate their followers, and his theory has attracted considerable scholarship (Conger, 1999; Conger & Kanungo, 1987, 1994, 1998; Conger, Kanungo, & Menon, 2000; Judge, Woolf, Hurst, & Livingston, 2006; Yukl, 1999a).

Expanding on Burns' (1978) and House's (1976) work, Bernard Bass (1985) brought empirical rigor to transformational leadership. His research broadened our understanding of follower needs and the role of charisma, and helped transformational leadership become the most researched leadership theory of the past three decades (Bono & Judge, 2004; Hawkins, 2009; Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Lowe, Kroeck, & Sivasubramaniam, 1996; Schaubroeck, Lam, & Cha, 2007; Yukl, 1999a).

As scholars have investigated transformational leadership and have deepened their inquiry into the dynamics of LMX, a modern family of ethical leadership theories has emerged. This range of theories extends transformational leadership and explores its ethical dimensions (Ciulla, 1995). Among the more prominent ethical theories are spiritual leadership (Fry, et al., 2005), authentic leadership (Luthans & Avolio, 2003a, 2003b), and ethical leadership (ethical leadership is both a specific theory of leadership and the broader characterization of theories which explore ethical dimensions of leadership; M. E. Brown, et al., 2005). Each of these theories examines a specific dimension of the ethics involved in leadership behaviors and processes.

Robert Birnbaum (1988a) was one of the first theorists to specifically explore leadership in educational settings, arguing that a cybernetic approach to leadership is most fitting. Cybernetic organizations are those characterized by "control systems [that] can be described in terms of sensing mechanisms and negative feedback loops that collectively monitor changes

from acceptable levels of functioning and that activate forces that return institutions to their previous stable state" (Birnbaum, 1989a, p. 239). The systems are cybernetic, or self-correcting, by providing constant checks on the ways leadership and management are impacting organizational processing. Because educational institutions are loosely coupled (Weick, 1976), their diverse subunits can benefit from feedback loops that allow for the correction of inefficiencies.

In recent years, another conceptual framework has emerged in the form of distributed leadership, a theory designed to describe how leadership operates in educational settings. Among the first researchers to examine the theory was Gronn (2002), who presented distributed leadership as a new unit of analysis for researchers. He proposed studying "the division of labor . . . [and] the leadership of agents acting conjointly" (p. 441), which, he argues, is truer to the way leadership manifests in the academy.

Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond (2004) also explored distributed leadership in an attempt to provide a robust model for the educational setting. They base their theory on distributed cognition and activity theory, which posits that social context is "an integral component of, not just backdrop or container for, intelligent activity" (p. 8). Because distributed leadership accounts for both the individual and the environment, it explores the ways that leadership is distributed among an "interactive web of actors and artifacts" (p. 9). The theory of distributed leadership echoes earlier work on teamwork and the collective practice of leadership in higher education (Bensimon & Neumann, 1993).

We might wonder why distributed leadership is especially suited to education. One of the classic differentiating features of education, especially higher education, is the notion of shared governance whereby "considerable authority and discretion over academic decision

making [are assigned] to the faculty" (Bensimon, Neumann, & Birnbaum, 1989, p. 74). Though shared governance is not a theory of leadership per se, we can certainly see its fingerprints in distributed leadership. Distributed leadership has been empirically tested in higher education, most notably by van Ameijde, Nelson, Billsberry, and van Meurs (2009), whose qualitative study of a U.K. university identified external activities as a necessary condition for successful distributed leadership; and Bolden, Petrov, and Gosling (2009), who found that distributed leadership operates mostly as a rhetorical device in U.K. universities, offering little more explanatory power than other leadership theories. Collinson and Collinson (2009) found that U.K. faculty and staff preferred what they call blended leadership, "a way of understanding and enacting leadership in which apparently separate and incompatible dichotomies are reevaluated as inter-related and mutually necessary" (p. 376). For example, employees in their study appreciated a blend of directive and firm leadership with approachability.

Leadership Research

There are obviously many ways to study leadership and to understand how people go about leading others. For the purposes of this dissertation I will consider empirical literature on leadership that uses a social exchange perspective, rather than considering the full range of theories. This approach is most fitting because it gives special consideration to interactions between leader and follower, and the way each influences the other. A social exchange perspective draws broadly from many of the leadership theories described above, by incorporating the exchange between leaders and members (Dansereau, et al., 1975), the actions of leaders (Burns, 1978/2010), the needs of followers (Bass, 1985), and the ways in which relationships between leaders and followers impact leadership effectiveness (Birnbaum, 1988a; Gronn, 2002).

As noted above, scholars find it difficult to even describe what leadership means, and there are numerous conceptual frameworks for studying its effects. We might be tempted to ask whether leadership in higher education is even effectual and can be studied. Birnbaum (1989b) studied presidential succession and found more modest results than we might expect. His longitudinal analysis of succession at 91 campuses suggests that not all presidents have a significant impact on their institutions. Rather, "the idea of leadership helps us to 'make sense' of organizational processes and happenings" (p. 133). A similar finding is echoed in his examination of presidential searches (Birnbaum, 1988b), in which he argued that while a change in the presidency may have only a moderate effect on a campus, the process of selecting a new president can result in a clarification of an institution's goals and priorities, and a signaling of the same to both internal and external constituents.

Boundary-spanning can be understand as information diffusion and exchange (Yukl, 1999b) and is a helpful lens through which to frame our consideration of leadership in higher education. Boundary-spanners serve as conduits for information exchange (Tushman & Scanlan, 1981a) and resource exchange (Tushman & Scanlan, 1981b) between internal and external constituents. In the context of higher education, boundary-spanners include department chairs, deans, vice chancellors, vice presidents, pro vice chancellors, principals, presidents, and boards of trustees. When it comes to access for undocumented students, such boundary-spanners are perhaps the most important leaders in their institutions, especially in their ability to enable information and resource exchange between various constituents.

There is evidence to suggest that boundary-spanning activities may differ based on leader gender. Bensimon (1989a) offers a feminist revision of presidential leadership, while simultaneously calling into question the standard measurement tools used by researchers. She

illustrated the limitations of Bolman and Deal's (1991) four organizational frames, because the authors did not explicitly consider gender differences among the leaders they studied in formulating the frames. While she did not explicitly examine boundary-spanning activities, Bensimon did offer some cautions that may help us understand potential differences between the experiences of male and female boundary-spanners. Specifically, she noted, "Women, as a group, tend to define their identity in the terms of relationships, as opposed to men, who define their identity in terms of separation" (p. 149). For leaders who are trying to balance internal and external leadership through a process of trusted information exchange, we might wonder if such a collegial (p. 153) model might be appropriate.

Boundary-spanning as information exchange. One way we can frame boundary-spanning leadership is in terms of information exchange and diffusion. Leaders who are situated at institutional boundaries rely on strong relationships with both internal and external constituents in order to bridge organizational borders. Tushman and Scanlan (1981a) note that "informational boundary spanning will be accomplished only by those individuals who are well connected to external information areas and who also are well connected internally" (p. 292). By earning the trust of constituents both inside and outside of institutions, leaders are able to "gather information from external areas and disseminate that information to their colleagues" (p. 303).

Pilbeam and Jamieson (2010) found a clear example of information sharing in their recent study of pro-vice chancellors (PVC), which are the U.K. equivalent of U.S. vice presidents. Though their sample included only eight interviews, they discovered some interesting evidence that highlights the information exchange role of leaders at the boundaries. Rather than relate to peer institutions as adversaries, PVCs who were responding to changes in the external policy environment regularly sought "'non-sensitive' information from other

universities that could inform institutional practice in their own university" (p. 766). The authors additionally noted that the PVCs were also members of various professional and civic agencies external to their institutions, which allowed the leaders ample opportunities to collect information and establish vital networking relationships which they could leverage for their institutions.

For leaders focused on developing relationships both internal and external to the organization, drawing a balance can be key. Collinson and Collinson (2009) found this balance to be particularly difficult for U.K. college leaders due to "the numerous external funding and inspection processes to which colleges are now subject" (p. 374). Especially in dealing with governmental agencies, a leader's external activities can seem less like leadership and more like management, with some leaders feeling like followers in the external environment (p. 375). Effective leadership is required for integrating these coercive pressures into institutional practice, especially if the leader is actively guarding an institution's distinctive mission and values. Goldring and Sims (2005) echoed this finding in their study of a district-community-university partnership in Nashville, where, "as a result of the boundary spanning role, trust developed quickly, and turf wars never emerged" (p. 245). Leaders who are able to create dynamic relationships with internal and external constituents may be more able to enact a rich exchange of information.

The most visible boundary-spanner in higher education is the president. He or she is ultimately responsible for both the internal operations of the university and for representing the institution to numerous external constituents. In their study of presidents at thirty two institutions, Neumann and Bensimon (1990) identified four types of presidential leaders, two of which share an orientation towards external activities. We would identify these externally active

presidents as true boundary-spanners; the other two types of presidents in the study tend to be more internally focused and thus engage in fewer spanning activities. The boundary-spanners, however, "aspired for their institutions' involvement in the 'hopes, dreams, and frustrations' of their communities" (p. 686).

In order to maintain such a commitment to the external environment, these presidents relied heavily on university executive officers, which became critical allies in sharing the internal leadership load. In addition, the presidents were careful to create powerful reporting systems that would effectively manage the internal operations of the institution, thus allowing them more freedom to work externally. Another important activity for boundary-spanning presidents was pursuing "resource-related interactions between the college and its external environment" (Neumann & Bensimon, 1990, p. 690), cultivating financial and other resources for the institution. The pursuit of resources also allowed presidents to bolster their institution's image and build social capital with external constituents.

Boundary-spanning is not, however, limited to presidents. Leaders throughout organizations exercise bridging roles in their positions. Floyd and Wooldridge (1997) studied 259 middle managers' role in mediating between internal and external environments, hypothesizing that "boundary-spanning units play a key mediating role between environmental uncertainty and internal organizational arrangements" (p. 469). The authors found that middle managers did indeed play a significant role in an organization's process capability, and that those middle managers who had formal positions in boundary-spanning units also had a greater impact on the organization's strategy by "injecting divergent thinking and change-oriented behaviors into the strategy-making process" (p. 467). In this capacity, the middle managers became vital conduits of important environmental information that they leveraged for internal strategy.

Boundary-spanning and community engagement. In an earlier age there was a more common general perception that higher education exists for the public good (Kezar, Chambers, & Burkhardt, 2005). Colleges and universities provide an invaluable service to communities, the argument goes, as a more educated populace is more civically active, votes more, is more interested in the arts, and is less likely to commit crime. Neumann (2009) refers to this phenomenon as "higher education's mission of knowledge production for the social good" (p. 15). In recent times, however, attention has increasingly shifted to the private goods bestowed by higher education, especially increased lifetime earnings and employment opportunities. One fairly common example of an effort to reinforce higher education's public good orientation is community-university partnerships, which we might broadly classify as community engagement.

There is evidence that suggests boundary-spanning leaders are instrumental in the success of these community-university alliances. In an eight year longitudinal study of a school-community partnership, Firestone and Fisler (2002) found that the liaison between the school and the community was particularly well situated to provide leadership and that "boundary-spanning leadership has proved important in other partnerships" (p. 486). The key leadership task for the boundary-spanners in question was in promoting intergroup communication and understanding. This facility for creating community between the disparate groups is important since "a multitude of interest groups in both schools and universities are represented in such partnerships" (p. 488). Once again we see the importance for boundary-spanners to be able to earn trust and build community between diverse constituents. In this case, those relationships enable universities to reach beyond campus borders and strengthen their local communities.

University-community exchange is not a one-way street, however, with the university always on the giving end. Roper and Hirth (2005) mapped the evolution from considering

community engagement a uni-directional diffusion of university learning into society to a more bi-directional model of exchange and engagement. Youtie and Shapira (2008) characterized this shift as moving from "knowledge factory" to "knowledge hub" (p. 1190). Whereas university leaders in the 1950s may have viewed a university's community service as a one-way process of giving, modern leaders may understand the relationship in more mutual terms.

This has obvious ramifications for leaders who must preside over often-complex relationships between universities and communities. Not surprisingly, Weerts and Sandmann (2008) identify leadership as a key variable that enhances a university's ability to engage its community. In their case study of six institutions, they found that leaders were instrumental in "(a) communicating the value of engagement internally and externally, and (b) aligning administrative resources and structures to promote engagement" (p. 89). From the perspective of the community partners, the authors found that the most important leadership activities were in building relationships between faculty, staff, and community partners. Interestingly, in each of the six institutions "engagement work was typically done by boundary spanners in academic staff positions, not by traditional tenure-track faculty" (p. 93). This is not unexpected, since tenure-track faculty members are required to spend most of their time in teaching and research.

One likely reason that faculty members generally do not engage in significant boundary-spanning activities is the sheer amount of time it can take. Bolton (1996) interviewed 17 deans of business schools and found that on average they spent 45 percent of their time interacting with external constituents, and "more wish to increase than to decrease that proportion" (p. 502). He also found that there was a belief that the role of the dean was nearly as complex as that of the president, though deans were happy to be "more closely connected to a coherent group of internal constituents" (p. 497). In contrast to research on successful presidents (Bensimon,

1989b), however, the deans did not feel the need to employ more cognitively complex leadership in their positions. According to Bolton, deans often consider deans of rival schools to be friends and important sources of information sharing, rather than adversaries.

We should also not overlook other environmental factors that can impact boundary-spanning leadership, especially in international settings. Leaders in Iranian medical schools face an interesting set of challenges in spanning institutional boundaries (Bikmoradi, Brommels, Shoghli, Khorasani-Zavareh, & Masiello, 2010). The 18 medical school leaders in this qualitative study identified two unique challenges. First, academic leaders are appointed by the Iranian government, which often leads to government meddling in university affairs, a direct source of coercive pressure. Second, because the state often requires that medical schools provide Iranian public health services, academic leaders often struggled to balance the needs of internal and external constituents.

Boundary-spanning and accountability. In recent years there have been increasing calls for accountability from higher education. Legislators challenge endowment spending rates and university non-profit status as tuition rates continue to outpace inflation, and parents and students question the return on their tuition investment. Some boards of trustees have taken it upon themselves to adopt more corporate governance styles, and have become "activist boards" in the process (Bastedo, 2005). Competition for increasingly scarce resources has resulted in growing demands for measurable accountability not only in the U.S., but also in countries throughout the world. Altbach (2009) argues that the rise in calls for accountability can threaten an institution's autonomy. He notes the often-conflicting pressures for research universities: while developing countries rely on research universities as a "means of communication with the

international world of science and scholarship," (p. 25), the state is often unafraid to demand increased accountability from institutions that receive significant public funding.

While presidents surely feel the impact of such external pressures, so do deans and directors. As heads of schools and programs, these boundary-spanners are often tasked with defending the relevance of their academic enterprises, even while constantly pursuing additional funding and partnerships for their schools. In a survey of 865 faculty and administrative staff, Rosser, Johnsrud, and Heck (2003) evaluated the leadership effectiveness of 22 deans and directors. They found that the greater the amount of external funding generated by deans and directors, the stronger the group perceptions of their leadership (p. 18). Faculty and staff perceived that the best leaders are those who had the facility to raise funds for the operation. Though the authors found greater variance at the individual versus the group level, the findings also held for individuals – in general, those respondents who received increased resources perceived their leaders to be more effective.

Though both internal and external activities are important parts of effective boundary spanning, faculty perceptions of a president's leadership may be linked more closely to internal activities. Bensimon (1991) showed that faculty perceptions of new presidents influence presidents' ability to lead on their campuses. For instance, when a president "takes the role" of the faculty (p. 641), meaning she engages in activities that strengthen the bond between the president and faculty, she experiences much greater trust from the faculty. Respondents also highlighted a president's ability to "step out of the presidency" by joining in important meetings as peer and not as president (p. 643). Faculty members witnessed this action by the president and were more inclined to trust her as both a peer and a leader. Based on the findings of this study, we might expect that presidents who engage in significant and visible boundary-spanning

activities should also devote their attention to developing relationships with faculty members. A president who is able to earn the trust of the faculty may merit increased social capital that would serve her in bridging boundaries to external constituents.

Boundary-spanning and sensemaking. As individuals who are trusted both inside and outside their organizations, boundary-spanners' ability to broker information exchanges and build coalitions helps a university make sense of the environment and its place in it. Del Favero (2006) examined the impact of deans' disciplinary affiliation on their leadership capacity to manage complex environments. She looked to sensemaking (Weick, 1995) to help explain how leaders handle the complexity and ambiguity of their environments. She found that deans from applied fields such as medicine, engineering, education, or law tended to be more predisposed to "multiframing behavior" (p. 305) which allowed them to better handle the complexity required of their positions. Experience in an applied field may signal greater facility in sensemaking, thus allowing deans to more effectively understand environmental pressures and make effective decisions. Del Favero is not the first to have examined cognitive complexity in leaders in higher education; Bensimon (1989b) found that more experienced presidents tended to rely on multiple organizational frames (Bolman & Deal, 1991), which is a reflection of their cognitive complexity.

Another study that explored presidential sensemaking was conducted by Neumann and Bensimon (1990). The authors explored the "complex 'enactment' of deeper, personally constructed understandings and beliefs about the nature of reality" (p. 680) for presidents, which is a more subjective and socially constructed conceptualization of the presidency than we see in some other research. Of the four presidential *types* identified by the authors, type A represents a leader who is "externally directed but remains clearly connected to the internal organization

through formal management mechanisms, including delegation systems, budgeting processes, and formal planning structures" (p. 687). These type A presidents exercise their boundary-spanning roles by learning the environment, initiating ideas, leading within and beyond the institution, winning friends for the institution, thinking about the present in the future tense, relying on the administrative team to build a sound infrastructure within the institution, and maintaining control over the budget (p. 697).

Sensemaking

As explained above, my research questions are two: first, to explore how leaders make sense of undocumented student access, and second, to identify the role that stories may play in the sensemaking processes of leaders. Before constructing a narrative framing of sensemaking to address the second question, it will be helpful to more broadly describe sensemaking. Weick (2008) claims, "To focus on sensemaking in organizational settings is to portray organizing as the experience of being thrown into an ongoing, unknowable, unpredictable streaming of experience in search of answers to the question, 'What's the story?'" (para. 1). In other words, in organizations that are constantly changing and evolving, sensemakers extract social cues to construct plausible accounts of what is happening.

Sensemakers do not seek to identify one objectively true and unchanging story of what is happening in their organizations, however. O'Leary and Chia (2007) explain: "In sensemaking, the essential task is to create a coherent and plausible account of what is going on without ever really seeking a one true and final picture of how the world actually is" (p. 392-393). Another perspective is offered by Maitlis and Christianson (2014) who describe sensemaking as "the process through which individuals work to understand novel, unexpected, or confusing events" (p. 58.) As these perspectives illustrate, sensemaking describes how we process and organize

what we are experiencing, acknowledging that both our environments and we are constantly in flux.

Perhaps one of the most robust theories underpinning sensemaking is symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969). As noted by Fine (1993), symbolic interactionism has a well-founded pedigree, rooted in the thought of William James (1890/1950), Charles Cooley (1902), John Dewey (1910), George Herbert Mead (Mead & Morris, 1934; Mead & Strauss, 1956), and Herbert Blumer (1969). Symbolic interactionism explores the ways people apply subjective meanings to others (people and objects) around them. It is founded on three basic premises: first, people interact with things (objects, other people, institutions, activities of others, everyday situations) based on what those things mean to them; second, the meaning of those things emerges from the social interactions people have with others; and third, these meanings are redacted through processes of interpretation (Blumer, 1969, p. 2).

Symbolic interactionism "sees meaning as arising in the process of interaction between people" (Blumer, 1969, p. 4) and thus foreshadows the essentially social nature of sensemaking. Weick (1995) acknowledges the contributions of social interactionism to sensemaking, "not so much because this is the unofficial theory of sensemaking but because the theory keeps in play a crucial set of elements, including self, action, interaction, interpretation, meaning, and joint action" (p. 41).

Sensemaking ultimately transcends social interactionism, though it incorporates many of its elements. Clear parallels between the two approaches include their social character, their emphasis that meaning making is ongoing, and their situation of meaning within action. Sensemaking, however, emphasizes a broader appreciation for the role of social cues, identity,

and enactment and is therefore a more robust framework for understanding how people understand their environments and themselves.

Though we can see many elements of sensemaking in Karl Weick's (1977) early chapter "Enactment Processes in Organizations," he made one of the original organizational applications of sensemaking in his analysis of the 1984 gas leak at the Union Carbide pesticide plant in Bhopal, India (Weick, 1988). He explored the catastrophe in which several thousand died and countless were injured. Though industry and state officials assessed blame to various parties, Weick dove deeper into the situation and illustrated the breakdown in social processes that created an atmosphere of complacency, lax safety, and poor supervision in the plant, each of which contributed to one of the most devastating industrial accidents in history.

Key to sensemaking is the concept of enactment, which Maitlis and Christianson (2014) describe as "premised on the idea that people play a key role in creating the environment in which they find themselves" (pp. 84-85). In other words, when people act they change their environments and create a trail of decisions and actions, based on numerous assumptions that end up influencing and possibly constraining their own future decisions and actions. In this way, individuals do not only respond to environmental cues, but also enact the environment itself.

Weick's conceptualization of sensemaking. In his conceptualization of organizational sensemaking, Weick (1995) identifies seven observable properties—these will be helpful in analyzing how leaders make sense of undocumented student access. He argues that sensemaking is *social*, grounded in *identity* construction, *retrospective*, focused on and by extracted *cues*, *ongoing*, driven by *plausibility* rather than accuracy, and *enactive* of sensible environments; he represents these processes with the acronym SIRCOPE (Weick, 2001, 2006). These seven

properties are not intended to exhaustively describe organizational sensemaking; they represent instead a rough framework for understanding how it works.

Social. Sensemaking is a social process. Meaning is sought and understood as part of a process of social interaction between individuals and environments, and both are constantly in flux. This conceptualization of the social construction of reality hearkens back to the work of Berger and Luckman (1967), who explain:

> The reality of everyday life is not only filled with objectivations; it is only possible because of them. I am constantly surrounded by objects that 'proclaim' the subjective intentions of my fellowmen, although I may sometimes have difficulty being quite sure just what it is that a particular object is 'proclaiming.' (p. 50)

In other words, our understanding of the world around us is bounded by our subjective interpretations of what we believe things to be. Sensemakers thus engage in a "process of social construction in which individuals attempt to interpret and explain sets of cues from their environments" (Maitlis, 2005, p. 21).

Identity. Sensemaking is deeply influenced by identity—both the identity of the sensemaker and the identity of her organization. Social identity theory (SIT) describes how people create their own identities through self-differentiation and affiliation (Tajfel, 1979; Turner, Brown, & Tajfel, 1979). As they continually refine their sense of who they are in different settings, sensemakers' identities become lenses through which they encounter the world around them. Gioia and Thomas (1996) found that people's perception of their own identity and their university's identity impact their sensemaking. This echoes work by Dutton and Dukerich (1991) who studied the Port Authority of New York's interactions with the homeless. They

found that "the Port Authority's identity, or how organization members saw it, played a key role in constraining issue interpretations, emotions, and actions" (p. 542).

Retrospect. "Traditionally, sensemaking has been seen as a retrospective activity, one that can occur only as one looks back over action that has already taken place," explain Maitlis and Christianson (2014, p. 94). Sensemaking is a process, and it is by acting and living that people come to make sense of them and their environments. Things that are known and understood are in the past; dynamic, ongoing events and situations can never be fully grasped by our sensemaking because they are continually in flux. Therefore, while sensemaking takes place in the now, it is always retrospective in nature.

Cues. Sensemakers continually monitor their environments and extract and interpret the cues they perceive, allowing them to reduce the equivocality they experience. Cues include relationships and interactions with other people, past experiences, new perspectives, various forms of data and information, and many others. Sensemaking is limited by the cues that are perceivable to people, which again reinforces the subjective and socially constructed (Berger & Luckmann, 1967) nature of sensemaking. As leaders continually monitor their environments, they "translate cues into meaning for organizational participants" (Daft & Weick, 1984, p. 294).

Ongoing. Sensemaking happens when individuals begin to bracket their ongoing experiences. Because human living and sensing do not cease (until one loses the ability for conscious cognition) sensemaking is never finished and is always ongoing. This creates an interesting problem for the sensemaker, as both she and the environment are constantly changing. She must constantly reconsider earlier judgments in light of new and changing information and interpretations. From time to time, however, we encounter interruptions that "signal that important changes have occurred in the environment" (Weick, 1995, p. 46) and

cause us to pay closer attention. These disruptions can trigger more focused sensemaking as we become aware of something different, or something that does not fit as comfortably into the categories we were using before the interruption. An attendant sitting in front of a bank of gauges and monitors, for example, might settle into a routine of relative nonchalance until a warning light triggers a heightened atmosphere of awareness and causes her to ask, "What's going on here?"

Plausibility. The goal of sensemaking is not objective truth, but plausibility. We do not need to fully and objectively understand our environments and ourselves, but to sense them in a way that enables us to make decisions and deal with threats and opportunities. This is especially fortunate for leaders who are tasked with making sense of complex realities upon which numerous decisions will be based. Accuracy is secondary for sensemakers who are limited by their own bounded rationality (March & Heath, 1994; Simon, 1955) which constrains their ability to make sense of the often overwhelming amounts of information and cues in the environment (Thomas, Clark, & Gioia, 1993).

Plausibility is also important because any single cue can have multiple meanings. As people commit to courses of action, they engage in ongoing sensemaking, retrospectively reinterpreting the earlier cues in light of the new and continuous information that results from their decisions. This is how most doctors diagnose illness, by making judgments to allow them to plausibly label the problem, prescribing treatment, and then engaging in ongoing sensemaking to see how the patient responds to the treatment (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005). Instead of waiting for the one, final, true diagnosis, doctors (and sensemakers) instead make plausible best guesses and take action, while continuing to monitor situations.

Enactment. "Enactment is premised on the idea that people play a key role in creating the environment in which they find themselves" (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014, pp. 84-85). By making judgments and decisions and by labeling previously unlabeled realities people enact new environments that did not exist before. According to Orton (2000), "The enactment perspective helps emphasize the role of the organization in creating events to which it must then respond, the presence of numerous interacting events, and the capacity of a small event to have large consequences" (p. 223).

Again we can see enactment at work in diagnosis; research has shown that doctors commonly over-test healthy patients, for fear of missing a diagnosis. While this caution is understandable, it can also have detrimental effects on these otherwise healthy patients. As physicians inadvertently and inappropriately diagnose symptoms they believe they are seeing, impressionable patients can actually start to manifest sicknesses as a result (Scheff, 1963). In this example, overly zealous physicians cause their healthy patients to feel sick.

Sensemakers can thus be said to shape their environments, for better or for worse, by the sense they make of it, the decisions that follow, and even by their very presence in the environment. Even the words people use to describe the environment as they sense it have a shaping effect as others in the organization hear and repeat the language. Thus, a university leader may mobilize against a perceived environmental threat, even when another sensemaker would understand that same threat as nothing more than a benign force, or perhaps even an opportunity.

Sensemaking research. "To understand leadership as a sensemaking process helps illustrate more clearly what happens in the daily doing of leading" (Pye, 2005, p. 31). If we accept this perspective, then we can expect the sensemaking research to help us better understand

leadership in higher education. Maitlis (2005) argues that organizational sensemaking research generally follows one of two approaches: investigating how individuals or groups affect others' sensemaking; or investigating the social processes of sensemaking, especially in crisis situations. As noted above, though sensemaking is a constant and ongoing process through which we continuously interpret the events around us we are most conscious of our sensemaking when we experience an interruption, or triggering event (Weick, 1995).

Researchers have focused on sensemaking during times of crisis or chaos, such as the Mann Gulch wildfire (Weick, 1993), the Bhopal plant disaster (Weick, 1988, 2010), or climbing catastrophes on Mt. Everest (Kayes, 2004). Those who have examined sensemaking in non-crisis situations have often chosen to center their research on organizational interruptions, such as processes of organizational change in a university (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Gioia & Thomas, 1996; Gioia, Thomas, Clark, & Chittipeddi, 1994) or in an industry (Balogun, 2006; Balogun & Johnson, 2004, 2005).

The research on sensemaking offers several findings that may help us expand our understanding of leadership in higher education. Balogun and Johnson (2004) studied the sensemaking of middle managers in response to change processes initiated by senior managers in a privatized utility. Their description of middle managers could apply, largely, to directors of financial aid and admissions. Middle managers are an especially interesting unit of analysis—as subordinates they must make sense of the initiatives that come from superiors in the organization, while as leaders they must simultaneously translate the initiatives into actual organizational change. In addition, "Middle managers are often closer to external stakeholders, in particular to clientele, than are top managers" (Rouleau, 2005, p. 1414).

Their case study illustrated how middle managers engaged in processes of sensemaking that were often independent of senior managers. Though senior managers attempted to frame a divisional restructuring as "business as usual," the middle managers found that they had to provide more complex models for the organization to cope with the emerging schemas. The authors also identified the use of "negotiating processes" (Balogun & Johnson, 2004, p. 540). When top management failed to respond to growing tensions resulting from the restructuring processes, middle managers forged new interpersonal and interdepartmental relationships to bridge organizational conflicts and they made independent judgments about which parts of the old organizational schema needed to be carried forward into the new structure. These findings will be especially helpful for understanding the responsibilities and challenges faced by middle managers such as directors of financial aid and admissions in my study.

Sensemaking and identity. Sensemaking researchers have explored the impact of identity—one of the seven characteristics of sensemaking—on one's interaction with the world. Gioia and Thomas (1996) learned in their study of strategic change in academia that people's perception of their own identity and their university's identity has an effect on their sensemaking. They found that in the enactment of strategic change in their institutions, "the top management team's perceptions of institutional identity and image (both present and desired in the future) constituted the major 'lenses' through which the team interpreted organization-level issues" (p. 371). The ways top leaders envisioned their institutions' identity and image acted "as perceptual screens or mirrors that affect[ed] team members' information processing and, ultimately, their interpretation of key issues" (p. 372).

Dutton and Dukerich (1991) identified a similar effect in their study of the Port Authority of New York's interactions with the homeless. They found that "the Port Authority's identity, or

how organization members saw it, played a key role in constraining issue interpretations, emotions, and actions" (p. 542), as did the Port Authority's image, or how people outside the organization saw it:

> The relationship between individuals' senses of their organizational identity and image and their own sense of who they are and what they stand for suggests a very personal connection between organizational action and individual motivation. It suggests that individuals have a stake in directing organizational action in ways that are consistent with what they believe is the essence of their organization. (p. 550)

Identity and image thus play important roles in the ways people make sense of their organizations and the actions their organizations take.

While scholars have explored organizational identity (Albert & Whetten, 1985) they have also investigated the impact of one's personal identity and its relation to organizational behavior and functioning. Social identity theory (SIT) describes the ways people create personal identity through processes of self-differentiation and affiliation (Tajfel, 1979; Turner, et al., 1979). People create personal identities by comparing themselves to various ingroups and outgroups, those with whom they are similar or dissimilar, respectively (Tajfel, 1982). Ashforth and Mael (1989) explain, "Social identification, therefore, is the perception of oneness with or belongingness to some human aggregate" (p. 21).

The identity a leader imagines for himself can substantially shape thinking and action, even to tragic ends, such as in the 1996 climbing disaster on Mt. Everest. Early on the morning of May 10, various climbing teams began their final ascent to the summit of Everest. By the evening of May 11, however, eight of them had died. According to Kayes (2004), among the various reasons for the disaster was a breakdown in leadership. He describes the American guide

Scott Fischer exhibiting the "bravado of the rugged individualist" (p. 1277), while other guides were similarly blinded by "the temptation of goal achievement [that] overtakes the leader's ability to consider alternative courses of action" (p. 1281).

The expedition leaders were not necessarily narcissistic, pursuing success simply to prove their mettle as guides. They were, instead, driven by the audacious goal of reaching the summit, as well as the significant expense—in time and capital—that the climbers had invested in the trip. These factors combined to give the guides an identity characterized by bravado, risk-taking, and an unwillingness to share leadership with others in the group. The result was a series of bad decisions by leaders that resulted in eight deaths and numerous complications—including hypothermia and amputations—for others in the climbing groups.

Wrzesniewski, Dutton, and Debebe (2003) explored a similar concept to identity, self-meaning, which they describe as, "the self-understanding that employees acquire about themselves when at work" (p. 102). Self-meaning "strikes at the heart of one's identity and worth as a human being . . . as the information conveyed about job and role ultimately has an impact upon the self" (p. 112). In other words, employees form a sense of identity, or self-meaning, by paying attention to the social cues in their workplace; this identity then plays a role in how the person visualizes him or herself in the workplace. The authors name this the "looking glass self" (p. 105), a sense of personal identity gained by reading the cues others reflect back to them.

Porac, Thomas, and Baden-Fuller (1989) explored how identity operates in sensemaking in their study of the Scottish wool industry. The authors examined the ways that mental models held by leaders have an effect on the competitive landscape of the industry. Mental models "provide both an interpretation of the environment and a prescription as to how that environment

should be structured" (Denzau & North, 1994, p. 4). In the absence of reliable market research, leaders in the Scottish wool industry engaged in a process of identity construction by building a set of beliefs about themselves and their target markets and primary competitors. As they have competed with others over time, the relatively small contingent of Scottish firms has self-identified as the highest quality artisans who serve only the very top of the market, producing what one manager described as "high quality fully-fashioned classic knitwear" (p. 408).

There was little empirical data to support this chosen identity—managers instead relied on shared beliefs about the market and about the competitiveness of Scottish firms vis-à-vis other rivals around the world. As the Scottish managers accepted and perpetuated their self-identity as makers of the highest quality knitwear, they engaged in a cycle of enactment that strengthened this identity and simultaneously affected external stakeholders' perceptions of the same. Figure 1 presents an illustration of this process; it also highlights the reciprocal effect of the market cues that reinforce the self-identity of the Scottish firms.

Figure 1. Enactment processes in the transactional network of the Scottish wool industry

STRATEGIC CHOICES

Definition as 'classical elegance' — Agents carrying 'classic goods' — Shops with 'classic' emphasis — Consumers preferring 'classic' sweaters

MARKET CUES

Adapted from (Porac, et al., 1989, p. 409).

Sensemaking and change in higher education. In higher education it is rare for a college or university to undergo radical strategic change, such as shifting from a traditional, four-year liberal arts curriculum to a fully online model. Especially in the recent history of higher education, models of education have remained relatively consistent and individual institutions have not regularly undergone strategic change (Gioia, et al., 1994). Though the system itself has grown and changed, including the rise of community colleges (Brint & Karabel, 1991) and the emergence of the for-profit sector (Kinser, 2007; Morey, 2004), individual institutions have remained fairly strategically stable. While undocumented student access is not of sufficient scope to cause radical strategic change in universities, it may require leaders to reconsider institutional policies and procedures as they relate core mission values to the issue.

In a period characterized by increased competition for students and faculty and declining governmental subsidies, colleges and universities are finding themselves confronted with the real possibility of making some strategic changes in order to remain solvent and competitive (Gioia & Thomas, 1996). One method for reacting to these environmental pressures is to rethink the mission statement or challenge the organization to meet new goals. For a sector like higher education where this sort of change is relatively rare, this proposition can be daunting at best.

Gioia, Thomas, Clark, and Chittipeddi (1994) conducted an ethnographic case study to examine a comprehensive public research university in the midst of a change in presidential leadership which brought with it a significantly new organizational strategy to reposition the institution toward a ranking that would identify it as a top-10 university. Various researchers spent six months gathering data, focusing their inquiry on the Strategic Planning Task Force (SPTF; p. 371). The authors identified a "pervasive use of symbols and metaphors in SPTF's attempts to make sense of their experience" (p. 375). Because numerous aspects of the revised

strategic plan were ambiguous, members of the SPTF relied heavily on metaphors and other symbols to help communicate the renewed vision and help others make sense of the changes. Internally, members of the SPTF allied themselves with existing power brokers, if for no other reason than to appear legitimate to organizational members. This helped the SPTF communicate the change in less threatening ways while simultaneously influencing key stakeholders.

The ways in which top executives perceive institutional image and identity can also have an effect on organizational change. Gioia and Thomas (1996) argue, "Although changes in the external environment obviously influence the interpretation process [during organizational change], 'internal' contextual features also exert considerable influence" (p. 371). Their mixed method, two-phase study of strategic change in higher education included a case study and a survey of over 600 top-level administrators in higher education. The authors note that, "Perhaps because change in the external environment is now virtually a given, it is useful conceptually to observe that top management teams in academia construe the proximal context for sensemaking in internal terms" (p. 398).

