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Denice Katherine Ross Haynes
Iowa State University

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The Sweet Briar Way: The search for organizational identity in higher education

by

Denice Katherine Ross Haynes

A dissertation to the graduate faculty

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Lori Patton Davis, Major Professor
Eric Abbott
Larry Ebbers
Latrice Eggleston
Florence Hamrick

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to God; in hopes that the inspiration that was given to me to embark

on this project inspires those who work with students, as they have the power to do so,

provide the best educational environments possible for their students at their respective

institutions. To my life companions, daughter Adrienne Brooke Haynes and son Jeremiah

Ivory Haynes, the phrase often heard; "I could not have done it without you" will be forever

etched on my forehead when I look at you both. I can't believe I get to have you two as my

children! Our right hands will forever be tightly linked.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABSTRACT

This study looked at organizational identity in higher education. First conceptualized by organizational and management theorists Stuart Albert and David Whetten in 1985, it is defined as those attributes and features members believe to be most central and enduring about their organization and that distinguish it from others. Using case study methodology, the study explored how the identity at Sweet Briar, a women's college in Sweet Briar, Virginia was developed, sustained, and preserved and its influence in the college. The study found a high degree of identity salience at Sweet Briar evidenced by clear identity claims and identity-referencing discourse as well as corresponding practices, behaviors, and attitudes that gave expression to the identity in the culture of the college. The study also revealed the presence of facilitating protocols, which were those campus-sponsored procedures, systems, and commemorative events that kept its identity at the center of institutional life at Sweet Briar. Overall findings suggest that a high level of identity salience is a powerful resource a college can draw on to build a cohesive community, strengthen itself in times of challenge, and firmly position itself in the marketplace.

CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

There is a foundational dimension unique to most every college or university that, when called upon, can serve as a guide or compass when facing challenges of profound consequence. This dimension is defined as that which is central, enduring, and distinguishing about an organization and considered to be, according to seminal scholars Stuart Albert and David Whetten (1985) and others (Ravisi & Shultz, 2006; Whetten, 2006), a fundamental property of the organization itself. Yet, campus leaders rarely take this aspect of a university's identity into account when launching even the most comprehensive strategic planning initiatives (see Dooris, Kelly, & Trainer, 2004). In higher education today, most campus activity, particularly those initiatives that will impact current and future students, occur amidst loosely coupled structures (Weick, 1976), utilitarian agendas (Albert & Whetten), and competing internal cultures (Bergquist & Pawlak, 2008) and agendas. These may be far removed from those of the founders who envisioned its unique place among other colleges and then penned its inaugural mission statement and purpose.

The problem, this research assumes, is that when an institution loses site of its own identity, centered in its distinctiveness, its power as guide, anchor, and compass is compromised. More importantly, this diminished identity salience can render an institution unduly vulnerable to the changing external milieu and its demands. No longer in alignment with the institution's current operations, pursuits, and practices, the unique identity of the college is buried beneath the latest trends and implementation of programs that have little root in its original charter. This temptation to drift from what is most central and enduring is not only likely, but it is understandable given the times. Unless this level of congruence becomes an intentional pursuit (Smith, Wolf, & Morrison, 1995; Wolf-Wendel, 2000),

today's demands on higher education to be, as Harvard president Drew Gilpin Faust (2009) put it, "practical as well as transcendent," seem as if they are "almost irreconcilable" (¶2)

Indeed, colleges and universities are under fire today. However, achieving transcendence may take decades to cultivate and requires a willingness from all members of the university to invest in the pursuit of the big questions in the context of their campus community (see Parks, 2000). Short-term solutions (i.e., program cuts, departmental changes, and adjustments in personnel) can often be done compartmentally might appear more judicious. The growing cacophony of diverse expectations, then, forces the hand of institutional leaders to move quickly and often. And although necessary at times, this approach tends to be more favorably received by the institution's leaders and an increasingly critical public. Gilpin Faust seems to have captured this dilemma in her 2009 *New York Times* article "The University's Crisis of Purpose":

> Have universities become too captive to the immediate and worldly purposes they serve? Has the market model become the fundamental and defining identity of higher education? . . . The economic downturn has had . . . a worrisome impact. It has reinforced America's deep seated notion that a college degree serves largely instrumental purposes. The federal government's first effort to support higher education, the Morrill Act of 1862, which established land grant colleges, was intended to advance the "practical education of the industrial classes." . . . But even as we as a nation have embraced education as critical to economic growth and opportunity, we should remember that colleges and universities are about a great deal more than utility. . . . Unlike any other institutions in the world, they embrace the

long view and nurture . . . critical perspectives that look far beyond the present. (¶10, 14)

This call to remember is crucial in order to resist the tendency to respond to challenges and pressures from the external environment with left-brain, logic centered solutions and bottom-line strategies (Bess & Dee, 2008). Again, this approach is said to often be the first consideration unless, as Albert and Whetten (1985) noted, it becomes apparent that these methods are not working. When the identity question, "Who are we as an institution?" finally does emerge, the level at which the question is pursued is rarely sufficient enough to make the institution as effective as it can be. In fact, the way any organization answers that question and the level at which it does so has a profound effect on its strategic activity (Albert, 1998; Brown & Starkey, 2000; Gioia, Schultz, & Corley, 2000; Stimpert, Gustafson, & Sarason, 1998). Colleges and universities would do well to consider a more holistic approach to responding to the constantly changing external milieu—one that first pays particular attention to how its strategic decisions impact or helps preserve what its members believe to be most central and enduring at its core.

Understanding what is central, enduring, and distinctive about an organization was identified by organizational behaviorists Albert and Whetten in 1985 as organizational identity. When used as a prelude to a more rational model exercise of an institution's strengths, opportunities, and weaknesses (Dooris, Kelly, & Trainer, 2004) an identity framework can serve to remind its leaders of its central character (Albert & Whetten,). It also affirms the original path and purpose of that particular institution and offers a touchstone for strategy, assessment, and future progress before significant change ensues (Albert, Ashforth, & Dutton, 2000; Barney et al., 1998; Brickson, 2009; Dutton & Dukerich, 1991/2004).

Purpose of the Study

Using explanatory case study methodology (Yin, 2009), this research will examine Sweet Briar College, a private women's institution in Sweet Briar, Virginia founded in 1901 by Indiana Fletcher Williams in honor of her late daughter Daisy, who died as a young girl. This examination of Sweet Briar's institutional identity seeks to identify what members believed to be its core identity; its origins, development, and effect on the campus; and how that identity has been preserved, sustained, altered, or reshaped through challenge and crisis. In particular, the study focuses on key events that make issues of identity most salient and how it impacts key issues and strategic decisions.

A College Called Sweet Briar: A Personal Introduction

I learned about Sweet Briar College when I was a nontraditional master's student in a student affairs program at Illinois State University in 2002. Wanting to building on my prior work experience in assessment, evaluation, and continuous process improvement in the public and private sectors, I secured a summer practicum with the dean of students at Illinois Wesleyan University, a small private liberal arts institution in Normal, Illinois. My assignment was to work with the dean on issues of organizational climate and student satisfaction. Dean Matthew's daughter was planning to attend a college called Sweet Briar that fall.

Much later, when considering schools to study for an early dissertation research topic having to do with the outcomes of faculty-directed service learning programs, I rediscovered Sweet Briar. Sweet Briar's approach to career development was similar to the program I directed at Simpson College, where students were encouraged to first consider their internal values and preferences (vocation) as they looked for potential careers. Simpson College

looked first to its core identity for the foundational values of the program and the lens through which it would articulate it to prospective and current students and staff. Service learning was then selected as the venue through which students would be able to explore careers that were consistent with their character and values as well as their skill and career aspirations. Because of this and my findings from an earlier research project I conducted about the vocational discernment program's origin and impact at Simpson, I was very interested in looking into the Sweet Briar College further.

After consulting the school's web pages, I decided to follow up personally. In August 2008, I contacted the University Relations office who informed me that the college recently changed its mission statement (see Appendix A) as a result of a university initiative called Shape of the Future (SOF). After a couple of conversations about the information I was looking for, they directed me to an associate professor who had involvement in Sweet Briar's service-learning program. We had several conversations about my interest in Sweet Briar, and he enthusiastically offered Sweet Briar's assistance in helping me with my dissertation work. He also talked to me about the mission change as a result of the SOF initiative.[1] Changing an institutional mission statement is not something done flippantly. It occurred to me at that moment that this initiative was a big deal for this small college. Yet, what spoke loudest was his articulation of a special college; one that boasted of a strong legacy and identity. I could hear it in the tenor of his voice, and I wanted to know more.

Through the professor, I arranged a visit to the campus in late October 2008 for two days. This visit was intentionally informal and designed for key members of the campus community to get acquainted with me and learn more about my research goals (Stake, 1995).

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[1] This professor has since taken on a role as one of my key informants in this study (Yin, 2003).

During that time, I spent time in informal conversations with my informant and two other professors, five students, and three members of the co-curricular life team. I also talked with the then-current president who gave me permission to study the case. I even submitted to a campus tour, which was unusual for me because I typically avoid admissions-sponsored tours of any kind (this may be connected to years of campus tour speeches as a former admissions representative). When I returned, I began to consider the questions I wanted to explore about this fascinating place.

I learned that Sweet Briar College has been recognized for its exemplary accomplishments in student engagement and involvement (Manning, Kinzie, & Schuh, 2006). It consistently ranks highest among its peer institutions in all five benchmarks[2] of the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). As a result, it was selected as one of 20 colleges and universities in 2003 for the Documenting Effective Educational Practices (DEEP) project. The DEEP report focused on higher education institutions nationally recognized for high levels of student engagement and higher than average graduation rates (Blaich, Chan, Kuh, Mulholland, & Whitt, 2004). I could see that Sweet Briar was a school that pursued excellence and I wanted to learn more about it processes.

The campus is located on a former rose plantation of 3,250 plush and hilly acres about 20 miles from Lynchburg, Virginia. The landscape is breathtaking. The original plantation house, now home to Sweet Briar presidents, stands in restored elegance, vested in bright canary yellow and white with those imposing pillars so well known in the South. It still has much of the original furniture. Humbly nestled in the backyard of the house is a one-

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[2] The five benchmark categories are: level of academic challenge, active and collaborative learning, student–faculty interaction, enriching educational experience, supportive campus environment (see NSSE, n,d.).

room cabin once home to the enslaved house servants. It now serves as a tool shed for the groundskeepers. The museum building, not far from the house, displays fine dresses and other elegant clothing and artifacts of the founders; there is even a humbly stitched dress of the little enslaved girl named Signora, said to be the playmate of Daisy. Pictures, jerseys, banners, and robes that tell a tale of the early years of the college are also displayed. The graves of the landowners are buried on the estate and encircled by iron gates and elaborate tombstones. In another area on the grounds and nestled in a grove of trees, lies a humble and unmarked burial site without headstones for those enslaved on the plantation. It was recently restored by the work of a professor of anthropology at the college and commemorated with a reunion of their descendants, all at Sweet Briar's expense. These poignant artifacts are strikingly present reminders of the legacy and times of its founder and the plantation turned college. Every homecoming the college community takes a solemn walk (with faculty in full regalia) to the stately tombstone of Daisy situated atop Monument Hill to honor her memory. This recurrent acknowledgement was a stipulation in the founder's will.

The college, originally called Sweet Briar Institute, was founded with its purpose to prepare young women to be educated and productive members of society. Named for the Sweet Briar Rose, the college, like many institutions, has had its share of thorns to deal with. One early incident bears this out. The will of its benefactor stipulated that the college was to be "for the education of *white* girls and young women" (Stohlman, 1956, p. 39 [italics added]).[3] In 1963, the board of trustees, acting on behalf of the college and responding to the progressive sentiments of the 1960s, took itself to court to have the will amended to admit women of color. It was not without contest as there were those who insisted on remaining

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[3] Virginia law at that time required that charters for schools specify one race or the other.

true to the language in the will. The deliberations finally rested on what they believed to be in favor of the spirit of the will and not the restrictive language mandated by law at the time. In July 1967, after a Supreme Court ruling, Sweet Briar announced its open admissions policy effective that fall (Sweet Briar College, 1968).

Fast forward to the late 1990s when the college faced issues of fledging leadership, institutional relevance, and sustainability in light of the modern economy, as the potential pool of women interested in single-sex institutions appeared to be decreasing. The legacy of Sweet Briar was challenged again.

In 1999, after the new president had been in office for 3 years, the board of trustees issued a mandate to the president and her cabinet to develop a strategic plan that would successfully carry the college into the next century. It was intended to address how to best attract and prepare Sweet Briar Women to compete well in the current marketplace and be productive members of society, as the original charter intended.

The plan issued a series of goals. At the time, the college was in stable condition financially and comfortable with the status of its endowment. The new plan was released to the campus community and business went on as per usual. A few years later however, with crashing stock markets that greatly impacted the endowment fund and decreasing enrollment numbers that threatened fiscal health, campus leaders grappled with whether or not they should reposition as a coed college. The SOF initiative was introduced. The process engaged individuals at every level of the campus community as they seriously and thoroughly considered the options. At the end of the initiative, Sweet Briar decided to continue as a woman's college. As an expression of recommitment, not only was the mission statement revised but a marketing firm was then commissioned to help them develop a new public

image complete with a new commitment to its students in the form of a "Sweet Briar Promise." This promise outlined their commitment and "distinctive approach" to providing a relevant, "meaningful and enduring" education for their students (*The Sweet Briar Promise,* n.d.). The school has since reported record numbers of enrolled students, and no programs or positions were cut. The way that members of the college appeared so collectively vested in the legacy of the college, despite it having weathered some difficult and even controversial challenges, made it a fertile site for research that seeks to explore the role of organizational identity in higher education.

Research Questions

Specifically, this case study explores the following research questions:

I.   How is the identity of Sweet Briar defined and how have significant events and subsequent decisions shaped, reinforced, and contributed to this core identity?

II. How is the identity of Sweet Briar College perceived, defined and reinforced by its members?

III. How was identity leveraged as a resource as the college encounters crisis and challenge?

Significance of the Study

Currently, references to organizational identity in higher education literature beyond institutional type and Carnegie Classification are difficult to find. Research in higher education today has minimally, if at all, acknowledged the notion of identity when referring to institutions, as presented by Whetten (2006) and others. However, there are historical examples that seem to indicate the presence of an identity-referencing framework at one time. In the classic work by Burton R. Clark (1970) entitled, "The Distinctive College," the

notion of "saga" and institutional distinctiveness was presented as a type of narrative repository where the core identity of an institution is preserved and tremendously impacts sustainability over time. For example, note and consider the following historic but anthropomorphic references to Yale by its president during the inaugural address in 1921 as a way of offering a generic precedent and context for the direction of this study:

> No thought has been so often brought to my notice by the alumni of Yale . . . as their desire that she should somewhat enlarge her character as a national university. . . . If Yale is to remain national in her thought, and feeling, she must keep in touch with the various currents of sentiment and opinion flowing through the life of the people, and nothing can so fully assure this sympathetic contact as the presence in her midst of those who are among the finest representatives of the younger generation, from the various parts of the country. (Longfield, 1992, p. 148)

According to Longfield (1992), this was the beginning of the end of Yale's attempt to walk out its "dual heritage as a both a Christian and public institution" (p. 156). What it also suggested was a tension between Yale's historical and current identity (Elsbach & Kramer, 2004; Gioia & Thomas, 1996) in the midst of a changing milieu. The college's new commitment to attracting and educating students from a broader demographic base made it increasingly difficult to mandate institution-wide religious observances and practices once commonplace in its history and central to its identity. However, "though Yale was moving away from its traditional Christian practices, the Christian heritage continued to buttress Yales's mission to America" (Longfield, p. 158). Yale's leaders decided to yield to the demand for a more liberal approach to education in order to stay competitive; yet its early

leaders did so with an eye on the founding principles that would serve to sustain the institution for almost 200 years.

Although this may not prove that considering colleges through the lens of institutional identity was the case for all, this story is relevant to my study. In addition to offering the reader a historical example of how one of the earliest higher education institutions perceived itself, it also shows how its identity (as distinguished from its operation) can be challenged as the college naturally evolves and external influences are brought to bear (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991/2004; Ravasi & Shultz, 2006).

Like Yale, many colleges today are faced with this problematic reality of enrollment growth, declining fiscal resources, and overall sustainability in a global economy (Gilpin Faust, 2009; Van Der Werf & Sabatier, 2009). However, many would agree that Yale and similar institutions have maintained a distinctively strong identity and have been successful even though cost of attendance may be beyond the reach of most. This suggests that there are reasons for this success that go beyond good fiscal management. Perhaps it is that which is central, enduring, and distinct about Yale, that has secured its position as a premier institution despite the thousands of college and universities that have opened since.

This study raises the issue of whether or not organizational identity even matters in colleges and universities today. If it does matter, then perhaps it begs the question, to what degree is it even discernable; and if so, to what degree is it an identifiable factor in successful institutional strategy? Some would argue that there are more pressing issues. Clearly, colleges and universities are faced with potential enrollment challenges in the face of consumeristic approaches to college selection increasingly driven by financial aid packages and market rankings. Lesser-known public and private institutions are struggling to hold on

to their distinctive niche as more colleges compete for the same students. It was recently predicted in a *Chronicle of Higher Education* research report that

> regional public universities, small liberal-arts colleges, and private universities without national followings—can expect to compete for students based on price, convenience, and the perceived strengths of the institutions. . . . They will constantly have to ask themselves, "What is college?" and be constantly rethinking the answer if they want students to attend. (Van Der Werf & Sabatier, 2009, p. 6)

This seems a rather bleak prognosis for the institution of higher education given its rich legacy and noble aims. It is not the question itself that is so disturbing; it is the one-dimensional nature of the question and the fear- infused duress under which they suggest it be asked.

Although it is important to consider environmental trends and seek to be responsive to what prospective college students might expect in the way of a college education, this question, when asked alone, might forge a pathway to strategic action that de-emphasizes the most important benefit of higher education: its sacred trust to shape future citizens (Baxter Magolda, 2009). An over-emphasis on public polls and other external forces places the institution at the mercy of these forces when developing strategy rather than responding from the place of its identity. Case in point: many colleges today invest in strategies to increase the caliber of students they admit (and deny), which results in an undue emphasis on enrolling merit scholars and those with the highest entrance exam marks (see Gioia & Thomas, 1996).

The reality is that most colleges will not make the top 10, 20, or even 100 best colleges list, but most do have something unique to offer that is a best fit for a particular student. The more this uniqueness is buried under brick and mortar facts and features, the

more students will continue to respond like consumers and choose the best school for the dollar. However, "organizations that heedfully develop and maintain value-based identities are more likely to avoid crises, are better able to weather crises, and most importantly, are most likely to rebound stronger than ever in the aftermath of crises" (Barney et al., 1998, p. 167). It's better, it seems, to first ask this question: "Who are we?"

Assuming this is true, it would be helpful if colleges and universities facing similar challenges could learn from those that have successfully followed this approach. With increasing demands for both internal and external accountability and assessment, institutions are pressed to show cause for the decisions they make that will ultimately impact student learning and outcomes. At the very least, as Kuh (2003) affirmed, the people who work on college campuses, whether it be senior leadership, faculty, or administrative and support staff, must "understand how people, organizational structures and governance processes influence one-another" (p. 270). There is a growing interest and willingness to revisit the interconnectedness of these often operationally distinct components, how they coalesce, and what it produces (Manning et al., 2006). Perhaps the place of that interconnectedness is linked to its organizational identity.

This study acknowledges the value of this line of inquiry and asserts: Colleges that address questions around the issue of identity as a strategic response to sustainability concerns, internal unrest, and external pressures do so to their advantage. The findings of this study will provide practitioners with detailed examples of how a college reassessed and clarified its own distinctiveness (identity) over time in order to impact both student enrollment and campus community (sustainability). The size of this study and its design should lend itself to greater specificity and useful conceptual insights (Locke & Guglielmino,

2006). Potentially, it could offer the beginning sketches of a template for how to engage identity in ways that will attract students, retain students, and successfully influence their overall viability and sustainability

Research in the field of higher education that highlights this pathway toward identity development and its effect on institutional strategy is lacking. The gap is understandable. Like individual identity scholarship, there is an awareness that its properties, stages, and transitions are often multidimensional, layered, overlapping, and context specific. This is also the case when attempting to define properties of an organization that can be concrete yet fluid, and historical yet relevant. "Identity may be precisely that question that eludes standard conceptions of measurement—that may be one of its defining properties" (Whetten, 2006, p. 3). Wheatley and Kellner-Rogers (1996), discussed their beliefs about organizations in their book entitled *A Simpler Way*: "Organizations are living systems. They too are intelligent, creative, adaptive, self organizing, meaning seeking" (p. 3). They also premised, "If we can know our beliefs, we can act with greater consciousness about our behaviors" (p. 2). To measure identity may require that one measure its reluctance to being measured, that one study the genius of its disguises and the way it eludes capture while still claiming presence as a core defining feature. Hence, analogies and metaphors have been helpful in drawing a conceptual map for an organizational identity framework (Albert & Whetten, 1985; Corley et al., 2006; Hatch & Schultz, 2002/2004).

The theory of organizational identity as developed in management science literature has relied on the use of analogous comparisons to individual identity theory to capture the dimensions of organizational identity. However, research that has attempted to make

connections to the cognitive-like process by which identity evolves in an organization is rare. This is particularly the case in higher education research.

As there are stages and levels of cognitive activity that influence individual identity over time, so too, it would seem that this phenomenon would also be present in the dynamics of organizational identity. Research that extends the theory by examining the presence of collective cognition in organizational identity development can contribute to what is currently known about effective institutional strategy by offering additional conceptual language and markers college leaders can use in their self-study efforts that strengthen their institution, inform decisions, and set the stage for successful strategic action.

Delimitations, Contributions, and Limitations

This research recognizes the interplay between identity, organizational structure, and practice and its potential impact on the whole of university life and the inherent difficulty in the measurement of such. Organizational identity theory, as an official construct in management science research to understand this interplay, is only about years into its development (Corley et al., 2006). Moreover, much of the conversation has focused, by intention, more on the development of the construct as a foundation for more fruitful research and less on actual research (Albert, 1998). Furthermore, scholars in higher education have been virtually silent on issues of identity as delineated in this body of literature. The relatively young age of the concept may contribute to this fact.

Broadly, theories of organizational identity shed light on issues of meaning making, identification with and commitment to an organization's values, and collective activity among members (Albert et al., 2000). There is a clear call from the literature for studies that examine the topic in ways that highlight the evolution of identity in organizational life. Using

Sweet Briar as an example, this research examines within an identity framework first what is notably central, enduring, and distinctive about the college and then seeks to understand the process by which it evolves to influence institutional decisions and strategy. In the final analysis, and given the importance of legacy in the Sweet Briar case, special attention is given to the historical influence in the formation of its institutional identity. By the same token, its very uniqueness could be a limitation in that the action of Sweet Briar might not be possible for other colleges that differ in size, location, type, and legacy.

Organization of the Dissertation

The remainder of this dissertation will consist of a literature review in chapter two that looks at some foundational organizational theories followed by a more detailed description of organizational identity theory and its propositions. A detailed account of the data collection methods used and how the data were then analyzed comprises chapter three. The propositions of organizational identity discussed in chapter two are used as a beginning framework for data collection, analysis, and to report my findings in chapter four. Chapter five contains discussion of the research and its implications and assertions. Given that true case study format is primarily illustrative in its structure (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009), the format of chapters four and five will take on a more narrative format and use the unfolding storyline of Sweet Briar, introduced here in chapter one, but significantly expanded to:

1. Illustrate evidence of the unique identity claims of Sweet Briar College;

2. Compare, contrast, and expand upon events where identity makes its presence known as an influencer of institutional strategy;

3. Conclude with some analytical generalizations, potential rival theories to what is proposed, implications for practice, and suggestions for future research.

The appendixes following the list of referenced work include relevant documents such as

IRB Approval, the Informed Consent template, artifacts, and other relevant documents.

CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

There are four literature domains that have been of primary importance to the development of this research, and these will be reviewed in two sections. The first section presents a review of selected literature on organizational theories of higher education institutions, campus environments, and campus culture. [4] In the second section I review organizational identity theory and, at the same time, present this as the theoretical and conceptual framework through which I address and analyze the questions asked in this study.

At the start of my review of the literature relevant to this study, I consulted the most obvious research domains of organizational theory for colleges and universities, which included the study of campus environments. I found that the research did not fully speak to the questions I was forming about organizational identity and its effect in light of what I thought was happening at Sweet Briar. A last resort word search using key words "organizational identity" introduced me to the scholarship on organizational identity from the field of management science. However, not wanting to discard the previous literature search, primarily because it is what higher education researchers are more familiar with, I include it here.

Furthermore, I found that this literature review actually served a dual purpose (Yin, 2009). As a point of reference, it provided me with a rich and broad foundation from which to better understand the uniqueness of higher education institutions. It also provided me with scholarly insight and exposed me to questions already supported by research in the field and,

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[4] After a cursory review of change literature, I decided not to include it in this review, as the literature on organizational change is extremely broad. This case study does not examine issues of organizational change specifically but, rather, preparation for change.

at the same time, sparked a desire to explore some of these same question further but from a slightly different angle. It also confirmed the significance of this particular research as I read concluding discussion after concluding discussion calling for future research in the area of interconnectivity. Secondly, and as a point of departure, the gaps present in the literature spurred new questions for me (Yin, 2009) that are now the foundation and impetus for this study and, hopefully, a fruitful research agenda in the future.

Organizational Theories of Higher Education Institutions,
Campus Environments, and Campus Culture

This section looks broadly at general organizational types—structures and physical aspects such as type, size, student perceptions, and campus culture—which typically fall under the heading of campus environments. Then, I discuss a theory called organization adaptation, less known in higher education literature under that specific heading and apparently borrowed from organizational science. This theory broadly addresses how colleges respond to external pressures in the environment. To reiterate, this section serves primarily as a referential review of how higher education scholars have used organizational theory and environments as a way to function effectively and impact student success. It also serves as the basis for the questions this study asks and seeks to understand around issues of organizational identity and its potential relevance and impact on campus action.

Organizational Theory in Higher Education

Although similar in many respects to private sector organizations, the way universities operate and handle issues of governance, management, and leadership is different from formal organizations in business and industry. Although business and management theories, like loose coupling and open and closed systems, borrowed from sociology and management scholars, have served as a useful comparison, "in order to explain

university organizations, business analogies are not easily applicable" (Sporn, 1999, p. 36; see also Hall, 1981). Moreover, "the distinguishing characteristics of academic organizations are 'so different from other institutions that traditional management theories do not apply to them'" (Baldridge, 1983, p. 8, as cited in Sporn, p. 31).[5]

As a result, there has been a full spectrum of organizational research devoted specifically to understanding academic institutions, which take into account the unique nuances of the academy.

> Organizational theory is a window through which to view the behavior of individuals and groups (students, faculty members, student affairs professionals) in the context of a complex organization interacting with and being shaped by external exigencies and special interest groups. (Kuh, 2003, p. 270)

Kuh's thoughts on the use of organization theory are fairly recent. They include the human aggregate and account for the external influences that have had increasing impact on the university; which was not typically a consideration in the way these institutions were understood in earlier research.

The following section reviews some of the theories commonly used to better understand college and university organizations. Although not an exhaustive list, the theories that follow are common to higher education organizational literature and, with the exception of organization adaptation, seem to be the ones most foundational and relevant to this study. They are: closed and open systems, loose coupling, environmental, organizational adaptation, and culture studies.

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[5] Baldridge was known for his wisdom in management excellence and was also a former Secretary of Commerce and namesake of the prestigious Malcolm Baldridge National Quality Award. The Baldridge National Quality Program eventually developed special assessment criteria for academic institutions (see Baldridge National Quality Program, 2008).

College and University Institutions as Systems

Academic institutions were originally thought to be analogous to closed systems. This model suggests that influences external to its operation (be it societal, economic, or cultural) have little or no impact and, as such, present no threat to the life of the campus. This conventional viewpoint or ideology understood universities to be characterized as "rational–bureaucratic," "collegial," or "political" (see Kuh, 2003, p. 273). Although helpful, perhaps, when striving to understand distinct parts of a campus, particularly the chain of command structure, this viewpoint's descriptive capacity is limited and rather static. It tends to offer little insight into the questions now being asked about the human dynamic and impact of the process on environment.

Open systems theory. Open systems theory, borrowed from biological systems research (Seidl, 2005; Sporn, 1999) is the basis for several postconventional viewpoints (Kuh, 2003) and is more commonly used to study academic institutions. Based on the contribution of biologist Ludwig Bertalanffy, who developed general systems theory in 1976, this model was offered as an easily transferable concept to many fields of study, including the study of organizations, and provided an applicable framework for understanding and explaining the interrelatedness of organizational subunits (Morgan, 1986; Seidl; Sporn). This is a dominant research paradigm even today. Viewing colleges as open systems as opposed to closed systems, "builds on the principle that organizations, like organisms, are 'open' to their environment and must achieve an appropriate relation with that environment if they are to survive" (Morgan, pp. 44-45). "Instead of being orderly, linear, and goal-directed, the post conventional organization encourages sharing information simultaneously in various

directions and interactions within, across, beyond organizational boundaries to respond to developing circumstances" (Kuh, p. 276).

The examination of college and university organizational structures through the foundational lens of systems theory has helped researchers and practitioners to better understand the social, structural, and organizational properties of academic institutions. It recognizes the presence of individual and collective idiosyncrasies that work synergistically (or as a system) to influence and give voice to cultural issues, governance practices, and continuous improvement efforts (Baird, 1988; Kuh, 2003; Manning et al., 2006; Schein, 2004). What started as an analogy to biological systems, this now rather canonized approach acknowledged the complexity and system-like nature of university organizations and has served as a launch pad for newer theories of understanding. However, studying these institutions as systems alone do not seem to address the evolution or sustaining properties of academic institutions over time; nor do they offer much commentary on the nature of organizations as impacted by the individuals that make up its membership. The next framework discussed, also an open systems construct but different from the more simple closed or open systems approach, is highly acknowledged and affirmed as a more accurate model of how colleges and universities operate today.

Organizations as Loosely Coupled Systems

The notion of loose coupling asserts the presence of some coordination and high levels of integration among distinctive and separate parts of the institution and serves as a well-researched and often-cited confirmation that, indeed, the "part" (a division or department) works with or connects to the whole. In his highly cited article, organizational theorist Karl Weick (1976) offered the notion of loose coupling as an application to the study

of academic institutions to highlight the way in which various elements coexist and yet maintain a high level of autonomy.

Loose coupling is thought to be highly conducive to supporting the fragmented way colleges operate. It is also conducive for the various subcultures that exist and often thrive within a campus environment (Bergquist & Pawlak, 2008; Locke & Guglielmino, 2006). Its advantages can be a structural disadvantage when faced with the challenge to move the entire institution forward or make systemic adjustments. A loosely coupled organizational structure can be problematic as departments can function as entrenched, stand-alone silos that fight against each other for resources and influence.

The study of institutions as loosely coupled systems at best paint a mere descriptive yet static picture of how colleges and universities operate in the aggregate. As Weick (1976) observed, this and other frameworks, in attempts to concretize the structural nature of organizations, have not sufficiently answered the questions about what really holds an organization together or how to move it forward. Perhaps researchers and practitioners have been looking at the wrong things. "Preoccupation with rationalized, tidy, efficient, coordinated structures has blinded many practitioners as well as researchers to some of the attractive and unexpected properties of less rationalized and less tightly related clusters of events" (Weick, p. 37) that impact a campus.

As an answer to his own question of "What holds organizations together?," Weick (1976) tried to offer words like "impermanence, dissolvability, and tacitness" and other such "properties" (p. 38). However, he concluded that it is most likely due to the forces of technology or the top authority tier. Although Weick is a noted scholar on the presence of sense-making in organizations, this is characteristic of how conversations about the elusive

aspects of organizational activity get lost when examined through rational model frameworks. Weick used the word "identity" as separate from "logical or physical separateness" to refer to the distinctive nature of departments and something that could be retained in the operation of the organization (p. 38) but did not elaborate or refer to the scholarship on organizational identity.

Environmental Research

Particularly in higher education research, researchers have sought to look at environments and culture, not only as a way to impact change, but as a way to gain insight into the essence of colleges and universities as experienced by its members. The 2-year DEEP study looked at 20 higher education institutions noted for achieving high levels of student engagement (a chief predictor of student success) as reported in the NSSE. These schools of distinction, according to the DEEP report, were those that employed "practices [that] were thoughtfully designed with the institutional context and the students' needs in mind" (Manning et al., 2006, p. 32). These and other such recent studies convincingly point out the influence of the many factors that impact the college student experience and contribute to student success (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). One such factor is the campus environment.

The topic of campus environments has prompted considerable study over the past 5 decades (Baird, 1988). Reasons for the study of college environments are three fold: to better enhance the quality of the college experience as a whole, to understand and explain through theoretical constructs how college environment impacts students, and to proactively shape the environment in ways that match student's needs (Baird).

