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There is a clear understanding that leaders of faith-based educational institutions shape the school community's culture in ways that assist in faith formation. This implicit and explicit focus on faith formation and an alignment with the broader mission of the Catholic Church is foundational to contemplative leadership (Schuttloffel, 1999, 2008). Contemplative leadership practice presumes that a leader's character, shaped by her/his communities, life stories, and virtues, is a necessary quality for making decisions that contribute to a school's Catholic identity. Using qualitative research methods, this study explores leadership practice within Catholic schools in Australia, England, and the Netherlands, in order to describe common themes attributed to contemplative practice. Data from this study suggest three common themes in contemplative Catholic school leaders' decision making: (a) the impact of their personal life stories; (b) their view of leadership as a vocation; and, (c) the priority given to relationships. Generational communities and national culture or regional subcultures emerge as influential special communities that often challenge school leaders. The findings have implications for Catholic higher education that include the following: continuing professional development that fosters the character necessary for contemplative practice, adaptive experiences that support spiritual leadership, and opportunities for ongoing reflection on decision making that leads to Catholic identity formation.

Recent Church statements continue to emphasize the important ministry of Catholic schooling (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops [USCCB], 2005). The professed purpose of faith-based schools is to support parents as they transmit the faith to the next generation of believers (Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977, 1982; United States Catholic Conference, 1988). For more than two centuries, American Catholic schools assisted families and the Church in this mission (Augenstein, Kauggman, & Wister, 2003; Buetow, 1985). Essential to this role of Catholic schooling are well-prepared and effective leaders. But concerns about the availability and ability of future leadership to meet the challenge—both here in the US and internationally—abound (Convey, DeFiore, & Schuttloffel, 2009; Fraser & Brock 2006; Schuttloffel, 2003).

For educational institutions to be successful in their mission, effective leadership is key (Bass, 1985; Bennis, 1989; Sergiovanni, 1992). In addition to the typical qualities and decision-making behaviors ascribed to exceptional or great secular leaders (Collins, 2001), the contemplative model for Catholic leadership practice presumes additional distinctive components of the Catholic school leader's decision-making process (Schuttloffel, 1999). An individual's character is an integral component in the extent to which a leader's Catholic identity shapes her/his ability to engage in contemplative practice. Coherence between a leader's beliefs and actions create credibility within a school community and fosters its Catholic identity (Schuttloffel, 1999, 2008). As Cook (2001) has suggested, the Catholic school leader's character shapes the school community's Catholic architecture.

This article presents findings from an international qualitative study that explored the manifestations of contemplative practice across three national cultures. First, I present a brief review of the contemplative model and its theoretical framework. The contemplative model of leadership focuses on the school leader's role in creating a faith formation community (Schuttloffel, 1999, 2008). Second, I describe the genesis of the international study. I include an explanation of my interest in culture and why it emerged as a key influence within the creation of the study. Next, I include relevant information about the methodology used in the study in order to make the connection among data collection, data analysis, and my purpose for the study. The article includes a discussion of the constructive and challenging themes that emerged from the study's data. In conclusion, I provide commentary on what I believe can be learned by American Catholic educators from this international study.

What is Contemplative Practice?

Theoretical Framework of the Contemplative Model

Contemplative practice is based on a reflective model of leadership grounded in metacognition (Flavell, 1977; Van Manen, 1977). It is intended to encourage Catholic school leaders to think about their own thinking regarding their decision-making processes and outcomes. Contemplative practice emphasizes the principles upon which a decision is made. Within Catholic school leadership, those principles are explicitly gospel values, Catholic theology, and Church tradition applied to such leadership behaviors as implementing a

transformational vision, creating opportunities for participatory governance, and building community (Nelson, 2012; Schuttloffel, 2008).

Currently, American Catholic educational leadership programs focus on the tripartite of competencies deemed essential for school leadership—instructional leadership, managerial leadership, and spiritual leadership (Ciriello, 1993, 1994, 1996). The complex nature of school leadership requires commitment to a leadership practice that includes religious identity, personal identity, and professional identity. In accord with the purposes of the National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA) leadership monograph series and Church documents, the purpose of the contemplative model is to assist Catholic school leaders in their distinctive educational vocation and ministry (Jacobs, 1996). The contemplative model builds on Sergiovanni's (1992) metaphor for leadership—the heart, the head, and the hand. The heart represents a leader's beliefs, values, and philosophical orientations; the head represents the leader's worldview, knowledge, and skills; and the hand represents the decisions that result from the integration of the heart and head.

The focus of contemplative practice on the creation of an authentic faith learning community does not diminish efforts to create first rate academic and social support programs within a Catholic school. I would argue that those outcomes can be strengthened by the emphasis on decision making informed by Catholic social and intellectual traditions. Catholic school leaders are called to be excellent professional educators *and* ministers of the Church.