Because internal images of an institution's identity and image influenced the sensemaking process, Gioia and Thomas (1996) found that an important duty for leaders is to frame strategic change in "aspirational terms" (p. 398). If leaders can capture the imaginations of organizational members by helping them envision the university in the future, members may be more predisposed to engage the strategic change process. Situations of strategic change are very complex, and the authors stop short of offering suggestions for creating this sort of openness to the future. However, the evidence suggests that how leaders frame their university's identity and image can have an effect on the institution's ability to undergo strategic change.

Anderson, et al. (2005) studied a related concept, the sensemaking impact of symbols, or, more precisely, mental models. Their study of nurse assistants found that mental models, which are constructs that help people understand their surroundings and make decisions about action, have a significant effect on CNA (certified nurse's assistant) sensemaking. CNAs who relied on either "The Golden Rule" (p. 1011) or "Mother Wit" (p. 1012) "might understand resident care situations in ways that either lead to inappropriate care (i.e., infantilization, encouraging incontinence, cookies, timeout) or put up barriers to appropriate care (i.e., undiagnosed and untreated depression or pain)" (p. 1016). In other words, the authors found that common mental models that people often use to frame their understanding of their environments can have a detrimental effect on the sensemaking process. Nurses' understanding of the social cues they perceive can thus be tainted by a previously accepted mental model, which can act as a lens through which the nurses make sense of the symptoms and situations they encounter. Because of this danger, the authors suggest that more senior RNs or medical staff be included in the sensemaking processes, to guard against inadequate care.

A recent study by Gonzales (2013) explored faculty experiences as leaders in their university aspired for the institution to become a "Tier One" research university. Because of concerns for attaining *legitimacy* in the perceptions of others in higher education, faculty members "looked to already established research universities to understand what 'Tier One' meant" (p. 201). Recognizing how other top research universities were structured gave faculty members criteria for making sense of how their own university might eventually look. The example of existing Tier One universities was so strong that faculty members rejected the notion that their university might "[do] Tier One differently" (p. 203). To navigate the move well, the

faculty realized the importance of gaining legitimacy by mimicking the structure and behavior of their aspirational peers:

> Faculty members make sense and apply the definition that seems the most familiar and the most legitimate by drawing from agents and agencies that construct, categorize, and structure the field, such as already established research universities, evaluative bodies, and the peers/competitors that embody Tier One values. (p. 203)

Sensemaking and reliability. Sensemaking theorists have given considerable thought to how organizations maintain repeatedly reliable outcomes. There is a strain of sensemaking research that applies the theory to High Reliability Organizations (HROs; Weick & Sutcliffe, 2007; Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 1999). HROs are organizations that must always operate at a high rate of reliability. These would include the air traffic control system, nuclear power plants, or research laboratories that deal with hazardous materials. Though most of us might readily accept a certain "failure rate" in the quality of a sandwich from a fast food restaurant, we would probably be much less willing to board a plane that had a significant likelihood of failure during the flight. How, then, do HROs go about maintaining constant vigilance and achieving "collective mindfulness" (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2000, p. 34) under complex conditions?

One study of 26 residents in a U.S. teaching hospital illustrated the contribution of sensemaking to high reliability (Blatt, Christianson, Sutcliffe, & Rosenthal, 2006). One of the problems for HROs is that lapses in reliability are often unique and situational, making it difficult to preserve reliability simply through procedures and structures. The authors identified improved sensemaking as an important tool for better achieving high reliability and dealing with novel lapses. In other words, rather than relying on procedures to guard against lapses, more reliable residents tended to be more attentive to their sensemaking of situations. The authors also

found that residents were so concerned with being perceived by their superiors as competent that they were often reticent to voice concerns, for fear of being considered incompetent.

In the healthcare field, where diagnosis is often based on hunches and various cues that doctors and nurses stitch together to understand an illness and prescribe treatment, this reticence to voice their assessment of a situation was particularly problematic. Thus, for doctors who were able to observe that a lapse in reliability was occurring, their sensemaking of the situation and any resultant action was clouded by fears of voicing their concerns. This adds an additional layer of complexity onto an already difficult situation that calls for high reliability. The authors hypothesize that a heightened awareness of sensemaking processes may make residents more confident in voicing potentially serious concerns.

These perspectives on leadership, boundary-spanning, and sensemaking, combined with an understanding of the seven properties of sensemaking (SIRCOPE; Weick, 2001, 2006), provide us with the background to explore the primary research question of this dissertation, "How are leaders in Catholic universities making sense of undocumented student access?" In Chapter 4, I discuss the primary findings of this study, focusing especially on identity, social contexts, and extracted cues.

Narrative Theory

The second level of inquiry in this study is to identify the role that stories may play in the sensemaking processes of leaders. The literature on narrative theory will help us understand the various functions and forms of narratives. Next, I use Bruner's (1990) four components of narrative as a framework for understanding how stories operate. Weick's (1979) threefold model of organizing will help us explore how stories may fit within retrospective sensemaking. Finally, I review the literature that treats the role of narrative in sensemaking.

Narrative functions and forms. Scholars have identified a variety of narrative functions and forms. To provide some context for the ways leaders used stories in my study, I will begin with a broad consideration of how narratives operate and what forms they can take.

Bruner (1990) explains, "Perhaps its principal property is its inherent sequentiality: a narrative is composed of a unique sequence of events, mental states, happenings involving human beings as characters or actors" (p. 43). The meaning of these elements is given by their place in the sequence and the ways in which the elements interact with one another. He continues, "A second feature of narrative is that it can be 'real' or 'imaginary' without loss of its power as a story. That is to say, the sense and the reference of story bear an anomalous relationship to each other" (p. 44). Stories need not be simply factual accounts of historical events, but can also be fictional without loss of their communicative power. Even historical accounts contain instances of narrative imagination and invention as storytellers seek coherence in the retelling.

Ricœur (1984) illustrates the seeming contradiction between the real and the imaginary when he defines story as a:

> sequence of actions and experiences done or undergone by a certain number of people, whether real or imaginary. These people are presented either in situations that change or as reacting to such change. In turn, these changes reveal hidden aspects of the situation and the people involved, and engender a new predicament which calls for thought, action, or both. This response to the new situation leads the story toward its conclusion. (p. 150)

Due to their narrative structure, stories have the potential to be meaningful regardless of whether they are true in a factual sense. Thus we have the trope common among storytellers, "All stories are true; some of them actually happened."

"Another crucial feature of narrative," claims Bruner (1990), "as already noted in passing, is that it specializes in the forging of links between the exceptional and the ordinary" (p. 47). Here he is referring to the idea of canonical stories which contribute to the creation and maintenance of culture: "The viability of a culture inheres in its capacity for resolving conflicts, for explicating differences and renegotiating communal meanings" (p. 47). In other words, as people refer to canonical stories—stories whose meaning is taken for granted by members of a cultural group—they reinforce or rework the common meanings that constitute the "standard grammar" (Czarniawska-Joerges, 2004, p. 83) of a culture.

At the same time, canonical stories serve as wells of meaning from which storytellers can draw for comparison or contrast. Stories draw strength by resonating with members' understanding of canonical themes, or they set up intriguing—if not unsettling—dissonance by deviating from the canon. Such deviations may require elaboration on the part of the storyteller to resolve the dissonance. Bruner (1990) explains, "The function of the story is to find an intentional state that mitigates or at least makes comprehensible a deviation from a canonical cultural pattern" (pp. 49-50).

With this basic understanding of story in hand, we can turn to a consideration of the various narrative forms, especially as they may appear in my study. A potential point of confusion is the difference between narrative and story, a distinction which various scholars tackle in ways that sometimes are contradictory. Gabriel (2004) explains the distinction between narrative and story:

Narratives involve temporal chains of interrelated events or actions, undertaken by

characters . . .. [They] require verbs denoting what characters did or what happened to

them. They are not mere snapshot photographic images, but require sequencing,

something noted by most systematic commentators on narratives. (pp. 63-64)

Stories, he argues, include an additional element beyond sequencing, namely, plot. "As we move from narrative to story we are forced to recognize the increasing importance of plot, which 'knits events together,' allowing us to understand the deeper significance of an event in the light of others" (p. 64).

Though many scholars use narrative and story interchangeably, it is helpful to identify the unique characteristics of each. Because I am citing the work of various scholars who often conflate the terms I will simplify my study by using the term story, regardless of whether others use the terms "narrative" or "story" in their thinking. I will give special consideration to the element of plot, however, at least in identifying stories that go beyond the mere sequencing of events and seek to provide some sense of emplotment, real or imagined.

The most basic form that most stories take is relatively simple. In his *Poetics*, Aristotle (350 B.C./1917) argued that a narrative "should have for its subject a single action, whole and complete, with a beginning, a middle, and an end [BME]. It will thus resemble a living organism in all its unity, and produce the pleasure proper to it" (p. 89). His fundamental conceptualization of stories has persisted from the fourth century B.C. to the present day. Boje (2008) claims that most scholars of organizations acknowledge "Aristotelian narratives with . . . [a] (BME) plot structure that is quite linear and whole" (p. 1).

Though the BME story represents the most common narrative form, it is certainly not the only kind of story. Stories come in a range of shapes and sizes and serve a variety of purposes. Mandler and Johnson (1977) explain:

The essential structure of a single episode story is that a protagonist is introduced in the setting; there follows an episode in which something happens, causing the protagonist to respond to it, which in turn brings about some event or state of affairs that ends the episode. The simplest story must have at least four propositions, representing a setting, beginning, development, and ending, if it is to be considered a story. (p. 119)

The more imaginative genre of stories includes "such fictions as the epic, the folk tale, myth, romance, tragedy, comedy, farce, and the like" (White, 1987, p. 27). These generally take the form of a BME story but are structured differently to meet specific ends. Counterfactuals are story forms that set up hypotheticals against which comparisons and contrasts can be made. They are imaginative because they represent fictional or hypothetical states of affairs, but their purpose is usually to strengthen an argument made by an empirical account. Parables and morality tales can operate in the same way, crafting imaginary scenarios that relate closely enough to personal experience that they can educate or inspire.

Returning to the concept of the canonical story, Rappaport (2000) draws distinctions between *community narratives*, which are stories "common among a group of people" (p. 4), and *dominant cultural narratives*, which "are overlearned stories communicated through mass media or other large social and cultural institutions and social networks" (p. 4). In recent years scholars have explored the concept of antenarrative, which can be understood as "fragmented, non-linear, incoherent, collective, unplotted and pre-narrative speculation, a bet" (Boje, 2001, p. 1,). Whereas narrative tends to refer to tidy, univocal accounts of events that have ceased evolving, antenarrative is a more organic approach to storytelling that is polyphonic or multivocal. According to Boje (2001) the antenarrative period usually occurs while events are still unfolding

and various storytellers are trying to make sense of what they are experiencing, which leads to the abundance of voices or perspectives.

Bruner's conceptualization of narrative. We can turn to Bruner (1990) to explore how narrative functions in sensemaking. In his exploration of how children develop language skills, Bruner identifies four components of narrative:

> It requires, first, a means for emphasizing human action or "agentivity"—action directed toward goals controlled by agents. It requires, secondly, that a sequential order be established and maintained—that events and states be "linearized" in a standard way. Narrative, thirdly, also requires a sensitivity to what is canonical and what violates canonicality in human interaction. Finally, narrative requires something approximating a narrator's perspective: it cannot, in the jargon of narratology, be "voiceless." (p. 77)

Bruner's conception of child language development is basically an embodied form of sensemaking as children begin to interact with their environment, and, more importantly, their culture. He examines the "symbolic activities that human beings [employ] in constructing and in making sense not only of the world, but of themselves" (p. 2).

These four components of narrative resonate with what we know of organizational sensemaking. "Agentivity" sounds like sensemaking's social character—meaning is sought and understood as part of a process of social interaction between individuals and environments, and both are constantly in flux. Not only do sensemakers interact with their environments, they also often rely on the judgments of trusted friends and colleagues to make sense of situations. From a sensemaking perspective, therefore, environments are understood as socially constructed phenomena that change in response to actions taken by individuals, "whether those others are imagined or physically present" (Weick, 1995, p. 39).

While we may not be accustomed to describing sensemaking in terms of "linearizing," that idea is inherent in sensemaking's retrospective character. Things that are known and understood are usually in the past; dynamic, ongoing events and situations cannot be captured by our sensemaking because they are continually in flux. Therefore, while sensemaking takes place in the *now*, we can only make more complete sense of things that have already taken place. Sensemaking's reliance on reflection to unravel meaning requires static, or completed, events that have stopped changing or evolving.

The notion of violation of canonicity can help us understand how stories operate in sensemaking. Louis (1980) explains that it is "discrepant events, or surprises, [which] trigger a need for explanation, or post-diction, and, correspondingly, for a process through which interpretations of discrepancies are developed" (p. 241). These discrepancies and surprises sound very similar to Bruner's (1990) description of children's responses to anticanonical stories.

To illustrate this phenomenon, Bruner (1990) cites a study of kindergarten children by Joan Lucariello (1990) in which the researcher told a group of four and five year old children a simple story of a birthday party. The control group heard a standard story that could describe any child's typical birthday party: cake, candles, gifts, etc. The experimental group, on the other hand, heard a story that violated the typical, canonical version—in one instance the child put out her candles by pouring water on them.

When Lucariello (1990) asked the children about the stories they had heard, she found that "the anticanonical stories produced a spate of narrative invention by comparison with the canonical one—ten times as many elaborations" (Bruner, 1990, p. 82). The children who heard the anticanonical story were vexed by the unexpected events and invented numerous and

ingenious stories to describe why the birthday girl was unhappy and threw a tantrum. Lucariello's experiment illustrates the ways that even the very young rely on narrative structures to make sense of their world.

The fourth component of narrative is the voice or perspective of the narrator. This certainly resonates with what we know of sensemaking—hearkening back again to the basic formula for sensemaking, "How can I know what I think until I see what I say?" (Weick, 1995, p. 18). As the sensemaker interacts with her environment, she engages in repeated reconceptualizations of the environment and even of herself, continually reassessing her previous judgments. Thus, her understanding of the environment is linked to her own conceptualization of her identity and her ongoing relationship to the enacted environment.

If we adopt Bruner's (1990) understanding of narrative into a sensemaking framework, we can begin to describe how stories may fit in retrospective sensemaking. Following his fourfold structure above we can posit that 1) a sensemaker applies a 2) sequential order to events by 3) referring to canonical stories or elaborating to account for anticanonical stories in order to 4) relate the events to the sensemaker's personal perspective.

Narrative and retrospect. In *The Social Psychology of Organizing*, Weick (1979) argues that most organizing is comprised of three processes: "enactment (bracketing some portion of the stream of experience for further attention), selection (imposing some finite set of interpretations on the bracketed portion), and retention (storage of interpreted segments for future application)" (p. 45). Figure 2 illustrates this threefold model of organizing. In the first process (enactment) the person or group speaks or acts and equivocality is introduced. Looking back retrospectively on what was said or done the person or group makes sense of it (selection) and the meaning is stored (retention.)

Figure 2: The three processes of organizing
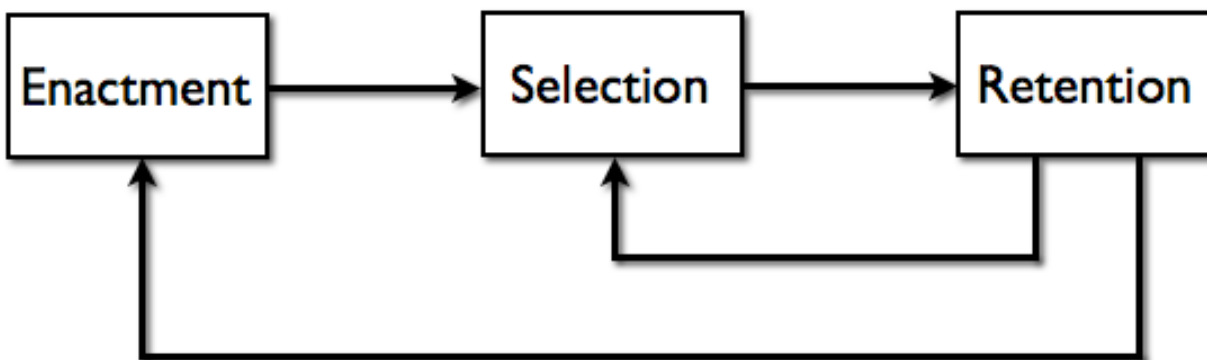
Adapted from Weick (1979).

This basic model of organizing helps us understand sensemaking and highlights its retrospective character. The model does not, however, clarify where we might find story in sensemaking. Boje (2008) claims that the sensemaking research incorrectly omits story and maintains that it is merely by applying our sensory perception that we turn event into experience. He argues instead, "story turns events into experience, and shapes that into collective memory" (p. 194).

Contrary to Boje's (2008) assertion, however, it actually is not the case that sensemaking makes no room for story; quite the opposite is true. Weick (1979) explains that sensemaking serves to provide stories in the organizing process. "Much sense-making in the selection process can be viewed as writing plausible accounts, histories, and sequences for enactments. Equivocality is removed when an enactment is supplied with a history that could have generated it" (p. 195). Though story has not been absent from the sensemaking scholarship, there exists an opportunity to deepen our understanding of its place.

Polkinghorne (1988) makes a distinction that helps explain the creation of meaning. "Narrative meaning is created by noting that something is a *part* of some whole and that something is the *cause* of something else" (p. 6). He illustrates this concept by explaining that

"feeling an ache in my muscles" may have little meaning by itself, even though I have sensed it; however, when combined with "playing three sets of tennis" and "not stretching before playing" the soreness becomes part of a larger episode that has narrative cohesion and meaning. "The meaning of each event is produced by the part it plays in the whole episode" (p. 6). By placing these three experiences in proximity and relationship with one another, the sensemaker moves beyond simple sensory perception and is able to understand the deeper meaning of what took place. The sensemaker thus uses the story to make sense of the individual parts and create a meaningful whole.

One of the simple reasons for our narrative structuring of experience may be to cope with our limited memories. Johnson and Mandler (1980) argue:

> Both sentences and stories consist of serially ordered constituents, and both have evolved under 'real-time' processing constraints which are, at least in part, a function of the limitations of working memory. Only a few items can be held in mind at one time. As new items come along, previously presented items must be recoded and organized into larger units if they are to be retained; i.e., higher-order structure is required by the nature of the processing system. (p. 55)

Because of our limited ability to hold items in memory, we need structures that help us manage the complexity and volume.

Narrative in sensemaking research. There is some treatment of the role of narrative in the sensemaking research. Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) describe the first step of the work of the ethnographer as creating a "journalistic narrative or story" (p. 435). Ethnographic researchers, from their perspective, utilize stories to make sense of their research. In a longitudinal study of British orchestras, Maitlis (2005) identified a similar process within organizations: "members

interpret their environment in and through interactions with others, constructing accounts that allow them to comprehend the world and act collectively" (p. 21). This resonates with Polkinghorne (1988) who argues that narrative is "the primary form by which human experience is made meaningful" (p. 1). Weick and Browning (1986) agree:

> Narration, much like metaphor, has power precisely because it captures complex experiences that combine sense, reason, emotion, and imagination. Narration stirs all those elements together and preserves their interactions in a compact summary that can be reconstructed starting from any one of its parts. (p. 250)

Gabriel (1991) identified stories as keys for unlocking truths within organizations. By understanding the stories members tell, we have access to "vital information about organizations, their members, their outlooks, and their feelings, which are not accessible through more conventional survey techniques" (p. 871). Tsoukas and Hatch (2001) share a similar conceptualization of stories, arguing that "our understandings of complex systems and their properties will always be grounded in the narratives we construct about them" (p. 1007). Boje (2008) contends that organizations "live and die by the narratives and stories they tell" (p. 4).

Though the empirical literature on narrative in sensemaking is relatively limited, a recent special issue of the journal *Human Relations* (Edwards, 2012) included several articles which examine the place of stories in organizational sensemaking. Humphreys, Ucbasaran, and Lockett (2012) found that stories play a pivotal sensemaking and sensegiving role for the development of the organizational and musical lives of jazz musicians. Because of the improvisational nature of jazz music, stories serve as important tools for communicating the jazz culture, especially to new or young musicians. "Stories," they argue, "…are perhaps best understood as recursive, reciprocal and interactive sensemaking and sensegiving vehicles that shape meanings" (p. 43).

Whittle and Mueller (2012) investigated the spinning of moral stories by bankers involved in a recent UK financial crisis. Bankers used several discursive devices to create narratives about the financial crisis, to protect their reputations and the morality of their character and even cast themselves as heroes who, through their swift and decisive actions, avoided an even worse financial disaster. This analysis highlights the dual role of the bankers: as experts they are able to comprehend the complexities of the crisis, while as leaders they were simultaneously responsible for avoiding financial disasters such as the one that occurred. The authors found that the rhetorical skill of the bankers/sensemakers played a crucial role in distilling multiple storylines into a single narrative.

Cunliffe and Coupland (2012) studied embodied narrative sensemaking, "which posits that whether we are aware of it or not, we make our lives and ourselves 'sensible' through embodied (bodily) interpretations in our ongoing everyday interactions" (p. 64). The authors describe that "in the moment of performance [read: sensemaking] we draw on past experiences, present interactions and future anticipations," (p. 83) to narrate our experiences into coherent stories. This study is important because it expands our understanding of sensemaking which "is generally theorized as a disembodied cognitive activity" (p. 68) to include a deeper appreciation of the role of emotion and feeling. Far from being a retrospective process that is simply sensory, they argue that our sensemaking of the world around us is physical, emotional, and lived.

Maclean, Harvey, and Chia (2012) explored the ways that elite business leaders use storytelling to make sense of their careers and to preserve their personal legacies. While researchers usually examine sensemaking from a more proximate perspective, these authors examined the ways that leaders made sense of their career histories, looking back over many

years of experiences. In their quest for self-legitimization, the leaders employed storytelling to make sense of their careers and project their preferred self-image to others.

Elites are not the only organizational members who use stories to shape perspectives—Näslund and Pemer (2012) found that numerous and contradictory stories emerge within organizations as various individuals and groups attempt to exercise influence. Ultimately, however, they observed that dominant stories backed by powerful political actors took precedence within organizations and exercised the greatest influence, even exerting hegemonic power over sensemaking within the organizations. "Dominant stories have the potential to govern sensemaking, so that change is only possible as stipulated by these stories, which in turn contributes to organizational inertia" (p. 106).

Model of Organizational Sensemaking

To begin to understand how stories may fit in sensemaking, we will start with a model of sensemaking. Jennings and Greenwood (2003) adapted Weick's (1979) three stage arrangement of organizing processes (enactment, selection, and retention) and incorporated the seven properties of sensemaking (see Figure 2.) Careful readers will notice that the social property of sensemaking is absent from the figure—Jennings and Greenwood note, "the inclusion of identity [in the model] makes enactment truly "social" and "ongoing" (p. 202), thus accounting for the missing property.

Figure 3: Conceptual model of sensemaking in organizing processes
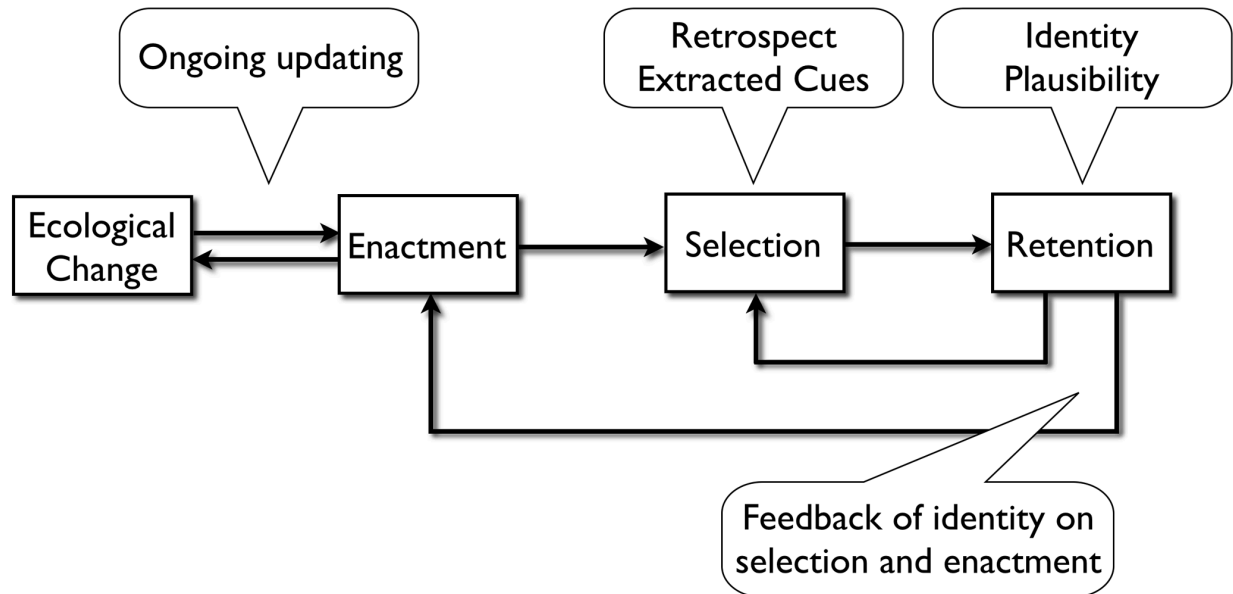
Adapted from Jennings and Greenwood (2003, p. 202).

Jennings and Greenwood (2003) created the model primarily to illustrate enactment. Because enactment is inherent in each of the properties of sensemaking—in each step of sensemaking people are interacting with, and therefore affecting, their environments—the larger model is helpful for illustrating the broader concept of sensemaking.

As the model demonstrates, ecological change spurs a person to make sense of what is new. Even in the immediate sensemaking impulse, the actor introduces variation into the environment—this is enactment. As the sensemaker retrospectively extracts cues, he or she goes through a process of selection in which the new information is bracketed and simplified. Finally, the sensemaker filters the bracketed data through the lenses of his or her own sense of personal identity, in plausible terms, and retains the new meaning. The process is not strictly linear, though it does have a beginning—some ecological change—and an end—the retention of some

new meaning. The model illustrates various loops that signify the ongoing nature of the sensemaking process and the impact of various sensemaking processes on one another.

Situating story in sensemaking. Now that we have a model of the broader process of organizational sensemaking, we can begin to narrow our scope and think about how stories may fit in sensemaking. Boje (2008) claims that, "In retrospective sensemaking it is assumed that there is no difference between event and experience, that event just becomes experience by application of sensory perception" (p. 194). This idea hearkens back to Mead (1956) who argued that we are only conscious of our sensory processes. Boje, however, oversimplifies the process of retrospective sensemaking; Weick (1995) gives considerable attention to the ways we use narrative in retrospective sensemaking (pp. 127-132). Still, an opportunity exists to add to our understanding of sensemaking by further exploring the role of stories.

My approach builds on psychologist Jerome Bruner's (1990, 1996) work on narrative and language, management and narrative theorist David Boje's (2008) concepts of antenarrative and storyability, and philosopher and physician Howard Brody's (2003) notion of healing as storytelling. Boje (2008) claims that "events only become experience when we willfully story event into experience" (p. 194). His creative wordplay notwithstanding, he means that we make sense of the world around us by structuring events in a narrative form.

Bruner (1990) agrees, "the typical form of framing experience (and our memory of it) is in narrative form, and [there is] evidence showing that what does *not* get structured narratively suffers loss in memory" (p. 56). Robinson and Hawpe (1986) echo the same: "It is in reflecting on experience that we construct stories. The stories we make are accounts, attempts to explain and understand experience. Narrative thinking is, therefore, a type of causal thinking" (p. 111).

This approach also resonates with the writing of the physician Howard Brody (2003) who frames healing as storytelling. He argues:

> Learning to become a physician requires, first, learning to tell the story of a patient's illness in a standardized format (the medical history or case presentation), and then learning the skill of comparing and contrasting that case presentation to a collection of comparison cases within the correct scientific category to discern the correct diagnosis and the correct treatment. (p. 9)

Brody (2003) was first inspired to consider the narrative makeup of human life when he read *After Virtue* by Alasdair MacIntyre (1981/2007). MacIntyre concerns himself with critiquing modern moral philosophy and argues for a new and reimagined virtue ethics. In making his case, he repeatedly refers to "the narrative unity of human lives" (p. xi). He describes this perspective: "It is because we all live out narratives in our lives and because we understand our own lives in terms of the narratives that we live out that the form of narrative is appropriate for understanding the actions of others" (p. 212). Barbara Hardy (1968) expressed the same sentiment, somewhat more poetically:

> For we dream in narrative, daydream in narrative, remember, anticipate, hope, despair, believe, doubt, plan, revise, criticize, construct, gossip, learn, hate, and love by narrative. In order really to live, we make up stories about ourselves and others, about the personal as well as the social past and future. (p. 5)

Reflecting on these broader perspectives, Brody (2003) applies a narrative lens to the work of the physician, settling on the notion of healing as storytelling. "Suffering is produced and alleviated by the meaning that one attaches to one's experience. The primary human mechanism for attaching meaning to particular experience is to tell stories about them" (p. 26).

In other words, doctors make sense of illness and treatment by shaping their sensory experiences into narratives—only then does their experience become meaningful for diagnosis and healing.

These examples of narrative—in virtue ethics, healing, and healthcare—are helpful for foreshadowing where story and narrative might fit in sensemaking in the context of institutional life. Weick (2008) claims that, "To focus on sensemaking in organizational settings is to portray organizing as the experience of being thrown into an ongoing, unknowable, unpredictable streaming of experience in search of answers to the question, 'What's the story?'" (para. 1). The question "What's the story here?" is not meant to signal that there is but one story in any sensemaking situation. On the contrary, it indicates a fundamentally narrative approach to making sense of the world around us. Another formulation of the same idea comes from Whittle and Mueller (2012) who express the question as, "What is going on?" (p. 112). There is an opportunity to expand our understanding of the retrospective character of sensemaking (Weick, et al., 2005) to include a greater appreciation of the role of story and narrative (Boje, 2008; Bruner, 1990).

In acquitting my study, I did not hope to learn more about *how* stories function in the metacognitive processes inherent in sensemaking. Instead, I hypothesized that we would see evidence of leaders using stories to organize their experience. If my dataset were to include a reasonable occurrence of stories in leader sensemaking, there might also be an opportunity to begin describing where stories fit in sensemaking processes. Though I designed this study primarily to examine how leaders are making sense of access for undocumented students, careful listening in the data collection and analysis phases allowed me to further our understanding of how leaders used stories in their sensemaking.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

My dissertation is a qualitative study that explores the ways that leaders in U.S. Catholic institutions make sense of a complicated issue. Specifically, I investigated how leaders in Catholic universities make sense of undocumented student access in their institutions. As individuals encounter situations or issues they organize the experience by asking themselves, "What's the story here?" University leaders are currently wrestling with how to make sense of the plight of undocumented students, and in some unique ways, I anticipated, in Catholic institutions; understanding their sensemaking will help us better understand how leaders go about the work of leading.

Research Paradigm

I am using an interpretive research paradigm to shape this dissertation. A research paradigm can be described as "a perspective, a set of questions that can be applied to data to help the analyst draw out the contextual factors and identify relationships between context and process" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 89). From a broader perspective, a research paradigm is a set of basic assumptions that frame the way one approaches research, data, theorizing, and analysis. Guba and Lincoln (1994) suggest that paradigms issue from our basic assumptions about ontology, epistemology, and methodology (p. 108). The ontological question asks about the form of reality and what can be known; the epistemological question asks about the relationship between the researcher and what is being studied; the methodological question asks about the researcher's techniques or strategies for going about the study.

There are various ways to classify the paradigms that guide research. Morgan (1980) identified four paradigms that are frequently used in social and organizational theory: functionalist, interpretive, radical-humanist, and radical-structuralist (see Table 1).

Table 1: Four paradigms for the analysis of social theory

The Sociology of Radical Change

Radical-humanist	**Radical-structuralist**
Interpretive	**Functionalist**

Subjective (left of table), **Objective** (right of table)

The Sociology of Regulation

Adapted from Burrell and Morgan (1979/2003, p. 22).

Bansal and Corley (2012) argue that one of the primary goals of qualitative researchers is to tell stories in their research. Qualitative researchers, they explain, "attempt to create narratives through [their] accounts" (p. 511) of data and theory. Pollock and Bono (2013) claim the same:

> We have two jobs as scholars: answering interesting questions and telling the story . . ..
> If we want our insights to influence management research and practice, we need to pay as much attention to the craft of writing and storytelling as we do to identifying and answering interesting questions. (p. 629)

To tell the story of leader sensemaking in the most compelling way possible, I will rely on an interpretivist research paradigm.

In qualitative research, "the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis" (Merriam, 2009, p. 15). This reality provides some advantages, especially in the flexibility and adaptability of the researcher to the data and settings he or she encounters.

Humans, however, are also naturally subjective and carry with them inherent biases. Peshkin (1988) argues that qualitative researchers should seek not to eliminate their subjectivity, but to identify it and illustrate the ways it influences their methods and conclusions. Similarly, sensemaking researchers who are familiar with the concept of enactment—in interacting with their environments, individuals create and change the environments in ways that may impact or constrain their future actions—should appreciate the ways that one's own subjectivity interacts with and enacts the research environment. Understanding this primary orientation of researcher to data and theory helps us choose the research paradigm that guides this study.

Rather than describe numerous potential research paradigms that could inform this study, I will simply compare and contrast two approaches: positivism and interpretivism. A positivist research paradigm tends to indicate "deductive, theory-testing, objective . . . processes" (Lee, 1999, p. 10) that are generally best suited to quantitative investigation. It focuses on "observable, objectively determinable phenomena," (Phillips, 1983, p. 5) such as the chemical makeup of the water molecule, for which there is but one correct answer: H_2O.

Burrell and Morgan (1979/2003) explain that the positivist, or functionalist, researcher "adopt[s] a 'realist' approach to ontology" (p. 7) which, in organizational research, "seeks to provide essentially rational explanations of social affairs" (p. 26). Phillips (1983) argues that the positivist paradigm has "had a profound but pernicious influence on conceptions of the nature of science [and] . . . eventually sickened and died" (p. 4) in social science research. Whether or not the positivist approach has actually met its demise, if we conceive of organizations in terms of narrative—which is inherently interpretivistic—it does not make an appropriate choice for this study.

Qualitative work is rarely positivistic in orientation and is generally better suited to "inductive, theory-generating, subjective, and nonpositivist processes" (Lee, 1999, p. 10). We should be careful not to confuse nonpositivist methods with being antipositivist, such as some postmodern approaches in which "fragmentation and simulation makes coherence problematic" (Boje, 2001, p. 5) or simply impossible. In such postmodern approaches, "stories are harder to tell because experience itself is so fragmented and full of chaos that fixing meaning or imagining coherence is fictive" (Boje, 2001, p. 8). In contrast to such antipositivist or postmodern approaches, nonpositivistic research paradigms tend instead to be more interpretivistic in their orientation.

From an interpretivistic standpoint, researchers assume that they can attain knowledge, though it may take a different form than a positivistic researcher would expect. Roth and Mehta (2002) explain, "The interpretivist approach does not seek an objective truth so much as to unravel patterns of subjective understanding" (p. 132). Interpretivism, therefore, is a more appropriate paradigm for exploring social realities like culture. Whereas a positivistic research paradigm might be somewhat awkward for exploring socially constructed environments and phenomena, an interpretivistic approach is designed to do just that. Interpretivism "assumes that all versions of the truth are shaped by the viewers' perceptions and understanding of their world" (p. 132) and it is the researcher's duty to uncover the truths that lie within and beneath these social constructions.

We should be careful not to confuse this approach with relativism, where "truth itself is relative to the framework the investigator chooses to adopt" (Phillips, 1983, p. 9). Rather, an interpretivistic paradigm acknowledges the researcher's role in carefully comprehending and clarifying often-complex social realities. Peshkin (1988) explains that "subjectivity can [even]

be seen as virtuous, for it is the basis of researchers' making a distinctive contribution, one that results from the unique configuration of their personal qualities joined to the data they have collected" (p 18). Bansal and Corley (2012) use the image of sculptors to describe qualitative researchers who work with reviewers to create socially constructed meaning in their research: "they use an array of tools to work and rework their materials to form their composition" (p. 512).

My dissertation research is shaped primarily by an interpretivistic paradigm. First, I am exploring the ways that leaders make sense of a complex issue; an interpretivistic paradigm is therefore well-suited for unraveling "patterns of subjective understanding." Second, the nature of organizational sensemaking research itself is more interpretivistic than positivistic; researchers have expanded upon the framework by exploring stories and narratives in the Mann Gulch wildfire (Weick, 1993), in jazz leadership (Humphreys, et al., 2012), and in the study of narrative itself (Boje, 2001, 2008).