The research on campus environments separates into various elements or domains that scholars have observed via research and the work of scholars from other disciplines (e.g., anthropology, sociology, and social psychology). There is a long tradition of using quantitative methodologies to study campus environments. They are studied through demographic, perceptual, behavioral, and multimethod lenses (Baird, 1988) or as physical environments, aggregate environments, organizational environments, and constructed environments (Strange & Banning, 2001).

Common assessment tools for environmental studies were typically in the form of questionnaires which were used to measure demographic characteristics like size, location, and type; student and faculty perceptions of the curriculum and expectations; student activity or behavior patterns and "sub environments" (Baird, 1988). These sub environments were normally considered to be things like residence hall groups, student organizations, and Greeks (Baird).

Pace and Stern, in the late 1950s, were the first to look at how environmental demands interacted with the student's personality to bear on student behavior (Baird, 1988). Studies using the College Student Questionnaire (developed by the Educational Testing Service in 1968) confirmed that certain characteristics prominent in a campus environment, such as scholastic rigor, artistic and creative expression, and warmth, were more likely to have the same type of attributes and/or perceptions in the students themselves (Baird).

Perceptual studies looked at student characteristics that were impacted by attending college and also how students felt about their campuses. These were great studies for college administrators to identify how environment influenced students and make improvements and adjustments where necessary (Baird, 1988). It was also helpful in monitoring perceptions of

traditionally underrepresented students or other minority groups (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). These studies, however, focused on student perceptions and their satisfaction or dissatisfaction in terms of campus-environment fit only and not how congruent it was with, say, overall campus mission or goals. The assumption of the studies' relevance was that a campus environment only mattered in terms of how students felt about it, whether or not they were satisfied, and if it met their academic expectations (Baird).

A major limitation to perceptual approaches that employ quantitative methods lies in its very research design (Baird, 1998). A respondent can describe only those aspects of the college covered by the items in the instrument and only in the particular way the items allow. Although research on "subenvironments" provided more insight into student and faculty perceptions and distinctive college type differences, individual perceptions could not be considered as a universal account of the campus at large. Furthermore, language needed to capture these more ambiguous properties present in the environment was not known. Baird too, referred to this elusive nature inherent in campus environments; "since many of the important aspects of the atmosphere of a college tend to be elusive . . . even the most skillfully prepared items will appear vague or ambiguous" (p. 27). Even then researchers understood the need to look at how campuses develop a sense of collective knowing and how that, along with individual perceptions, is what shapes the environment (Baird). This is what an identity framework seeks to understand.

Women's Colleges

This section would not be as complete if research on women's colleges did not acknowledge them as having a unique and distinctive campus environment. Higher education researchers recognize the uniqueness of women's colleges and the differential impact its

environment appears to have on the student experience (Kinzie, Thomas, Palmer, Umbach, & Kuh, 2007; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Toutkoushian & Smart, 2001). Nearly all of the most popular studies have not focused on the organizational structure but have focused instead on educational outcomes comparing their graduates to students who attend coeducational colleges. I present just some of the literature here because Sweet Briar is a women's institution and these types of colleges are recognized in the body of literature on higher education as having a differentiating impact on the student experience and educational outcomes (Pascarella & Terenzini).

Fewer numbers of college bound women are seriously considering attending women's colleges today (GDA Integrated Services, 2004). Although this may be due to the belief that the potential for a satisfactory social life is significantly diminished at women's colleges, (Langdon, 2001; NSSE, 2004; Smith, 1990), it is most likely due to the fact that women are no longer denied access to college on the basis of gender. Coeducation is widely viewed as the popular option for equal education and post-graduate opportunity (Salomone, 2007). Today over 98% of women enroll in and graduate from coeducational institutions (Kinzie et al., 2007). However, women's colleges are still the gold standard when it comes to educating women well and are often looked to as models for educating women within a coeducational infrastructure.

Some of the earliest research measured after-college achievement and success of women according to institutional type as measured by income level, graduate degrees (particularly in underrepresented fields), and leadership positions of alumnae. Elizabeth Tidball's (1974, 1989) often-cited and even challenged research in this area focused on the impact of women faculty members on these outcomes and drew much attention to the kind of

experiences and opportunities for growth and development that women's colleges appeared to cultivate. Tidball's work has been invaluable but also challenged by other researchers who questioned the validity of her results, citing the inability of these and similar studies to control for and thus differentiate between precollege characteristics of incoming students and the impact of the college itself (Crosby et al., 1994; Oates & Williamson, 1978; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Some researchers who have studied the impact of college suggest that much can be learned from the way these institutions continue to cultivate certain desirable characteristics in its graduates (Pascarella & Terenzini; Wolf-Wendel, 2000).

Kim (2001) concluded that attendance at women's institutions positively influences the desire to work for the good of one's community, which in turn impacts the high proportion of its graduates involved in civic engagement and activism after graduation (Wolf-Wendel, 2000). More opportunities for involvement in campus-sponsored activities and opportunities that result in deeper connections to faculty and staff have been found to be more prevalent at women's colleges (Smith, Wolf, & Morrison, 1995; Whitt, 1994, Wolf-Wendel). Other characteristics developed as a result of attending women's colleges include social confidence (Kim & Alvarez, 1995) and career success in the workplace (Conway, 1974; Shmurak & Handler, 1992; Tidball, 1974, 1989). Critics of these findings cite issues with the inability of some studies to differentiate between institutional effects and the selectivity of the pool of incoming students (Crosby et al., 1994)

Although Tidball's (1974, 1989) work has been challenged over the years, her work seems to have been key in the recognition that what the institutional does in way it educates its students has a significant on student success. This is the area most related to this research. Most of the involvement studies cite little impact on student outcomes from institutional

effort or characteristics (Pike, Kuh, & Gonyea 2003; Toutkoushian & Smart, 2001).

However, Elizabeth Whitt (1994) noticed "remarkable similarities in institutional practices as well as students' descriptions of their experiences" in her findings on leadership development. "Despite differences among the institutions in history, tradition, selectivity . . . leadership and . . . students' incoming characteristics," she concluded, "it might be, in part, a reflection of similarities in mission and institutional philosophies." (p. 201).

Whitt (1994) is not the only one to express uncertainty about what might be responsible for the statistical variations in the data even after controlling for things like selectivity and precollege characteristics. Tidball's (1974, 1989) studies point to differences in postgraduate achievement of students attending women's colleges versus comparable coed colleges in selectivity; analysis of the data as even she mentioned, offers no explanation for those differences.

Additionally, as mentioned earlier, like the environment studies that were limited by the design of the survey instruments, most studies on women's colleges seem to ask the same questions that other outcome studies ask and use the same data sets (Crosby et al., 1994). Understandably, institutional distinctiveness is not so easily cross compared, and there does not seem to be a model that has asked the kinds of questions on which identity research tends to focus. Historical research often centers on the unique circumstances around the inception of one or more colleges, but the data have not been synthesized in a way that offers new explanations for the stark differences in student outcomes from women's colleges. Furthermore, there is no indication that research on women's colleges has been examined within an identity framework. This is the realm of organizational identity and the questions the model it positioned to answer.

Organizational Adaptation Theory

Organizational adaptation theory tends to be viewed from an open systems lens in terms of how organizations adapt and respond to their current environment. With most of its contributions coming from research in business, economics, and sociology (Sporn, 1999) this framework has been applied to the study of a number of higher education institutions; but primarily outside the United States. Organizational adaptation is an informative way to understand the way institutions assess and respond to the pressures that the external environment presents.

The way the organization responds and adapts to its external environment and the process it follows is vital to its continued relevance, value, and sustainability as an institution of higher learning. In the study of six colleges both in the United States and Europe, Sporn (1999) used this "working definition" of adaptation to set the stage for her project, which has significant relevance to my study:

> Organizational adaptation refers to modifications and alterations in the organization or its components in order to adjust to changes in the external environment. Its purpose is to restore equilibrium to an unbalanced condition. Adaptation generally refers to a process, not an event, whereby changes are instituted in organizations. Adaptation does not necessarily imply reactivity on the part of an organization because proactive or anticipatory adaptation is possible as well. But the emphasis is definitely on responding to some discontinuity or lack of fit that arises between the organization and its environment. (Cameron, 1984, p. 123; as cited in Sporn, 1999, p 20)

In order to better understand the theory of organizational adaptation, it might be helpful to know how it defines structure and environment. Structure refers to the internal senior administrative and governance tier that has the authority to steer the organization through adjustments and changes (Sporn, 1999). In this theory, the term environment is expanded and is used to describe the world outside the institution and the pressures it brings to bear on internal organizational structure. Consider the following:

> The environment, viewed broadly, consists of cross-national dynamics of different higher education systems . . . changing societal expectations for universities both at a local and global level; increasing financial pressure; rapidly changing technology and its impact on education and governance; the changing role of the state; and the shifting autonomy of institutions. (Sporn, p. 20).

The study of those six colleges found that colleges differed in the degree of integration and coordination they exhibited. The degree of integration and coordination as well as alignment with mission was positively related to the success of the adaptation process.

Organizational adaptation theory looks at how colleges respond to new environmental pressures of the society. Yet, because of its roots in traditional organizational theory, particularly the view that sees colleges as loosely coupled systems, not much attention is given to the interpersonal dynamics of campus life and how a sense of equilibrium is maintained among its members. Furthermore, it does not intentionally address cognitive-like dimensions of organizational life that this study seeks to explore in terms of the way an organization sees itself first before responding to external pressures.

Culture Studies

The lion's share of the literature on campus culture focuses on how it is described and expressed. Most empirical work done on cultures typically analyzed the more visible aspects of culture like community symbols, rituals, norms, and assumptions (Detert, Schroeder, & Mauriel, 2000). Later research focused on the presence of what may be similar to the earlier work on subenvironments discussed in the previous section that deals with the presence of multiple environments within a single campus setting (Bergquist & Pawlak, 2008; Locke & Guglielmino, 2006).

Campus culture has been studied as having three layers (Kuh & Hall, 1993; Schein, 2004). The first layer might include the visible artifacts readily observed in the environment and can be found in buildings, traditions, rituals, stories, the language expressed and even climate. An interesting note about this layer of culture that Schein points out is how easy one can observe visible artifacts and yet have difficulty in determining its meaning and importance to that particular group. So, experiencing the culture is not the same as understanding the culture. This is especially true if the observer has no access to the insights or values present in deeper levels of culture where values and assumptions are known.

The second layer or dimension of culture embodies the group's "espoused beliefs and values," which can often be observed in strategic goals and philosophies (Schein, 2004, p. 30). However, as Schein further warned, an observer cannot assume that he or she can fully "know" the culture even at this level. Although it may give some insight that helps explain certain behaviors, there is no guarantee that the behavior is congruent with the beliefs of its members. In fact, careful observation may reveal contradictions in the way these values and

beliefs are presented and expressed. For example, a company may make statements about its products that claim "both the highest quality and lowest cost" (Schein, p. 30).

As with any phenomenon that is subjective in experience and includes meaning making, the third layer of culture comprises those "taken-for-granted" paradigms that find behavioral expression in the dominant dos and don'ts of the group; assumptions. Schein's (2004) understanding of basic assumptions has found:

> If a basic assumption comes to be strongly held in a group, members will find behavior based on any other premise inconceivable. . . . Basic assumptions, like theories-in-use, tend to be non-confrontable and non-debatable, and hence, are extremely difficult to change. (p. 31)

Identity and Cognitive Structure of Culture

Schein (2004) acknowledged a cognitive and interpersonal dimension present in organizational life located in this third layer. It is cognitive in that it involves individual sense making as the members of a culture learn and perceive appropriate and inappropriate behavior for the group. It is interpersonal insofar as the assumptions of what is acceptable or not has to be shared at some level in order for it to have impact or permanence. These often tacit but very real assumptions have the power to gather members around some belief, viewpoint, or behavior. Schein is not often quoted in the higher education literature on culture, but his work provides helpful insights to how culture and identity overlap.

Subcultures

Finally, Bergquist and Pawlak's (2008) and Locke and Guglielmino's (2006) work on subcultures highlight the need for campus leaders to be aware that there is often more than one "group" present on college campuses when navigating through issues of change and

strategic planning. Moving ahead with the assumption that all divisions are operating under the same assumptions and value structure is sure to thwart any campus-wide strategic plan or initiative. The research on subcultures is compatible with the loose coupling theory (Weick, 1976) and deals primarily with the social fragmentation found within college environments, whereas this research targets the more systemic and unifying dimensions of identity.

Summary

Static theories about organizations as systems describe how typical institutions are fashioned but hold little insight on how to move forward. Studies of campus environments are important as they provide insight on how to capture student and staff perceptions of climate and culture and to help gauge satisfaction issues. It can make administrators aware of the social dynamics inherent in campus community and acknowledges that members' perception of place is critical know. This research recognizes the importance of categorization among colleges and universities according to specific features like size and classification type. Yet, as mentioned before, even environmental researchers admit the information gained is only as good as the survey instrument, and it is has been difficult to capture campus consensus ideas in the way that the study of organizational identity research can (Baird, 1988; Strange & Banning, 2001).

Adaptation theory amplifies the reality that a campus does not exist in a vacuum. Hence, the study of how higher education institutions adapt to external environmental pressures is critical, as its leaders must know how to navigate through societal and demographic changes as well as changing expectations of the workplace. Including this in the literature review was important because much of the change initiatives that colleges and

universities initiate are provoked by external forces and pressures, which ultimately have a profound impact on institutional identity.

Culture studies are closest in nature to the concept of organizational identity, but it is important to make a distinction between this study's aims and a study where culture is the primary unit of analysis. Research about culture from a higher education perspective is often macro in scope and focuses on the presence and influence of certain collective activity and/or expression of different members or groups within a college environment (Bergquist & Pawlak, 2008). Clearly, culture is closely related, and in many cases, a clear reciprocity between identity and culture is implicated and exists in the research. Noted researchers in organizational behavior see organizational culture as a distinctive phenomenon with its own set of dynamics (Albert, 1998; Hatch, 1993). In other words, culture can be viewed as

> a symbolic field constituted by interpretation processes providing a context for meaning and sense making both about the organization and the reality it occupies. . . . An organization's identity is the aspect of culturally embedded sensemaking that is self-focused. (Fiol, Hatch, & Golden-Biddle, 1998, p. 56).

When considering organizations primarily through an organizational identity lens, culture in many ways, is a stage for the expression of identity and often the venue where identity may be made more salient; yet it is distinct from the meaning making and perception inherent in the construction of identity. "From this perspective," as Albert (1998) viewed it, "the relationship between identity and culture is clear: A particular culture (or image or reputation) may, or may not, be a part of the answer to the identity question: Who am I? What kind of firm is this?" (p. 3).

The distinctions between culture and identity are somewhat permeable. Some researchers have noted that there are levels within both culture and identity that can be examined separately or as overlapping components (Hatch, 1993; Schein, 2004). Other researchers believe it has more to do with the lens through which culture and identity are viewed more so than the level of analysis (Albert, 1998; Fiol et al., 1998). Culture, understandably, may be included as a part of the institution's central character—as is most likely the case with Sweet Briar. However, culture and identity "are distinguishable by culture's being *relatively* more easily placed in the conceptual domains of the contextual, tacit, and emergent than identity which, *when compared with culture*, appears to be more textual, explicit, and instrumental" (Hatch & Schultz, 2004, p. 997).

Culture is very salient at Sweet Briar and is expected to play a strong role in this research, particularly in providing rich descriptions that will help the reader understand its institutional context as it relates to its unique identity. However, this study intends as its primary focal point the institution as a collective actor (see Whetten, 2006) with an interest in how and to what degree issues of identity were made salient to faculty, staff, and students during key strategic processes, changes, and adjustments. This next section will provide additional information about the theory and its conceptual framework that will be explored in specifically this research: organizational identity theory.

Organizational Identity Theory

The simple goal is to have a sufficient blueprint . . . and this requires theoretical propositions. . . . For this reason, theory development prior to the collection of any case study is an essential step.

Yin (2003, p. 29)

Graham Allison's 1971 best-selling and highly regarded case study of the Cuban missile crisis in 1962 is an example of an explanatory single-case design strategy that rested

on three distinct but complementary political science theories (Yin, 2003, 2009). Each theory was presented first followed by a chapter length narrative of the events using components of the featured theory to illustrate how and explain why the crisis unfolded the way it did and the potential lessons that could be learned from analyzing the event from each viewpoint. Following his lead and the suggestion of prominent case study scholars Robert Yin (2003, 2009) and Robert Stake (1995), this section presents a primary framework upon which the assumptions and propositions of this study are conceptually framed and were used to guide the data analysis and assertions in the following chapters.

Organizational Identity: Propositions

To review, the concept of organizational identity is used in this study as an organizing lens through which the identity of Sweet Briar is examined. The term has been defined as that which the members of an organization hold to be central, enduring, and distinctive about their organization. Albert and Whetten (1985) asserted that most organizations, when faced with issues of identity, respond at a surface level that is not sufficient to help them through times of crisis. In order for organizational identity to be acted upon, a consensual understanding is necessary. A sufficient answer to, "Who are we?" must include both an articulation of a "claimed central character," "claimed distinctiveness," and "temporal continuity" (Albert and Whetten, p. 90) and evidence that it is highly shared and embraced by organizational members. A brief description of each one follows.

Criterion of central character: "Features that are somehow seen as the essence of the organization" (Albert & Whetten, 1985, p. 90). The words "essence," "core," or "critical" are possible descriptors that might be used to articulate what is central about an organization. Claims of central character revolve around that which an institution is known to be at its

core. This dimension can be seen in policies, ways of operating, and/or values that are seen as nonnegotiable, vital to its existence, and that, if not held, would cause members to consider it " acting out of character"(Albert & Whetten, 1985; Whetten, 2006, p. 223). This dimension may have a sense of sacredness ascribed to it and often be celebrated with rich narrative (Clark, 1970).

Criterion of claimed distinctiveness: "Features that distinguish the organization from others with which it may be compared" (Albert & Whetten, 1985, p. 90). This criterion has often been referred to as what happens when certain components or features present in one organization, not necessarily distinctive when considered separately, coalesce to produce something unique. It is this combination, the literature seems to suggest, when positively perceived engenders a sense of pride, passion, and commitment. It could also be a singular feature or program that members believe set them apart and thought to be imperative to the organization. Positions concerning this element "are presented as truth claims, comparable to moral obligations" (Whetten 2006, p. 222).

Criterion of claimed temporal continuity "Features that exhibit some degree of sameness or continuity over time" (Albert & Whetten, 1985, p. 90). This criterion refers to ideologies and positions that an organization holds that have managed to endure despite efforts to extinguish them. It tends to overlap with centrality but is also seen in standard policy statements, approaches to trustee relationships and town–gown issues, and operational priorities (i.e., "We are a research institution"). The example of Yale mentioned in the introduction of the study is an example of claimed temporal continuity over time.

Identity-Referencing Discourse

The key to distinguishing general organizational features and values from the aforementioned identity claims lie in what Whetten (2006) later described as "identity-referencing discourse," which involves language from the organization's members that expresses certain "categorical imperatives" (p. 221). "They are categorical in the sense that they reference distinctive social categories (we are a credit union, not a bank) and . . . are stated as implied categorical distinctions (we are a decentralized bank)" (p. 223). Another recognizable feature of identity-referencing discourse is that is also tends to articulate what is believed to be the proper way of doing things. This helps the organization to be accountable to itself in terms of its professed mission and category. It serves as a way to let the organization know when it is "acting out of character" (Whetten, 2006, p. 223).

Beginnings of Organizational Identity Theory

The two scholars credited with the initial development of organizational identity theory are Albert and Whetten (1985). This theory was born out of a need to understand and explain what the two, as organizational behaviorists, saw happening as their university experienced a severe financial crisis in 1979 (Whetten, 1998). Borrowing from the early individual identity researchers like Charles Horton Cooley (1902/2004) and George Herbert Mead (1934/2004) and others, Whetten (1998) recalled, "We crafted a theoretical lens that afforded us a better understanding of the incongruous response-to-stimuli behavior on campus" (p. viii). After a period of inactivity and with the two scholars now at separate institutions, interest in identity resurfaced as many of their colleagues started observing and experiencing the same things at various institutions. A conference of organizational scholars

in management science was convened in 1994 to have a series of scholarly conversations about the topic and the work that had been done up until that time.

Even though the theory was first observed and applied to a university setting (Albert, 1998; Albert & Whetten 1985; Whetten, 2006) it was not published in higher education journals. The construct was developed further and applied mostly to the study of private sector and nonprofit organizations. Even today the theory is not well known among higher education scholars. Using organizational identity as the primary conceptual framework for this study allows a distinctly different lens to be applied to the study of what researchers have alluded to as that glue that holds everything together, or ethos, or esprit de corps (Baird, 1988; Weick, 1976) present in all college and university organizations.

Development of the Concept

Building on individual identity, social interaction, and other related psychosocial theories (Czarniawksa-Joerges, 2004; Gioia, 1998), organizational behaviorist scholars have continued to add to the conversation about organizational identity. Its advantages appear promising. "The concept of identity has the advantage of being a concept, construct or question that can be studied or posed at any level of analysis" (Albert, 1998, p. 10). As a result, there are multiple viewpoints and ways of looking at it, and the field is yet negotiating definitions and use of the term (Brown, Dacin, Prattt, & Whetten 2006; Corley et al., 2006; Hatch & Schultz, 2002; Whetten, 2006). Pratt and Foreman (2000) discussed the presence of multiple identities both at the macro and micro level, which like culture studies, suggest that they are to be managed if change is to occur successfully (Bergquist & Pawlak, 2008; Locke & Guglielmino, 2006). Others found that identity could be used negatively as a way to

control workers (Alvesson & Willmott, 2004) but also positively to foster identification with and commitment to an organization resulting in member well-being (Albert et al., 2000).

Identity Threat

There is a common assumption that issues of identity become salient as threats to the organization arise (Elsbach & Kramer, 2004; Gioia & Thomas, 1996; Ravisi & Schultz, 2006; Seidl, 2005). Some scholars found that identity can drift or evolve over time when an organization loses a founder, new leaders reject the old identity, or members embrace new ways of doing and goals are refined (Albert & Whetten, 1985; Barney et al., 1998; Whetten, 2006).

Identity, Culture, and Image

The dynamics of identity, culture, and image have been examined, whereby culture is seen in relation to identity as "the tacit organizational understanding (e.g., assumptions, beliefs, and values) that contextualize efforts to make meaning, including internal self-definition" (Hatch & Schultz, 2002, p. 996). The study of the intersection of image and identity has suggested that an organization may act in response to how it perceives others view it whereas some may have a public image that is distinctly different from its core identity (Gioia et al., 2004; Gioia & Thomas, 1996; Waeraas & Solbakk, 2009).

Limitations of Current Research

As mentioned before, the literature base in this field has been developed from scholars in organizational behavior both in the United States and abroad. Much of the research has focused on business organizations internationally but not U.S. colleges. When studies do reference higher education institutions, it is done more through a management science lens with more of a focus on the top administrative layer of the institution (see Ravisi

& Schultz, 2006; Scott & Lane, 2000). In fact, out of the many articles I reviewed on organizational identity, only one focused on an academic setting with academia (see Gioia & Thomas, 1996). This article, however, looked more closely at the dynamics of strategic change as they attempted to change their perceived public image. The authors did, however, find a relationship between the strength of the institutional identity salience and how successful the leaders navigated through the process. This suggests that identity matters in times that call for purposeful redesign and new strategies (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991/2004). Whetten, in his 2006 article, "Albert and Whetten Revisited: Strengthening the Concept of Organizational Identity," stated that the primary gap in the original 1985 article was the absence of a "systematic characterization of profound organizational experience" that could be observable in times of crisis (p. 226).

Summary

The research on identity in organizations allows for the human dynamic, and more importantly, directs attention first to the foundational properties of an organization that are central and enduring and then to who and what the members within the organization collectively believe it to be. This has tremendous impact on the actions of the organization. Some organizational scholars examine the construct through a lens that posits that identity is a property of the organization and thus supersede or exist outside the views of its current members (D. Whetten, personal communication, November 4, 2009). Others believe it is a constructive and cognitive schema that is held in the minds of the members and thus highly malleable and more transient (Brickson 2009, Dutton & Dukerich, 1991/2004; Ravisi & Shultz, 2006). Most, however do agree that there is significant permeability among both viewpoints and that both elements can exist in the same organization although the names

ascribed to them may be different (Albert et al., 2000; Pratt et al., 2000). Given the uniqueness of higher education institutions and, as mentioned before, the inadequacy of any business theory to fully capture the nuances of these organizations, I adopt a "both–and" view for this study. It is clear from the literature that identity is something distinct and independent from members' perceptions, but its relative salience and impact on collective action has much to do with how it lives in the minds of the organization's current members. An in-depth examination through the lens of organizational identity of the issues and context in which Sweet Briar's identity was challenged offers enhanced insight into how colleges and universities can successfully endure through environmental shifts and changes and emerge even stronger than before.

This research is ripe with clues and connections that can give insight to this and other questions about core institutional identity, how this impacts community and corporate action, and how to successfully start the process of institutional change that will help colleges to move forward.

CHAPTER THREE
METHODOLOGY

The purpose of undertaking this study was to explore the dynamics of organizational identity in a college setting. The study contributes to the current body of literature by shedding light on how identity weighs in to distinguish one college from another, but more importantly, how its development can play a significant role in issues of institutional sustainability. In particular, this examination focused on the shared beliefs the members held about what was distinctively central and enduring about Sweet Briar College and why. It also revealed how its identity influenced key strategic action. This chapter explains the rationale for the research methodology, design, and data collection strategy and how the data were analyzed.

Research Methodology Choice

One of the admonitions I heard often as I started this process was that, in selecting a research design, the question determines the method. This wisdom forced me to really grapple with what would be the best treatment of this topic for the kinds of questions I was proposing. I decided to use a case study design as my first look at this issue. I saw merit in examining Sweet Briar identity and its interpersonal dynamics in a way that honored the environmental context and would allow for a greater depth of understanding, which is what case study as a methodology is well suited to do (Eisenhardt, 1989).

If the study were concerned only with the history of the college, the use of historical methods would have sufficed. Though historical method is very close to case study design, case study methodology is descriptive and context-based as well as relational (Yin, 2003). It also allows for building new theories as well as expanding current ones.

As mentioned before, the consideration of context was very important to this analysis. Yin (2003) recognized the importance of the researcher to clearly understand the issues around which his or her study is connected, especially when using case study design as a methodology (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003). Case studies are designed to take advantage of contextual clues. It encourages the consideration of context for making connections and inferences (Creswell, 1998; Stake). It is the attention to context that allows assertions to be made from case study design. There are different ways to apply case study methodology: exploratory, explanatory, or exemplary (Yin, 2003), intrinsic or instrumental (Stake). My approach in this study was primarily exploratory. Exploratory case study design is highly suitable to address research questions that ask how or why, as its reporting format often includes "operational links needing to be traced over time, rather than mere frequencies or incidence" (Yin, 2009, p. 9).

Moses and Knutsen (2007) identified six ways to purpose case study design: atheoretical, interpretive, hypothesis generating, theory confirming, theory infirming, and deviant. Atheoretical and interpretative designs are used when generalizations are not the goal. Hypothesis-generating and theory confirming case study designs are appropriate when developing a hypothesis for later testing or to "fit" an existing theory to another scenario. In theory-infirming cases, the results weaken or disprove an existing theory; in deviant case study design, the researcher's results show that the case "deviates from established generalizations" (see Moses & Knutson, p. 132). This research was designed to take the theory of organizational identity used mostly in the field of management science and test its applicability to a university setting.

Wide generalizations are difficult to make from case study research and are sometimes strongly contested when attempted, especially by those with more objective epistemologies; but it is acceptable to make analytic assertions and generalizations (Yin, 2003). It is through this methodology that I explain how organizational identity is present in colleges and to generate some additional assertions about identity development and related action in higher education.

To use the typology that Moses and Knutsen (2007) cited from the seminal work of Arend Lijphart in 1971, this case study design was both theory confirming and hypothesis generating. Sweet Briar was "chosen as an empirical venue for applying a particular theory"; which in this case was organizational identity theory (Moses and Knutsen, p. 132). Additionally, it was also intended to be a type of "plausibility probe," said to be used when trying to assess whether or not a potential theory is worthy of extensive research. It applied here because I was interested in determining whether organizational identity theory, scantily applied to higher education settings (and, so far, only by organizational theorists) shows potential for lessons and further scholarly development in the study of higher education institutions. In terms of hypothesis generation, I wanted to remain open for ways to build on the theory as I examined the role of institutional history in the formation of identity and how members actually processed and kept identity salient in the operational life of the college.

Research Design

Building a Chain of Evidence/Data Sources

In case study methodology, particularly when the unit of analysis centers on an organization, gathering data from various sources support construct validity claims and directly impacts the quality of the final analysis. A subtle but powerful distinction of case

study data collection versus surveys and phenomenological inquiry is its objective. Yin (2009) wrote:

> Throughout, a major objective is to collect data about actual human events and behavior. This objective differs from (but complements) the typical survey objective of capturing perceptions, attitudes, and verbal reports about events and behavior (rather than direct evidence about the events and behavior). (p. 98)

This strategy was an important consideration in my data collection. Although I felt I needed information about actual events and behavior, I also needed corroborative information gathered from the verbal accounts and voiced perceptions of Sweet Briar members. Attention to the development of a chain of evidence allowed each source to assist in the validation of the other for greater accuracy. To prepare for the data analysis portion of the study, I gathered information from six major sources suggested for building high-quality case studies (Stake, 1995; Yin 2003, 2009): documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant observation, and physical artifacts. The following paragraphs will describe how each source was used in the study.

Documents and Archival Records

Document analysis is considered to be a critical part of any case study (Yin, 2003). It serves primarily to "corroborate and augment information from other sources" by providing the supportive detail helpful in the identification of themes and patterns (Yin, 2003, p. 87). These sources of data, ranging from interoffice memos and e-mails to press releases and blogs, are advantageous because they are the independent properties of the research site and can offer a record of actions and behaviors in real time (Yin, 2003). For example, because organizational identity is defined as that which is central, enduring, and distinctive about an

institution, documentation was collected and systematically reviewed (Krippendorff, 2004) for language that referenced collective pronouns like we, our, etc., and evidence of wording that spoke to enduring values and shed light on the question of who Sweet Briar believes itself to be and/or connects collective action to identity claims.

Archival records are those that may be more specific in nature and may include statistical data, demographic and geographic information, surveys, etc. Particularly for this study, archival records played a crucial role in bearing out the dimensions of organizational identity, providing examples of "the criterion of claimed temporal continuity" and "the criterion of claimed central character" (Albert & Whetten, 1985, p. 90). I specifically looked for and examined documents that referenced historical and more formal events and compared them with more contemporary sources and documents for corroboration. With these records and documents in hand I planned to cross reference the information with key themes and identity claims articulated in the interviews for evidence of ideas and values that may have persisted over time. Some of the documents and records that were collected for analysis were:

1. Available written records around internal strategic planning:

    a. Retrievable e-mails or copies of e-mails referencing the events;

    b. Any available Shape of the Future Committee correspondence; and

    c. Public reports and updates to the Sweet Briar community, Board of Trustees and other stakeholders.

2. Alumni publications and correspondence.

3. Internet documentation such as blogs, calendars, and announcements.

4. Campus publicity notices and mailings.

5. Selected NSEE reports, particularly the 2004 survey and the customized report written by the DEEP research team and presented to the college.

6. Past and present mission and vision statements.

7. Selected copies of the student's handbook.

8. Archival report of the 1967 court case to integrate Sweet Briar College.

9. *The Voice* student newspaper (two issues)

How documents and archival records were gathered. Yin (2009) said that interviews in a case study are not necessarily used as the primary data source because of the inclusion of multiple sources of evidence. This chain of evidence is used to highlight a broader understanding of the phenomenon under study. This philosophy worked well for this study. Not wanting to privilege the interviews primarily because of my conversation with Dr. Whetten about identity being more the property of the institution rather than its members, I spent a great deal of time gathering a wide assortment of supporting written documentation

My initial search commenced with multiple visits to the Sweet Briar website, which I consulted to get contact information. I then looked for more specific information mentioned in my conversations with the community relations office and the faculty member who would later become a key informant. The documents I ultimately selected for review were chosen first by talking with members of the Sweet Briar community about my project and then following up on their recommendations of what written information and documents might contain the information I was sought.

I visited the Sweet Briar campus three times over a period of about 19 months. The first visit was strictly informal; I was testing the feasibility of the study and as Yin (2009) and Stake (1995) mentioned, getting acquainted with the members of the Sweet Briar

community and explaining to them what I hoped to learn from the study. During the first visit, I took scores of field notes, observed, and fielded questions from faculty, staff, and students over 2 days. I also took a tour of the campus and met with my key informant about potential interviewees for my next visit.

One of the primary purposes of my second visit, which lasted a total of 7 days, was to gather as much written information I could. I spent a day in the Sweet Briar library searching through archival data under the helpful guidance and assistance of the school librarian who has served as a faithful guardian of the school's most precious records. The materials were under lock and key and accessible only through a winding staircase to the lower level of the library. I left having looked through scores of old student's handbooks, yearbooks, and archival records. Much of the information that provided identity clues was similar from year to year, so I chose what I thought was a fair representative sample, paying specific attention to key events in the school's history.