The reflective process advocated by Van Manen (1977) provides another theoretical component of the contemplative model that is both dynamic and interactive. Van Manen has proposed three possible types of reflection: technical, interpretive, and critical. Technical reflection provides a description of what is going on in a situation. Interpretive reflection asks the question, "What does it mean?" or, "What message does it send?" Finally, critical reflection requires school leaders to consider personal values, beliefs, and philosophy as they think about *why* they think the way they do.

What distinguishes the contemplative model's integration of these two theoretical underpinnings from other usages is that the values, beliefs, and philosophical anchors are taken from gospel values, Church teaching, our Baptismal call for evangelization, and the Catholic Church's intellectual tradition. Also, interpretive reflection is grounded in a Catholic worldview rooted in a well-formed Catholic identity. The contemplative model is more than merely taking a generic leadership theory and a reflective practice theory and employing them at a Catholic school. Contemplative thinking requires

that a leader's thinking about her/his own thinking sustains an explicit connection to her/his own personal Catholic identity, her/his understanding of the mission of a Catholic school, and her/his role in carrying out that mission. An implicit assumption of the contemplative practice model is an explicit faith formation connection to sacramental and liturgical parish life. A contemplative Catholic school leader views the Catholic school community as a faith formation or evangelizing community for students, teachers, parents, and everyone associated with the school. It is the individual school leader's character that makes this kind of thinking possible.

Catholic leadership preparation presumes that there are personal qualities necessary to make decisions regarding children, teachers, and the school community that reflect the school's Catholic identity and mission (Miller, 2006; Schuttloffel, 1999; USCC, 1972, 1988). Character encompasses these qualities (Nash, 1996). Nash has defined character as the integration of an individual's formative communities, virtues, and personal life story. Each person is acculturated in a community in which specific values and beliefs are learned (Pai & Adler, 2006). Although difficult to define, the intimate dynamic among these influences shape an individual's identity and, ultimately, her/his decision- making process (Hollins, 2008).

In the same way, an American Catholic school has a particular culture that I easily recognize during school visits. Cook (2001) has defined the evidence of American Catholic school culture to include the following: core beliefs and values; heroes and heroines; symbols; ritual traditions; and human communication through prayer, scripture, and history, including the founding charism. School leaders practicing the contemplative model make decisions that further develop these cultural connections to their Catholic identity for students individually and the school community as a whole. Because it is easy to think about Catholic identity as obvious in an American Catholic school, it is possible to take Catholic identity formation for granted. A lack of intentionality about faith formation is a potentially dangerous position for anyone committed to the transmission of Catholic identity to the next generation.

How the Study Began

After the publication of *Character and the Contemplative Principal* (Schuttloffel, 1999), I made numerous presentations on the topic at various American Catholic educational conferences and diocesan professional development sessions. Principals readily shared my understanding of leadership practice characterized by the contemplative model. They often related incidences in

which they practiced the model, but had not had the language to describe what they were thinking and doing. Their stories confirmed my confidence in the model's applicability and authenticity.

In 2001, I was invited to give a presentation on contemplative practice at the bi-annual conference of the Education and Ethos Network, hosted by the Institute for Catholic Education, at the Catholic University of Nijmegen in the Netherlands (currently known as Radbound University). I highlighted how Catholic school leaders in the United States view their roles from a ministerial perspective that specifically embeds Catholic faith formation into school community life. During the discussion, a well-respected Dutch religious education professor stated, "This is not possible…it is too much! Principals in the Netherlands would not do this!"

The response led me to question whether this was an outright rejection of the concept of contemplative practice or if this was something different. Reflection on that question motivated me to consider the possibility that contemplative practice was an exclusively American model based on the unique American history of Catholic schooling. The American parish model of Catholic schooling was historically tied to ethnic communities, their supportive religious congregations, and the preservation of a culturally based parish life grounded in faith. Even in the current environment of diocesan centralization, contemplative practice intentionally strengthens the school-parish-connection for faith formation and Catholic identity development. The study presented in this article originated from my efforts to determine if there was something distinctly American about contemplative practice, or if the Catholic Church's doctrine and tradition—elements of the universal Church—provide the framework for Catholic school leaders' identities, enabling their decision making to be consistent with contemplative practice, in spite of their national culture.

My research questions in this international study were: What evidence is there that the decision making of a Catholic school leader creates a Catholic school—as a school—a faith learning community? How does a Catholic school leader's personal Catholic identity shape his/her school's Catholic identity? These questions led me to conduct my study along a particular epistemological path.

