Chapter 6
Organizational Identity in Higher Education: Conceptual and Empirical Perspectives

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The American higher education system is extraordinarily diverse, with US colleges and universities varying significantly by historical and legal foundations, size, reputation, values, culture, processes, and programs (Birnbaum 1983). As Trow (1989) summarized, a combination of legal and cultural factors "constituted a kind of license for unrestrained individual and group initiative in the creation of colleges of all sizes, shapes, and creeds" (Cohen and Kisker 2010). The unique character of US colleges and universities was also shaped by the distinctive and sometimes competing visions of academic leaders, industrialists, and clergy vying to define the purposes of higher education (Cohen and Kisker 2010). Most noteworthy, the German university model emphasizing research and the production of scholars began to supercede the English model adopted by the early colonial colleges. This shift elevated knowledge creation as a salient purpose of higher education in addition to preserving culture (Rudolph 1962).

The massification of higher education in the USA—which occurred earlier than in other developed countries—and the diversity of the American population also played powerful roles in promoting distinctive organizational identities for colleges and universities. Women's colleges, for example, gained prominence during the progressive era in the early twentieth century, while black colleges were

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developed with support from mission organizations and industrialists (Anderson 1997). Junior colleges—later known as community colleges—found their unique roles in serving students who were diverted away from selective institutions that increasingly focused on research (Brint and Karabel 1991). The diversity of the system allowed an elite group of research universities to emerge and turn their attention more fully to knowledge creation. By the middle of the twentieth century, the USA had developed recognizable sectors of higher education that reflected the unique values of their founders, regional contexts, and overall place in the developing educational landscape.

Despite the emergence of a robust system of colleges and universities in the USA, it was not until the mid-twentieth century that a formal literature on higher education would appear (Peterson 1998). Prior to World War II, research-based writing on organization, governance, and leadership of higher education was largely limited to institutional anthologies, reports, or unpublished studies often written by significant university leaders or statesmen such as Thomas Jefferson, Charles Eliot, and Robert Hutchins. As the scholarly literature on higher education developed in the 1960s, so did more formal and conceptual analyses about attributes of distinctive colleges and universities. Yet, literature on this topic has produced a fragmented set of studies only loosely connected to the broad concept of organizational identity. This continues to create a conundrum for scholars who seek to situate their research within the larger frame of institutional diversity in higher education.

Recognizing these conceptual challenges, the purpose of this chapter is to examine the evolution of scholarly perspectives, methodologies, and narratives that constitute the body of literature on organizational identity in higher education. Key questions to be investigated in this chapter include the following: "How has organizational identity been defined in scholarship on higher education?" "How have conceptions of organizational identity in higher education changed over time?" and "What are the implications of these changes for future research on this topic?" Addressing these questions, the primary contribution of this chapter is to introduce a framework to distinguish among perspectives and assumptions that have guided research on organizational identity in higher education. In doing so, the chapter illuminates ways in which the concept has anchored past studies and may inform the next generation of research on this topic.

The concept of organizational identity has its roots in social psychology and organization science. First introduced in 1985 by Albert and Whetten, the term has taken on multiple meanings, assumptions, and interpretations over time. Examining two decades of research on organizational identity, Puusa (2006) suggests that the concept is best understood by distinguishing between inner and outer levels of analysis. At the inner level, scholars have primarily examined how organizational members understand the central and enduring features of their organizations. Such studies largely examine internal belief systems that inform sensemaking and subsequent action among members (Albert and Whetten 1985; Gioia 1998; Mael and Ashforth 1992). At the outer level, scholars studying organizational identity primarily concentrate on institutional attempts to signal and project meaning—through logos, symbols, branding, and other marketing and

communication strategies—to those outside the organization. At this level, the intent of the analysis is "to help an organization's stakeholders and shareholders both to identify the organization and to distinguish it from other companies with the help of external characteristics" (Puusa 2006, p. 26). Organizational identity, from this perspective, is closely linked to the concept of organizational image, which explores how external stakeholders perceive and make sense of an organization (Albert 1998; Puusa 2006).

Puusa's (2006) inner and outer level distinctions are informative in this chapter as we distinguish between the organizational identity literature focused on and directed to the organization's internal constituents and the organizational identity literature constructed to project meaning to external audiences. Internally oriented work has largely addressed and shaped how faculty, students, and administrators understand and express their institution's identity. This literature is perhaps most prominent and important within sectors that serve underrepresented groups, such as historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) (see Gasman et al. 2008), but is also present in college and university histories across all institutional types. Meanwhile, externally oriented studies primarily focus on how colleges and universities are (or would like to be) viewed by the public and key external constituencies such as prospective students, legislators, community leaders, and alumni. Higher education scholarship in the domain of institutional marketing and branding is linked to this perspective (Anctil 2008; Boyles 2007; Litten 1980; Litten and Brodigan 1982; Hartley and Morphew 2008).

This chapter organizes the scholarship on organizational identity into four discrete narratives we label as *storytelling, saga*, *strategy*, and *market responsiveness*. Using this lens, we examine organizational identity across various historical periods and discuss conceptual frameworks used to guide a broad and diverse body of work from each perspective. Each of the four sections describes common research methodologies and the strengths and limitations of these analytic approaches. We situate each narrative within the larger higher education context, including key economic, demographic, social, and political forces that influence language and underlying assumptions. We conclude the chapter by identifying gaps in the literature and proposing future directions for research on organizational identity in higher education.

Organizational Identity as Storytelling

We classify early organizational identity literature as storytelling. In this era, external audiences were treated to popular, colorful narratives of collegiate life while internal constituents developed loyalty and a shared sense of purpose via institutional histories. This literature was developed in two distinct streams from the Civil War to World War II. We situate the first stream, popular media's take on collegiate culture and campus life, as those pieces written for external audiences. Capitalizing on rising middle-class interest in college going at the turn of the

century, articles, novels, advertisements, radio shows, and movies focused on campus life. Mostly earnest or lighthearted, rarely explicitly critical, this work communicated to the public that college was a significant rite of passage for those fortunate enough to partake of it. While leading scholars of the day debated the intellectual, moral, and public purposes of education (Dewey 1916; Hutchins 1936; Veblen 1918), popular media sought to project both the cachet and entertainment value of higher learning to wide audiences.

Institutional histories comprise the second major stream of research relevant to organizational identity before World War II. These works, which were internally focused, were often written by individuals with close ties to the institutions. Histories were important in defining and influencing individual and group behavior around a common mission. They helped members to make sense of, and derive meaning from, their organizations (Rudolph 1962).

Higher Education in the Popular Media: The Birth of the Collegiate Ideal

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, colleges and universities eschewed advertising, but still enjoyed exposure via popular media, which was awash in all things collegiate (Thelin 1976, 2004; Thelin and Townsend 1988). Novels, films, and magazine articles projected images of individual colleges and of the field as a whole and had a significant impact on the public's view of what higher education and campus life meant. Thus, any review of organizational identity literature in higher education necessarily includes artifacts of popular culture from this period.

Colleges and universities were portrayed by the popular media to a largely uninitiated public before World War II. Prior to the massification of higher education that occurred later in the twentieth century, the general public's image of higher education was formed primarily from the outside, looking in at a relatively elite and rarified world. Very few adults had, after all, experienced campus life. In 1869, when the federal government began collecting participation data, just one percent of young adults attended college. That proportion had grown to only two percent in 1900 and 10 % in 1940 (National Center for Education Statistics 1993).

Until the latter part of the nineteenth century, the US economy was fueled primarily by agriculture and small business. People worked the farms they were born on or in the trades in which they apprenticed. Relatively few men other than the independently wealthy or those training for the educational and clerical professions had much use for the classical and theological curricula promoted by many colleges (Cohen and Kisker 2010). Influential Americans, wrote Riesman (1956), "worshipped the plainly practical, the self-made, the ruggedly unscholarly" (p. 29). To the extent that typical Americans thought about colleges, they thought of them in a mostly negative light (Clark 2010).

The years between 1860 and 1944 transformed the higher education field and, simultaneously, the public's conception of its utility and value. Fueled by population growth, territorial expansion, railroad construction, rapid industrialization, discovery of natural resources, establishment of frontier communities, and technological innovation in agriculture and manufacturing, a growing, more professionally minded middle class came to see college as practically, economically, and socially useful (Cohen and Kisker 2010). This period saw the "rise of a more elaborate educational structure" (Brubacher and Rudy 1997, p. 143). Institutions became more diverse in many ways. The need for new knowledge, especially in science, led to the founding of functional, German-inspired institutions such as Cornell University (1865) and Johns Hopkins University (1876). During the same era, new groups began to participate in higher education. Women's colleges such as Vassar (1861) and Smith College (1871) were established, and Howard University (1867) and Spelman College (1881) were among the dozens of historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) that opened their doors. Denominational and "hilltop" schools dotted the frontier landscape. In turn, the public began to revise old ways of thinking about opportunity, status, and success (Bledstein 1976). A "revolution" was afoot in US higher education (Metzger 1955, p. 3).

The boosterism and tradition-building on college campuses that marked this period captured the public's attention in new ways and birthed the concept of the "collegiate ideal." The adoption of institutional colors and mascots, hymns, anthems, also called 'alma maters,' [was] "designed to make one feel part of a campus tribe at athletic events and reunions," (Thelin 2004, p. 160) even if you weren't a student or alumnus. Campus life was newly invigorated, with an emphasis on joining and belonging. Clubs proliferated. *A cappella* ensembles were born, starting with the Whiffenpoofs at Yale, and imitated by the Dartmouth Aires, Princeton Nassoons, and Smith College Smiffenpoofs. Harvard's Hasty Pudding burlesque shows, founded in 1795, attracted national attention. During this "golden age of the college," (Thelin 2004, p. 155) the American public was captivated by the "elusive institutional spirit" widely on display (p. 157).

Collegiate life during this period was marked by exciting new traditions and events that served to highlight institutional uniqueness. Campus calendars were filled with events promoting ceremony, pageantry, and large crowds, including newly established Founder's days and Homecoming weekends. Many were short-lived, but some of those deemed not too dangerous, unsafe, expensive, or culturally inappropriate survive today. The Princeton-Rutgers game of 1869, for example, paved the way for public affection for intercollegiate athletics. Cornell University's annual Dragon Day, born in 1901, continues to feature a giant creature imagined, built, and paraded through campus by architecture students. Carnegie Mellon University's Buggy Sweepstakes, established in 1920 and still popular today, encourages feats of engineering and levity as student groups compete to design and race pushcarts.

This national preoccupation with college was initially stoked by colleges themselves, but soon thereafter, college mania was manufactured for mass consumption by people and entities outside higher education. Madison Avenue

copywriters, Hollywood film producers, radio personalities, and New York literary agents were among those painting a picture of college life that was at once glamorous, manly, and madcap. This amounted to scarcely less than a total image makeover of higher education's image in the media (Clark 2010). For most of the nineteenth century, magazines had disparaged the "college man" as indolent, pretentious, and effeminate. In contrast, as the century drew to a close and the twentieth century began, the same individual was heralded as jaunty and destined for success. A 1908 advertisement in *Collier's Weekly*, for example, featured "Harvard Clothes" that were said to "mark a new era in the proper appareling of young men. They possess exclusively a snap, dignity, and correctness that is best described by the phrase 'well groomed.'" A contemporary issue of *The Saturday Evening Post* hawked "Adler's Collegian Clothes," which claimed to "possess every desirable feature of present-day fashion, but no indication of 'freakish' extremes" (Clark 2010, p. 168).