A visit to the alumni office ended with me leaving with 19 copies of alumni magazines covering years from 1998 to 2006. This was a great find as the school website, which stored copies of the magazines online, only went back as far as 2003 or so. Other precious documents were handed to me in trust by staff members. One document, written by the president to the board in the spring of 1999, detailed the results of a major strategic planning initiative. This document was in response to a charge given by the board to set forth some goals for the college as it moved into its second century. Another document was a copy of a memo from the president that started with an account of the progress made since the board approved the 1999 strategic plan. It also outlined how the mandates set forth as a result

of the SOF initiative informed the strategy the senior management team would take to realign its financial priorities with the reaffirmed and now clarified mission of the college.

I was also given materials that, in my estimation, were bonus finds because they belonged in the personal collections of the staff members and were not obviously accessible in the library nor were they on the school's website. These were most precious. However ,as I cursorily read through each document to choose which ones I would include, for some reason it was difficult for me to embark on a detailed document analysis of the documents. The written text had not yet come alive to me even though I dutifully attempted to organize and peruse the information. Perhaps it was because in my mind, I did not consider myself armed with enough, especially given that I had not completed my interviews.

Interviews

Specifics about interview participants. It was difficult to be certain of exactly what members of the Sweet Briar community I would ultimately interview at the actual time of data collection. My key informant agreed to serve as my main contact for scheduling, and I benefited from his position at the college to gain access to otherwise difficult to reach or more guarded interviewees. I gave him a list of who I thought I wanted to interview based on my first trip out, his recommendations, and the website review. Additionally, as I became acquainted with other faculty and staff, they suggested who might have the information I was looking for. Yin (2003) confirmed this approach to interview selection, and I found that being open to suggestions for recommendations proved be beneficial for this study. The referral process seemed to help in establishing rapport with each participant.

The faculty members chosen for interviews were those who had formal responsibilities both outside and inside the classroom and could speak more broadly to issues

related to the identity of the college and potential adjustments over time. There were 3 faculty selected: 1 in the sciences, 1 in the social sciences, and 1 in the humanities. They represented a faculty cohort of over 110 full- and part-time professors; 97% with terminal degrees, and almost a 50/50 ratio of male and female professors. According to the website, 72 full time faculty members teach 80% of the courses in over 40 academic majors and other programs with a 9:1 student/faculty teaching ratio. The dean's office reported that over 75% of the faculty has been at the college for 11 years or more with the two largest groups with 11–15 year (22.2%) and 26–30 years (18.1%) of service (J. Green, personal communication, Jun 2010). Additionally, faculty salaries for Sweet Briar professors have historically been above average for Carnegie IIB institutions, but in very recent years salaries have hovered around the average range.

Contacting procedures for interview participants. There was no official script or formal letter or e-mail that was sent to all participants. I found from my first visit that the members of this college responded best to informal contact. I contacted potential interviewees with whom I had established a connection on the first visit personally via phone, via e-mail, or in person. My key informant contacted those with whom I had not yet met or upper level administrators with busy schedules (Yin, 2009).

I conducted on-site, semistructured, open-ended individual and group interviews (Creswell, 1998; Esterberg, 2001; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003). I conducted one formal interview and one group interview during my second vist and the remainder of the interviews on the third and final visit over a period of 4 days. By the end of the data collection process, there were a total of 11 formal single interviews: 6 with staff members, 3 with faculty members and 2 with students. There were two group interview sessions: one with 6 staff members and

one with 3 students for a total of 20 individuals formally interviewed. I also had informal conversations of various lengths with several other faculty, staff members, students, and alums as I set aside time to observe and interact with the community. These informal exchanges served as a way to highlight to me what was most salient for members about Sweet Briar identity and provided information I could later follow up on in my formal interviews and document review. I made it a point to follow up any divergent responses and opposing viewpoints relative to the study in the set of interviews conducted and written documents. This was handled by me simply asking the person to clarify what he or she meant during the interview. I also used the information to formulate specific questions in interviews with other participants. However, this was rare. Overall, there was a significantly high level of consensus in the interviews as indicated by the high degree of confirmation across the data. Saturation was clearly achieved with the final number of interviews selected, and the information obtained in the interviews converged with the other sources of evidence (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Yin, 2009). This is evident when reviewing the results in the next chapter.

Interview topics and questions. Yin (2009) suggested that the case study researcher understand the critical and/or essential questions that he or she is asking of the study but not feel constrained to a structured interview approach. He referred to these as Level 1 questions. Although it is important to have a "consistent line of inquiry," having a grasp of the study's Level 1 questions allows for the actual "stream of questions" to take the form of "fluid" but "guided conversations" (Yin, 2009, p. 106). This is different from what Yin (2009) referred to as Level 2 questions, which is the line of questioning that is planned beforehand but asked directly to participants as the interview unfolds. Yin (2009) stated,

Thus, case study interviews require that you to operate on two levels at the same time: satisfying the needs of your line of inquiry (Level 2 questions) while simultaneously putting forth friendly and nonthreatening questions in your open ended interviews (Level 1 questions). (pp. 106-107)

In my interviews with Sweet Briar members, I used this approach and it worked extremely well. It seemed to generate a great deal more narrative than found with a more formalized and focused approach. Following the suggestion of Yin (2009) and others, I delineated the following Level 1 questions. All interviews were at least 45 minutes in length and questions from my research question protocol (Level 2 questions) were asked as relevant (see Appendix B). Because this research had as its primary focus the nexus of Sweet Briar's identity as percieved by its members and the events and activity that help define and shape it, the Level 1 questions centered on four main topics:

1. Background and history of Sweet Briar (including awareness of founding mission);

2. Perception of the Sweet Briar identity (i.e., what members believe were its distinctive and noticable elements or components; how did the fact that it was considered a legacy college impact the community, how is this identity expressed or made evident, and what is its impact in the life of the college);

3. Potential barriers and challenges to identity (i.e., internal changes, external demands, key events, etc.);

4. Shape of the Future initiative (i.e., challenges, well done elements, things that could have been different).

Each interview was taped, transcribed, and reviewed for any evidence of collective meaning making and identity such as a voiced internalization of identity claims, personal or group

action or performance in line with the perceived identity, and corroboration with documents and archival data. A complete list of Level 1 and 2 questions can be found in Appendix B.

Issues of confidentiality with interview participants. All identifying information, with the exception of a general description of the interviewee's connection to the college, has been kept confidential. Interviewees are identified as staff, faculty, or student in the final report. In some cases, staff members are mentioned by department affiliation. Computer files have been kept secure and there is no plan to release the identities of participants in the near future.

General and emerging themes, along with interview quotes, are reported where appropriate and are not traceable back to the interviewee. The participants' identities will remain confidential unless they give express permission to release any personally identifying information. All interviewees reviewed and signed an informed consent document (Appendix C), which are kept in the researcher's confidential files.

Direct Observation and Participant Observation

As mentioned before, context is important to case study methodology. Direct observation is one of the techniques used in case study to better understand context. To ensure that the study accounts for this important consideration, I visited the museum that is housed on campus and the campus library for relevant historical information and also observed several university-sponsored events (graduation, baccalaureate ceremony, and senior luncheon for the class of 2009) in order to gain a deeper knowledge of the context in which members of Sweet Briar experience the campus.

I observed various student and faculty and staff interactions during my visits to campus. Between and after interviews, I often sat in the campus coffee shop, which was

located in the main student center, and observed casual activity such as greetings and brief conversations in passing. I attended the campus-wide holiday dinner, as well as a social event for off-campus and nontraditional students sponsored by the career office during my final visit. I kept extensive written field notes in a notebook and stored on my computer field notes that were made on my voice recorder or video recorder. All observation notes were general and limited to making reference to whether groups or individuals observed (if known) were part of the faculty, staff, alumni, board members, or students of Sweet Briar.

Physical Artifacts

The research also included in its analysis various physical artifacts on campus, also considered a type of content analysis (Neuendorf, 2002) that might reflect, convey, or lend credibility to identity claims of centrality, distinctiveness, or continuity. In fact, the campus itself was a type of artifact in a way. The cultural symbolism of various places on the grounds had direct connection to the salience of how identity was expressed there. Considered to be of lesser importance to the quality of the case study, physical artifacts are a part of the chain of evidence (Yin, 2009).

Development of a Case Study Database

An audit trail (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) or case study database (Stake, 1995; Tellis, 1997; Yin, 2003, 2009) was created and is included in the Appendix D. Yin (2003) stated that "a case study database increases markedly the *reliability* of the entire case study" (p. 102). The case study database for this study includes the case study protocol and completed narrative. The narrative contains answers to the questions of the protocol completed by the researcher. Its aim, according to Yin (2003) is to bring together the various data sources used that speak to each question or topic in the protocol before the formal data analysis begins and

the formal report is developed. It also establishes a link between the research questions and the protocol and serves to "document the connection between specific pieces of evidence and various issues in the case study generously using footnotes and citations" (Yin, 2003, p. 104). The database also contains handwritten and typed notes, memos written during interview transcript review, field and observation notes, and miscellaneous researcher notes about and during the process.

Data Analysis

As mentioned earlier, the data were analyzed through an organizational identity framework put forth initially by Albert and Whetten (1985). This theory identifies three criteria that can be seen, heard, and expressed through various documents, records, artifacts, and the language and behavior of the members of the particular organization. They are: a "claimed central character," a "claimed distinctiveness," and a sense of "temporal continuity" (Albert & Whetten, p. 90). Whetten (2006) further identified validity standards for definitional and ideational components that are inherent in the structure and function of an organization that can be used to determine legitimate identity claims.

The multiple data sources that are relied upon with case study design can result in a large body of information from which to sort through. I was careful to follow a rather simple strategy with a few complementary techniques I identified early on to ensure a type of analysis consistency. Yin (2003) discussed the importance of a data analysis strategy when using case study methodology. He wrote, "Analyzing case study evidence is especially difficult because the techniques have not been well defined. To overcome this circumstance, every case study analysis should follow a general analytic strategy, defining priorities for what to analyze and why" (p. 126).

With this in mind, I allowed for both deductive and inductive analysis in this study using organizational theory as the sole theoretical framework and connecting point for cross comparison of the data sources. First, I started with extracting key components from the theoretical propositions identified in Albert and Whetten's theory of organizational identity (Whetten, 2006) that represented legitimate identity claims and developed as a few a priori categories. After the categories were identified, I followed with a microanalysis review of interview text as described by Strauss and Corbin (1998) where special attention was given to words, phrases, and sentences that met the criteria.

I then followed up with a more inductive analysis by listening for evidence of the theory in identity-forming properties, dimensions, and processes that emerged and seemed to recur over time and across different situations. These "theoretical comparisons" were used as "tools (a list of properties) for looking at something somewhat objectively rather than naming or classifying without a thorough examination of the object at the property and dimensional levels" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 81). This process could also be called conceptual ordering as described by Patton (2002). This approach is believed to foster a more objective examination that looks at what the "incident symbolizes or represents" as opposed to a comparison of "specific incidents" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 81.) In the paragraphs that follow, I detail the steps taken in my analysis.

Deductive Analysis

Guided by the findings in the literature review about the different interpretations of the initial theory, I wanted to stick as close as possible to the original concept. I believed that this would yield more credible results in terms of construct validity and reliability. Being aware of the different interpretations, I made the decision early in the analysis to focus on the

theory as specified in the original work and later clarified by Whetten (2006). The proposition was that that identity was a property of the organization and was contained in its institutional claims but could be found in the shared beliefs of the members. However, I was open to other propositions about the theory that focused more on the arbitrary construction of identity in the minds of an institution's members (see Ravisi & Schultz, 2006, p. 434).

The interview sessions were transcribed in two phases. The first phase started by transcribing interviews directly into the Atlas.ti software along with recorded observations. I added two documents for a total of 13 items loaded into the primary documents category. With this small sampling of data I began to highlight text that met my a priori categories while being open to coding of additional categories that were not determined beforehand. The software program helped "put the evidence in some preliminary order" (Yin, 2009, p. 129). I printed out a copy of the initial research questions and posted them so they were before me at all times. I then completed what I could of the protocol narrative as recommended by Yin (2009). This allowed me to begin thinking about the documents and archival records I had gathered and how they corroborated the interviews and addressed my research questions.

Confident that the categories were sufficient and similar patterns were emerging among transcripts, I completed the remainder of the transcription work, highlighting with different colors statements that spoke to the research questions and/or met the criteria for the a priori categories. A data source log was then developed listing the interviews, documents, and observations as well as important highlights from each based on how they aligned with the criteria established (see Appendix D). I decided to use the interview transcripts, one of my six sources of evidence (Yin, 2009), as the primary starting point to identify identity-

referencing discourse and work back to the documents. Although Yin (2003, 2009) didn't privilege interviews over other sources when building a chain of evidence, I used member interviews as a centering data source because of their ability to best capture current members' perceptions of identity in terms of the definition that Albert and Whetten (1985) established. In other words, as statements were made from members that referred to attributes they considered central, enduring, and distinguishing about the college, I would confirm their accuracy by comparing the statements to written documents, historical information, etc. If in reviewing written documents or historical information I discovered something new, I would review the interview transcripts again or look for confirming evidence in other written sources or artifacts. For example, the honor code was mentioned in all of the student interviews. I tried to find the earliest mention of the honor code in the documents I collected, which in this case was the early student's handbooks. I then followed the trail in the remaining handbooks I had collected and also looked for and noted references to the honor code in other interviews. Again, once I achieved sufficient saturation and no new information could be found, I considered the information I gathered complete enough to move forward with the remainder of the analysis.

Inductive Analysis

As transcriptions of interviews were completed, I alternated with a review of the documents I had collected and making comparisons between text and context (Gadamer, 1994). They were added to the data log, and notes were made on the interview transcripts that indicated where I found corroborating evidence from other interviews or other data sources. I spent a great deal of time with the interview transcripts. That is to say, I reviewed many of the transcripts more than once and made comparisons to other interview transcripts and

documents. Through this process, it seemed that the deductive analysis employed in the beginning began to give way to a more inductive approach in which the deeper meanings in the texts started to emerge for me as the researcher.

Once the interviews were completed in December 2009 and I started the transcribing process, I was naturally drawn back to those precious documents I had been given personally by the members of the Sweet Briar community and had reviewed cursorily before. The personal testimonies of those who were carriers of the Sweet Briar story constantly reminded me of things I had read about on the website and as I had collected actual copies of written texts. It was uncanny in some ways how consistent the voices on tape were with the voice that emanated from the words of many of the documents I had read earlier but now seemed to come alive for me or, in other words, make sense. Each document was carefully reviewed and cross-compared for recurring patterns within and across data sources (Krippendorff, 2004; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). I ceased collecting data well after I achieved saturation and the sources of evidences were consistently repeating general themes, trends, and patterns.

One such precious document, given to me by one staff member in the alumni office, was a book of a historical narrative of the college from its founding to the late 1950s written by an alumnus under the simple title, *The Story of Sweet Briar College: Volume 1*. The use of the words "The Story of" triggered the thought that this would be something written out of nostalgia and would be based more on folklore than historical truth. I was delighted to find that I was sorely mistaken. This piece was anything but folklore. Although it was obviously the work of amateur researchers, but meticulous nonetheless, it included accounts from newspapers, archival records, eyewitness accounts, and interviews of those who had personally known and worked with the founders and early leaders of the institution as well as

accounts of letters written by the hands of the institution's founders and pictures. It did, however, offer something an objective researcher with a Ph.D. could not: This history of Sweet Briar was written by one who had a love for the institution and a vested interest that its history be accurately reported and preserved.

Rationale for Development of Definitional and Ideational Components Versus Traditional Themes

This book, along with the transcribed interviews and what emerged for me as I listened to them, set the stage for the rest of the analysis and was, to my surprise, starting to look much like the pattern and practices described when engaging texts hermeneutically (Gadamer, 1994; Love, 2004; Prasad, 2005). Instead of the more quantitative and even thematic approach to document analysis, where word counts are critical to establishing validity, the hermeneutic approach, often referred to as the "hermeneutic circle" when relating to various texts, holds

> that the meaning of any text can be discerned only if we look at the conditions that go in to its constitution. . . . Although hermeneutics would not necessarily opposed to the kind of systematic counting of words and phrases typically employed by content analysis, it would not regard it as being particularly insightful unless it were further reinterpreted in the light of a deeper understanding of the text's context. (Prasad, p. 37)

Prasad went on to say that this analytic method has been underused but holds great promise for researchers looking to understand "the complexities of management and organizations." This approach proved to be very complementary with the case study methodology this study employed, which relies heavily on the illustration and presence of context as a foundation for interpretation of the event or phenomenon under examination. With this type of analysis,

context and text are reciprocal, each providing insight to one another for a deeper and more intimate understanding.

One of the most well known writers on the hermeneutic tradition Hans-Georg Gadamer (1994) described this movement of text to context and back to text again as a type of dialogue that a researcher establishes with the text. In the interrogation of a previously written text, the researcher, in a sense, brings it back to life and into the conversation where questions can be asked of it that yield answers that allow the researcher to see beyond a mere word account of isolated incidents.

> In this process, the interpreter is able to reach some awareness of his or her presuppositions and can reinterpret the text with a new set of more meaningful questions. Like the hermeneutic circle, the circle dialogue with the text is (theoretically) an endless iterative process done until some satisfactorily level of understanding is achieved. (Prasad, 2005, p. 37)

In light of this approach and the theoretical framework of organizational identity, which shows itself in the identity claims of its members, I focused on the identity-referencing discourse that emerged from both verbal and written data sources. As a result, what became more salient for me, particularly in the latter half of the analysis, were actual categorical statements that expressed identity rather than descriptive themes about identity. Again, adhering very closely to the work of Whetten (2006), I developed four definitional components and eight complementary ideational components that emerged from the data and that reflected the shared beliefs of what members told me that was central, enduring, and distinguishing about Sweet Briar. In chapters four and five, I present a detailed explanation

of these components. The discussion will address how they connect to each other and were expressed in the operational life of the college.

Triangulation and Construct Validity

Each data source could have been used as a stand-alone component for data analysis in other research methodologies. The strength of case study design, however, lies in its use of multiple sources of evidences and the links that the researcher can establish in a way that demonstrates construct validity, internal and external validity, and reliability (Stake 1995; Yin, 2009). Working with more than one type of data source is also considered to be one type of triangulation. All of the sources reviewed here were used to build a chain of evidence for this study (Yin, 2003) and were used support the strength of its findings and assertions.

By its very design, triangulation is considered to be already inherent in case study methodology (Tellis, 1997; Yin, 2003). However, because through this study I also hope to be able to also offer some "assertions" as a result of the analysis (Creswell, 1998; Strauss & Corbin, 1998), I sought to ensure construct validity by comparing and measuring findings against the multiple sources of evidence as explained earlier (i.e., interviews, participant observation, archival information, follow up with member checking, etc.) and then again against the validity standards identified by Whetten (2006).

Additional consideration was given to insure internal validity by examining Sweet Briar's identity in light of the propositions identified in organizational identity theory. This helped to guide and focus the analysis of my findings and keep the study accountable to the questions asked (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003). As the process was delineated through data gathering, I sought notable comparisons and patterns that confirmed and helped build plausible explanations against my theoretical frameworks. This is referred as pattern

matching (Tellis, 1997; Yin, 2009) and is used in explanatory case studies when wanting to connect the data to some theory. I also developed a table to visually illustrate these inferences (see chapter four).

Transferability

One of the critiques of qualitative research design is replicability. This issue, when not handled strategically, challenges a study's claims for robustness and empirical strength. "The general way of approaching the reliability problem is to make as many steps as operational as possible and to conduct research as if someone were always looking over your shoulder" (Yin, 2003, p. 38). Poorly documented case notes and other such procedures can be avoided by the use of a case study protocol, which outlines a formal course of action for collecting data and houses study objectives and guiding questions the researcher seeks to explore (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003). For this study, the research proposal served as the case study protocol and also included a research question protocol (see Appendix B). In addition, a case study database was created that included collected documents, field notes, and other materials that can be easily retrieved should it be necessary (Yin, 2009).

Thick Description

Throughout my final analysis I wanted to attend to the task of the providing the reader with "thick description" in order that, when assertions were offered the reader might have a full understanding of the "findings" as well as the context from which issues of transferability were drawn (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 125). The significant use of context to build the case is considered one of the key features of case study design (Creswell, 1998; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003). In order to bring the context to life for the reader, I found that using a more narrative approach, the most common reporting style in case study design (Yin,

2003), did indeed provide richer descriptions of the events surrounding my study and how the findings related to my theoretical framework. This will be evident in how the findings are discussed in chapter four. Chapter five concludes the study with a discussion of the implications of this research in terms of the application of identity theory in higher education. There is also some discussion and suggestions as to how leaders might apply this construct in ways that help them to be better prepared to navigate through the tough challenges mentioned at the start of this study.

CHAPTER FOUR
FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

Chapter four presents the findings from Sweet Briar College. The specific questions asked of this research include:

I. How is the identity of Sweet Briar defined and how have significant events and subsequent decisions shaped, reinforced, and contributed to this core identity?

II. How is the identity of Sweet Briar College perceived, defined and reinforced by its members?

III. How was identity leveraged as a resource as the college encounters crisis and challenge?

The theoretical framework was necessary to recognize certain dimensions and properties of identity during data gathering and analysis. However, what emerged equally as significant to the analysis and understanding of organizational identity was the contextual backdrop of Sweet Briar's history (Burton, 1970; Whetten, 2006) and its influence (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) on the college.

It was apparent early on in this research that the history of Sweet Briar, starting with the events in the life of the founder prior to the start of the college, would prove to be central to its current identity. However, this discovery certainly did not happen in a stepwise manner. It seemed, rather, to resemble a process that unfolded somewhat meanderingly rather than in a mechanical or linear fashion. The importance of this history became clearer over time with each event, each action, and each corresponding interaction observed. The following statement by Strauss and Corbin (1998) describes perfectly what a process tends to look like and is reflective of what I experienced in terms of this research. A process is

a series of evolving sequences of action/interaction that occur over time and space,

changing or sometimes remaining the same in response to the situation or context.

The action/interaction may be strategic, taken in response to problematic situations,

or may be quite routine, carried out without much thought. It may be orderly,

interrupted, sequential, or coordinated–or in some cases, a complete mess. What

makes the action/interaction process is its evolving nature and its varying forms,

rhythms, and pacing all related to some purpose. (p. 165)

Bearing in mind the nature of such a process, the findings that follow in this chapter

are framed around what organizational theorist Whetten (2006) felt needed to be evident

before there are what he described as a *legitimate identity claims*. For review, *identity claims*

or *referents* (used interchangeably) are specific attributes that signify "an organization's self-

determined (and self-defining) unique social space and [are] reflected in its unique pattern of

binding commitments" (Whetten, 2006, p. 220). A legitimate identity claim must show

evidence of centrality as well as confirming examples of integration within the organization.

Evidence of centrality is a repeated articulation of what members believe to be core or

central to who they are as an organization in terms of overall structure. Additionally, the

claims must also be demonstrated by an *abundance of confirming examples* that demonstrate

how the claim is expressed or made evident in the actual workings of the organization over

time. These claims tend to be expressed by what Whetten (2006) and others referred to as

identity-referencing discourse and can be heard in the conversation of the organization's

members. Verbal clues that identify this distinct discourse might contain phrases or words

like "this is who we are" or "this is why we do this or that" and specifies how or why

something is perceived as a legitimate identity claim. Archival records, reports, and other written documentation can also contain legitimate identity claims that support and are consistent with the verbal expression of its members.

The findings in this research confirmed what was reported in the literature review about the presence of certain verbal ideation as it relates to organization identity theory. It is an identifying and signifying language from members that articulates and describes in what ways their organization is both different from and similar to others in their class (Pratt et al., 2000; Ravisi & Schultz, 2006, Whetten, 2006). These identity referents spoken by the members of Sweet Briar were almost always mentioned in terms of what they thought distinguished Sweet Briar from other colleges. This ideation was especially noticeable in actual statements including the phrases, "we are who we are" or "that's just who we are."

It is important to note that verbal ideation alone, the expression of "who we are," does not legitimize a claim of distinctiveness when properly studying identity in organizations. In order to fully grasp organizational identity, each identity claim must be understood to be a necessary part of one whole. In other words, organizational identity has three distinct parts. Whetten (2006) expressed a concern that much of the research by organizational theorists attempting to explore identity failed to consider it in its entirety. He stated,

> Looking back, it is my sense that the present lack of conceptual clarity in the literature citing this foundational article is largely due to the increasingly common practice of treating the ideational part of our tri-partite formulation as if it were the whole, and thus treating the whole as if it were its least discriminating part. (p. 220)

Whetten (2006) also described "validity standards[6] for qualifying legitimate organizational identity claims and associated organizational identity-referencing discourse" (p. 228). His description was offered as a way to explain and underscore the tri-dimensional nature of organizational identity and encourage its examination in light of all three elements as a whole. The three distinct components include: (a) an ideational component, (b) a definitional component, and (c) a phenomenological component. A brief recap of each component is presented below, because the analysis of the data in this study adheres to this formulation and will be helpful for the reader to understand the framework through which the findings were interpreted.

The ideational component is what Whetten (2006) believed many researchers inappropriately give the most attention to when researching organizational identity. This important component is reflected in the shared articulation of what members believe their organization is ultimately about; particularly when answering the question, "Who are we?" For example, "We are a college, not an elementary school," points to the overall function of one school as distinguished from another type of school and also defines limitations and boundaries.

The definitional component of the construct, describes the central and enduring—and when considered together—distinguishing attributes of an organization and is what really gives a fuller perspective to the organization's identity as a whole. Expressed in self-

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[6] I am aware that the term "validity" is not typically used in qualitative research today because of its application to quantitative methodology. The terms, trustworthiness (Merriam, 1998) and goodness is thought to be a better depiction when asserting the strength of a construct or theoretical framework. However, when this concept was first presented in 1985, this term was in use. Moreover, since this is the terminology the seminal author uses, I felt it best to stay consistent with his terms. Additionally, case study methodology can employ both qualitative and quantitative methods and the term "triangulation" and "construct validity" is often used (Yin, 2009).

referencing language, it also answers the question of how and why certain things are done in the organization. This component has functional and structural dimensions to it that should be evident when determining whether or not an identity claim is legitimate.

The functional dimension speaks to what attributes members believe distinguishes the organization from others and reflects a "distinctive set of preferences" and "commitments" (Whetten, 2006, p. 222) for its operation. For example, one of the commitments of Sweet Briar, which will be discussed shortly, is the claim that they *are* a college for women. The structural dimension really makes itself known through "an organization's core programs, policies and procedures, and that reflect its highest values . . . [which] operate as irreversible commitments" (Whetten, 2006, p. 222). To use another example from the discussion that follows, one of the irreversible commitments that Sweet Briar understands it must *do,* is to commemorate its founders every year—*ad infinitum*. These commitments or expressions support the distinctive claims of the organization. Furthermore, they are often indicative of deep institutional priorities (centrality) that have withstood the test of time (enduring) and are tangible manifestations of how the mission of the institution is carried out.

Finally, each dimension has a phenomenological component, which is the "identity-referencing discourse" that is "most likely to be observed in conjunction with profound organizational experiences" (Whetten, 2006, p. 222). In other words, it is simply the language or more specifically, the statements members use to answer the question of how, when, and why (ideology) the organization does what it does and its "justifications" for doing so.

Organization of Findings

The findings in this study represent a high degree of overlap within and between the different components and identity claims. However, I have attempted to highlight them individually and provide some discussion of their connection to historical events and how they remained evident at the time of this research. One can expect to find a narrative format typical of case study design. The findings are presented in this way to highlight the unfolding process of identity formation (though not necessarily chronologically) and the importance of contextual perspective. Short historical vignettes that contain references to the college's history are also presented alongside some of the findings as a way to emphasize the temporal centrality of its identity and the influence of the institution's history.

As each of the identity claims is presented and discussed, an explanation of the components and corresponding identity-referencing discourse that best represents the claim follows. Excerpts from interviews are used extensively as they provide poignant examples of identity-referencing discourse. As mentioned in chapter three, the actual identities of the people interviewed have been kept confidential and the excerpts are drawn from the formal interviews. Below I provide brief profiles of the faculty and staff and students, with the exception of the group interview with members of the co-curricular life senior staff, which give an idea of their connection to the college.

The interviews were with the following members of Sweet Briar College[7]:

Faculty Member #1: This faculty member teaches in the social sciences. This person, who

played a key role in this study in helping to arrange the first set of interviews and

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[7] Not all of the people interviewed are quoted in the study findings. The profiles of those not quoted are not included.

serving as my primary Sweet Briar contact for each visit, has been at the college for over 11 years.

Faculty Member #2: This faculty member was recommended to be interviewed by Faculty Member #1 and a senior administrator. This person teaches in the humanities and has been at the college for over 11 years, serving on several strategic planning committees.

Faculty Member #3: This faculty member teaches in the hard sciences and has been with the college for more than 11 years.

Senior University Administrator #1: At the time of the interview she had been employed for more than 11 years but has since retired. Her interview not only was informative in terms of her knowledge of Sweet Briar, but her experience and insight in higher education and issues of identity were very valuable to this study.

Senior University Administrator #2: This administrator has had several roles at the college for more than 11 years at Sweet Briar and is heavily involved with the academic administration of the college.

CCL Administrator #1 and CCL Administrator #2: These administrators both report to the president of the college and have leadership roles in matters concerning student life and co-curricular development. They have been at the college for less than 10 years.

There was one group interview with 3 senior students from the class of 2009 conducted during my second campus visit. Where appropriate, they are referred to as Student #1, Student #2, and Student #3. There were formal individual student interviews with 2 senior students from the class of 2010 during my third and final visit; they are referred to as the first and second 2010 senior student.

Additionally, as appropriate with case study design (Yin, 2009), selected information and quotes from newspapers, websites and blogs, issues of the *Sweet Briar Alumnae Magazine*, historical records and documents, and observations are also used as supporting examples.

Ideational and Definitional Components

As indicated in chapter three, instead of identifying emerging themes as is done in most research, this research identified four definitional components, and eight ideational components and phenomenological components paired together. These ideations, representative of the voice of the college, were first constructed from the initial a priori categories that were identified early in the more deductive stage of the data analysis process. The definitional components followed as the analysis became more inductive and I began to see evidence and confirming examples of how the college's identity claims were manifested in the operation of the college. See Table 1.

What follows is the discussion of the findings in four sections consisting of one definitional component and one or more ideational and phenomenological component pairs. Each definitional component will be delineated by one or more ideational and phenomenological pairs, which are expressed as examples of related identity claims and corresponding behavioral practices (see Table 1). Where appropriate, the sections will contain brief historical vignettes as a way to establish the context for the findings and observations reported in each section.

Table 1. *Summary of Findings by Definitional Components (Conceptual Domains)—Sweet Briar Identity Claims*

Ideational component (Conceptual/ideology)	Presence of identity-referencing discourse?	Phenomenological component (preferences/commitments practices)	Facilitating Protocols (evident in core programs, key events, etc.?)	Evidence of irreversible commitments?
I. We are a legacy institution for women				
1a. We believe that honoring our legacy is important to the perpetuity of Sweet Briar	Yes	1a. We practice this through acts of commemoration; preserving the memory of things and people that have gone before that represent the values we want to be a continuous part of campus life	• Founder's Day • Full and consistent representation of stories in alumnae magazines	Yes
1b. We believe that we are responsible for carrying the legacy into the future	Yes	1b. We practice this by strong articulation of the legacy internally and externally; encouraging and facilitating opportunities that foster strong connections between alumna, faculty, staff, and current students that also engenders gratitude and hope as well individual responsibility for bringing forward the best of the past and passing the torch to those who will come behind.	• Distinguished alum • Speeches during homecoming events • 1967 case moving to open admissions policy • Restoration of enslaved workers burial ground and honoring descendants of families	
II. We are a mission mindful institution				
2a. We believe that adhering to our mission is important to the perpetuity of Sweet Briar	Yes	2a. We practice through our commitment to making it a plumb line for all that we do, articulating it loudly, and being accountable to its claims in our work with students.	• Aligning of departmental mission statements with overall mission statement • Sweet Briar Promise	Yes
2b. We believe in the power of our community.	Yes	2b. We practice with intentional collaboration, valuing the voice that each member has in the community; we work with the whole in mind, not being afraid to deal with the hard questions, asking what's best for the college, and working toward that end by acknowledging the things that need to be accentuated or abandoned, reconciled and/or changed in the process.	• SOF initiative • Frequent strategic planning work • Faculty and staff pay cuts • Collaboration between co-curricular life student affairs and academic affairs	

Table 1. (continued)

		III. We are academicians with a distinct academic framework		
3a. We believe that the education of women should be intellectually rigorous, creative, and practical; that it should cultivate confidence, industry and innovation, and civic responsibility and care.	Yes	3a. We practice this by providing a purposeful curriculum in a relevant and proportionately rigorous multidisciplinary context that develops the intellect along with the relevant and requisite skill sets sufficient for her to remain productive in the changing society.	• Senior seminars • Writing intensives, moral intensives • Service learning programs	Yes
3b. We believe that we should be leaders in educating women especially in fields where women have been traditionally underrepresented.	Yes	3b. We practice this by providing state-of-the-art resources necessary for advanced learning in the various subject areas, preparation for graduate school success, inspiration for high personal achievement and exposing students to other high achieving women, especially Sweet Briar alumnae.	• Research opportunities • Career service programs • Alumnae network	
3c. We believe that the best learning occurs when students, professors, and staff are partners in the process.	Yes	3c. We practice this by encouraging self-efficacy but intentionally nurturing our students; fostering a collegial environment rich with opportunities in and out of the classroom for leadership, community engagement, and personal development. We also teach tacitly by willingly modeling behaviors and attitudes that demonstrate high regard and confidence in our students.	• Continuing the self-governance system via student government association • Service learning programs • Final examination policies • Honor Code	Yes

		IV. We are partners in the development of our students		
4. We believe that we are educating women for life and are not afraid to hold them accountable to high ideals and high standards.	Yes	4. We practice this by providing a generously student-governed context that allows for connection, development, and expression. We cast and communicate often a vision of high personal integrity and responsibility and that they can make a difference in the world.	• Co-curricular programming and interaction with students. • Leadership certificate	

Definitional Component 1: We Are a Legacy Institution for Women

Historical Vignette #1

Elijah Fletcher, the father of Indiana Fletcher Williams, was quite an influence in Indiana's life in terms of ideology and practice and would be even beyond his death. The life experiences to which he exposed her and her siblings seem to have resulted in a much larger perspective on life that went beyond the hegemonic limitations placed on women's intellectual development and their potential at that time in the United States (Dzuback, 2003; Johnson, 2008; Wein, 1974). A former academic himself, Elijah had no problems believing that a woman should be educated, and he apparently practiced what he preached. He once sent a letter home to his own father encouraging him to make sure that his younger sister received an education along with his brothers. Committing to invest one-ninth of his meager salary to the cause, he wrote, "A girl will be more respected with an education than with wealth. . . . I shall send you a hundred dollars next month by which you may be enabled to assist Lucy" (Stohlman, 1956, p. 11).