Sample Selection

The sample for this dissertation is leaders in 12 U.S. Catholic universities. I chose to restrict my sample to Catholic institutions for several reasons. First, as noted in a recent report from the National Forum on Higher Education for the Public Good (Burkhardt, et al., 2011) the diversity of federal and state policies around access for undocumented students creates some daunting challenges for institutions. Because private universities generally have more flexibility in setting policies to determine admissions and award financial aid, I hope to remove from this study some of these confounding policy effects.

Second, in addition to the various secular voices on access for undocumented students, there are numerous religious and spiritual perspectives on the issue. The United States

Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB; 2003), for instance, issues teachings on a wide range of issues, including immigration policy. While not every pronouncement of the bishops requires assent or action on the part of Catholics or Catholic institutions, it is nevertheless expected that their perspectives be carefully considered. Germane to undocumented students, the bishops wrote, "We stand in solidarity with you, our migrant brothers and sisters, and we will continue to advocate on your behalf for just and fair migration policies" (para. 106). It is reasonable to expect that the Catholic character of universities will have some bearing on decisions related to the issue of access for undocumented students.

Another reason for restricting my sample to Catholic institutions is ease of access to data due to my status as a priest. Additionally, many Catholic institutions now have a senior administrator who is responsible for tending to mission-related matters on campus. These are precisely the individuals who may be charged with navigating issues like access for undocumented students.

To provide some control over regional differences, I grouped the 12 institutions into three geographical areas (four universities in each region.) According to the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities (ACCU; "Complete List of Catholic Colleges and Universities," 2012) there are 251 Catholic institutions that grant degrees in the United States. I first focused my analysis of the list on geographic regions that had higher concentrations of undocumented populations. The Pew Hispanic Center (Passel & Cohn, 2011, p. 23) lists California (2.55 million) and Texas (1.65 million) as the states with the largest number of unauthorized immigrants, while Illinois ranks sixth (525,000). These three states/regions are also home to numerous Catholic institutions and they served as my three geographical research sites.

Initially it was my hope to identify institutions with a diversity of perspectives and experiences regarding undocumented student access. I was, however, unable to identify even one institution that was opposed to access. The reasons for this are not immediately clear, especially if we presume that not all U.S. Catholic colleges and universities provide access—this is a presumption that I cannot back up with empirical data, though I have heard anecdotal reports that suggest it is true. Because I selected institutions from regions with relatively high immigrant populations, it is likely that they are generally more open to serving immigrants, including undocumented students. Though I was unable to recruit universities opposed to access for the study, the issue of access for undocumented students remains unsettled even for proponents of access and provides an appropriate opportunity to study leader sensemaking.

Since I was unable to sample on the diversity of access stances, I focused instead on selecting schools that represent a diversity of institutional types and sizes. The final sample included the following number of institutions, listed by Carnegie Classification ("Carnegie Classifications," 2012): Master's—Larger Programs (7), Doctoral/Research Universities (4), and Research Universities/Very High Research Activity (1). The distribution of enrollments in the sample is: 2,000-4,000 (4), 5,000-8,000 (4), and over 8,000 (4).

In each of the 12 institutions I targeted six top leaders to be interviewed, including the following: presidents, provosts, vice-presidents for mission and enrollment management (if the institution had such positions), and directors of admissions and financial aid. These leaders are among those most responsible for setting and enacting institutional policies, especially regarding admissions. In some cases, institutions had vacancies in certain positions; in others they simply did not have the position in their organization. I invited a total of 71 leaders to sit for interviews. I followed these steps to invite participants:

1. I mailed paper letters to presidents (see Appendix B: Recruitment Letter), inviting their participation in the study and asking if I might mention their involvement of the study in my invitations to other leaders in their institutions. In the mailing I also included paper copies of the description of research (see Appendix C: Description of Research). Nine of the 10 presidents who agreed to be interviewed also agreed to let me mention their support of the study in subsequent invitations.

2. I sent emails to presidents to follow up on the paper letters, including three attachments: pdf of the paper invitation letter, pdf of the description of research, and pdf of the consent form.

3. I placed phone calls to presidents, but only if I had not heard back in response to the paper letters or emails.

4. After hearing back from presidents, I then repeated the previous three steps for the other five leaders in my sample, in addition to any other leaders suggested by the original six invitees.

The response to my invitations was very positive. Of the 12 presidents I invited, 10 agreed to be interviewed—one declined outright, and one was simply too busy with travel to meet. The numbers for the provosts were the same: 10 agreed to take part in the study, one declined outright, and one was too busy to meet. Of the remaining invitations I extended, most were willing to be interviewed; of those who declined, the excuse they offered was typically "lack of experience with the issue," and they suggested others in their institutions I might approach. I interviewed a total of 55 leaders of the 71 I invited to take part, for a response rate of $55/71 = 77.5\%$.

Though the unit of analysis I selected is composed of elite leaders (Odendahl & Shaw, 2002), I experienced no significant issues in gaining access to them or winning their respect. This was likely due to several factors: first, in my experience the kinds of leaders who serve in higher education, especially in Catholic institutions, tend to be fairly amiable; second, my status as a priest automatically grants me a certain standing in Catholic institutions; and third, I was able to identify one or more contacts within most institutions, so I largely avoided cold-calling.

Sample Demographics

My decision to restrict my sample to Catholic colleges and universities not only allowed me to examine spiritual and religious values that may influence leader sensemaking, it also affected the demographics of my sample. It is surprisingly difficult to find complete demographic data on top administrators in higher education; though the data is incomplete, it nevertheless gives us a general idea of the gender and ethnicity that we might expect to find in my sample. The IPEDS online database ("Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System," 2014) includes gender and ethnicity data for the categories "full-time" and "management," but not all Catholic degree-granting institutions reported these data. Likewise, the Almanac of Higher Education ("Almanac of Higher Education," 2013) includes gender and ethnicity data for all presidents, all chief academic officers, and "other top administrators." Table 2 presents the demographic characteristics of my sample alongside the IPEDS and Chronicle data.

Whereas 22.3% of presidents nationwide are female ("Almanac of Higher Education," 2013), three of the 10 in my study were female (see Table 2). My overall sample was 51% female (28/55), which matches the IPEDS gender breakdown for Catholic institutions, and is significantly higher than the percentage of female administrators nationwide as reported by the Chronicle. My sample included a slightly greater percentage of white respondents than the

Catholic average (80% vs. 73%, respectively), which is simultaneously a lower percentage than the average at all institutions (Catholic and non-Catholic). While my sample included roughly the expected number of black leaders, it included a significantly higher percentage of Hispanic leaders (12.7%).

Table 2: Demographic characteristics of study participants

	My Study	IPEDS Catholic Institutions	Chronicle All Presidents	Chronicle All Chief Academic Officers	Chronicle All Other Top Administrators
Gender					
Female	**51.0% (28/55)**	51.0%	22.3%	39.9%	43.3%
Male	**49.0% (27/55)**	49.0%	77.7%	60.1%	56.7%
Ethnicity					
White	**80.0% (44/55)**	73.0%	88.1%	93.0%	86.3%
Hispanic	**12.7% (7/55)**	4.0%	3.1%	0.9%	2.6%
Black	**7.3% (4/55)**	6.0%	6.4%	3.9%	7.9%

Adapted from Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System ("Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System," 2014) and Almanac of Higher Education 2013 ("Almanac of Higher Education," 2013).

Data Collection

My data consisted of open-ended, semistructured interviews. "Because it involves the vagaries of human nature, multiplied by social interaction," Hammer and Wildavsky (1993) explain, " . . . interviewing without much structure or closure is an extremely uncertain business" (p. 59). The flexibility of the open-ended, semistructured interview, however, is

precisely what makes it appropriate for "the inherent uncertainties of brief, asymmetrical, mixed-motive encounters" (p. 59). The open-endedness of my interviews allowed me to understand the unique experiences of the leaders and institutions in my study while the interviews' semistructured nature provided for comparability between results (Merriam, 2009). While I used the same protocol for all interviews, I utilized unique follow-up questions to probe responses from individual leaders.

Just as we can broadly describe sensemaking with the question "What's the story here?" we can also view data collection in terms of narrative. Czarniawska-Joerges (2004) argues that "in many cases, answers given in an interview are spontaneously formed into narratives" (p. 51). This is not surprising, since so much of how people communicate takes a narrative form. It can also be the case, however, that both interviewer and interviewee may privilege factual responses over narrative replies, based on the erroneous yet "shared conviction that 'true knowledge' is not made of narratives" (p. 51). Though factual responses and sound bites might at times seem preferable to the researcher, it may actually be more advantageous to give respondents the space to form their answers narratively, as is likely more natural to them. While certain parts of an interview protocol are generally more structured to allow for gathering of standard information such as demographics (Merriam, 2009), in general, open-ended, semistructured interviews are better suited to allow for the narrative formation of responses.

I conducted the interviews in person, in private settings, usually the leaders' own offices. With their consent, I recorded interviews on the Recorder application on my iPhone. During interviews I had a paper copy of my protocol and an ink pen for taking any short notes I deemed would be helpful. However, during most interviews I did not take even a single note, focusing instead on the person and his or her responses to my questions. A professional transcriptionist in

Indiana transcribed the interviews into .doc files. All transcriptions were stored in a Dropbox folder on my laptop (and, by default, in the cloud); Dropbox is an encrypted cloud storage service that also offers previous file version recovery for the trailing 30-day period (a user may restore any versions of files that have been changed or deleted during the last month.)

My laptop is also encrypted, which adds to the safety of the data storage. No one in my study requested to see his or her transcription; several confirmed multiple times that the study is confidential and there is no attribution of quotations. Just one of the 55 leaders was reticent to allow me to record and transcribe the interview—only after I promised to member-check anything from that interview prior to inclusion in the dissertation did the person agree to be recorded (I did not ultimately use any quotations from that interview in the dissertation.)

At the conclusion of each interview, I sought a quiet space near to the interview location to make fieldnotes. I dictated my fieldnotes into the Dragon Recorder application on my iPhone as a separate digital file from the interview. As described by Emerson (1995), my fieldnotes consist of "remembering, elaborating, filling in, and commenting upon" (p. 39) the experience of interviewing. Dictating fieldnotes immediately after interviews "offers a way of releasing the weight of what [I] just experienced" (p. 40). In this period immediately following each interview, I focused primarily on dictating the notes "as quickly and efficiently as possible" (p. 64) so that important details were not lost to memory. I also decided early in the data collection process to allow for informality in the fieldnotes, following my stream of consciousness. This allowed me to be attentive to even the small details, such as describing the settings of the interviews and the attire of the people I interviewed—these details became very helpful in the analysis phase when I was able to clearly remember each of the 55 interviews.

When I returned to my laptop after each day's interviews I imported the digital recordings of my fieldnotes and transcribed them using Dragon Dictate software. I have significant experience using Dragon Dictate and am able to dictate at a very high rate of accuracy (the software claims that it is able to achieve accuracy levels over 99%.) After the initial transcriptions were complete, I transferred the text into Pages (Apple's word processor) and proofread them for accuracy and completeness. As with the interview transcriptions, I stored fieldnote transcription files in the Dropbox folder on my laptop (and, by default, in the cloud.)

Though research memos are more typically used in the data analysis phase (Emerson, et al., 1995), I recorded my "alternative hypotheses, speculations, and corresponding explanations in a series of memos . . . [Which] serve as the basis for subsequent discussion, debate, and interpretation" (Lee, 1999, p. 50) of my data. I therefore wrote several memos in the data collection phase of my study. During the interviewing stage, I dictated theoretical memos with Dragon Recorder in the manner described above. These documents captured and preserved connections and possibilities that arose in the midst of data collection and analysis that might otherwise have been forgotten.

Prior to beginning the formal data collection for the dissertation, I conducted a pilot study at a single Catholic institution in Michigan. This afforded me the opportunity to test my interview protocol and to identify any needed adjustments before taking the project to scale. The pilot study also familiarized me with practical matters associated with interviewing elite university leaders (Odendahl & Shaw, 2002). Due to timing constraints, I was only able to interview three leaders at my pilot study institution. It was nevertheless a very helpful exercise and increased my confidence in my method and ability to carry out a study of this nature and scale.

Data Analysis

For this dissertation I used a constant comparative method (CCM) of analysis, based on grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Merriam (2009) explains that researchers utilize CCM by comparing particular incidents from their data with other incidents; this leads to preliminary categories which allow for further comparison. As the iterative rounds of comparison proceed, the researcher develops "substantive theory—theory that applies to a specific aspect of practice" (p. 200). The theory is *grounded* because it is rooted in the data. Glaser and Strauss (1967) explain, "in discovering theory, one generates conceptual categories or their properties from evidence; then the evidence from which the category emerged is used to illustrate the concept" (p. 23). Grounded theory is appropriate for this dissertation because "it is most suited to efforts to understand the process by which actors construct meaning out of intersubjective experience" (Suddaby, 2006, p. 634). While methods such as CCM tend to be primarily emic in orientation—focusing on internal characteristics of the data independent of the researcher's perspective—I included some etic elements in my analysis (see below) that allowed me to test my own hypotheses.

My dataset consists of 55 transcribed interviews (totaling 380 single-spaced pages), various methodological and analytical memos (Corbin & Strauss, 2008), and integrative memos (Emerson, et al., 1995). While some new material was appearing even in the last of the 55 interviews, it was also clear that I was experiencing saturation. Glaser and Strauss (1967) explain that saturation "means that no additional data are being found whereby the sociologist can develop properties of the category. As he sees similar instances over and over again, the researcher becomes empirically confident that a category is saturated" (p. 61). I found enough evidence in the dataset to satisfactorily address my research questions.

For the open coding of my interview data I utilized Atlas.ti software. I chose to use this Windows-only software because it is the software package of choice by faculty in the Mendoza College of Business at the University of Notre Dame (with whom I am collaborating on other qualitative research). Atlas.ti was very helpful in managing the process of open coding the large quantity of raw data in my study. Because "grounded theory is an interpretive process, not a logico-deductive one" (Suddaby, 2006, p. 638), however, the important work of assigning meaning to the data happened not in the software, but in the mind of the researcher.

For the subsequent rounds of coding (see below) I found Atlas.ti to be an unwieldy tool. I therefore migrated my data into Numbers, Apple's spreadsheet program. The migration required some electronic acrobatics and some care to clean the data and ensure that codes were preserved alongside their corresponding target quotations. The move was especially helpful because it allowed me to repeatedly sort by the different levels of codes. Without the flexibility provided by Numbers, the process of distilling the open codes would have been much more difficult.

My data analysis included several levels of coding, which is a process Corbin and Strauss (2008) describe as "extracting concepts from raw data and developing them in terms of their properties and dimensions" (p. 159). The first stage was open coding, "breaking data apart and delineating concepts to stand for blocks of raw data" (p. 198). Though this stage of open coding was an opportunity for me to follow where the data led, I did not approach the data without an appreciation of the ways theory may present itself (Weston, et al., 2001). Prior to reading through the first transcript, I reread my proposal and composed a list of concepts I expected to appear in the coding process. I refined my literature review, theory, and research questions into a dozen categories of concepts that would address my hypotheses if they appeared in the data.

I then made sure I was comfortable with the ways these concepts would appear—how will I know concept X when I see it—before I began the coding process. I took these steps to ensure I would not miss anything, especially in the early transcripts, that would be important for the study. After preparing my list of reasonably expected key concepts, I parsed the data line by line and broke it down in search of the concepts within (Wasserman, Clair, & Wilson, 2009). During all phases of data analysis, but especially in the open coding stage, I looked for the presence of stories in leader sensemaking processes. I assigned a total of 1873 codes in the open coding process, of which 286 signified stories that appeared in leader sensemaking.

One unexpected issue arose during the open coding: a tension between coding and tagging. While I worked to "delineate concepts to stand for blocks of raw data" (coding), I was also simultaneously aware of my need to label responses to certain questions to allow for comparability (tagging). One of the questions in my protocol, for instance, asked what pressures leaders feel to take a position on the issue of undocumented student access. Responses ranged from "no pressures" to "significant pressure from alumni and donors" and many in between. To be able to access all responses to that question for comparison purposes, I felt the need to tag the responses. I coded each of the responses to the pressures question with the leading tag "Pressure" followed by the specific answer the person gave.

I did the same for other questions in the protocol, which resulted in codes with leading tags such as: "Orgs:" for which organizations influence leader sensemaking; "Consulted:" for whom leaders consulted; "Data:" for the data or information the leaders initially sought when first encountering the issue, and so on. While this method of tagging made it very easy to access all of the answers I sought to compare against each other, it also had the side effect of occasionally confounding the coding process. Some of the answers required more of a tag than a

code, such as "no pressures" in response to the question of which pressures leaders are feeling to take a position. Others warranted both tags and codes and I found it somewhat confusing to remember to include both.

As I engaged the data in iterative and constant comparison, I began to draw connections between the emergent concepts from the open coding phase. This second stage of coding is known as axial coding. Axial coding is the process of "crosscutting or relating concepts to each other" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 195). My axial codes were informed by, but not limited to, the seven properties of sensemaking (Weick, 1995) and narrative theory (Bruner, 1990; Polkinghorne, 1988). Though I continued to follow where the data led, the axial codes were important for "refining the category scheme" (Merriam, 2009, p. 200) in this grounded theory approach.

It is important to note, however, that "as focused codes and broader concepts emerge[d] from the data . . . they [did] not become *a priori* concepts for subsequently collected data" (Wasserman, et al., 2009, p. 359). Rather, the emerging concepts continued to be constantly compared to new data as it became available. In this way, "concepts, and the larger conceptual scheme, [were] constantly improved by synthesizing new data or new analysis of older data" (Wasserman, et al., 2009, p. 359). In this second stage of coding I grouped the 1873 open codes into just 119 axial codes; I also organized the 286 stories (from open coding) into just five categories that described the ways leaders used stories in their responses.

The third stage of analysis is selective coding. We might think of selective coding as "knit[ting] into a single coherent story the otherwise isolated areas of analysis" (Weiss, 1995, p. 160) that resulted from the open and axial coding. While axial coding certainly begins this process of refinement, it is in selective coding that I distilled the many and diverse axial codes

into very few themes. These represent the findings for my study. Memos served as important tools for distilling axial codes into findings. As noted above, I began writing memos at the beginning of my data collection process. It was in the axial and selective coding processes, however, that research memos served a crucial purpose.

At numerous points in these stages of coding I reached impasses as I wrestled with the data and tried to make sense of it. Typing and dictating research memos allowed me to offload my thoughts and process them in written form. In each instance of writing memos during the coding process I was surprised how quickly I moved from confusion to insight and was able to return to the coding with renewed purpose.

While it is tempting to describe this stage of analysis as one of discovery, it is actually a more active process of creation. Emerson, et al. (1995) explain:

Theory only *seems* to jump out of the data and hit the researcher in the face; this flash of insight occurs only because of the researcher's prior analytic commitments built into the notes, the theoretical concerns and commitments she brings to the reading, and the connections made with other "similar events" observed and written about. (p. 167)

In the third stage of coding I reduced the 119 axial codes into 15 selective codes; I then synthesized the 15 selective codes into just six themes, which led to some of the major findings of the study.

Though my coding process allowed me to refine 1873 open codes into 6 themes, it would be a mistake to report only on those six findings. As noted above, I felt a tension throughout the coding between codes and tags. Initially I was confused about whether or not to even include tagged open codes in subsequent rounds of coding. I realized that the tags were already preserved in the open codes, which would allow me to quickly and easily compare answers to

specific questions from the protocol. I could thus review, for instance, all of the pressures that leaders experienced (by sorting the open codes), while also including those open-coded responses in later rounds of coding. This was important because the answers leaders gave to individual questions helped me understand not only specific elements of their sensemaking but also the larger patterns that exist in the way they have encountered undocumented student access. As a result, in Chapters 4 and 5 I am able to report some interesting descriptive data about the ways leaders responded to specific questions in the study.

Application of Data Analysis Methods

Having described my analytical methods from a broad, theoretical perspective, it will be helpful to detail how I applied them in my study. I will include in this section some detailed descriptions of my coding process, as well as some examples to help illustrate my methods.

Open coding. As noted above, my dataset included 55 semi-structured interviews; the transcriptions totaled 380 single-spaced pages of text. I applied rigorous methods in my analysis for two purposes: first, as a means to manage such a large dataset; and second, to provide reliable findings. Before beginning the first round of coding, open coding, I reread my review of previous literature and made a list of the sort of concepts I expected to find in the dataset. The list—which was not exhaustive—included the following items:

1. Leadership activities

2. The presence of story or narrative in responses

3. Various tools used in sensemaking, which might include relationships, concepts, theories, stories, and others

4. Personal and institutional values, especially values rooted in Catholic spirituality/charism and practice

5. Charism of the university or its founding religious community ('charism' refers to the unique spirit, tradition, or approach to education in a university)

6. Local traditions or rituals

7. Responses to specific questions—such as "Pressures:" or "Orgs:"—that I could tag to facilitate comparison and grouping in later stages of analysis

With this list of concepts in place, I began reading through my transcripts. In open coding, my goal was chiefly to name what I was seeing in the data. The results of this first round of coding were varied. I designed my interview protocol to elicit two different kinds of responses—factual and descriptive. Several of the questions in my protocol asked "what" or "who" questions that tended to elicit more factual responses. Other items in my protocol asked "how" questions that tended to elicit more descriptive answers from leaders. These two different types of responses necessitated a dual approach to open coding—some open codes looked more like tags and served to group factual responses for later comparison and analysis, whereas other open codes simply described what I saw in the data.

Some examples will help illustrate the difference between the two basic categories of open codes. I tagged some of the factual responses with leading descriptors like "Orgs:" to allow me to compare and analyze responses to specific questions. Many of the tagged responses were straightforward, such as leaders who reported that no organizations had significantly influenced their thinking on undocumented students. In these instances, a simple "Orgs:no impact at all" served to tag the responses for future comparison and analysis.

Other tagged responses were more complex, such as the president's response to the same organizational impact question with, "The bishops, I think they're out of touch." In this case, I tagged his response "Orgs:bishops are out of touch" to allow for two kinds of analysis of the

quote. First, I wanted to compare this president's response to all other responses to the organizational impact question from the 55 interviews, and the "Orgs:" tag allows me to easily group these responses. Second, this president's comment communicates not only that the bishops do not have an impact on his thinking (factual response to the question), but also that he thinks the bishops could do more to connect with contemporary issues (descriptive response to the question.)

My other open codes differed from those with the leading descriptors, or tags. I assigned these open codes to concepts, images, or other salient points that leaders made in their responses. An example of this kind of open coding applies to the response of a provost who, when reflecting on American Catholic higher education's historic outreach to immigrants, responded, "All of this, the whole undocumented piece is really, I think, a challenge to who are we as Americans. What do we believe? What's our value base?" I assigned the following open code to this quotation: "Issue of US [undocumented students] raises value questions about what it means to be an American." This open code is unique to the provost's comment and I would later group the quotation with other similar quotations in later rounds of coding.

The third and final category of open codes includes those I assigned to stories in leader responses. Though the primary goal of this dissertation was to explore how leaders are making sense of access for undocumented students, the secondary purpose was to identify the presence of story in leader sensemaking. I was able to identify 286 instances of story in leader responses—stories thus represented 286 of the total 1873 open codes. I coded these stories with the leading terms "Story about" followed by words that described both the story and how the leader seemed to be using the story. In some instances the leader seemed to be telling a story simply to help me understand his or her thinking. In other instances, the leader seemed to be

telling a story for different purposes. It is only by analyzing the stories within the larger contexts of the interviews that I was able to assign my understanding of the purposes stories seemed to be serving. I describe the stories and how I discerned their contextual purposes in Chapter 5. Table 3 lists the various categories of open codes I assigned in the initial round of data analysis.

Table 3: Open codes by category

Open Code	Frequency
Unique Open Codes	593
Open codes containing "story"	286
"Voice of"	130
"For:"	127
"Consulted"	112
"Catholic:"	108
"Data:"	104
"Orgs:"	91
"CST"	68
"Against:"	52
"Pressure"	52
"Initial response was"	45
Open codes containing "risk"	45
"**"	42
"No pressures"	18

Axial coding. In the second round of coding, axial coding, I began grouping like open-coded quotations. Similar to the open coding process, in my axial coding I looked for the presence of the sorts of concepts—Catholic values, properties of sensemaking, or the presence of story, for instance—that I expected to see in the data. More importantly, however, I sought in my axial coding to respond to what I was seeing in the data, as reflected in the open codes I had earlier assigned. As I worked through the open-coded quotations I began to recognize patterns in the data. I grouped these similar ideas with axial codes, and I sought to assign axial codes that were not overly general and were descriptive enough to retain the uniqueness of the ideas.

If we return to the examples from above, I can illustrate how I moved from open to axial codes in five steps:

1. I grouped the items open-coded "Orgs:no impact at all" into the axial code "National orgs have no impact." I also included under this same axial code other items such as "Orgs:not a lot of guidance from bishops on this issue" and "USCCB peripheral." Though not every leader responded clearly that national organizations do not have any impact on their thinking, it was clear that for many of them the national organizations were so peripheral or quiet as to be inconsequential. I thus grouped these and other similar open-coded quotations under the axial code "National orgs have no impact."

2. For the quotation I open coded "Orgs:bishops are out of touch," I chose the axial code "National orgs could do more to organize Catholic position and advocacy." I grouped this open-coded item with others such as "Orgs:are actually behind this institution in addressing the issue," and "Orgs:impact only indirectly—reads about them when in the news." In each of the quotations included in this axial code the leaders were communicating not only their impression that national organizations do not shape their thinking but also their opinion that the national organizations could and should do more. In some cases leaders directly communicated this opinion that organizations could do more, such as a vice-president of mission who stated, "The USCCB is sort of organized about immigration but I think that they've chosen to put their muscle in different places and so I don't know that they're really moving the needle on this, which I think is unfortunate." In other cases leaders communicated the same opinion only indirectly, through their tone and body language.

3. For the quotation I open coded "Issue of US raises value questions about what it means to be an American," I assigned the axial code "US look like everyone else and want to be Americans." I grouped this open-coded item with others such as "Different than traditional immigrants because they basically are Americans," and "Surprised to learn that some US didn't know they weren't citizens until applied for college." There were five instances of open-coded items that fit under this axial code. In each instance, the leaders were communicating that for them the issue of undocumented student access is more complicated than simply an issue of illegality. Though it appears that the open-coded item "Issue of US raises value questions about what it means to be an American" is only loosely related to this group of similarly axial-coded items, when the original quotation is placed in the context of the larger interview it is clear that the provost was speaking about immigrants and their desire to be welcomed in the United States.

4. For the 286 instances of story I open coded, I assigned a total of four axial codes. In the process of open coding I began to see patterns emerge in the way leaders seemed to be using stories in their responses to my questions. These patterns resonated with various aspects of narrative theory, as is explained in detail in Chapter 5. Though for the rest of the data axial coding is only the second of four stages of analysis, for the instances of story additional rounds of coding were unnecessary. To discern intentionality in the ways leaders used stories in their responses, I asked myself "Why did this person tell me this story in this way?" I considered several aspects of the stories and their use:

   a. What form does the story take? Some stories were told in the first person and recounted personal experiences. Others were told in the third person and related experiences of others. Still other stories were generic in form, with characters,

settings, and plots that had nonspecific characteristics. By identifying the form of the story, I could begin to understand how the leader was using it.

b. Where does the story appear in the interview response? In some responses to my questions, leaders made general statements and then followed them immediately with stories. In others, leaders responded to my questions only by telling me stories. Identifying how stories appeared in responses helped me discern how leaders were using them.

c. What can I learn from the vocal characteristics and body language of those telling stories? As leaders were telling stories in their responses, their body language and vocal attributes communicated much of the context for the stories themselves. Examples of such body language would include pauses with knowing glances towards me to gauge whether I understood what they were communicating, or a leader exhibiting an emotional response to a story he or she was telling. These physical cues provided important context for understanding how leaders were using stories.

5. I considered each instance of story in the larger context of the interview and assigned them to one of the following four categories:

a. Stories as evidence to support a claim: 100 of the 286 open-coded stories fit roughly into this category. Some leaders used this story form as explanatory partners for declarative statements; others simply skipped the declarative statements and told the stories in response to my questions, letting the stories stand on their own. As Gabriel (2004) explains, "Narratives and stories feature prominently as sense-making devices, through which events are not merely

infused with meaning, but constructed and contested," (p. 62) allowing the stories to become tools for better communicating the sensemaker's intended message.

b. Stories as referents for comparison or contrast: 54 of the open-coded stories fit into this category. Leaders used various shared narratives—such as community narratives or dominant cultural narratives (Rappaport, 2000)—as illustrations of their sensemaking, or to provide contrasting examples that provided relief against which they described their sensemaking. Whereas stories as evidence to support a claim were generally simple stories about personal experience, stories as referents for comparison or contrast tended to be canonical stories that are meaningful for groups larger than the leader him or herself. The leader tapped into the shared meaning by referencing the shared narratives in his or her sensemaking.

c. Stories as anchors for past experience: 46 open-coded stories fit into this category. In responding to my queries, these leaders used autobiographical stories. Bruner (1987) claims, "We seem to have no other way of describing 'lived time' save in the form of a narrative" (p. 12). By using these autobiographical stories, leaders communicated both their responses to my questions and their own conceptualizations of themselves.

d. Stories of personal experience that led to empathy for undocumented students: 86 of the open-coded stories fit into this category. These personal narratives feature the narrator in some role, and the relationships and interactions they experienced led them to advocacy for undocumented students and framed the way they understand educational access.

Selective coding. In the third round of coding, selective coding, I worked to refine and greatly reduce the many axial codes into fewer selective codes. Whereas in axial coding I focused on grouping like open-coded items, in the selective coding stage I engaged in much more intentional process of distillation. To move from 119 axial codes to just 15 selective codes required finding connections between axial-coded items that may not have been immediately obvious, as the examples below will show.

To allow for the refinement of various and often diverse axial codes into fewer selective codes, I took several steps. First, I removed numerous axial-coded items that did not warrant being grouped into selective codes—these include axial codes such as "Does not feel any pressure," and "Issue is quiet on campus, at least for now." Second, I grouped all of the 286 quotations axial-coded for stories into the selective code "Narrative forms."

I next returned to the theory and expectations guiding my study so that I could look for confirmation or disconfirmation in the data. I anticipated that Catholic values would shape the ways leaders understand and make sense of the issue of undocumented student access in their universities and that leaders would describe using a variety of tools in making sense of the issue. To stitch various axial codes into selective codes I looked for "stories" in the data—I am referring here not to the presence of narrative forms in leader responses, as I have described above, but to thematic similarities in the data that signify common ideas. Often when axial-coded items seemed diverse and unrelated they actually fit well together when considered as part of a broader understanding of what leaders were communicating.

Returning to the examples from above, I can illustrate the move from axial to selective codes in four steps:

1. For the items open-coded "Orgs:no impact at all" and axial-coded "National orgs have no impact," I assigned the selective code "Immigration issues bigger than US access." Under this same selective code I grouped a total of 234 of the original open-coded quotations. I also included in this group other axial codes including "External professionals are important resource," "Professional associations are important resource," and "Opponents to access are important resource." It is only by considering the original quotations in the larger context of the overall data set that we can begin to see how they fit together in this selective group. In each of the examples here we can see that leaders were reaching out to others and were learning more about not only undocumented student access to higher education but about immigration issues in general.

2. For the quotation I open coded "Orgs:bishops are out of touch" and axial coded "National orgs could do more to organize Catholic position and advocacy," I also assigned the selective code "Immigration issues bigger than US access." As with the other axial-coded items immediately above, this quotation illustrates the breadth of the immigration issues that transcend undocumented student access.

3. For the quotation I open coded "Issue of US raises value questions about what it means to be an American" and axial coded "US look like everyone else and want to be Americans," I assigned the selective code "Personal relationships lead to advocacy for US." Under this same selective code I grouped a total of 53 of the original open-coded quotations. I also included under this selective code items with axial codes such as "Family history leads to advocacy," "US are good students," and "Familiarity with issue has led to advocacy." In each of these groups of quotations leaders described various paths towards developing an advocacy stance for undocumented students. For some it

was personal experience in their own family with immigration issues, for others it was in getting to know students on their campuses.

4. As noted above, I assigned all 286 open-coded stories, in their four axial-coded categories, to the selective code "Narrative forms." This selective code primarily served to group the story quotations into one category so that they would be organized under a single heading in both the selective and thematic coding lists. Because I was able to group the 286 open-coded stories into just four axial codes, I did not need to further refine the axial codes into fewer selective codes—the four axial codes provided sufficiently descriptive categories for me to analyze the ways the stories appeared in leader responses.

Thematic coding. In the fourth and final round of coding, I grouped the 15 selective codes into just six themes, which constitute some of the major findings of the study. Whereas the axial coding stage consisted largely of grouping like items, and the selective coding stage consisted largely of refining and distilling the many axial-coded items to begin identifying "stories" in the data, the thematic coding stage was more synthetic. To move from 1873 open-coded quotations to just six themes required me to remain very attentive to what leaders were communicating in their responses while simultaneously bringing my theoretical lenses to bear on the data. Returning to our previous examples will illustrate the ways theory allowed me to synthesize various selective-coded items into themes.

1. For the items open-coded "Orgs:no impact at all," axial-coded "National orgs have no impact," and selective-coded "Immigration issues bigger than US access" I assigned the theme "Collaboration with others internally and externally to solve complex immigration issues." I also included under this same theme the following selective codes:

"Collaboration for CIR," "Common good," "External contacts and resources are important," "Finances are biggest hurdle," "Need for education/data/policy," and "No one can solve this issue alone." Each of these selective codes represents different ways in which leaders appreciate the complexity of not only undocumented student access but the broader immigration issues in our country. If we recall that organizational sensemaking is essentially *social* and focused on and by extracted *cues*, we may group together these selective-coded items that describe the ways leaders reach out to others for support, leadership, and resources.

2. For the quotation open-coded "Issue of US raises value questions about what it means to be an American," axial-coded "US look like everyone else and want to be Americans," and selective-coded "Personal relationships lead to advocacy for US" I retained the selective code and transferred it to the same thematic code. I chose to retain the selective code in this instance because it was strong enough to stand on its own as a category. None of the other selective codes were related closely enough to this category to merit combining them into a common thematic code.

The impact of personal relationships on leader sensemaking resonates with several characteristics of organizational sensemaking, especially its *social* character. Regardless of how a person might originally conceive of the issue of access for undocumented students, those who have personal relationships with undocumented students themselves almost unanimously reported some level of advocacy for the students as a result of the relationship. In addition, the personal relationships speak to the *ongoing* nature of organizational sensemaking. Sensemaking never stops—even if leaders had previously made a decision to oppose access for undocumented students, as they

continued to gather more information and develop new relationships they often moved to advocacy or at least softened their opposition stances.

3. In addition to these two thematic codes I grouped the remaining selective codes into one of the following four thematic codes: "Leaders must protect institution and US from risks," "Leadership enacts Catholic values," "Narrative forms," and "US access is more complex than just admitting them."

These six thematic codes constitute some of the major findings of my study—they are themes that emerged in the data, often from seemingly unrelated responses. By considering the over 1600 quotations in the contexts of the larger interviews from which I selected them and comparing and contrasting them to quotations from other leaders I was able to uncover some themes in the 55 interview data set. These six themes, however, are far from the only findings of the study. First, each of the tagged responses offers insights into the tools leaders used to make sense of undocumented student access. Second, there is much to explore in the ways leaders made use of the four story types in their responses. The six thematic codes are helpful for identifying some broad themes that the data contains, but they are not the only findings of the study. Chapters four and five explain the findings at length.

Validity and Reliability

Having described my research methodology in detail, it will be helpful to address validity and reliability concerns. Though the methods I used for this study are rigorous and appropriate for answering my research questions, my study will be strengthened by transparency about the ways my data and methods will lead to findings. "One of the assumptions underlying qualitative research is that reality is holistic, multidimensional, and ever-changing; it is not a single, fixed, objective phenomenon waiting to be discovered, observed, and measured as in quantitative

research" (Merriam, 2009, p. 213). This is not to suggest that I suppose everything in the world is relative; as a Christian I personally believe in the existence of objective truth. However, as our human understanding of and encounter with our world is mediated through our humanity, so the data we collect is filtered through the lenses of our senses and colored by our own interpretation. We are also reminded by sensemaking's principle of enactment that in research—which is itself a process of sensemaking—scholars enact the environments they are studying, affecting changes in the environment simply by the their presence and scholarly activity.