Movies of the day brought the college man to life. *Brown of Harvard* (Conway 1926) featured a handsome athletic hero, a scrawny but loyal sidekick, a professor's beautiful daughter, and a wholesome moral message. In *The Plastic Age* (Ruggles 1925), shot at Pomona College, a clean-cut scholar athlete was nearly corrupted by a flirty flapper played by Clara Bow. Frank Merriwell was the prototype for the genre, the lead character for a series of stories first appearing in *Tip Top* magazine in 1896, later in radio shows, and ultimately in the serial film, *The Adventures of Frank Merriwell* (Smith 1936). Merriwell was the fictionalized collegiate ideal: a humble, temperate, yet indomitable Yale athlete who solves mysteries and rescues people from harm while keeping up with his studies.

Other popular films relished the opportunity to poke fun at such clichés and, in the process, highlighted the new activities gaining popularity on campus. In *Jack Spurlock, Prodigal* (Harbaugh 1918), the protagonist was expelled for bringing his pet bear to college. Hollywood's biggest stars routinely portrayed fun-loving, mischievous students during the 1930s and 1940s. Jack Benny's Babbs Babberly, a student at Oxford, impersonated an old woman in *Charley's Aunt* (Mayo 1941). Mickey Rooney and Esther Williams swirled through collegiate romantic misadventures in *Andy Hardy's Double Life* (Seitz 1942). Laurel and Hardy took aim at college pranks in *A Chump at Oxford* (Goulding 1940). In *Blondie Goes to College* (Strayer 1942), Blondie's husband Dagwood enrolls in college to keep his job at Dithers Construction Company; typical of Dagwood, he made the crew team but ended up in jail. Judy Garland debuted in *Pigskin Parade* (Butler 1936), in which the Yale football team was trounced by Texas State University. In perhaps the best-known football farce of the period—if not all time—the Marx Brothers' *Horse Feathers* (McLeod 1932) concludes with Chico, Harpo, Groucho, and Zeppo charging through the end zone in a horse-drawn chariot.

Compared with what was portrayed on the silver screen, novels of this era presented a more nuanced and complex version of college. They offered scholars some important perspectives on the field (Anderson and Thelin 2009; Lyons and Moore 1962; Kramer 2004) and valuable points of triangulation with other data from the period (Thelin and Townsend 1988). Novels opened a window into the

"customs, rituals, jargon, fashions, and rounds of life within the American campus" (Thelin and Townsend 1988, p. 202). Leveraging the increased access to higher education, some stories offered hope for characters struggling to overcome class barriers, as in Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* (1895) and William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936). Still, college was often presented through a lens of privilege, as in Flandrau's *Harvard Episodes* (1897) and Fitzgerald's *This Side of Paradise* (1996, 1920). In the latter, protagonist Amory Blaine mused, "I think of all Harvard men as sissies, like I used to be, and all Yale men as wearing big blue sweaters and smoking pipes … and Princeton as being lazy and good-looking and aristocratic—you know, like a spring day. Harvard seems sort of indoors—" (p. 17).

Nonfiction literature from the period also asserted points of differentiation among specific colleges with regard to culture, commitment, and ethos. Starting in the 1890s, for example, magazines and book publishers produced "campus portraits" of individual colleges, meant to highlight their unusual or unique features. These vignettes foreshadowed later attempts by the popular press to produce college guides. As Thelin observed (1976):

> Journalists assumed the role of amateur anthropologists who explained to laymen the unique patterns, customs, and activities of a given college. Writers recognized that public interest in these institutions was not confined to forms and functions but also involved and demanded discussion of the elusive institutional spirit. (p. 9)

The media's portrayal of higher education during this period of great growth and promise penetrated the national psyche and contributed significantly to prevailing popular notions about college. Neither scholarly nor marketing-driven, these offerings entertained and built the stature and identity of colleges and universities. From the lilac silk neckties sported by the fictional freshman Dink Stover at Yale (Johnson 1911) to Buster Keaton's flailing courtship and athleticism at make-believe Clayton College (Horne 1927), to the caps, canes, and banjos advertised in *Colliers and the Saturday Evening Post* (Clark 2010), media artifacts of the period projected some real, and many fanciful, images to external audiences. They imposed and shaped public notions about the central, enduring, and distinctive identities of individual colleges and college life as folklore.

Institutional Histories: A Single Grand Story Line

Rich and varied institutional histories aimed at internal audiences emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. These volumes represent the first attempts by colleges and universities to tell their own stories. They remain today among the most interesting and readily available secondary sources on institutional identity in higher education. Typically written by institutional administrators, faculty, or clergy for internal constituents including students, parents, and alumni, their purpose was to establish historical record and build pride of association. Known as "house histories" (Rudolph 1962, p. xviii), they were sometimes written in the first person plural and—like today's more sophisticated marketing materials—often

included photos or drawings of cherished founders, texts of first lessons, auspicious inaugural addresses, mottos, and fight songs. If there is a purpose to be discerned from institutional histories of the era, it is that they brought together people and events in a single grand story line. They identified and amplified central commitments, triumph over adversity, and sense of legacy—even destiny. In organizational identity terms, the house history enabled a college to proclaim "this is who we are" by showing "this is who we have always been."

A Denison University centennial history (Shepardson 1931) is typical of the genre in its coverage of the ebbs and flows of institutional vitality. Written by a descendent of one of the school's early deacons, the book chronicled Denison's founding as a denominational literary and theological institute under the Jackson administration and recounted 100 years of personalities, crises, and resolutions. Milestones included the "stress and storm" of an early presidency (p. 61); uncertainty as to where to permanently situate the campus; a name change in honor of a local farmer who contributed $10,000; successful "agitation" for the admission of female students (p. 181); tensions over the "Christian character" of the faculty (p. 308); and "dark years" of low enrollment, "when friends were scarce and the future of the college seemed doubtful" (p. 417). Excerpts of speeches and correspondence capture the distinctiveness of Denison's collective personality, described as its "divine purpose" by the incoming president of 1926 (p. 352).

Meant for audiences that had experienced life on campus, institutional histories from this era attached special—even spiritual—significance to campus ethos, tradition, values, symbols, places, or events. Many histories brim (or even run over) with pride, metaphor, and sentimentality. For example, *Yale College: An Educational History* (Pierson 1952) opened: "Yale was a name: a living legend. And Yale College was its center" (p. 3). Another history, *Berea's First Century* (Peck 1955) began more lyrically:

> Berea's Fay Forest may well stand as a symbol of the College, for out in the hills regardless of winter's cold hand on oaks and anemones alike the forest continues to live because of its underground roots in the soil. In the Berea story, buildings, equipment, courses of study, labor adjuncts, and even instruction itself depend for their value upon the underlying intellectual and spiritual roots. (p. vii)

Beyond the turn of the twentieth century, institutional histories remained a vital component of identity literature geared toward institution building. One hundred years after many land-grant, denominational, and hilltop colleges were established, histories were published as part of centennial celebrations (Dethloff 1975; Lund 1963; Miller 1952; Ross 1958). Two hundred years after the founding of the earliest colleges, still more histories also appeared (Curran 1993; Dyer 2004; Ellison 2009; Miner 1954). These celebratory volumes often had titles evoking place, tradition, or spirit. Centennial histories of Manhattan College and Calvin Colleges, for example, were titled *The Tree Bore Fruit* (Gabriel 1953) and *Promises to Keep* (Timmerman 1975), respectively. A bicentennial history of Middlebury College was titled *The College on the Hill* (Bain 1999). Marking the 125th anniversary of Gustavus Adolphus College, the institution's chaplain wrote a book of reflections under the title *Kingdom of Identity* (Elvie 1987).

Overall, the collection of works we place in the storytelling frame largely exists to increase pride and loyalty for the institution and inculcates organizational members with a sense of purpose, long-term narrative, and legacy to future generations. Institutional histories were very important to mission building and strengthening campus culture before 1960, and they remain so today. These writings remind constituents of deeply held values that are important to their communities and alma maters. They help to build internal loyalty and pride, and for members of campus communities, they help to answer the question "who are we?"(Albert and Whetten 1985).

Methodology and Analytic Approaches

The identity-related literature in higher education prior to 1960—whether a popular portrayal of campus life or institutional history—is largely informal, historical, and qualitative in nature. That which was not commercially derived came from individuals often deeply embedded in institutions. The work has limitations, typically as a function of its lack of methodological rigor and the subjectivity and varying interests of those who left it behind. That said, the material is extensive, includes many voices, and reaches across media. Without the benefit of large datasets, surveys, case studies, and statistical or critical analysis, and without generating theory of note, the work reveals much to scholars of organizational identity. It shows how colleges and universities were perceived from the outside and experienced from within. Uniqueness, mission, and narrative come through in a composite picture of extraordinary richness. Without scholarly methods of formal analysis, the work nevertheless lays a useful foundation for later work in the field of organizational studies.

Organizational Identity as Saga

The second perspective on organizational identity in higher education appeared in the mid-twentieth century and is characterized by the first studies that drew on social science theories and formal methodologies to examine institutional identity in higher education. These studies extended the storytelling work of the previous era by unpacking from a sociological perspective how identity was understood and negotiated within the walls of the academy.

During this period, colleges and universities began expressing their identities in new and innovative ways. As Kerr noted at the time, "universities in America are at a hinge of history; while connected with their past, they are swinging in another direction" (2001, 1963, p. xi). For some time, higher education's new directions had been uncertain. External conditions had changed dramatically, placing new expectations, pressures, and constraints on higher learning. The country had emerged from

the war economically and militarily strong, but Cold War tensions brought the need for greater technological and scientific competitiveness. The atomic bomb prompted the urgent call for international peace and cooperation while Sputnik challenged the USA's global preeminence in science. The majority of Americans enjoyed greater opportunity and prosperity, but racism, sexism, and poverty suffered by a minority highlighted a raft of social ills. For solutions to these and other problems, Americans turned to higher education.

In response, universities expanded and became significantly more diverse between 1945 and 1970. Multiplication and differentiation of institutions was fueled by returning veterans, greater access for women and minorities, increased government financial aid, and baby boomer matriculation (Geiger 1999). Federal and state support to institutions reached new highs (Witkowski 1974). Graduate programs expanded. The job and compensation outlook for faculty was never better. Colleges found themselves in a "seller's market" with no bubble in sight (Hefferlin 1970, p. 519).

The growth of higher education and its acknowledged importance in real and metaphorical arms races exposed a paucity of data and analysis on its operations and outcomes (Sanford 1962). Recognizing this, government agencies and other groups began to collect data and disseminate reports with frequency and rigor. Under the aegis of the National Center for Education Statistics, the first Higher Education General Information Survey (HEGIS) was fielded in 1966, to gather comprehensive data on US colleges and universities. In 1967, Clark Kerr took the helm of the fledgling Carnegie Commission on Higher Education, whose purpose was to evaluate US higher education and make suggestions for its improvement. The Commission's reports during this period significantly influenced scholarly research in the field (Elton and Smart 1983).

Higher education, at this time, was largely an unstudied field. Much of the higher education research conducted during this period concerned such fundamental topics as financing, governance, participation, curricula, and the student experience. Sociological inquiry into organizations was in its infancy, and the rise of this disciplinary work created methods with which to study colleges and universities in a more scholarly way. Work undertaken in economics, psychology, sociology, and business would also have a bearing on the study of organizational identity in general and in higher education in specific.