Later, as a businessman, Elijah was sought after for his expertise in managing lands for production. As a community leader, he was known as a generous benefactor providing lands and finances for building churches and schools. History has recorded that he spared no expense in the education of his own children, exposing them to the best education possible at the time. Indiana's brothers studied and ultimately graduated from Yale, whereas she and her sister were sent to Washington D.C. in their early teens to study at a convent in Georgetown.[8]

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[8] Educational opportunities in the south for young women were scarce and often considered subpar. Many families of means sent their daughters north or, as in the case of Indiana Fletcher, abroad in the hopes of a well-rounded education. Many women who were sent to colleges in the North returned to the South to establish seminaries and colleges on par with northern schools (see Johnson, 2008).

A letter dated October 16, 1841, reveals how he felt about his daughter's education: "I know it is for your good to be away for awhile. . . . You have greater opportunities that you could possibly have here and you know how anxious your brothers are that you should be a learned and accomplished Lady" (von Briesen, 1965). They completed their education in Paris in music and languages but there is no record of them having attained a bachelors degree.

Nevertheless, it is clear that Elijah Fletcher encouraged a sense of independence in his daughters, which was different from traditional ideals about Southern womanhood in the mid 19th century (Dzuback, 2003; Johnson, 2008). He appears to have been a man ahead of his time in terms of his ideas about the place of women. Allowing them to grow and expand as individuals, he modeled for them one who valued their voices and wanted to prepare them to handle responsibility as it related to the management of the lands. One noteworthy example of this can be seen in a letter he wrote to his brother Calvin about the work on Sweet Briar House that his daughters themselves requested,

> My daughters remain with me this summer, wishing to stay and superintend their building in which they take much interest and about which I permit them to exercise their own taste. When they get it completed, they send a sketch of it. (Sweet Briar Plantation, 2010)

In an 1841 farewell letter he wrote to the readers of his publication, *The Virginian,* he talked about his decision to leave the busyness of city life to focus on the care of his many properties. He remained on the Sweet Briar plantation until he died in 1852 leaving his wealth and the care of his plantations and other business holdings to his daughters, one of whom would later become the founder of Sweet Briar College (Stohlman, 1956; von Briesen, 1965).

When Indiana Fletcher married, it was to a man much like her father who also believed in the importance of setting money aside for the support of educational causes and even suggested in his will that a school be built for the education of young women (Stohlman, 1956). They had a daughter they called Daisy who died at the young age of 16. Indiana's husband died almost 5 years after Daisy's death and Indiana was left to grieve alone. According to a campus museum brochure as well as the research done by Stohlman, Indiana received many requests for money in her final years, but she decided instead to stock up on large amounts of miscellaneous items sparking much negative speculation among the townspeople in Lynchburg about what she might be planning to do with all of her money and goods. Her death marked the official beginning of Sweet Briar Institute. Before that, no one, not even her closest friends, really knew what Indiana Fletcher was planning until the reading of the will upon her death some 11 years after her daughter, Daisy, died. Indiana was preparing to found a school for girls and young women. Here is an excerpt from her will verified with a date of November 23, 1900:

"13th. I bequeath the residue of my estate, whatsoever and wheresoever it may be situated, unto the Right Reverend A.M. Randolph (who is the Bishop of the Southern Diocese of Virginia), the Reverend T.M. Carson, of Lynchburg, Va.; Stephen R. Harding, of Amherst County, Va., and the Reverend Arthur P. Gray of Amherst, Va.; and the survivors or survivor of them, as trustees upon the trust and with the powers and duties hereinafter specified—that is to say:

"1. I direct the said trustees forthwith after my decease to procure the incorporation in the State of Virginia of a corporation to be called the 'Sweet Briar Institute,' . . . for the object and maintaining within the State of Virginia

a school or seminary for the education of white girls and young women. It shall be the general scope and object of school to impart to its students such education in sound learning, and such physical, moral and religious training as shall, in the judgment of the directors, best fit them to be useful members of society.

The same section of the will further provides that the Sweet Briar and the St. Angelo lands, over 2,500 acres in all, shall be inalterably held for the purposes of the school. (Sweet Briar Institute, 1904, p. 5)

Findings: Definitional Component 1

As an overall finding, the historical legacy of Sweet Briar as a college for women was by far its most central and distinguishing dimension. This component seemed to serve as the compass for institutional activity as well as a powerful rallying point for Sweet Briar as a viable community. This component carries with it two ideational and phenomenological component pairs that are listed below as identity claims: (a) honoring the legacy and (b) carrying the legacy forward.

- Ideational component 1a: We believe that honoring our legacy as a women's college is important to the perpetuity of Sweet Briar.
  - Phenomenological component 1a: We practice this through acts of commemoration, preserving the memory of things and people that have gone before that represent the values we want to be a continuous part of campus life.
- Ideational component 1b: We believe that we are responsible for carrying the legacy into the future.

o Phenomenological component 1b: We practice this by strong articulation of the legacy internally and externally; encouraging and facilitating opportunities that foster strong connections between alumna, faculty, staff, and current students that also engenders gratitude and hope as well individual responsibility for bringing forward the best of the past; and passing the torch to those who will come behind.

Honoring the legacy.

- Ideational component 1a: We believe that honoring our legacy as a women's college is important to the perpetuity of Sweet Briar.

  o Phenomenological component 1a: We practice this through acts of commemoration, preserving the memory of things and people that have gone before that represent the values we want to be a continuous part of campus life.

As suggested by Yin (2009), I spent some time at the start of the analysis process to develop a protocol narrative; a practice he stated should be used more often at the start of data analysis in case study design. A protocol narrative is where the researcher attempts to answer the questions asked of the study from the case study protocol "almost as if it were an open book test or a "comprehensive 'take home' exam" and is considered a part of the analytic process (Yin, 2009, p. 120). It is considered a good first effort by the researcher to synthesize the data (Yin, 2009).

The following excerpt from my protocol narrative provides insight about one of the most significant findings and the first definitional component, even though it did not fully come together until the very end of my analysis. In this excerpt, I attempt to answer one of

the questions in the protocol about the lingering vision/ideology of the college from my interviews and other data.

> The lingering vision is that of a grieved benefactor and her daughter having died before reaching the potential hoped for by her parents that these women have an opportunity to reach by reason of their yet being alive. . . . I would also say that their ideology is that legacy matters—it's important and worth taking the time to do well. . . . I think that the ideology of the college [that] was transmitted by the founder—the "idea" that a woman should be able to be, to live, and to contribute . . . it is possible. She wanted to preserve that. . . . It seems that from these ideas . . . sparked and gave birth to a college. . . . Not only is there a vision cast of the ideal woman—the ideal Sweet Briar Woman. . . . There are some thoughts . . . of what type of learning environment, curriculum; thoughts of needed or possible relationships between faculty and students, faculty and faculty, faculty and administration, faculty and alums, alums and institution, alums and each other, students and students, where the seed reproduces and perpetuates—I'm thinking of a snow ball.

Admittedly, I was biased against this aspect of Sweet Briar being a key finding initially and even throughout most of the data analysis. I thought to control for (as if in quantitative research) the obvious fact that Sweet Briar was a women's college, not wanting that to influence the study of its identity. This was because, at first, the institution's designation as a women's college did not appear to be a distinguishing characteristic. Furthermore, I wanted it to be clear that the study was not about women's colleges, but about institutional identity.

Next I provide some initial thoughts to another question in my case study protocol about whether or not Sweet Briar's operation as a women's institution made a difference in the way education was accomplished.

Before my last data collection trip to the campus, I was [in retrospect] pretty adamant about separating the focus of my study on what was central, enduring, and distinctive about SB from what I will refer to as its categorical and/or group identity or Carnegie classification (i.e., a women's college, a liberal arts college, a small college, etc.). However, this repeatedly emerged in the data as a point that is apparently discussed often by faculty and administration.

As I drew to a close of the analysis, after having become very acquainted with Sweet Briar, it occurred to me almost serendipitously, that to deny this reality was, in fact, to deny one of the institution's most central identity claims. Faculty Member #1 had this to say about what they he perceived as core to the identity of Sweet Briar:

I think the women's college thing is something we all cherish. That will never change. We've had a serious chance. . . . And we overwhelmingly chose not to. So I think that's part of who we are. . . . So I think that even within the spectrum you've got the Sweet Briar and the sister colleges—that are so academic that they ignore gender but in a different way that we ignore gender. It's something we're very proud of—it's something we accept as part of our campus identity but I think that we don't think enough about it. I think that if it was ever in danger—we'd think about it more and we'd go after it more. But I think . . . our size . . . and [being a] women's college—those are core.

Every participant interviewed on the Sweet Briar campus overwhelmingly referenced this attribute when talking about the college and its mission. This was a clear identity referent in that it was an institutional attribute that they expressed differentiated them from other colleges. This is of particular note to identity research. In order for this claim to be considered a legitimate identity referent according to Whetten (2006), there had to be evidence of a distinctive centrality that distinguished it from other women's colleges, not just other institutions. In other words, there would have to be examples that demonstrated how and why they (institutionally speaking) delivered education differently.

As mentioned before, I initially saw no distinguishing features of Sweet Briar in terms of its single-sex function alone. After further investigation of institutional documents and interviews with Sweet Briar members and the review of information about other women's colleges (see Dzuback, 2003; Shmurak & Handler, 1992; Whitt; 1994; Wolf-Wendel, 2000), it became obvious that there were notable and distinct differences that distinguished them from other institutions. What is important to this finding is that the interview participants were clearly able to articulate and provide examples of what specifically distinguished Sweet Briar from other like institutions.

The Senior University Administrator #1 quote below made this comparison between Sweet Briar and a women's college close by that recently made the decision to go coed:

They see their identity quite differently. Not first and foremost female but first and foremost [in terms of] academic programs and its international flavor in recent years. . . . Those things ranked higher so they came to a different decision even though we're very similar in looks and we had very similar financial situations. . . . They had

a larger endowment than we did [and] a slightly smaller enrollment but not very different on paper—and yet totally different personalities.

Unified by the strong desire of the founders of women's colleges and supporters to see women educated at the college level, each institution had differentiating circumstances and contexts surrounding their inception. Historical accounts of the founding of some of the more prominent women's colleges bear witness that each unique mission had significant bearing on the institutional life of the college before a culture had a chance to take root (Johnson, 2008; Shmurak & Handler, 1992; Wein, 1974). The context that sparked their inception and their opinions about how women should be prepared boldly shaped their programmatic foci in terms of academic offerings and student development.

For example, Butchart (2002) concluded that the missions of Mount Holyoke College and Oberlin College, established when the colleges began, was a driving force behind the high numbers of its African American and White graduates who would later make up a disproportionate amount of those who taught at freedmen's schools in the late 19th century. He further suggested that these schools developed the desire to carry out a legacy of this type of civic engagement in their students through discourse. More than acquiring information by intellectual assent alone, these students were "immersed in [an] ideology that manifested itself in all aspects of their schooling, from the structure of the curriculum and school life to theology and permissible objects of inquiry" (Butchart, p. 16).

With Sweet Briar, its legacy permeates the operational life of the college. The connection to the legacy via identity claims consistently and intentionally serves to reinforce its perpetuation. This thought was also voiced in all 20 interviews, as well as in the student's handbooks and alumnae publications reviewed and on the school's website. CCL

Administrator #2 expressed a common affirmation about Sweet Briar connected it to its legacy:

> This was a legacy—this was a gift of a woman in honor of her daughter—it's very first president and every president but one—had been a woman. So [it's] very much a women's centered institution. That is a very important factor—you can't dismiss that factor.

Sweet Briar College regularly commemorates its legacy by paying tribute to its founders in the present life and operation of the college. This happens in a number of different ways, but clearly the most unifying and the most anticipated event occurs during the annual homecoming festivities. Every year since the inception of the college, and at the very spot where Indiana Fletcher's husband, James Henry Williams, and daughter, Daisy, are buried, known today as Monument Hill, Sweet Briar students, alumni, faculty, and staff gather there to memorialize Daisy, in whose memory the college was established. This was an irreversible condition and stipulation of the will. In fact, while leaving much freedom in her will to her appointed trustees in the building of Sweet Briar, this was the one stipulation that was to be carried out explicitly by the Sweet Briar community. This request bears a striking connection to the desire of Indiana's father Elijah Fletcher, also buried on Monument Hill, who left instructions that his grave be visited and tended to every year by his children (Stohlman, 1956; von Briesen, 1965).

Instituted officially as Founder's Day in 1909, this is an integral ritual on campus. In formal procession, with faculty in full academic regalia, graduating seniors debuting their graduation robes for the first time, and men in kilts playing music on bagpipes, the campus community makes its way up to the mount with daisies in hand to place on the graves of the

founders. Daisy's white marble tombstone with an angel on top stands tall; her grandfather's white marble obelisk is close by. After 100 years one might think that the ritual might be reduced to an activity without heart in the minds of those now obligated to carry it out. However, it appears that the way it has been institutionalized around the school's homecoming festivities complete with an inspirational speech from a distinguished alumna keeps it new, fresh, and exciting every year.

For first-year and prospective students, the Office of Co-Curricular Life publishes an electronic book featuring all of the institutional traditions. The following is what the booklet lists about Founder's Day:

> In the will of Indiana Fletcher Williams, there was but one stipulation for the college: the graves of the founding family must be maintained in perpetuity. . . . Seniors wear their graduation robes for the first time, while all other students wear black and white. Following the convocation, everyone walks up to Monument Hill to pay respect to the founding family, and each senior is accompanied by one or two underclasswomen. Each student leaves a daisy on Daisy's grave. (*Traditions of Sweet Briar College,* n.d., p. 4)

This walk up to Monument Hill is special to those who have participated in it year after year because they are able to witness and guide those who are experiencing the tradition for the first time. It also reminds them of why they are a part of Sweet Briar. This event goes on year after year, and its importance is transmitted by older members of the community to newer ones. I considered this one of many confirmations that identity is a property of the institution that greets its members when they arrive and remains when they leave (D. Whetten, personal

communication, November, 2009). CCL Administrator #1 said about the ritual and how central it is to them as a college community:

> If you think about what become important rituals in the life of the college . . . the march to Monument Hill. . . . That is a pretty unifying thing. The way that it unifies across other forms of difference is pretty profound. . . . There are these ritual acts that do have a tremendous symbolic power and do have their own narrative that says who we are . . . there's this story of legacy passed on . . . the veins of the place. . . . Going and remembering our founders and seeing ourselves in a tradition of passing on education for women, as being part of a long line of people who did that [before us] . . . is very much a part of the consciousness.

The importance of this event is reinforced on campus through highlighting the event in all of the written materials about traditions for students and alumnae. Each Founder's Day promotion receives multiple page coverage in the *Sweet Briar Alumnae Magazines*. It is promoted enthusiastically as if with the understanding that it is a long-awaited event. After the Founder's Day festivities, pictures and speech reprints are also allotted full-page spreads.

Against the modern media backdrop, this enduring tradition is also given space in the blogosphere. While exploring the Sweet Briar website I discovered the blog of one Sweet Briar professor who was not a part of the formal interview process. He seems to have been totally engaged in the events of the day and with rather nostalgic prose reported in real time on the day's events via a live blog post entitled "Live Blogging Sweet Briar's Inauguration of Jo Ellen Parker (bumped to the top)."

This professor of American Politics, political analyst, and blogger on issues in government and higher education (including strategic planning),echoed what I found to be a

sentiment of all with who I spoke, no matter what their roles on campus. They had an intentional grip on the past, but it was not expressed as an anchor in the sense that it halts or prohibits forward thinking. It serves as both a cornerstone and a linchpin that anchors them in community amid the constantly changing landscape of higher education.

Although there are undoubtedly those who unduly hold on to things from the past that are not beneficial for the college, from those with whom I spoke, I was assured that their voices are not malicious and are not loud enough to damper the community spirit. It appeared from the interviews and supporting written information available, they were intentional in their efforts to balance past with future. The blogging professor also wrote:

In our society today we have the tendency to brush tradition and ritual to the side in our relentless progress to build the future. That's a good thing, in many respects, but tradition and ritual can be powerful things for a community to come together and define and redefine itself in powerful and constructive ways.

This tradition, having endured since 1909, continues to claim the institution's full attention on that day. To the members and friends of Sweet Briar, old and new, it is apparent that this is a meaningful event. On the institutional website, there are links to pictures of the ceremonies from past years including a video of the 2009 ceremony where newly appointed president, Jo Ellen Parker served as the speaker. The Lynchburg newspaper acknowledged this event with: "The ceremony was steeped in tradition, with professors wearing floor-length academic robes and bagpipe music filling the room. Parker delivered an inaugural address and a host of other higher education leaders participated" (Barry, 2009, ¶2).

Carrying the legacy forward.

- Ideational component 1b: We believe that we are responsible for carrying the legacy into the future.
    - o Phenomenological component 1b: We practice this by strong articulation of the legacy internally and externally; encouraging and facilitating opportunities that foster strong connections between alumna, faculty, staff, and current students that also engenders gratitude and hope as well individual responsibility for bringing forward the best of the past and passing the torch to those who will come behind.

At the core of the Founder's Day event is an exercise in identity that reinforces a shared belief and value in remembering those who have gone before and made the way for them to have a school like Sweet Briar. It is their legacy. This legacy is the passing on of education for women for achievement and success. CCL Administrator #1, mentioned this mentoring aspect of the event as being important to the way in which first-year students perceive it and learn how to carry the legacy themselves:

Seniors feel like they have a responsibility for sophomores . . . when we get ready to do the procession up the hill, the word is . . . make sure you're looking out for your sophomore; that your sophomore knows what to wear . . . the language of the possessive is not about the owning of a pet . . . it's an . . . endearing and respective kind of responsibility . . . it's all about solidarity . . . everybody does these things together.

I reviewed the inauguration speech of Sweet Briar's 10th and newest president, Dr. Jo Ellen Parker, a graduate of Bryn Mawr. Her installation took place during that day. She, too, although being on the campus only 3 months, honored, acknowledged, and actively

articulated at length, this endearing (almost sacred) connection to the institution's historical roots. She used this connection creatively but poignantly by referring to the mythical god Janus, who could "simultaneously see the past and the future" as a way to set the context for the focus of her administration:

> I have recently spent a good deal of time casting about for tutelary deities whose auspices I should cultivate. . . . I have finally settled, personally, on double headed Janus, he of beginnings and endings, doorways and passages, of past and future and the transitions between them. (Parker, 2009)

She cited the article by Drew Gilpin Faust (2009), president of Harvard, written earlier that month (also cited in chapter 1 of this dissertation). Making reference to Dr. Gilpin Faust's comments about the pressure in higher education to be accountable to short-term and numbers-based outcomes as a gauge of institutional success she added,

> Without balancing the Janus-views of past and future, an insistent focus on the present becomes, in President Faust's word, "myopic." . . . It is not the immediate and present outcomes of education that will tell us whether we are succeeding. . . . For that, we must attempt to gaze ahead. . . . Generations of Sweet Briar Women and men . . . before us created a powerful legacy of success and achievement. My call to the community is to extend that legacy, to generate the future that our students will inherit from us. . . . In future years . . . let us be remembered as the generation of scholars and teachers who carried Sweet Briar's tradition of excellence into the digital age. (Parker, 2009)

This strong invocation to be a carrier of the Sweet Briar legacy into modernity is articulated loudly through other venues, especially the *Sweet Briar Alumnae Magazine*. The

publication often reprints in their entirety significant speeches and relevant documents that keep its very active alumnae community connected to the traditions of the campus, current Sweet Briar students, faculty and staff, and the activity of the present. This effort is a practical example of how the college reinforces this phenomenological component of its identity relative to their perception of Sweet Briar as a *legacy college for women.*

A specific instance is found in the 2001 centennial issue of the *Sweet Briar Alumnae Magazine*. The school chronicled the last 100 years one decade at a time in a manner characteristic of the mythical two-headed character President Parker referred to in her inaugural speech. The opening inside cover read in scripted white and pink typeface, an excerpt from a 1990 founder's day speech by Dr. M. Elizabeth ("Lee") Tidball, Professor Emerita of Physiology, The George Washington University Medical Center and a Sweet Briar Board of Trustees member from 1978–1985:

> We are all part of the continuing story of this place, students, faculty, alumnae, staff, administration, directors, friends—all of us share in the joy and responsibility of seeing to it that the place continues serving women with excellence, expertise, and enthusiasm. (inside cover)

Further evidence of the central and enduring dimension of this ideational component, the idea of perpetuating the legacy into the future, is present in the words of President Emerita Elizabeth Muhlenfeld (1996–2009) 12 years ago in her inaugural address. It was reprinted in a Winter/Spring 2009 *Sweet Briar Alumnae Magazine* article introducing a fund established in her honor called the Elisabeth Showalter Muhlenfeld Fund for Historic Preservation. The effort was first officially publicized in a 2008 brochure/mailing under the header: "Sweet Briar's Future Incorporates Her Past." Her words then, spoken over 12 years

ago, reflected a central sentiment of the college and its practices that remain even at the time of this research:

> I revere the fact that the College we celebrate today is the vibrant legacy of living, breathing people who walked across these meadows not so very long ago—people of vision inspired by a very special place. We who have inherited the legacy are not just the recipients of their vision, but indeed the engines thereof, because their vision lives in us and have not yet been fully realized. . . . We have within us the instinct to take risks to realize that vision. ("In the Sweet Briar Tradition," 2009, p. 40)

I wondered how the students felt about the very direct way this responsibility to legacy is articulated in and throughout campus life. I wondered what impact this might have, and was it possible that they saw it less profoundly? CCL Administrator #1, speaking on behalf students, offered this as a possible answer:

> We have all sort of internalized this legacy of living meaningfully as students—we're going to get the best out of this experience. And in some ways that is a reflection— subconsciously . . . in the way we work out these major rituals because we're saying okay . . . this is the legacy in which we fulfill the unrealized potential of the child Daisy. So it's a formative piece, the question is how formative . . . how central it is to the student's mind. But it's there.

During all three visits to campus, I found no sarcasm or duress expressed from the members about having to take the walk to Monument Hill, other than warnings to wear breathable clothing and comfortable shoes. What I found instead was evidence of a collective self-awareness of the event's importance to who they are and the legacy they are enjoined to carry forward. Across the board, the people who I interviewed spoke (and sometimes

presented in written form) openly but extremely tactfully about skeletons, missteps, their not-so-mission-minded presidents, and seasons of job insecurity in times of financial crisis. In fact, their commitment to keep the legacy alive and the way they have valued that charge together through institutionalized commemorative acts is also directly related to the way they steward their mission.

Definitional Component 2: We Are a Mission Mindful Institution

Sweet Briar College prepares women (and at the graduate level, men as well) to be productive, responsible members of a world community. It focuses on personal and professional achievement through a customized educational program that combines the liberal arts, preparation for careers, and individual development. The faculty and staff guide students to become active learners, to reason clearly, to speak and write persuasively, and to lead with integrity. They do so by creating an educational environment that is both intense and supportive and where learning occurs in many different venues, including the classroom, the community and the world. ("Mission," 2004)

Findings: Definitional Component 2

The findings of this study as it relates to this identity claim are critical to understanding how Sweet Briar has managed to keep such a strong grip on its historical identity. Within the Sweet Briar College community of today, more than 100 years since the founding, there was overwhelming evidence of strong community that is fueled by a keen awareness among its members of an institutional mission. Correspondingly, there was also an articulated willingness to embrace it as a central motivator in the work they do

collaboratively to intentionally enact the directives put forth by Indiana Fletcher and early founders.

This clarity revealed itself by strong identity-referencing discourse full of expressions of confidence in their ability to stay true to the mission, which has acted as a sure rudder in the face of challenging times. Based on the findings, this definitional component carries with it two ideational and phenomenological component pairs: (a) clarity and confidence and (b) commitment to community. The identity claims are listed below. This section presents how this theme was evidenced in the data.

- Ideational component 2a: We believe that adhering to our mission is important to the perpetuity of Sweet Briar.
    - Phenomenological component 2a: We practice through our commitment to making it a plumb line for all that we do, articulating it loudly, and being accountable to its claims in our work with students.
- Ideational component 2b: We believe in the power of our community.
    - Phenomenological component2b: We practice with intentional collaboration, valuing the voice that each member has in the community; we work with the whole in mind, not being afraid to deal with the hard questions, asking what's best for the college, and working toward that end by acknowledging the things that need to be accentuated or abandoned, reconciled, and/or changed in the process.

Clarity and confidence in mission.

- Ideational component 2a: We believe that adhering to our mission is important to the perpetuity of Sweet Briar.

o Phenomenological component 2a: We practice through our commitment to making it a plumb line for all that we do, articulating it loudly, and being accountable to its claims in our work with students.

In this section, I present just some of the sentiments the members of Sweet Briar articulated that supported what emerged as the engine (or the necessary companion) of the most central enduring and distinctive dimension of the college mentioned in the beginning of the chapter; which was its legacy as a women's college. Exhibiting a strong sense of what could be termed "mission mindfulness," the actions of faculty and staff members and even students were evidenced by a state of awareness and intentionality concerning the mission of the college. This emerged as one of the most critical factors in the degree of authentic identity salience the institution projects. I also define mission mindfulness as the degree of congruence and confluence an institution has with its original charter.

In an interview with the members of the Office of Co-Curricular Life staff, there was a strong sense of mission awareness and acceptance and a commitment to its enactment in the work they did on behalf of Sweet Briar Students. This was not a young and inexperienced staff; instead, they had over 50 years combined experience working at Sweet Briar. This team really not only articulated and acted out this powerful component, but it was clear that they saw themselves working for and on behalf of students, and the mission was a rudder, template, and springboard for their specific action and interaction with other colleagues and departments. I present the following particular question and answer excerpt as evidence of the abundance of identity-referencing discourse that connect to this identity claim. It is also noteworthy that the faculty and students that I interviewed noticed this attribute of the staff and how it shows in their work with students.

[Staff #1]: [We are] extremely cognizant of the mission of the college and what we're here to do and that is truly to help prepare students to reach their goals and dreams . . . very cliché in a sense but it's what we're here to do and it fits with the mission of the college in the sense that we are to prepare solid citizens, world leaders.

[Interviewer]: So you develop your own mission statement?

[Staff #2]: Yes, CCL intentionally designed their mission statement to fit in with the college's and help support the college's mission statement. Each of our departments designed our own mission statements to connect with CCL's overall and the college's.

[Staff #3]: The original purpose of Sweet Briar was to educate women and they have carried that mission forward from the time it was initially established. They have expanded on what was considered young women to educate going from mostly local young women expanding it to worldwide—in addition to that, it went from basically Caucasian young women to be expanded to a very diverse population—all focused on educating young women to take their place in the world as leaders.

[Staff #4]: Say it!

[Staff #1]: Just to dovetail on what [Staff #2] and [Staff #3] said as well. Everybody takes the mission as a living kind of vibrant testament to what we're all trying to do. It's incorporated into our individual mission statements but then we use that as a template to try to create the programming. . . . What really makes Sweet Briar so distinctive is . . . because of vibrant partnerships and collaborations that occur . . . for the success of the student—that's what's key!

In a different interview session, Faculty Member #2 commented about the sense of mission mindfulness. I present the comment here because it references the Office of Co-Curricular Life staff. Note the sense of mentorship mentioned in the discussion of the first definitional component and the language that expresses distinction from faculty at other colleges:

> From the faculty point of view—and we tell faculty when we're recruiting—it's not a job, it's a way of life. It really is. . . . We do a lot that I think . . . faculty on other campuses don't do. The co-curricular people; Lord knows, are here day and night. I think what stayed the same is the commitment to the education of young women. Absolutely. I think that is really important. I think most faculty would tell you.

This humanities faculty member had been with Sweet Briar for almost 15 years, having served on several strategic planning committees during that period. As a well-respected member of the campus, it was highly recommended that this faculty member be interviewed for this study because the role this individual played in the SOF initiative was one of this study's key informants. Faculty Member #2 went on to say: "I think the mission of the school—it goes back to the will—is the education of young women to serve to have purposeful lives . . . that's what was in the will and that's what we don't depart from."

Faculty Member #1, from the social sciences department, answered a question about how integral mission is in the conversations that take place in the context of community:

> We want . . . our students [to] have productive purposeful lives and careers . . . we all agreed that that's our mission but having it out there makes it something that we're aware of, not necessarily for the first time, but it keeps it on our mind.

Three staff and faculty members with whom I spoke noted that the students may not necessarily remember the specifics of the Sweet Briar mission, but were aware of the most central piece of the saga. I followed up on this observation. This appeared to be true in the interviews with students in terms of the accuracy of every historical fact, but I got the sense that not only were they aware of the most central pieces, their confidence in the goodness of the legacy and mission of the college was just as intense, if not more so, than the faculty and staff. When I asked one of the 2010 senior students I interviewed about her understanding of the legacy and mission of Sweet Briar, she answered,

> I think its legacy is preparing women for the world . . . that's why it was established in the beginning. . . . Indiana Fletcher—the mother of Daisy—left her money and her land and everything to found Sweet Briar. . . . She believed that all women should be educated which is why she left everything to start a women's institution that would be at the same level of the top universities at the time for men. Even though it had a finishing school kind of way because of society[9] –that's what Sweet Briar's always been—to prepare women for the world. Whether . . . research scientists[10], or whatever, becoming teachers, or just you know, to know something and then get married [sheepishly]—I don't know. To be interesting—that's what Sweet Briar has always been—to get the women to where they wanna be in life.

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[9] During the era when Sweet Briar was founded, the "Southern Lady ideal encompassed domesticity, purity, submissiveness, and piety as well as charm, dependence, grace, and manners" (Johnson, 2008, p.2). Southern colleges were slow to shed the finishing school image prevalent in the early 19th century. They were also thought to be less rigorous than their counterparts in the North (i.e., The Seven Sister Colleges; Johnson, 2008). Although participants were aware of this lingering perception, it is not widely held. Today, Sweet Briar is considered a "selective" college in terms of admission standards. (Colleges of Distinction, 2010).

[10] The percentage of Sweet Briar graduates obtaining graduate degrees is among the highest among its peer institutions (Kinzie et al., 2007)

This comment and similar comments from all of the students interviewed both formally and during informal conversations while on campus is highly consistent with the research on women's colleges noted in the literature review (Kim & Alvarez, 1995; Tidball, 1974; Wolf-Wendel, 2000). The comments noted above, in combination with relevant literature, further support how important identity-referencing discourse that expresses high achievement is and the role of such discourse in fostering an atmosphere of expectations. This finding suggests the possibility that institutions can and do make an impact on student perceptions with appropriate and intentional identity-referencing discourse as implicated in previous research (Albert & Whetten, 1985; Elsbach & Kramer, 2004; Ravisi & Schultz, 2006). Institutions can also promote high expectations for students to believe that, at their particular institution, they can meet their academic and career goals.

For example, the same 2010 senior student made it a point to tell me how much Sweet Briar had been a factor in her personal development. She expounded,

I was always the quiet one, I was very very shy. . . . I was never involved . . . ever. I went to school . . . I went home. I just kept to myself. . . . I was *ex-tre-eme-ly* quiet. Sophomore year came and snap! . . . it was ridiculous how involved I was. . . . I was never a leader growing up- ever. . . . Now most people see me and they know that I'm a leader and I'm loud. I have no problem yelling across the room to tell somebody something. Sweet Briar has done so much more than give me a degree. It really has changed [me]. It has made me come out of my little shell.