Maxwell (1992) describes a challenge faced by qualitative researchers. "If qualitative studies cannot consistently produce valid results, then policies, programs, or predictions based on these studies cannot be relied on" (p. 279). The same is certainly true of quantitative research; because of the qualitative nature of this dissertation there are nevertheless specific practices and cautions that will protect the validity and reliability of the findings. As Phillips (1987) explained, "there are *no* procedures that will regularly (or always) yield either sound data or true conclusions" (p. 21). Researchers are therefore obligated to align their methods with their research questions carefully and intentionally.

As noted above, this dissertation is informed by an interpretivistic research paradigm which is suited to "inductive, theory-generating, subjective, and nonpositivist processes" (Lee, 1999, p. 10). My exploration of sensemaking asks "What's the story here?" not to uncover the one, objectively true story of leader sensemaking (which would be a strictly positivist approach), but to develop a richer understanding of the ways in which leaders use stories to organize their experience. This does not mean my findings are not 'true,' for "qualitative researchers generally *do* intend for their findings to be taken as veridical" (Phillips, 1987, p. 10). Rather, I have sought to execute a study whose findings are believable, credible, and coherent (Phillips, 1987, p. 23),

and whose analysis will help us understand what could be true and real about how university leaders lead.

It is important to comment on the generalizability of a study such as this. Research in an interpretivistic paradigm is not customarily oriented towards making broad and sweeping generalizations. It would be a mistake for me to conclude this study with an assertion for universal practice across settings based solely on this research. Rather, I have the more realistic and appropriate goal of learning about university leadership in a way that will enrich our understanding of sensemaking, especially in higher education. While some of my findings may be applicable in other settings, it is not my hope or expectation that they will be broadly generalizable.

There are various methods researchers can use to gain "insight into the reasonableness, correctness, and validity of his or her interpretations" (Lee, 1999, p. 53). Because I analyzed transcriptions of recorded interviews, and because the transcription was outsourced to a professional transcriptionist, verifying the accuracy and reliability of the transcriptions was helpful in certain instances. When she had trouble understanding the recorded interviews, my transcriptionist highlighted the dubious portions in red. In some cases the highlighted sections were relatively inconsequential, such as when interviewees went on unhelpful tangents or the transcriptionist was unfamiliar with common abbreviations or acronyms. In other cases, however, it was important to compare the highlighted sections with the original audio to ensure the accuracy of the text.

Another common method for validating a study's findings is member checking, which provides interviewees the chance to give feedback on the researcher's analysis (Merriam, 2009). This can be especially helpful in situations where the findings are unexpected or surprising. As

noted above, only one of the leaders I interviewed was nervous about the possibility of attribution, even after I repeatedly assured the person of the confidentiality of my study. I included nothing from that interview in the analysis, and thus did not need to member check with that person. My use of memos throughout the data collection and analysis phases also protected the validity of the study by chronicling my own engagement with interviewees and data. My findings thus fairly and reasonably represent my best understanding of the topic of my inquiry.

Researcher Bias and Assumptions

Qualitative research has the benefit of very closely uniting the researcher to the data. Merriam (2009) explains, "Because human beings are the primary instrument of data collection and analysis in qualitative research, interpretations of reality are accessed directly through their observations and interviews" (p. 214). It is therefore crucial for researchers to be forthcoming about their own biases and assumptions through which their interpretations of reality are filtered.

One of the first, and perhaps most obvious, of my personal characteristics is my status as a Catholic priest. Though my priesthood does automatically communicate some of my personal makeup (I am a professed Christian; I publicly—and privately, in my case—voice support for Catholic teaching; and I am identified with both the positive aspects of the Catholic Church—such as commitment to the poor and to education—and, unfortunately, the negative aspects too—such as priest abuse), I take research and scholarship seriously and strive for honesty, humility, and transparency in my work. As Peshkin (1988) and others have noted, objectivity is not only a poor goal, it is impossible for humans to achieve. Therefore, I embrace my priesthood and my Christian commitments for the ways they serve as "the basis of [my] making a distinctive contribution," (p. 18) while also doing my utmost to follow rigorous empirical methods that will produce authentic, valid, and reliable findings.

Regarding my personal opinions on access for undocumented students, my perspective is similar to that of the bishops' council: I do not have an official position on whether or not they should be granted access. As a Catholic, I do, however, believe strongly in care for the poor, the oppressed, and the displaced. Due to these beliefs, in practice I support access for the undocumented, though I am understanding of those who are opposed to access. The issue is complex and there are multiple competing logics (legal status, human dignity, education as a public good, etc.); in effect, even though I sympathize with some of the arguments against access, I support access for the undocumented because the most important values I hold would lead me to that conclusion.

One practical implication of my priesthood that required some reflection was my attire. The customary clothing for priests is black clerical dress, known informally as "the Roman collar." For some Catholics, however, especially those of a more progressive ecclesiology (theology of church), clerical dress can be interpreted as patriarchal and can create a barrier. These individuals might more readily welcome me in casual, non-clerical dress. At the same time, more traditional Catholics expect priests to wear clerical dress as the norm. For them, a khaki-clad student-priest might communicate a more progressive personal ideology or an immaturity that could make them less comfortable in the interview. How should I decide what to wear in my interviews, lest I give the impression of being either a laissez-faire hippie or a simple-minded sycophant?

After considering the ramifications of the various apparel options, I decided that I would dress in clerical attire, which is the norm for priests in professional situations, regardless of their personal ideology. My clerical dress was simple (there are very formal versions of the Roman collar) and my body language and demeanor communicated a friendly and welcoming stance to

the interviewees. Only one of my respondents communicated—through her responses and her body language—that she had me pegged as an ideological conservative. At one point in the interview she was getting further and further off topic and was fairly admonishing me about issues of national politics (unrelated to undocumented student access). Though I almost never gave any direct feedback to respondents during the interviews themselves, in this case I did make a small corrective statement which had the intended effect of communicating that I am not the patriarchal conservative she may have thought me to be while also getting her down off of her political soapbox (for the remainder of the interview she was more focused on my questions.) My decision to wear clerical dress did not cause any additional issues of which I am aware.

I hope I have represented in this section two points: first, I am a priest who has a public relationship to the institutional Catholic Church; and second, my personal religious beliefs and obligations did not inappropriately prejudice my acquittal of the study proposed here. I feel that this is important to explain because of the public nature of my priesthood and because of my choice to situate the study in Catholic universities. I am explicit in what I believe and in what I represent as a public minister in the Catholic Church, but I do not suspect those beliefs and representations have had a negative impact on the validity of this study.

Chapter 4: Leader Sensemaking of Undocumented Student Access

The primary research question guiding this study has been: How are Catholic university leaders making sense of undocumented student access? As I explored this primary question, I examined leaders' initial interactions with the issue, the various tools they used to make sense of it, the pressures and risks associated with addressing it, and the impact of the Catholic character of universities on their sensemaking.

I designed this study with two purposes in mind: first, to explore and better understand the ways leaders are making sense of undocumented student access, and second, to explore the use of stories in leader sensemaking. This chapter reports the findings for the first of those two purposes; Chapter 5 reports the findings for the second. In the literature review I described the seven characteristics of sensemaking which would frame my data analysis: sensemaking is *social*, grounded in *identity* construction, *retrospective*, focused on and by extracted *cues*, *ongoing*, driven by *plausibility* rather than accuracy, and *enactive* of sensible environments (Weick, 2001, 2006). My most compelling findings relate to identity, social context, and cues; though my data also addresses the other four characteristics those findings are largely confirmatory of what we already know about sensemaking. I have thus chosen to report only on the three characteristics to which my study makes the strongest contributions.

Identity

In this first section I address the impact of individual and organizational identity on leader sensemaking of undocumented student access. The leaders I interviewed perform significant service in making decisions and setting policies within their universities. They are

therefore continuously engaged in ongoing sensemaking, constantly asking on behalf of their schools, "What's going on here? What's the story?" As leaders become more familiar with circumstances that have the potential to have an effect on their institutions—that is, as leaders extract environmental cues to create plausible accounts of what is going on—they reduce the equivocality that results from an overabundance of possible meanings from which to choose. I am seeking here to better understand the influence of leader identity on their sensemaking processes.

To provide some context for my findings, I briefly return to the sensemaking literature on identity. I then explore three ways leader identity shapes sensemaking of undocumented student access: constructing Catholic identity, embodying identities, and managing commitment.

Weick (1995) often refers to the primary question guiding sensemaking inquiry, "How can I know what I think until I see what I say?" (p. 18). As the sensemaker interacts with her environment, she engages in repeated reconceptualizations of the environment and of herself, continually reassessing her previous judgments. Thus, her understanding of the environment is linked to her own conceptualization of her identity and her relationship to the environment.

As Gioia and Thomas (1996) learned, people's perception of their own identity and their university's identity has an effect on their sensemaking. The ways top leaders in their study envisioned their institutions' identity and image acted "as perceptual screens or mirrors that affect[ed] team members' information processing and, ultimately, their interpretation of key issues" (p. 372). Dutton and Dukerich (1991) identified a similar effect in their study of the Port Authority of New York. They found that "the Port Authority's identity, or how organization members saw it, played a key role in constraining issue interpretations, emotions, and actions" (p. 542), as did the Port Authority's image, or how people outside the organization saw it.

Social identity theory (SIT) offers us another way to describe how people create personal identity through processes of self-differentiation and affiliation (Tajfel, 1979; Turner, et al., 1979). People create personal identities by comparing themselves to various ingroups and outgroups, those with whom they are similar or dissimilar, respectively. Kayes (2004) identified a breakdown in leadership—as a result of guides' identity formation—as a key factor in climbing disasters on Mt. Everest. This resulted in a series of bad decisions by leaders that resulted in eight deaths and numerous complications. Wrzesniewski, Dutton, and Debebe (2003) explored a related concept, self-meaning, which "strikes at the heart of one's identity and worth as a human being . . . as the information conveyed about job and role ultimately has an impact upon the self" (p. 112).

When we examine how leaders in Catholic universities are making sense of undocumented student access, we can identify several ways that personal and professional identities shape their sensemaking. First, leaders construct the Catholic identity of their institutions by the values they espouse publicly and privately. Second is a process of attempting to live up to their sense of their self-identity as leaders, to embody the roles they fill in the organization. Third is managing commitment, a tactic for maintaining strategic ambiguity (Eisenberg, 1984) that provides flexibility for leaders.

Constructing Catholic identity. I intentionally situated my study in Catholic universities because I anticipated that the religious and spiritual values inherent in them would have an effect on leader sensemaking. Leaders described both the direct and indirect influence of Catholic values and the histories of their universities on how they make sense of undocumented student access. They spoke at length about the ways that Catholic values and

heritage speak to the issue, and they explained that the Catholic identity of their universities is something that must be repeatedly constructed and expressed.

To provide context for the construction of Catholic identity, we can return to the work of Porac, Thomas, and Baden-Fuller (1989) and their study of the Scottish wool industry. The authors found that the mental models espoused and enacted by leaders had a clear effect on the composition of the woolen wear industry. As Scottish managers accepted and perpetuated their self-identity as makers of the highest quality knitwear, they engaged in a cycle of enactment that strengthened this identity and simultaneously affected external stakeholders' perceptions of the same.

How can the inner workings of the Scottish wool industry help us understand Catholic higher education? In the enactment cycle described above, the ways that Scottish managers enacted their sense of their firms' identity had a direct and reciprocal impact on the business and markets in which they competed. As they projected a self-identity as makers of "high quality fully-fashioned classic knitwear" agents, shops, and consumers received that message, and it was reinforced by their purchasing habits. Managers thus had a direct and lasting impact on their firms' actual identity by their espousal of that identity.

This identity then influenced their subsequent sensemaking as they continued to reconsider and reestablish both their identity and competition within the wool market. If a university's Catholic identity is something that leaders take seriously, we should expect to see that identity have an effect on leader sensemaking of undocumented student access. In other words, if leaders espouse Catholic values for themselves as leaders and their universities as organizations, we should be able to identify some sort of relationship between those values and

the issue of undocumented student access (given the ways Catholic values speak to care for the poor, as noted above.)

The majority of leaders in my study reported that the Catholic character of their institutions predisposed them towards an advocacy stance for undocumented students; not a single leader reported that reflection upon Catholic character prompted them to oppose access. A president explained:

> The primary driver is our Catholic mission and when we made a statement about [access for undocumented students] and we said, 'Why are we doing it?' that was why we said we are doing it. It's the wonderful asset of a Catholic university. You can give a rationale for action that's rooted in our rich, ethical religious framework and if I were the president of [a public institution] I wouldn't be able to do that. I wouldn't be able to draw on that tradition. I wouldn't be able to find guidance for it. It would be strictly in terms of the interest of the state or country. So it both shapes our position and helps us to articulate it.

The president's comment should not signal that only Catholic institutions advocate for undocumented student access. On the contrary, many public and non-Catholic private institutions are doing as much or more than their Catholic peers to welcome undocumented students, and leaders in my study recognized this reality. Leaders at non-Catholic institutions, however, do not have recourse to religious or spiritual values in the same way they do at Catholic schools. A provost commented:

> And although many institutions would have some adherence to it—a sense of an ethical framework—that the degree to which a Catholic institution resonates with those

principles I think ought to be greater, that it ought to be something that we talk about more extensively [than do our secular peers.]

Some leaders interpreted their university's Catholic character not simply as a predisposition towards access policies but as a moral imperative to reach out. A president noted broadly that, "You know I think that Catholic colleges have to be a presence in our communities as standing up for the dignity of all human beings and standing up against oppression." A vice-president for mission explained that her university's Catholic character "compels us to work for justice in this area and to be servant leaders to this group of people." Note her use of the word "compels" when speaking about how Catholic character relates to the issue—from her perspective, the spirit that animates the institution carries with it a compelling mandate for action. This notion of an institution's character *compelling* action merits some deeper consideration—how does a school's heritage lead to an edict for action? We might find an answer to this question in the ways leaders spoke about their schools' Catholic character.

As they reflected on the Catholic character of their institutions, leaders repeatedly spoke about human dignity. Dignity is such a constitutive element of Catholic teaching that leaders mentioned it 34 times over the course of my 55 interviews. A vice-president for mission's first comments about the impact of the institution's Catholic character were, "It starts with fundamental things like the dignity of human life." A vice-president of enrollment management explained further, "Our Catholic faith compels us to put God and others—God-in-others—ahead of ourselves." This fundamental disposition towards human beings—that each person has an intrinsic dignity due to his or her creation by God—is the foundation for all Catholic teaching on how people should treat one another. Because of this shared understanding of the intrinsic dignity of the human person—even those leaders who did not call the concept "dignity" still

clearly referred to the basic concept—leaders described a Christian commitment to social justice. The word "justice" appeared in my study in excess of 120 times, evidence that it is a concept that resonates with the values of leaders in Catholic higher education.

We can speak broadly about the Catholic character of institutions, and we can also look more explicitly at some church teachings that guide the thought and action of the faithful. Catholic social teaching (CST) refers to the body of pastoral theology that teaches Catholics how to treat other human beings, especially the poor—though in CST *poverty* refers primarily to material and economic destitution, it can also refer to deficiencies of opportunity, position, or ability. According to the USCCB:

> Catholic social teaching is a central and essential element of our faith. Its roots are in the Hebrew prophets who announced God's special love for the poor and called God's people to a covenant of love and justice . . .. [It] is based on and inseparable from our understanding of human life and human dignity. Every human being is created in the image of God and redeemed by Jesus Christ, and therefore is invaluable and worthy of respect as a member of the human family. ("Catholic Social Teaching," 2014)

It is important to note this definition as we are coming to understand how Catholic character and identity play into leader sensemaking. In the definition cited here, we recognize the presence of the concepts love, justice, and human dignity. These elements are rooted in relationship with the God in whose image Catholics believe every human being is created, a relationship consummated in the person of Jesus Christ. As a result, all Catholic social teaching is essentially relational and focuses on ways Catholics should interact with and care for others. 36 of the 55 leaders in my study included the terms "justice" or "social justice" in their description of undocumented student access. 19 of the 55 named "human dignity" as a primary

way to frame the issue. Others referred to their school's historical commitment to serving the poor, reaching out to local immigrants, or providing a home for first generation students.

If we return to the example from the Scottish wool industry we may find some ways to understand the development and influence of the Catholic identity of higher education. As discussed above, Porac, Thomas, and Baden-Fuller (1989) showed that as they engage in competition with others in the wool market, Scottish producers differentiate themselves as purveyors of "high quality fully-fashioned classic knitwear" which appeals to a very narrow market segment, "the top 2-5 per cent of income groups in any given country" (p. 406.) The Scots formed their identity as the highest quality producers of woolen products based on several factors: their centuries-long tradition of craftsmanship; their reliance on highly skilled workers to create handcrafted products; and their sourcing of local, hand-dyed yarns from Scottish wool.

As producers enacted their self-identity in a process of social engagement with agents, shops, and consumers, they developed shared mental models which Porac, Thomas, and Baden-Fuller (1989) call the "Hawick mind" (p. 405), referring to the region of Scotland in which the wool industry is centered. As illustrated in Figure 4, even in the absence of empirical market research, "certain beliefs about competitor and market identity isolate a commonly perceived competitive arena for many of the Scottish managers" (p. 405). Hawick producers thus moved from shared beliefs about their identity into an enacted reality of that identity in the larger market. In other words, because Scottish producers shared beliefs about their identity and a common understanding of their place within the competitive market, they were able to enact a niche in the market for themselves. The authors explain, "The Scottish knitwear sector exists as it does today because the mental models and strategic choices of key decision-makers intertwine to create a stable set of transactions in the marketplace" (p. 412).

Though Catholic colleges and universities do not compete in markets in the same way as do wool purveyors, we can nevertheless find commonalities between the two examples. First, and most fundamentally, Catholic institutions are situated within the Catholic Church and draw inspiration and direction from its theological and historical heritage. Though this tradition of loving and serving one's fellow human beings—especially the poor—is manifested in different ways in different settings, it should be a constitutive element of the life of every person and institution in the Catholic Church.

Second, Catholic schools are heirs to traditions of educational service—most Catholic universities were initially formed to teach immigrants, first generation students, and the poor. Third, as the Scottish wool producers rely on a tradition of craftsmanship handed down over the centuries, each Catholic institution claims a distinctive educational charism. A university's charism refers to the unique spirit, tradition, or approach to education that inspires the way the school goes about the work of educating students. Charisms are often associated with the religious communities that founded various colleges and universities; examples of charisms that religious orders have imparted to schools would include the Vincentian dedication to serving the poor, the Benedictine commitment to community, and the Holy Cross sense of family and collaboration. On any campus that retains a lively connection to its founding charism there is a palpable sense of the history and traditions that breathe life into the institution and its educational mission.

Leaders drew some clear connections between their university's charisms and undocumented student access. A director of admissions explained, "The [religious] charism from [this] University calls for community, calls for adaptation, change, calls for a lot of

interfaith, intercultural, interracial gathering—the sense of community is felt very, very strongly." A provost likewise claimed:

> It's the [founding religious community]. We're [this university], okay, so [this university] is about service to the poor and the unfortunate and the disadvantaged. And so you're talking about something that is essentially in our DNA and so as an institution, community is in our mission statement because we're Catholic and [associated with our founding religious community].

Additionally, a vice-president for enrollment management stated:

> I think that the charism of the Sisters of [the founding community] relates a great deal to the institution. We base ourselves on a belief of the worth of an individual. We base ourselves on the belief that education is open with access and I think that as a Catholic institution that we believe that the worth of the individual is very strong, that the worth of education is very strong, that the spiritual development of the individual is strong and that we basically believe that as an institution that education is to be had for, really for all.

Over the course of 55 interviews at 12 schools, only one institution's leaders claimed to have not had historical experience with undocumented students, and those leaders still communicated an advocacy position for access. Though there was clearly a wide differential in the numbers of undocumented students on the campuses at which I interviewed—from zero known students on one campus to hundreds of students at others—at every institution there was a clear predilection for access for undocumented students. Many leaders cited a direct connection between their university's Catholic character and their belief in access for the undocumented.

Similar to how Hawick leaders constructed their identities, we can begin to understand the ways leaders construct the Catholic identity of their institutions by grounding them in

Catholic values. When leaders reflected on the core beliefs that are common to all Catholic institutions they almost unanimously expressed a commitment to human dignity and social justice. Espousal of the importance of dignity and justice leads, in part, to outreach to the poor, which includes the undocumented as a subset. As stakeholders outside of the university—in this case, undocumented students and their advocates—feel welcome to pursue education at Catholic universities, they come to recognize the religious values that lead to educational access.

After her university made a public statement welcoming undocumented students to apply, a director of financial aid claimed, "I have never heard from so many kids to say, 'You've made a dream come true, never even thought I could apply to the [university]—don't know I'm going to get in—but I knew before I couldn't even apply.'" Another director of financial aid spoke about the relationships he has cultivated with guidance counselors in a different state as they have worked together to create a pipeline for the undocumented to attend his university. At a recent scholarship night in the state a counselor approached the director: "And he comes up to me and says, you know all I got to say with [the university], you guys are the greatest story that can't be told."

We can see in these quotes evidence of the espoused Catholic values that lead to open admissions policies for the undocumented. As guidance counselors become familiar with the policies and the values that undergird them they begin communicating the educational opportunities to the undocumented students and their families. Finally, the students themselves begin identifying the Catholic universities as places they are welcome to apply and pursue higher education. This process leads to a strengthening of the connection between these Catholic values and the identities of the universities that espouse those values; leaders are thus constructing the

Catholic identity of their universities, reinforcing the connection between foundational religious values and contemporary policies on access.

Embodying identities. When they first encountered undocumented student access, the most common way leaders responded was with a protective instinct. Roughly a third of them recalled that their most immediate concern was for the well being of the students themselves. A director of financial aid stated simply, "[My] intuitive response is they're good human beings working hard, doing the best they can. They need every leg up." The leaders did not, however, unanimously describe themselves as initially advocating for access for these students. Instead, their first reaction was simply compassion for the young people who were struggling to avail themselves of higher education. A president described his initial response as: "great frustration because I saw all the promise and I knew what awaited them when they couldn't stay here."

Several leaders initially characterized undocumented students as similar to any other group striving for access to higher education: "they just fall in with all the rest of the students that we worry about." Other leaders described not knowing what they should—or could—do, but still feeling responsibility as leaders to reach out to these students. A vice-president of enrollment management explained, "My intuitive response was that, especially working at a Catholic institution, we had some sort of mission or obligation to reach out to those students who were marginalized or disenfranchised." Still others recognized the plight of undocumented students as evidence of the need for comprehensive immigration reform. A vice-president of enrollment management explained that his thinking had:

> evolved in terms of an understanding of kind of what the issues are on the national scale, what can we do in terms of the immigration reform and understanding of kind of the complexities there as that public policy discourse continues to evolve.

The second most common way leaders responded upon initially encountering undocumented student access was expressed as a concern for protecting the institution and the undocumented students themselves from risks. Undoubtedly reflecting the increasing legalization in higher education (Olivas, 1999), these leaders envision themselves as being responsible for protecting their institutions and their constituents. They were concerned with protecting not only their universities from legal trouble—"Were we breaking the law if we accepted such a student?"—but also the undocumented students and their families. A director of admissions explained:

> We would often worry . . . whether anything that we would do on behalf of these students would call attention to their status in a way that would get their family in trouble . . . because you wouldn't want to be the cause or the trigger that brought the authorities to realize that this student—and by extension her or his family—were not in the country legally.

Roughly 10% of the leaders in my study reported initial concerns about the inappropriateness of reaching out to undocumented students. A director of admissions stated simply, "Why would we go out of our way for students who were here or are in this country illegally?" A president described the dilemma that the educational investment would be wasted when the students were unable to gain employment upon graduation: "You know, we're in a way giving a kid a Cadillac in terms of this education but they can't get a driver's license [after graduation]." Multiple leaders described a similar apprehensiveness for overburdening students with debts they would not be able to pay back after graduation due to their inability to find gainful employment. Even in expressing their doubts about undocumented student access, the

leaders were communicating much the same message of concern for the students and for protecting them and the university from risk.

Each of these responses adopted by leaders upon initially encountering undocumented student access illustrates how they envision their identity as protectors—those who are ultimately responsible for the stewardship and protection of the human and financial resources in their institutions. They are not only responsible for being strategic in how they utilize institutional resources; they also sense a deeper moral responsibility to shield their people and their universities from unnecessary harm.

These examples illustrate the influence of identity on sensemaking. I am referring here not to organizational identity (Albert & Whetten, 1985), but to the person's own sense of identity as a leader which becomes a lens through which she makes sense of the world around her. Identity shapes sensemaking in several ways: the identity a leader possesses by virtue of holding an office with a title and responsibilities in an organization—such as president of a university— carries with it certain responsibilities and expectations that influence how the leader thinks and acts; the identity a leader imagines herself to have can also exert significant influence on sensemaking. That so many of the leaders in my study visualized their identity as protectors or stewards of the various resources in their institutions is evidence of how they envision their identities within their universities.

Leaders further described their awareness of the tension between their own personal and professional identities, especially regarding sensitive issues such as undocumented student access. In response to a question about what risks one faces in taking a position on the issue, a provost answered:

And we [have] people, faculty, that step out in front of political issues one way or the other and it does come back, it does affect the university. But as a provost, I don't think it's my kind of position to do that. If I ever become a 'private citizen' you would probably hear a lot [of how I feel about undocumented students], but otherwise, no.

Numerous leaders expressed a similar awareness that their personal beliefs must always be tempered by their professional identities. They acknowledged that their words and actions were symbolic because of the positions they hold within the university. This symbolic aspect of their leadership need not necessarily be understood as a limitation, as evidenced by the story of the Civil Rights Commission in my introduction—throughout history leaders in higher education have used their positional power to further causes both inside and outside of the academy. On an issue such as access for undocumented students, however, many leaders remain wary of taking too resolute a position—for or against access—for fear of putting their school or its stakeholders at risk.

This sensitivity to potential conflicts between personal and professional identities highlights another facet of the role of sensemaker identity, namely, multiplicity. Each person has multiple identities and different identities operate at different times. We might think of the surgeon who would never personally perform housekeeping duties in her clinic, yet after work returns home and vacuums her children's rooms. In one setting she is the CEO who is far too busy and important for menial tasks; in the other she is a parent performing daily chores. Numerous leaders described a similar tension between how they personally feel about undocumented students and what they believe is an appropriate public response from someone in their position in the university.

Leaders repeatedly expressed sensitivity to the possibility of alienating donors or alumni by taking too firm a stance—either for or against access. For universities with a history of serving the poor or first generation students, for instance, leaders described the risk of alienating supporters by *not* taking an advocacy position on the issue. According to the interviewees, the general sense is that the majority of major donors to Catholic higher education seem to be more conservative, however, meaning that advocacy for the undocumented tends to be the riskier position. The prospects of marginalizing alumni and donors did not necessarily keep leaders from advocating for undocumented students, however—it just made them more careful and strategic in how they addressed the issue.

Leaders also spoke about the risk of antagonizing faculty and staff. From the vocal tone and body language of the leaders who described the risk of antagonizing faculty and staff, they had not anticipated that they would experience the risk. A vice-president for enrollment management explained that, "Our African American faculty and staff feel that we pay too much attention to the Latino effort . . . and that if we were using these resources [differently] we could have a stronger African American population." Another vice-president of enrollment management expressed the same concern: "There's a lot of advocacy around, in racial ethnic subgroups, when you start crafting enrollment strategy." He continued to explain that, though undocumented students tend to be very economically poor, first generation students, efforts to welcome them and fund their education could often be interpreted as a "shift in strategies that we might have around the umbrella of diversity access." The initial pride these leaders felt about their university's efforts to reach out to such an economically poor demographic of student turned to caution, for fear of alienating and upsetting their own faculty and staff.

While identity plays a significant role in leader sensemaking, sensitivity for potentially alienating constituents also illustrates sensemaking's social character. Not only do leaders seek to embody their identities as stewards and protectors of those they lead, leaders also realize the importance of their relationships with a variety of stakeholders. Weick (1995) explains, "Conduct is contingent on the conduct of others, whether those others are imagined or physically present" (p. 39). Even if the presence of others is simply imagined, it nevertheless affects sensemaking, especially when the sensemaker is concerned about how the imagined others would react to the results of the sensemaking. Because of the lack of consensus about access for undocumented students, many leaders in higher education choose to tread softly on the issue of access. Most of the leaders in my study did not report having experienced any negative backlash as a result of their outreach to undocumented students, but concern for alienating constituents— especially donors—was fairly constant.

Managing commitment. Understanding the various pressures leaders face on an issue helps us develop a more complete picture of their sensemaking. In the second section of my protocol I asked leaders what pressures they felt to take a position on access for undocumented students. They reported experiencing pressure to support the institution's policy on access, to avoid upsetting donors and alumni, and to align their actions with their deeply held values. Very few leaders reported feeling significant pressure from outside of the university, that is, from people or organizations with no direct tie to the university, such as local politicians or civic groups.

Leaders in my study unanimously expressed an appreciation for the religious and mission-related values that animate their universities. Even those who were not initially inclined to advocate for access for undocumented students explained that espousal of Catholic

institutional values could only reasonably lead to advocacy for these students. I anticipated that these leaders who are grounding their thinking in deeply held religious values would be active and outspoken in reaching out to undocumented students. Quite the opposite is true—leaders instead described numerous behaviors that provide them a measure of anonymity and security in addressing this often-contentious issue.

One way for us to understand leader sensemaking in the midst of these various pressures is to examine the concept of commitment. According to Salancik (1977), "Three characteristics bind an individual to his acts and hence commit him. They are the visibility, the irrevocability, and the volitionality of the behavior" (p. 64). The more committed people are to their decisions the more they personally identify with those decisions and the harder they work to build meaning around them. When facing difficult decisions or contentious issues, therefore, leaders may be reticent to take public, irrevocable, and volitional positions that may bind them in the future. This can lead to a variety of different behaviors on the part of leaders who seek to insulate themselves from potential reproach.

Leaders in my study repeatedly described the potential negative fallout from alienating institutional stakeholders. A president explained, "I think the risks of taking any public position on an issue is that you're going to alienate a percentage of your alumni, that's the main risk." A director of financial aid described some negative feedback, "But I had equal alums who said, this is the worst thing that's ever happened here. How can we be providing access to students like this? We don't need to be doing this." For boundary-spanning leaders whose institutional responsibilities include the cultivation of relationships with both internal and external stakeholders, the fear of alienating those stakeholders is a constant companion, particularly surrounding issues on which people have deeply held convictions.

To mitigate some of the potential fallout from reaching out to undocumented students, leaders described several strategies for softening their commitment to a pro-access position. The primary tactic for avoiding the alienation of those opposed to access for undocumented students was to restrict conversations about the issue to private settings. The less public their commitment, the less leaders are personally bound to the issue. Leaders at several universities described exercising discretion when deciding with whom to discuss the issue openly. Many were reluctant to discuss the issue openly even with their board members; presidents spoke repeatedly of avoiding the topic with trustees and other stakeholders who would likely struggle with the university's access position. There was a similar unwillingness to openly broach the topic inside of universities—in several cases even important internal leaders such as directors of financial aid or admissions were left out of policy decisions, when their experience and perspective were arguably the most pertinent among top leaders.

Another method for lessening commitment is to address the irrevocability of the decision. Leaders in several institutions explained that their university officially had no policy regarding undocumented students. Some have devised ways to informally identify students from missing information on financial aid forms, while others have created generic scholarships that they award at the discretion of the financial aid director. Such tactics provide a measure of plausible deniability to leaders who may seek to avoid directly addressing the topic with those opposed to it, while still allowing the leaders to reach out to undocumented students. By exercising these and other tactics to lessen commitment, leaders were able to introduce some strategic ambiguity (Eisenberg, 1984) into their leadership surrounding the issue. This provides the flexibility to pursue a variety of policies and procedures while simultaneously providing some measure of political protection for leaders in their interactions with various stakeholders.

A third tactic for managing commitment is to lessen the impact of choice. Leaders described various efforts to provide cover for their decisions to admit undocumented students by aligning the decisions with religious values or church teachings. A president explained, "I will say, it gives me cover from the right-wing. It's hard to attack us if the bishops are so strong on this." By drawing clear parallels between deeply held mission values within the university, or by citing the support of the bishops for reaching out to immigrants, leaders can lessen the perception that the admission decision is simply a free-will act informed by personal values. Of course, aligning support for the undocumented with mission values also has the paradoxical effect of deepening commitment—if there is a clear relationship between Catholic institutional values and admitting undocumented students then leaders are also strengthening their institutional commitment by citing that relationship. For the leaders themselves, however, drawing parallels like these can also serve to manage their personal commitment to the decision.

Though leaders tended to be sensitive to the potential alienation of stakeholders, they also showed considerable resolve to not be limited in doing what they believe is right. In addition to the strategies mentioned above, leaders sought to be proactive in reaching out to important constituents who might not share a belief in access for undocumented students. A vice-president for mission explained, "Ultimately, it will be [the donors'] decision whether they want to stay engaged or not but yeah, we try very hard to educate and help people to understand why we're doing what we're doing."

For all of the fear of upsetting stakeholders by adopting an access policy, leaders also realized that silence on the issue upsets people too. A president reflected, "but on this one, to be frank, I think we alienate people as much by not doing something as by doing it." The issue of undocumented student access is thus an example of the complex diversity of a university

community; the word university comes from the Latin *universitas*, meaning 'the whole,' (University, 2014) and included in the whole are a vast array of different perspectives. Leaders thus face risks both by speaking out on access for undocumented students and by remaining silent.

Though sensitivity to pushback exerted significant pressure for leaders, internal expectations to get on board with the institution's decision to admit undocumented students was the most cited pressure in my study. A common response to the question, "What pressures do you feel to take a position on the issue" was phrased by a vice-president for mission, "If there's pressure I guess it comes from being part of that institution—if for some reason you were here and you didn't sort of resonate with those values—and yet, I'm not sure why you'd be here if you didn't." As this vice-president indicates, though leaders repeatedly expressed feeling pressure to support the institution's position on access they had relatively little trouble doing so, since the positions tend to resonate with the leaders' personal values. For this reason, many leaders who cited the internal expectation to support an access policy were reluctant to label the expectation "pressure."

In summary, leaders described three ways that Catholic identity manifested itself in regards to undocumented student access: constructing Catholic identity, embodying roles, and managing commitment. Present in each of these practices are various risks and pressures leaders face when confronting the issue; present also in each are various tactics for addressing the issue while safeguarding one's leadership and even one's university from harmful criticism. Reflecting on the ways leader identity influences their sensemaking, we can identify a clear impact of the religious and spiritual values that animate Catholic universities.

Social Contexts

In addition to considering the ways individual and organizational identity shape leader sensemaking, I explored the social contexts in which leaders engaged in sensemaking. Sensemaking is not a solitary endeavor but a process of social interaction between individuals and environments. Because undocumented student access remains open to a variety of opinions and interpretations, it provides a unique opportunity to examine the impact of social settings and contexts. My working hypothesis was that due to the volatile nature of the issue top university leaders would collaborate closely in addressing it.

To provide context for these findings, I will return to the sensemaking literature on social context. I then explore three ways social context shapes leader sensemaking of undocumented student access: the breakdown of communication, the establishment of "grassroots efforts" to support students, and the development of "heart to heart" relationships.

From a sensemaking perspective environments are understood as socially constructed phenomena that change in response to actions taken by individuals. This environmental responsiveness is known as enactment, referring to the idea that "organizations are more active in constructing the environments that impinge on them than is commonly recognized" (Weick, 1977, p. 267). By making judgments and decisions and by labeling previously unlabeled realities people enact new environments that did not exist before. This notion of the social construction of reality finds its roots in the work of Berger and Luckman (1967), who eschew the idea of a purely objective reality in favor of realities that are mediated by human perception and interaction.

"Sensemaking has been defined as the discursive process of constructing and interpreting the social world" (Gephart, 1993, p. 1485). Meaning is sought and understood as part of a

process of social interaction between individuals and environments, and both are constantly in flux. Not only do sensemakers interact with their environments, they also rely on the judgments of trusted friends and colleagues to make sense of situations. Maitlis (2005) explains, "Organizational sensemaking is a fundamentally social process: organization members interpret their environment in and through interactions with others, constructing accounts that allow them to comprehend the world and act collectively" (p. 21). By examining the social contexts and relationships of the leaders in my study, we can grow in our understanding of their sensemaking of undocumented student access.

Communication breakdown. At numerous institutions in my study, leaders reported a difference in approaches to undocumented student access between people at different levels of the institutional hierarchy. We might reasonably expect that top leaders in universities would generally be more strategic in their leadership and would be required in their roles to think more broadly about issues they face and the institutional values that apply. We would likewise reasonably expect that leaders who are lower in the hierarchical structure would generally be more task-oriented and would be required in their roles to enact institutional visions that are usually passed down from above. As we will see, my study highlighted not only these basic differences in approach to undocumented student access, but also a breakdown in communication between levels of hierarchical leadership that could signal the potential for trouble in university decision-making.