Colleges and Universities as Social Systems

A distinctive feature of this era was the application of organizational science to better understand the inner workings of colleges and universities. In the 1950s, Talcott Parsons and Philip Selznick were among the thinkers who contributed a foundational understanding of organizations and whose work helped create mechanisms through which to study colleges and universities in a more scholarly way. Parsons asserted the "primacy of orientation to the attainment of a specific goal" as

the feature that sets organizations apart from other social groups (1956, p. 64). Citing governments, hospitals, and universities as exemplars, he defined the organization in a specifically environmental context:

> An organization is a system which, as the attainment of its goal, "produces" an identifiable something which can be utilized in some way or another by the "system"; that is, the output of the organization is, for some other system, an input. (p. 65)

Similarly, Selznick (1957) distinguished between the "technical" and "natural" dimensions of organizations and specified how an organization or organizational type can take on values and become something more:

> As an organization acquires a self, a distinctive identity, it becomes an institution. This involves the taking on of values, ways of acting and believing that are deemed important for their own sake. From then on self-maintenance becomes more than bare organizational survival; it becomes a struggle to preserve uniqueness in the face of new problems and altered circumstances. (p. 21)

The work of Parsons, Selznick, and others suggested the need to study colleges and universities as social institutions. Others took up the call. In 1962, Sanford edited a volume of essays under the title *The American College: A Psychological and Social Interpretation of the Higher Learning.* Although its main topics included students, academic programs, interactions between students and faculty, the effects of college, and higher education in the societal context, Sanford called for the development of more theory regarding the "structure and functioning of institutions" in their social setting and "intensive, probably also long-term studies of the inner workings of educational institutions" (pp. 1012–1013).

In a paper called "The College as a Social System," Pervin (1967) described higher education organizations as systems and organisms and highlighted the importance of integration and agreement on goals. Referencing the anthropologist Margaret Mead, he underscored the challenges of reconciling "human impulses" and "social forms" and stressed the need for compatibility between individuals and their environments (p. 318). In a similar vein, Pettigrew (1979) investigated the internal languages and long-running stories of organizations, bringing to the foreground the "expressive social tissue" that "gives tasks meaning" (p. 574).

During the 1960s and 1970s, as social scientists asserted the value of normative and interpersonal togetherness in organizations, it was noted that higher education organizations presented idiosyncratic barriers to cohesion, loyalty, and identification. One of these idiosyncrasies centered on the role of faculty and the nebulous nature of academic work. Some scholars of this era noted the "slowness" and "sogginess" of academe and its impact on organizational leadership (Bennis 1973, p. 393) while others bemoaned "guild" loyalty among faculty (Gardner 1965, p. 393). Ikenberry (1972) cited the tension in academic communities between organizational and individual allegiances. He blamed unclear goals arising from the "intangible nature of the task, its extreme complexity and variability, and the tendency of the end product to be highly perishable" (p. 25). Calling educational organizations "loosely coupled systems," Weick (1976) asserted that professional faculty identify more closely with their individual disciplinary fields than with their educational institutions.

Amid such lines of inquiry and commentary, Burton Clark published *The Distinctive College* (1970). Influenced by Selznick and other organizational theorists, Clark was fascinated by the college as an organizational form. The book offered rich and deep ethnographic exploration of the historic and contemporary organizational essence of three iconic and distinctive colleges: Antioch, Swarthmore, and Reed. The work was groundbreaking, not least for its qualitative case study methodology, which helped to uncover important but largely informal and nonrational dimensions of life in these extraordinary communities.

Clark's thesis was that distinctiveness derives from a college's passion, personality, and commitment to ideas and principles. He proposed that a unique and compelling institutional narrative, or "saga," results from innovative and charismatic leadership, inspired personnel, original programs that align with deeply held values, a strong network of social support, and robust student subcultures. A distinctive institution breeds a type of "quiet fanaticism," he wrote (1970, p. 253), and this spirit becomes part of the organization, contributing to its unique values and structures. Defining the essence at the core of a college, Clark used several terms, including not only *distinctiveness* and *saga* but also *character.* Concluding his introduction to the original edition, he summed up with language that built on Selznick's: "The organization with a saga is only secondarily a social entity characterized by plan and reason. It is first of all a matter of the heart, a center of personal and collective identity" (p. 9).

Preparing *The Distinctive College,* Clark immersed himself in college histories and gathered firsthand accounts from individuals associated with his three particularly unusual and storied institutions. He reported an almost cult-like phenomenon within these college communities, in which members "behave as if they knew a beautiful secret that no one outside the lucky few could ever share" (p. 235) and where institutional traditions and myths have the "capacity to make strong men cry in the glare of the afternoon gathering as well as in the darkness of the lonely hours" (p. 235). Clark's piercing analysis was a watershed in the development of literature on organizational identity in higher education.

Clark's conceptualization of the construct of organizational saga departed from the descriptive and celebratory nature of institutional histories in important ways. First, his method of analysis employed social science techniques and rigorous qualitative methods. Institutional histories, as noted earlier in the chapter, were generally descriptive works designed to celebrate rather than critique the college or university in question. Histories were designed for internal audiences, as a means of marshaling sentiment and building excitement. *The Distinctive College*, on the other hand, was an application of contemporary organizational theory and was instrumental in making the point that organizations can become institutions if infused with values and character that outlast their leaders. Perhaps most importantly, institutional histories were a story told from *within*, while Clark's organizational saga was "discovered" by a third-party observer conducting ethnographic-like analysis of a central phenomenon that could be documented and shown to be credible.

Importantly, Clark's work on the distinctive college also appeared as a journal article in *Administrative Science Quarterly* in 1972. His article, entitled "The

Organizational Saga in Higher Education" is considered by many as being part of the early canon of higher education literature. In discussing the initiation and fulfillment of saga, Clark (1972) summarized this concept in understanding the ethos of distinctive colleges:

> An organizational saga is a powerful means of unity in the formal place. It makes links across internal divisions and organizational boundaries as internal and external groups share their common belief. With deep emotional commitment, believers define themselves by their organizational affiliation, and in their bond to other believers they share an intense sense of the unique. (p. 183)

Works by scholars such as Selznick, Parsons, Pervin, and Clark formed a legacy that would serve as a central starting point for other scholars for studying higher education as formal organizations. These scholars provided a bridge from the earlier era of informal storytelling to examining colleges and universities as distinctive entities, important to developing the expanding organizational theory literature. In doing so, scholars of the era helped to formalize the study of organizational identity in higher education, providing new analytic frames and methodological tools to assess and understand institutional culture and identity.

Organizational Identity as Strategy

While the decade of the 1960s was known as higher education's "golden age," the sector would be referred to as a "troubled giant" a decade later (Jencks and Riesman 1977; Thelin 2004). The shift in fortune for higher education after the 1960s can be attributed to a number of challenges the mature industry faced, including an uncertain economy, demographic changes, and loss of public confidence. Legislators and the general public were reeling from the aftermath of student protests and discontent on campus. The violence, language, and unconventional dress of students of the period raised questions among politicians about whether rebellious college students were worth the expenditure. These perspectives coincided with economic instability, as the US economy of the 1970s and 1980s faced soaring inflation, high unemployment, oil crises, wage and price controls, loss of markets to Japanese and German goods, and corporate downsizing (Lazerson 1997).

New reports calling into question the income returns to higher education were issued and higher education faced a crisis of confidence. Among the most prominent of these works was Freeman's (1976), *The Overeducated American*, which made the case that a college degree was no longer a safe bet for economic success and might not represent a worthwhile investment. Such perspectives were captured by national media outlets such as *Newsweek*, which that ran an eye-catching headline asking "Who Needs College?" (*Newsweek*, April 26, 1976).

A growing number of voices criticizing the management and priorities of the academy fueled this growing uncertainty. Complaints grew that undergraduate teaching was being neglected and that college was inaccessible to a growing number of minority students (Lazerson 1997). Colleges and universities became

increasingly bloated, impersonal, bureaucratic, and fragmented (Simpson 1979; Thelin 2004). The massification of the era gave way to accusations of institutional irrelevance and alienation (Goldberg and Linstromberg 1969). Reports such as *The New Depression in Higher Education* (Cheit 1971) called into question whether higher education could manage itself, suggesting that approximately two-thirds of the nation's public and private, two-year and four-year colleges were in financial trouble.

The greatest fear of all, however, was the forecast of the decline in the number of traditional students available for college. Due to the "birth dearth" of the era, experts forecasted that between 10 and 30 % of America's 3,100 colleges would merge or close by 1995, many of them small private liberal arts colleges that were unique to the US higher education system (Astin and Lee 1972). Predictions of declining enrollment and a weaker employment outlook for graduates prompted many colleges and universities to brace for a more competitive marketplace. By the mid-1970s, "the age of the professor gave way to the age of the student or client" (Mayhew 1974, p. 166).

As the higher education sector matured in the 1970s and 1980s, so did the scholarship on organizational identity in higher education. This section describes several organizational identity works from the 1970s through roughly 2000 that were primarily written for internal audiences, namely, faculty and college administrators. Compared to the storytelling and saga literature of an earlier era, these works more carefully considered the external environment that was shaping institutional priorities and strategies. As discussed in the next sections, open systems perspectives began to guide the literature, and identity studies in higher education increasingly focused on institutional culture and the growing phenomenon of academic drift.

An Open Systems View of Higher Education

The challenges of the 1970s and 1980s produced scholarship examining colleges and universities in the context of changing environmental forces. As Peterson (1998) explained, colleges and universities were no longer conceived just as purposive, rational, or collegial organizations relatively free of external influence or conflict. Instead, they came to be viewed as political organizations with competing stakeholders at multiple levels—campus, state, and national (Baldridge 1971; Millett 1975; Bailey 1975). During this period, open systems theory became increasingly popular in the organizational theory literature, emphasizing the interdependence of the organization and its environment. The environment was viewed as the ultimate source of materials, energy, and information to maintain the survival of an organization (Scott 1992).

A series of studies with the open systems perspective sounded alarms about the need for college leaders to be more strategic in their management and operations. The most prominent of these works was George Keller's 1983 book, *Academic Strategy: The Management Revolution in American Higher Education*. In the

opening pages, Keller spoke of the "specter of decline and bankruptcy" (p. 3) facing higher education, detailing a list of financial and enrollment troubles faced by the public and private sectors. He described what he called a leadership crisis facing higher education, arguing that academic administrators must develop a skill set in planning and strategic decision-making. A particular problem was academic governance in that it was slow to respond to the new challenges of the area, leaving administrators alone to retrench their campuses (Fincher 1982).

In his foreword to Keller's book, Richard Cyert (former President of Carnegie Mellon University) acknowledged the skepticism of academics toward strategic management. Still, he touted how scholarly contributions in the areas of finance, operations, decision-making, marketing, social forecasting, and strategic planning made it possible for colleges to thrive in this new environment. *Academic Strategy* was a precursor to a body of scholarship on the subject of institutional adaptation, which explored ways in which colleges and universities were beginning to adapt to a changing environment and new management practices. This work explored higher education's salient environmental features, including the economy, politics, and technology (Cameron and Tschirhart 1992; Dill and Sporn 1995; Gumport and Pusser 1997; Gumport and Sporn 1999; Massy 1996; Peterson and Dill 1997). Adaptation studies explored retrenchment (Cameron and Tschirhart 1992; Zusman 1994), restructuring, (Gumport 1993; Rhoades 1995; Slaughter 1995), improved performance, reorganization, and redefined missions (Dill and Sporn 1995; Gumport and Pusser 1997; Peterson 1995). The majority of these studies were both descriptive and prescriptive and explored ways that institutions might adapt to environmental changes. Not all were as positive about the utility of the new knowledge cited by Cyert. Many studies were explicit in identifying and criticizing the ways in which strategic planning, for example, was used subjectively to eliminate programs that traditionally enrolled more women or minorities (Gumport 1993; Morphew 2000; Slaughter and Silva 1985).