The mission of the college was so poignant to the second 2010 senior student I interviewed that she stated rather matter-of-factly, "My mission is to memorize the entire mission of Sweet Briar before I graduate. I haven't gotten that far yet. But essentially the mission of

Sweet Briar is to enrich and empower women's lives thru education." This young woman had a goal of one day becoming president of Sweet Briar, and everyone knew it. Some might assume that every student is not as intense as this student about memorizing the mission. In fact, it is just the opposite. To the people I interviewed, no matter what their position was in terms of the organizational structure within the college, this mindfulness seemed to influence the way they lived in community with one another.

Commitment to community.

- Ideational component 2b: We believe in the power of our community.
  - Phenomenological component2b: We practice with intentional collaboration, valuing the voice that each member has in the community; we work with the whole in mind, not being afraid to deal with the hard questions, asking what's best for the college, and working toward that end by acknowledging the things that need to be accentuated or abandoned, reconciled, and/or changed in the process.

In conversations with my interviewees, they displayed courage to deal with the proverbial white elephants, face the hard questions, always careful to ask as they deal with the various issues, "What is best for the college?" In my interview with Senior University Administrator #2, the following comment really captured the essence of this ideational component. It also confirmed what was seen in student's handbooks, historical accounts of events and actions, and committee meeting minutes,

Being different is fine but you need to be sure you are being different on purpose and that you have a reason for it. If you are doing something different from the norm, you

don't necessarily have to question whether it's the right thing to do. You do need to objectively examine if there are legitimate reasons why you do things differently.

This comment was in response to my inquiry about how the college handled challenges and issues that created tension within the college. At Sweet Briar, as is likely at every college, its members can point to several key events and issues in the history of the college that threatened the sustainability of the college. During the data-gathering phase, I also encountered stories of situations, great and small, in which the college had to come to the table of discussion. As a result, the college's identity and the choices made as a result were brought into public scrutiny. These issues and events were not the focus of this research; rather, the focus was how issues of the college's identity were brought to bear in the midst of them as they considered what was best for Sweet Briar. The following example highlights one such issue.

The Shape of the Future initiative: A deliberation of identity. In the late 1990s Sweet Briar's enrollment dropped significantly, forcing the college to spend more of its endowment than was beneficial. It mattered to faculty and the entire campus then to be able to really examine whether or not to remain a women's college in the wake of financial crisis, so the SOF initiative, a type of strategic planning initiative process, was launched during the 2003–2004 academic year. As noted earlier, it was during this watershed process that issues of identity were seriously raised and settled.

To address and reconcile the issue the college went again to the question of who it believed itself to be in terms of its core identity. In the beginning stages, the process looked like a strategic response to budget shortfalls as the committee turned to programs and services that could be cut (Muhlenfeld, 2008). In a memo released to the board and

distributed to faculty and staff, the former president unabashedly updated them on the situation,

> 2001–2004: Decline of Stock Market, Endowment, Enrollment: Incoming first year classes began to decline . . . dropping each year between 2000 and 2003. During this same period, the precipitate stock market decline severely impacted Sweet Briar's endowment, already vulnerable because of a high spend rate. July 2003: Board inaugurated a planning exercise aimed at long term-financial viability appointing a Shape of the Future Committee of board members, administration and faculty. Precipitating factor: high concern about the future of the College in light of our inability to increase enrollment over time and our excessive reliance on the endowment. The SOF committee worked throughout the academic year, exploring a variety of options for the future, among them going co-ed.

In examining some of the archival records, the SOF process was a typical example of how the institution faced its most serious challenges and rendered key decisions affecting the future and identity of the college. Faculty member #1 confirmed that, though the situation was different in terms of time and situational context, the SOF initiative was handled the way the college always deals with challenge: openly, forcefully, and thoughtfully—always asking the question of what is best for the college. This same question has been around since the college first opened its doors[11] (Stohlman, 1956). Faculty member #1 went on to say that this

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[11] From the copies of the student handbooks I gathered, this question was presented to describe the kind of regard a Sweet Briar student ought to have for the college. The student government association authored the handbook and, in welcoming the new students, the returning students expressed their "welcome to Alma Mater" to the new students along with a vote of confidence that "her value to the rest of the college is inestimable, if her idea and aim is always that of what is best for Sweet Briar College" (Student's Handbook, 1917-1918, pp. 3, 33).

"default response" was not just for issues that threaten the college's sustainability but also what it does when retooling or revitalizing academic programs and initiatives:

> Whenever there are issues . . . the question of who we are comes back in some ways. It's almost a safety net for us because we're forced in some ways to choose again and again who we are and the things we want to commit to.

The SOF initiative from all accounts, strengthened the members' sense of and confidence as a women's college with a distinguishing identity. Their penchant for handling matters that concern the entire institution with openness and transparency demonstrated a central, enduring, and distinctive feature about their college. It also increased sentiments of trust in the leadership of the college as a result of the way it involved everyone in the community in the deliberations about what was best for Sweet Briar. Senior University Administrator #1 said about the process:

> It was the endless conversations that we had—so many of them organized . . . many informal . . . that resulted in an entire campus that could say specifically what it was that was distinctive about Sweet Briar as a women's college. . . . I think it's that experience that motivated the campus to think differently and develop a language that it felt accurately reflected what was distinctive about the college.

All but two of the faculty and staff members I interviewed were employed at Sweet Briar during the SOF initiative process, and each confirmed that the conversations during that period were focused on the goal of preserving the legacy of the college, which suggests the vocalization of strong identity-referencing discourse. This discourse served as a guide and compass, making issues of identity salient as members examined the options placed before them. From all accounts, the SOF initiative was well received, thought to be affirming of

everyone's voice, and therefore considered extremely successful. Again, this ideational component gives evidence of how Sweet Briar members encounter the hard questions. It also reveals a connection with the first definitional and subsequent ideational and phenomenological components in that the process served to refresh the collective awareness and commitment to its legacy. In addition, this same administrator, when asked how the SOF initiative was more successful than a normal strategic planning initiative in strengthening identity, noted,

> The reason I think, it was more effective . . . is because we looked at all of the options that the college might pursue that would generate a sufficient endowment/enrollment balance to move on in perpetuity into the future; and among those was co-education which is of course the route that many women's colleges have taken. And what I think is interesting is that it was probably that word that *galvanized* everybody.

The word that is referenced in this quote is "coeducational." As mentioned before, Sweet Briar approached the option of going coeducational, a lingering question on the table for many women's colleges (see Hernandez, 2010; Salomone, 2007). This statement confirms yet another Sweet Briar distinction and phenomenological component—the way they handle the hard questions. Due to the strong sense of connection that students from women's colleges report having as a result of attending these types of colleges (Kinzie et al., 2007; Wolf-Wendel, 2000), the question of whether or not to go coeducational is a hard question for many. Not every decision is made openly and congenially. Some colleges that have closed have done so over bitter battles between alumnae and board (Salomone), and decisions have been reversed due to the vehement protests of its students, like at Mills College (Hernandez). Although Sweet Briar's process was successful in that it did not split

the college, the vast majority of the community wanted it to remain a single-sex institution, even though they do admit men to the graduate program in education.

The SOF initiative represents one of Sweet Briar's most significant moments. What the initiative highlighted was an almost flawless example of the phenomenological component described in Whetten's (2006) work whereby identity-referencing discourse is "most likely observed in conjunction with profound organizational experiences" (p. 220). Additionally, one of the key indicators that signify whether or not something is a part of an institution's identity is the conversational space it occupies among its members. It is the "dominating topic of conversation . . . in the face of a credible identity threat," which, in this case was coeducation (Whetten, 2006, p. 222). Senior University Administrator #1 stated,

> It was in the process of articulating that that everybody realized, "We need to be able to explain why we feel this is of value." . . . *That*, I think, yielded these, very rich discussions about Sweet Briar College as a specific, very defined, very definitive, and very differentiated institution.

Senior University Administrator #2, upon meeting with me informally during my second visit to Sweet Briar, mentioned then that the SOF initiative turned out to not be a strategic planning session (in the traditional sense) at all. I followed up on this statement in our formal interview during my third visit. He commented,

> The real outcomes from [the SOF initiative] was . . . a commitment to more conspicuously articulate some things we thought were selling points for the institution; so those were the "promises,"[12] all of which in some form or another

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[12] The "promises" he was referring to was a part of the overall Sweet Briar Promise that was released to the public as a result of the SOF initiative process.

already existed—so in terms of strategic planning it wasn't [in terms of saying] . . . these are the things we aren't doing now and we have to figure out how to do them.

What the SOF initiative represented in the context of this research was a strong example of a core "go to" strategy (evidence of centrality) members within the leadership structure of Sweet Briar have used time and time again (evidence of temporality). Only this time they used it to address the issue of a declining budget, a shrinking endowment, and low enrollments. The administrator later commented that it wasn't as if the college wasn't aware of declining enrollments and such. Grassroots efforts and discussions among the faculty were already underway to help solve the problem. He recalled,

> The entire college didn't wake up and say one day, "Gosh, we don't have enough students." . . . There were a number of faculty members and administrators in the academic areas that thought, "Gee, maybe there are some things we can do to stave this off."

The SOF process helped to gather the various efforts and initiatives of the college under one microscope, bringing it face to face with the question of why it should continue as a women's college. The way the leaders engaged the entire community evoked strong emotions and feedback from the campus community as well as the alumni, but it only made them stronger as a community. This is what was legitimately distinguishing in terms of the definitional component of mission mindfulness.

Definitional Component 3: We Are Academicians with a Distinct Academic Framework

Historical Vignette #2

From the start, Sweet Briar was intent on emerging as more than just another women's college in the South that would compete amongst those of like kind. The founders

desired to "have it take possession of a territory hitherto overlooked and neglected" (*Sweet Briar Institute*, 1904, p. 6; Stohlman, 1956). Hoping to train its students like the more "intellectual" schools in the North (Johnson, 2008), but combined with a more vocational course of study, they developed an academic policy that would distinguish them as an institution of the highest caliber. Led by board member Dr. John McBryde, then president of Virginia Polytechnic Institute (Virginia Tech), this policy stated that the academic program made available to the Sweet Briar student would be an intentional subject mix of both practical and intellectual coursework. It was established at the time of the original charter in 1901, six years before classes would start:

> But nowhere, to our knowledge, has the attempt been made harmoniously to combine in one institution the best features of these two classes of schools. Holding that the combination is neither impossible nor impracticable, but rather that industrial training can be made, if only a safe equilibrium be provided for, to supplement, strengthen, and enrich the intellectual, it is our resolve that the Sweet Briar Institute shall attempt this new line of educational effort. *Standing for a policy and work distinctively and peculiarly its own* [italics mine], it will offer to the young women of the South, carefully-formulated courses of study leading to degrees, of high grade and proper adaptation to the needs and capabilities of the female mind- some literary and some scientific . . . artistic and industrial branches of knowledge—the two lines of work so arranged and co-ordinated. (Sweet Briar Institute, 1904, p. 7)

Findings: Definitional Component 3

Sweet Briar's curriculum is organized on the premise that a foundation in the liberal arts enhances the development of critical and creative abilities, develops the ability to

synthesize disparate information, equips the student for graduate and professional

education, and encourages her to continue to learn long after leaving Sweet *Briar*.

A broadly based academic program teaches the student to view her

experience within wide contexts, to appreciate the achievements of the past, to

understand the methods and major theories of science, to gain an appreciation

of the arts, and to communicate with precision and cogency. . . . A highly

qualified faculty, committed to the highest standards of teaching, engages

individuals on a human scale. ("Mission," 2004)

The academic focus at Sweet Briar is interdisciplinary and the question is not only what is

best for the student but what is best for today's student. As seen from the excerpt of the

original charter in the historical vignette above, this distinctive approach to the curriculum

was intentional from the beginning. The distinctiveness referenced in this definitional

component found a beginning in the intention of Sweet Briar administration and faculty to

see to it that students would fully engage in practical and intellectual teaching and learning.

A general faculty sentiment I observed during my visits was that the primary goal was not to

gain notoriety from a few star academic programs or faculty stars, even though recent tenure

requirements shifted service to third place and research moved into its spot as the second

priority after teaching. (This was changed about the time of the SOF initiative.) What is most

important to them, however, has everything to do with the functional relevance to the women

who receive a Sweet Briar education and the quality thereof. There are three overlapping

ideational and phenomenological component pairs that support this component. They

include: (a) mission centered pedagogy, (b) cultivating high achievement, and (c) mission

centered engagement. The identity claims for these are listed below.

- Ideational component 3a: We believe that the instruction of women should be intellectually rigorous, creative, and practical; that it should cultivate confidence, industry and innovation, and civic responsibility and care.
  - Phenomenological component 3a: We practice this by providing a purposeful curriculum in a relevant and proportionately rigorous multidisciplinary context that develops the intellect along with the relevant and requisite skill sets sufficient for her to remain productive in the changing society.

- Ideational component 3b: We believe that we should be leaders in educating women especially in fields where women have been traditionally underrepresented.
  - Phenomenological component 3b: We practice this by providing state-of-the-art resources necessary for advanced learning in the various subject areas, preparation for graduate school success, inspiration for high personal achievement, and exposing students to other high achieving women, especially Sweet Briar alumnae.

- Ideational component 3c: We believe that the best learning occurs when students, professors, and staff are partners in the process.
  - Phenomenological component 3c: We practice this by encouraging self-efficacy but intentionally nurturing our students; fostering a collegial environment rich with opportunities in and out of the classroom for leadership, community engagement, and personal development. We also teach tacitly by willingly modeling behaviors and attitudes that demonstrate high regard and confidence in our students.

Mission centered pedagogy.

- Ideational component 3a: We believe that the instruction of women should be intellectually rigorous, creative, and practical; that it should cultivate confidence, industry and innovation, and civic responsibility and care.
  - Phenomenological component 3a: We practice this by providing a purposeful curriculum in a relevant and proportionately rigorous multidisciplinary context that develops the intellect along with the relevant and requisite skill sets sufficient for her to remain productive in the changing society.

In reviewing the original charter, the founders specifically used the term "distinctively." In other words, they set out thinking about how Sweet Briar could be different. This is an example of what Whetten (2006) referred to as "claims of distinctiveness" that would ultimately be considered "categorical imperatives" that reflected what members would agree to be "irreversible commitments" (p. 222). This is also consistent with the research on women's colleges that discuss how women's education was approached differently depending on the institution and the context surrounding its inception (Conway, 1974; Langdon, 2001; Wolf-Wendel, 2000).

This blend of the professional and practical at Sweet Briar has remained central to the over 100 faculty members that teach at Sweet Briar today. In the excerpts that follow, I provide examples of identity-referencing discourse that reveals how they approach teaching and learning in a way that is congruent with the charter mission and legacy of the college. The following statement shows how Senior University Administrator #1 saw Sweet Briar's distinctiveness in this area:

That's a defining characteristic. I think, from the very first, the college has always tied many academic studies and library study with hands-on work. In other words, we try to make sure our students know how to do their discipline as well as read about it. And that dates back to the earliest trustees who said they wanted the college to be just like the colleges on New England—meaning Wellesley, Vassar, and Smith but with an added piece that was practical. In 1905, that meant home economics. But you know we take that now to mean the ability to go into the world and do well on the job. So there's always been a little bit of a difference between this institution and similar small liberal arts colleges.

The faculty with whom I spoke during my visits considered themselves to be quite intentional in and about the way they approached their craft. However, when asked specifically about it, they seemed neither impressed nor concerned about being distinctive. They did, however, reference their belief in and intentionality about their multidisciplinary approach to education called for by the mission. Faculty Member #2 said,

> The vast majority [of the faculty] are not only aware of the fact that . . . our primary role is to educate . . . there's a shared agreement that the best way to do this very broad based. We want specificity in the major but we understand that majors don't exist in isolation. If all you came out of here was as a psychologist, a sociologist, or a biologist, if that's all you got from Sweet Briar you missed the boat—that's not what were about—that's a chunk of what we're about. But the rest of the education is an appreciation for the liberal arts.

As an example, this faculty member went on to recollect about a 1999 strategic planning season and the talks that ensued about possible changes in the curriculum in order

to strengthen the academic experience in preparation for the new millennial students. She recalled how the meeting agenda was originally supposed to discuss and hear reports on general education requirements, but it soon took another direction.

It ended up focusing on changing the way we did gen-eds. Which, also helped us to identify priorities and what we felt students needed to be able to do when they left here. . . . We [now] have these writing intensive courses and moral intensive courses; the idea is that we all have, across the curriculum . . . understanding of what that means and why students need it, so students are hearing the same thing in every class and why these are important skills for them to have over and above their knowledge areas.

That same year, in a plan presented to the board of directors, then-President Elizabeth Muhlenfeld communicated the importance of Sweet Briar's "distinctive educational program." On the title page of the plan it read: "Educating the Whole Woman." She stated,

We know that a first-rate education for such a woman . . . a woman who deserves to experience high career satisfaction and who will become a leader in her community— must focus on this complexity . . . providing excellent academic offerings continues to be necessary, but is no longer sufficient. (Muhlenfeld, 1999, p. 5)

The faculty at Sweet Briar understand this and, through a long-standing faculty culture of shared governance, ownership of the curriculum, and enthusiasm, they are always exploring ways to offer a relevant educational package to students. In my interview with Senior University Administrator #2, I asked him about the faculty's sense of intentionality in matters of curriculum design. He responded,

If . . . shared governance is rich enough, a faculty member with a good idea actually thinks they can take the ball and run with it and see what might happen. . . . Engineering was really developed because . . . a physics professor said, "I need to figure out some way to make my discipline relevant to a larger group of people. . . . Smith just started an engineering program . . . maybe we can do this."

Recently, the college became the second women's college to offer a degree in engineering (Smith College was the first). Originally funded by a National Science Foundation grant and most recently by a $3 million grant from one of their alumni, this program is quickly gaining recognition. They are not intent on just graduating students, particularly in the older sciences, who know content but upon graduation are slightly bereft of social skills. The faculty in the department is adamant against this single-focused approach. When interviewing Faculty Member #3 about how engineering fits within a traditional liberal arts program and the academic mission of the college, he responded,

Engineering as a discipline is very central to the liberal arts. . . . And you would want engineering and those that are not engineers to understand how to interact with that world whether its water supply systems or nuclear weapons or biomedical engineering. You'd like the engineers to have a sense of society and the impact what they do might have on it. I mean all disciplines in the liberal arts have a relevance to people's lives but it's a very functional and its very practical and its one that students can see and can talk about.

This statement truly underscores the Sweet Briar approach to the curriculum in all areas.

The faculty are intentional about making the education broad based, which is a staple feature of most liberal arts education today (Seifert et al., 2010). However, Sweet Briar

seems to be one that approaches the curriculum from a comprehensive menu first then departmentally; ever mindful of the mission and how it can meet the needs of today's students. Senior University Administrator #2 described it:

> There were lots of open conversations and faculty meetings about whether or not a business major, or to some extent an engineering major . . . were contrary to the philosophy of liberal arts colleges. . . . A few of us argued . . . that if, in fact, we could prepare them for those careers and give them a liberal arts education, we were first . . . providing more broadly educated people in disciplines where there is a desperate need for them and second . . . helping to serve our students who have an intention of going into those fields anyway by preparing them the best that we can rather than expecting them to try to make up for it after they leave.

Every single interview I conducted with faculty and staff members carried this sense of care and regard and intentionality about the academic mission. The following response from Faculty Member #2 sums up this consistent message that was repeated often as I asked faculty members what they thought was most central and enduring and what they saw as distinctive about how they educate at Sweet Briar:

> What hasn't changed is the desire to give them *the* strongest ways of learning—not just subject matter, 'cause you know content and subject matter changes over time— we want to give them frames of reference so that they are educated and know how to do things but also we want to instill in them: "This is how you learn—and this is how you keep learning. And this gets you started but don't think you're gonna stop once you graduate. . . . You need as many ways to approach a problem as you can get . . . that's what different disciplines, different subject matters give you—different ways of

looking at the same problem." So we try to teach 'em how to think. And that that'll be what sustains them over time. Sometimes we even talk about the fact that well, maybe we're not training you for that first job, we're training you for that second or third job.

Cultivating high achievement.

- Ideational component 3b: We believe that we should be leaders in educating women especially in fields where women have been traditionally underrepresented.
  - Phenomenological component 3b: We practice this by providing state-of-the-art resources necessary for advanced learning in the various subject areas, preparation for graduate school success, inspiration for high personal achievement, and exposing students to other high achieving women, especially Sweet Briar alumnae.

The academic program at Sweet Briar has definitely expanded beyond home economics; in fact, all colleges have. Like other colleges, it has its share of distinguished faculty known in their respective fields. They have secured lucrative grants, written scores of books, and created and performed classical musical scores as well as theater and dance productions. They have advised government, blogged on political issues, and traced lineages of enslaved workers to plantation owners and on their own grounds discovered and restored once-forgotten burial grounds of the enslaved labor force as a way of honoring those that indeed contributed to the wealth of the Sweet Briar Plantation. The school even has a top-notch equestrian field for its program.

Sweet Briar boasts of a great science program. In fact, research is a big deal at Sweet Briar. Sweet Briar students get significant research experience and get to work with advanced

lab equipment before most first-year doctoral students—so they say. One of the first things pointed out to me on my first visit was that they were one of few schools to have an "Amray 1810 Scanning Electron Microscope, the successor to the original Cambridge Instruments microscope." My tour guide made it a point to tell me that Sweet Briar is one of the few schools to allow its first- and second-year students to work on the microscope as well as other advanced-level equipment. A visit to the Chemistry Department website confirms this fact. The website also corroborates the overall academic focus of Sweet Briar, which is described as a "progressive independence" curriculum ("Programs," n.d.) that successfully moves students studying chemistry to "strong, confident and mature scientists" ("Our Mission," n.d.).

Chemistry boasts of another science fiction-sounding piece of equipment that looks more like an oversized deep fryer than a research-grade 400 Mhz nuclear magnetic resonance spectrometer. Use of this equipment has brought the school recognition in the form of accepted and published articles in peer-reviewed journals with chemistry undergraduates listed as co-authors as well as top honors at undergraduate research conferences and symposiums. In the social sciences, their psychology majors have been scoring "at or above the 90th percentile of psychology majors taking the test" for admission into graduate degree programs. Faculty report that they get feedback constantly about how well prepared these students are for graduate level work and how the word is out: Those Sweet Briar students can compete.

This success may be due in large part to the small class size. This setting encourages a deeper level of dialogue and prevents students from hiding in the "back row," as one psychology student described it. In my interview with Senior University Administrator #2,

we talked about Sweet Briar's reputation for preparing students well for graduate study. He suggested that Sweet Briar's student faculty ratio of 9:1, one of the lowest in the country besides Sarah Lawrence College, and the class size is a contributing factor:

> A student, when she graduates, will have had really the smallest classes in her upper level years of anybody in the country . . . that may be the difference. . . . When a senior seminar has 3 or 4 students and you teach it like you would at Harvard with 12 students with the same rigor it seems . . . the likelihood of slacking off and the nature of how much dialogue and exchange . . . giving a grand lecture on stage is just not going to work. . . . So from an academic experience thing, that's the thing that's different. . . . When students go to grad school from here they always say that it seems exactly like my undergraduate experience . . . we've been doing this all along.

One 2003 graduate, Julia Schmitz, spoke about her experience in a Winter 2006 *Sweet Briar Alumnae Magazine* article,

> After many interviews and acceptances, I elected to enroll in the cell and molecular biology program at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. . . . Since I had so much research experience while at SBC, an experience that set me apart from other applicants, I was one of the few students in my incoming class who was accepted straight from college. ("Spotlight," 2006, p. 38)

Tidball (1989) and others have confirmed the high level of accomplishment that graduates of women's colleges achieve; most notably in the sciences. Sweet Briar is no exception. The college boasts of many distinguished alumnae who have gone on to successful careers at top research institutions, and they articulate this loudly and clearly to their current students. For example, the 2005 distinguished alumni award recipient and

Founder's Day keynote speaker was Dr. Jo Ann Soderquist '64. She was the first woman to obtain a master's degree in aerospace engineering from the School of Engineering at the University of Virginia. She told the audience that when she defended for her master's her mentor and professor from Sweet Briar was in attendance.

What is distinctive is not the fact that the college has renowned graduates, but what they do that seems to ensure that more success stories will follow. With every new homecoming, with every distinguished alumni speech and reception, with every article and encounter about the Sweet Briar Women and their achievements, the current Sweet Briar "Girl" begins to think it is possible for her to become a successful Sweet Briar Woman someday too. The following example demonstrates what this looks like in practice. The year the engineering major was established as an official part of the new Department of Physics and Engineering, the college organized an entire homecoming around it. The cover of the *Sweet Briar Alumnae Magazine* read, "Eminent Physicist Brian Greene Kicks Off Homecoming 2005: Focus on the Sciences." Rather than leave the other sciences out, each department was given a glorious spread featuring the faculty and promoting the theme of students as "key partners" (Loboschefski, 2006, p. 24). The way that Sweet Briar faculty lets its students know that high achievement is possible, by way of a consistent and extravagant exposure to the achievements of former graduates as well as other professionals and scholars, appears to be a large part of what cultivates in the students an expectation of the possibility of that same level of achievement.

Mission centered engagement.

- Ideational component 3c: We believe that the best learning occurs when students, professors, and staff are partners in the process.

o Phenomenological component 3c: We practice this by encouraging self-efficacy
but intentionally nurturing our students; fostering a collegial environment rich
with opportunities in and out of the classroom for leadership, community
engagement, and personal development. We also teach tacitly by willingly
modeling behaviors and attitudes that demonstrate high regard and confidence
in our students.

The teaching emphasis associated with liberal arts colleges, to use the word
associated with an organizational identity framework, is a central and enduring attribute that
distinguishes them from other higher education institutions. This distinction holds at the
macro level. Within the category of liberal arts colleges Sweet Briar has earned an additional
mark of distinction among its peers.

In the NSSE, one of the most-recognized surveys, Sweet Briar consistently outranks
their class in terms of the quality of the teaching experience that students report they receive.
As mentioned in an earlier chapter, in all five benchmarks on the 2004 and the 2007 NSSE
survey, Sweet Briar was almost untouchable; the largest point spread was in the category of
student–faculty interaction.

NSSE's DEEP project, which "features case studies about twenty colleges that have
higher than-predicted-scores on five clusters or 'benchmarks' of effective educational
practice"(Blaich et al, 2004, p. 4), selected Sweet Briar as one of its case studies. In 2003,
DEEP researchers visited the campus to conduct a series of interviews and focus groups and
presented a comprehensive report to the college in 2004. A lengthy discussion of the report is
not the focus of this study but is presented here for three reasons. The first reason is for the
purpose of data triangulation. The findings in the present study are highly similar to the

findings in the DEEP report from 6 years earlier. What the NSSE data have not been able to explain entirely is the part the institution plays in these results (Kinzie et al., 2007).

Even after visiting the campus and reporting some very specific and detailed examples of the activity at Sweet Briar, the DEEP research team admitted at the end that they were still "uncertain how academic challenge works at Sweet Briar" (Blaich, 2004, p. 38). The findings in this section speak to that question and reveal that examining this question through the identity framework is key in understanding how and, more importantly, why Sweet Briar might excel in this area. What seems to actually fuel the high level of student–faculty interaction that Sweet Briar students and alumnae alike consistently report experiencing is the collegial and community environment. This environment is grounded in a more interactive teaching style, which is in large part informed by its charter. It is something that they are intentional about cultivating, as indicated by the following identity claim on the college's website. It is taken from its "Statement of Purpose in Support of the Mission," which appears directly below the actual mission statement on the college website. In reference to the academic program this portion reads:

> At Sweet Briar this study takes place within a residential environment that encourages physical well being, ethical awareness, sensitivity to others, responsibility for one's actions, personal initiative, and the assumption of leadership. . . . In small classes, students receive the attention that encourages self-confidence and the improvement of skills for life and livelihood. ("Mission," n.d.)

What the DEEP team reported hearing overwhelmingly while spending time at Sweet Briar was the phrase, "It's a Sweet Briar thing" (Blaich et al., 2004, p. 15). It is important to note that, during my time on campus, that phrase was mentioned only during my first visit. It

was not mentioned nor offered as a way of explaining the way they did things unless I brought it up. This struck me as odd until I realized later that I had already entered the realm of the "Sweet Briar thing" when I asked them about their identity.

At Sweet Briar, the size of the campus community and the proximity to students both physically and relationally work in tandem to create a rather synergistic partnership among students and faculty that is central to the life of the college. Faculty–student partnerships have been a central mainstay at Sweet Briar and are evident both in and out of the classroom. I observed Faculty Member #1, apparently a favorite of the students as evidenced by his teaching awards, with students after class. As students streamed out of the classroom and followed him to his office they were making jokes about mean squares (with frowns and burrowed brows) and other statistical terms. Yet, he voiced seriousness when he shared with me later about the instruction of students,

> Everybody here works much harder than they need too—every person gives more than they take . . . . Everyone is here for the right reasons and helps each other out and holds each other accountable for these things. . . . That's who we are and there's a time for play. Play has to be a part of education but I tell you, as much as I play I take my job very seriously, and the students know that.

It is this sense of regard toward students that positively impacts them, not only academically, but also socially and personally. A strong sense of reciprocal respect was very evident in every single student interview and alumnae report and among staff comments. CCL Administrator #2 said when asked what stood out about Sweet Briar faculty–student relationships,

I would say that faculty student connections are prime—are very central to student's experience and that you get back into some of the values of honesty, integrity, self-responsibility, and things that are woven into the fabric of their academic experience and their social experience.

For example, from the start of Sweet Briar, it was planned that faculty would live on the grounds along faculty row and that students would be treated with the utmost respect and given freedom to exist as mature young women as they learned. Currently, over 70% of the faculty lives on campus. This is a practice that works well for the college and contributes to the strong relationships and expressed regard that is shared between faculty and students.

Definitional Component 4: We Are Partners in the Development of Our Students

Historical Vignette #3

The rules of the college concerning student life were intentionally deferred until necessary, which ended up being about 3 weeks into the semester. By this time however, there arose a need to address the issues in the dormitory in terms of noise control and other issues pertaining to the participation and general conduct of the girls[13] themselves. Instead of calling on faculty to regulate student behavior, the girls themselves decided that they would be self-governing and petitioned to the faculty to handle most matters that pertained to behavior outside of the classroom. A petition dated October 17, 1906, which would be reprinted in the student's handbook each year thereafter, stated:

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[13] At Sweet Briar, it is commonly accepted that the term "girl" is used in a nonoffensive way. This was also noticed in the DEEP visit to campus. DEEP researchers thought the term might be seen as offensive but reported that, instead, one student was offended that it was even mentioned in the site visit report (Blaich et al., 2004). It is used as a "term of endearment": "Sweet Briar Girls." It was used frequently during my visits to campus. Use of the term "girls" is not necessarily received or used in the same way at other women's colleges.

The students of Sweet Briar College, believing that there is dignity and honor in student government, desire individual and community responsibility for the conduct of students in matters not strictly academic.

We, therefore, petition the President and Faculty for legislative and executive control in certain matters. We ask:

I. Right to control quiet and order in all places about the buildings and campus that are not under the immediate control of a member of the Faculty.

II. Permission, with the advice and approval of the Faculty, to extend our power as occasion arises and we prove worthy to be vested with greater power and authority.

III. Permission to make such additions to the above as we may feel are necessary, with the consent and approval of the President and Faculty.

The faculty replied 3 days later:

The Faculty of Sweet Briar College endorses most cordially the desire of the student body to assume responsibility for the conduct of individual students in non-academic matters. Therefore, the Faculty accords permission to frame a constitution embodying laws regulating the points specified in the petition—said constitution to be submitted to the Faculty for endorsement. (Student's Handbook, 1964-65, p. 7)

Although the students can be applauded for this seemingly mature initiative toward self-governance, it was just as crucial that the faculty at that time took the young women seriously and allowed self-governance to be established in the official workings of the college. Faculty endorsement was crucial for it to have remained as a central and enduring

attribute and a legitimate identity claim yet today. Clark (1970) wrote, "The role of a strong faculty is an imposing one in the forming of an organizational legend and the making of a distinctive college" (p. 248). For this college, the way they have endeavored through the years to allow students the best context and environment to practice self-governance is truly a distinguishing characteristic and a central, enduring feature of the college. As evident in most of the findings, the way a particular attribute is facilitated and woven into the organizational structure is especially important when attempting to understand how central it is. In the next section a discussion of definitional component four will give attention to the effort to remain true to the vision of the Sweet Briar Woman and its relation to self-governance and the honor code.