Selznick (1957) described the role of elites within an organization who "play a vital role in the creation and protection of values" (p. 14). He argued that elites need a certain amount of autonomy to maintain social values, but not so much autonomy that they become insulated from the larger organization. Kraatz, Ventresca, and Deng (2010) applied Selznick's concept of elites

in their study of university leadership structures. Their research showed the potential of enrollment management systems to undermine the authority of value elites such as financial aid and admissions officers, those often most responsible for actualizing a university's mission. While presidents and provosts are often the most visible promoters of institutional values, in the daily life of the university it is often the staffs of financial aid and admissions that bring those values to life.

Directors of admissions and financial aid are particularly important in actualizing mission values regarding access to higher education, especially in the more difficult cases. Leaders in my study, for instance, described roughly three types of applicants to their institutions. A vice-president of enrollment management classified the three groups:

> Now some students are easy to accept, maybe 25% of the kids we accept, no-brainer, they're fabulous, they're at the top of their class, they're brilliant, they fit [our university.] And there are some students who clearly can't make it here academically or the letters would say, 'It's not the kind of student who would flourish at [this university] because they won't buy into what [this university]'s all about.' And then there's a middle 50% of which you can take only a few that take all of our time.

If leaders are to remain faithful to institutional values regarding diversity—such as targeted breakdowns of the student body by ethnicity, gender, and SES (socio-economic status)—they must expend considerable energy filling out their incoming classes from the middle group of applicants.

While university trustees may be responsible for setting broad institutional diversity goals, and while presidents and provosts may speak about the importance of diversity in academic settings, it is the directors of financial aid and admission who have the power to

actualize that diversity by admitting and funding the right students. For an issue as volatile as undocumented student access, Selznick's (1957) model would require these directors—as value elites in their universities—to exercise the autonomy to freely speak their mind about undocumented students and how they fit into the diversity mix. In my study, however, the reality was more complicated.

Directors of financial aid and admissions repeatedly explained that they had not been included in any substantial way in the discussions leading to institutional policies or procedures for undocumented students. In some cases they had been completely left out of the conversations and the eventual procedure and policy decisions were simply handed down to them; in other cases they had been consulted only cursorily. A director of financial aid explained her frustration with not being directly involved:

> Along the way, I don't get to talk to any of the decision makers. I say, so I got this [dilemma], now what are we going to do with this? And all of my communications go up through a chain and then it comes down through a chain.

When I asked why they had not spoken up and shared their wisdom and perspective, various directors expressed concern for the potential backlash that could have resulted.

With the exception of several leaders whose long tenure at their institutions provided sufficient political capital to shield them from potential repercussions, the average director of financial aid or admissions was more reticent to engage top leaders in conversation about undocumented students. In my study the issue of undocumented student access was characterized by very sensitive political norms that only the intrepid would dare breach, even when more critical thinking and open conversation might improve the situation for the undocumented students and the universities.

One way to frame this communication breakdown is in terms of plausibility. In making sense of situations, we seek plausibility rather than accuracy, though we are doubtlessly pleased when the two coincide. For effective sensemaking, what is needed is:

> something that preserves plausibility and coherence, something that is reasonable and memorable, something that embodies past experience and expectations, something that resonates with other people, something that can be constructed retrospectively but also can be used prospectively, something that captures both feeling and thought, something that allows for embellishment to fit current oddities, something that is fun to construct. In short, what is necessary in sensemaking is a good story. (Weick, 1995, pp. 60-61)

In universities that have a predisposition to serving populations that might include the subset of undocumented students—first generation or low SES students, for example—presidents and provosts might feel pressure to adopt an advocacy stance. Even if the top leaders themselves favor the admission of undocumented students, their efforts to reach out to those students may ebb after they enact a relevant policy or procedure. This should not necessarily signal negligence or even animosity on the part of these leaders—they might justifiably believe that the biggest hurdle to admitting undocumented students is simply the lack of a policy from the main building. After they assist students to clear the biggest hurdle of all—gaining admission—top leaders may rationally presume that the existing support services in the university will care for the students and assure their success.

The reality is more complex. Undocumented students face numerous and unique challenges, including the possibility of being deported if their illegal status is revealed. Recent policies such as Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA; "Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals," 2014), which went into effect on June 15, 2012, have offered

undocumented students assistance in obtaining education, but many challenges remain.

Directors of financial aid reported that due to their ineligibility for federal financial aid, for

instance, undocumented students tend not to file the Free Application for Federal Student Aid

(FAFSA). A director of financial aid explained, "It's hard to gather data on undocumented

students because they're fearful to reveal themselves as such." Financial aid directors cited this

lack of financial data as a special challenge in admitting and funding undocumented students.

While the prototypical undocumented students are indigent youth of Latin American

descent, in reality they span various ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds. This does not,

however, mean that it is easy to determine their financial need. One financial aid director

described the difficulty of determining need without the FAFSA: "You'd see the family come in

and they have that brand new SUV out there in the parking lot and then you look at it, and they

have full aid eligibility because their taxable income wasn't there." Top leaders may have never

given thought to such practical matters associated with admitting these students, and they may

not have needed to. To placate the advocates of access, and in some cases to soothe the nagging

of their own consciences, what they need is not necessarily an accurate appraisal of the entire

issue, but merely a plausible approach. Plausibility may come through the pronouncement of an

access policy—publicly or, more often in the case of those whom I interviewed, privately—

regardless of whether the policy accurately addresses the full range of access issues.

Another way to understand the communication breakdown between university leaders is

to return to the concept of commitment. Weick (1995) explains that, "as commitment develops

around specific actions, these diverse cognitions become organized into those that support the

action, those that oppose it, and those that are irrelevant to it" (p. 159). Before a group has

committed to a position or direction, it is open to a much broader range of sensemaking inputs as

it gathers information. Once it has committed to a plan of action, however, the group prioritizes information that confirms the commitment and helps the group take steps to enact the decision. In my study we can identify such an organization of cognitions, indicated by the apprehension that financial aid and admissions directors feel for voicing the challenges they recognize in admitting and graduating undocumented students. Once top leaders have made the decision to admit undocumented students, they seem less willing to hear voices that oppose access or offer challenging critiques to the institutional policy.

If we accept Weick's (1995) description of commitment as a process of moving from broad openness to sensemaking inputs to a more restricted and focused process of selecting inputs that will help people enact their decisions, we might question why top decision makers in universities were not more open to input in the initial stages of sensemaking on undocumented student access. Why were directors of financial aid and admissions not consulted more regularly during the information gathering phase when leaders were rigorously asking, "What's the story here?"

The answer to that question is quite simple: leaders tended to be very concerned about potential risks associated with admitting these students. These concerns included not wanting "to jeopardize our tax exemption status," "a risk that some of your donors would be unhappy with it and would stop giving," and "alienating and antagonizing the faculty and staff." In short, leaders were so unsure of how immigration issues in the United States might play out that they were often unwilling to take public positions that could put their institutions in danger of any sort. As a result, they tended to carefully control the process of information gathering and sensemaking so that they could protect their universities. One of the results of this conscientiousness, however, was a general cessation of sensemaking in some universities at the

decision to admit students, to the detriment of policies and procedures that could help the students be more successful once they arrived on campus.

"Grassroots efforts.*"* For undocumented students, gaining admission to a university is just one of the challenges to pursuing higher education. These typically low-income, first generation students experience a range of potential barriers to success, each compounded by the students' lack of legal standing in this country. Aside from funding strategies, none of the universities in which I interviewed, however, provided any formal programs to explicitly support undocumented students after their admission. In the absence of formal support networks, numerous interviewees described the emergence of informal support networks led by top university leaders. A director of financial aid explained, "Very honestly, a number of us gave up waiting for the administration to do something and we've started grassroots efforts, so we are just creating our own structure." A vice-president for mission described the lengths she has gone to:

> I have never done anything illegal or against policy and procedure in the vein of
>
> supporting those who are undocumented. But I have lived the spirit of the law at times. I
>
> have been creative and resourceful—or ghetto—in my approach.

The most common leader in my sample to reach out to undocumented students after they arrived on campus was the financial aid director. A director of financial aid explained, "I'm probably the one person here who knows who all the undocumented students are, just because of my role here." In addition, whereas directors of admissions stop working with students after they are admitted, financial aid directors serve students every year until their graduation. Financial aid directors described a wide range of informal support practices, including personal and academic counseling, interventions with families, and even the storage of personal effects

during summer breaks when students left their universities for several months. In addition to the directors, vice-presidents of mission reported their involvement in informal support activities, generally owing to their personal relationships with undocumented students.

These leaders who are taking personal responsibility for supporting undocumented students are focusing on the extracted cues they perceive in their environments. Sensemakers rely on social cues to reduce *equivocality*, which can be understood as "the extent to which data is unclear and suggest multiple interpretations about the environment" (Daft & Weick, 1984, p. 291). Undocumented student access is currently characterized by significant equivocality. In universities that support access—either officially or often more privately—there remain stakeholders who oppose access, sometimes vehemently. In universities that lack a position on access—for or against—leaders may be unsure of how to serve undocumented students and they may be wary of potential consequences for broaching the issue at all.

To reduce the equivocality they experience around undocumented student access, leaders pay attention to various extracted cues from their environments. Leaders throughout my study reported perceiving many cues, including: formal and informal policies regarding access, charisms of the religious communities that founded the institutions, institutional mottos and mission statements, stories about immigration issues in the media, the lived experiences of undocumented students on their campuses, and many more.

The directors and vice-presidents who reported taking personal responsibility for creating and sustaining informal support networks paid special attention to several cues. First, as professionals who are devoted to helping students attend and succeed in Catholic higher education, these leaders were especially sensitive to the stories of the undocumented students themselves. They listened carefully to the way students described their situations and the

challenges they were facing. Second, they paid particular attention to the cues present in

interactions with students—the students' body language, their overall demeanor, and the way

they talked about their academic and social lives. Third, some leaders reported monitoring

undocumented student grades to that they could intervene if a student's classroom performance

began to deteriorate.

The experiences reported by directors of financial aid and admissions resonates with

Balogun and Johnson's (2004) study of strategic change in a privatized utility. They found that

"it is crucial to understand change recipients' reactions to change and the way they shape change

in the absence of senior management" (p. 523). In addition, the authors showed that "especially

in geographically dispersed organizations, senior managers became 'ghosts' in the sensemaking

of middle managers, rather than being active directors of change" (p. 524).

In other words, though senior managers may play a large role in initiating strategic

change, it is the work of middle managers to mediate that vision into actionable strategies.

Balogun and Johnson (2004) describe this work of middle managers as "negotiating processes"

(p. 540) by which they bridge the gap between institutional policy and the particularities of daily

life in the organization. Though universities are typically not geographically dispersed

organizations, they are loosely coupled systems (Weick, 1976) and thus share some of the same

characteristics. The reports of leaders in my study illustrate this obfuscation between levels of

the university hierarchy and highlight the significance of informal efforts by directors and vice-

presidents to reach out to undocumented students.

"Heart to heart." For leaders grappling with undocumented student access, perhaps

their most important relationships are with undocumented students themselves. Leaders

described the students in overwhelmingly positive terms, and explained how these "heart to

heart" encounters were the most influential data in their decision-making processes about educational access. Relationships with students were important not only for vocal proponents of access, but even for those who have struggled with the concept of undocumented student access.

Many of the participants in my study reported some level of discomfort with access for undocumented students at one point or another in their experience with the issue. Some simply found their time consumed with serving legal students and struggled to justify redirecting efforts to serve those who are illegally present in this country. Others were sensitive to making considerable sacrifices for people who will not be able to realize the full benefits of the education. As one vice-president for mission noted, "Why would you educate them if, when they're done, they can't even get employment here; they get an engineering degree from [us] and can't be an engineer?"

Regardless of their specific objections to access, one similarity amongst all leaders who expressed misgivings was their experience of the undocumented students themselves. Leaders unanimously described being impressed by the undocumented students with whom they had interacted. A president explained:

> I got to know many of these students individually and as I often end up saying, I became
>
> so enamored of and impressed with their courage that how could I not be courageous on
>
> their behalf . . . if they were working as hard as they were working to get into school . . ..

A vice-president of enrollment management described how her thinking changed as she got to know an undocumented student:

> So working with her kind of gave me a very different perspective and deeper
>
> understanding of some of the challenges that these kids are dealing with. Her story had a
>
> kind of happy ending. I was in a position where I could say, we are going to honor the

merit based scholarships and her mosque agreed to fundraise during services and we put her on a payment plan and she was able to find her way through [the university.] But it was really talking to a young person who had grown up here all her life and always assumed she was an American and found out at the last minute so to speak—but in the very early stage of her college career—that she wasn't, and the impact that was going to have on her. So it made me a big fan of the Dream Act.

Leaders in my study described undocumented students possessing the mettle to overcome significant obstacles in numerous parts of their lives. A director of financial aid claimed, "Some of these kids may be grittier than the other kids who are citizens. I suspect they're probably going to have more grit to them and be able to negotiate because they've been doing that in a lot of different ways." Leaders highlighted the students' performance in various disciplines and they noted that, unlike some other students on campus who can exhibit a sense of entitlement the undocumented students were usually very grateful for the opportunities extended to them.

Leaders further explained that their personal relationships with undocumented students had shaped their thinking about immigration policy. One president explained how undocumented student access began in her institution: "It did not start organizationally at a policy level, it started very individually, heart to heart, with students." A vice-president of enrollment management described the power of personal relationships with undocumented students:

There's people I've spoken to who were very negative about undocumented immigrants, but there's not a person that I've told the story about this young woman to that hasn't immediately kind of melted and wanted to know how they could chip in and help make her education successful because you could bring it down to a personal level.

I heard a similar story repeated throughout my study—those who have any sort of personal relationship with undocumented students inevitably become advocates—to some degree—for access. When I asked, "Has your thinking on this issue changed since you first encountered it," leaders repeatedly explained that they had grown more committed to access as they have gotten more involved in the lives of the students. None of the leaders I interviewed described growing in opposition to access over time—rather, experience with the issue and with the students themselves inevitably led to some degree of increased compassion and advocacy for undocumented students.

Leaders also reported that relationships with undocumented students relieved some of the pressure associated with advocating for access, including the pressure to not alienate donors and alumni. A vice-president of enrollment management explained her experience:

So when they talk about what they're doing in class, or when you see them again get leadership positions on campus, cheering when they walk across the stage at graduation, or knowing that they're admitted to graduate programs or professional schools, I think celebrating those successes for me is something that relieves some of that pressure.

The influence of personal relationships illustrates the essentially social character of organizational sensemaking. Organizational sensemaking is not a solitary undertaking—the modifier "organizational" suggests that it takes place within a group. Again, "Conduct is contingent on the conduct of others, whether those others are imagined or physically present" (Weick, 1995, p. 39). Leaders do not simply sit alone in hermetically sealed offices and make sense of what to do with undocumented students without considering the presence of others. As explained above, leaders are sensitive to the possibility of alienating donors and alumni by taking a public position on access—either for or against.

Within universities, leaders are sensitive to the political machinations of faculty and students who advocate for their own affinity groups in ways that can conflict with access for undocumented students. Directors of financial aid and admissions struggle with the difficulty of openly expressing concerns about access policies in their institutions. As illustrated in this section, perhaps the most important constituent group for leader sensemaking of this access issue is the undocumented students themselves. Regardless of what preconceptions leaders may have had when first encountering the issue, they report having a hard time not becoming advocates once they have gotten to know the students themselves.

Voices from the Outside

In each interview, I asked leaders to reflect on how organizations external to their universities may have affected their thinking about undocumented student access. Leaders reported hearing a large variety of voices and perspectives from a variety of different sources, including both civic and religious individuals and organizations. I asked specifically about the USCCB and the ACCU, to explore how national Catholic organizations are addressing the issue. Their responses help us understand how external perspectives speak to the issue for leaders, and help us understand the role of the broader, institutional Catholic Church.

Sensemaking is driven by the many cues actors perceive in their environments, including the voices of external organizations and individuals. As people continually monitor the ongoing stream of environmental cues around them, they extract cues and order them into accounts—or stories—that help them interpret and understand what is going on. This allows them to reduce the equivocality that results from the oversupply of possible meanings from which to choose (Daft & Weick, 1984).

In most instances, the continuous stream of environmental signals helps us make accurate sense of what is taking place. If, however, the cues are confusing, or even contradictory, to the reality of what is taking place, tragedy can ensue. Weick (1993) notes that such was the case for the firefighters who died in the Mann Gulch wildfire of 1949. The smokejumpers were repeatedly told that they were facing a "10:00 fire," (p. 635) which was meant to signal that they would have it under control by 10:00 am the next morning. As they were hiking toward the fire, the more experienced crewmembers casually ate supper while others stopped to snap pictures— these were cues that signaled to others in the group a low level of anxiousness.

When the foreman finally realized the fire had suddenly jumped the gulch and had become critically dangerous to the firefighters, he immediately shifted his mood from nonchalance to panic, which confused the smokejumpers. The cues they had perceived up to that point had reinforced the idea that the Mann Gulch fire was just a small blaze that would give them little trouble, while the reality was quite the opposite. Tragically contrary to their expectations based on the cues they were perceiving, only three of the 16 men survived the day. The perception and extraction of cues is a vitally important part of the sensemaking process.

In reflecting upon the environmental cues external to their universities, leaders described undocumented student access as a "hot topic" at conferences and within professional organizations, and they described the "noise" of the voices of national Catholic organizations.

"Hot topic." One of the primary responsibilities of top leaders—including university presidents and provosts—is environmental scanning to stay abreast of any issues that may affect their organizations. Among the various cues to which leaders remain attentive are the voices they hear. When I asked leaders about the voices and perspectives they were hearing related to undocumented student access, they identified 77 different sources. These ranged from

undocumented students themselves, student advocates on campus, and scholars promoting access to various members of the Catholic Church, members of the media, and politicians at both the state and federal levels. The perspectives included opposition to access for undocumented students—eight of the 77 reported sources were from those opposed to access. While some leaders reported not hearing much about the issue in recent months, for others it is clearly a "hot topic."

The type and amplitude of the voices leaders hear helps them discern the volatility of any given issue for their communities. Here we might reimagine the basic formula of sensemaking into, "How can I know what I think until I see what *others* say?" One vice-president for mission explained, "Our students are very articulate about the need for this. They've been a force here of change and thought around it." When voices such as these resonate with institutional values and missions, leaders reported that they were more willing to take action on the issue.

Directors of financial aid and admissions were much more likely than others higher in the institutional hierarchy to report the influence of professional associations and organizations on their sensemaking of the issue. Numerous directors listed professional conferences as a consistent source of information about undocumented student access. Even if they had not been hearing anything on their own campuses, they repeatedly reported hearing formal (conference presentations) and informal (discussions with others) chatter at conferences around the issue.

A vice-president for mission explained the frequency of encountering the issue at professional organizations: "We're talking about it at NASPA, at student affairs conferences, we're talking about this issue all over the place and it's a hot topic. Everybody's interested in it." A vice-president of enrollment management echoed the sentiment: "I think at the level of professional organizations, I probably couldn't go to a conference now without at least one or a

couple of sessions on being focused on working with undocumented students and helping them through the process." For financial aid and admissions directors, and to a lesser extent for vice presidents, professional organizations and conferences are important networking resources around the issue of access for undocumented students.

This identification with structures outside of their own institutions reminds us of Gouldner's (1957) distinction between cosmopolitan and local social identities. He describes cosmopolitans as "those low on loyalty to the employing organization, high on commitment to specialized role skills, and likely to use an outer reference group orientation" (p. 290). In higher education, professors are often called cosmopolitans because they tend to identify most with scholars and organizations outside of their institutions. Nothing in my study suggests that financial aid and admissions directors are "low on loyalty" to their own universities, but the directors did report specialized role skills and identification with external professional organizations at a higher rate than other university leaders in my study.

Noisy neighbors. My penultimate question asked how national Catholic organizations affected leader sensemaking. I expected that leaders would report that these and other non-Catholic organizations had played a significant role in shaping their thinking. Leaders described "a whole variety of voices which at some level translate into not distinct voices but noise which makes it a little bit more difficult to really hear [ourselves] clearly." This "noise" included the perspectives of both the ACCU and the USCCB, in addition to many others such as the Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities (AJCU), Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD), Catholic Relief Services (CRS), and social issue lobbies such as NETWORK.

Because of their respective roles in leading the U.S. Catholic Church and in organizing

Catholic higher education, I anticipated that the USCCB and the ACCU would be among the

most significant external voices on this issue for leaders. The USCCB has not officially

addressed access for undocumented students directly, but in recent years it has issued numerous

broader exhortations to care for the immigrant, the refugee, and the stranger in our midst. The

ACCU, on the other hand, has hosted presidential gatherings around the country with a strong

emphasis on undocumented access and has also addressed the issue at their Annual Meeting.

Contrary to my expectations, many interviewees reported that they were largely unaware

of these efforts, or that they had relatively little contact with the USCCB and the ACCU.

Though many leaders reported having been present at ACCU Annual Meetings in Washington,

D.C., few had any recollection of the association ever broaching the matter (in fact, the ACCU

has been fairly vocal in addressing the issue). Several leaders even grew somewhat indignant as

they described the organizations' seeming lack of action for undocumented students. A president

stated, "I mean frankly I think all those organizations are behind us in recognizing the issue," and

a provost claimed, "I don't see a lot of literature, or it's not top-fold, I mean it's kind of masked

in there. It hasn't done anything to sway me or it hasn't done anything to support my position,

so it hasn't influenced it." Comments such as these simultaneously communicated both leaders'

desire for greater attention from national organizations and their ignorance of the ways those

organizations are already addressing undocumented students access.

We might return here to our understanding of extracted cues to help explain this lack of

awareness of the voices of the USCCB and ACCU. Leaders in higher education are bombarded

with an overabundance of cues in their environments. Even if they sought to be aware of every

cue, their bounded rationality (March & Heath, 1994; Simon, 1955) would preclude it. There is

simply too much going on for leaders to make sense of it all—they must prioritize and give their attention to what they believe is most important and relevant at any given time. Starbuck and Milliken's (1988) concept of *noticing* describes the process of extracting cues. "Noticing involves a rudimentary form of sensemaking in that noticing requires distinguishing signal from noise, making crude separations of relevant from irrelevant" (p. 45).

Starbuck and Milliken (1988) base their understanding of noticing on the work of Helson (1964), who researched adaptation levels. His analysis of various psychological studies showed that "an individual's attitudes, values, ways of structuring his experiences, judgments of physical, aesthetic, and symbolic objects, intellectual and emotional behavior learning, and interpersonal relations all represent modes of adaptation to environmental and organismic forces" (p. 37). He distinguished between foreground and background stimuli and described the ways the two interrelate. As we experience broad environmental stimuli, he argued, those stimuli shape our expectations about how the world generally works and, in turn, influence how we notice and respond to future, more specific, foreground stimuli in our immediate experience.

According to Helson's (1964) work, our sensing of background stimuli over time can have a substantial impact on what we do not notice in the foreground. In other words, what we see or pay attention to over time sets a baseline and thereafter we only notice what departs from that adaptation level to which we have grown accustomed. Starbuck and Milliken (1988), however, explain that it can be difficult to notice changes in the background stimuli:

> Because simultaneous background stimuli strongly influence what people do not notice, people tend not to notice them. In particular, people tend to notice subtle changes in foreground stimuli while overlooking substantial changes in background stimuli, and so background stimuli may have to change dramatically to attract notice. (p. 48)

This might be a key to understanding why leaders were generally underwhelmed by the voice of the USCCB on undocumented student access. As noted above, the bishops issue teachings and statements on a wide variety of issues, from economic justice to stewardship of the environment to guidelines for what Catholics should eat on Fridays during Lent. The bishops have, in fact, made numerous broad statements about immigration issues in the United States, and have urged the passage of comprehensive immigration reform. They have not, however, made direct or bold statements about undocumented student access to higher education, nor have they directly implored leaders in Catholic higher education to take action.

If we adopt Helson's (1964) distinction between foreground and background stimuli, we might argue that the teachings of the USCCB over time constitute part of the background for immigration issues. Taking the idea of foreground and background a bit further, we might identify several different ways that leaders are hearing the voice of the USCCB. In my study, leaders can be generally categorized into three groups: those who are critical of the bishops, those who hear nothing from them, and those who find the bishops helpful on undocumented student access.

We might apply Helson's (1964) foreground/background distinction to the three groups to help us understand their sensemaking of these extracted cues:

1. The critical. Over time, this group of university leaders has grown disenchanted with the USCCB and the hierarchy of the Catholic Church. These leaders have grown frustrated with the bishops on issues such as healthcare—the bishops have been very vocal in criticizing several aspects of the Affordable Care Act, particularly the contraceptive mandate—and over time these background stimuli have congealed into a generally negative view (adaptation level) of the current leadership in the American church.

Leaders in my study described this disposition as: "The bishops—I think they're out of touch," and:

> I get upset with where the bishops are going on some of that because . . . I think
> we live in an incredibly complex society and there are no purists anymore [who
> remain perfectly faithful to every tenet of church teaching].

For these leaders whose baseline experience is generally critical of the bishops, it might take a bold and unexpected statement of support of undocumented students to shift their adaptation level and cause them to notice the bishops' advocacy; thus far the bishops have made no such bold statements.

2. The hear-nothings. This group of leaders is generally unaware of how the USCCB's positions might relate to undocumented students. Though leaders are certainly aware of Catholic teaching generally, over time the bishops' lack of bold or dramatic communication regarding access has caused leaders to look past the statements the bishops are making in the present—statements which certainly point towards advocacy for the undocumented and other immigrant groups. In other words, the voice of the USCCB on immigration has become generic noise from which leaders are often unable to distinguish helpful signals. When asked how the USCCB has influenced their understanding of undocumented students, these leaders often simply replied, "It hasn't."

3. The confederates. This last group of leaders views the bishops as vital allies in advocating for undocumented students. One president explained that alignment with the bishops on sensitive issues provides some helpful protection from constituent criticism. "It gives me cover from the right-wing. It's hard to attack us if the bishops are so strong on this." The adaptation level for these leaders casts the bishops as vocal allies of

undocumented students. As a result, confederates report having a generally positive regard for the background stimuli from the bishops and their teachings over time that predisposes them to recognize even the subtle teachings that appear in the foreground.

In each of these three cases, the history of background stimuli constitutes a level of noise from the bishops to which leaders have adapted. Because university leaders have adapted to the background noise over time, they now tend not to notice foreground stimuli that align too closely with that level of noise. In the case of the confederates, this does not cause significant problems, because they are already predisposed to receive the bishops' teachings positively. For the other two groups, however, unless the bishops dramatically change their position the leaders cannot distinguish it.

While leaders generally reported a limited understanding of the stance of the national bishops' conference on access for undocumented students, several reported a great appreciation for the work of their local bishops. Even some leaders who were generally critical of the larger USCCB credited their local bishops with being generous advocates for undocumented students. One president noted, "Really this is to me one of the moral issues of our time and I'm very appreciative that our archbishop has really spoken out on this." Leaders also recounted numerous stories of having collaborated with their local bishops on various projects surrounding immigration. Even for those leaders who fail to appreciate the fullness of the USCCB's position on access, positive personal relationships with their local bishops remain influential.

In this section I have primarily focused on the ways leaders described the influence of the USCCB, and I have not looked too deeply into the ways leaders described the impact of the ACCU. While I had originally included the ACCU alongside the USCCB in my question exploring the impact of national Catholic organizations, they actually play very different roles in

the church. Whereas the USCCB is a national conference of bishops that oversees all aspects of

Catholicism in the United States, the ACCU is rather an organizing body for top leaders in

Catholic universities. The ACCU, in fact, restricted its membership to presidents for many

years, only broadening its focus to include faculty and professional staff in the mid-1990s

("Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities (ACCU): An inventory of Association of

Catholic Colleges and Universities Records at The American Catholic History Research Center

and University Archives," 2014). The primary purpose of the organization is therefore to

provide various forums for top leaders from Catholic institutions to come together and share

perspectives and concerns. Chief among these forums is the Annual Meeting, held in

Washington, D.C. early in each calendar year.

My justification for including the ACCU alongside the USCCB in the protocol originally

stemmed from a series of presidential meetings the ACCU convened around the U.S. during

2012. Present at these meetings were top leaders of various Catholic colleges and universities

who came together explicitly to discuss access for undocumented students. The ACCU's role in

these meetings, however, was more facilitative—while the organization brought leaders together

to discuss access for undocumented students, it did not necessarily advocate for access in any

official way. Leaders in my study were generally aware of these meetings, and many had taken

part in them, but they reported that the ACCU as an organization had not directly influenced

their thinking on the issue.

Seeing What They Said

As I guided leaders through the interviews, one reaction to my questions occurred

repeatedly. Again and again leaders responded to my questions by pausing, looking upward, and

saying "Hmm, I have never thought about that," or something similar. After taking a moment—

or longer, in some cases—to collect their thoughts, they would then begin answering my question. In some cases, their body language and tone communicated that they were clearly unsure what they thought about the question I had posed and they were working out their thinking in the process of answering the question.

In these moments I was witnessing the basic formula of sensemaking in action: "How can I know what I think until I see what I say?" As they verbally worked through the responses to the questions that had initially seemed puzzling, leaders appeared to arrive at answers that, if not completely representative of their thinking, were at least responses they found reasonable. Becoming more confident as they spoke their way into understanding their thinking, the interviewees would often nod their heads and make more direct eye contact with me.

At the end of numerous interviews leaders thanked me for having invited them to meet, because it gave them the opportunity to learn more about this issue of undocumented student access. In most interviews I deviated very little from the form of the questions in the protocol (see Appendix A: Interview Protocol.) These leaders who felt they had grown in their understanding were communicating to me that it was in the act of seeing what they said that they came to know what they think. My data collection about sensemaking thus became an act of sensemaking itself for the leaders in my study. Further evidence that some interviewees grew in their understanding of what they think about undocumented students surfaced in a provost's comments at the end of the interview: "What has come to mind is that I feel pretty ignorant on the topic. It's just not something that I worry about, I don't think about, so that I'm going to go do a little bit of research."

Chapter 5: Story in Sensemaking

As noted above, this dissertation was designed for two parallel purposes. The primary research question considers how leaders in Catholic universities are making sense of undocumented student access. The secondary research question explores how stories may appear in the sensemaking of those leaders. This section reports the findings from the latter. Of the 1873 open codes I assigned in the preliminary analysis of my data, 286 identified stories that leaders used in their responses. Leaders seemed to use stories in roughly four ways in their responses to my questions, including the following general categories: 1) stories as evidence to support a claim; 2) stories as referents for contrast/comparison; 3) stories as anchors for past experience; and 4) stories of personal experience with the issue of undocumented student access which led to compassion or advocacy. Figure 5 illustrates the frequency of each type of story in my study.

Figure 5: Frequency of story types in open-coded leader responses
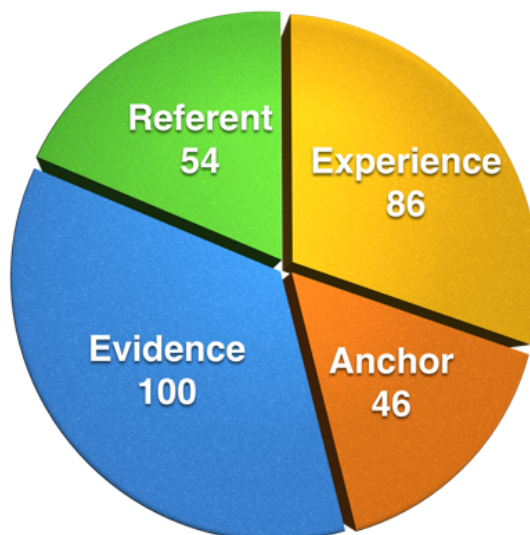
Stories in Sensemaking

As I described in my review of the literature above, in designing this study I anticipated that we would see evidence of a greater role of stories in sensemaking than we have previously recognized. The concept of story appears with some frequency in the sensemaking literature describing various aspects of how we make sense of our world. It even summarizes the entire process of sensemaking, as a quest for "answers to the question, 'What's the story?'" (Weick, 2008, para. 1). Though story is certainly not a novel concept in sensemaking research, few studies have explicitly examined how story functions in retrospective sensemaking. As I examined the ways leaders were making sense of undocumented student access I looked carefully for the presence of narrative forms in their responses.

The stories leaders told varied in length, shape, and type and leaders used them for various purposes. In my original research design, I sought to identify the presence of stories in sensemaking to help us grow in our understanding of how stories fit into retrospective sensemaking. The presence of the 286 stories in my data confirms my expectation that people use stories to organize their experience. By comparing the types of stories leaders used and by considering the ways in which they used them we can add to our understanding of how stories fit in sensemaking.

Though leaders in my study repeatedly used stories in their answers, they almost never explained what the stories were supposed to do or what they were meant to communicate. They presumably either believed the stories were communicative enough on their own and needed no clarification, or, perhaps they were not even explicitly conscious that they were using stories for specific purposes. If the latter is true we might wonder if their experiences are structured

narratively in their memories and it is natural to present them as stories when sharing them with others.

As illustrated in Figure 6, 51 of the 55 leaders in my study used one or more stories in their responses. The most stories used by any leader were 27 by a vice-president of enrollment management. The mean was 5.61 stories per each of the 51 leaders; the median was three stories. The mean of 5.61 is clearly skewed by the top three leaders who used 27, 21, and 19 stories, respectively, in their interview responses. If we remove those three cases from the sample, the mean occurrence of stories among the remaining 48 leaders is 4.56 stories each. The correlation between interview length (in minutes) and number of stories in responses is 0.5911, indicating only a very limited relationship between the two. Because I did not design my study to explore differences in the frequency of stories between leaders, I can offer only this descriptive analysis of the frequency data.

I should also note that the stories I identified in my dataset are not distinctly differentiated from one another—various stories could reasonably fit into more than one of the story categories into which I grouped them. I did not design this study to provide a deep analysis of the narrative elements of the stories leaders used in their sensemaking. Rather, the stories that follow serve to illustrate different ways leaders incorporated narrative forms into their sensemaking.

In the analysis to follow, I consider each of the four ways leaders used stories in their responses: 1) stories as evidence to support a claim; 2) stories as referents for contrast/comparison; 3) stories as anchors for past experience; and 4) stories of personal experience with the issue of undocumented student access which led to compassion or advocacy.

I then compare each of these cases with evidence from narrative theory to expand our understanding of how stories operate in leader sensemaking.

Figure 6: Number of stories in responses and duration of interviews (for the 51 leaders who used stories)
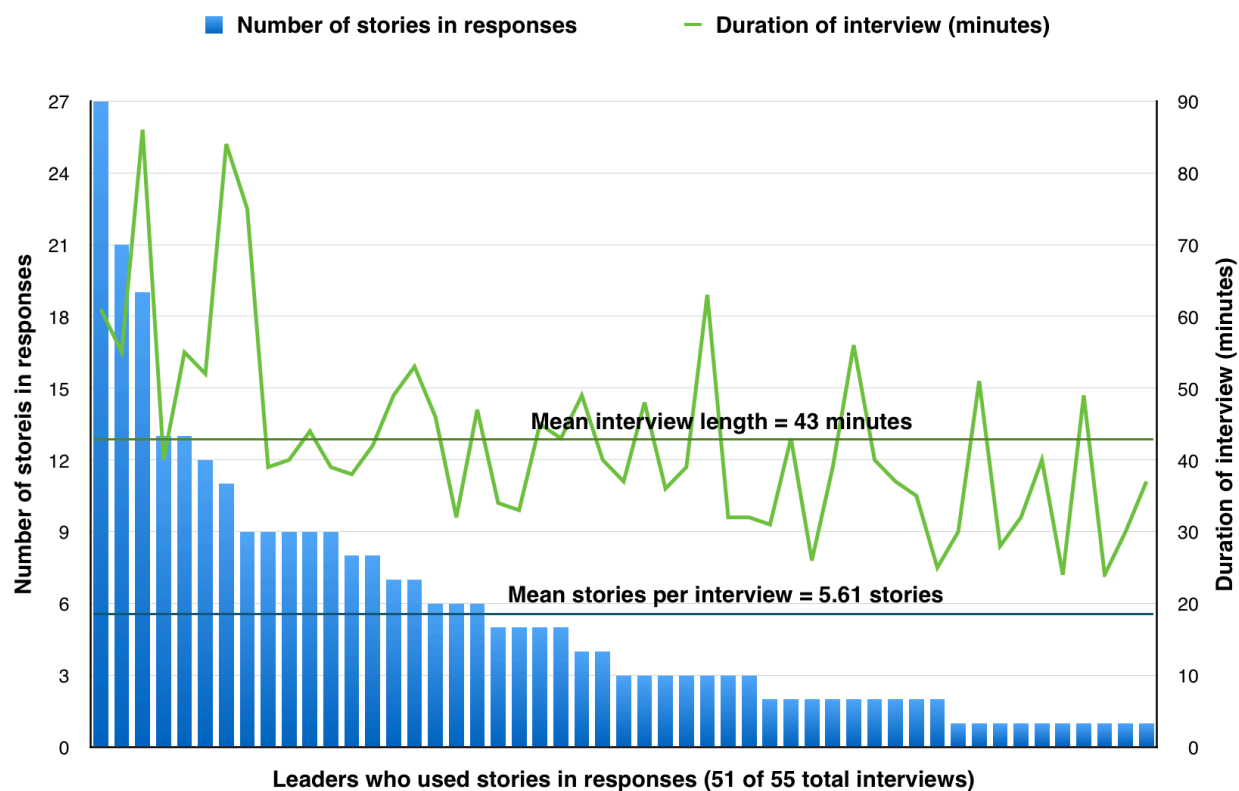
Story as Evidence to Support a Claim

The most common way story appeared in my study was as evidence to support a claim; 100 of the 286 instances of story fit into this category, accounting for roughly 35% of the total occurrences. These evidentiary stories were generally rich in details and tended to be longer than other stories leaders used. They appeared in a number of different narrative forms and served various discursive purposes. Some leaders used this story form alongside declarative statements; others simply skipped the declarative statements and told the stories in response to my questions, letting the stories stand on their own.