Organizational Identity and Culture

Only 2 years after the publication of *Academic Strategy*, the term "organizational identity" was officially coined by Albert and Whetten (1985) to describe aspects of organizations viewed as enduring or central to organizational actors. Soon research emanating from this perspective provided evidence about the power of organizational culture in achieving strategic interests of an organization. For example, studies found that organizational identity fostered loyalty among employees (Adler and Adler 1987; Bhattacharya et al. 1995) and decreased turnover (O'Reilly and Chatman 1986). Contributing to this concept, Ashforth and Mael (1989) suggested that the perception of oneness with an organization ties the individual to organizational successes and failures. For example, research that examined the behavior of Port Authority employees in response to the problem of homelessness found that organizational members gain self-esteem from their organizations and are motivated

personally to preserve a positive organizational image or repair a negative one that is consistent with the essence of the organization (Dutton and Dukerich 1991). Studies like this one provided evidence about the importance of leveraging institutional cultures to achieve institutional goals.

The emerging body of work on organizational identity appeared in tandem with several popular works that elevated organizational culture as a salient topic within the field of organizational studies. *In Search of Excellence* (Peters and Waterman 1982), *Theory Z* (Ouchi 1981), *Corporate Cultures* (Deal and Kennedy 1982), and *Organizational Culture and Leadership* (Schein 1985) became popular management books throughout the 1980s and examined how organizational belief systems, attitudes, rituals, and traditions shaped organizational life and performance. Cameron and Ettington (1988) were among the first group of higher education scholars to investigate how campus cultures related to various outcomes. They found that clan cultures within 4-year institutions were associated with high morale of faculty, staff, and students while ad-hocracy cultures more easily adapted to the environment. Market cultures were associated with resource acquisition. Using a two-stage randomized design, Smart and Hamm (1993) found similar patterns among two-year colleges, suggesting that campus culture may be leveraged to help achieve various institutional outcomes.

Campus culture continued as a theme in the organizational studies of the early 1980s. It often focused on how organizational actors made sense of the innovation and mission expansion that challenged the values and structure of their colleges and universities. This was especially present in the literature on liberal arts colleges, which explored how identities of independent institutions were changing in light of market forces and new pressures to survive (see Martin 1984; Jonsen 1984). Two particular studies illustrate classic examples of analyses that focused on how internal actors navigated changes in institutional identity. First, a qualitative study conducted by Wells and Picou (1982) explored the transition of a small, southern, white "finishing school" that eventually became a biracial, co-ed institution featuring innovative educational programs. The case study articulated the struggles in transformational change and shifting notions of the essence or centrality of the institution in transition.

Similarly, Chaffee's (1984) case study of three liberal arts colleges exposed how organizational actors were involved in adaptive changes within their institutions. She concluded that institutions making successful management changes were those where participants viewed the organization as both a social contract and organism. In such settings, leaders attend to participants' sense of meaning and satisfaction derived from membership in the organization while also attending to changing needs of the market. In her conclusions, Chaffee prescribed a combination of adaptive (sensitive to market) and interpretative approaches (values affirming) in helping distinctive colleges to succeed in the new landscape.

In the public sector, Levine's (1980) book, *Why Innovation Fails*, examined the interplay between organizational identity and adoption of innovative practices at SUNY-Buffalo. Employing case study methodology, Levine began his book by explaining that organizations possess unique personalities that are shaped by a

distinctive set of norms, values, and goals. He posited that boundary establishment was a tool through which organizations guard against external forces that may violate these commonly held norms, values, and goals.

Levine concluded that innovation occurs when "environmental change makes existing boundaries unworkable, when the organization fails to achieve desired goals, or when it is thought that goals can be better satisfied in another manner" (p. 12). For this to happen, the innovation must be both compatible with institutional values and be viewed as profitable to the organization generally or to organizational actors individually.

All three of the studies above are examples of works from the early 1980s that examined organizational identity in the context of adaptive changes within colleges and universities. On one hand, the findings illustrate how "what is central" to the organization may be leveraged to make changes within the institutions. On the other hand, they suggest that distinctive institutions may reject innovations that fail to incorporate interpretive approaches or are seen as incompatible or generally unprofitable to the institution (Chaffee 1984; Levine 1980).

Academic Drift

Studies of "academic drift" or "mission creep" are good examples of analyses focusing on identity changes within the academy. Such studies explored how institutional missions were evolving as colleges and universities responded to a changing environment. Specifically, many institutions with traditional missions began adding degree programs and expanding their portfolio of academic offerings in an effort—sometimes strategic, sometimes reactive and normative—to become more like their most successful brethren. Depending on where one chooses to look, the concept of academic drift may have originated in several places. One likely birthplace is David Riesman's *Constraint and Variety in American Education*, which was published in 1956. Riesman painted the famous description of the tendency of American higher education institutions to mimic others as a "snakelike procession." As an example, he cited the growth of the public comprehensive university, which, at the time he was writing, had morphed from normal school to state university:

> Once one enters, let us say, the state university league, this involves the full line of departments. People who come into the league to teach, having done graduate work elsewhere, bring with them an image of what a proper university should look like—and this image consists truly of castles in the air, not located on a particular, carefully studied terrain. (p. 36)

Riesman's (1956) conception of academic drift was echoed by Guy Neave (1979), who described it as "that process by which categories of students, usually of sub-degree level, are sloughed off the better to concentrate the resources of the institute upon degree—and in some cases, postgraduate—work" (p. 144). Riesman described the ongoing struggle between "locals" and "cosmopolitans" and how the practices and values of one (typically more prestigious) institution might seed other

campuses if the "itinerants" from places such as Oxford, Cambridge, or even Ames were able to overcome the tendency of the "home-guarders" to focus on activities tied to the institution's historic mission. Riesman's argument highlighted prestige and the primary role of faculty in governance and academic decision-making as the reason that "there will eventually be priest accountants and Notre Dame-trained physicists" (p. 58).

The concept of academic drift has been refined and discussed many times since Riesman's (1956) initial undertaking. In particular, work on the subject has highlighted the role of faculty and the pursuit of prestige and competition among universities, particularly those that aspire to research university status. Empirical work on the subject has used both qualitative and quantitative methods and several conceptual frameworks, including neo-institutional theory. While American scholars have worked on the topic, a significant amount of the research has been conducted in Europe.

The vast majority of the empirical work on the subject of academic drift has occurred since 1980. A concern among those who studied the tendency of colleges and universities to emulate the missions of more comprehensive and prestigious institutions was isomorphism or a loss of institutional diversity. One of the earliest empirical studies on academic drift in the USA diagnosed the problem as "vertical extension," because the authors concluded that the primary impetus for institutional mission change was the pursuit of graduate degree programs and their accordant status and that public institutions were even more susceptible to the drift disease (Schultz and Stickler 1965). Similarly, Robert Birnbaum's (1983) findings from a study of the US higher education system between 1960 and 1980 documented a loss of diversity in several institutional types, including those that served only undergraduate students, as private and public colleges strove toward university status. These studies and others (Berelson 1960; Lachs 1965; McConnell 1962) confirmed that while academic drift gained greater attention in the 1970s and 1980s, the phenomenon was very much present and perhaps related to the disorganized growth noted by Keller (1983) and other strategic planning advocates.

Research on academic drift sometimes focused on its function and outcomes in public higher education systems. Many state governing, planning, and coordinating boards had been established primarily as a shield against duplication of expensive degree programs—exactly the type of activity that institutions engaged in academic drift pursued as part of their expansion (Berdahl 1985; Millett 1975). The same concerns were echoed at the national level in countries where the federal government had primary responsibility for delivering and managing higher education and where there was evidence that the creation or reform of higher education systems contributed to greater isomorphism of mission (Meek 1991; Neave 1979).

Much like Riesman (1956), scholars who examined the phenomenon of academic drift with data—quantitative or qualitative—came to the conclusion that faculty and institutional norms that rewarded the dominant behavior of the group Riesman referred to as the "cosmopolitans" were the primary drivers of academic drift. For example, research using the 1987 National Survey of Postsecondary Faculty (NSOPF) identified salary mechanisms that served disproportionately to

reward faculty, even those at undergraduate teaching institutions, for their research productivity (Fairweather 1997). Likewise, interviews with faculty members involved in the creation of new undergraduate and graduate degree programs during the 1970s and 1980s that duplicated those already offered within their state or national system of higher education revealed that these faculty members were consciously striving to become more like their colleagues at more comprehensive or prestigious universities and were well aware that university ambitions and salary structures would reward their behavior (Morphew 1996; Morphew and Jenniskens 1999).

In sum, the demographic, economic, and political challenges facing higher education after the 1960s gave way to a growing body of higher education scholarship that focused on managing environmental uncertainties. Within this literature, scholars embarked on internally focused studies that explored ways in which institutional actors understood the essence of their institutions in the midst of innovation and change (Chaffee 1984; Levine 1980; Wells and Picou 1982). Researchers writing from this perspective documented shifts in the shape of higher education sectors, most notably liberal arts colleges that began to drift from their distinctive missions to accommodate career and professional education (Martin 1984; Jonsen 1984; Finkelstein et al. 1984; Pfnister 1984). Such studies foreshadowed later studies that explored the significance of organizational identity in relation to change strategies (Hatum and Pettigrew 2004; Whetten and Godfrey 1998).

Institutional Strategy and Communication with External Audiences

While internally focused works of the era called on colleges and universities to rethink their practices, new scholarship emerged analyzing how colleges and universities built their image with key stakeholders. This shift to the external reflected a new focus on strategic positioning for the purpose of distinguishing one institution from another in an increasingly competitive marketplace. Recruiting students and enhancing institutional prestige were the primary purposes of these studies.

Externally focused studies were largely linked to the field of marketing and had strong linkages to research on organizational image (Albert 1998; Puusa 2006). Institutional image was always an important component of higher education, but this began to accelerate with the emergence of reputational rankings marking institutional prestige. College and university rankings emerged as early as 1966 with national associations beginning to assign identity to certain types of institutions, based on reputation. Peterson (1998) observed that the American Council on Education may have legitimized the use of reputational studies as a way to bolster higher education's battered image (Cartter 1966; Roose and Anderson 1970). The work on academic drift demonstrated that even absent external rankings, faculty and institutional norms already promoted the tendency of colleges and universities to adopt programs and practices that mimicked more successful and prestigious institutions.

The growing pressure to become more prestigious, comprehensive, and selective prompted higher education scholarship that began to examine how institutions generated their "customer base" through marketing and communication. As early as 1972, higher education leaders predicted that institutions with stronger consumer orientation, better marketing research, and more sophisticated communication techniques would fare best in a resource-scarce environment (Krachenberg 1972). Thompson (1979) wrote that "institutional administrators can no longer afford to base resource allocations—course or program mix, faculty allocation, etc.—on vague notions or intradepartmental equity or campus balance" (p. 83). They must instead focus on what its customers want most "and adopt a market orientation" (p. 84).

By the early 1980s, companies like American College Testing (ACT) and the College Board offered marketing analysis services and admissions officers surveyed applicants about perceptions of their campus (Trusheim, Crouse, and Middaugh 1990). Litten (1980) was among the researchers who provided an early primer about marketing for academic audiences. In his article appearing in the *Journal of Higher Education*, he acknowledged that many academics eschewed marketing in collegiate contexts, but noted the growing place of marketing and its language in the academy:

> A new vocabulary is gaining respectability in academia. The terms have been appropriated from the field of Marketing and, although they still stick in many an academic throat, they are spreading rapidly through the system. Deans make references to "market research." "Market penetration," "positioning," and "market audits" spill from the lips of up-to-date admissions officers. Committees of various stripes ponder "strategies" appropriate to various "market segments." In the face of very real challenges, Marketing and Market Research have caught the fancy of academic administrators. (p. 40)

Litten's (1980) article was largely conceptual and examined the benefits and risks associated with marketing in higher education. At its most basic level, it was a "how to" and "what to avoid" piece that described common marketing strategies and warned academicians about some of the pitfalls.