Methodology

Creating a research study that includes the layers of complexity involved with

religious identity, leadership practice, and national culture was challenging. My study's qualitative methodology followed a hermeneutical phenomenological approach to determine *what it means to be a Catholic school leader in another nation* and to explore how that meaning resonates with contemplative practice (Creswell, 2007). Decision making is at the heart of leadership and contemplative practice. A leader's motives for making a decision, prioritizing a decision, and implementing a decision all reflect what it means to be a Catholic school leader within the contemplative model. For those readers interested in a more developed understanding of this methodology's rationale and approach, research by Moustakas (1994) and Van Manen (1990) are useful.

Since 1998, I have been involved with Catholic education in a variety of capacities in numerous nations, including England, Belgium, the Netherlands, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and Chile. Following my conference experience in 2001, I formally began to focus my research on the contemplative practice of school leaders within different nations. Prior to that experience my focus was on leader decision making that fosters the development of faith learning communities in American Catholic schools. It is important to state that at the outset of my inquiry, I held the false assumption that the meaning of "being Catholic" or the "Catholic worldview" was universal among Catholic school leaders. I now acknowledge this flaw in my thinking, as my lens was formed by my own Catholic cultural community. Following that revelation, I began to consider what I, as a former principal, might have in common with the experiences of school leaders in other nations. At the same time, I explored the differences in the meaning of Catholic identity and how this meaning influences the school leader's role.

Participants in the Study

Data for this international study were collected from principals, teachers, diocesan officials, school board members, and higher education researchers from each participant nation. Participation was voluntary; individual participants were recommended by university colleagues or diocesan officials for their willingness to participate in an international study that focused on the best practices of contemplative leadership. In each country, my goal was to interview and observe school leaders from at least 10 schools (directors, school heads, and principals), which was the case in each of the participant countries included in this study: England, the Netherlands, and Australia. I also visited faculty of Catholic colleges and universities that prepare school

leaders and teachers, diocesan officials, staff of Catholic educational institutes and educational centers, and network staff and/or school board members. Over the course of 10 years, I interviewed and observed approximately one hundred Catholic educators in these three countries. By interacting with school leaders considered exemplary within their country, I gathered particular view of what a high quality Catholic school leader looks like in each country.

In addition to participant interviews, I collected numerous books, journal articles, and school and diocesan documents that described the local school and national educational contexts. I also studied web sites. In my view, however, the most interesting data were collected on site, visiting with principals, observing their interactions with parents, teachers, and students. Between 1999 and 2013, I made 17 international trips to England, Australia, and the Netherlands.

Data Collection

The typical process of data collection included an extensive semi-structured interview with the principal (e.g. director, head teacher); observations of the principal interacting with teachers, parents, and students; and an examination of school documents and artifacts. Conversations were open-ended. Interview data were transcribed from notes or entered directly into a computer file. Photos were often used to document visual experiences. The actual school visits themselves and the surrounding activities (e.g. lunch in the teachers' lounge) were also data that often carried the substance of the principal's community ethos more genuinely than the formal interview.

Data Analysis

After data collection, interview data was coded to identify themes. The themes were then checked for congruence with contemplative practice behaviors. Examples of these behaviors include leading prayer for faculty and students, using Catholic themes as behavior modification tools, engaging with their affiliated parish, and considering comments that indicated the school leader was viewed as a spiritual leader as well as an instructional leader for the school (Convey, DeFiore, & Schuttloffel, 2009; Schuttloffel, 1998d, 1999, 2003, 2008). I also drew on my previous work with Catholic school principals, my roles as a professor and mentor, as well as my experience as a Catholic school principal and as a consultant to numerous dioceses to identi-

fy themes and to cross-check the meaning of statements. I then analyzed the data for specific national cultural themes or markers within the national data.

The findings were then organized into textual descriptions for each nation's Catholic leadership practice (Marshall & Rossman, 2010). After making some essential statements about school leadership practice and leader identity development (national and religious), I contacted colleagues, school board members, or diocesan officials who resided in the nation of each individual case and asked them to review statements for misinterpretation, misrepresentation, or further enrichment of the data's description. Interview data were triangulated with documents, observations at school sites, and other participants. Examples of documents include handbooks, curricula, newsletters, and artifacts within the school. College and university faculty, in addition to members of educational centers, were useful in determining if my interpretation of school culture and leadership behaviors were accurate. Finally, I compared contemplative practice themes across nations looking for similarities or differences with my American contemplative practice and meaning for Catholic identity or worldview.

Although each school leader attempts to create an excellent school by secular or professional definitions, not every school leader makes decisions representative of contemplative practice. I was particularly interested in what meanings were attached to being Catholic, the purpose of a Catholic school, and what it means to be a Catholic school leader today. Each of these meanings is integrated within contemplative leadership practice. In the next section of this article, I present a brief summary of the themes that emerged from my international study.