Gabriel (2004) explains how stories such as these fit into sensemaking:

> Facts rarely speak for themselves—and never in isolation. Narratives and stories enable us to make sense of them, to identify their significance, and even, when they are painful or unpleasant, to accept them and live with them. Narratives and stories feature prominently as sense-making devices, through which events are not merely infused with meaning, but constructed and contested. (p. 62)

From this perspective, stories enable people to make sense of facts in a way that both infuses them with meaning and allows for construction and contestation. This may be the reason stories appeared as evidence to support leader claims in my study. Rather than simply stating facts in response to my questions, numerous leaders added stories to infuse the facts with meaning and allow for the construction of meaning that supported their responses.

One of the primary ways leaders used stories as evidence was to provide background information to underpin their responses. Leaders repeatedly made statements in the interviews and immediately followed them up with stories that illustrated or supported the statements. A vice-president of enrollment management made the following statement about mission integration and offered the story as evidence to strengthen his claim:

> I think if you talk to anybody on my staff, actually talk to anybody at [the university], and this notion of the degree to which mission motivates us is pretty palpable.. . . I mean we have federal auditors come in here to audit our financial aid practice, as every institution does. And even they walk away saying, 'Your folks, they are the most articulate about how mission drives what they do of any place that we've ever visited.' These are the *auditors*—not necessarily known for being able to gauge that kind of thing—the nuance of those kind of those reflections and abstractions. But every time we've [been audited],

they've come back and said, 'It's remarkable the degree to which some sense of mission permeates the place.'

The story here illustrates and gives context to the assertion "the degree to which mission motivates us," but it also adds legitimacy to the statement by reporting the opinion of an external authority. Though we might not expect federal financial aid auditors to be expert arbiters of a university's mission integration, they nevertheless spend their time going from one campus to the next amassing experience which gives their opinion some credence.

Other stories go beyond simply providing context and serve as a sort of proof of the leader's claims. In response to my question, "How does Catholic social teaching speak to the issue," a president first made some general comments about his institution's welcoming atmosphere for peoples from all backgrounds:

> As Catholics, as believers, we consider ourselves more faith-based than we do Catholic, and in a holistic sense we believe if a Muslim or a Jew or a Baptist or whatever faith comes to [this university] that through [their] experience that they'll become better in their faith.

On its own, this statement is not particularly descriptive. It is likely that any of the leaders in my study could have made a similar claim about their own institutions—Catholic universities have a strong reputation of being places where people can practice their faith, regardless of which creed they profess. So we might ask ourselves, is this president simply espousing a virtue of welcome that characterizes every Catholic school, or is the lived experience at his university exceptionally welcoming?

The president seemed aware of the need for some evidence to strengthen his claim and immediately followed up with a story to fortify it:

We have a student—who's a good example—that's a Mormon, staunch Mormon. He's going to be getting his MBA from [this university], came here because of the faith-based nature of the university, was not able to graduate, not able to walk the stage when he got his BBA because of work commitment and other issues. And so he wrote me a letter two days ago and saying that he was really looking forward to December graduation because it would be the first time he could walk the stage, but he's not going to be able to because we graduate on a Sunday and they keep the Sabbath on Sunday. Typical university would respond—or university president would respond—by saying, 'Well, that's just the way it is and if you can't do it, well sorry.' We are responding and saying that, 'Well, if you wait till May, in May we have a Friday night graduation which is for our doctoral students in our professional schools but we would allow you to walk the stage then,' so he wouldn't be in conflict with the Sabbath, 'or we will give you a private ceremony and give you a diploma.' But that's the values that we attest to as a university—whether Catholic values, I don't know—but they're the values that we attest to.

The president's initial claim was generic enough to have been made by any leader in a Catholic university. With the addition of the story about the student the claim moves from a merely espoused value to an enacted value at this institution. The story thus serves as evidence that proves his point that this university is a welcoming place for people of all creeds.

Leaders also used stories as evidence to paint a fuller picture of the points they were making. A provost began talking about some of the racial aspects of access for undocumented students and the challenge of facing reluctance from university stakeholders. After making a number of generic statements about how university leaders had struggled to defend the

institution's outreach to undocumented students she offered the following story about relating the

issue to African American access half a century ago:

> We are now an HSI [Hispanic Serving Institution], and there has been some angst in
>
> some quarters about that, not from my perspective but there's been some angst in some
>
> quarters associated with [this university] about our being an HSI... . We've had some
>
> uncomfortable conversations right here at [this university] about that. They were
>
> uncomfortable for me and conversations in which I spoke up in a way that didn't always
>
> make other people in the room comfortable, because 50 years ago we would have been
>
> having that conversation about [African Americans], 'cause I remember hearing stories
>
> about how the first African American woman—'cause we used to be . . . an all-female
>
> institution—how several parents completely objected to the notion and how the president
>
> of the university said, 'Well you're probably at the wrong place. If you say your
>
> daughter cannot room with our first African American student, well you're probably at
>
> the wrong place.' Or a hundred years ago it might have been about some of the people
>
> who were sitting around that table because they were Irish or they were other things and
>
> even maybe . . . Jewish or whatever, there's a whole long list of people to queue up for
>
> that.

This story serves to personalize the provost's relatively vanilla description of the struggle to

welcome undocumented students. By following the statement with the story about the

uncomfortable conversations she turns a stale statement into a compelling episode that hearkens

back to the Civil Rights era and beyond.

Another way that stories serve as evidence to support claims is in their ability to arouse

empathy and inspire the listener. I asked a provost "Has your thinking on the issue changed

since you first encountered it" and he replied "No, absolutely not." He followed those three

words with a 602-word story about his relationship with a student that had attended his

institution some years ago. After describing how he had met the student and how their

relationship had developed over the years, his tone intensified and he became more deliberate,

leaning forward in his chair—it was clear that for him the story was reaching a climax. He

finished his answer to my question:

> This is the long way to get to this profound moment, which to me is the ultimate in
>
> making sense of supporting undocumented students. I said, [Michael—not his real
>
> name], 'Do your countrymen have hope?' And he said, 'Oh no, Dr. [Provost], my
>
> countrymen do not have hope.' And I said, 'Why are you different?' And he said,
>
> 'Education.' And I, naively, interrupted him—open mouth, insert foot—and said, 'Yes
>
> [Michael], education is power.' And he says, 'No, Dr. [Provost], education is freedom.'
>
> To this day, I get emotional about it because in that office, I cried. And it's true.
>
> Education frees us mentally, emotionally, spiritually, socioeconomically. I mean
>
> education is freedom and here are these undocumented students who just want a chance
>
> for freedom. How could that not fit with our mission? Say what you want to say—
>
> they're illegal aliens—I mean say all those things, but this country is a melting pot of
>
> diversity. It is—this country was founded on freedom and education is an avenue of
>
> freedom. And so if we can provide that path, we ought to do it.

The provost teared up in the retelling of the story because it was so clearly meaningful

and inspirational to him. He had answered my initial question in just three words, "No,

absolutely not." He had always been a proponent of access for undocumented students and

nothing that he has experienced has caused him to reject his advocacy stance. On the contrary,

the more experiences he has with students such as "Michael" the more resolute he becomes in his advocacy for them. The structure of the provost's answer to my question illustrates how stories can serve as evidence to support claims. Figure 7 illustrates how story operates in the provost's answer.

Figure 7: Story as evidence to support a claim
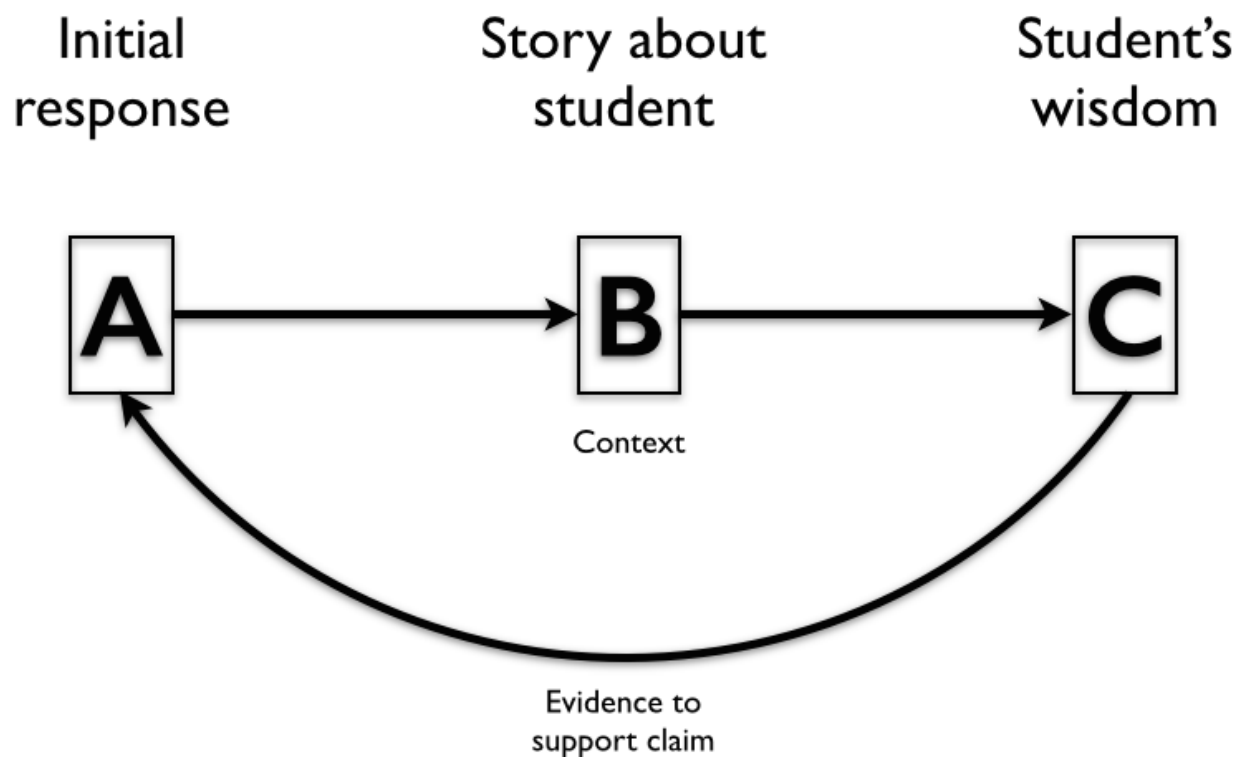
The provost's initial response to my question, "No, absolutely not," is indicated by A. The response is simple and straightforward. Note that he obviously interpreted my question about "change" in his thinking to mean, "having changed his mind," which would indicate that he has moved from advocacy to opposition. In asking the question I was not necessarily intending to ask if the person had changed his or her mind on access but simply to inquire how his or her thinking may have evolved over time.

In the context of the provost's larger answer to the question, it is clear that he was trying to communicate that: 1) "no" his position had not changed over time—he was and still remains an advocate for access; and 2) his advocacy had actually increased as he had gotten to know undocumented students, hence the use of the intensifier "absolutely." The clearest evidence of the intensification of his advocacy is embodied by his reaction to the student's wisdom, "Education is freedom," signified in Figure 7 by C. The provost presents the inspirational interaction with "Michael" as evidence to support his claim that he grows ever more committed to access for undocumented students. He cannot get to C, however, without first relating the context, indicated by B. He therefore tells me the more general story of coming to know "Michael" (B) so that he can arrive at the climax of the story, "Education is freedom" (C), which supports and fortifies his original claim, "No, absolutely not" (A).

Story and sensegiving. Stories are also useful for shaping another person's understanding. Scholars of sensemaking refer to this influencing of others' thinking as *sensegiving*, and we can identify numerous examples in my data of leaders using stories to shape the thinking of others or to help them understand what the leader was thinking or experiencing. Some leaders used stories to shape the thinking of various stakeholders in their universities, while others used them to influence my understanding as the interviewer.

Sensegiving can be understood as "the process of attempting to influence the sensemaking and meaning construction of others" (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991, p. 442). Sensegiving occurs when people move from "making sense of an ambiguous situation for [themselves] . . . [into] a mode of making sense for others, i.e. of supplying a workable interpretation to those who would be affected by [their] actions" (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991, p. 443). Leaders and managers often engage in sensegiving activities during periods of strategic

change as they work to influence the understanding of their constituents (Balogun, Jacobs,

Jarzabkowski, Mantere, & Vaara, 2014; Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Gioia & Thomas, 1996).

Rouleau (2005) explains, "Sensegiving is concerned with [manager] attempts to influence

the outcome, to communicate their thoughts about the change to others, and to gain their

support" (p. 1415). Leaders avail themselves of a variety of tools to "shape the sensemaking of

organizational members through the use of symbols, images, and other influence techniques"

(Maitlis & Christianson, 2014, p. 67). People use sensegiving to "influence each other through

persuasive or evocative language" (Maitlis & Lawrence, 2007, p. 57), and members throughout

organizations engage in sensegiving, including middle managers (Balogun & Johnson, 2004).

Leaders in my study were aware of the power of stories to win hearts and rally support

for a cause from otherwise staunch opponents. A provost described how he had used stories to

convince skeptics about the value of diversity in educational institutions. He explained:

> I mean at [the university where I used to work]—and this is something we don't face
>
> here—at [that university] you had a pretty politically conservative board of trustees. And
>
> I don't know that you had trustees who were so extreme [that they would say], 'Oh now
>
> this needs to be an enclave of white folks.' But it was a pretty conservative board of
>
> trustees. How do you sell a conservative board of trustees diversity? You help them
>
> understand that it helps all the white kids be better educated. I mean that's a little bit
>
> harsh but you kind of learn to do that.

In this quotation we have a story from a provost about a situation at a former institution.

He is telling a story about how he worked to influence the thinking of the trustees with whom he

worked, but we don't clearly see the presence of stories in his sensegiving with the trustees. Did

he actually use stories to influence their thinking, or did he rely simply on studies of diversity to support his claim?

If we go back to the provost's interview we find a further explanation of how he sought to influence trustee understanding of the value of diversity. He continues:

Take sort of the typical white student from [the area], male or female, and ask yourself what milieu of their fellow students and faculty—what's going to do the best job of preparing them for a life of success, perhaps leadership, in the 21st century? Well, the fact is it's not going to be going to college with all white kids from [the area]. That's not the world that most of them are going to live in. . . . There was a lot of emphasis on crafting a student body with all kinds of diversity including international students. I mean that was one of the pitches about growing the international population was it wasn't just to become a venue that was good for the international students. What does it do for your domestic students to have in class, to have in working groups, and to have in their dormitories and across the institution a richness of diversity?. . . There was actually a fairly strong belief that students of all types will receive a better education and preparation if they're put into an interesting milieu of people.

This quotation helps us understand how the provost used stories to influence the sensemaking of members of his former university. He painted a generic picture of the typical white student at the institution and asked decision makers at the university to imagine the kind of world into which the students would emerge after graduation. To best prepare them to serve as leaders in that modern world, the students would benefit from experience with a diverse group of peers.

The provost's argument challenges the trustees to think more broadly about the success of their own children—if they really are concerned about best preparing the students for a lifetime of success and leadership, that is best achieved by providing them opportunities to interact with the kinds of people that make up the society in which they will live, lead, and serve. By relating the story of a diverse educational environment to the personal circumstances and concerns of the conservative trustees the provost was able to introduce some equivocality into their sensemaking, thus influencing the way the trustees think about the value of diversity and its implications.

A vice-president for mission engaged in sensegiving by telling me a story to help me understand her perspective on how her university's Catholic character speaks to undocumented student access. She began by making a general comment and followed it with a story to shape my understanding of the relationship:

> I think we go back to the whole idea of the dignity of the human person, Catholic social teaching. You go back to the history of the Sisters [who founded the university]. I was actually [away] last week for a board meeting—it was very interesting—and they were going back to the history when we first went to [that city] to open a hospital. And the founder . . . said, 'Everybody's welcome at this hospital.' That meant Negroes or African Americans as well as whites, Caucasians, everything else. But the mayor of the city came after her, all the leading political figures approached her and said, 'You can't do that.' She said, 'No I *have* to do this because everybody's equal. When I die, I don't want to go to Heaven and meet my friend, who is African American, and I excluded him from my care.'

Numerous leaders in my study spoke about human dignity, which is a foundational concept in Catholic social teaching. The vice-president's story here is a form of sensegiving because it helps deepen my appreciation—as interviewer—of how the "dignity of the human person" is constitutive in the history of her university and her religious order. By following the more general comment with a specific and detailed story she is shaping the way I understand her experience.

A provost answered the same question about his university's Catholic character with a long story that described his personal experience of growing in his own Catholic faith. His own experience parallels his university's commitment to reaching out to all people, due to its commitment to being 'big C' Catholic—referring to the university's Roman Catholic affiliation—and to being 'little c' catholic—referring to being universal in welcoming all people. He described his experience:

> I encountered the spirituality aspects that were built into [my program of study] and it started me to thinking and that's when I discovered the little c.. . . What I found and what I find predominantly—which is one of the single most important things to me about Catholicism—is almost without exception wherever I go to Mass, people accept you for who you are. There is not this, 'Well let's see, do you have this [clothing] on? 'Did you check that [box on the membership survey]? It's just they just embrace you, you're part, you participate in communion. I mean it's the little c. It's just as Jesus said, 'Come as you are.' And that has been the thing that has been most meaningful to me in my journey and has helped me in my leadership is to—it's human nature to stereotype, it's human nature to have biases—but almost without exception the Catholic Church is universal in

their acceptance of people right where they're at. And so when an undocumented person comes to this campus, we need to live the little c.

The two senses of catholicity are important for all who work in Catholic higher education, and numerous leaders mentioned them in their responses. For this provost, however, his university's commitment to honoring both implications of catholicity is made real in his own personal experience of growing in his faith. By telling me the story of how he has grown in his own faith expression he concretizes and personalizes the distinction between the 'big C' and 'little c' and makes the distinction much clearer for me as interviewer.

Story as Referent for Comparison or Contrast

We can identify various levels of embeddedness for the stories that give our lives meaning. The personal stories that shape our lives are worked out in the larger arena of stories that are meaningful for the broader culture. Rappaport (2000) calls these "shared narratives":

> Shared narratives are the surrounding substance of our social world. The psychological sense of community can be indexed by its shared stories. People who hold common stories about where they come from, who they are, and who they will, or want to be, are a community. A community cannot be a community without a shared narrative. Shared narratives are the currents in which our individual lives move down the river of time. They are resources that empower or impede. They give our lives direction and meaning. (p. 6)

Shared narratives are resources for making sense of our own lives and the ways we relate to the various communities and groups of which we are members. They appeared in my study in a variety of ways, especially as leaders sought referents for comparison and contrast in their sensemaking.

Canonical stories are stories that have been overlearned and retold so often that they claim a unique meaning for a person or group. Mandler and Johnson (1977) explain how canonical stories operate: "A canonical story need not specify the causal connections between nodes in the surface structure; these are automatically supplied by the listener" (p. 131). Because canonical stories are so well known and their meaning so well shared, all members of a group can use them as tools for sensemaking and the creation and refinement of other shared narratives.

While some stories are canonical for very large groups, such as all American citizens—*In fourteen hundred ninety-two, Columbus sailed the ocean blue*, for example—other stories are canonical for one person or for a relatively small group such as an immediate or extended family. An example of such a restricted canonical story might be the tale of the hardships one's great-grandparents experienced in their emigration to the United States. Like other canonical stories, these shared narratives have been retold so many times that they embody values for the person or group. In addition, they can serve as rich building blocks for the person or group's identity and are frequently referenced in people's ongoing sensemaking.

Rappaport (2000) describes the different scopes of canonical stories: "A *community* (setting) *narrative* is a story common among a group of people. It may be shared through social interaction, texts, pictures, performances, and rituals. These narratives tell the members important things about themselves" (p. 4). This contrasts with "*dominant cultural narratives* [which] are overlearned stories communicated through mass media or other large social and cultural institutions and social networks. The dominant cultural narratives are known by most people in a culture" (p. 4).

Not only are dominant cultural narratives well known by members of a group, they also share a very useful characteristic. Rappaport (2000) notes, "They are often communicated in

shorthand, as stereotypes (welfare mother, college student, housing project resident) that conjure up well practiced images and stories" (pp. 4-5). Salzer (2000) conducted a study of narratives written by college students about occupants of public housing and found that the students often used negative stereotypes to refer to cultural narratives present in the lives of those about whom they wrote. So influential are these stereotypes, argues Salzer, "It is plausible that the belief that public housing residents tend to make poor decisions will undermine the implementation of policies aimed at increasing resident participation in the decisions made about the communities in which they live" (p. 135).

This idea of narrative shorthand or stereotypes—which is inherent in the ways canonical stories operate for sensemakers—is key for understanding how story fits in retrospective sensemaking. As we perceive the world around us with our senses, we structure events narratively either by referring to canonical stories or elaborating to account for the noncanonical. The more easily we have access to dominant cultural or community narratives—which generally happens as the stories are overlearned and repeatedly retold among group members—the more powerful they serve as tools for organizing our experience.

Fans of the University of Michigan football team, for instance, have recourse to a range of narrative shorthand that finds its way into daily sensemaking. It would not be unthinkable even for a professor at U.M. to inspire his research assistants by emphatically—and rather frequently—repeating "The Team, The Team, The Team," in reference to coach Bo Schembechler's famous 1983 speech to his team ("Bo Schembechler's legendary "The Team" speech still rings true today in high school football," 2014). So often has the story of that famous speech been told among U.M. fans that it has ascended to the status of community narrative and can teach and inspire with the simple threefold repetition of two words. Listeners who are

familiar with the canonical story of Schembechler's speech quickly recognize his admonition to focus on what can be accomplished by working together toward a common goal.

Such a conceptualization of stories that are especially meaningful for groups of people is not new, even in higher education. Burton Clark's (1972) famous essay, "The Organizational Saga in Higher Education" describes how these community narratives develop within colleges and universities. Clark explains, "Organizational saga refers to a unified set of publicly expressed beliefs about the formal group that (a) is rooted in history, (b) claims unique accomplishment, and (c) is held with sentiment by the group" (p. 179). Organizational sagas, however, tend to be more epic in scope than the community narratives described by Rappaport (2000). They tend to be heroic tales of inspirational people who accomplished something lasting and distinctive. As members of the group come to identify with the saga, the story "becomes a foundation for trust and for extreme loyalty" (p. 183).

Robinson and Hawpe (1986) describe how this type of story evolves:

Sometimes an event is so salient that it becomes a reference point for entire classes of experience. In these instances the originating incident is schematized and abstracted to form a prototype. Prototypes straddle the upper ranges of the structural continuum: they are more general than analogues, but not so generalizable as to become rules. (p. 120)

Whether we call them sagas or prototypes they operate in much the same way—as referents that organizational members use to relate newer experiences to meaningful events from the past.

Leaders in my study used these forms of shared narratives in various ways as they made sense of undocumented student access. 54 of the 286 stories that appeared in my study fit this genre, as leaders used stories as referents for comparison or contrast in their responses. Leaders referred to community narratives such as the stories of the founding of their institutions, and they

referred to more dominant cultural narratives such as the history of Catholic universities reaching out to the poor and disenfranchised. They referred to generic or stereotypical stories and story fragments about working with students—stories that often served as shorthand in their sensemaking—and they referred to novel stories against which to compare or contrast their own sensemaking. Several leaders also made use of counterfactuals—describing alternate potential realities—as referents for making sense of undocumented student access.

Community narratives. In their grappling with access for undocumented students, six leaders turned to important community narratives to aid their sensemaking. As explained above, community narratives are stories "common among a group of people.. . . [That] tell the members important things about themselves" (Rappaport, 2000, p. 4). To describe how her institution's Catholic character relates to undocumented student access, a vice-president of enrollment management referred to the experience of the priest who founded the religious community that would eventually establish her university:

> I would really go back to the time of [the founder] in the French Revolution and think
> about [him] living in exile and so could in some way somebody draw a parallel with
> [him] and somebody who's undocumented . . . .If [he] or the others could come and
> speak to us now, I would think that they would say, 'But these are all God's children and
> we should take care of them and have them as part of our lay communities and continue
> to spread God's word and help people explore their faith through doing this.'

A vice-president for mission at another institution shared a story that similarly related the founder's charism to undocumented students. This laywoman explained:

> For our particular charism as a [Catholic] institution, our founder was an immigrant
> himself. He was an immigrant from Italy and he had a remarkable sensitivity to the

diversity of culture that he experienced in his day, what was then the frontier. So . . . in

our formation programs with our faculty we often point to an educational program that he

developed for native peoples that was in their own language, that was intended for not

only the young—the children—but for the parents, and his insistence that their culture be

respected. So I think in the tradition of our founder is also the responsibility for us to be

as sensitive to the people who are threatened and at risk and to whom our present day

government takes a punitive stance.

This leader describes how the story of the founder's sensitivity to diversity is used in the

ongoing formation of faculty in the university. My protocol did not contain measures to explore

the salience of this story as a community narrative throughout the institution. The fact that the

vice-president included the story to elaborate on her institution's Catholic character, however,

and the fact that they use the story in the ongoing formation of university constituents suggests

that it does function as a community narrative at some level.

Dominant cultural narratives. In reflecting upon the ways that their universities'

Catholic character speaks to undocumented student access, numerous leaders referred to the

dominant cultural narrative of Catholicism in the United States and throughout the world. The

stories they told were generally broad and expressed one or more virtues that are foundational in

Catholicism. Diversity was one such characteristic that leaders identified in the universal church

and that they believed resonated with how we should consider dealing with the undocumented.

A president explained:

We're more naturally an international university because of our Catholicity. I mean you

argue that the Catholic Church is, as they say often, the most diverse—nationally,

culturally, ethnically—body in the world today. I mean there's no more diverse. And so

it's sort of part of who we are to feel that people of different nationalities or different

ethnic groups are part of us and so that goes to the issue of undocumented students, it

goes to the issue of diversity, it goes to the issue of internationality, all that's part of who

we are. I mean I see this as a sort of rich fabric. These aren't distinct areas but they're

all interwoven with one another, that nobody's a stranger, that all are part of the Body of

Christ. All human beings we live in solidarity with and so it grows naturally for who we

are.

Leaders also referred to dominant cultural narratives at the national level, as opposed to

the worldwide Catholic Church. A president described his initial response when first hearing of

the issue of undocumented student access:

I think my intuitive response was more to sympathize and to side with my colleague who

was speaking to me that, of course, the Catholic universities—my understanding in the

United States—were founded in significant part to educate immigrants. And so it struck

me that if we were talking about the role of a Catholic university [on] this issue we were

probably more on the side of the angels to be enrolling undocumented students than not.

As explained by Gleason (2008), the historical narrative of Catholic higher education in

the United States is very broad and takes many different shapes. Most colleges and universities

were founded by religious orders—or taken over by religious orders shortly after their

founding—and most of the orders had been founded outside of the United States. The religious

sisters, brothers, and priests who emigrated to the U.S. came chiefly to serve the immigrant

populations of Catholics from various countries that had come to the New World. Catholic

higher education did not exist solely to serve Catholics, however—some schools were founded

by religious orders committed to serving the poor of any creed (or none whatsoever.) Regardless

of each school's specific charism, nearly all Catholic colleges and universities have a history of serving immigrant populations.

Leaders spoke about the Catholic Church's commitment to serving the poor and the suffering as a lens through which to understand access for undocumented students. A vice-president of enrollment management explained:

I'm very proud of our Catholic Church because I think in every case that's ever been documented—and *ever* is a lot, and that's an absolutism—when something happens in our world, you ask Democrats and you ask Republicans, who steps up to the plate? Historically, financially, humanistically in terms of power and service and whatnot, it's been the Catholic Church, every disaster. And I hear that from lay people, from ardent Baptists, probably some Atheists and everything else who work at a United Way or work in this corporate arena and will say, 'You gotta give it to those Catholics, man. You guys are on your game when it comes to a crisis, you're right there.' And we've always been focused on the Rocky Balboa's, those underprivileged, underserved, disadvantaged human beings who want to give them their title shot, give them their dream, give them an opportunity.

The narrative quoted here seems incomplete on its face and implies specific details and some of the elements that constitute a story. The vice-president's assertion nevertheless broadly describes a story of a values-driven response to crisis on the part of Catholics. That groundedness becomes not only a source of pride for this leader, but an inspiration that helps him understand how we should reach out to the undocumented. A director of financial aid echoed a similar sentiment:

I mean the Catholics have been rescuing people—people who don't fit into everything—and working with them for generations. So I think Catholicism has that history; so to me it's very logical why they would not have a terrible bias against people who are here and have gotten in the wrong way.

Stereotypical story fragments. A narrative form that appeared in numerous interviews was what we might call a generic or stereotypical story. These are stories not of specific incidents but of more general episodes, and the leaders usually left some of the details unspoken and implied. An example of this story form comes from a vice-president for mission who was describing why she cares about undocumented student access. She explained:

And that's what keeps it real for me—not the politics, not the government, not anything else—it's that individual that comes into this door and says, 'I don't have any money anymore, I've done all that I can do, and I can't ask for federal monies 'cause I'm undocumented. Can you help me?' That I will respond to. The other stuff I think is just too vast for me sometimes, honestly, it really is, and too complicated.

This story describes the kind of interaction the vice-president has with undocumented students—not any specific student at any specific time or place, but the typical encounter she has with students seeking her intercession. We recognize some of the usual story elements here: a protagonist (the student), a beginning (the student comes to the door), a middle (the student is worried about lack of funding and asks for assistance), and additional characters (the vice-president who may be able to offer assistance, the federal government which is unwilling to help). What we don't see here—at least not directly—is an ending. The ending we must infer, based on the vice-president's initial framing of the story. Because of how she set up the story, as

the sort of interaction that "keeps [undocumented student access] real for her," we can infer that she is motivated by these encounters with students to take action on their behalf.

It is important not to overlook how story fragments such as the one cited above operate in leader sensemaking. When she thinks about this issue that is complex, political, and difficult to solve it is the stories of interactions with the students themselves that offer her a way to understand it. She does not feel she has the tools or the influence to personally resolve the conundrum of access for undocumented students, but she is moved by her personal interactions to advocate on behalf of the people who knock at her door. For this particular administrator, the stereotypical story of the student at her door resonates with her own personal and family experience. She explains the context for the previous stereotypical story:

Because I have a position of leadership in this institution, it doesn't erase my experiences growing up in a Hispanic family. It doesn't erase my grandfather coming from across the border; it doesn't erase the struggles. I mean I'm very clear, my memory's strong, and it's good, but I think those memories, if it wasn't for those memories, I'm not sure if I would be in a position to bring about change. And I do change one at a time because that's how it was done when I was growing up. It was one at a time. If we look at the global problem, if we look at immigration in the country, I hear people say, it's just too big, too vast, too complicated, what can one person do? And I always come back with, well let's see if we can help this individual get through the cracks . . . let's see if this individual can walk across a stage. She needs two more years; she needs three more years. How are we going to walk with this individual till they can finish?

The vice-president's own identity as a woman of Hispanic descent and her own stories of family struggles with immigration issues predispose her to pay attention to the individuals at her

door. Though she is aware of the broader social cues that pertain to access for undocumented students (federal, state, and institutional policy, for instance) she more readily recognizes and extracts cues associated with individuals who need assistance. When she is spurred to reflect upon how she personally engages undocumented student access she relates the issue to meaningful events in her own family history and describes the contemporary issue with the generic story of the student at her door.

Other leaders used stereotypical stories in a similar fashion. A director of admissions described the reason for his compassion for undocumented students:

> And so it becomes interesting because these [undocumented] adults have children. What do you do with your children? Put yourself in their situation as, 'My life is hard, I have to wake up at 5 a.m. and I have to do physical labor all the way till the sun goes down, but my child has to go to school. I want them to have a better life, not the life that I'm having right now, that's why I came to this country.'

For this director, the stereotypical parent of an undocumented student is an adult motivated to work from dawn to dusk in order to provide a better life for his or her children. The director has distilled numerous encounters with parents of students into one stereotypical account or characterization of a concerned, devoted, hardworking person who, despite his or her best efforts, still needs assistance to help his or her children achieve something more. These multiple encounters are distilled and stored in the director's experience as a single story that he tells himself and others to create empathy.

For both of the leaders cited here, and for the many others who similarly used generic stories in their responses, the issue of undocumented student access has a face. That face is an amalgamation of the many faces of people whom the leaders have encountered who find

themselves in this situation. But that composite image is not simply a face, as if it were a picture

of an anonymous undocumented person. The face also has a story and that story is likewise a

composite of the many stories of undocumented people with whom each leader has interacted.

Because the story represents numerous experiences from numerous people it is necessarily

generic and lacks specific details. Instead of restricting its utility as a story, however, the lack of

specificity allows the generic story to represent the experience of numerous undocumented

people. The sensemaker, in this case, does not need one detailed story of how one

undocumented student faced challenges in her life, but rather a generic or stereotypical story that

symbolically represents the experience of numerous students.

Novel stories. Some leaders used novel stories—which were unrelated to undocumented

students or even their own university leadership—as referents for comparison. A provost was

explaining to me the relationship between America's rich diversity and how we should treat

undocumented students. He chose to tell me a story about some friends of his to illustrate the

diversity of the United States. He recounted:

> We have friends visiting from Australia right now . . . and [one of them] said something
>
> that was so simplistically profound the other night. He said, 'You know in Australia . . .
>
> even though we have New South Wales . . . Australians are Australians. We're pretty
>
> much the same. As large as our country is, we're pretty much the same whether you're in
>
> Perth or you're in Sydney or you're in Melbourne or Brisbane.' And he said, 'But as
>
> we've traveled around'—and they love to travel—'the United States,' he said, 'this
>
> actually is the United States of America.' He said, 'Virtually every state, the people in
>
> this state don't act like the people in this state or in this state or in this state or in that
>
> state. There's nuances,' and he said, 'but you're united.' I mean that was profound to

me. And it's so true. So I think that for me, that's the hallmark of who we are is

recognizing the underpinnings of and the foundation of what this country was founded on

and built on.

This provost could have simply referred to the notion of U.S. Diversity—the image of the

'melting pot' or an equivalent—to make his point. Instead, he chose to tell me this story about

the experience of friends visiting from another country. Why did he choose to use such a story

to act as a referent for comparison? Perhaps the story was in his consciousness because the

friends were visiting at the time of the interview. We can also read in the story itself how

impressed he was with his friends' insight about the profound diversity in the United States. The

juxtaposition of the diversity of the American people to the diversity of the Australian people

provides a clear illustration of the point he wanted to make.

In addition, by putting the story on the lips of his Australian friend, the provost has

recourse to increased authority—it is not merely he himself who is judging the diversity of the

American society, but a foreigner from a country that is roughly equivalent in land mass but

inferior in the diversity of its citizens, at least according to the speaker. The story of the

interaction with his foreign friend thus serves as a helpful referent for the provost in his

sensemaking about undocumented student access.

Counterfactuals. According to Dannenberg (2008), "Counterfactual thought

experiments about what might have been constitute a key form of human consciousness" (p. 3).

This narrative form often appears in fiction, such as when a character imagines a different reality

for herself, had she made different choices in the past. While in literature counterfactuals may be

quite elaborate, describing alternate worlds in great detail that allow characters to transcend time

and space, leaders in my study used them as brief stories against which to contrast the current

state of affairs.