A more sophisticated body of literature investigating marketing related themes began to emerge on the topic of college choice. Chapman (1981) provided one of the early conceptual pieces, theorizing that choice related to student background characteristics (aspirations/performance) and a set of external influences including people (parents, peers), and college characteristics. Importantly, his framework included institutional efforts to communicate with students through written materials and recruitment. However, he also noted that there was scant evidence suggesting that marketing was important in directing students' choice of college, perhaps due to the unsophisticated nature of marketing efforts during this period. Studies of the recruitment and promotional materials produced by colleges and universities during this period found that they were either written at too technical a level for most high school students or simply inaccurate (Johnson and Chapman 1979; Stark and Marchese 1978).

Scholars soon began to build and test statistical models to understand higher education enrollment patterns. In the majority of these studies, the students

themselves were the primary unit of analysis, with the aim of understanding what would lead them to select a particular college. For example, Cook and Zallocco (1983) examined students' criteria for selecting their colleges and universities, documenting the importance of academic reputation and faculty-student association in the recruiting process and its implications for marketing. Litten (1979) used frequency distributions and regression analyses to better understand a college's market position with students from specific geographic segments. Likewise, Trusheim, Crouse, and Middaugh (1990) specified a linear compensatory model to examine college applicants' attitudes and how they impacted enrollment decisions. The model suggested that students' attitudes and perceptions about specific colleges predicted enrollment outcomes.

Studies focused on colleges and universities as the unit of analysis investigated how sectors differentiated from one another according to reputation and other attributes. For example, Rowse and Wing (1982) employed factor analysis to investigate competing groups of campuses and attributes of prospective students in relation to various segments. They investigated whether students could be swayed to consider many campuses and the general stability of competitive groups within the SUNY system. Bruggink and Gambhir (1996) investigated the probability of students enrolling in various sets of institutions based on college reputation and student background characteristics. These studies highlighted the enrollment outcomes for institutions that rose or fell in prestige.

Some of these externally focused identity studies examined the congruence between institutional image among internal and external stakeholder groups. For example, Reiner and Robinson (1970) published results of an image perception survey where trustees and older alumni of a liberal arts college gave it higher ratings than did students and faculty. Beyer and Stevens (1975) developed and tested four models for predicting variability in perceptions of university departments and concluded that no individual group of factors can reliably predict the rise or fall of perceived prestige across all disciplines. At the state level, Biggs, Brown, and Kingston (1977) conducted a factor analysis of responses to a stratified, random sample survey and found a relationship between citizens' educational values and their satisfaction with a state university. Such studies made a link between state cultures and the perceived value of higher education.

Some scholars sought to understand how colleges fashioned their images with external constituents. Such studies typically focused on marketing materials. For example, Ragan and McMillan (1989) conducted a discourse analysis of 28 liberal arts viewbooks to understand the themes that guided communication with outside audiences. The authors found that the rhetoric of liberal arts colleges had adapted to the new needs of the consumer while aiming to preserve the uniqueness of the college. A more recent study of 48 viewbooks produced by a diverse set of colleges and universities produced more damning findings, suggesting that higher education institutions may have set aside distinctive messages in favor of more generic messages (Hartley and Morphew 2008).

Mission statements were another fruitful area of analysis. For example, Delucchi (1997) analyzed mission statements to assess the degree of uniqueness among 300

baccalaureate colleges. Unusual among the organizational identity literature for its utilization of quantitative methods, the study showed that liberal arts traditions were highlighted in the mission statements of even baccalaureate colleges that had evolved from liberal arts college to become dominated by professional programs. Delucchi (1997) speculated that accentuating the liberal arts tradition is not meant for internal audiences but rather to "highlight the repertoire of accepted rationalities for a higher education" (p. 423). The study suggests that mission statements communicate a broad set of interests among diverse stakeholders including accrediting agencies, rating guides, applicants, and the general public. Two recent studies of mission statements built on these findings suggested that colleges and universities use mission statements to signal identity to important external stakeholders while being careful to employ terms that are strategic in their nebulousness (Morphew and Hartley 2006; Taylor and Morphew 2010).

Another group of externally focused analyses critiqued marketing efforts of colleges within the context of their effects on prospective students. The most prominent example, a study of college choice by McDonough (1994), used extensive fieldwork, interviews, and a review of popular literature to understand the impact of the burgeoning admissions industry and how students navigated this process. Her research concluded that among high SES students, college choice was no longer a process of soul-searching but was becoming a high-stakes process drawing on professional support services to gain admission to colleges of their choice. Overall, McDonough (1994) suggested that high school students were increasingly "commodified" by enrollment managers, which represented a significant shift from previous generations. More recent qualitative studies of enrollment management and college choice have supported and fine-tuned McDonough's claims (Steinberg 2002; Stevens 2007).

Methodology and Analytic Approaches

Three groups of methods and analytic approaches were primarily used to forward studies of institutional strategy. Narrative, prescriptive works emerged as a "wake-up call" for institutions to be more strategic in their management and operations. Keller's (1983) book was among the most prominent of these pieces, which provided some strategies institutional leaders in moving their campuses ahead in a time of great uncertainty. Similarly, pieces like Litten's (1980) article on marketing provided a prescription to help college leaders think about how marketing and communications could bolster enrollment. These works provided an important primer for college leaders in strategic management but did not formally evaluate ways to infuse such ideas into academic culture.

In response to these limitations, a group of organizational identity studies emerged that relied on qualitative methods—often case studies—to describe how organizational actors negotiated changing institutional identities. Many of these works focused on internal notions of organizational identity, including Levine

(1980), Chaffee (1984), and Wells and Picou (1982), who investigated ways in which distinctive cultural aspects of colleges either leverage or thwart institutional change efforts. A unique strength of these studies is that they provided thick descriptions about the complex set of cultural and political processes associated with the preservation of identity. In this way, scholars began to understand the essence of the organization (Albert and Whetten 1985) and the role the campus actors played in preserving an overall system of beliefs. In some cases, qualitative studies were also being used to shed light on the new world of enrollment management and its impact on students and families (McDonough 1994).

Research on academic drift relied on positivistic frameworks and used both quantitative and qualitative methods to identify where and how academic drift was occurring at the institutional and system levels. Neo-institutional theory, propelled by DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) edited volume and Meyer and Rowan's (1977) important work, emerged in the late 1970s and 1980s as a dominant perspective among organizational sociologists and was used by scholars in several fields interested in understanding academic drift and the organizational behavior of universities (Covaleski and Dirsmith 1988; Galaskiewicz and Wasserman 1989; Haveman 1993; Morphew 1996; Morphew and Jenniskens 1999; Huisman 1997). The "iron cage" of isomorphism detailed by DiMaggio and Powell (1983) was a natural fit for the higher education arena, because it featured multiple and complementary forces that reinforced each other. There was general agreement in the field that government (coercive), faculty (normative), and prestige (mimetic) played prominent predictive roles in explaining how and why academic drift occurred. Resource dependence theory and economic frameworks were also used to demonstrate how academic drift could be explained by labor markets or reward structures (Fairweather 1997; Tolbert 1981).

Quantitative analysis emerged in the 1980s and 1990s and aimed to help campus leaders understand their target markets and probability of enrolling certain types of students. These studies examined both students as the unit of analysis (Cook and Zallocco 1983; Trusheim et al. 1990) and institutions themselves to create strategies for reaching intended markets (Rowse and Wing 1982; Bruggink and Gambhir 1996). Many of these studies were anchored within the topic of college choice, which investigated an array of individual, social, and institutional factors associated with choice decisions. The benefit of these studies is that they began to use large databases (including datasets produced the National Center for Education Statistics) to understand enrollment patterns among students and how institutional identity impacted these choices.

Organizational Identity as Market Responsiveness

Beginning with the new millennium, scholars documented how institutions began to engage in even more aggressive market-positioning and image-building strategies. This literature explored how institutions aimed to differentiate themselves

from competitors, attract students, grow revenue, and communicate to internal and external audiences about distinctive characteristics of their institutions. This perspective reflected a growing uneasiness and curiosity about ways in which colleges and universities were adapting to changing political, fiscal, and market realities. The resultant scholarship analyzed and lamented changes in the character of higher education.

The central force precipitating more intense market-focused activity relates to the changing context of financing public higher education. Mountains of commentaries, reports, and articles have documented declining state support for higher education, often expressing regret about the strained relationship between states and public colleges and universities. Between 1990 and 2010, the amount states spent on higher education per full-time equivalent enrollment (FTE) declined by 26.1 % (Quinterno 2012). Most recently, the "Great Recession" of 2008 has resulted in 29 states spending less on higher education than they did in the prior 5 years (Kelderman 2012). Summarizing the plight, many public university presidents have quipped, "We used to be state-supported, then we became state-assisted, and now we are state-located" (Breneman 2002, p. B7).

These seismic shifts in the financial landscape of public higher education have resulted in the emergence of market-sensitive, entrepreneurial institutions that are more aggressive in their pursuit of diverse forms of revenue. Hearn's (2003) report for the American Council on Education (ACE) discussed a range of creative revenue generating strategies that would have been inconceivable among most campuses only a decade earlier. These include categories of nontax support including instructional revenue (lifelong learning, test preparation, workforce training); research revenue (tech transfer, start-ups, business partnerships, incubators, research parks); pricing initiatives (user fees, differential pricing); human resources (compensation for revenue generation); franchising and sponsorship (tours, camp, logos); auxiliaries, facilities, real estate (athletic facility rental, debit cards, alumni services); and donors (appeals to donors in the USA and abroad). The adoption of these strategies would have important implications for a college or university's identity.

Governance changes that emerged from institutional attempts to seek greater fiscal autonomy from states had a significant impact on organizational identity in the early 2000s. The most prominent of these initiatives was the 2005 Restructuring Act in the Commonwealth of Virginia, which made Virginia institutions eligible for increased independence in exchange for meeting 11 performance goals. Governance changes such as these often prompted discussions about the changing character of public colleges and universities and what it would mean for the future of public higher education (Couturier 2006).

The influence of rankings on college and university behavior became more evident during this period. By 2007, *U.S. News & World Report's* "America's Best Colleges" website was generating millions of page views each month (Marklein 2007). Because of the power of *U.S. News* and other commercial outlets, colleges and universities became increasingly conscious about rankings, reputation, and prestige as it relates to attracting students and securing their identity among competing institutions.

The rise of for-profit higher education also prompted institutions to more carefully examine and communicate their unique place in the market. Online education expanded as technology improved during the 1990s, and enrollments began outpacing traditional colleges and universities during that decade (Cohen and Kisker 2010). Between 2000 and 2010, bachelor's degrees awarded by for-profit institutions grew by 418 % (Thompson 2011). In most cases, for-profit institutions were not viewed as having head-on competition with traditional institutions. Instead, they expanded the higher education market by developing unique niches among previously underserved groups (Breneman 2002; Winston 1999). Winston (1999) forecasted, however, that the competition would affect colleges unevenly, with institutions with meager financial resources and modest student subsidies having the most to lose. Meanwhile, he suggested that wealthier institutions would be forced to clarify "what it is they sell" and "who is allowed to produce it" (p. 18). Winston's prognosis was prophetic: subsequent scholarship demonstrated that colleges and universities of all types became increasingly sensitive about their market niche and how this was communicated to external audiences.

The precipitous shift toward market-like activity challenged some higher education leaders of the era to launch a national conversation about the civic roles of US colleges and universities. This occurred because students were increasingly regarded as customers, and their overall levels of civic involvement diminished. An emphasis on earnings—the private benefits of higher education—defined the primary value of going to college (Hartley 2009). In an attempt to reverse these trends, dozens of initiatives were started by networks of higher education practitioners and scholars to reclaim the civic identities of colleges and universities. Among them, Campus Compact, a coalition of campuses supporting the civic roles of higher education, was launched by three college presidents in 1985. As of 2008, Campus Compact had grown to over 1,100 members, representing a quarter of all higher education institutions (Hartley 2009).