Common Themes across Nations

Three constructive themes were common across the nations I studied: (a) impact of life story; (b) leadership as a vocation within an education ministry; and (c) relationships as a priority. These three themes might be characterized as constructive because among school leaders, the theme's essence contributed positively to their school as a Catholic faith community and serves as evidence of contemplative practice. The following section discusses evidence of the common themes across Catholic leadership practice and schooling in Australia, England, and the Netherlands. Following this section is a discussion of issues that challenge contemplative leadership practice.

Impact of Life Story

One major theme within this study is that school leaders tend to create a Catholic identity within their Catholic school community that mirrors their own personal Catholic identity. An individual's personal Catholic identity is shaped by her/his story and the communities in which she/he lives and interacts. A school leader's life story includes educational experiences, marital relationships, parenting experiences, level of religiosity, family devotional traditions, career sequence, friendships, mentors, and other formational influences that create a unique worldview.

The dynamic nature of these various influences highlights the interaction between communities and life stories as suggested by Nash (1996). For example, across sites in this study, school leaders who were mature, varied in their life experiences, and who deliberated reflectively had a more developed personal identity. These contemplative school leaders had a leadership practice that was more coherent and intentional, and in turn, deeply shaped the school as a faith community. School leaders who reflect thoughtfully upon their lives demonstrate a mindfulness of all the influences on their identity (including Catholic identity) and their leadership practice. This coherence between identity and practice serves to create a school culture supportive of developing Catholic identity within students, teachers, and other members of the school community. Contemplative practice provides a vehicle for maintaining that coherence within the individual school leader. In addition, their Catholic identity bears a strong influence on the life story of a school leader, explicitly and routinely impacting the school leader's decision making.

Several English school heads commented on how they were "cradle Catholics," or raised Catholic since birth, but had not fully embraced their Catholic identity until they became parents. At that time, they realized how important their Catholic identity was to their own childhood, particularly through sacramental preparation. Through this personal experience and reflection, the school head placed new emphasis on how her/his students acquire Catholic identity, how that formation had become a priority, and how faith formation permeated the school community. This commitment was very evident during my visit through the choice of language used, artifacts within the school, and discussions with teachers about the school head's priorities. Dutch directors almost replicated the English school heads' language in their discussion of faith formation and how it had become a priority in meetings with parents. School leaders admitted that sometimes difficult conversations took place if

parents have not progressed in their own faith formation or have confounding issues with the Church (e.g., married outside the Church).

Dutch researchers Gommers and Hermans (2003) have stated the following in their research on Dutch Catholic school teachers:

> Each person construes his or her individual life story in terms of ideas and notions taken from diverse cultural traditions. As the "author" of its own life story, the self constitutes an individual voice which is a reflection of one or more collective voices in particular socio-cultural communities, hence outside the person. (p. 187)

Their descriptions portray communities as cultural traditions and resonate with Nash's concept of community within character and Sergiovanni's mindscape or worldview. National community, religious community, family community, ethnic community, generational community, and professional community generate a cultural tradition, each of which is an influence on the worldview of a school leader. This dynamic condition exists within school leaders in each nation studied. Sometimes cultural awareness was raised for individual principals because they lived in another country, which offered them an outsider's view of their own culture as well as that of another culture. These school leaders also recognized the role that culture plays in the lives of students, teachers, and members of the school community.

A significant impact captured within one's life story is the influence of generational cohort. D'Antonio, Davidson, Hoge, and Gautier (2007) have described the relationship between individual Catholics and the Church as represented by their generational cohort. The description of Catholic identity for a pre-Vatican II Catholic is different from a Vatican II Catholic, Generation X Catholic or a Millennial Catholic. These generational cohorts have unique theological knowledge bases, learned practices, views of appropriate behaviors, and prioritized beliefs. Indeed, each generational cohort has a unique worldview that explains some of the current tensions within the Church. As a member of the Vatican II generational cohort, I readily recognize and relate to Catholic educators across nations who are in the same generation. Many of us share the experience of working alongside members of religious congregations as teachers, and later becoming the first lay person to lead a Catholic school. Our sense of embracing the call for a lay apostolate is evidenced by our motives, language, and priorities within our Catholic educational vocation. Varied generational worldviews are evident within

Catholic schools across nations and among directors, teachers, and parents.

These unique life stories highlight complex challenges about the future leadership for Catholic schools—and potentially the Catholic Church—because teachers and future school leaders will rise from the Generation X and Millennial ranks (D'Antonio et al., 2007; Smith & Denton, 2005). Moreover, a set of cultural trends I describe as the *global-technological-secular-consumerist culture* appears to be shared by many people under 35 years of age in every part of the developed world. D'Antonio et al. (2007) and other recent studies on religious practice in young adults (Smith & Denton, 2005) have indicated generational differences in how religious identity is understood. It is possible to posit that this global-technological-secular-consumerist culture creates a generational community that also shapes the identities of young Catholics across national borders.