A prime example is the response of a financial aid director to my question about her

intuitive response to undocumented student access. She replied:

> Good. I'm glad that they do that; it's probably wrong but I'm glad they're in school
>
> somewhere. I don't want uneducated, undocumented people in the country. To me, this
>
> whole issue of 12 million, approximately, people in this country—what if they didn't
>
> want to be citizens? What if they wanted to be *insurgents*? I mean they want to be
>
> citizens. We should take the opportunity to allow them to become citizens so they can
>
> become taxpayers and be part of the system. We're lucky they want to be citizens. They
>
> could be in here wanting to do evil and they aren't. So I think that it's stupid not to find a
>
> way to give them a way of becoming citizens.

This director offered the counterfactual worldview of a militant undocumented class to

describe how fortunate we are that the millions of undocumented people in our country want to

be productive members of society. It is much easier for her to be compassionate to these people

when she considers "what might have been" in an alternate world. The counterfactual story here

is very limited—she does not go to great length to develop the consequences of the alternate

reality. The simple consideration of an alternate potential reality is enough for her to frame how

she views undocumented students.

Another leader referred cursorily to counterfactuals in his own story to illustrate how his

education shaped the way he views undocumented students:

> My education taught me that what if I'd been an English major or a French major, would
>
> I have the understanding that I had as an econ. major? So that's not really Catholic social

teaching but what did I choose to learn in economics when I was here, I learned about Latin America, Third World, that's why I chose not to go work for the World Bank. When I graduated, when I started, I thought I might go work for the World Bank, by my senior year I realized they were part of the problem, not part of the solution. They were part of the exploitation. So I think the Catholic social teaching taught me to care about that, don't go work for the dark side.

In this example, the vice-president of enrollment management briefly sets up an alternate personal reality in which he did not choose to study economics. The counterfactual story helps him to recognize how the field of economics provides him with a unique lens for understanding undocumented students.

In sensemaking terms, this vice-president is setting up a counterfactual identity for himself as an English or French major who would likely understand the issue differently. Because he chose to study economics, however, his identity as an economist shapes the way he frames the issue as one of exploitation. We can hear him asking himself here, "How can I know what I think until I see what I *might have said*." He imagines how he might have related to undocumented students if his self-image and worldview had been shaped by a discipline other than economics. Though the exercise is tangential and very brief, it nevertheless puts his identity as an economist in relief and helps him understand why he sees the issue as he does. The alternate reality of life as an English or French major thus makes it possible for him to more clearly elaborate his perspective that our society exploits undocumented people for economic benefit.

Story as Anchor for Past Experience

Bruner (1990) has argued that, "the typical form of framing experience (and our memory of it) is in narrative form, and [there is] evidence showing that what does *not* get structured narratively suffers loss in memory" (p. 56). Earlier he described the argument in plainer terms, "We seem to have no other way of describing 'lived time' save in the form of a narrative" (Bruner, 1987, p. 12). Not only are narratives a "typical form of framing experience," for Bruner narrative is the only way humans are able to describe and communicate our lives. From this perspective, what *actually* happened in the past is even less important than the ways people narrativize the experiences and store them in memory.

Bruner (1987) returns to the idea of canonical tools within a culture to provide the background for the creation of meaning. He explains:

> Eventually the culturally shaped cognitive and linguistic processes that guide the self-telling of life narratives achieve the power to structure perceptual experience, to organize memory, to segment and purpose-build the very 'events' of a life. In the end, we become the autobiographical narratives by which we 'tell about' our lives. (p. 15)

In this conceptualization of life and narrative, the creation of autobiography is a process of recalling past experiences and shaping them with the tools in one's cultural setting. Bruner (1987) is careful not to argue that autobiography is a purely subjective narrative form. Indeed, facts are still important and storytellers may not simply construct completely contrived self-narratives and pass them off as "true," such as claiming to have visited a place that one did not actually visit. The larger point he argues, however, is that the construction of one's self-narrative relies on the cultural tools available to the individual. It is in the process of structuring one's past experiences in narrative forms and in the retelling of those narratives that a person develops

a sense of self. Bruner is thus able to claim that, "Narrative imitates life, life imitates narrative" (p. 13). We should not find it surprising, then, when we encounter the narrative structuration of experiences in a person's memory.

46 of the 286 stories that I identified in my study were used as anchors. A typical example of a story used to anchor experience occurred when I asked a director of financial aid about how she first heard about the issue of undocumented student access. She immediately told me a story about an organization founded to create opportunity and access. Rather than providing me with an overview of what she was about to share and how it might answer my question, she simply related a long and relatively complex story, with various characters and subplots:

> [A state-sponsored higher education access organization] was started . . . over 30 years ago, that's when I became aware [of undocumented student access]. Okay, [this] is an organization that came into existence in [the late 1970's]—those were the early years of trying to get it organized and I was working for a different independent college here in [this city]. And luckily . . . it was a state law that had passed, that the [access program] was to be funded partially by the state and partially by in-kind contributions by the institutions who participated. And the deputy superintendent of [city] schools was the one who actually convinced the state legislature at that time to put this forth and luckily it was voted in. And he did it because colleges were coming to his high schools and wanting to speak to students and they needed to be in class. And he was very unhappy about that and he felt it all needed to be coordinated somehow, in some way that didn't disrupt classes. So he got this through and the only reason I got a call was because it required that an independent college be involved which, thankfully, it did because it

should have been that way. And the rest of the people were in public colleges that had been following this and knew that it was going to happen. It was all news to me—I didn't know anything about it. But I've been on that board ever since . . .

This story served as an anchor for the director's experience with undocumented students. She could have simply stated that she was part of an organization that was founded to provide access and opportunity and then moved on with her response. Instead of just quickly stating her relationship with the organization, however, she skipped any sort of summary comments and dove headlong into narrative mode, telling me a story about the organization and its founding.

As she looked back into her memory to recall how she first encountered undocumented students, this director found her experience packaged in a narrative form. Once she remembered the story that anchored her experience, she recounted events that had occurred over the past 30 years. Based on the fact that she told the story without any explanation, she apparently expected me to find the answer to my question within the story, which totaled 713 words—an entire single-spaced page of transcribed text.

This was not the only instance of this director answering a question with a story—she responded to the question "What voices or perspectives are you hearing now that speak to the issue" with a 353-word story about her evolving relationship with her husband. It was clear that stories served as very effective organizing tools for this director's past experiences and she was able to draw upon them to retrieve those experiences from memory. Her default style of responding to my inquiries was story-based and seemed effortless for her. In this sense she did not necessarily seem to be consciously using her stories to try and convince me of anything or to win my support for her point of view. She simply answered my questions with stories that stood

on their own, because they seemed to stand on their own in her memory as anchors for her past experience.

A director of financial aid used story in a similar way. When I asked him whom he had consulted to gain perspective on the issue of undocumented student access he began a 658-word story about a vocal advocate for the undocumented at his institution. The story began:

The champion of funding underrepresented students—actually there are two during my tenure here—most directly was [a former colleague] who was lots of different things to the university . . . So [he] was in charge of our diversity center, it had a different name at that time . . . it was the minority resources center. And [he] was a psychologist and he was in the education department and he was leading the charge, if you will, for sensitizing the university about the needs of these students. And every time there was a budget discussion, [he] would be right there and say, we have to do this, we have to do this. And [he] had the support of [the president.] . . . And during that time [he] was trying to educate all of us about the need to be very supportive of these students and the benefits of doing it . . . So we were sitting in [another colleague's] office . . . and [he] came with the request . . . 'I know these great kids and I have at least three or four of them and I know people will give me some money but it's not all the money and what can the university do?'

This director's account described a variety of relationships the advocate maintained throughout the university and how he was able to build a network of informal support for students that has led to the current access policy. That this director chose to answer such a straightforward question with a story is noteworthy—most respondents replied to the same question by simply listing people they had consulted. Those that included details in response to

this question tended to limit the details to information that would explain why these people were worthy of being consulted.

Why, then, did this director tell me such a long story in response to such a simple question? The details of the story he told describe a very charismatic and beloved leader whose sustained efforts over time effected real institutional change that benefitted undocumented students. This tells us that the otherwise nebulous issue of undocumented student access is embodied by the magnetism and advocacy of this former colleague. The director's initial encounter with the issue is thus anchored in his instrumental relationship with his colleague.

In addition to serving as anchors for experience, stories can also operate to symbolize and express a person's self-image. Such seems to be the case with a provost, who, in response to my question "How does the Catholic character of your institution speak to this issue" responded:

So I'm getting ready to introduce [a speaker] and I went back and looked up Letter from a Birmingham Prison by Martin Luther King, and he was talking about the rule of law because you understand . . . we don't really have an immigration issue problem, what we have is the problem of too many restrictions. Are we really letting in the amount of people that the traffic could bear? Well, obviously, we can because they're already here. And [King] starts talking about good moral laws and bad moral laws and he said something to the effect that good laws are those that uplift humanity, that improve the human condition. Bad laws are the ones that deny that. And so I read that to [the speaker] and he said, 'I want you to give me that,' 'cause I had identified for him, it's the connection between that civil rights movement and the civil rights movement of today. I thought it was just right on target.

For this provost the related incident is clearly emblematic of the intersection between the Catholic character of his university and the issue of undocumented student access. It was also clear in the way he recounted the story that he took personal pride in helping a nationally recognized speaker frame the issue in terms of civil rights, drawing parallels between the struggles of people of color 50 years ago and in the present day.

This story about sharing the thinking of Martin Luther King, Jr. illustrates for us how stories can serve additional sensemaking purposes for leaders. Maclean, Harvey, and Chia (2012) offer us a helpful lens for understanding how stories can serve to preserve self-legitimacy. They conducted life-history interviews with business leaders who were asked to reflect back on their careers. The authors identified three sensemaking processes in the narratives they heard: locating, meaning-making, and becoming. They describe the three processes:

> Locating concerns the creation of an axis of reference in time and space, narratives
> providing 'spatial syntaxes' that regulate transitions from one context to another. . ..
> Meaning-making (re)affirms the unity of the individual by joining together fragments of
> experience into a coherent whole through the espousal of personal values and
> convictions. [And] the weaving of events and episodes into an unfolding story intimates
> a sense of the becoming of things. (p. 33)

In this instance, the provost created an "axis of reference" by situating the story at a finite time in the past. He highlighted his "personal values and convictions" by noting it was his idea to frame access for undocumented students as a civil rights issue, and he wove that into the story of his interaction with the presenter. For this provost, then, "storytelling provide[d] an effective vehicle for legitimacy-claiming" (Maclean, et al., 2012, p. 33). His retelling of this story not

only illustrates how the values of his institution speak to undocumented student access, but also projects himself as an important leader who influences the way others understand the issue.

Story of Personal Experience that Led to Compassion or Advocacy

"Telling stories about personal experience is a prominent part of everyday discourse, and competence in such narration is an essential skill for members of a speech community" (Robinson, 1981, p. 58). Personal stories, or personal narratives, are a special kind of story that features the narrator in some role. Though "personal narratives . . . occur in distinguishable contexts of interaction and can be used for a wide range of pragmatic functions" (Robinson, 1981, p. 58), this does not mean that everything that happens to a person is worthy of storytelling.

Teun van Dijk (1975) argues that stories must be remarkable or interesting to merit being retold. He names four conditions of remarkableness: 1) the actions discharged must be *difficult*; 2) the beginning of the story should include a *predicament* which offers no clear resolution; 3) in the normal flow of events something *unexpected* should occur; 4) some part of the sequence must be *strange* to the narrator. Van Dijk notes that these properties are relative to the narrator's environment—what is remarkable for a third grade teacher may seem rather mundane to an undercover spy, for instance. These four categories nevertheless give us a frame for delineating the type of story that qualifies as a personal narrative.

Personal stories accounted for 86 of the 286 instances of story in my study. In contrast to the other types of stories leaders told, personal stories featured the leaders themselves as the primary agent (or one of the primary agents.) Leaders told stories about their personal relationships and interactions that led to advocacy for undocumented students, and they told personal stories about events in their own lives that frame the way they experience the issue.

For many stakeholders, one of the salient features of undocumented student access is the issue of legality. Not only do university leaders not want to put students or universities in jeopardy by identifying students who could be deported due to their illegal status, many people are also uneasy with the idea that financial aid is assisting people who are illegally present in this country. Those who are uncomfortable helping these illegal immigrants include not only stereotypically more conservative people but also legal immigrants who themselves fought long and hard to win their legal status.

A director of admissions explained his own struggles with the fairness of supporting undocumented students, explaining that he himself immigrated legally to the United States and knows firsthand the trials associated therewith:

> We talk about immigration reform and immigration law and they want to make all these people who have been undocumented for such a long time citizens if they've been here for ten years. Yet you can have a student that has jumped through so many hoops to remain in this country, to pay a lawyer to get a work visa to go back outside the country, to pay an embassy fee—and we're not talking paying $15 to $20, we're talking of thousands and thousands of dollars at this point in time—who then has to be sponsored by a company. No company wants to sponsor because there's no governmental benefits to it, the government won't pay for it, it's up to the company to spend $3000 to sponsor an international student where they can just hire a U.S. citizen and not even worry about it. So my issue is, why are you making [it], with the government, so hard for somebody who's doing things the right way, in a legal way, to become naturalized, a U.S. citizen, yet you have another set of people who are coming in, rightfully or wrongfully—that's not my issue—but they're coming in undocumented and all you're asking of them is just,

'if you've been here for ten years,' and it's definitely more complex than this, but you're giving them a clearer path toward citizenship. It just doesn't make sense, kind of in that sense. Is it their fault? No, it's not their fault. Do I hold it against them? No, I do not. That's not my issue against the undocumented students; it's more an issue of the political means and decisions that are being made.

This director's perspective illustrates his personal misgivings about the immigration system, yet he remains an advocate for the undocumented. For others who struggle with the idea of providing benefits for students who are in this country illegally it can be relatively easy to let their ideology dictate their response to the issue. 'If students haven't played by the immigration rules,' a stereotypical response goes, 'why should we help them? Let them get in line with all of those who are trying to immigrate legally, and once they have earned their legal status we will help.' Of course, policy decisions are rarely black and white, and the story of undocumented students in the United States is no different. Not only are many of them high achievers—the kind of young people this country needs to remain competitive in the labor market—they are typically not responsible for their immigration status, having been brought into the country at a very young age by their guardians.

How, then, can decision makers develop a richer appreciation of the complexity of the issue? Again, leaders can use stories as tools for moving people beyond ideology. Salzer (2000) explains, "Narrative humanizes and contextualizes an issue, moving it from the abstract policy discussion, for example, to a discussion of how the policy impacts or results from the experiences of real people" (p. 134). In other words, even in the face of seemingly clear legal boundaries that would appear to end the discussion about undocumented students before it even begins, connections can be drawn through stories and personal encounters. These experiences

can be so meaningful that they can lead to empathy, or even advocacy, from those who stand ideologically opposed to access for undocumented students.

A president described the power of personal experience to trump ideological misgivings. She explained:

> I have one former trustee who is very conservative and he's even supporting a student through four years at my request, anonymously. And he gets letters from her and she doesn't know who she's writing to but explains how this has changed her life and how she's able to be in school and what she's doing and what her grades are and all of that. When you give individuals personal experiences with individual students who are benefitting as a consequence, a lot of the other stuff goes away, it really does.

Note that the trustee seems not to have changed his ideological position on access for undocumented students, yet he has committed thousands of his own dollars to support an undocumented student anyway. This is but one of many stories in my study of how personal relationships tend to trump ideology—it seems much more difficult to maintain an opposition to access for undocumented students when the issue has a face.

Other leaders found something within their own personal experience that resonated with the plight of undocumented students. A vice-president of enrollment management drew a parallel between the issue and his own experience as a parent:

> I guess my immediate thought was more as a parent that these kids deserve, need some sort of future. They're not necessarily responsible for what happened previously so they just need an opportunity. So it was probably a response more as a parent than a professional working in education and just thinking about what these kids are going through and what their lives might be like without that opportunity.

This leader does not approach the issue in terms of policy or legality, but in terms of basic human interest. Just as he cares for his own children and works to provide opportunities for them he feels a responsibility to do the same for the undocumented. The story of his own life as a parent trumps other concerns he may have and gives him a frame of reference for reaching out to these students who need a helping hand.

A president told an especially poignant story of how she first encountered the issue and was moved almost immediately to compassion and advocacy for the undocumented:

> So it's snowing, there's about a foot of snow on the ground, I am driving . . . to come to campus and I see [a student] riding his bicycle down [the street] to campus. And so I pull over and I say, . . . 'Put your bicycle in the back of my car and I'll drive you to campus. And why in the *world* are you riding your bike to school in a foot of snow in the middle of the *winter*?!' That was my first conscious understanding of the experience of undocumented students—undocumented student who couldn't get a driver's license, he lived three buses away and four changes and so it was easier for him to hop on his bicycle and ride to school. And so [he] is my undocumented student mentor.

This president had not given the issue much thought until she came across this determined student that frosty morning. In time, that chance meeting would become iconic for her as a representation of the daily struggles faced by people who want to better themselves through education. So influential did the story become for her that it led her to work for access at her institution and even to take leadership on a national stage in urging access policies across the country.

Another way that narrative leads to compassion or advocacy occurs when one reflects on one's own—or one's family's—story. Numerous leaders referred to their own personal history

as they described their sensemaking of undocumented student access. An admissions director explained:

> I am of Mexican descent so the issue of our migration has always been part of my family's history. Now border relations have changed over that history and different members of my family have been affected. So I know [the issue of migration] to be one that comes with limited opportunities and access.

A director of financial aid referred to his family's history of experiencing prejudice to highlight the ways the Catholic Church has reached out to immigrants:

> I think the church has, it's been its main mission, if you will, to support the people in their parishes, most of whom were immigrants, at least in the area I grew up in. But they were documented immigrants, it wasn't that they were undocumented so that wasn't an issue. It's just the fact that you were different from somebody else and there was prejudice and I remember my grandfather and my father telling me about in Boston, the 'Irish need not apply' signs in all the windows. Well, I think the church has been in support of supporting people who need to be supported for as long as I've been on this planet. And the undocumented population is just a different group of people who need support.

By relating undocumented student access to his own family's experiences in their immigration he moves to compassion for these modern immigrants.

A vice-president of enrollment management reflected at length about his grandfather's struggles immigrating to the United States from eastern Europe. He noted with some sadness:

> And I heard the stories about how he would actually have to, on his way walking to the mill, go past a couple of buildings an extra block because there was a certain oppression,

a certain discrimination, name calling and whatnot, and on his way just to go to work to make enough money to pay for his family and all that.

For this leader immigration issues have always been part of his own family story, and that has made it much easier for him to be compassionate in dealing with contemporary immigration issues such as undocumented student access. He continued:

And so I guess part of me has always been bonded by the European connection with my grandfather, the memories of all that, I've been saying, these are young folk who are here in some cases, not by their own doing and other cases, by their family's doing and what does it matter? There's a need there. I always keep saying, take the political out of it. And I'm even not the sharpest knife in the rack that could totally understand the full landscape of the complexity of the issue. I just see the human need.

A president at another institution bluntly described how the story of his family's immigration framed his perspectives on undocumented students. When asked if his thinking on the issue had changed, he replied:

No. You see, you need to understand I am a first generation college graduate. My father was an immigrant to the United States. My grandfather was an illegal immigrant to the United States. My first language was Italian. I learned English in school. So the reason I'm president of [this university], the reason I'm here, is because I can relate very well to our student base here, to their parents, to their grandparents. So it's just part of who I am.

As we have seen above, the president's answer is simple and straightforward, "No." He does not stop his answer there, however, but continues to tell the story of generations of immigration—even illegal immigration—in his own family to clarify his own stance towards immigrants. Similar stories were told by a vice-president for mission who described growing up

speaking "Tex-Mex" and interacted with family members on both sides of the American-Mexican border, a vice-president of enrollment management whose family emigrated from Italy to the United States in the early 1900s to find a better life for themselves and their children, and a vice-president of enrollment management who remarked, "My husband's grandparents came here and I suspect at least one of them was an illegal cause he would never go home to Ireland." In each of these cases, family stories of immigration frame the way they view undocumented students in the present day.

A vice-president of enrollment management related the tale of a board member who was vocally critical of undocumented people, yet was clearly impressed with a student at his dinner table who, unbeknownst to him, was herself undocumented. The vice-president describes the scene:

> One night we were sitting at the president's dinner, there's usually a president's ambassador at each table . . . and one of the board members started talking in a negative way about people who were in the country illegally. Well, I knew that we had this undocumented student at the table and I was thinking about—okay, do I present alternative points of view right now, do I change the subject, what do I do, this is a terrible dinner conversation right now because this student is sitting here . . .. That person who was sitting there making negative comments about people in the country illegally didn't have any idea about the student sitting at our table, but yet, saw—I'm going to put words in the person's mouth—but . . . saw her as this wonderful representative of the president who was there that night and could talk about her academic accomplishments and dreams and so on, so it puts a face and a heart to the issue.

The board member had no idea that the student at his table was undocumented, and he reportedly found himself quite impressed with the young person's accomplishments. This story had quite an effect on the vice-president who watched it unfold—though the narrative did not serve to bring conversion to the board member it did strengthen the vice-president's appreciation of the ways that undocumented students can overcome their circumstances to achieve admirable success.

Stories can also serve as inspiration for leaders who are trying to make sense of undocumented student access. In response to the question of how national organizations have influenced her thinking about the issue, a vice-president for mission shared the story of how she is inspired instead by stories about the work of religious sisters. Though this particular story is not an example of a personal narrative, it serves a similar purpose by evoking empathy on the part of the narrator. She explained:

> Catholic organizations that do impact my understanding would be groups that are much more on the fringe and much more in the trenches . . . .In Chicago, you probably know [about] them but there's a couple of Mercy Sisters who have started a companioning group to immigrants and they started by saying the rosary in front of the detention center where ICE keeps people and deports them, and now they're doing lobbying. They do spiritual accompaniment of people on the bus, on the way to the airport. They have set up a group too, that basically meets people who are being released from detention centers. So there's these horrible stories of people who are kept in detention for whatever period of time. They are arrested in May and they're released in February with the same property that they had when they were in May. So they're like let out onto the street in downtown Chicago with flip-flops and a t-shirt and $1.50 to get on the bus. So these

sisters have organized a group of people that will take an emergency call and go meet

those people and be sure that they have somewhere to go, that they have a coat to wear,

whatever their immediate needs are . . .. So those kind of people who are really with the

people suffering as a result of this policy are the folks that are much more influential to

me in how to think about this cause they're there, and they're putting themselves at risk

for the good of others.

Rather than reflecting on the ways that the USCCB or the ACCU influenced her

sensemaking, this vice-president told me a story about sisters who directly serve the poor. From

the way she told the story it was not apparent that she knew the sisters personally, but she had

obviously heard stories about their work. As Salzer (2000) suggested above, the narrative about

the sisters "humanizes and contextualizes" undocumented student access for the vice-president

and inspires her to take action herself.

The Narrative Arc of Undocumented Student Access in Universities

If we take a step back from the specific stories leaders told in their interviews, we can

explore the larger narrative arc of how leaders have encountered undocumented student access.

As Maitlis and Sonenshein (2010) argue, "Research which considers organizational change as an

unfolding set of narratives, inevitably shaped by power relationships, is one approach that can

capture the political processes through which dominant interpretations emerge" (p. 571). We can

explore the "unfolding set of narratives" within the universities in my sample.

Leaders typically responded that among their most immediate reactions when first

hearing about undocumented students was concern for protecting the institution from potential

legal fallout associated with an advocacy position. After leaders were reasonably confident that

they were not putting their institutions in danger, they generally expressed concerns for

protecting the undocumented students themselves from similar potential legal repercussions. For universities in which a vocal advocate for access was present, leaders next turned their attention to exploring the issue and identifying ways that they could reach out to the students. The largest barrier to access in every university is financial—even in the wealthiest universities the average documented student only receives partial financial aid, whereas the average undocumented student requires full (or nearly full) scholarship/grant aid.

Though religious and mission values are certainly present throughout this process of discerning how to serve undocumented students, it is often at the financial aid stage or beyond that the values take center stage. For those leaders fortunate enough to have the financial resources to provide some access, the question becomes whom to serve and how best to reach out to them. For leaders with less financial flexibility, religious and moral values can become the impetus for some challenging considerations of how to best enact a university's mission. Is it better to provide access for a few undocumented students who need full financial aid packages, or to provide financial aid for twice as many other students, many of whom also come from disadvantaged backgrounds? Finally, in response to growing awareness of undocumented students and advocacy for access from numerous fronts, leaders may find themselves considering ways that their institutions can become vocal and public advocates for the undocumented, even to the point of advocating comprehensive immigration reform at a broader, societal level.

If we return to Maitlis and Sonenshein's (2010) idea of "an unfolding set of narratives," we can see that the issue of undocumented student access moves through several story stages. The arc generally begins with concerns for *liability* for the institution and the undocumented students themselves. Next unfolds a story of exploring what an institution has done in the past and what it can do in the present to *reach out* to the students. Third, leaders engage in ongoing

sensemaking of the ways institutional *values* speak to the issue and inform actual or potential policy. Finally, reasonably assured that they are not putting their schools at risk, and in response to numerous advocacy perspectives in their institutions and beyond, leaders may even find themselves becoming vocal *advocates for access* themselves.

Each of these steps in the sensemaking process is ongoing and non-linear, meaning leaders move backwards and forwards within the narrative arc as they work through the issue. We can also understand that narratives shape each step, that is, each process is a story of weighing the needs and abilities of the institution and its potential students. These steps or processes weave together to form "an unfolding set of narratives" as leaders and their institutions make sense of undocumented student access.

This concept of the narrative arc is a helpful way for us to visualize how stories operate in retrospective sensemaking. In each step of the larger narrative process leaders search for plausible stories in answer to the question "What's the story here?" and they can only move onto the next stage of sensemaking after having plausibly framed each of the prior steps of the story. Of course, the process is non-linear and ongoing, as sensemakers continue to circle back to earlier stages of the arc to account for new information. The question of risk for universities and students, for instance, is never completely settled, even when leaders are relatively confident that they can reach out to students with impunity. As they grapple with later stages of their engagement with access for undocumented students, leaders continually reassess their earlier sense of the issue—the earlier stories they constructed—to adapt them to their ongoing sensemaking. Only when leaders have matured in their understanding of the issue and its ramifications can they look back and appreciate the various smaller stories that make up the larger narrative arc.

Chapter 6: Discussion

I designed this study for two purposes: first, and primarily, to explore how leaders are making sense of the issue of undocumented student access, and, second, to examine the role that stories may play in the sensemaking processes of leaders. In this chapter I summarize my findings for each of the two purposes and consider the theoretical and practical implications of my research. I also consider the limitations inherent in this study.

Research Summary

The first research question for this dissertation explored the ways leaders are making sense of undocumented student access (see Chapter 4.) The findings were relatively broad and related to organizational sensemaking in a variety of ways. To frame my analysis, I compared my results with the seven properties of sensemaking signified by the acronym SIRCOPE (Weick, 2001). My findings related specifically to sensemaker identity, social contexts, and extracted cues.

Identity. Leaders in my study communicated the impact of both personal and organizational identity on their sensemaking. They were aware of their responsibility to exercise their leadership in ways that protected their universities and their constituents from harm. Even for those leaders who were ambivalent—or skeptical—about access for undocumented students, they communicated their duty to protect undocumented students and their families from potential negative consequences related to making public their undocumented status in this country. Leaders also spoke about tensions between their professional and personal identities and the ways this complicated their understanding of access for undocumented students. Even for those

with a strong personal belief in educational access for the undocumented, they reported that the most important identity for understanding and acting on the issue was their professional identity as top leaders in their universities.

Leaders were very sensitive to the potential for political fallout from any position they might take regarding undocumented students. They described facing various pressures and risks whether they advocated for access, denied access, or even remained silent on the issue. To protect themselves from pushback they engaged in a variety of behaviors that served to manage their commitment. Chief among these efforts was a tight control of the communication and decision-making process, even when those restrictions ended up constraining their sensemaking by reducing the number of relevant perspectives. Numerous leaders described the absence of any policies regarding access for undocumented students in their universities that enabled them to address the issue more informally and with greater flexibility and anonymity. Finally, leaders were careful to draw distinct parallels between institutional mission and religious values and any official statements or policies regarding the undocumented. By aligning their action with deeply held institutional values, histories, and charisms, in addition to associating their perspectives with their local bishops and the broader Catholic church, leaders were able to deflect some negative repercussions.

The Catholic identity of their universities played an important role in leader sensemaking. When leaders first encountered undocumented student access they reflected on the ways that their institutional values and charisms related to the issue. In their decision-making processes leaders cited the significant influence of the Catholic character of their universities. Finally, in the pronouncement of any practices or policies that resulted from their deliberations leaders not

only referred back to the historical Catholic charisms of their universities, but also revitalized—or constructed—the Catholic identity in the present.

Social contexts. Social contexts played an important role in leader sensemaking in my study. Directors of financial aid and admissions described breakdowns in communication, especially during the initial sensemaking period around undocumented student access. In tightly controlling access to the decision-making processes—as a strategy for managing commitment—top leaders in some universities excluded directors of financial aid and admissions. As value elites in their universities, directors provide important perspectives on issues such as admitting and funding students. By excluding them from some decision-making processes top leader sensemaking was impoverished and the resultant practices and policies were incomplete.

Leaders described their ongoing sensemaking as undocumented students arrived on their campuses. In the absence of formal support programs for the undocumented at any of the 12 schools in my sample, leaders reached out informally in a number of ways. Several directors and vice presidents described a variety of informal, "grassroots" support behaviors to help undocumented students succeed at their universities. That these unofficial support efforts are led by directors and vice presidents, rather than the typical student support staffs at lower levels of a university's hierarchy, illustrates again the sensitive and even precarious nature of students' undocumented status.

Though various relationships were important for leader sensemaking, none were more important than their relationships with undocumented students. Regardless of how they may have initially felt about undocumented student access, after getting to know the students personally leaders unanimously reported increased compassion and advocacy for them. Most leaders reported finding it difficult to oppose access once the issue had a face attached to it. A

president even reported that a trustee who remains opposed to access decided to fund the education of an undocumented student because he was so impressed with her story. Despite any ideological misgivings people may have initially had—or may still have—"heart to heart" relationships with undocumented students inevitably led to compassion and advocacy.

Extracted cues. Leaders reported hearing a variety of voices related to undocumented student access, including students, faculty, and staff on campus, and various perspectives from media, church, and government. They spoke about the importance of networking with their peers through professional organizations—directors were especially likely to note the importance of professional organizations—and described undocumented student access as a "hot topic" at professional conferences. Roughly 10 percent of the reported perspectives were from those opposed to access; the overwhelming majority were advocates for the undocumented.

I also asked leaders to reflect more specifically on the impact of the USCCB and the ACCU, two national Catholic organizations that I believed would be important. Leaders reported a range of awareness of the bishops' perspectives on immigration issues, from frustration about the bishops' lack of leadership to fond appreciation for the work of the USCCB. The variance in understanding the bishops' perspectives was correlated to leaders' experience of past pronouncements from the bishops. Leaders who communicated past frustrations with the bishops' social justice advocacy likewise struggled to appreciate—or *notice*—how the bishops have been addressing immigration issues. Those who communicated a generally positive understanding of past leadership from the bishops likewise showed a greater appreciation of their leadership on contemporary issues such as immigration. These findings illustrate the ways background stimuli can influence people's noticing of foreground stimuli.

Story in sensemaking. The second research question for my dissertation investigated the role of story in retrospective sensemaking. Though I designed my interview protocol to answer my primary research question, "How are leaders in Catholic universities making sense of undocumented student access," I listened in each interview for stories in leader responses. In designing this study I hypothesized that canonical stories play a significant role in our sensemaking. I was able to identify the presence of canonical stories—alongside other story types and uses—in leader responses. Leaders used stories in four different ways in their interviews.

Story as evidence to support a claim. More than a third of the stories in my study served as evidence to support claims. Leaders either told these stories as companions to declarative statements or they simply told the stories without any explanation. In telling stories to support their claims, leaders were infusing facts with meaning, both for themselves and for me as the interviewer. Leaders used stories in numerous instances to bolster otherwise bland or generic statements, or to give statements more authority by citing another person's corroborating perspective. Some leaders used stories to communicate more fully their emotional reaction to a situation, or to inspire empathy within the interviewer. Finally, leaders described how they had used stories in their own sensegiving around diversity issues such as access for undocumented students.

Story as referent for comparison or contrast. Leaders referred to shared narratives—community narratives and dominant cultural narratives—as shorthand or stereotypes. This allowed them to draw on the meaning of the shared narrative without having to retell the story and explain its significance. Some shared narratives served to support the messages leaders were communicating; others served to provide contrast against which leaders could embolden a point.

Finding 54 instances of shared narratives in my study shows that they may be more important to organizational sensemaking than we have recognized.

Story as anchor for past experience. To respond to questions in my interviews, some leaders simply told me stories about things they had experienced. Because people "seem to have no other way of describing 'lived time' save in the form of a narrative" (Bruner, 1987, p. 12), it was natural for leaders to refer to narratives when reflecting on the past. While some of my prompts led more naturally to story responses—such as the question, "What was your experience the first time you heard about undocumented student access?"—others were more ambiguous prompts, such as the question, "Whom did you consult to gain perspective on the issue?" That leaders used stories in response to both types of prompts is evidence that people frame experience in narrative form. When pondering their responses to my questions, these narrative structures often stood out in leaders' memories.

Story of personal experience that led to compassion or advocacy. Autobiographical stories were tools leaders used to structure their experience. They told me these personal stories—which featured the storytellers as primary agents—to describe how they became advocates for the undocumented. Even for leaders who had previously had misgivings about undocumented student access, stories of personal encounters with the students themselves often exerted powerful influence on their thinking, including trumping deeply held concerns about issues such as the legality of the students' presence in this country. These narrative structures provided greater context for leaders that allowed them to see beyond some of their own ideological objections and empathize with the human elements of undocumented student access.

Implications for Theory, Practice, and Future Research

My study has a number of implications for theory, practice, and future research. Due to the lack of consensus about access for the undocumented—among other, broader immigration issues that are also currently in flux—I had the unusual opportunity to observe sensemaking as it was beginning to occur for university leaders. This provided a window into the very early stages of sensemaking and highlighted the volatility that influenced how leaders encountered the issue. In the absence of normative guidance for making sense of access for undocumented students, university leaders were aware of the vulnerability of any conclusions they might reach in their thinking. This allowed me to witness leader sensemaking in a particularly raw and unsettled form.

My study can help us grow in our understanding of organizational sensemaking and our appreciation of the role of stories therein. The results also identify some potential pitfalls in organizational behavior and suggest some ways to deal with sensitive issues on university campuses. Finally, I discuss implications for future research on organizational sensemaking.

Implications for theory. This dissertation enriches our understanding of leader sensemaking in several ways: the volatility of the initial stages of sensemaking of an unsettled issue, the impact of managing commitment, the noise effect of background stimuli, and the role of various stories in sensemaking.

Volatility of initial sensemaking. Critics of sensemaking research often point out that much of the literature focuses on situations of crisis or chaos, such as the Mann Gulch wildfire (Weick, 1993), the Bhopal plant disaster (Weick, 1988, 2010), climbing catastrophes on Mt. Everest (Kayes, 2004), or the UK financial crisis (Whittle & Mueller, 2012). It is clear in times of distress that something has gone wrong, which means there is an opportunity to improve

future organizational functioning. It is not, however, the case that sensemaking research only examines crises.

Researchers have studied sensemaking in settings as diverse as symphony orchestras (Maitlis & Lawrence, 2007), nursing homes (Anderson, et al., 2005), and elementary education (Coburn, 2001, 2005), and they have investigated perspectives as varied as high reliability organizations (J. Busby & Iszatt-White, 2014; J. S. Busby & Collins, 2014), dynamic complexity (Colville, Pye, & Carter, 2013), and change and ambiguity (Denis, Langley, & Cazale, 1996). The sensemaking literature is relatively broad and covers a wide range of topics. How does my dissertation make a contribution to this diverse scholarly store?

One of the important contributions of this study is understanding the way volatility impacts sensemaking. Leader sensemaking in my study was especially volatile due to the unsettled nature of access for undocumented students. As with many other contemporary immigration issues, access to higher education is undecided—not only is there a paucity of national and local laws to provide guidance to university leaders, there remains a palpable fear of even discussing the issue openly. Leaders fear putting undocumented students and their families at risk of deportation; they fear alienating constituents who may be opposed to spending limited university resources to provide opportunity for people who do not have legal status in this country; and they fear failing undocumented students by not reaching out in some way. Because there are various viewpoints on access for the undocumented, and because potential consequences to leader decisions remain unknown, the issue is in a very volatile state. In a sense, we are witnessing sensemaking of this access issue just after the "big bang" of its occurrence.