Fueling this civic resurgence were several reports that declared civic engagement to be a salient feature of twenty-first-century higher education (American Association of State Colleges and Universities 2002; Boyte and Hollander 1999; Kellogg Commission 1999). By 2006, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching created a new classification of "community-engaged institutions" that were characterized by their commitment to the principles of engagement. The first classification included 77 institutions in 2006 and has since grown to 312 institutions included under the broad category of "community engagement, outreach, and partnerships" (Carnegie Foundation 2013).

A Struggle for the Heart and Soul of Higher Education

With the surge of changes underway in the twenty-first century, college leaders faced the difficult challenge of successfully weaving together their historic identities and civic responsibilities with new fiscal and market realities. In this context,

many organizational identity works appeared as full-length books that critiqued these changes, seeking to understand how they might be interpreted from both internal and external perspectives. Internally focused analyses and critiques were written for academic audiences to make sense of the changes underway in their own departments and broader campuses. To that end, these works largely examined how internal organizational actors (faculty, students, and administrators) derived meaning, understanding, and interpretations about events within their institutions. Such accounts were typically disapproving, often condemning the privatization or corporatization of public higher education and how such changes were adversely affecting the life of students, scholars, and the historic missions of state institutions. Overall, they challenged readers to consider and protect "what is central" in their institutions as it relates to traditionally held educational values and practices (Lyall and Sell 2005).

One group of internally focused works intensely criticized the corporatization of the academy, articulating its adverse impact on academic values central to traditional colleges and universities. Among the most theoretically grounded pieces was Slaughter and Leslie's (1999) *Academic Capitalism: Politics, Policies, and the Entrepreneurial University.* In this book, the authors introduced the theory of academic capitalism, which broadly argues that the academy has shifted from serving broader public needs to focus on profit acquisition, leveraged through the diverse products of the academy. The authors cited evidence about the growing number of patents, faculty equity in companies, peer review that now included industry as peers, and institutions being more closely linked to economic development initiatives. The authors warned readers about a shift to an academic capitalist regime, which was fundamentally changing the identity of American colleges and universities as stewards of the public good. These themes were echoed in more recent (and less scholarly) books with provocative titles such as *University, Inc.: The Corporate Corruption of Higher Education* (Washburn 2005) and *The Lost Soul of Higher Education: Corporatization, the Assault on Academic Freedom, and the End of the American University* (Schrecker 2010).

Another group of internally focused studies were broader in scope, examining the changing character of public higher education and the implications of becoming quasi-privatized entities. For example, books authored by economists, *What's Happening to Public Higher Education*? (Ehrenberg 2007) and *The True Genius of America at Risk: Are We Losing Our Public Universities to De Facto Privatization*? (Lyall and Sell 2005), used quantitative data to illustrate how declines in state support for higher education were affecting public colleges and universities. The authors documented the inverse relationship between declining state support and increasing tuition, tightening enrollments, cuts in financial aid, increased attrition rates, declining faculty salaries, and diminishing capacity to serve the public good. Such accounts warned public university colleagues about how public higher education was changing dramatically from previous eras of sustained support.

Still, other works in this genre were more strategic and instructional, offering a broader view about ways in which institutions might understand and leverage their identity to assist campus planning. Zemsky et al. (1997), for example, developed a

model for mapping market segments of higher education which ranged from convenience/user-friendly colleges to name-brand colleges. Based on their quantitative analysis of several student factors (e.g., yield, selectivity, tuition), the strategic mapping tool was designed to help institutional leaders understand their segment and likely competitors in each sector. The taxonomy was espoused as a way to track changes in the market and facilitate purposeful planning to strengthen one's market niche. Similarly, DesJardins (2002) created predictive models to segment an institution's most promising group of prospective students to target for recruitment and telemarketing efforts. His work offered leaders insights on ways to make more efficient use of limited recruiting and marketing resources.

Derek Bok's (2003) *Universities in the Marketplace: The Commercialization of Higher Education* was less tactical and more philosophical, examining how institutions might preserve their values in the face of inevitable entrepreneurism. The book, written by the former Harvard president, explored the origins of commercialization in the academy and detailed some of the strengths and limits of adapting business models to academic settings. Bok examined the benefits and costs of commercialization and ultimately emphasized setting limits, protecting research integrity, and preserving educational values. Similarly, Kirp's (2003) *Shakespeare, Einstein, and the Bottom Line* featured a series of vignettes about institutions that were leveraging prestige, branding, and market forces to move them ahead in the academic pecking order. The book invoked questions about how institutions might harness entrepreneurism without compromising core institutional principles.

Another group of studies examined organizational identity as it relates to "striving institutions" seeking to move up in the prestige hierarchy (O'Meara 2007, p. 122). These studies highlighted the latent consequences of prestige maximization and academic drift. These consequences include mismatched faculty behavior and rewards (Dubrow et al. 2006; Melguizo and Strober 2007) and institutional reallocations away from core functions (Morphew and Baker 2004). Gonzales's (2013) study of faculty sensemaking at a striving Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) highlights the gap between faculty expectations, historic mission, and administrative intentions. Thacker's (2005) book, *College Unranked: Ending the College Admissions Frenzy*, provides an unflattering exposé into how admissions practices have been altered to increase rankings, fed by pressures to maximize prestige and revenue.

In summarizing this literature, we note that the notion of "what is central" in an organization (Albert and Whetten 1985) was increasingly viewed as malleable, normative, and influenced by external forces, primarily related to market influences. Specifically, many of these works challenge the notion that organizational identity can be viewed as a single unifying notion but instead might consist of multiple identities that are reshaped and negotiated. One study explored this perspective in the context of departmental mergers, examining how structural changes within a college related to identity formation of a new department. In framing their analysis, Mills et al. (2005) summarized their perspective about organizational identity in the context of change:

> The process of identification is complicated because neither the individual nor the organization has a single identity or even consistency among identities. Just as more

> nuanced views of organizational culture go beyond an integrationist perspective to allow for multiplicity of meanings in differentiation fragmentation perspectives (Martin 1992, 2002), the conception of organizational identity has moved beyond something that people take to be central, distinctive, and enduring about an organization (Albert and Whetten 1985) to thinking about identity as a social construction susceptible to variation and change. (Gioia 1998; Humphreys and Brown 2002; Wenger 2000) (as cited in Mills et al. 2005, p. 600)

Mills et al.'s (2005) research was anchored on Hatch and Schultz's (1997) view of organizational identity, focusing on organizational culture as the basis for the creation and maintenance of identity. It documented the challenges of merging academic departments, suggesting that simply designing new administrative structures does not ensure fostering a cohesive organizational identity at the departmental level. Ultimately, mergers may not always result in intended outcomes such as cost savings, revitalization, or cross-disciplinary collaborations given the cultural considerations that may impede the creation of cohesive institutional identity. Alternatively, other research suggested that core identity can be maintained throughout such transitions. Specifically, one study conducted in Scandinavia concluded that institutions that had undergone extensive structural changes, resource reallocation, and reorientations were able to preserve unique characteristics of their institutions (Huisman et al. 2002). Stensaker and Norgård (2001) explain that such institutions were able to successfully "edit" their identity and attach meaning to changes as they unfolded on their campuses.

Finally, we identify another set of internally focused works of the era that examined how institutions could refashion their identities and practices to be more attuned to addressing society's most pressing problems. At the forefront of these contributions was *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate* (Boyer 1990), which challenged academicians to expand the definition of scholarship around discovery, integration, and application. This work would be rebranded later as the scholarship of engagement, which further emphasized community partners playing a significant role in creating and sharing knowledge (Boyer 1996). Scholarship in this realm examined the changing identity of "engaged institutions" as they transformed traditional teaching, research, and service activities to adopt principles of engagement (Kellogg Commission 1999). Sandmann et al.'s (2009) monograph, for example, examined characteristics of the first wave of Carnegie classified engaged institutions and how engagement was being institutionalized on these campuses via leadership, structural changes, rewards, marketing, and fund-raising. Several works during the last decade provided leaders guidance to express their civic identities especially in the domain of student learning and democratic education (Ehrlich 2000; Jacoby and Associates 2009; Saltmarsh and Hartley 2011) and faculty scholarship (Fitzgerald et al. 2010; Glassick, Huber, and Maeroff 1997).

In sum, the internally focused organizational identity works of the last two decades reveal a struggle for the heart and soul of higher education and how internal stakeholders seek to understand, harness, or buffer external pressures influencing the academy. Such pieces often engaged academic audiences around the changing nature of higher education in a market-driven world and how it was changing the

identity of public higher education in the USA around the globe. While some of these works offered a new vision for higher education, many of them merely critiqued the state of higher education under new market realities and often lamented the negative consequences of institutional change to conform. All challenged the notion of organizational identity as a single construct in defining the "essence" of an institution among competing beliefs, values, and emerging views of the academy. The core question of "who are we?" (Albert and Whetten 1985) became more complicated and contested within higher education than ever before.

Institutional Image and Reputation

As the literature on organizational identity grew, many studies began to bridge internal perspectives (what is salient among internal actors) with external perspectives (how external stakeholders view an organization). In doing so, this literature began to encompass several fields, drawing on perspectives from organizational behavior, public relations, sociology, communications, and advertising. Salient questions of interest focused on what individuals believe about an organization (both internal/external stakeholders), how an organization uses or changes this information, and how individuals might respond to what they believe about an organization (Brown et al. 2006). Within the higher education literature, these broad concepts have been grouped together by some as "university identity" which incorporates organizational identity (internal cultural dimensions), "symbolic identity" (aesthetic dimensions of the campus), and "external reputation" (Steiner et al. 2013).

Toma et al.'s (2005) *The Use of Institutional Culture: Strengthening Identification and Building Brand Equity in Higher Education* provides a good example of scholarship that bridges internally and externally focused identity studies. In this monograph, the authors make a case for the importance of leveraging institutional identity and image in ways that yield benefits to the institution. In doing so, they link the concepts of institutional identity, brand equity (clarifying external image), and institutional culture as mutually reinforcing concepts. They summarize, "The notion is straightforward: people want to associate with places they view as distinctive, central, and enduring and want to know that others view them in the same way" (p. vii). The authors reinforce the notion that organizational identity has utility in higher education as it engenders loyalty, cooperation, and contact with the organization.

Empirical evidence supporting these claims could be found in emerging research on alumni bonds with their alma mater. Specifically, Mael and Ashforth's (2006) study of alumni from a private college noted that one's organizational identity predicted financial contributions, willingness to advise one's son to attend, and willingness to advise others to attend one's alma mater. The authors found that institutional traditions, myths, metaphors, and sagas were important to making membership salient and providing images of what an institution represents. In discussing their findings, the authors linked their findings to a broader body of literature suggesting that distinctive organizational identities could be leveraged to stimulate

member support for an organization (Albert and Whetten 1985; Cameron and Ulrich; 1986; Chaffee 1984; Clark 1972; Stern 1988). This work was extended in other alumni studies that found positive relationships between organizational identification and alumni involvement, perception of educational effectiveness, and perception of prestige (Caboni 2003; Okunade and Berl 1997). In the same vein, organizational identity has also been linked to retention and faculty satisfaction. One study found institutional image and reputation to be correlated with persistence among business school students (Nguyen and LeBlanc 2001) while another found a relationship between prestige of faculty appointment and job satisfaction. This particular study suggested that graduates of highly prestigious PhD programs were most likely to value prestige while graduates of low prestige programs valued salary more highly (Morrison et al. 2011).