Historical Vignette #4

After the Civil War, women were entering the workforce in record numbers. At the time of Sweet Briar's founding in 1906, the ideal Southern woman was still cast in a domesticated and fragile framework. The pervasive thought by those who criticized equal education of women at that time felt that women's studies should be limited to that which made them better homemakers (Harwarth, Maline, & DeBra, 1997; Johnson, 2008; Salomone, 2007) or teachers (Berkeley, 1984). Furthermore, some thought that women could not physically handle the demands of college-level work. What was available in the South was considered to be little more than finishing school opportunities that trained women for the service industry and the growing teaching profession. Many of the Southern-born and bred women (who had the means) would leave their families to attend Northern schools, which were considered more rigorous and where they could earn bachelor's degrees (Johnson, 2008, Shmurak & Handler, 1992; Wolf-Wendel, 2000) and return to the South to

work toward equal education. Needless to say, Indiana Fletcher Williams and the founders were intent on Sweet Briar being as good, if not better, than women's colleges in the North. The first president of Sweet Briar, Miss Mary K. Benedict, was educated in the North receiving a bachelor's degree from Vassar and a Ph.D. in Psychology.

To say that a Sweet Briar Woman is the distinct property of the institution clearly would not be appropriate. It would be possible, however, for an ideal to be espoused and treated as such. The founders had a vision of the kind of woman that Sweet Briar was to cultivate, and this vision has endured since the beginning. In fact, it was a part of the conversation as early as the first board meetings when they were picking the school colors, the motto, and the crest. Chairman McBryde, of the first board of directors and president of Virginia Polytechnic Institute (now Virginia Tech), suggested the motto be, "A perfect woman, nobly planned" as "indicative of the aim of the school" which seemed to sum up what they were hoping to see accomplished in their students (Stohlman & von Briesen, 2001, p. 6). The motto that was ultimately chosen was offered by the chairman's son and designer of the Sweet Briar seal, John M. McBryde, Jr., and was articulated in Latin: "*Rosam Quae Meruit Ferat*" which is translated as "Let her who has earned it bear the rose" (Stohlman & von Briesen, p. 6).

Because Indiana Fletcher Williams was not alive when the doors of Sweet Briar opened in 1906, the focus of the men who she left in charge of building the foundation of the college was mostly organizational in scope. I found no record of a more composite narrative of the motto besides the wording in the original charter indicating that a Sweet Briar Woman grow to be a productive member of society (Stohlman, 1956). The honor code, which will be discussed shortly, was developed early on by the student government but carried a more

prescriptive tone to it. It was not until the second president—Miss Emilie McVea Sweet Briar, who arrived in 1916 from the University of Cincinnati where she served as the dean of women—that a more complete articulation from leadership about the ideal Sweet Briar Woman would start to take form. She is the one who brought with her a "vision" of the Sweet Briar Woman. Miss McVea wrote these words in an Easter Card to students in 1917:

> I would have the graduate of Sweet Briar be a woman strong in body, sincere in thought, clear in vision, using the larger freedom of today but preserving the charm of the women of yesterday . . . revere scholarship . . . know the joys of the mind . . . never be afraid to think . . . love beauty and above all have faith in God and good in the destiny of mankind. (Marshall, 2001, p. 29)

Findings: Definitional Component 4

I conclude this chapter with the fourth and final definitional component, and supporting ideational and phenomenological pair, because it is a logical culmination to the Sweet Briar saga (Clark, 1970). This particular component emerged from the findings and reveals a level of institutional involvement in the lives of the students that perhaps only colleges like Sweet Briar can realistically achieve. However, colleges that, as mentioned in the first chapter, refuse to let the work of transcendence slip while in pursuit of the practical (Gilpin Faust, 2009) may find that they can cultivate mentoring environments (Parks, 2008) alongside "utility" (Gilpin Faust ¶9).

This component is the most reciprocal of the four. It also asks the most of the college (i.e., faculty and staff) to engage with the student beyond the dutiful dissemination of academic and programmatic content. In turn, the student is asked to embrace what is being communicated with a level of ownership and agreement. The success of this component rests

in the degree to which the students believe in the value of what is being communicated, agree with it, and make it a part of their own campus experience. There is one ideational and phenomenological component pair that supports this definitional component. This pair could actually be applied to each of the previous definitional components. It involves: casting a vision for the Sweet Briar Woman. The identity claim is listed below.

- Ideational component 4: We believe that we are educating women for life and are not afraid to hold them accountable to high ideals and high standards.

  o Phenomenological component 4: We practice this by providing a generously student-governed context that allows for connection, development, and expression. We cast and communicate often a vision of high personal integrity and responsibility and that they can make a difference in the world.

Casting a vision for the Sweet Briar Woman.

- Ideational component 4: We believe that we are educating women for life and are not afraid to hold them accountable to high ideals and high standards.

  o Phenomenological component 4: We practice this by providing a generously student-governed context that allows for connection, development, and expression. We cast and communicate often a vision of high personal integrity and responsibility and that they can make a difference in the world.

One thing is clear about Sweet Briar today. There is still an articulated and clear narrative that is widely referred to when speaking about the Sweet Briar Woman. This topic was not short on identity-referencing discourse. Although worded slightly differently, depending on the person, every student expressed similar thoughts about the Sweet Briar

Woman, "She will go out there and make a difference in the world," to which two students added, "with pearls on!"

There is no way of knowing if, when I asked Senior University Administrator #1 about the kind of woman Sweet Briar desired to cultivate, she had in mind the words of President Emerita McVea that were reprinted in the 2001 *Sweet Briar Alumnae Magazine*. She shared her thoughts on the ideal Sweet Briar Woman:

> She will be bright, and yet, unpretentious, there's something about the country that leaches out some of that pretention. . . . She's VERY articulate; she uses language well and persuasively. She feels very comfortable doing whatever anybody asks her to or expects of her. In other words, it doesn't occur to her that "I can't do that." She thinks as her first thought, "I can do that." So she's got a high confidence in her ability to do things—sometimes . . . too high. But that's a factor of youth. And she is—relatively social. With that—she's probably got a number of close friends and they are not all just like her. . . . This is not a cliquey place. That pretty much sums it up.

From the findings, it appears that this vision of the ideal Sweet Briar Woman has motivated and continues to motivate and inspire faculty and staff as they work with students

Expectations in character development—self-governance. The vision of the ideal Sweet Briar Woman is two fold. In addition to her being well educated, her character should be influenced by certain values and expressed with corresponding behavior. Self-governance seems like a natural requisite to the notion and realization of students as partners. It allows opportunities for the students to take responsibility for their behavior which, in a sense, qualifies them to walk out with a more equal membership standing in the context of

community. Identity-referencing claims that cast the vision of certain character traits and behaviors are found everywhere from yearbooks to handbooks, both past and present. A 1935 student's handbook reads:

> The strength and effective operation of Student Government depends upon the truthfulness and the high sense of personal honor on the part of each student, an enlightened and vigorous student opinion, and the recognition of individual responsibility for upholding and furthering the standards and ideas on which the association is based (p. 18)

Again, in the 1935 student's handbook, the following behaviors are outlined:

> Three things are fundamental:
>
> 1 A student will tell the truth.
>
> 2. A student will respect the property of others.
>
> 3. A student will maintain absolute honesty in her academic work-preparation, classroom, tests, papers, examinations, everywhere.
>
> Students who do not acknowledge these fundamentals or who are unwilling to exert themselves to the utmost to make those ideals prevail are out of place at Sweet Briar. (p. 19)

After students were tested and passed the honor code exam, they were expected to sign the pledge as a symbol of their agreement and intention to live by the code.

In the 1944–45 student's handbook this component is further developed. It is also interesting that like the Yale example in chapter one, Sweet Briar is referred to anthropomorphically by students as "she":

Sweet Briar exists only in her students. Each one of us is responsible for making her live by upholding the high principles upon which she was founded and which she has endeavored to maintain throughout the years. Come prepared to give Sweet Briar the best you have and she pledges her best in return. (preface)

Twenty years later, in the 1964–65 student's handbook, the pledge holds consistent but with the following admonition:

The Sweet Briar Honor Pledge is to be signed without reservation. When a student signs the Pledge, she automatically gives up the right of private judgment as to which of the rules she will uphold. By signing the pledge, she promised to uphold *each one* of the Sweet Briar Regulations, realizing that each is important to her safety, to the community as a whole, or to the ideals of the college. (p. 34)

This pledge is then listed in all capital letters:

I PLEDGE THAT I WILL MAINTAIN THE VALIDITY OF MY WORD, MAINTAIN ABSOLUTE HONESTY IN MY WORK, AND RESPECT THE PROPERTY OF OTHERS. REALIZING THAT THESE STANDARDS ARE AN INTEGRAL PART OF LIFE AT SWEET BRIAR, I HEREBY ASSUME MY OBLIGATION TO UPHOLD THEM AND TO ABIDE BY THE REGULATIONS OF THE COLLEGE. I WILL REPORT MYSELF AND ASK OTHERS TO REPORT THEMSELVES FOR ANY INFRACTION OF THIS PLEDGE.

That next year, in the 1967–68 student's handbook, a fourth principle was added along with a very strong opening admonishment in the form of a "statement of policy":

Any student accepting a place at Sweet Briar College should know that the College will not tolerate extremes of social behavior which are injurious to the individual, the

community, or the college. The misuse of alcohol or drugs and sexual behavior, which affronts contemporary moral standards will not be condoned. (p. 30)

1. Integrity of one's word

2. Respect for the property of others

3. Honesty in academic work (including preparation of classroom work, papers, laboratory work and notebooks, tests, and examinations).

4. Responsible judgment and discretion in one's conduct.

Today this system is still very much in place. Students are still tested in their first year of attendance on the information in the current student's handbook.

When gathering copies of the handbooks from the library, one of the librarians challenged me to try to see the differences in the language of the handbook starting with the 1967–68 school year. I originally assumed it was because that was the first year that they admitted African American students and consequently my focus was to look for references to race, acceptance, inclusiveness, etc. Upon a separate review of the partial copies I made of eight handbooks randomly selected from 1917 thru 1968, I found nothing significantly different between the years, especially nothing that referenced race.

However, after a subsequent review of the copies, what was different and noticeable with the 1967–68 student's handbook than was present in previous editions was the much stronger admonition to adhere to standards of acceptable behavior. This may have been a reflection of the 1960s, commonly known as the start of the loosening of the moral norms of that day; no doubt felt at most colleges in the United States. Still, that alone did not meet the criterion that would distinguish Sweet Briar from any other school dealing with the same student culture. What was distinguishing for Sweet Briar was how the writers managed to

keep the general tenor of the values and character ideally expected for Sweet Briar Women steady yet tempered with time-appropriate language. In other words, they did not back down from articulating clear expectations of what they considered appropriate behavior.

For an example of just the opposite, Clark (1970) gave an account of how the honor code at Reed College lost its authority among students and faculty. The college allowed students and faculty to interpret the honor code arbitrarily. Over time, it became difficult to administer, and the student sentiment in the late 1950s was that any type of code or regulation of behavior was an infringement on student freedom.

Statements concerning student behavior at Sweet Briar prior to the 1967–68 student's handbook were ripe with flowering language of welcome, trust, and a call to a sweet conformity that seemed almost oblivious to the thought of any serious large-scale mutiny. For example, the opening pages of the 1917–18 student's handbook greeted the new students with words of welcome and an offer of true friendship and community. It goes on to say,

> We hope as the days slip by, we will be all friends together, loyal to Sweet Briar and to each other . . . we hope you will like us and be happy with us . . . and if you give us a chance, we will be happy together. The first thing the 'old' girls want to say to the 'new' girls is that we are very glad you are coming to Sweet Briar. (p. 33)

This is worth repeating here because, interestingly enough, the language would change later in the college's history, but the sentiment in the message remained the same, which will be noticeable in the text to follow. The same 1917–18 student's handbook had this to say about rules:

> The observation of the rules and laws of the Association may at first seem irksome, but they become easy if we remember to uphold the highest standard. To help in the

upholding of our rule, we have drawn up a constitution. . . . This booklet, as we trust, will become your friend and constant guide, especially during your first weeks at Sweet Briar. (p. 33)

Fifty years later, the 1967–68 student's handbook spoke of language warning of administrative involvement and the threat of "suspension or expulsion" as a consequence if behavior codes were violated. This was at the discretion of the president. The authors (still students) did take care however; to include language complementary to the culture of mutual regard in the way students were invited to ask for clarification if needed:

The President and the Deans will be willing to clarify the College's interpretation of the above statement as well as its definition of acceptable behavior in particular circumstances. Any student unwilling to acknowledge such authority on the part of the college is advised to withdraw. (p. 30)

This language points to the uncanny ability of the leaders of Sweet Briar to hold on to the prized values important to its legacy but with an awareness of the need to negotiate it differently within the context of the present world reality they and their students faced. This is an example of how identity claims were held constant even though the expression of them was adjusted to suit the times.

The thought that perhaps the language differences were reflective of the times proved to be true as I examined the 2001 centennial issue of the *Sweet Briar Alumnae Magazine*. This informative issue had a collage-like format reminiscent of the old *Life* magazines in the way they would chronicle key historic moments of a presidential administration or a political issue. Its content comprised reprints of quotes from old articles in previous *Sweet Briar Alumnae Magazines* and newspaper clipping of the top stories of the time, interspersed with

pictures galore. What was printed about the time period from 1966–76 confirmed and suggested that times and students were indeed starting to become different. The following comments are from student leaders in the late 1960s who wrote about their experiences in the 1971 summer issue of the *Sweet Briar Alumnae Magazine,* which were reprinted in the 2001 issue:

> The rigid social rules . . . have been altered to allow each girl to exercise her own personal code of responsibility. The late 60's was . . . a real transition period for Sweet Briar. . . . The radical behavior of college students . . . resulted in a highly volatile atmosphere on campuses throughout the United States . . . this extremism affected attitudes at Sweet Briar and that many of the changes at Sweet Briar were influenced by the same liberalism prevalent on other campuses. (St. Clair Talley, 2001, p. 109)

President Pannell at that time called it "a period of enormous upheaval, alienation, unhappiness, and difficulty—the hard years" St. Clair Talley, 2001, p. 109) but 1971 graduate Michela English, who would later be one of the key alumna leaders during the SOF initiative when the college would again have to strategically affirm its position as a woman's college, summed it up best when she wrote,

> The class of 1967 came to Sweet Briar dressed in ladybug sweaters and skirts, circle pins, and Pappagallo shoes consistent with the dress code at the time. Four years later, we shopped exclusively at the Army–Navy surplus store and wore combat boots and blue jeans. (St. Clair Talley, 2001, p. 111).

Despite the changing cultural milieu, Sweet Briar held its stance with a flexible grip that allowed students freedom of choice, but its leaders were unwilling to give up on the vision of

the Sweet Briar Woman. They held it before them even though they knew at times that its poignancy was not as compelling in the minds and hearts of the students.

Today, self-governance and the honor system are as strong as ever and still administered primarily under the leadership of students. In the 2009–10 *Student's Handbook*, the language is once again relaxed, overtly collegial and welcoming, not so authoritative, and as always, respectful to the self-governance tradition of its students. The strong admonition is no longer present, but instead is a letter from the 10th president of Sweet Briar, Jo Ellen Parker herself. Complete with identity-referencing statements and gentle reminders about Sweet Briar Women in language reminiscent of the very early years. She wrote,

> You should know that many of the codes, policies, organizations, and traditions outlined here have been developed over the years by students. Sweet Briar Women have the maturity and character to create, through self-governance, a community that fosters integrity, achievement, and friendships.
>
> One key component of this self-governing community is the Honor Code. Please read that with special care: it governs the integrity of both intellectual work and social life on campus. The Honor code works because Sweet Briar Students make it work, because they value the respect it affords every individual and the atmosphere of trust and integrity it creates. It represents what Sweet Briar expects of you and what Sweet Briar Women expect of each other. Again—Welcome! We're all very glad you're here. (p. 1)

The honor pledge for the students is now a bit simpler as compared to the compelling admonishments since the late 1960s. Yet, it is still written in language that is clearly

expectant of a certain behavior expected from Sweet Briar Women, which is, in itself, an identity claim in every sense of the term:

> Sweet Briar Women do not lie, cheat, steal, or violate the rights of others. Therefore, I pledge to uphold all standards of honorable conduct. I will report myself and others for any infraction of this pledge. (*Student's Handbook 2009-2010,* p. 37)

Clark (1970) found that the student subculture, though transient, was crucial in how and to what intensity the ideals contained in the founding of a college were perpetuated, especially in terms of saga or identity. Furthermore, Whetten (2006) posited that organizational attributes become legitimate identity claims when they "have repeatedly demonstrated their value as distinguishing organizational features" (p. 221).

The abundance of data support the finding that this honor system and the vision it projects for Sweet Briar Women clearly belong to the college and, having endured the test of time, is still at work today. However, the data also clearly suggest that this vision of the Sweet Briar Woman remained a valuable constant in the minds and hearts of Sweet Briar Women old and young despite fluctuating college student culture throughout the years. It is also walked out in the context of student community.

The Honor Code in student life: Action and application. Before reading and analyzing several historical accounts of the original petition for self-governance from students in 1906, the context for the present day honor code and how it influenced the development of the student was not yet apparent to me despite its mention in almost every interview. Initially noted as a nice feature of student life at Sweet Briar, it presented nothing unusual as a stand-alone theme; from my experience, my assumption was that many institutions had long-standing honor codes.

What was distinguishing and enduring, however, was that this particular honor code at Sweet Briar appeared to be lived out in the lives of current students. This suggested that in order for this kind of partnership to work, in which students are allowed this level of self-governance and autonomy, the honor code had to be a significant part of the student's reality at Sweet Briar. Moreover, the code and its reverential regard by Sweet Briar Women seemed to facilitate a context for this to be expressed in the student culture.

It, too, is currently listed in the *Traditions of Sweet Briar College* (n.d.) booklet found online under "Honor Code and Self- Governance" with a reference to its enduring presence on campus:

> Ever since the first students arrived at Sweet Briar in 1906, the honor code has been enforced through self-governance. Unlike many schools, infractions of the honor code are dealt with by a panel of students, not the administrators of the college. (p. 2)

CCL Administrator #2 had this to say about the honor code when asked about how it was different from those at other schools where she had worked previously: "The difference is . . . is that the judicial process is overseen by the students, we advise it but it belongs to the students." A rising sophomore that I met in the hallway of one of the residence halls on move-out day student commented with her palms facing the ceiling, "The honor code is huge here! It's like . . . what the whole college is about!"

In a group interview with graduating seniors from the class of 2009, one of the students, an officer on the judicial board, recalled a story about a Sweet Briar student who saw a fellow classmate preparing to cheat on a final exam. Here is what two of the students had to say about the honor code and how it is managed among the students:

[Student 1]: She told her, "You are going to walk out of this room and take that book with you . . . or I will turn you in so fast to judish" ["judish" is apparently short for "judicial board"].

[Student 2]: It's a really big thing here.

[Student 1]: The honor pledge that we have—it's everywhere [pointing to the blackboard in front of her].

[Interviewer]: Where?

[Student 1]: It's behind you—in bright pink. We really replay that and I think people really respect that. . . . We *do* turn people in . . . we just hold ourselves to a much higher standard . . . we know it might be your situation but at the same time it's a cry for help.

I was told in another interview on a subsequent visit a very similar story that also highlighted how this is experienced in student life.

The data presented in the preceding paragraphs suggest that a part of the identity that Sweet Briar College espouses is the development of certain values. These values are embodied in the vision of the Sweet Briar Woman and it is expected, though not oppressively so, that every Sweet Briar Woman conduct her affairs within the code of honor. When talking to students about Sweet Briar, this was most salient for them. It seemed to provide a template with which they could practice in the context of community while at Sweet Briar and proudly model as Sweet Briar Alumni.

This ideal is also in the minds of faculty and staff as they hold it out before students as something they are confident will be formed in them by the time they leave the college. This has created a very strong culture of mutual positive regard and, as many in the co-

curricular life staff described, a culture of care where the goal is to serve students well. From the strong interview responses, it even manifests in the classroom as faculty push students to pursue intellectual excellence and work above and beyond the call of duty to help them reach their goals.

As I met with students, I wanted to know more about how they felt about the honor code and its impact on them in terms of ideology. Interestingly, when I framed the question earlier in terms of what characteristics the college itself most resembled, I got blank faces. The question was far too nebulous to answer without a framework or context. But when I asked them to describe what it meant to be a Sweet Briar Woman, the students especially, many of whom I did not formally interview but met in the coffee shop or the Bistro on campus, had no hesitation whatsoever in answering: only dignity with a hint of pride. The following excerpt is from the same group interview with the 3 senior women mentioned earlier from the class of 2009,

[Interviewer]: What is a Sweet Briar Woman?

[Student 1]: A Sweet Briar Woman. Confident in her abilities, embraces life fully, committed to developing themselves as a human being.

[Student 2]: One who doesn't sit back in the shadows.

[Student 1]: Yea, who doesn't sit around and wait for change to happen but acts as that motivator.

[Interviewer]: Do you think that students come here with those traits already?

[Student 3]: You have to have the raw material to a certain point but then the environment will really cultivate it within you to help develop into that Sweet Briar Woman.

[Interviewer]: What cultivates that?

[Student 2]: The fact that it is a women's college . . . class sizes are small . . . discussion is encouraged . . . you have to speak up and voice your opinion.

[Student 3]: You can't be anonymous here. You can try but it will be pretty hard.

At the close of the session, I asked the participants to describe their take on the "Sweet Briar Woman." As this was my first formal interview with students and only the second interview in the process, most of conversation about this term I encountered up to this point was sketchy and almost anecdotal. My questions tended to be more along the lines of what "she" might do or what she might say. In subsequent visits to the campus, and after a fine-tuned interview protocol, my understanding of the deeper meaning and implication of the Sweet Briar Woman shifted. I came to realize that this was a concept that was a part of the identity of the institution; not just faddish spoken of by students. What follows below are excerpts taken from a written account from two of the students that day about how the Sweet Briar Woman might handle a difficult situation:

[Comment 1]: The Sweet Briar Woman has a good sense of humor and knows how to have a good time with the various traditions. She usually acts tactfully, but sometimes crosses that line. She isn't malicious. If she offended anyone, it wouldn't be intentional, and she would, of course, apologize as she wouldn't want to ever want to hurt a Sweet Briar sister.

[Comment 2]: It's well known that a Sweet Briar Woman would never intentionally offend. We are taught to express ourselves openly and to at least try to see things from a different perspective.

During my third visit to campus late during the fall 2009 semester one 2010 senior student spoke extensively of how the honor code factored into her life and the values she was encouraged to embrace that are central to Sweet Briar,

[Interviewer]: What virtues or characteristics does the college articulate or express that seem to be of prime or central importance?

[Student]: Honesty, integrity, loyalty . . . yea.

[Interviewer]: And how is it articulated?

[Student]: Though our honor code. Yes. The almighty honor code .

[Interviewer]: Who talks about it with you?

[Student]: The chairs of the academic and nonacademic judicial process that year that you come in. And like the honor code—just like . . . in everyday life. Like okay, the honor code at most schools applies only to academics. Yeah. *No.* Not at Sweet Briar. The Sweet Briar Honor Code applies to every aspect of your life, on and off campus. Once you're a Sweet Briar Woman you are always and ever a Sweet Briar Woman. It's really just that simple. so when you say that Sweet Briar Women don't lie, cheat, steal, or violate the rights of others, that's what you don't do whether you're here, whether you're not, it's just something that becomes a part of you.

This articulation of the kind of women they could be is the dominant ideology among every student I talked to on campus. I wanted to know how far this concept extended. In my interview with the second 2010 senior student, she shared the following thoughts,

[Student]: Don't ever mess with a Sweet Briar girl when she has Sweet Briar friends. You mess with us you mess with all of us!

[Interviewer]: You mess with us you mess with all of us. And you really believe that? And you've seen it going on?

[Student]: Yep. Yep. If my friends need me, I will be there for them and I know that if I need them they will be there for me.

[Interviewer]: Have you ever felt like it was too much to live up to? This identity, the expectations of it?

[Student:] It is and isn't. We all know that . . . we can't be, you know, everything. A lot of us try to be as much as we can. . . . I think it's understood.

Summary

This chapter centered on a discussion of four definitional components that revealed the answer to an overarching question this research sought to answer, which was whether an organization's identity was discernable or not when using the theory introduced in Albert and Whetten's (1985) seminal work on organizational identity. The more specific discussion was about how an organization's identity impacted an institution and its role in its sustainability or perpetuity.

To review, the four definitional components discussed identified the central and enduring, and when considered together, distinguishing attributes of Sweet Briar College. Each definitional component was delineated by one or more ideational and phenomenological pairs, expressed as related identity claims and corresponding behavioral practices. These ideations or "identity claims" were expressed with self-referencing (either organizationally or personally in relation to the organization) language and frequently used a context of comparison, either explicitly or implicitly. This macro component, if you will, revealed functional and structural dimensions to it that pointed to evidence that the identity

claim was legitimate. Interviews were used to provide rich descriptions of how and why organizational members did what they did. The following chapter will summarize how the findings addressed each research questions and the implications of this work in higher education leadership.

CHAPTER FIVE
CONCLUSIONS

We know who we are, which believe it or not, is a pretty rare thing among colleges and universities.

"About Heston*,*" Heston College, Heston, Kansas

The identity of Sweet Briar emerged from the data as a collection of attributes, central to the life of the college, which have endured over time (Albert & Whetten, 1985; Ravisi & Shultz, 2006; Whetten, 2006) and, considered interdependently, represent a dynamic but distinct set of institutional commitments and practices. As important as one's voice is to identity research (Baxter Magolda, 2008; Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; Mead, 1934/2004), so it is with an organization's identity. Using the theoretical framework of organizational theorists Albert and Whetten (1985), I set out to discover whether it was possible to learn something beyond the college than what appeared on the "quick facts" page of the website. The search proved fruitful. After almost 20 months of inquiry, I walked away understanding the voice of Sweet Briar. This chapter represents the culmination of this in-depth exploration. Starting with a brief review of the data collection process, analysis procedures, findings and assertions, the chapter will conclude with a discussion about the implication and limitations of this research, and recommendations.

Sweet Briar College was a perfect fit for modeling how a college or university could be examined within the framework of organizational identity. The college is one of about 51 remaining women's colleges in the country and has a rich history and set of traditions. This made the quest easier in many ways, allowing me to have conversations with its members around issues of distinctiveness. Their openness and warmth extended to me as a researcher was incredible, something I would later understand to be a part of their enduring distinctiveness.

As the literature suggests, the events in an organization's past, particularly around its founding and early leaders, often set precedent for what becomes central, enduring, and distinguishing about that organization (Clark, 1970, Whetten, 2006). This was certainly true of Sweet Briar. Bequeathed as a gift upon her death in 1900, benefactor and founder Indiana Fletcher Williams left all of her land and about $800,000 to a preappointed board of directors to start Sweet Briar Institute. Today, on an enclosed campus of over 3,200 acres of land, what is now Sweet Briar College still bears the marks of its founders after 100 years. A historical review of the life of Indiana Fletcher, her upbringing, and the early years of the college against the operational life and practice of the college today revealed very strong influences on its identity formation over time and was critical to the overall research process.

As the researcher, I utilized case study methodology and gathered data over three separate visits to the Sweet Briar campus between 2008 and 2009. I also gathered information from web pages and blogs; formal interviews with 3 faculty members, 12 staff members and 5 students; public reports; and archival records and documents. Written documents from the college—student's handbooks, alumnae publications, yearbooks, etc.— provided an abundance of data that corroborated the interviews and gave a historical and current perspective on the college. Observations were recorded using field notes and were either written by hand or spoken into a voice recorder and then transcribed. They were used to provide an immediate account of feelings, observations, and thoughts about the data throughout the process. The study endeavored to answer three questions: (a) How is the identity of Sweet Briar defined and how have significant events and decisions shaped and contributed to its core identity? (b) How is the identity of Sweet Briar College perceived, defined, and reinforced by its members? (c) How is the identity of Sweet Briar leveraged as a

resource when the college encounters challenging situations? The answers to these questions will be reviewed later in the chapter.

Analysis

A hermeneutical approach was embraced as the context for analysis and interpretation (Gadamer, 1994). As indicated in chapter three, historical information in the Sweet Briar story supplied the key information needed to analyze the data from a hermeneutical perspective (Crotty, 2003; Gadamer) and when using an identity framework (Merriam, 1998; Whetten, 2006; Ravisi & Schultz, 2006;). In laying the foundations for data analysis, a protocol narrative was composed from the original list of level 1 questions (questions asked of the research as a whole) and level 2 questions (more specific questions asked of the participants) where, as the researcher I attempted to respond to the questions as if taking a "comprehensive take home exam" (Yin, 2009, p. 121) after the data collection phase was complete. This was critical in early efforts to synthesize the data. A case study database (Yin, 2009), also referred to as an audit trail (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), was developed that included a record of each datum, the protocol narrative, field notes, and other relevant documents used in data analysis. Atlas.ti, a qualitative data analysis software program, was also used in the beginning to assist in the initial organization of the various sources of data to form a chain of evidence (Yin, 2009).

Taped and transcribed interviews were used as a key centering point around which other sources of evidence collected were compared. The interviews contained compelling references to the institution's history and how it impacted who the interviewees believed themselves to be in terms of identity in the present. Each interview quickly began to confirm others in terms of language and provided answers to what was central, enduring, and

distinctive about Sweet Briar and what that looked like in the current operational life of the college. As mentioned before, Yin (2009) did not privilege interviews as a data source over other sources. However, given the importance of discourse in this study in terms of capturing identity, information gathered from interviews were helpful in exploring and organizing data around key points.

It was helpful to see that the interviews closely corroborated stories and themes (sometimes the original accounts) found in the written documents and archival records. Each interview was first analyzed deductively by using some a priori categories I developed from the validity standards of the organizational identity construct (Whetten, 2006). Later, in the inductive analysis phase, overarching themes and patterns were identified leading to the formation of four definitional components along with eight supporting ideational components and phenomenological pairs all expressed in the form of identity claims.

About the Construct of Organizational Identity

In organizational identity research, experts have explained the general premise of the concept with analogous comparisons to what is known in individual identity research. Seminal researchers Albert and Whetten (1985) chose to cite primarily from the work of psychologists Cooley (1902/2004) and Mead (1934/2004). Mead developed a two-pronged premise of individual identity: the "Self -I" and the "Self-Me." This "I" and "Me" are two parts of the same whole—the Self; representing on the one hand, what it thinks about itself (I) and on the other hand, representing what it thinks others believe or assume about them (Me). In my opinion, the "Me" could also represent what the "I" feels it has to do in order for it to be in the world socially. This did not make much sense to me until after I read the work of other organizational researchers (Czarniawska-Joerges, 2004; Dutton & Dukerich,

1991/2004; Hatch & Schultz, 2002; Whetten & Mackey, 2002), whose work suggests that organizations can and do think and act as a collective entity and are even considered as such by those outside the organization.

As the study progressed, individual identity theory comparisons became less important as organizational identity theory emerged for me as a stand-alone phenomenon similar to, but distinct and separate from, individual identity. However, it provided a clearer understanding of how it was used in the initial conceptualization of organizational identity. Furthermore, it was also helpful in my understanding of foundational concepts in terms of its application to organizations. It was this sense of clarity that made me want to focus this study exclusively on organizational identity as was originally stated in the literature, as it seemed to provide a logical place from which to build a foundation for further research of identity in higher education institutions.

Albert and Whetten's (1985) work posited that organizational identity, the answer to the question of "who we are" as an organization, is the property of the organization itself—or in the case of most higher education enterprises, an institution (Czarniawska-Joerges, 2004; Whetten & Macky, 2003). This identity is, at first, self-referent, most often rooted in history and, after having been established in institutional practice over time, welcomes those that are new to the institution and remains once they leave (Albert & Whetten; D. Whetten, personal communication, November, 2009).

As the concept expanded further, other management scholars began to assert that organizational identity was held somewhat arbitrarily in the minds of its members or in the imagination of leaders (Alvesson, 1990/2004; Golden Biddle & Rao, 1997), which also implied that it could be easily manipulated and changed at will because it was a constructed

or otherwise instable concept (Brickson, 2009, Gioia, Schultz, & Corley, 2000/2004) or in some ways was an outflow of culture (Hatch & Schultz, 2002/2004). Many of the studies also dealt very heavily with the self–me aspect of the self, which addresses issues of member identification, identity threat, and notions of external image (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Dutton & Dukerich, 1991/2004; Ravisi & Schultz, 2006).

In his 2006 article, Whetten expressed a concern that the many renditions of the construct by organizational theorists attempting to explore the theory failed to consider it in its entirety. He identified the same "three principle components" of the organizational identity construct he and Stuart Albert introduced in the 1985 seminal article but with different terminology. These new terms were offered as a way to further clarify and underscore the tripartite nature of identity and encouraged its examination in light of all three elements as a complete whole. This formulation of identity consists of: (a) an ideational component, (b) a definitional component, and (c) a phenomenological component. A brief recap of each dimension follows.

The dimension that is explored when considering "who are we?" as an organization is what Whetten (2006) referred to as the ideational component of identity. This component speaks to the shared articulation of what members believe their organization is ultimately about. Closely related is the definitional component of the construct, which specifically addresses what is central, enduring, and distinguishing (or distinct) about the organization. Finally, the dimension that is "most likely to be observed in conjunction with profound organizational experiences" through "identity-related discourse" is the phenomenological component (Whetten, 2006, p. 220).