Leadership as a Vocation in an Education Ministry

First, and practically speaking, participating school leaders believe they create high quality schools with good curricula and instruction, positive interpersonal relationships, and competent management. (*What* we do.) Contemplative school leaders attempt to make decisions that create a good school by anyone's definition. But, in addition, these contemplative school leaders intentionally create a faith learning community permeated with a Catholic culture that communicates gospel values, a Catholic worldview, and the Catholic intellectual tradition as articulated through critical reflection. (*Why* we do what we do.) In the following statement, an English school leader described her experience after first being hired as a Catholic school teacher:

> I came and looked at the school and I liked what it was about and I began to practice again. Sometimes you lose why it is important to practice; I never lost my faith, and in the school and taking part in the school Masses and things and I really started to enjoy it again. I would want my children to grow up in that environment.

This school leader's comment followed from her discussion of why a faith learning community impacts both students and adults within a school. Similarly, another English school head noted, "My mission is to be a conduit through which God will speak." My observations of school leaders' behaviors within their schools demonstrated the priority given to faith formation. Interview data of contemplative principals described school leaders who

believed it was their role to help the students, parents, and teachers find God and grow in their faith. Regularly, Australian school leaders described their ministry of Catholic education and their desire to serve the Church with language similar to that used by the following English school head, stating, "We share with parents the responsibility to guide their children toward God. Sometimes that means helping the parents in their sacramental life too."

Most school leaders easily recognized that their experiences were qualitatively different from those of their peers in government schools; in fact, that difference was typically given as their reason for being a Catholic school principal. Another English school head stated, "Being involved with the Church for me and my family is one reason I am working in a Catholic school. There is a seamless integration of home, parish, and school." Remarks from school leaders across the three nations indicated that contemplative practice was consistent with a vocational view of Catholic education as a ministry. There was a clear understanding that the purpose for Catholic schools was faith formation. That said, there exists a continuum of contemplative practice that was represented by the various school leaders in the study. In other words, not every school leader's decision made on every occasion was based entirely on its contribution to the development of a faith community. Some decisions were pragmatic due to finances or government requirements. The most obvious contradiction to a pervasive contemplative decision was the directors in the south of the Netherlands (to be discussed later in this article).

Relationships as a Priority

Hospitality is a quality deeply rooted in the Catholic tradition and emerges in the charism of numerous religious congregations (e.g., Benedictines, Carmelites). Hospitality is also represented within the Corporal Works of Mercy. Numerous Gospel stories relate to hospitality and its importance as a Christian virtue. Because as Catholics we believe in what Groome (1996) has called a Catholic anthropology (i.e., human beings are created in the image and likeness of God), how this belief is put into practice by a contemplative principal matters. In my experiences, the typical arrival of coffee or tea, cookies [biscuits] or sandwiches, transfer rides, and all shapes of gifts, while routine, exemplify hospitality as a theme in a Catholic school's culture and evidence of a faith learning community.

It is consistent, then, to see the connection between hospitality and an

emphasis on relationships. Leadership research states that the leader's role is twofold: to complete the organizational task and to manage relationships (Northouse, 2012). The primary emphasis is on reaching the goal of successful task completion. But there is considerable evidence that exceptional leaders are able to communicate that each follower has value and importance in reaching a goal. The contemplative leader recognizes that relationships are the substance of community building (Schuttloffel, 2008). The discussion of relationships and their influence on Catholic school leadership was a dominant theme within these English, Dutch, and Australian Catholic schools. Principals, heads of school, and directors often spoke to the importance of quality relationships among students, teachers, parents, parishioners, and community members. These principals clearly saw relationship building as vital to school community building and to developing a Catholic cultural ethos.

Relationships are also founded on the gospel call to love. During a discussion with Australian Catholic educators, I raised the question of what single quality they would want to have identified with their schools. Without hesitation, a principal said:

> I hope you saw that relationships are important to us. We have worked hard to bring our community together after an economic change where we lost families, added new families and we wanted them to feel like they belong.

Gospel values are at the heart of the relationships articulated by this principal; but—the principal went on to add—it cannot be "forced" or "artificial." Comments of this type reflect a virtuous character within a principal who makes choices with particular care to create an authentic faith learning community. This principal recognizeg that at the core of Catholic identity is the theological virtue of love, and that for some youngsters the experience of love is not routine. But her desire as a principal was to create a community in which love is routine. The following English school head described love as:

> that special feeling that you have when in a "nice" school which when extended is love. As in a nice person; pupils find love; something within the ethos of our school where the students feel wanted, nurtured, they are cared for and they are being told it is God. They may not be prepared to accept that. He is an existence that is there; that is what all Catholic schools try to do.