Similarly, research on college rankings reinforced the notion that leveraging institutional identity could yield positive benefits for an institution. Bowman and Bastedo (2009) found that moving onto the front page of *U.S. News & World Report* rankings resulted in a significant improvement in an institution's admissions indicators. They concluded that appearing on the front page of the *U.S. News* rankings served as a filter for many top students in categorizing their top college prospects. Their work mirrored other studies suggesting a relationship between rankings, selectivity, yield, and average SAT score (Meredith 2004; Monks and Ehrenberg 1999; Volkwein and Sweitzer 2006). Volkwein and Sweitzer (2006) discussed rankings and prestige in relation to resource dependency theory, which suggests that organizations act in ways that enhance their acquisition of financial and human resources (Pfeffer and Salancik 1978). Both public and private university budgets are significantly enrollment driven, and thus, institutions are motivated to enhance prestige to attract students. Collectively, the burgeoning literature on college rankings, prestige, and alumni loyalty illustrate the salience of externally focused identity studies in understanding how image may be leveraged to improve institutional prospects and outcomes. A distinguishing attribute of the "organizational identity as market responsiveness" era was that these linkages became even more explicit.

Branding

The literature on higher education branding focuses on how colleges and universities communicate their unique identity to external audiences. Branding relates to product awareness and asks the central question, "When a person hears our name, what does he or she think about? (Anctil 2008, p. 35). The concept of branding has long been viewed as a "dirty word" in higher education because it implies a push toward persuasion and commercialism that are at odds with traditional images of college as pursuing the greater good (Weisbuch 2007).

In the context of higher education, branding is often a contested exercise since it calls for precision, consistency, and commitment of institutional identity (Waeraa and Solbakk 2008). Branding may, in fact, be more important and difficult for organizations

like colleges and universities that offer numerous intangible products to diverse constituencies (Anctil 2008; Johnson and Sallee 1994). As such, understanding and agreeing on "what is central" is complicated and often disputed when seeking to summarize in a brand identity. In attempting to reconcile these tensions, Stensaker (2007) summarizes the need to anchor branding processes within the beliefs of internal actors:

> Branding should be viewed as a process of mobilizing the best marketers there are—the staff and students of the institution—not least because they represent central links between the outside and the inside, sometimes associated with the organizational identity, while at other times visualizing the image of the institution. For them to buy into the branding process, the image sought must be rooted in the distinctive institutional characteristics staff and students think are, and that they feel comfortable exposing to others outside the institution. (p. 13)

The importance of anchoring the brand in the perceptions of the organization's core constituents is illustrated in Waeraa and Solbakk's (2008) case study of the branding process at a regional Norwegian university. The authors explain that the precision and consistency required by the branding exercise generated resistance from faculty members opposed to a single espoused view of the institution. Their analysis draws on Selznick's (1949) notion of institutional theory, suggesting that organizations become institutional patterns of interaction through which meaning emerges. Through this conceptual lens, they suggest that identity is a product of one's history and is difficult to change by top management. This is further illustrated in an anecdotal account of the University of Dayton, in which faculty criticized their leaders for initiating a bold brand which was out of step with its understated culture and catholic tradition (Ashburn 2008).

The tension articulated by these scholars has shown to be salient in other nonprofit contexts. For example, Voss et al.'s (2006) quantitative study of 113 nonprofit theaters found that lower ticket sales and net revenues were associated with divergent views of organizational identity among leaders. Low performance occurred when disagreement about identity was extreme. The authors pointed out that artistic values and market values can come into conflict, suggesting that leaders should try to foster a single identity that would be consistently expressed in marketing and fund-raising. Yet, the issue is further complicated when refreshing institutional identity may be critical to an institution's survival. In the case of the University of Dayton, branding changes were credited with buoying enrollments (Ashburn 2008), suggesting a delicate dance in revitalizing institutional image to improve market share while preserving what is central to the organization.

These tensions were conceptualized in Waeraa and Solbakk's (2008) literature review on the branding process in relation to organizational identity. They point out that aspects of organizational identity are dynamic rather than fixed, making it difficult to assign the most prominent aspects of identity in an organization (Corley et al. 2000; Gioia et al. 2000). The presence of multiple identities creates disagreements about what is central in an organization (Pratt and Foreman 2000), and conflicts arise when identity is viewed as holistic by managers (Humphreys and Brown 2002). Even Albert and Whetten's (1985) foundational article suggests that a single organizational identity may be untenable in certain contexts. This may be especially true in "striving

institutions" (O'Meara 2007) that often have divisions among local and cosmopolitan faculty about the purposes of an institution (Birnbaum 1988; Riesman 1956).

Image and Reputation

Much of the branding literature rests on the assumption that such exercises are a salient feature of defining external image and reputation. Yet, other research sheds light on the complexity of how external entities understand institutional image. These images are shaped by media, personal experience, and anecdotes about campus experiences. The results of these studies suggest that image creation is a messy process, shaped by many factors. For example, an empirical study by Kazoleas et al. (2001) found that an institution's image was primarily the function of personal relationships or actual experiences of the university, not media campaigns or coverage. In examining proximity on perceptions of image, the authors concluded that community relations and serving clients well are more important than marketing campaigns in deriving institutional image. Their findings relate to other studies suggesting that public institutions that demonstrate a strong commitment to their communities have been successful in leveraging public and private support for their campuses. Such institutions are typically regional, urban universities that have distinguished themselves from their sister land-grant institutions (Langseth and McVeety 2007; Weerts 2007, 2010). As "engaged institutions," these campuses have branded themselves—formally and informally—by modeling the values of reciprocity and mutual benefit (Weerts and Sandmann 2008).

With the growth of the civic engagement movement in higher education, institutions of all types have used community engagement as a market-positioning strategy. In doing so, they communicate to stakeholders about conceptualizations of engagement that fit most appropriately with their missions and image. Research documents, for example, how private liberal arts colleges and research universities articulate their engagement mission in terms of "transforming the world, and improving the human condition." Conversely, regional public universities and community colleges typically describe their work in more practical, place-based terms such as "serving business and industry, public schools, and social service agencies." These studies conclude that language is important in communicating image and engagement and signaling an institution's most salient stakeholders such as legislators, alumni, prospective students, and boards of trustees (Morphew and Hartley 2006; Weerts and Hudson 2009).

Methodology and Analytic Approaches

The scholarship we categorize within organizational identity as market responsiveness features a diverse array of scholarly approaches. Many of these works have

been authored by leaders in the field whom have held roles as campus presidents or CEOs of higher education associations (e.g., Bok 2003; Boyer 1990; Boyte and Hollander 1999; Erhlich 2000; Lyall and Sell 2005). While some of these leaders relied on data to advance their arguments (notably economists), others were more philosophical and reflective in their discussions about the changing character of higher education. Such works tended toward the descriptive. Still other pieces, more anecdotal, were practitioner-oriented, providing vignettes to animate the changes in campus practices related to entrepreneurialism, branding, and enrollment management (see Kirp 2003; Thacker 2005). Slaughter and Leslie's (1999) work on academic capitalism was among the few full-length works that provided a rigorous and conceptual analysis of changes in the sector. Our review suggests that the most prominent works within the domain of organizational identity were not empirical in nature, but rather promoted awareness of changes underway in the academy, suggesting ways in which leaders might think about these changes.

Empirical studies on the topic relied on a diverse range of methodologies to add new knowledge on organizational identity in higher education. A number of qualitative studies were informative to understand sensemaking that takes place when institutional identities are challenged in response to external forces. Such cases were evident at the department and institutional levels (Gonzales 2013; Mills et al. 2005; Morphew and Jenniskens 1999; Waeraa and Solbakk 2008), often examining faculty responses to branding exercises and organizational change. Work on college and university promotional materials relied on discourse analysis or content analysis, with the rare quantitative analysis (Delucchi 1997; Hartley and Morphew 2008; Morphew and Hartley 2006; Taylor and Morphew 2010). Quantitative studies were more likely to be focused on strategic practices such as market positioning (Zemsky et al. 1997) or enrollment management (DesJardins 2002). A series of multivariate studies also examined the impact of prestige maximization on changing revenue streams and priorities of the academy (Morphew 2002; Volkwein and Sweitzer 2006) and ways in which alumni identified with their alma mater (Ashforth and Mael 1989; Caboni 2003). Overall, a diverse set of methodologies was employed in addressing organizational identity through internal and external perspectives within the branding frame.

Conclusions and New Directions for Research

This chapter posed three primary questions: How has organizational identity been defined in scholarship on higher education?" "How have conceptions of organizational identity in higher education changed over time?" and "What are the implications of these changes for future research on this topic?" In addressing the first two questions, this chapter offered a conceptual and chronological framework to categorize identity-related literature in the field of higher education during the last several decades. Popular conceptions of identity suggest that the concept refers to the enduring and durable qualities or character of an organization, however, the

scholarship on organizational identity proposes that the concept is much more dynamic. More specifically, the concepts of identity and image—which some scholars suggest are mirrors of one another—are often intertwined in higher education scholarship.

Table 6.1 provides a summary of the four frames discussed in this chapter, illustrating ways in which the literature might be understood and differentiated in its focus on internal and external audiences and depictions of organizational identity. The table also provides a historical context for understanding each of the frames. Our depiction of the frames illustrates how assumptions, language, and conceptualization about organizational identity have changed in relationship to an evolving national context.

Table 6.1 demonstrates clearly that conceptions of organizational identity in scholarship on higher education have been dynamic. The table and our description of these changing conceptions also suggest that in the literature on higher education, identity and image are often intertwined. This is consistent with the work of scholars such as Gioia et al. (2000) who argue that identity and image play reciprocal roles. Their research and our discussion of organizational identity document how organizations can work to change their images—how they are portrayed and understood by external groups—and then how these changed images of themselves affect organizational identity. This is true in the cases of organizational identity as strategy and market responsiveness, for example. In the former case, colleges and universities responded to their images as poorly managed organizations by adopting businesslike practices such as strategic plans. Such practices transformed institutional identity as internal constituents adopted these new structures and policies as part of their organization's new identity. The same is true in the case of organizational identity as market responsiveness: the identity of colleges and universities has undeniably changed as a function of their responses to changes in state appropriations, students' expectations, and rankings.

As summarized in Table 6.1, the storytelling frame represents the earliest identity works (pre-1960s) that relied on rich narratives to convey distinctiveness and values that defined the essence of early colleges, many of them liberal arts institutions. Internally focused studies between the Civil War and World War II relied on rich and colorful narratives to describe unique traditions, values, and lore that defined distinctive colleges of the era. Such studies built loyalty and cohesion around unique institutional values and enduring characteristics. Meanwhile, externally focused pieces of the era were largely media driven, providing a colorful glimpse into college experience for many who would never experience it. Journalists and Hollywood producers conspired to create some of the most memorable imagery of college life, helping to embed notions of the "collegiate way" into the psyche of the American public. Together, the internally and externally focused works within the storytelling frame were less critical, often boosting the image of college among internal and external stakeholders. While less rigorous methodologically, these works played an important role in painting an intriguing portrait of American higher education.