In light of his clarification, definitional, ideational, and phenomenological statements were developed that represented the self-referencing (self–I) voice of Sweet Briar. Based on the findings that emerged from spending time on campus, interviews, review of archival documents, artifacts, and practices of the college, I now discuss how the data and findings specifically addressed the three research questions asked of the study. It is followed by a summary of the overall findings.

Research Question I: How Is the Identity of Sweet Briar Defined and How Have Significant Events and Decisions Shaped, Reinforced, and Contributed to This Core Identity?

As mentioned earlier, I was determined early on not to let the fact that Sweet Briar's categorical attributes of being a small liberal arts women's institution diminish the significance of my findings around identity. So, in an effort to control for typical classification typology, I decided early on not to look in the direction of standard descriptions already associated with the college such as size, institution type, etc. It was important to be aware of my own biases in attempting to discover the institution's identity. I was pleased when I heard my preconceived sentiments confirmed in some of the interviews about how the fact that it was a women's college had no bearing on how faculty taught.

It occurred to me however, rather by surprise and nearly at the end of writing chapter four, that I was indeed guilty and had not escaped researcher bias. The evidence was so compelling that I could no longer deny the fact that one of Sweet Briar's most obvious descriptors was also one of its key attributes. It became undeniably apparent that the overarching identity of Sweet Briar College was its distinction as a women's college. Sweet Briar is inherently women-centered in its focus! The answer to this question relates directly to the legacy of the college, which has persevered through the years via the commemorative rituals and traditions that the college continues to honor.

Once I acknowledged that this attribute was, in fact, one of Sweet Briar's most central and enduring claims, the other findings made more sense. It emerged clearly as the chief identity of the college out of which flowed all of the other definitional components, identity claims, and corresponding practices (phenomenological components) identified earlier. It spoke to the first half of the first question about how the identity of Sweet Briar was defined.

The second half of research question asked how significant events and decisions shaped and contributed to this core identity. There are two ways to answer this question: contextually from the point of it being founded as a women's college or by explaining key events in the life of the college. The former provides a better context for understanding the origin of Sweet Briar's identity. To answer this, I turn briefly to some of the historical information on women's colleges and the feelings about women's education during the time Sweet Briar was founded. It was helpful for me to get a sense, by no means exhaustive, of the external issues that impacted the mission and focus of Sweet Briar. Sweet Briar's focus on practical and intellectual education was not accidental; it was a direct result of what was happening in the external environment around women's education. In general, "women's colleges were established to provide educational opportunities to those who were denied access to the American higher education system. Therefore, their missions were clear and compelling" (Langdon, 2001, p. 6). Nevertheless, there was considerable controversy over just what kind of education women should receive and the level of rigor they were capable of handling within each curriculum (Wein, 1974).

It is not surprising, then, that the notion of providing a college education for women for the purposes of leadership in society and to make contributions to the canon of knowledge was met with great dispute, especially in the South (Harwarth et al., 1997;

Johnson, 2008). Education of women in the South, prior to the founding of Sweet Briar, was tolerated as long as it supported the roles men desired for women to submit to: as keepers of the home, instructors of children (particularly males), teachers, or vocational workers (Berkeley, 1984; Salomone, 2007; Wein, 1974). These ideas were dominant in the South during late 19th and early 20th century. Charles W. Eliot, president of Harvard and one of the influential leaders in education felt that "women were not as intelligent as men" (Harwarth et al., p. 4).

The founders of women's college believed differently. Not often discussed when studying women's colleges were the distinctly different philosophies that significantly impacted how programs and policies were implemented at each institution. Some of the early founders, both men and women, had different ideas of just how much education women were entitled to and what the academic focus should be (Salomone, 2007, Wein, 1974). Some advocates of women's education felt and strongly advocated that women could actually create new knowledge, which was the impetus behind the founding of the seven sister colleges like Mount Holyoke, which for example, would be known for excellence in chemistry (Shmurak & Handler, 1992). Each founding had its own unique story that would develop differently according to the core ideals that served as the foundation for that school. This is still evident today in how women's education is delivered at the various colleges. Lisa Wolf-Wendel (2000) found high expectations to be common at the five women's college she studied, as was found in other research, but there were distinct differences. "While respondents at all five institutions mentioned the importance of having high expectations for students, the institutions had important differences in their approaches to this issue" (Wolf-Wendel, p. 327).

The founding board members of Sweet Briar designed the college around what they felt was the best educational program for women. They too wanted to create a college that imposed no limits on how much women could excel professionally or intellectually but felt that the curriculum should also prepare the students to assume very practical or vocational roles if and when needed. These seven initial board members selected by Indiana Fletcher Williams, led by then-president of Virginia Polytechnic John McBryde, were intentional in this effort so they recruited some graduates from women's colleges in the North to be professors and administrators of the college. They intended that Sweet Briar be considered equal to women's colleges in the North. With so many strong opinions of what women were to be or not to be, the board was compelled to be certain about what their core purpose was for existing and then be specific about outcomes they hoped to achieve. In light of identity research, it is easy to see then why women's colleges that have remained tend to have such strong identities. In the beginning of these colleges, the leaders had to constantly fight and advocate for a place in a society whose dominant view of women was in stark contrast to what its founders strongly believed to be true about women, their place in society, and their potential (Salomone, 2007; Wein, 1974).

The work in the early days to establish the Sweet Briar shield and motto, as well as to articulate the kind of women the founding board members hoped to cultivate, was instrumental in shaping Sweet Briar's core identity. It makes sense, then, that when Sweet Briar opened its doors in 1906, it was reluctant to establish strong rules and regulations on student behavior. After 3 weeks, the students themselves approached the faculty to establish what would later be a signature feature of Sweet Briar: student self-governance. In an era

when colleges assumed an *in loco parentis*[14] role, in which they took responsibility (like parents) for the behavior and control of the student, Sweet Briar faculty allowed their students to assume responsibility for their own behavior. In the early days of Sweet Briar, there was no dean of students on staff. This was definitely a different approach to early practices in student affairs and one that would significantly shape student life as well as student–faculty relationships at Sweet Briar.

Research Question II: How Is the Identity of Sweet Briar College Perceived, Defined, and Reinforced by Its Members?

The Sweet Briar community is marked by a strong sense of meta-awareness (of itself in light of its mission) and is infused with a sense of appreciation and trust that most everyone is working for the good of the college. The following claims, informed and developed from the both written and verbal summative discourse of the college found in the data, articulate and answer the question who Sweet Briar members collectively believe about their identity. This is their response to the legacy of Indiana Fletcher Williams and the founding board members, faculty, and students before them worked to preserve. For each claim, an underlying belief and corresponding institutionalized practice served as evidence of the claim's legitimacy as it relates to organizational identity.

We are a legacy institution for women.

- We believe that honoring our legacy as a women's college is important to the perpetuity of Sweet Briar.

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[14] *In loco parentis* was a "doctrine borrowed from early English common law . . . placing the educational institution in the parent's shoes and . . . permitted the institution to exert almost untrammeled authority over student's lives" (Kaplin & Lee, 1997, p. 6). This practice would ultimately be rejected in higher education but not until the 1960s.

- o We practice this through acts of commemoration, preserving the memory of things and people that have gone before that represent the values we want to be continuous part of campus life.

- We believe that we are responsible for carrying the legacy into the future.

  - o We practice this by strong articulation of the legacy internally and externally; encouraging and facilitating opportunities that foster strong connections between alumna, faculty, staff, and current students that also engenders gratitude and hope as well individual responsibility for bringing forward the best of the past and passing the torch to those who will come behind.

We are a mission mindful institution.

- We believe that adhering to our mission is important to the perpetuity of Sweet Briar.

  - o We practice through our commitment to making it a plumb line for all that we do, articulating it loudly, and being accountable to its claims in our work with students.

- We believe in the power of our community.

  - o We practice with intentional collaboration, valuing the voice that each member has in the community; we work with the whole in mind, not being afraid to deal with the hard questions, asking what's best for the college, and working toward that end by acknowledging the things that need to be accentuated or abandoned, reconciled, and/or changed in the process.

We are academicians with a distinct academic framework.

- We believe that the instruction of women should be intellectually rigorous, creative, and practical; that it should cultivate confidence, industry and innovation, and civic responsibility and care.

- We practice this by providing a purposeful curriculum in a relevant and proportionately rigorous multidisciplinary context that develops the intellect along with the relevant and requisite skill sets sufficient for her to remain productive in the changing society.

- We believe that we should be leaders in educating women especially in fields where women have been traditionally underrepresented.
  - We practice this by providing state-of-the-art resources necessary for advanced learning in the various subject areas, preparation for graduate school success, inspiration for high personal achievement, and exposing students to other high achieving women, especially Sweet Briar alumnae.

- We believe that the best learning occurs when students, professors, and staff are partners in the process.
  - We practice this by encouraging self-efficacy but intentionally nurturing our students; fostering a collegial environment rich with opportunities in and out of the classroom for leadership, community engagement, and personal development. We also teach tacitly by willingly modeling behaviors and attitudes that demonstrate high regard and confidence in our students.

We are partners in the development of our students.

- We believe that we are educating women for life and are not afraid to hold them accountable to high ideals and high standards.
  - We practice this by providing a generously student-governed context that allows for connection, development, and expression. We cast and communicate often a vision of high personal integrity and responsibility and that they can make a difference in the world.

Research Question III: How Was Identity Leveraged as a Resource as the College Encounters Crisis and Challenge?

To answer this question, I considered the overwhelming consensus voiced in my interviews. The evidence revealed that when the college comes to the table of discussion for most any matter, the default response is to consider the matter in light of their core identity as a legacy college for women and what is best for the college. The identity of Sweet Briar is not used as a type of bargaining chip but, rather, it is preserved as a space of consensus and agreement around which they can unify to work in the best interest of the college.

Those interviewed, particularly those who were in positions of significant leadership at Sweet Briar, were the first to admit that this cohesive and pervasive narrative of the college so readily offered during my visits had not always been the case. In fact, one of the senior administrators admitted that there were once "a lot of disconnected parts," though she did not express this in a negative way. A member of the CCL staff mentioned that even though there had been some difficult spots when not everyone was on the same page, in the 20 years she had been at Sweet Briar, the staff had always felt heard. This was the overwhelming consensus in my interviews. I could not find any opposing views in the people with whom I spoke during my three trips to campus.

One of the endearing things about Sweet Briar people is that, when challenge knocks, they respond with courage to deal with the hard issues. Rather than ignore the realities of the present, whether internal or external, they respond with a fervent willingness to align what seems to be out of focus to the mission and purpose of the college. Like every enterprise, there are periods of self-assessment and recommitment to mission, followed by bold decisive action that supports that recommitment. What Sweet Briar has been able to cultivate over the last 13 years or so, however, is a practice of open conversation where they start at the place

of agreement (we are first and foremost a women's college) and work from there. It is the way they do things at Sweet Briar.

For example, in the late 1990s enrollment numbers were in sharp decline and other women's colleges were closing around them due to lack of enrollment and shrinking resources. Sweet Briar decided to tackle the issue head on by asking what strategies it needed to employ as an institution that would preserve Sweet Briar and its legacy into the future. In 2003, this question was made an institutional and board priority and resulted in a 2-year visioning and planning process named Shape of the Future. As a community they considered every option available to them at the time. I remember one of the senior administrators saying that even this process was a way to model to students how to effectively and thoroughly consider options in the face of legitimate challenge. I found that fascinating. From all accounts, SOF was said to have been a really intense and far from easy process. Yet, the members with whom I spoke were quick to say that the process strengthened the college, as more cohesive community resulted and morale was increased because of the collective commitment to remain a women's college.

Before collecting the data for this research, I thought SOF was the event when the identity of the college truly became an issue for the first time. Although it was said to have "galvanized" the college with a stronger sense of agreement about what was important in terms of its identity, the institution had been at the table of intense discussion, so to speak, before. From all accounts though, this particular initiative was a significant watershed event in the life of the college. The possibility of having to go coed out of a position of financial decline shook the campus to its core and caused the members to zero in on their essential design as a college for women. Having to deal with reports from a discouraged admissions

team that felt that Sweet Briar could no longer compete with coed institutions, the leaders recognized that a move to coeducation would seriously affect the college's operational focus, especially because it was so vested in the original mission of the college. SOF looked at the options from a financial standpoint; physically, in terms of buildings and grounds; and emotionally, as it related to students, staff, faculty, and alumnae. Their decision, as recounted to me by a faculty member and a senior administrator, reached the point where as an institution they realized, "We are a woman's college in our DNA so we might as well own it!" This was based on conversations they had around that same time with a consultant who reminded them that Sweet Briar was not founded as a coordinate to men's colleges whose main reason for existing disappeared when coeducation arrived. This seemed to strengthen their resolve that they had something viable to offer prospective students. The Sweet Briar community emerged from the SOF process with a renewed sense of commitment to who they were and, more importantly, a determination to leverage their legacy and distinctiveness as a resource and a point of pride and not a liability when connecting with perspective students.

This gave birth to what is seen throughout the website and prospective student materials as the "Sweet Briar Promise." [15] This promise is a guarantee of for what Sweet Briar will be held accountable for the young women who decide to enroll. I was told that they did not have to add any new programs or cut programs; they did not have to do anything different; they just articulated those things that had, for a long time, been central, enduring, and distinguishing to the college anyway but in a new way. This new way was a trendy remix

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[15] "Sweet Briar provides women with an enduring education that includes broad based skill development and relevant professional experience. . . . The Sweet Briar Promise includes: Global discovery through international study; Resume Building internships and work experience; Research opportunities with faculty; Customizable majors to fit your goals and interests; Advising teams guiding you through life at Sweet Briar; Extensive opportunity for student leadership.

of the same message, but one that capitalized on the general association of the color pink, one of their school colors, and the old Albert Einstein posters with the words "think differently" written in large letters by his head. What is now on posters, flyers, mailers—you name it—is "Think Is for Girls," with the word "think" printed in bright pink,

Summary of Findings

The findings from this data were compared and aligned well against Whetten's (2006) validity standards for measuring organizational identity within an organization. The findings were also in agreement with related research that confirmed the significance of a "long term, path-defining imprint of a founder's initial commitments" in shaping an organization's identity (Whetten, 2006, p. 225). This is also true for Sweet Briar. Its historical mission and legacy indeed occupies a compelling space in the life of the college in a way that seems unusually distinctive. As an overall finding, the historical legacy of the college as a college for women is by far its most central and distinguishing dimension. This attribute serves as the compass for institutional activity as well as a powerful rallying point for Sweet Briar as a viable community.

The four definitional components and the eight supporting ideational and phenomenological pairs discussed earlier express what emerged as most salient in terms of identity at the time of this study. The statements reflect strongly held assertions of what Sweet Briar is and what are the college's "irreversible' commitments" (Whetten 2006, p. 225). To summarize briefly here, I found that the members of Sweet Briar College see their identity first and foremost as a college with a mandate to educate women who would be useful members of society: *We are a legacy college for women.* The ideas that inspired the founding of the college were encapsulated in the mission of the college. The mission

statement, amplified by the "Statement of Purpose in Support of the Mission," ("Mission,"

2004) informs and signifies a commitment to certain actions and resources that will be

continuously employed to carry out that mission: *We are mission mindful*. These certain

actions were encompassed in the two remaining identity claims, the first one being: *We are*

academicians with a distinct academic framework. This claim has, as its roots, a confidence

on the part of the faculty in the value and utility of the Sweet Briar curriculum. It is

supplemented by a learning environment fueled with a strong belief in students' abilities to

meet the challenges presented to them in their respective course of study. One faculty said

vehemently that the college's product was not a degree but a life! Finally, what has

undergirded the three preceding claims for the last 100 years of Sweet Briar's history is a

firm articulation of heartfelt but wisely proportioned commitment to support and challenge

the students by providing them a generous field for holistic development: *We are partners in*

the development of our students. These three claims point back to or are the "therefore

response," so to speak, of the first and primary identity claim: *We are a legacy college for*

women. The result: Graduates who not only believe they can leave Sweet Briar and, as they

would say, "go out and make a difference in the world" but have every intention of doing so.

Facilitating Protocols

As I pondered the construct of organizational identity in light of the data, I realized

that there were certain systems in place that served to keep Sweet Briar's identity at the

center of institutional life. These systems, which I define as facilitating protocols, answered

the question the research asked about how a university might reinforce its identity claims.

When I offer the term facilitating protocols in terms of this research, I am referring to

systems, things, recurring events, or administrative procedures and processes, authorized or

sponsored by the college that serve to reinforce and keep identity salient in the normal activity of the college. They do so by providing a context where identity claims can be, not only expressed, but also established over time, thereby weaving them into the fabric of college life. Furthermore, these protocols, when consistently practiced, ensure that newcomers to the organization have ample opportunity to learn what's important to the community members. "They must understand the organization so they can act within it" (Ashforth, 1985, p. 838).

I found that facilitating protocols at Sweet Briar were what enabled the activity referenced in the eight phenomenological components to become enduring practices (one of the requirements that confirm it as a legitimate identity claim). For every practice, there was something formally in place that enabled its functionality and connected to an identity claim. A more common word to describe it is "institutionalized." For students, it was the context of self-governance that really promoted ownership of each student's own Sweet Briar experience. For faculty, it was a purposeful curriculum administered in a truly collegial partnership with and on behalf of the students. For the administration and staff, it has been the work (CCL programming) done on behalf of the legacy of Sweet Briar that provides leadership and other developmental activities and opportunities to students. For leaders and board members, it was implementation of decisions from strategic planning efforts that ensure that the college continues to move into the future from a position of strength and competence. For the membership as a whole, the facilitating protocol is all the work done in preparation for institutionally sponsored enactments of rituals and traditions deemed important to campus life.

Over the years and on a regular basis at Sweet Briar, the various rituals and traditions practiced at the college are a key facilitating protocol for the connection that binds the community to the institution and to one another. These connections are really what keep identity salient at Sweet Briar. Faculty and staff, who are admittedly less connected to most of the rituals than are students, did express that they do help to keep them mindful of the reason—why they are "in it." Watching and occasionally participating in the traditions on campus appears to inspire them as they work to do their part in seeing that Indiana and James Fletcher's vision of the Sweet Briar Woman is realized in the life of its graduates. These protocols act as "behind the scenes" mechanisms to keep essential aspects of their identity central in the work they happily do on behalf of the college. Moreover, these protocols provide the stage that generously gives voice to the college's identity: "We are a legacy college for women, we are mission mindful, we teach well and we treat students as partners in the process. We walk out our commitment to help them develop into useful and productive members of society. We have every confidence that our Sweet Briar Women will go out and make a difference in the world."

Limitations of the Study

The methodology employed in this study was a single case study design based on a concept with admittedly more theory development than empirical research (D. Whetten, personal communication, November 2009). Moreover, there appears to be no published empirical studies examining this construct in the higher education literature. Sweet Briar is a small liberal arts institution with a size more readily conducive to feelings of community and a more cohesive culture. Although it was an ideal methodology given the subject at hand, the assertions that are made from the study may not carry as much weight as would a multicase

study design comparing several schools. Furthermore, such a study conducted on the identity of a large institution might not be so clearly defined in terms of isolating a core identity.

Another limitation was the study's confidentiality constraints. Because of changes in the leadership at the time of data collection, I was advised to use limited confidentiality out of deference to the new president who had not yet arrived when the study began and was not able to weigh in on the study's parameters. Although I agreed with the advice, it is possible that the study might have been stronger in the eyes of the reader if more specific titles and position responsibilities were revealed. Every person I interviewed was agreeable to having his or her identities revealed, and the new president was in support of this as well. However, the Institutional Review Board at Iowa State University already had approved the study (see Appendix E) with the confidentiality restraints, and they were reluctant to loosen the restrictions without me submitting a new application involving a potentially lengthy approval process.

Rival Theories and Assumptions

Yin (2009) suggested that a case study analysis is more complete if the researcher acknowledges the possibility of rival theories that could explain the phenomenon under examination from a different perspective. More common to explanatory studies, exploratory studies can also speak to this as well. The text that follows is an attempt to briefly acknowledge assumptions or questions that might be raised when considering the results of this study.

Assumptions about distinctiveness. It is possible that the claims of distinctiveness (or the combination thereof) identified in this research are not exclusive to Sweet Briar. This would be difficult to prove. However, organizational identity as a construct does not call for

unmitigated distinctiveness, only that the members of the organization themselves see certain institutional attributes as such.

Assumptions about the nature of identity. As mentioned in the literature review, there is a view held by some researchers that organization identity is held more so a cognitive schema primarily dependant on how organizational members construct it (Gioa, Schultz, & Corley, 2004; Hatch & Schultz, 2002/2004). This study was based on the work of seminal researchers Albert and Whetten (1985), who concluded that an organization's identity is first the property of the institution and is, therefore, not merely a construction in the minds of the members. Consequently, identity bears influence on the organization whether members are aware of its influence or not (Albert & Whetten; Dutton & Dukerich, 1991/2004; Whetten, 2006). There is also an assumption that a strong organizational identity would be highly oppressive and controlling; indeed some organizational theorists have explored this phenomenon (Alvesson & Willmot, 2004; Kuh & Hall, 1993), and it was also discussed by Morgan (1996) as psychic prisons. Although I agree that this is possible within some organizations, and certainly worthy of further study, this study worked with the assumption that organizational identity is primarily a positive resource (Brickson, 2009) that can be used to strengthen colleges who are facing challenges, want to impact the student experience, or position themselves better strategically.

Assumptions about culture and identity. Organizational culture and organizational identity are similar but distinct. Due to the lack of research from higher education scholars on organizational identity, there may be a strong assumption that they are one and the same. Although I don't feel it really possible or necessary to give much space in this particular study to delineate the differences between the two, it should be noted that there is overlap.

How much of one or the other a researcher sees is dependent on the theoretical lens of that particular study. Organizational identity researchers who have looked at culture have different views on the relation between identity and culture (Albert, 1998; Fiol et al., 2008; Hatch & Shultz, 1997). As mentioned in the literature review, an important consideration when looking through an identity framework is to what degree the observed culture of a college speaks to who the members believe the college to be or the kind of institution it is or aspires to be (Albert; Hatch & Schultz, 1997).

Admittedly, the blurring of lines of distinction lie in the reality that culture and identity both can be expressed externally, whether by voice or action (Bergquist & Pawlak, 2008; Schein, 2004). This study revealed that the culture at Sweet Briar was, in many ways, an expression of the identity of the college. The leaders of Sweet Briar worked intentionally to keep culture relatively congruent with their identity, due in large part to the facilitating protocols mentioned earlier in this chapter. This affected both student and staff satisfaction because the environment is kept rather constant due to of this congruence. However, this study did not focus on the role or activity of culture specifically.

Overall Conclusions About Organizational Identity and Implications for Practice

My findings in the Sweet Briar case were consistent with those of Clark (1970), Whetten (1996), and others' observations (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Dutton & Dukerich, 1991/2004) in terms of the location of identity that it is a property of the institution. Furthermore, the data also showed that although members *can* decide how to communicate publicly, express internally, and reinforce culturally the organization's identity, they can no more change it than they can go back and change the circumstances that were in place around time of the original charter. Specifically for higher education institutions, how leaders,

faculty, and staff members choose appropriate identity at their colleges or to what degree or aspect they perpetuate or carry forward is no doubt at their discretion, but not the identity itself. When the identity of a college is salient in the current life of the institution, as is the case with Sweet Briar, it can be leveraged both to guide and influence the action and behavior of the members of the community. Furthermore,

- Identity can serve as a resource for goal generation for the college leadership. In other words, it informs what has to be or could be done in the future to preserve and sustain what is most central to the college and ensure its viability as an institution. An example of this might be in the form of a strategic planning question that asks, in light of today's higher education landscape, "What do we need to do that will position the college for growth and sustainability?"

- Identity can be useful in positioning the college positively as it moves into the future and communicates its distinctiveness to prospective students. An example of this may be in the form of a recruitment strategy question that asks, "What do we need to be sure to emphasize our identity when meeting with prospective students and parents so they can really understand what we have to offer?"

- A shared recognition of identity impacts the level of congruence among the various entities that make up the organization as well as the affectivity of the members in relation to one another. Institutional members' awareness of a college's identity can influence the way they work on behalf of the college and its students. This shared reality can be leveraged in the following ways that benefit the organization:

    1. Knowledge of the confirmed identity of the college (i.e., that which was articulated and settled upon at the time of the original charter) informs the

articulation of who they are (that is to say believe themselves to be collectively) and which results in an institutional saga or narrative.

2. Knowledge and agreement with identity claims that belong to the college provide a template for identity-appropriate action and behavior and work on behalf of the college.

3. This knowledge, and its corresponding domain of action and behavior, is available to leaders to use to shape and guide institutional culture for faculty, staff, and especially, student culture.

4. Treatment of the institution's identity as a touchstone for ritualized commemoration and celebration ensures the integration of the college's most central attributes (core identity) into the operational life of the college and serves as an informal initiation for new community members (e.g., Sweet Briar's campus-wide procession to Monument Hill on Founder's Day).

5. The resulting identity-rich environment can then be leveraged as a generative resource that not only connects but binds the community together—students to one another on account of shared experiences and inheritance (e.g., Sweet Briar womanhood), the faculty and staff to one another on account of shared pedagogy and affect toward the "Sweet Briar Girls," the alumnae to the college on account of shared memories and roles as sponsors, supporters, and legacy carriers—and attracts new members to the institution.

Recommendations for Practice

An identity framework affords a unique perspective from which systemic change can be better effected because of the level of operational behavior it reveals. The work of scholars like Parks (2000) and Wheatley and Kellner-Rogers (1996) remind us that the level of congruence between units within a college need not be sacrificed at large institutions, even though it appears that loose coupling (Weick, 1976) is more prevalent than cohesiveness.

Looking closely at a college's identity, those central and enduring attributes that distinguish one institution from another, can be useful to colleges and universities that are interested in organizational improvement. In this case, conversations about identity as it relates to aligning institutional purpose with practice might be a way to work toward a greater sense of consensus about what is best for the college and its students.

Colleges looking to align institutional mission with practice should conduct a self-study that looks intently at its own identity and the level of salience that is present in the actual operation of the college. Identity salience is about more than just a good story line that everyone knows. It has everything to do with how that identity is given credence and how it can be leveraged to dovetail the various units of the college together for more effective and cohesive education delivery.

It is important to underscore what was mentioned about the nature of identity in the first chapter, which may be helpful for larger colleges that want to engage in identity work as a strategic tool. The literature on smaller liberal arts colleges overwhelmingly highlights the advantages of these types of institutions. Nevertheless, there are also studies that confirm that larger colleges and universities can and do replicate some of the same learning environments (Seifert, Pascarella, Goodman, Salisbury, & Blaich, 2010). Moreover, there are larger

colleges and universities that also can and do demonstrate an awareness of organizational identity (Albert & Whetten, 1985; Elsbach & Kramer, 2004; Ravisi & Schultz, 2006). Identity work takes its direction from the question of who we are as an institution first—which could be asked of any college collective. Public institutions can surely point to things they consider to be historically central and distinctive to the university. Following up then with the identification of organizational practices that are or could be in place to strengthen those attributes and why would be the next step. I would go so far as to strongly suggest that it is more important to engage the question as a community than to worry about settling on precise answers or statements or even one answer or statement, for that matter. The work of identity by its very nature is imprecise but deep, potentially enlightening, and as Sweet Briar would attest, messy. Albert and Whetten (1985) stressed too that what could emerge as most central in terms of identity will vary depending on the issue at hand, the context in and for which it is to be applied, and the external environmental milieu. It might also be helpful to know that the 1985 study was birthed as a result of a crisis at the University of Illinois, Champaign–Urbana (a large research university), where issues of identity surfaced during a major financial crisis; so identity is not proprietary to smaller schools. Additionally, there are two other studies conducted by organizational scholars that looked at issues of identity at top-tier business schools when its leaders were faced with *Business Week*'s ranking of top business schools. The method of ranking by this group brought into question what business school leaders and students felt to be fundamentally central and distinguishing about their schools, how they differentiated themselves from other top schools, and how they felt they would now be seen publicly in light of the new rankings (see Elsbach & Kramer, 2004; Ravisi & Schultz, 2006).

I offer the following thoughts as a loose guideline for starting the deliberating pathway toward greater identity awareness. Conducting an identity assessment is a way for colleges to measure the degree of identity salience and how the college currently makes provisions for its identity claims operationally. However, though there are clear lessons that can be extracted from the examples in the Sweet Briar case, I would intuitively caution any institution, large or small, to expect the results to look precisely like what was revealed in this study. As Albert and Whetten (1985) discovered with the University of Illinois, there may be dual or multiple identities in operation, or, as Dutton and Dukerich (1991/2004) discovered in their study of the New Jersey and New York Port Authorities, conflicting sentiments about what is or needs to be most central in terms of identity in order for the organization to most accurately fulfill its categorical purpose. If this is the case, what an institution might observe from the Sweet Briar case is how a college can be tenacious in pursuing points and places of agreement about what is critically essential in identity expression. When Sweet Briar came face to face with its original racially biased admissions policy they aggressively deliberated internally and eventually with the Supreme Court about the most essential component of the founder's legacy. They demonstrated, though, an understanding of the need to recognize the contextual constraints and issues that affected and even dictated to a certain degree Sweet Briar's identity expression at that time. Board members responded by revisiting the ramifications and relevance of a once legally imposed condition on the charter against what they believed was the essential aim of the college and what needed to be carried forward for its sustainability.

Although some may see this as an example of how Sweet Briar lost, gave up, or changed its original identity as a result of reinterpreting the will to allow an open admissions

policy almost 60 years later, it could also be seen as a more mature or enlightened expression of Indiana Fletcher's vision. The addition of an engineering or business program could be seen in the same vein: Sweet Briar saw it as a necessary evolution of the charter to provide a practical and intellectually rigorous curriculum to the population of students and parents that were looking at the college. I would argue that, although the expression of identity showed an acknowledgement and adaptableness to the current environmental context, it still retained the larger and compelling identity of educating women to be useful members of society. Harvard remained an all-male institution for 88 years before admitting women, yet few would say that the move went against its identity, and today there is a female president at its helm. The implication inherent in these examples suggests that identity expression is often fluid, contextual, and changing and, though potentially explicit in its claim, there are bound to be different manifestations, interpretations, and representations throughout the life of the institution. This movement of identity must be in sync with and sensitive to the external environment in which the college exists as well as to its key stakeholders in order for it to endure, but it does not meant to imply that new identities be claimed or substituted at every whim. Identity is not what others outside the college believe to be central, enduring, and distinctive; it is first internal. Again, deliberate pursuit of what is critical and essential to the college or university or a single unit or division so it is in alignment with its central mission should be the primary aim of any identity assessment process. Its value lies in its potential to ground the institution in such a way that it makes decisions that strengthen its distinctiveness and central attributes thus positioning it to move forward from a position of strength versus ambiguity. This assessment should at minimum, consider the following:

1. Concept (current mission and charter of the college)

   The concept of the college created or repurposed by an authorized creator (i.e., founder, charter members, new leader) resulted in a written charter, vision, mission, or a decree. The self-study team should gather as much information as possible about the college's history and founding to get a sense of the core values upon which the college was founded. Sample questions that could be asked are: "Are these things still important to us as a college? Why or why not? What is the central message inherent in these things?"

2. Cognition/Consciousness

   The concept of the college should be communicated to organization's members, resulting in a certain cognitive awareness and, if done well over time, recognized as a part of an institution's consciousness (as in the case of Sweet Briar's honor code). This awareness might be seen in a number of ways: identity-referencing discourse, like the Sweet Briar girls jokingly saying "that must be Daisy" when an unexplained sound or movement occurred; statements, like "You mess with one of us, you mess with all of us," speaking of the strength of community around common identity; rituals and traditions that clearly point back to the original concept and its ideals; or in the orientation programs of new members. The self-study team can explore how and to what degree unifying messages are being disseminated to and throughout the campus community about preferred values, actions, identity claims, etc. They should then take inventory of identity-referencing discourse from faculty, staff, and students that express what members believe is most central and enduring and distinctive about the college, paying

special attention to conversation around the messages that the college endorses concerning identity. A couple of sample questions could be, "How alike or different is the message from what was discovered by embarking on the first step?" and "Are there any conflicting messages that are circulating in subcultures or underrepresented student populations?"

3. Congruence/Confluence

This continuum refers to the degree or level of congruence (coordination) between authorized institutional practices or facilitating protocols (i.e., core programs, policies, procedures, systems) and the identity claims articulated in the concept/cognition continuum. For more identity salient institutions, the coordination can be categorized more as a state of confluence, which suggests a fluidity or "flow." A question might be, "What are we doing systemically that points back to and/or reinforces central points of our identity?"