Other themes were evident within the international Catholic school settings. The second group of themes presents some challenges for these international Catholic school leaders; they include: (a) national cultural tensions; (b) lack of spiritual formation and theological knowledge; and, (c) the rationalization of education. These themes influence contemplative leadership practice and were often raised by Catholic school leaders due to their impact on building a faith learning community within their schools.

National Cultural Tensions

Due to my long-term relationship with the Catholic Education Institute in Nijmegen, considerable data was accumulated for this study from Dutch school directors. The Dutch cultural emphasis on gentleness, tolerance, and acceptance of others, provided evidence of the value of building respectful relationships. Shaping a Catholic worldview, however, challenged even those northern Dutch Catholic school educators who made genuine and extensive efforts to preserve Catholic identity within their schools. Northern educational networks—and it is possible to assume that the directors I observed there best portrayed contemplative practice within Dutch Catholic schools—struggled to create Catholic identity within the larger societal realities of Dutch society. In spite of those pressures, within these northern schools Catholic identity efforts press forward. One network's slogan: "See it, hear it, feel it, do it" plainly stated the aims of a Catholic faith learning community. These contemplative leaders—who, like the proverbial Dutchman with a finger in the hole in the dike—view their goal as the survival of the Catholic Church in the Netherlands.

In the south of the Netherlands, directors intentionally built good relationships with parents, teachers, and students; they saw those relationships as evidence of their school's Catholic identity. But when asked about a school-parish connection, the directors made clear to me their belief that the ecclesiastical structure of the Catholic Church was irrelevant to parents and most [southern] Dutch Catholics. For example, an interesting comment shared by a Catholic identity consultant included a Dutch saying: "Teachers don't want argumentation, but co-habitation." In other words, teachers want children to learn to get along, to be open to others, and to be tolerant members of their community. These Catholic religious educators want their students to learn to be Catholic in a way that is consistent with being an open-minded Dutch person. The southern Dutch view implied that having too strong a Catholic

identity produces a kind of separatism or judgmental disposition that is not part of a positive Dutch identity, with its inherent orientation toward toler-ance. As another Dutch school director observed, "We call these virtues not because we are Catholic, but because we are people." Catholic identity is de-emphasized in this statement, neutralizing the prospect of contemplative practice. The southern Dutch Catholic educators offered the most pronounced example of this national cultural values view within my study.

These southern Dutch directors' characters were also based in life stories, communities, and virtue. But my data imply that they viewed the Catholic Church as an institution that was an inconsequential community to their identity formation. I was convinced that their leadership practice was ho-listic, humanitarian, and caring—but it was not evidence of contemplative practice. Contemplative practice assumes a connection between a Catholic school and the theological teachings and institutional structure of the Cath-olic Church. This connection supports the liturgical and sacramental life of students and their families. Contemplative principals intentionally create a faith-learning community that leads to being a Catholic within the Roman Catholic tradition. These humanist Dutch principals are the type alluded to at the 2001 conference that initiated my international study of contemplative practice.

My interactions with southern Dutch directors offered the most obvious examples of Catholic school leaders who held a meaning for their role that was incongruous with contemplative leadership, and not coherent with the typical understanding of Catholic school leadership in Australia, England, and the northern region of the Netherlands. Even in Catholic schools that served large numbers of non-Catholic students, principals were motivated by a Catholic worldview anchored in the Church's teaching. The southern Dutch directors' concept of Catholic identity might represent some excep-tionally liberal views within the Catholic Church in the United States and other nations, for whom an elastic interpretation of Catholic identity stretch-es even beyond the acceptance of orthodox ecclesial theology and tradition.

Lack of Spiritual Formation and Theological Knowledge

Because of the dwindling numbers of members of religious congregations present and involved in Catholic schools, current school community mem-

bers are further removed from direct experience with the presence of vowed religious and their charism. The impact of this lack of the presence of teaching and leadership by current or former vowed religious or those who were taught by the religious—or even taught beside the members of religious congregations—means that those working in Catholic schools today are less likely to absorb spiritual formation by its sheer presence in their environment (Cook, 2001). As such, many of these teachers and leaders are less spiritually formed than lay teachers in the past (pre-Vatican II and Vatican II era; see D'Antonio et al., 2007). This scenario emerged within each of the nations studied and was readily discussed by Catholic educational leaders. Principals, diocesan leaders, and those in charge of Catholic higher education cited this topic as a challenge to their formation efforts and to their ability to develop a faith learning community within a school.

