

Title: Vision and Narrative: How Two Religious Sisters of Mercy Initiated and Managed Organizational Change

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By examining the narrative fragments and narratives that circulated throughout their organization over the course of many decades, his historical case study assesses how a community of Catholic religious women, and in particular the two primary change agents, Sr. M. de Sales Farley and Sr. M. Silverius Shields, used stories about their past and constructed stories about their imagined future to sustain communal identity and lead change.

David Boje's (2008) insights into the dynamics of organizational storytelling, his distinctive interpretation of how *narratives* and *stories* differ, his definition of storytelling organizations that posits the replacement of individual memories with institutional collective memory, and his six elements for creating strategy narratives became the filters for analyzing the data collected for this study. Based on methodology derived from the work of Jules David Prown (1982) and Catherine Whalen (2009), a three-tiered analysis was applied to data presented in the form of an original three-act play.

Nine individual interviews, one focus group of five participants including a co-moderator, and archived materials served as primary data sources. Constant-comparative analysis of data proved useful in sorting through transcripts of interview responses, researcher field notes, and archival documentation. Prior to analysis, data was organized chronologically by subjects and key themes flagged to facilitate retrieval.

Findings suggested that the community of Religious Sisters of Mercy of Loretto-Cresson had worked, prayed, and studied at an institution that Boje (2008) would describe as a storytelling organization. Data pertaining to the two primary subjects of this study was inconclusive in regards to whether or not they had used narratives to lead change in their organization. The Loretto-Cresson Sisters used multiple narrative forms (scrapbooks, theatrical performances, objects of material culture, written accounts, and oral transmission) about their Mercy heritage and religious beliefs before, during and after the transition period. Having in many instances supplanted individual memories with communal memory, the Sisters continued, over time, to preserve their communal identity and sustain their cultural heritage by adding to the plotline of their organizational story.