4. Culture/Character

The study of identity acknowledges the reality that organizational identity can and does influence culture (Hatch & Schultz, 2002/2004). Although the Sweet Briar study was not about the specific effects of identity on its culture, a cultural audit (Kinzie et al., 2007) could be conducted as a part of the self-study to assess the level of identity salience and its impact on subcultures within the institution. The degree to which campus culture reinforces institutional identity claims, is the degree to which that the culture could be seen as an accurate reflection of the institution's character (which points directly back to its identity). This part of the self-study could also be conducted to determine if the culture that members

experience is in alignment with the legitimate identity claims of the institution. Because questions asked in the assessment of identity get at the perceptions of members in relation to what the college claims it is, the self- study team might be able to get a more accurate read of how the actions of the college affects those members.

Implications for Student Affairs Practice

As a former admissions representative for a midsize private college I understand firsthand how identity awareness impacts the admissions process. Taking the time to come to a consensus about identity claims helps those who speak for the college articulate the positive features of the college in a firm, clear, and coordinated way. Understanding how one institution is distinguished from another raises the admissions cycle above competition based on tuition discounting. Identity claims allow organizational members to speak of themselves as an organization not only to themselves but to others (Hatch & Schultz, 1997). Admissions personnel can speak with students about the enduring values of the college and what they might expect in the way of college life for that particular institution so that when the student enrolls and experiences it for his or herself, it is more likely that his or her expectations will be met. Admissions counselors and the faculty who regularly meet with prospective students need also to know what is unforgettable about their college and how to communicate this to students in language that resonates and is understood.

Student affairs practitioners at larger institutions may well be the team to lead their institution into a greater awareness of its collective identity and coordinate its infusion into the operational life of the college. Senior student affairs officers can see to it that their unit leaders steward well the traditions, rituals, and ideals that best support the college mission

and make sure that there are facilitating protocols that keep core attributes of identity salient in the minds of both staff and students. Maintaining a current awareness of what rituals and traditions are important and practiced by students is a part of the work of identity. This can be invaluable information to the campus community as a whole. Staff members should also seek to know what students see as central identity attributes and the discourse and supporting practices they use to express it in and throughout student culture. It is important that student affairs staff communicate these perceptions to top level administrators and faculty members so that they are acquainted with what is important to the students. This knowledge can also be used to impact student development programs, development, and outcomes.

Suggestions for Future Research

The potential for further research in this field is wide open. Higher education can learn from the trial and error of organizational theorists by avoiding researcher confusion of the how the framework can be used to understand colleges and universities. Specifically speaking from this study, this research can be expanded by examining identity with a multicase study that features several women's institutions. A multicase study could really highlight the nuances of identity and how it plays out differently in a number of institutions. Researchers who want to focus on women's institutions only might use an identity framework to explore how women's colleges defy traditional expectations for women and yet cultivate notions of domesticity and community that work to create these highly productive environments. Sweet Briar is such a place, where the vision of founder Indiana Fletcher challenged regional norms of educating women in finishing school style but intended it to be an environment that mirrored hearth and home as well as community citizenship.

To explore the presence of identity in larger institutions, single or multicase studies that attempt to capture identity would provide a current example of what identity looks like for that institutional type. Research that attempts to track identity claims in discourse and practice can shed light on how identity impacts campus community and operations. A place to start might be schools undergoing major strategic planning or redesign initiatives.

Generally speaking, organizational identity research can be an informative companion to student engagement research. Currently student engagement research gives vital information about the level of engagement a college student experiences during college. As mentioned in chapter four, Sweet Briar surpassed the institutions in its class in all five NSSE benchmarks. The most differentiating category was faculty–student interaction. Before the data analysis, this information was just another piece of data. I was aware that Sweet Briar had received high marks prior to the study. In fact, this was one of the reasons, I choose Sweet Briar for the study site. At the time, though, I was unable to make a connection that really meant anything other than the fact they appeared to be doing something right according to commonly held standards.

I revisited the survey report near the end of my data analysis. I found that I could now point to *why* Sweet Briar students' marks on the NSSE were so high, and more importantly, I could speak pretty intelligently on *what* was impacting these scores. My data suggested that the high scores were due in large part to the "students as partners" status afforded to Sweet Briar students by the professors and the confidence they communicate to and engender in the students. This was conveyed in the claims of definitional component 3: "We are academicians with a distinct academic framework." This only made the identity claims that Sweet Briar made regarding their integrated education program—in other words, "we do

education well"—that much more credible. This information might be helpful for another school whose engagement scores are in need of improvement. The faculty might want to revisit the foundations of their curriculum and how they treat and believe about students and student learning.

In Closing

The study of organizational identity has been expressed through analogous references of individual identity development. Just as in relationships, in which we get to know individuals more as we become acquainted with them and they reveal deeper truths about themselves as they sense a genuine appreciation for who they are, so it is with institutional identity. In order to discover identity, the researcher must be willing to see differently, more intimately.

If the search is intent on looking only for what is wrong, oppressive, or otherwise negative about an institution, the gems of identity might evade its explorers. Better to look first at what is positive, then work toward change. The type of information that identity research reveals can be instrumental in changing such things. If looking for a hidden treasure, organizational identity research can be a map with clues and markers to help along the way. For other specialty schools like historically Black colleges, Latino or Native American student serving institutions, community colleges, and religiously affiliated schools, this work holds promise. It gives an example of how a return to or continued focus on the ideals that the sparked the existence of these colleges can inspire institutional renewal, collegiality, and morale among members and alumni. To see the identity alive in an institution is to experience the joy of knowing an institution in a more intimate way. It provides insight on how a college exists beyond inanimate academic buildings and lecture halls and can

engender trust and inspire noble ideals in its members. It is this dimension of college and university life that lies deep beneath the present day dialogue of recession-induced budget cuts that demand that colleges conform to ways of being and educating students that is sorely adrift from its original intent. To see identity is both an ontological and epistemological gift.

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APPENDIX A
SWEET BRIAR MISSION STATEMENT (PRIOR TO 2004)

Deeply committed to the education of women since its founding in 1901, Sweet Briar is consistently ranked as one of the top national liberal arts colleges. Its excellent academic reputation, spectacular campus, and attention to the individual attract smart, confident women who want to excel in a diverse global society. The Sweet Briar experience intentionally integrates academic rigor and research with a dynamic and close-knit residential community. Students fulfill their promise as scholars and leaders while benefiting from a resource-rich environment and co-curricular opportunities that enhance their possibilities for success. Its curriculum is organized on the premise that a foundation in the liberal arts and sciences enhances the development of critical and creative abilities, develops the ability to synthesize disparate information, equips the student for graduate and professional education and encourages the individual to continue to learn long after leaving Sweet Briar. A broadly based academic program teaches her to view her experience within wide contexts, to appreciate the achievements of the past, to understand the methods and major theories of science, to gain an appreciation of the arts, and to communicate with precision and cogency. At Sweet Briar this study takes place within a residential environment that encourages physical well-being, ethical awareness, sensitivity to others, responsibility for one's actions, personal initiative and the assumption of leadership. Sweet Briar continues its commitment as a women's college to devote all its resources to the education of women in the full range of the liberal arts and sciences, including those subjects that have been traditionally considered as male domains. The student/faculty ratio is 8:1. A highly qualified faculty, 96 percent of whom hold an earned doctorate or appropriate terminal degree, contributes to fulfilling these goals. More than 80 percent of classes are taught by full-time faculty. The College continues to seek a diverse student body, drawn from a national and international pool of applicants. As an independent college, Sweet Briar possesses the flexibility to respond to the many challenges that face higher education in a rapidly changing world.

APPENDIX B
RESEARCH QUESTIONS PROTOCOL FOR CASE STUDY

1. Background and History (Looking for similarities in awareness of college history)
    How was SBC founded?
    Why was it founded?
    Lingering Ideology/vision
    Awareness of SBC mission/purpose
    Does the mission seem congruent with practice
    Does the fact that it is a women's institution impact the way education is done?

2. Perceptions of Sweet Briar Identity
    Do you think that colleges possess a distinctive identity?
    If so, what are your general thoughts about the identity of SBC?
    Where is it seen? Is it the same or different from the "SBC Way?"
    How does legacy of SBC impact it in terms of
    How would you answer the question, "Who are we as an institution?"

2.1 Points/Issues of Centrality- characteristic essence of SBC (stand aloneness)
    What virtues/characteristics does the college articulate and express that seems to be
        of prime or central significance and importance to SBC?
    What issues are of prime and central importance to SBC?
    What values are of prime and central importance (and are expressed) at SBC? (those
        that are considered irreversible)
    Would you be able to articulate the essential nature of SBC?

2.2 Points/Issues of Distinctiveness (comparative differentiation)
    What makes SBC different from other like colleges?
    Faculty Dimension & Practice & Relationships & Standing
    Student Dimension, standing, position, roles
    Faculty/Student Dimension: relationship, roles, posture
    Academic/Co Curricular Dimension: Connection?
    SBC/community/Board of Trustees

2.3 Points/Issues of Temporal Continuity (Enduring Qualities)
    What virtues/values have endured and stood the test of time at SBC?
    Faculty Dimension & Practice & Relationships & Standing
    Student Dimension, standing/regard, position, roles, impact o
    Faculty/Student Dimension: relationship, roles, posture of
    Academic/Co Curricular Dimension
    SBC/Community/Board of Trustees
    What has changed but has remained the same at least, in essence, over the years?
    What has made SBC the institution it is today?
    In 10 years, what will have remained the same?

2.4 Personality/Passion/Talents/Skills/Gifts- (comparable analogs)
    Discuss the two Susie Sweet Briars (this is commonly spoken of on campus)
    If the identity of Sweet Briar could be embodied in one woman, what would she be
        like?
    If she were a graduating senior, what would she bequeath to the students after her?

If she were an alumnus, what would she contribute to her area of influence? (For students, think of what you have learned by attending SBC)

If she were a faculty member, what skills would she seek to impart to students? What type of relationship would she foster?

If she were an administrator, what would atmosphere would she work to create, what environment would she want for the students?

If she took the Meyers/Briggs Personality Type Inventory, what preferences would she most likely exhibit?

Introvert/Extrovert
Sensing/Intuition
Thinking/Feeling
Judgment/Perceptive

3. Challenges to Identity; Evolution of (tentative)

Over the last decade, how has the identity of the college been challenged?

Or. How has the sustainability of the college been challenged and what role has identity played in the process?

4. Shape of the Future Process (What was it?)

How did this initiative come about? Why? When? How long did it last?

If not a strategic plan how was it different? What was its goal?

How did issues of identity factor in? Made salient? Amplified?

What was your role in the process? Overall experience?

What were challenges/barriers that you observed to the process?

What evidence was there of a notable campus impact?

How was it different than other initiatives? Contextually?

Describe the climate you perceived before the Shape of the Future was launched?

How was the SBC community engaged in the process?

Was the counter-story among those who were not satisfied?

What was the process whereby it was heard and acknowledged?

How did the process help, hinder strengthen, reinforce SBC identity?

Why so? In what ways? (Are there specific examples?)

Was it considered a success?

What was the unified voice that emerged from the process?

What were the commitments made or reaffirmed as a result of SOF?

Sweet Briar Promise? Necessary? Why?

Mission Change? Necessary? Why?

What virtues/characteristics of SBC was made stronger?

What, if anything was weakened?

Was there any new language articulated about SBC that emerged? What was it like?

How important were the group sessions to the process?

To what degree was this a community effort vs an administrative mandate?

APPENDIX C
INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Title of Study: **Lecture Halls Don't Talk: A Search for Organizational Identity**

Investigator: *Denice Ross Haynes*

This is a research study. Please take your time in deciding if you would like to participate. Please feel free to ask questions at any time.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to gain an in-depth understanding of the process and outcomes of the Shape of the Future Initiative that took place during the 2003-2004 school year at Sweet Briar College. You are being invited to participate in this study because you are or have been either a member of the faculty, administration, Board of Trustees, or student of Sweet Briar College and have either participated in the process or have been impacted as a result.

DESCRIPTION OF PROCEDURES

If you agree to participate in this study, your participation will require an in-depth interview that should last for about a half an hour to 60 minutes. Interviews will be in either single or group format and you may state a preference for one or the other if you so choose. You will be asked a series of questions at that time which will primarily center on the 2003-2004 Shape of the Future Initiative and around the events that took place before during and after the process and your general thoughts about Sweet Briar's identity. Your answers will be recorded on a tape recorder, and transcribed. You may be asked to provide written responses to certain questions asked but this is not a requirement in order to participate in any interview session. Recorded information will be erased and written responses or transcription files will be destroyed when the dissertation is completed unless given permission to keep on file for a period of up to five years after the study. **You may skip any questions that you do not wish to answer or that makes you feel uncomfortable.**

RISKS

There are no foreseeable risks at this time that could occur as a result of participating in this study.

BENEFITS

If you decide to participate in this study there *may be no* direct benefit to you. It is hoped that the information gained in this study will benefit society by providing valuable information and insight on what a college experiences and its potential outcomes when they are in the process of a successful strategic planning process.

COSTS AND COMPENSATION

You *will not* have any costs from participating in this *study*. You *will not* be compensated for participating in this study.

PARTICIPANT RIGHTS

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or leave the study at any time. You may also elect to not answer some or all of the questions in a given interview session. If you decide to not participate in the study or leave the study early, it will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Records identifying participants will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by applicable laws and regulations and will not be made publicly available. However, federal government regulatory agencies and the Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews and approves human subject research studies) may inspect and/or copy your records for quality assurance and data analysis. These records may contain private information.

To ensure confidentiality to the extent permitted by law, the following measures will be taken. You will be assigned a unique code and letter which will be used instead of your name on all field notes and computer files. Only the researcher and supervising faculty member will have access to the records. Computer files records will be kept in secure password protected files and only with your permission may they be reviewed with any identifying information by staff and students and trustees of Sweet Briar College. In the actual dissertation document, interviewees will be given alias. All identifying information with the exception of a general description of the interviewee's connection to the college (i.e. faculty member, student or staff) will be stripped from the files; general and emerging themes along with certain quotes where appropriate but that cannot be traced back to the interviewee will be shared. If after the study and dissertation is completed, and published, your identity will remain confidential unless given permission to do so.

QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS

You are encouraged to ask questions at any time during this study.

- *For further information about this* study *contact Denice Ross Haynes at 773-936-6462 or denicer@iastate.edu, 2125 Prairie View West #101, Ames, Iowa 50010. You may also contact my supervising professor, Dr. Lori D. Patton, Assistant Professor at 515-294-4241 or lpatton@iastate.edu, Our offices are located on the 4th floor of Lagomarcino Hall, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa 50011.*

- If you have any questions about the rights of research subjects or research-related injury, please contact the IRB Administrator, (515) 294-4566, IRB@iastate.edu, or Director, (515) 294-3115, Office of Research Assurances, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa 50011.

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PARTICIPANT SIGNATURE

Your signature indicates that you voluntarily agree to participate in this study, that the study has been explained to you, that you have been given the time to read the document and that your questions have been satisfactorily answered. You will receive a copy of the written informed consent prior to your participation in the study. *The informed consent document shall be given to the person signing the form.*

Participant's Name (printed) _____

_____   _____
(Participant's Signature)   (Date)

INVESTIGATOR STATEMENT

I certify that the participant has been given adequate time to read and learn about the study and all of their questions have been answered. It is my opinion that the participant understands the purpose, risks, benefits and the procedures that will be followed in this study and has voluntarily agreed to participate.

_____   _____
(Signature of Person Obtaining   (Date)
Informed Consent)

APPENDIX D
AUDIT TRAIL/DATA SOURCE LOG

Data Source	Type of Evidence	Key Information, Highlights, etc
1. Meeting with Key informant May 2008	Formal Interview Audio Taped Transcribed	This interview gives great information about the school in terms of identity. Provides thoughts about theory of institutional identity.
2. Meeting w Seniors from class of 2009- Focus group format	Formal Interview Focus Group* Audio Taped Partially transcribed *perhaps this could have been used like a focus to sort of pilot line of questioning before formal protocol was developed.	This interview was my first: I think I went in a direction I decided was not getting the information I really needed. The personality question is okay but better ones really deal with the CED model. The anthromporphic paradigm for institutional identity did not seem fruitful to develop But we did talked about honor code/student governance- how significant it was and how they are so encouraged to own and explore in the context of their classroom learning. "no one will tell you no here" SB girls will live life fully. Theme: students as partners, faculty as confidence boosters, women of honor.
3. Short Conversation with five (5) Seniors @ Senior Luncheon- May 2009 (They were served on plates – SB plates and forks and they can have drink freely and for free) dressy affair for ladies. Dean was present hosted on the lawn of the Dean of Co-Curricular Life's home on campus.	Informal Exchange Video Taped (6mins) INADMISSABLE PER IRB	Topic: who is Susie Sweet Briar? What is she about? Here I asked questions about SSB as a real personality. It soon became apparent that I really did not need this line of questioning as importantly as the later and more developed questions. Great confirmation though on the type of women that SB strives to develop. I was impressed at how they really seemed to identify with who the school has declared them to be: independent, making a difference, etc. Talked about Sweet Briar pearls. Also discussed the negative image of SSB and what that meant- spoke of an undercurrent that is in contrast to or not taking advantage of what SB offers. These young ladies seemed like little women- cute! They certainly appeared confident and that what they had to say was worth hearing. Unusual comportment.
4. Short conversation with a faculty and staff member in cafeteria May 2009	Informal Exchange Video Taped (approx 6mins) INADMISSIBLE	I liked this exchange because it matched almost word for word the conversation at the Senior Luncheon. Discussion how clubs and organizations and traditions work to build and establish identity. Much of this he repeated in his audio interview.
5. Short conversation with senior in the café. Just back from riding.	Informal Exchange Video Taped (3mins?) INADMISSIBLE	Cute conversation about the privilege of being able to ride horses on the Dell. It is for seniors only. Underscored the theme of the joy of waiting to be the benefactor of Grand Senior- they guard the dutiful respect of the traditions in anticipation of "their turn"

6. Attendance May 2009 Graduation	Observation / In Person	Delighted that the students entered and exited first. Boyfriends and husbands in pink and green ties, jackets, etc. When pronounced as graduates, they throw up pearls instead of graduation caps. Upon leaving- faculty line middle isle and grads exit as a way to say goodbye. It reminds me of the Knights of Columbus. Reinforced this Centrality: Students as Honored Residents, Truly Student Centered, new ones: Students as Co-Participants, & Traditions as identity metaphors
7. Graduation '09 Speech	Document / Web/notes	From the students- we've been taught here to move forward, strive for excellence and get the job done. We are can do girls with all the grace and dignity to take on anything that is put in our path. They acknowledged the faculty and staff who "changed our lives" Our professors created the young women you see before you. …the passion for learning, the faculty have instilled in us…. 94% of the students participated in the 2009 senior gift.
8.Derby day (girls wearing hats across the Dell) May 2009 & Architecture & Pink Bikes	Observation / In Person Video Taped	This was just refreshing to see. This little segment was taken to show some of the landscape- which is very important to the SB experience. I captured some of the earlier buildings and one in progress- now finished. I present the PINK SCHWINN as an artifact.
9. My thoughts on the first day of my first visit to Sweet Briar October 2009	Field notes / Audio Taped	I think this was my first night. I stayed on campus in the inn.
10. Thoughts on leaving Sweet Briar October 2009	Artifact / Field Notes Video Taped	"Leaving the pink bubble." This commentary discussed the outdoor signs I meant to record when I came in. Approaching the college has to be the longest road of all colleges. But the words serve as type of "artifact cluster" of the kinds of thoughts they have about education at Sweet Briar.
11. Meeting with SBC Administrator (2) December 2009 visit 3	Interview / In Person Open- Ended	
12. On line Blog: Pres 2 Author	Document / Web	Check daily…. Illustrates Themes: Transparency/ A culture of openness/ Connectedness -new
13. Inaugural Speech of Dr. Jo Ellen Parker Homecoming 2009 Sept. 3 months OTJ	Document / Web	Attempts to introduce the concept of looking back and looking forward. She uses a Greek mythological character Janus with two heads to illustrate. Quoted from Pres Faust (Harvard). Strong emphasis on making sure the SB graduates are prepared for a technological age. Themes: strong connection to SB legacy, intentional gaze toward future sustainability & relevance

14. Spending time in Sweet Briar House. December 2009 visit 3	Field notes / Tour of House	I had wonderful chocolate covered figs. Delightful!
15. Book: The Story of Sweet Briar College Volume 1 By: Martha Lou Lemmon Stohlman	Historical Document	This was published in 1956 – about the first 50 years. The dedication is key- themes of perpetuity - The Forward lists three essential ingredients of the SB Difference- Also confirms that the combination of element (the weight of each part) is how distinction is birthed- Highly convoluted- Not replicable. Easily diluted, not given voice or altogether muted. But IS
16. Meeting with Co-Curricular Life Staff December 2009 visit 3	Group Interview / In Person Semi - Structured Audio Taped	Met with 6 staff members from the department. Main themes: Collaboration, ECM (every contact matters) which articulates the honored guest theme or the student in residence (lol) Truly Student Centered, Excellence at the same time a healthy practice of support & challenge theory in use and an awareness to watch that the lines can get blurred. They are not passive servant workers but dedicated and partners in the charge. They use the word accountability which is also something repeated in several interviews with students (group, s1) also; power of alumni and wonderful (note: question: do they ever feel like the work of their office would be different if there wasn't such student led activities? How do they work with the many traditions that can be classified as annual activities that at another school might very well be planned by a SP practitioner? One of the staff of 16 years commented on something I think I will use for the theme: the desire to serve students well. She underscored what others have said about each doing it differently
17. Meeting with CCL Administrator December 2009 visit 3	Formal Interview In depth – semi structured Audio Taped Transcribed	Really highlights for me – the culture of care, and its intentionality- the fact that identity is a property of the institution, the fact that they are aware of their role to challenge and support and they are not to be duped into enabling students to their detriment, reaffirmed the self governance of the student body and how they work around the traditions. (I think she really brought out for me the dance that they have to do and the overall distinctiveness of this piece) her and I think one that is reflective of many folks there is this piece- students learning how to be adults- preparation for life- constantly reaffirmed by all. Also responsible mentorship- even with millennials and how they are aware that they need to adjust with each generation (so to speak) of students. And like the other talk- the notion of each member doing the

		same charge via different functions and out of different patterns of interactions w/students. Mentioned great alums too/ also separation of student and traditions- noticed with two other interviews- they are not buddies per say
18. Meeting with Senior staff member December 2009 visit 3	Formal Interview In depth – Semi-structured Audio Taped Transcribed	one of my favs. Brilliant insight on the coalescence of origins and purpose and mission and fulfillment.
19. Meeting w/Faculty December 2009	Formal Interview Semi Structured Audio Taped	Through the conversation with this faculty I saw this intentionality in making sure the curriculum is not based solely on content acquisition. But rather, infused with a broadness and life application. He talked about wanted the outside to see the real SB- I thought this modeled a care about the place- wanting others to recognize its value – he demonstrated pride in his work- being mindful of how the world is changing and how his field is adjusting to that. An intention and recognition that his students will be well –rounded . Modeled for me a commitment and intention to offer not just women's education but the best and most relevant education that adjusts with the time. The product may look different but the intent – encased w/in the mission, established and institutionalized over time- is definitely the same.
21. Meeting with Sciences Faculty December 2009	Formal Interview Semi-Structured – In Depth Audio taped Transcribed	See notes: Faculty as advocates, He deals with an answers the question about over catering to the students- also themes: preparation for life beyond the first job- training students for productive lives, faculty as friends, interdisciplinary respect among faculty also: he discusses how the faculty embody and reinforce- through the curriculum the charge the trust- notion of permission to connect; permeability between departments; there's a connection but there is a line- this remind me of what I gained from _____conversation- the realization for me that not everyone is directly involved with the part of the students lives that is particular and meaningful to them
22. Meeting with Senior (1) December 2009	Interview- Formal Semi- structured Audio Taped Transcribed	What is demonstrated here is the great and significant sense of affection the students have for SB. There is a sense of gratitude about how they are cared for but they understand that this is not to be taken advantage of. Instead of enabling these women, they thrive in this culture of care- which is an emerging theme perhaps. Another theme: Model manifestation cycle – the traditions are outlets as she says but there is another possible effect – they

		become legacy minded people. It feeds the mandate to make a difference beyond SB.
23. Meeting with Co-Curricular Life staff December 2009	Interview- Formal Group- Semi-structured Audio Taped Transcribed	Themes: reinforce this notion of new – separate not separated- the opposite of loose coupling the vehicle? Collaboration- truly student centered
Meeting with Senior (2) December 2009	Interview- Formal In-depth- Semi structured Audio Taped Transcribed	Alum network, true love and passion for SB, specific instances of this culture of care among alums, faculty, classmates. Modeled for me a sense of integrity and their honor code through her tasteful and mature conversation about withholding judgment about new president. Also, reflected having being taught that she was preparing for the world as the mission stated, modeled a keen belief in the claims of the institution and trust in the identity that seems to consistently emerge in conversation. Also discussed the balance issue- in that there are some that are not "into" the flow. I wouldn't call it hype about SB no, this is far from hype. This is real and tangible. Albeit a tad bit coy and illusive
Meeting with staff December 2009	Formal Interview Semi- Structured Audio Taped Transcribed	
Sweet Briar College: Seven Decades : 1901-1971 Martha vonBrieson & Dorothy S. Vickery	Book	Statement from the first president of the character development of SB women: "Honesty, Devotion to Ideas, freedom from bias, the ability to make value judgements"p.17 Student Governance but theme confirmation about: Students as partners, Also that SBC was a woman's college in its very DNA and not created as a female counterpart to men's colleges. Told the story of the 2nd president proposing such an idea only to have it totally rejected by the board, *"Although this idea received tentative consideration, the board decided that such an arrangement would violate the intention of the founders will"* p.23 Discussed faculty characteristics from SB third president Meta Glass Teaching, inspiration and guidance are looked upon as the prime prerequisites in faculty members" p.35 Also a source that made the connection between SB and the influence the father had on Indie. P.7 "It was undoubtedly this influence which led his elder daughter, Indiana to make the bequest by which Sweet Briar came into being."
National Survey of Student Engagement	Document Reviewed	Used to corroborate the students story of faculty/student relationships from students as

2007 Mean comparisons Sweet Briar College		compared with others At first glance- SBC is out of the ball park with some of the items…
Sweet Briar Alumnae Magazine Winter 1997 Vol. 68(2)	Document Reviewed	
Sweet Briar Alumnae Magazine Winter 1997 Vol. 69(1)	Document Reviewed	
Sweet Briar Alumnae Magazine Summer/ Fall 1998 vol. 70(1)	Document	Talks about the architects of SBC
Sweet Briar Alumnae Magazine Winter 2000 71(2)	Document	
Sweet Briar Alumnae Magazine Spring/ Summer 2000, 71(3)	Document	
Sweet Briar Alumnae Magazine Fall 2002 74(1)	Document	1. Quote from new dean at the time on p. 13: "Really, the College works as well as it does because the faculty are such good citizens of the campus, much like the students have to be involved for it to work as well. And all of us are trying to find ways to make things work even better, which is why it's so exciting to be here." (faculty as citizens) 2. Article: The Power of a Plan- President Emeritas Muhlenfeld- reveals the goals of the strategic plan and the updates 3. Letter from Michela English- '71 Chair of the Board of Directors at the time of printing – great quote about the need to be aware of the environment, take a non-silo approach to planning in a way that achieves goals that are best for the college. "There cannot be independent plans" (the board is a mouthpiece to the college- I have not been aware of such a presence of the board at the 4 colleges I have worked at – 3 I have attended- She talks about the possibility of having to make hard choices. 4. An Alum talks about leaving money to SBC in her will? Usuable? Too much? Not really distinctive.
Sweet Briar Alumnae Magazine Spring 2002 73(3)	Document	In the message from the president about distinctiveness: It is a truism to note that Sweet Briar is one of the largest and most beautiful college campuses in the nation. This beauty is more than skin deep. This campus is distinguished by a remarkable synergy between its history, its architecture…and its landscape and grounds

		inspiring broad visions- visions for the eye, the intellect, and the psyche. There are few other colleges, if any, that embody such a unity of mind, and spirit, and it is this unity which comprises what we mean by the "sense of place" each alumna cherishes. " (cover)
Sweet Briar Alumnae Magazine Fall 2003 75(1)	Document	President introduces SOF committee members and the purpose and intent of the committee
Sweet Briar Alumnae Magazine Winter 2004 75(2)	Document	RePrinting of the first 3 meetings of SOF committee-(plus general scope of meeting 4) the "notes" in full narrative format.
Sweet Briar Alumnae Magazine Spring/Summer 2004, 75(3)	Document	Reprinting minutes of SOF committee meeting minutes 4-6 p.16-20 and an article about community involvement in the process. p.21 Letters and emails from the community about what they feel about the process p.33-36
Sweet Briar Alumnae Magazine Winter, 2005 76(2)	Document	Article by the president: Shape of the Future: Next Steps pp. 11-15. Also, a long letter to the editor: from a '74 alum encouraging giving back to the college**. (p. 14) She says in a great quote which can be a type of justification in support of this research that colleges need more than standard business models** … "The business model for Sweet Briar and all colleges like it, does not work…
Sweet Briar Alumnae Magazine Fall 2005 76(4)	Document	Cover Lines: Implementing the Shape of the Future Initiatives Campus-wide. Inside followed by a pp. 2-31, featuring how the campuses have responded to the SOF movement A quote from Betsy at the 2005 commencement-96th entitled: A History-Making Event"
Sweet Briar Alumnae Magazine Winter 2006, 77(1)	Document	Cover Blurb: Eminent Physicist…Kicks off Homecoming 2005: Focus on the Sciences- It then occurred to me- w/o reading much of this issue that they brought in an alumnus who has achieved much in the sciences and then reprinted her great Founder's Day message by a distinguished alumna award recipient. She happened to be the first woman to receive her masters in aerospace engineering from University of Virginia's School of Engineering. Its like they model with models- they keep presenting the success of what they do in principle, in print, and in person. They also announce via an article entitled: Physics Department Now Officially The Department of Physics and Engineering ! But not to leave out the other things that were going on- they also paid honor - so to speak- to the other science departments with full page stories of each.

		Another perspective on uniqueness verification: a "testimony from a '03 grad of SBC now in a doctoral program on Molecular Bio- she says while she knew what she wanted to do- she was quiet- SBC helped her grow – she got hands on experience in science equipment for all years (something she noted that other colleges she explored would not allow) - and was able to do her own research- she cites these things as the reasons she got into graduate school right away while other students had to take pre-coursework. Another theme: they discuss everything! They introduce a new fundraising campaign and the first of a series about giving- from alums- they present the message- every small gift matters. They reported a total of over $134,000.00 received from alumnae gifts under $100.00 80% report a favorable SBC experience but less than 50% give
Sweet Briar Alumnae Magazine Spring/Summer 2006, 77(2)	Document reviewed	Features an article from Ken- director of admissions entitled: Promises Matter- he talks about what his office has done to get the message out about the promise that crystallized as a result of the talks on campus- this happened to be right around the time of the SOF (p.9)
Sweet Briar Alumnae Magazine, Winter 2007, 78(1)	Document	
Sweet Briar Alumnae Magazine, Spring/ Summer 2007 78(2)	Document	Theme: Use of our campus as a resource
Sweet Briar Alumnae Magazine Fall 2007, 78(3)	Document reviewed	Not much related to study
Sweet Briar Alumnae Magazine, Fall 2008, 79(3)	Document Reviewed	*! Presents the results of a study of women's colleges called the HARWICK REPORT- fascinating data that confirms /validates the experiences of SBC women- like the NSSE report! Records actual interview excerpts from alums from 1970 and 1997. Along with interviews from 2 recent (2009) grads & a current student (2011) Also features a "Thank You" spread in honor of Outgoing president Betsy Muhlenfeld Quoted a statistic about enrollment increases over the past 5 years on p.28 other stats about internship increases, NSSE comparisons,

APPENDIX E
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Institutional Review Board
Office for Responsible Resea[rch]
Vice President for Research
1138 Pearson Hall
Ames, Iowa 50011-2207
515 294-4566
FAX 515 294-4267

DATE: December 7, 2009

TO: Denice Ross Haynes
2125 Prairie View West Drive #101
Ames, IA 50010

CC: Dr. Lori D. Patton
N243 Lagomarcino

FROM: Office for Responsible Research

TITLE: **Lecture halls don't talk: Search for organizational identity**

IRB ID: 09-180

Submission Type: Modification   **Exemption Date:** 7 December 2009

The project referenced above has undergone review by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and has been declared exempt from the requirements of the human subject protections regulations as described in 45 CFR 46.101(b). The IRB determination of exemption means that:

- **You do not need to submit an application for annual continuing review.**

- **You must carry out the research as proposed in the IRB application,** including obtaining and documenting informed consent if you have stated in your application that you will do so or if required by the IRB.

- **Any modification of this research should be submitted to the IRB on a Continuing Review and/or Modification form, prior to making <u>any</u> changes,** to determine if the project still meets the federal criteria for exemption. If it is determined that exemption is no longer warranted, then an IRB proposal will need to be submitted and approved before proceeding with data collection.

Please be sure to **use only the approved study materials** in your research, including the **recruitment materials and informed consent documents that have the IRB approval stamp.**

Please note that you must submit all research involving human participants for review by the IRB. **Only the IRB may make the determination of exemption,** even if you conduct a study in the future that is exactly like this study.