Because access for the undocumented is presently so unstable, we have a unique window into the impact of volatility on sensemaking of the issue. Leaders described tightly controlling their processes of information gathering and decision-making, in order to provide for strategic ambiguity and to enable them to manage their commitment. Leaders described their frustration that they do not feel free to more openly advocate for students with real promise, and they reported the lack of support services for the undocumented even at campuses where their application and admission are welcomed. Especially for boundary-spanning leaders whose actions and decisions have repercussions both inside and outside of universities, the volatility of access for undocumented students has colored their sensemaking.

Though my study did not include controls to allow me to explicitly investigate the impact of volatility, the data itself suggests some ways that it affects sensemaking. First, leaders repeatedly spoke of their concern for upsetting constituents. This caused leaders to: a) restrict the perspectives they included in their decision-making processes; b) carefully manage internal and external communication even after they had decided to admit undocumented students; and c) create ambiguous structures—such as scholarships awarded at the discretion of the financial aid director—to mask outreach to the undocumented. While sensitivity to upsetting stakeholders is arguably a trait that is operative in most leadership activities, leaders in my study reported an acute awareness for the potential of any decision—or even the lack of a decision—to rankle constituents.

Second, in the absence of similar actions from their peers, leaders were generally reticent to take any action that might be considered bold or public. Leaders were concerned about possible pushback if they and their institutions took stances that went beyond what others were doing. This resonates with Gonzales' (2013) study in which faculty members sought legitimacy

in a time of strategic change in their institution by seeking to mimic the practices of aspirational peers. The only leaders in my study who described a relative lack of concern for pushback were those with significant tenure in their positions and a generally high degree of support for outreach to the undocumented throughout their universities. The great majority of leaders in my study, however, expressed reservations for reaching out too boldly to the undocumented, for fear of drawing negative attention to themselves and their universities.

Third, leaders reported a relative absence of tools for making sense of the issue. They had little or no information about how many undocumented students applied to or attended their universities; they were unsure how to gauge the attitudes of important stakeholders like board members; they were not easily conversant with policies or positions from the USCCB and ACCU; and they were unsure what repercussions they might face if they chose to openly engage the issue. At this early stage of leader sensemaking of access for the undocumented, leaders largely described that the bulk of their activity centered on gathering information, or extracting cues. Due to their lack of experience with the issue, however, leaders struggled to assign meaning to cues or to discern relationships between various cues. As a result, leaders reported difficulty determining the plausibility of various alternatives and also difficulty moving from the extraction of cues to the retention of meaningful experience (see Figure 3.)

Managing commitment. Universities are complex environments that are homes to a great diversity of perspectives. As a result, university leaders may pursue strategies that provide for strategic ambiguity (Eisenberg, 1984), allowing them the flexibility to maintain diversity of opinion while still pursuing needed organizational change. Leaders in my study described relying on a variety of behaviors to manage their commitment by addressing "the visibility, the irrevocability, and the volitionality" (Salancik, 1977, p. 64) of their sensemaking behaviors.

My study calls attention to the ways managing commitment can result in suboptimal decision-making. Leaders were aware of the risks associated with making claims about access for undocumented students. A president stated, "I think the risks of taking any public position on an issue is that you're going to alienate a percentage of your alumni." At the same time, leaders were also aware that not taking a public position on undocumented access likewise alienated proponents of access. In seeking to manage their commitment to the issue, leaders repeatedly described restricting the visibility of their sensemaking by carefully choosing whom to include in the decision-making processes. In several universities, this resulted in leaders excluding some of the most important perspectives on undocumented student access, those of value elites such as directors of admissions and financial aid.

Leaders also managed their commitment by serving undocumented students in unofficial and hidden ways. They created discretionary scholarships that they could award to undocumented students based on criteria other than the students' legal status and they created subtle methods for identifying the students without officially labeling them as undocumented. While unofficial tactics such as these manage the irrevocability of leader decisions to admit undocumented students, the tactics also suffer from being unofficial. If admissions and funding policies are not official, how are students to know about them? If admissions directors are not able to openly broach the topic of undocumented student access, how will they reach out to students whom their universities would welcome. Unofficial policies and practices can thus lead to unintended constraints on admitting and funding undocumented students, even while they provide leaders with strategic ambiguity in addressing the issue.

My study thus shows that while strategies for managing commitment can provide security and anonymity to leaders who are making sense of controversial issues, they do not come

without a cost. If leaders are sensitive to their exposure on an issue, they should likewise be aware of the ways that managing their commitment will restrict their ability to take action.

Background noise. Given the importance of extracted cues in sensemaking, noticing is a critical process for sensemakers. Starbuck and Milliken (1988) claim that "noticing requires distinguishing signal from noise, making crude separations of relevant from irrelevant" (p. 45). Noticing can thus be considered as the beginning of explicit sensemaking—once a cue is extracted and distinguished from noise sensemaking commences. Daft and Weick (1984) use a different term for noticing, scanning. They define scanning "as the process of monitoring the environment and providing environmental data to managers" (p. 286).

In their study of 156 hospitals, Thomas, Clark, and Gioia (1993) found that "top managers' attention to high levels of information during scanning was related to their interpretation of strategic issues as positive and as implying potential gains" (p. P. 258). The results of my study, however, suggest that background noise may foil interpretation to some degree. When asked about the impact of the USCCB on their thinking, leaders in my study largely reported the effect was minimal. Even those who expressed wanting to hear more from the bishops were largely unaware of how the teaching of the bishops provided support and encouragement for reaching out to immigrants such as the undocumented. The inability to notice the support of the bishops and extract messages of support as cues for processing was due to leaders' sensitization to prior exhortations from the bishops. For those who characterized their experience with the background stimuli from the bishops as either negative or neutral they were unable to extract the foreground stimuli that supported their position of advocacy for undocumented students.

This suggests that even for sensemakers who are attentive to the "potential gains" to be won by extracting supportive environmental cues the noise of background stimuli can foil their noticing of foreground stimuli. This effect echoes the thinking of Weber and Glynn who argue that "institutions function to contextualize sensemaking by imposing cognitive constraints on the actors who do the sensemaking" (Weber & Glynn, 2006, p. 1642). Similar to the impact of institutionalized roles which can constrain sensemaking, my study illustrates that learned patterns of response to background stimuli can negatively bias sensemakers to look past potentially positive foreground stimuli.

Role of various stories in sensemaking. In the literature review I hypothesized that canonical stories may be important to sensemaking. I was able to identify the presence of canonical stories—also called shared narratives (Rappaport, 2000)—in numerous leader responses. Leaders used two basic forms of these stories in their sensemaking: canonical stories belonging to their universities—community (setting) narratives—and canonical stories known to the broader culture—dominant cultural narratives. They often referred to the canonical stories tangentially, in narrative shorthand or stereotypes.

In addition to canonical stories, I identified personal narratives (Robinson, 1981), life narratives or autobiographical tales (Bruner, 1987), and stories that organize facts (Gabriel, 2004). While scholars have studied each of these narrative forms, we have not described the differences between the ways they operate in sensemaking. That they appeared in my study in different use cases as leaders made sense of undocumented student access suggests that stories may be more important for sensemaking than we have previously understood.

As I have stated repeatedly above, I did not design this study to investigate how stories function in organizational sensemaking. Though there is some disagreement among scholars

about how stories fit into sensemaking, including those who argue sensemaking has traditionally made no room for narrative (Boje, 2008), on the basis of the sheer number of stories I identified in my data I am confident that story plays a significant role in how we make sense of the world around us. Due to the constraints of my study design, I am only able to offer descriptive comments about how stories fit into sensemaking; these comments are nevertheless grounded in the substantial data I collected.

Stories are interesting. The mean interview length in my sample was 43 minutes. For most leaders, the bulk of the interviews were devoid of much emotional investment. They are busy people with busy schedules and they seemed to be trying their best to faithfully answer my questions without unnecessarily extending the interviews. There was one striking exception to this general norm, however—in every instance of storytelling in the interviews, the leaders' affect changed noticeably. Smiles replaced stoic glances, furrowed brows softened, and leaders leaned forward in their chairs as they recalled meaningful episodes from the past. On several occasions leaders were moved to tears by the stories they related. It was clear throughout my interviews that the most meaningful information was characterized by some sort of narrative framing. Not all episodes were complete stories—some were story fragments or shorthand—but narratively structured information consistently piqued the interest of the leaders in my study.

Stories are compelling. As I explained in Chapter 5, leaders told stories of personal relationships that were important in their own understanding of access for the undocumented. They also told stories about relationships others had formed which had been influential in their understanding of the issue, such as the trustee who remained opposed to access yet found himself fully funding an undocumented student's education. These anecdotes illustrate the power of stories to trump even deeply held beliefs. Though intellectual arguments can be convincing, it

seems they are not as captivating as stories. Perhaps this is due to the embodiment in stories of human attributes such as hope, faith, or perseverance. In short, stories put a human face on issues and help us relate to them in deeply human ways.

Stories transcend people. Perhaps another reason stories were so meaningful to leaders in my study is that the stories transcend people. As Bruner (1991) argued, stories include the following characteristics: agentivity, sequential order, canonicality, and a narrator's perspective (p. 77). Unlike intellectual arguments that can often stand on their own, stories require agents and a narrator's perspective. Especially in really good stories, we encounter people whose struggles and successes resonate with our own life experiences. The stories then become placeholders that symbolize the tragedies and triumphs of their owners; the agents themselves may retell their story as may others who did not take part in the tales. In retelling stories that belong to others, storytellers can conjure up much of the same responses from listeners as the agents themselves could in the original telling.

Stories are symbolic. Much of the utility of canonical stories resides in their ability to draw from a pool of shared meaning and understanding (Rappaport, 2000). Storytellers only use canonical stories effectively if listeners easily understand the referenced meaning. Absent this shared understanding, canonical stories become simple tales. If, however, all parties to a story have access to the shared meaning, canonical stories can become quite powerful tools for storytellers and listeners alike.

Even stories that do not have access to a commonly accepted and shared meaning, however, still exhibit some of the symbolic power of canonical stories. Leaders in my study repeatedly used stories that symbolized meaning and events for them. After having explained the meaning to me, the listener, I too had access to the symbolic power of these stories. A

president, for instance, described encountering a student riding his bicycle to school in a deep snow—that student came to symbolize for her the tremendous struggle for education and the substantial grit of so many undocumented students. Simply referring to that snowy morning allows the storyteller to encapsulate significant meaning in one symbolic story. Like a canonical story, this anecdote offers considerable utility to the storyteller and becomes a shorthand for communicating that meaning to others.

Stories enable retention. If we return to Jennings and Greenwood's (2003) model of organizational sensemaking (see Chapter 2), we see that retention is located at the far right side of the model. Though sensemaking is ongoing, retention happens later in the process as sensemakers process what they have sensed and assign meaning to it. If the extracted cues are not infused with this meaning, or are not striking or remarkable on their own, they will likely be lost to memory. Stories thus seem to fit best into the retention phase of sensemaking. The stories leaders told in their interviews were largely done changing and their meaning was mostly fixed. As additional social cues appeared and were considered by leaders, however, they were willing to change the meaning of the stories. This was the case for a president whose less-than-positive opinion of her bishop's stance on undocumented access changed when he invited her to join him on a committee formed to serve immigrants in the diocese, including the undocumented. In the absence of such new information, stories seem to fit best in the retention phase of sensemaking as people bring an element of emplotment, a sense of plausibility, and an understanding of one's identity to what may earlier have simply been various extracted cues.

Implications for practice. My study has a number of implications for practice, especially for how we conceive of and exercise leadership in higher education. Implications for enhanced leader sensemaking include the following areas: the importance of subsidiarity, the

potential for better collaboration across the sector of Catholic higher education, the importance of revisiting decisions, the inclusion of the vulnerable in decision-making processes, and the effect of framing leadership in narrative terms.

Subsidiarity may strengthen sensemaking. One of the unexpected findings of this study was the restriction of perspectives by top leaders. Those managing the sensemaking processes around undocumented student access in several universities chose to manage their commitment to the issue by restricting the public nature of their decision-making. This resulted in the exclusion of directors of admissions and financial aid from the decision-making process—some were simply not consulted in any way, while others contributed only indirectly by communicating up the chain of command. This left some directors feeling frustrated, especially since they are experts in their respective fields and serve as value elites (Selznick, 1957) within their universities.

According to the principal of subsidiarity, "powers or tasks should rest with the lower-level sub-units [within a political] order unless allocating them to a higher-level central unit would ensure higher comparative efficiency or effectiveness in achieving them" (Føllesdal, 1998). Efficient organizations often strive to enable subsidiarity by members, in order to reduce redundancies in levels of management and to empower those who are organizationally closest to tasks to take responsibility for them. As we saw in my study, financial aid directors are often the only people on university campuses who can identify undocumented students and they have perhaps the richest understanding of the challenges these students face. Excluding the directors from the organizational sensemaking about undocumented student access limits the information available to top leaders and demoralizes the directors who are left out. Though top leaders may

reasonably want to manage their commitment to difficult issues, they may find that efforts to include the voices of those closest to the issues will enrich the sensemaking process.

Capacity for Catholic collaboration. Numerous leaders in my study complained that there was not a more unified voice in Catholic higher education regarding access for undocumented students. They lamented the "silence" of the bishops and they identified an opportunity for increased advocacy if the entire sector spoke with a unified voice. Ironically, those who complained of the bishops' silence were often unaware of the ways the bishops are reaching out on this issue. Given the uncertainties surrounding immigration issues in general, and undocumented students in particular, leaders reported a variety of concerns for speaking out publicly on the matter. These fears certainly stymie potential collaborations among Catholic universities. If the commitment to access for undocumented students is as widespread in Catholic higher education as it appeared to be in my study, this lack of collaboration may represent a significant missed opportunity.

Many of the initial concerns to addressing undocumented student access—such as fear of putting a university's 501(c)3 status in jeopardy—are dissipating as laws are changing and as leaders are learning that they face fewer risks than they may have once anticipated. Even in the months since I first began my data collection more Catholic universities have pronounced access policies for the undocumented; others have made national news by reaching out to immigrants such as refugees at the U.S.-Mexico border ("Catholic college plans to offer housing, scholarships to immigrant children," 2014). As efforts to serve the immigrant and the undocumented student continue to evolve and portend fewer risks for universities, there is the possibility for greater collaboration among Catholic colleges to attend to the population.

Most of the access efforts I identified in this study are institution-specific. There is relatively little sharing of tactics, successes, failures, policies, or plans to serve the undocumented. The ACCU has engaged in numerous efforts to reach out to Catholic university presidents and provide forums for discussion of the issue. There remains the opportunity for greater collaboration, and it should probably start with the USCCB.

The bishops have made numerous statements about care for immigrants, the poor, refugees, and other distressed populations. They have not, however, made a bold exhortation to Catholic universities to directly address immigration issues or to reach out to the undocumented. Were the bishops to issue such a bold appeal, organizations such as the ACCU would have the opportunity—perhaps the mandate—to organize Catholic higher education to address the issues. As a result, leaders within Catholic universities would likely feel united and protected from potential negative fallout. This could lead to the kind of courageous action that could spur broader societal change.

Involvement in such a systemic approach to immigration issues would strengthen Catholic university leaders' ability to lead by improving their communication—both within and between universities. If such a scenario were to occur, Catholic higher education could present a unified voice in applying its religious and mission values to a serious societal problem; this collaborative action would also portend future potential collaboration in Catholic higher education regarding other pressing issues.

Circling back. Though we know sensemaking is ongoing and is never finished, some leaders in my study spoke about their sensemaking of undocumented student access as if it were now over. They communicated verbally and nonverbally that once they had reached the decision to admit the students the issue was resolved. Other leaders, especially those lower in the

institutional hierarchy who work more directly with undocumented students, expressed on numerous occasions that the admission decision was simply the beginning of the university's relationship with the students. In the absence of intentionally ongoing sensemaking of the issue throughout the university, several leaders described "grassroots" approaches to providing continuing support to the students.

To ensure that issues do not disappear from leader consciousness after the initial decision-making processes, leaders might plan to revisit the issues after a designated time period. In keeping with the principle of subsidiarity, and to reduce the load on top leaders, those leaders closest to the issue should take responsibility for reporting on the status of the issue. Included in the reports might be metrics about the results of the decision and a consideration of what may be needed next to ensure the success of the endeavor. This would, for instance, give leaders the opportunity to explain why they are storing student effects in their garages over the summer months and allow decision-makers to discuss other options that may be more optimal and appropriate. If university leaders made the decision to admit undocumented students to their schools, then they should be committed to providing the needed support that will enable their success. Circling back to initial sensemaking and decision-making processes allows them the opportunity to assure they remain attentive to the students.

Including the vulnerable. Throughout my study leaders spoke about the power of personal relationships to trump misgivings regarding access for undocumented students. Connecting with the students "heart to heart" helped even staunch access opponents empathize with the real people who were struggling with pursuing higher education. In university environments where the pursuit of ideas is a major goal, allowances for personal relationships can help ensure the most compassionate decisions are made. Leaders should thus remember to

include the vulnerable in their sensemaking whenever appropriate. In the case of undocumented students, leaders should identify any such students on their campuses and invite their input—in whatever ways is respectful of the students and their situation—in their ongoing sensemaking of the issue.

Especially in Catholic universities, whose foundational values include special care for the poor and a commitment to the dignity of every human person, inclusion of the vulnerable that are affected by decisions can increase the likelihood of outcomes that are most respectful of them. Including these populations can also concretize values that may otherwise seem disembodied from the daily life of the university.

Narrative framing of leadership. If we agree with Pye (2005) that, "To understand leadership as a sensemaking process helps illustrate more clearly what happens in the daily doing of leading" (p. 31), and if we accept the narrative framing of sensemaking suggested in this dissertation, then we can come to frame leadership itself in narrative terms. This idea is not novel in the leadership and sensemaking literature. Boje (1991) argues, "In organizations, storytelling is the preferred sense-making currency of human relationships among internal and external stakeholders" (p. 106). Scholars have examined the presence of stories in various leadership contexts, including organizational identity construction (Humphreys & Brown, 2002), organizational restructuring (Balogun & Johnson, 2004; Maitlis & Sonenshein, 2010), and in leadership role negotiations (Kelley & Bisel, 2014). Beyond simply understanding it from a theoretical perspective, leaders may stand to reap various benefits by framing their own leadership in narrative terms.

The title for my dissertation is a good place to start. When leaders experience an interruption that spurs more intentional sensemaking, they should encourage themselves to

literally ask themselves, "What's the story here?" This causes them to enter into a narrative framing of the sensemaking process from the very beginning. Understanding their sensemaking in narrative terms allows them to investigate the elements of story. Returning to Bruner's (1991) conceptualization of narrative, leaders who frame their leadership as narrative may seek the following elements in their sensemaking: agentivity, sequential order, canonicality, and a narrator's perspective (p. 77).

In other words, as they explicitly engage in sensemaking to answer the question, "What's the story here?" leaders will look beyond the simple cues they extract from the environment and seek to understand them as parts of a larger narrative whole. This perspective also serves to concretize for leaders their roles as some of the chief storytellers in their organizations, those responsible for retelling important organizational stories and encouraging constituents to continually consider the bearing of an institution's foundational values on the issues at hand. Finally, framing their leadership in story terms helps leaders better appreciate that their leadership consists not of dealing with impersonal issues, challenges, and opportunities, but with real people who are actors and agents in a variety of stories.

Implications for future research. I designed this dissertation to simultaneously explore two levels of inquiry: leader sensemaking in Catholic universities and the presence of stories therein. While I identified findings for both research questions, each could also be strengthened by future research. Specifically, this study suggests that opportunities exist for future research to examine the following areas: the proactive construction of organizational identity, the management of the restrictive effect of background stimuli on foreground cues, and the role of canonical stories and narrative shorthand.

Proactive construction of identity. One of the primary justifications for locating my study in Catholic universities was my hypothesis that Catholic mission and religious values would have some bearing on undocumented student access. Leaders confirmed this hypothesis by speaking at length about the connection between Catholic values and their sensemaking of the issue. In analyzing these perspectives and comparing them to the research on organizational identity, the possibility emerged to deepen the ways we conceptualize identity in sensemaking.

Much of the sensemaking research treats organizational identity as a preexisting condition that exerts influence on sensemaking processes. Scholars have studied the impact of identity ambiguity during strategic change (Corley & Gioia, 2004; Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Gioia & Thomas, 1996; Gioia, et al., 1994), the impact of organizational identity on social interaction (Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1994), and member responses to threats or changes to organizational identity (Elsbach & Kramer, 1996; Hsu & Elsbach, 2013). In these and other studies, however, it is usually the organizational identity that exerts influence over member sensemaking.

A study that offers a somewhat different perspective is Porac, Thomas, and Baden-Fuller's (1989) work exploring how identity operates in the Scottish wool industry. They found that leaders constructed an identity for their industry by espousing a set of beliefs about themselves and their target markets and primary competitors. Over time consumers reinforced the managers' shared beliefs and market activity enacted the identity for the Scottish manufacturers. We saw some similar effects of the construction of identity in the ways leaders applied Catholic values to undocumented student access. While leaders explained that their universities' Catholic identity "compelled" them to take action on the issue (organizational

identity influencing sensemaking), they also identified that their espoused Catholic values led to advocacy for the undocumented (values constructing Catholic identity.)

In other words, leaders could hypothetically say both that 'Catholic values compel us to take action,' and 'Because we take action we are Catholic.' The former statement illustrates the impact of identity on sensemaking, while the latter shows how leaders construct identity by espousing values and acting upon them. Future research might more deeply explore identity construction within leader sensemaking, focusing on the connection between espoused values and organizational decisions and their consequences.

Managing background stimuli. My study highlighted the dampening effect of background stimuli on leader noticing of foreground cues. As they noticed background cues over time, leaders developed adaptation levels that subsequently shaped their ability to notice foreground cues (Helson, 1964). Proponents of undocumented student access thus made comments such as, "The bishops, I think they're out of touch," even when much of the bishops' communication would best be interpreted as supporting access (especially when understood as part of a larger concern for immigrants and the poor.) The dampening effect of background stimuli on sensemaking is not a novel concept—Starbuck and Milliken (1988) showed that executives are limited in their *noticing* due to learned patterns of perception. The results of this dissertation likewise illustrate that for leaders who are charged with making sense of issues the limiting effect of background stimuli on foreground cues can have negative effects.

Future research might explore the management of background stimuli to better optimize the noticing and extraction of foreground cues by leaders. Because like all people leaders are bounded in their rationality (March & Heath, 1994; Simon, 1955), it is important to identify means for limiting the effect of obstacles to sound decision-making. An example of a method

for lessening the effect of adaptation levels is the tactic of "contra-thinking" (Wissema, 2002, p. 538), though even being aware of the need for a "devil's advocate" is often confounded by learned habits of perception. Tourish and Robson (2006) explain, "The problem is that when people have radically different perceptions of what constitutes reality they are also inclined to think that their perception of it is more widely shared than it is" (p. 715). Future research into leader sensemaking might therefore explore not only the management of background stimuli so that leaders may remain more agile in sensing foreground stimuli, but also the difficulties of discerning when contra-thinking is needed.

Canonical stories and narrative shorthand. The sensemaking literature includes numerous considerations of how narrative operates in sensemaking: describing sensemaking broadly as the process of creating meaningful narratives (Polkinghorne, 1988), naming storytelling "the preferred sense-making currency" (Boje, 1991, p. 106), exploring how narrative operates in the shared sensemaking of team members (A. D. Brown, Stacey, & Nandhakumar, 2008; Humphreys & Brown, 2002), and examining "organizational change as an unfolding set of narratives, inevitably shaped by power relationships" (Maitlis & Sonenshein, 2010, p. 571). With the exception of Joan Lucariello's (1990) related work on children's development of language, however, none of the sensemaking research considers the role of canonical stories in sensemaking. The limited results of this study suggest the potential for clarifying the role of canonical stories in retrospective sensemaking.

The secondary purpose of this dissertation examined the role of story in sensemaking. That I ultimately identified 54 instances of canonical stories—some told in long form and others used as narrative shorthand—suggests that canonical stories may play an important role in retrospective sensemaking. Future research could build off of the research on shared narratives

(Rappaport, 2000) and narrative shorthand and stereotypes (Salzer, 2000) to strengthen our understanding of how canonical stories work to organize experience.

Limitations

Though I designed this dissertation carefully, it is not without limitations. Some of these shortcomings I would foresee if I were to redesign the study today, knowing what I now know. Others are simply limitations inherent in any sociological research, but still need to be listed here.

A major limitation of my study is the paradox of studying sensemaking: am I studying how people make sense of certain phenomena, or am I studying how people make sense of making sense of those phenomena? To clarify, when I first designed this study it was my intention to study how leaders had first made sense of undocumented student access when they initially encountered it. If I designed my study carefully enough, I reasoned, I would be able to discern not only how leaders initially made sense of the issue, but also how stories operated in their initial sensemaking. As the design matured and the research commenced, however, I realized that I was actually witnessing sensemaking-in-progress as leaders pondered and responded to my questions. Even the questions that explored their past sensemaking were an act of ongoing sensemaking in the present. As Allard-Poesi explains, "Fully acknowledging that our sensemaking of the sensemaking process is an active, purposeful and subjective sensemaking process in itself is not an easy task" (p. 171).

My research design provides some relief from this paradox of circularity. My interview protocol (see Appendix A: Interview Protocol) is divided into three sections—in the first section I ask leaders to focus on the time in the past when they first encountered the issue; in the second section I ask them about how they are encountering the issue in the present day; and in the third

section I ask them to reflect on how the Catholic character of their institutions relates to access

for undocumented students. It is clear that sections two and three examine sensemaking in the

present and I am able to witness leaders making sense of the issue right in the interviews. In

section one, however, I ask leaders to think back to a time in the past when they first became

aware of undocumented student access. Because of the way I structured the protocol, I was able

to guide leaders through a process of recalling how they initially made sense of the issue.

My status as a Catholic priest caused some limitations for this study, potentially resulting

in a positive reporting bias on the part of the leaders I interviewed. When leaders looked across

the desk and saw a priest dressed in clerical attire, asking questions about religious values, they

may have sought to impress me with their knowledge, commitment, and piety. The opposite

effect was also likely present—for leaders with a more progressive view of ministerial roles in

the Catholic Church, any outward signs of my clerical identity might be interpreted as

patriarchal. For most of the leaders in my study the fact that I was investigating undocumented

student access—which is generally considered a progressive social justice issue—likely

mitigated any potential negative impact of my priesthood. In at least one case, however, a leader

seemed to communicate by her vocal tone and body language that she was uncomfortable with

my status as a priest.

Measuring Catholic character and its effect on people or institutions is somewhat akin to

measuring a political candidate's patriotism—in both cases the subject of the questioning may

attempt to bolster his or her reputation, which can result in overly positive reports. Second,

people of faith, especially Catholics, may tend to represent themselves to clergy as more pious

and committed than they may actually be. Finally, leaders exhibited differing levels of ability to

reflect critically upon the religious values that influence their sensemaking—some were not

Catholic and were unfamiliar with concepts like "Catholic social teaching," while others simply seemed to be unaccustomed to reflecting on religious or spiritual matters. Both my status as a priest and the Catholic content of my interviews are limitations that were unavoidable.

Though I spent a considerable amount of time crafting my protocol and preserving theoretical links between my model and my interview questions, my final protocol was imperfect. I recognized in my pilot study that one of my first questions would be somewhat problematic. In the initial group of questions I asked "What data or information did you gather about the issue?" (see Appendix A: Interview Protocol). For leaders lower in the organizational hierarchy, especially directors of financial aid and admissions, the question was actually more complicated. Though my intent was to ask leaders about the kinds of questions that arose as they encountered the issue of undocumented student access and the information they sought to answer those questions, many leaders heard the question instead as an interrogation of the facts and figures they had collected in their institutions. Many directors, therefore, responded simply "There was no data available at the time," since their institutions were not actively collecting any sort of data on undocumented students when they first encountered the issue. Getting answers that actually related to the broader intent of the question required considerable redirection and probing.

Another limitation of the protocol emerged in the final question, "How does American Catholic higher education's historic commitment to serving immigrants relate to undocumented students?" I knew from the beginning that this was a somewhat weak and leading question, but I wanted leaders to reflect on American Catholic higher education's history of serving immigrants. As I anticipated, the responses to that final question were largely unhelpful, as leaders tended to simply reiterate to me that American Catholic colleges and universities have, indeed, historically

served immigrants. The question was not a complete loss, as several leaders offered unique insights in response to the question, but it was generally unhelpful.

My interviewing style may also have limited my findings. I have been trained in my doctoral studies to make no utterances—such as "mmm-hmm"—and to use only minimal nonverbal responses during interviews. Just as overly friendly or positive interactions in an interview can result in interviewees saying what it appears the interviewer wants to hear, being overly stoic and unresponsive may also influence responses. This is a difficult balance to strike. The presence of stories in leader responses may have been lessened because of the difficulty of establishing a personal connection with leaders in relatively short interviews with carefully restricted verbal and nonverbal interactions. Even though I was very attentive to communicating interest and warmth to my respondents, the absence of more explicit and communicative interactions may have made my interviews seem more formal, thus restricting leaders' tendency to use stories in their responses. I would consider designing future studies with more informal settings and interviewing styles to better explore the use of story in sensemaking.

Another significant limitation of this dissertation is its dual purposes. I shaped the interview protocol primarily to answer the first research question, exploring how leaders are making sense of undocumented student access. The findings that address the second purpose, identifying the role of stories in leader sensemaking, come chiefly from my own observations within the interviews. Though there were some clear differences in the types of stories leaders told and in the ways in which the stories seemed to function within interviews, I am not able to tie those observations back to my study design. If I choose to study stories in sensemaking in the future I will be more intentional about crafting a protocol and study design that is more methodologically robust.

Also limiting this study was my decision to restrict my sample to Catholic university leaders. Had I included non-Catholic institutions as a control I might have come to a better understanding of what is unique about leader sensemaking in Catholic universities. There were benefits of restricting the sample—I was able to explicitly explore the effect of Catholic values and organizations on leader sensemaking. I would consider including a control group in similar future studies, however, to allow for comparison and contrast between leaders at different universities.

That all institutions in my study had a relatively welcoming stance towards undocumented students also limits my findings. As noted above, being located in regions with high numbers of immigrants, combined with histories of serving those populations likely contributed to my difficulty to identify an institution that would not at least informally welcome undocumented students. I do not believe data exists that describes the policies and positions on access for undocumented students at all institutions in the country; I cannot, therefore, make any claims about how my sample might compare to the whole of Catholic higher education or to higher education in the U.S. I can anticipate that there would be some differences in leader sensemaking of this access issue in institutions that are not welcoming. Leaders in such universities, for instance, might privilege different voices and perspectives in their sensemaking. To explore such potential variance in future research, I would put more effort into the recruitment of leaders at universities that do not welcome undocumented students.

Summary. Though this dissertation is not without its limitations, the study nevertheless contains benefits that can enhance our understanding of organizational sensemaking. By situating my study in Catholic universities I was able to explore the ways religious and spiritual values shape how leaders make sense of issues. Though I did not design this study to learn more

about *how* stories function in the metacognitive processes inherent in sensemaking, that I was able to identify a variety of different narrative forms in my data adds to our understanding of how stories fit into retrospective sensemaking.

My status as a priest, while perhaps limiting for some leaders in my study, also likely resulted in increased frankness in some responses—because priests are official members of the Catholic hierarchy, separated from the Pope by only two organizational levels, many people seize upon any opportunity to tell priests how they feel about a variety of issues, as if their candor might lead to change. Perhaps the greatest limitation of this study is the inherent paradox in studying sensemaking—engaging *in* sensemaking *of* sensemaking. As noted above, I structured my interview protocol to reduce this limitation, and to provide insight into both past and current leader sensemaking. This study, like any other, is imperfect, yet it contributes to our understanding of both leader sensemaking and the role of stories in sensemaking.

Appendix A: Interview Protocol

I first introduced myself, asked the person to sign the consent form, and briefly described my research objectives.

1. What was your experience the first time you heard about undocumented student access?
   a. What was your intuitive response to it?
   b. Whom did you consult to gain perspective on the issue?
   c. What data or information did you gather about the issue?
   d. Has your thinking on this issue changed since you first encountered it?

2. What voices or perspectives are you hearing that speak to this issue?
   a. What are the most compelling arguments to you?
   b. What pressures do you feel to take a position on the issue?
   c. How are you dealing with those pressures?
   d. What risks do you face in taking a position?

3. How does the Catholic character of your institution relate to the issue?
   a. How does Catholic social teaching speak to the issue?
   b. How do Catholic organizations—such as the USCCB or the ACCU—impact your understanding of this issue?
   c. How does American Catholic higher education's historic commitment to serving immigrants relate to undocumented students?

Appendix B: Recruitment Letter

Dear Fr./Sr./President [INSERT NAME]:

I hope this letter finds you well. [FOR THOSE WHOM I KNOW OR HAVE MET, INCLUDE MORE PERSONAL SALUTATION HERE.] My name is Dan Parrish, C.S.C.—I am a Holy Cross priest and a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Michigan. I am writing to you because I am working on a dissertation about leadership in Catholic universities and I am hoping you will agree to be interviewed for the study.

Briefly, I am studying how leaders in Catholic universities make sense of issues that their institutions are encountering. Because universities are such diverse and complex settings, it is an exciting setting to study leadership and sensemaking.

Though you are undoubtedly very busy, I am hoping you will agree to be interviewed for this study—the interview should take roughly 60 minutes. I also hope to contact others in your institution; my sample will include presidents, provosts, vice-presidents for mission, and directors of admission and financial aid at 12 different Catholic colleges and universities around the country. All interviews will be confidential and blind—no individuals or institutions will be identifiable in any way.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter and consider my request. I would welcome the opportunity to speak with you about this study if you have any questions or concerns. You may contact me via email (djpcsc@umich.edu) or on my cell phone (574-210-7376). Enclosed is a brief description of this research; I will be happy to share the full dissertation proposal if you are interested. I will follow up on this written request with an email or phone call in the near future.

Thank you for considering my request.

Peace,

Rev. Dan Parrish, C.S.C.
Ph.D. Candidate
Center for the Study of Higher and Postsecondary Education
University of Michigan
Ann Arbor, MI

Appendix C: Description of Research

"What's the story here?" It is a question we often ask, especially when we enter new settings or encounter new situations. Think of the firefighter arriving on the scene of a blaze, the nurse receiving case reports during a shift change, the teacher responding to shouts in a school hallway—to make sense of situations we tend to look for stories. Weick (2008) claims, "To focus on sensemaking in organizational settings is to portray organizing as the experience of being thrown into an ongoing, unknowable, unpredictable streaming of experience in search of answers to the question, 'What's the story?'" (para. 1). As sensemakers, however, we do not simply seek one grand story in any given setting. Rather, we rely on many smaller stories to help us turn the events we perceive into more permanent experience, to help us translate what we are sensing around us into meaningful knowledge and memory.

There is much to understand about how we use stories to organize our experience. My study will explore the sensemaking of university leaders—individuals who are responsible for serving complex and diverse communities. To explore leader sensemaking, I will structure my inquiry around the contemporary, still evolving issue of undocumented student access. I will situate my study in Catholic higher education, which will allow me to consider religious and mission values that may play a role in leader sensemaking of this issue. My dissertation should deepen our understanding of what happens when Catholic university leaders look at the issue of undocumented student access and ask themselves, "What's the story here?"

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Appendix D: Consent Form

<u>Consent to Participate in a Research Study</u>
WHAT'S THE STORY HERE? HOW CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY LEADERS
ARE MAKING SENSE OF UNDOCUMENTED STUDENT ACCESS

You are invited to participate in a research study about leadership in Catholic universities.

If you agree to be part of the research study, you will be asked to sit for a 60 minute interview.

Benefits of the research include an enhanced understanding of the unique challenges of leadership in Catholic institutions and the potential elaboration of our understanding of organizational sensemaking.

There are no potential risks or discomforts from this study. All individuals and institutions will not be identifiable in the final study.

There is no compensation for participation.

Participating in this study is completely voluntary. Even if you decide to participate now, you may change your mind and stop at any time. You may choose not to answer any question for any reason.

If you have questions about this research study, you may contact:
Dan Parrish, C.S.C. (Principal Investigator), djpcsc@umich.edu, 574-210-7376
John Burkhardt, Ph.D. (Faculty Advisor), jcbforum@umich.edu, 734-615-8882

The University of Michigan Institutional Review Board Health Sciences and Behavioral Sciences has determined that this study is exempt from IRB oversight.

I agree to participate in the study.

_____   _____

Signature   Date

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