Table 6.1 Four frames of organizational identity in higher education scholarship

	Pre-1960	*1960–1980*	*1980–2000*	*2000–present*
	Organizational identity as storytelling	Organizational identity as saga	Organizational identity as strategy	Organizational identity as market responsiveness
Underlying assumptions and values	Our college/university is unique; mission matters; who we are is informed by our past	Institutional history and leadership matter; sagas/stories can act as organizational glue, even as leaders change	Higher education can and must learn from business; with fewer students, we must compete and organize ourselves more efficiently	Marketing is a must: attract all the students you can; maximize prestige; tell your story
National context	Higher education still elite; collegiate ideal appealing to maturing nation	Evidence of stratification is more apparent; baby boom; post WWII government involvement	Student market shrinks; many question value of higher education; competition for traditional and nontraditional students increases	Publics seek elite status; state appropriations reduced; for-profits rise; rankings become important; marketing linked to college choice
Audience orientation	*Internal* Clarify values, engender loyalty, develop institutional culture, and build mission	*Internal* Assist scholars in applying evolving organizational theory to collegiate context	*Internal* Criticism of higher education as poorly managed, and drifting from character and mission. Emerging vision of engaged colleges	*Internal* Challenges of finding identity salience in complex institutions
	External Media and Hollywood portrayal of the "collegiate way"		*External* Leverage and edit identity to be more strategic in responding to market forces and public needs	*External* Clarify market niche and corresponding brand identity
Methodologies	Institutional histories; mission centrality; narrative; less critical	Largely qualitative; analytical; neutral; smaller datasets or single cases	Qualitative and quantitative, incorporating business language/concepts case studies	Qualitative and quantitative, increasingly critical and complex; larger datasets

The literature we categorize within the saga frame represents a shift to a more scholarly analysis of colleges and universities as complex organizations. Burton Clark and other social scientists led the way in developing a research agenda on the broad topic of college distinctiveness and institutional diversity. These scholars were the first to develop theoretical frameworks and rigorous methodological approaches to understand enduring aspects of organizations and how higher education institutions might be understood in this context. Such studies formally demonstrated the importance of institutional history and leadership in understanding organizational life within colleges and universities. Unlike the storytelling literature of the previous era, empirical studies within the saga era were less celebratory or promotional, typically neutral in developing theory around colleges and universities as complex entities. Subsequently, the audiences for the saga-oriented studies were typically social scientists and higher education leaders (e.g., internal audiences) who hoped to make sense of colleges and universities as distinctive organizations.

As illustrated in Table 6.1, the shift from the saga to strategic era is delineated by a shifting political and economic context that pushed the organizational identity literature in new directions. After the turbulent 1960s, the stakes became higher for higher education. Due to the need to attract students and quell public scrutiny of the academy, scholars and higher education leaders began to more critically explore the relationship between identity, strategy, and outcomes. To that end, more diverse methodologies were employed to understand complex relationships, including the relationship between institutional image and college choice.

As literature within the strategic era developed, theories such as resource dependency and isomorphism became more salient, challenging organizational identity literature that traditionally focused on examining the enduring attributes of colleges and universities. Many scholars writing from this perspective sought to understand how leaders might leverage and even edit institutional identities to survive in an increasingly uncertain world. But not all scholars took this view. Beginning with the strategic era, authors—typically higher education insiders and former leaders—condemned the changing character of higher education as too captive to market forces. Still, other scholars took a more assets-building view, envisioning how the academy might reinvent itself to be more productively involved in addressing society's most pressing problems. The literature on academic drift, college rankings, civic engagement, and academic capitalism is illustrative of these tensions that continue to exist today.

Finally, the market responsiveness frame represents a set of more sophisticated works examining institutional image formation and market niche. In particular, literature within this category began to bridge internally and externally focused scholarship, exploring how identity could be leveraged to create brand equity and loyalty. Ranging from the empirical to the anecdotal, these pieces continue to gain prominence as financial pressures force institutions to compete more aggressively for students and the loyalty of external stakeholders. The studies that were internally focused within this frame often explored the tensions associated with branding and identity salience within complex universities. Other studies explored whether cohesive identities could be retained with structural changes resulting from mergers.

Compared to literature in the strategic era, internally and externally focused pieces in the branding frame became more harmonious in their purpose, illustrating more sophisticated approaches to understanding the relationship between identity, image, and institutional outcomes.

In comparing these four frames, we note the symbiotic relationship between institutional identity and external influences that shape the identity of the sector as a whole. Specifically, the literature reviewed for this chapter suggests that organizational identity is malleable and mutually reinforcing, with colleges and outside agents playing important roles in shaping and reshaping identity to match contemporary contexts. Examples can be seen in each of the four frames articulated in this chapter. For example, literature within the storytelling and saga perspectives illustrates that notions of the "collegiate way" were perpetuated by both internal and external stakeholders. The collective influence of institutional historians and an imaginative media gave rise to an enduring view of collegiate life that permeates our understanding of higher education today.

Likewise, the strategy and market responsiveness frames illustrate how market forces and changing politics of education have led colleges and universities to be viewed in less benevolent ways than the past. Due to changing fiscal and political realities, colleges and universities have become more concerned about revenue generation and acquisition of paying customers. Paradoxically, as institutions have responded to these forces, it has reinforced the image—often negative—that colleges and universities primarily exist to profit themselves. This is evident in a recent poll by Public Agenda suggesting that 6 out of 10 Americans believe that colleges are "mostly like businesses and mainly care about the bottom line" (Immerwahr et al. 2010, p. 2). Such examples reveal that organizational identity in higher education is a complex process of co-creation between internal and external forces in articulating "what is central". Simply put, colleges and universities wittingly or unwittingly conspire with external stakeholders to create and co-create an identity for the sector as a whole.

Implications for Future Research

We now turn our attention to the final question posed in this chapter: "What are the implications for future research on the topic of organizational identity in higher education?" We suggest that the next generation of literature on this topic may take several discrete paths conceptually and empirically. Following the form of this chapter, these studies might be grouped into internally and externally focused works.

From an internal perspective, we suggest that the changing national context will continue to shape studies exploring the shifting identity of colleges and universities. Rapidly increasing costs, the emergence of massive open online courses (MOOCS), and a changing demographic profile of college students are altering the higher education landscape significantly. In this context, small private colleges with

distinctive identities are particularly vulnerable, evidenced by declining market share and susceptibility to closure (Marcus 2013). Hunter (2012) explains that such institutions "do not have the enrollment volume, endowment strength and reputational clout to resist internal and environmental fluctuations or competition" (p. 3). In a recent blog post, Pamela Reid, President of St. Joseph College, connected this phenomenon to Darwin's theory of natural selection:

> According to Charles Darwin, "It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent that survives. It is the one that is the most adaptable to change." If we apply this pronouncement to higher education, our focus turns to small private colleges and universities. These institutions exist across the nation in settings from urban to rural; many were founded with religious affiliations or backgrounds; and they often serve disproportionately more first-generation students, students with special needs, and those for whom personal attention is essential. (Reid 2012)

As the unique niche for small distinctive colleges shrinks, intriguing questions emerge about the relationship between organizational identity and survival of these institutions. In framing such questions, population ecology may provide a fruitful conceptual grounding for future research. Pioneered by Hannan and Freeman (1977), the concept focuses on how organizations adapt to changing environments and examines the birth, growth, and death of organizations that occur in these environments. The theory might inform future research on organizational identity in higher education as it contributes to our understanding about growth or demise of distinctive colleges. Central questions might include the following: "What role might organizational identity play in the closure of a college? What role does organizational identity play in sustaining the health and vibrancy of a vulnerable college?" Interviews with faculty, alumni, trustees, and administrators could be triangulated with archived reports, meeting minutes, and other documents to understand these contexts and relationships. Larger datasets might be constructed and used to test models predicting what types of colleges and universities can be expected to survive and whether leadership qualities or specific institutional traits (e.g., resources, location in an urban setting) play a role in predicting survival. Quantitative techniques such as event history analysis may be particularly appropriate for these types of studies.

In the public sector, we suggest that more research is needed to understand the relationship between institutional image and public funding and/or voluntary support for higher education. This is especially important since a prevailing narrative exists among many higher education leaders that additional marketing or "telling our story better" is the most promising way to restore state budgets for higher education (Weerts 2011). Yet, there is a wide gulf in perceptions among academic and public audiences about the value and impact of higher education in society. For example, expensive economic reports sponsored by university relations office have been scrutinized for their inaccuracy and are often "taken with a grain of salt" by state officials. It remains unclear how such studies help institutions in the face of budget deficits and competing interest groups vying for a diminishing share of state funds (Potter 2003). Furthermore, national polling data suggest that Americans are increasingly skeptical about the continual pleas for more tax money among college

leaders. Many believe that colleges and universities are not doing enough to control costs (Immerwahr et al. 2010). Others suggest that marketing about higher education's commitment to public needs often does not match reality. A report authored by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (2002) explained, "While the idea of public engagement is frequently embraced by university presidents, there is considerable evidence that deep engagement is rare—there is more smoke than fire, more rhetoric than reality" (p. 13).

The above examples suggest that there is incongruence between espoused images crafted by institutional leaders and the beliefs and impressions held by important external stakeholders. Wan and Schnell (2007) discussed this concept in the private sector, suggesting the need to understand symmetry in co-creating organizational image among stakeholders:

> If corporate image functions as an ideal two-way mirror reflecting the public's expectations of a good company on the one hand and how the company would like to be perceived on the other, then the congruency between the two would thus meet the requirement of a symbolic relationship that is as close to symmetrical as possible. Of course, the premise for this condition to occur is that an image must be the truthful representation of the substantial organizational behaviors, and not an illusion with no basis in reality. (p. 39)

The notion of symmetry or congruence is also discussed by Treadwell and Harrison (1994) who discussed the ethics of communication and the need to reconcile internal and external images of an organization. The authors suggested that two-way communication may help expand participation in crafting the image, which may result in long-term image stability. Nonaka (1994) took this a step further, suggesting that standards must be in place for judging truthfulness among various parties.

Future research on organizational identity in higher education might examine congruence between images held by higher education internal and external stakeholders. Questions to be addressed may include the following: "To what extent does the espoused image of an institution match those of the public or other key stakeholders? To what degree does organizational image align with the reality of what is central to the organization in terms of its priorities and alignment of resources?" Central to addressing these questions is understanding the extent to which loosely coupled organizations (Weick 1976) such as colleges and universities may manage and negotiate multiple images held by external stakeholders. For example, in the realm of institutional commitment to community engagement, it is often the case that some units or academic departments are highly engaged while others are disengaged. Thus, espousing engagement as a core component of institutional identity may or may not match stakeholder perceptions of reality depending on their point of entry into the institution.

To address these broad sets of issues, future research may employ multiple sets of methodologies. For example, national public opinion data might be matched against state higher education funding data to examine whether public opinion is related to changes in levels of state support for higher education. Such studies could take into account how public opinion interacts with larger economic and political shifts that may predict levels of investment in higher education. These studies could

be linked to earlier works that have examined changing rationales for funding higher education over the past several decades (see St. John and Parsons 2004).

Other research might focus more directly on how external stakeholders derive their perceptions of higher education, and specific institutions in this larger context. These studies might examine image formation among various types of institutions and how alumni, legislators, and community partners develop notions about a certain set of campuses. Such work might be qualitative in nature and could be used to inform institutional strategies regarding core priorities and branding strategies to match these priorities. In addition, studies might use national opinion data—such as the Public Agenda publications noted above—as dependent variables or covariates in models in order to determine what role colleges and universities play in shaping public opinion about themselves. Such studies might seek to determine whether higher education institutions' embrace of businesslike strategies actually accelerates the public's changing perception of higher education's businesslike nature, for example.

Finally, there is much more to be known about the interaction between organizational identity and college choice. Our discussion of organizational identity began with institutional histories and the role these narratives played in building internal cohesion. Traditionally, organizational identity has been used as a kind of organizational glue, but it is unclear how this adhesive works on prospective students. The contemporary higher education sector is chock full of claims that specific marketing practices and organizational trappings build community and a sense of identity on campus and with prospective students, but we have little empirical or conceptual evidence to substantiate these claims. A fruitful area of analysis in the near future might involve testing these claims with studies that use qualitative or quantitative (or mixed) methods to assess how a college's organizational identity is affected by the addition of, for example, big-time sports or the addition of graduate courses on what was an undergraduate campus and how changes in organizational identity affect its ability to recruit prospective students.

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