An additional complication to faith formation within the school community is that the current generation of teachers, leaders, parents, and parishioners experienced a different theological education. They are the product of a less dogmatic, more ecumenical religious education following Vatican II. It is widely acknowledged that between 1975 and 1995, religious education was weak in its foundational theological formation (Grace & O'Keefe, 2007; Hoge, Dinges, Johnson & Gonzales, 2001; Jacobs, 1996; Miller, 2006; USCCB, 2005).Compounding this weakness in their preparation for spiritual leadership is the reality that there are fewer priests in parishes. This allows for less time given to the school for the religious education of teachers, parents, and students. Another consequence of this scenario is that there are increased spiritual leadership demands on principals, many of whom do not feel qualified for this role, or simply are not (Schuttloffel, 2003)

In spite of these challenges, if diocesan leaders in the countries studied recognize this situation and respond with appropriate formation opportunities, school leaders can learn how to create a strong Catholic culture within their schools. Common among the current English and Australian school principals was extensive preparation in theology or theological preparation provided through their diocesan schools' offices. The northern Dutch networks and the Dutch religious education centers were attempting to meet this challenge with programmatic materials. Nonetheless, again, the depth of the expectations for theological preparation was considerably different between Dutch principals in the southern and northern regions. One possible explanation for the English emphasis on Catholic identity is the longstanding minority status of Catholics in England, which may have led

them to maintain a stalwart presence, with their own institutions steeped in a distinctive identity and mission. In Australia, Catholic leaders like Brother Kelvin Canavan in the Diocese of Sydney have great academic and theological expectations for Catholic school leadership that supports contemplative practice. Within the United States, the recently published *National Standards and Benchmarks for Catholic Schools* (Ozar & Weitzel-O'Neill, 2012) made explicit the importance of leadership that exemplifies qualities and practices consistent with contemplative leadership.

Rationalization of Education

Rationalization is a term that refers to the embrace of scientific management by educational institutions. In excess, rationalization focuses singular attention on the following: "What is legal?" "What can be measured?" and "What can be standardized?" Many leadership theorists argue that rationalization creates a diminished role for leadership. Leadership research and popular texts concur that behind every successful organization is a superior leader (Golding & Rallis, 1993). In fact, the educational proposition states that an excellent school is the product of an excellent leader managing excellent teachers. This common belief was brought into question when the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED), the English office of school inspections, noted that Catholic schools performed at high levels in their inspections, but school heads [principals, directors] managed only average ratings (Morris, 2010). Several explanations have been proposed. First, is it possible that teachers have raised the level of student performance irrespective of the school head's behavior? This theory seems unlikely, considering current leadership research. Second, the demographics of the student body may play a role; in other words, students enter Catholic schools as superior academic performers. Third, is it possible that OFSTED's Inspection Framework does not include characteristics that are prominent within Catholic schools? My immediate reaction when reading Morris's research was that OFSTED was not measuring the outcomes of contemplative practice. Consequently, inspections of Catholic school heads did not capture the underpinnings of *why* Catholic school leadership.

Catholic school leaders across nations are preoccupied with the ever-expanding encroachment of accountability, government protocols, and the general rationalization of education. Clearly, global trends in education—as in other areas of life—are quickly communicated through today's technologies and are often embraced without deep reflection on the potential consequences.

Catholic school leaders struggle to seek a balance between the positive and negative external influences on their schools. The nations included in my study receive substantial government funds, which—although attractive to supporters of American Catholic schools—involves a cautionary tale. These funds are not without commensurate demands and intrusions. It was often mentioned that these government funds are a type of "golden handcuff" because the schools could no longer exist without these funds—a complexity to consider as various government funding models are considered in the United States.

Discussion

The international study described in this article offers several contributions to an understanding of leadership, character, and Catholic identity formation. Catholic school leadership practice has many dimensions, including competencies (e.g., management, instructional, spiritual), character, reflection, and decision making. In previous studies, I explored leadership development as it related to innovative instructional methods and school change (Schuttloffel, 1998a, 1998b, 1998c, 1998d, 2000). This article presents common themes from an international study searching for evidence of contemplative practice. National culture was considered as a special kind of community and how it influences the meaning of Catholic identity and Catholic school leadership practice. On the surface, the countries studied—England, the Netherlands, and Australia—seem very similar culturally to the United States. Predominately English-speaking, historically White, and developed economically, each of these countries offers a culturally unique brand of national identity and, particularly in southern Netherlands, a unique Catholic identity. My phenomenological study provides descriptions of common meanings and distinctive Catholic leadership practices consistent with contemplative practice *within* Catholic schooling and *across* nations.

First, this study offers unique comparative insights to Catholic educational leadership across four nations. American Catholic schools have been guided in their understanding of Catholic identity by numerous documents from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (1996, 2005) and by publications from the National Catholic Educational Association. The Vatican's Sacred Congregation on Catholic Education (1977) also made explicit what makes a school Catholic. My initial assumption that Catholic school leaders in Australia, England, and the Netherlands translate the meaning of Catholic identity in ways similar to school leaders in the United States is at

once accurate and naïve. National culture also has a powerful influence on a school leader as a special community that informs identity. By examining data collected from Catholic school leaders in other countries, it is possible to gain insight into how similarly Catholic identity is shaped and transmitted in other cultural communities—and, at the same time, consider differences in how culture influences a school leader's Catholic identity.

Within the United States there is a dominant American culture with universal values (e.g. freedom, individual rights, equality, etc.) historically transmitted by government schooling with the goal of shaping American citizens. Today, American society is culturally diverse and, as such, the American Catholic Church is also seeing increasing cultural diversity with new immigrant groups and demographic trends (Pew Hispanic Report, 2007). These diverse Catholic identities are reminiscent of the ethnic Catholic parishes of the United States in earlier times. In those days, ethnic Catholic parishes and schools responded to a community's cultural needs (e.g. Irish-Catholic parishes, German-Catholic parishes). Today, most of those earlier ethnic groups have moved into assimilated parishes that are ethnically neutral. In an era of individualism and multicultural responsiveness, new subcultures are more likely to seek public expression (e.g., Hispanic, Korean, and Vietnamese). Catholic school leaders struggle with how to incorporate these new ethnic groups within their school and embrace their unique culture and its manifestations of Catholic identity while providing an education that prepares students for mainstream American citizenship. This study points to the importance of cultural awareness for responsive leadership if these new immigrants are to find a home within Catholic schooling and the Church.

Secondly, this study informs the complexity of preparing individuals for their future positions as Catholic school leaders (Parks, 2005). The relationship between the elements of character (communities, story, and virtue) and the elements of leadership (beliefs, world view, and action) offer important insights regarding the influence of Catholic identity formation on leadership practice. Investigations into these relationships support the development of leaders capable of responding to the mounting demands of Catholic school administration, including spiritual leadership and cultural responsiveness. The knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary for successful leadership are multifaceted and cannot be easily facilitated through leadership programs. However, the skills, knowledge, and dispositions necessary for thoughtful reflection can be developed and fostered through the creation of a community for professional and faith learning. An implication critical for Catholic

higher education is the challenge to build communities of faith within the educational experience that support the character ideals for Catholic educational leadership and promote virtuous living that forms individuals for mindful faith leadership.

Third, in spite of numerous constructive themes consistent within Catholic school leadership across nations, one shared challenge exists. The faith beliefs and practices of younger generations of Catholics—sometimes identified as Generation X and Millennials—are often quite different from those of older generations of Catholics. How to understand young people's experiences and expressions of Catholicism and appropriately support them in developing Catholic identity seems to challenge the Dutch, English, Australians, and Americans alike. More research is needed to fully understand the challenges and opportunities presented by contemporary phenomena such as globalization, digital technologies, and social media for religious identity and practice.

Conclusion

In summary, this international study displays the constructive themes present across national cultures and the role that Catholic religious identity plays in the decision making of Catholic school leaders. In addition, several themes illuminate the challenges within a contemporary environment that is culturally pluralistic and includes the near total expansion of lay leadership in Catholic schooling. As a comparative study of other nations, the descriptions within the study illuminate the role that a national culture shaped by unique historical events plays in Catholic leadership formation. It might be argued that as a nation of immigrants, the American emphasis on cultural assimilation diminished—or at least de-emphasized—our appreciation of cultural influences.

The exact nature of the impact of special communities, life stories, and virtue on creating beliefs, worldviews, and decision making demonstrates the often intangible quality of leadership for any organization. Although national culture plays an important role in shaping the character of a school leader, common themes across nations emerged that influence a school leader's ability to create a faith learning community. This reality emphasizes the significance of preparing Catholic school leaders for the distinctive nature of their role. This reality also speaks to the need for contemplative leadership practice.

The election of Pope Francis, the Church's first leader from the southern hemisphere, opens the possibility that culture will receive increased attention

as part of Church renewal and the new evangelization. Pope Francis models contemplative leadership in his words and actions, particularly through his interactions with the poor and marginalized. His life story of service to the poor will be attractive, I suspect, to young Catholics who are accustomed to a globally diverse society and who seek meaningful lives through service. Catholic school leaders have the opportunity to build upon the leadership modeled by Pope Francis and to contribute to the future of the Church by creating school cultures that are service-oriented faith learning communities.

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