

THE INSTITUTIONALISATION OF CHARISM IN A FAITH-BASED SCHOOL

A Case Study of a school in the Dominican Tradition

Margaret Joan Lee

M.Ed.Lead., B.Ed.Stud., B.A., P.G. Dip. in Education,
P.G. Cert. in Japanese

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Faculty of Education and Arts

Australian Catholic University

Research Services Locked Bag 4115 Fitzroy, Victoria 3065 Australia

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STATEMENT OF ORIGINAL AUTHORSHIP

This thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis by which I have qualified for or been awarded another degree or diploma.

No parts of this these have been submitted towards the award of any other degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution.

No other person's work has been used without due acknowledgement in the main text of the thesis.

All research procedures reported in this thesis received the approval of the relevant ethics committees (see Appendix A).

Signature: 

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“Some people come into our lives and quickly go ...
Some stay for a while and leave footprints on our hearts ...
and we are changed forever.” Flavia Weedn

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ABSTRACT

The research problem underpinning this study concerns the congruence between Dominican charism and how it is experienced by students, teachers and parents at San Sisto College. The purpose of the research is to explore how students, teachers and parents experience Dominican charism.

Three specific research questions focus the conduct of this study:

1. What do students, teachers and parents understand Dominican charism to be?
2. How do students, teachers and parents experience Dominican charism at San Sisto College?
3. How is Dominican charism nurtured at San Sisto College?

An interpretivist paradigm is adopted for this study. It is underpinned by an epistemological framework of constructionism. Symbolic interactionism is the particular perspective from which the interpretive data is analysed. Case study is the research methodology that orchestrates the selection of data-gathering strategies. The strategies utilised are two types of interview: individual interviews and semi-structured focus group interviews. The ideas in the documents are shown to be consonant with the content of the interviews.

Five types of participants within three broad stakeholder groups are purposively selected. Students are both current and past (graduate students). Parents and teachers, including non-Dominicans (i.e. lay) and informed (i.e. Dominicans) are also involved. A total of 57 stakeholders participated in this study.

This research generates nine conclusions that contribute new knowledge about the experience of charism.

First, the specific experience of charism is understood to be Gospel-authentic. It is perceived inclusive of everyone – irrespective of beliefs. Hence, it is not confined to, or limited by the Catholic Church.

Second, the Dominican charism nurtures a particular way of living the Gospel with a spirituality that is personal, global and practical.

Third, Dominican charism offers schools a Gospel-based framework for living Christianity that students experience as relevant, credible and responsive. It therefore fosters capacity-building of a Gospel culture.

Fourth, charism helps create a particular organisational identity. Students feel a strong connection to their *alma mater*. This strengthens their appreciation for the charism and heritage of the school.

Fifth, principals require a formation period in the charism before or early into appointment.

Sixth, in the absence of a church to which students are connected, the Dominican charism provides a means through which to work in the mission of God, the same mission for which the Church works. It is therefore an effective means of evangelisation.

Seventh, this research concludes that the Dominican charism, in a lay setting, can provide a legitimate way of understanding, teaching and modelling the Gospel when it is believed to be of intrinsic worth. A charism can grow and mature even when it is no longer tied to, answerable to, or bound to a religious order.

Eighth, the mission of the Catholic school incorporates two levels or types of mission – each mission legitimate in the evangelising role of a Catholic school.

Ninth, emerging paradigms relating to church and the Catholic school are evident. The first paradigm is that the school is the “new church”. Spirituality is not nurtured by “church” but rather by practical engagement in issues and activities that are meaningful and responsive to the needs of the world and to the spiritual needs of young people. These activities are available in schools. The second paradigm is that contemporary spirituality is nurtured through non-sectarian ways of living the Gospel. Young people are attracted to a spirituality that incorporates cosmic harmony and a global ethic. The third paradigm is that a regnocentric theology is emerging. This paradigm places less importance on church, and more emphasis on proclamation, mission, and kingdom.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Charism	“Charism” comes from the Greek word meaning “gift”. It refers to the spiritual graces granted to every Christian to perform his or her task in the Church. It is also used as a theological term for the extraordinary graces given to individual Christians for the good of others.
Church	Church referred to in this study is the Roman Catholic Church, a Christian denomination, unless context indicates that it is inclusive of all Christian denominations.
Churched	“Churched” is used to describe people who regularly attend Catholic Mass or any form of regular worship in a Christian church.
Regnocentrism	This term refers to a kingdom-centred ecclesiology. A regno-centric view emphasises the reign of God as central to the life of a Christian. The purpose of the church is to serve the reign of God.
Religious Order	A religious order refers to a community of people who live in some way set in accordance with a religious founder's principles or constitution. Religious Orders in this study exist within the Catholic Church, although they exist in many of the world's religions. Members of religious orders take vows such as poverty, chastity and obedience. They include ordained clergy.
Second Vatican Council	This refers to the 21st ecumenical council of the Roman Catholic Church (1962–65), announced by Pope John XXIII as a means of spiritual renewal for the church. The Council was opened on October 11, 1962.
System or system school	A “system” school refers to a school within an organisational system of schools. These schools are not conducted by the Religious Orders that may have established them. In this study, a system school is one that is owned and conducted by a Catholic diocesan educational authority.
Unchurched	“Unchurched” is used to describe people who do not regularly attend Catholic Mass or any form of regular worship in a Christian church.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACU	Australian Catholic University
APRE	Assistant to the Principal Religious Education
BCE	Brisbane Catholic Education
BCEO	Brisbane Catholic Education Office
CCE	Congregation of Catholic Education

Chapter 1: THE RESEARCH PROBLEM IDENTIFIED

1.1 Introduction: Personal Context

I am in my eighth year as Principal of San Sisto College, a Brisbane Archdiocesan secondary girls' school in the Dominican tradition¹. For three years prior to this appointment, I was Principal of a school with a Mercy² heritage, and before that, Deputy Principal for five years in a school established by the Sisters of St Joseph³. Interest in this study was born of personal experience in those schools that espouse the charism of their founding religious congregations. I also have a particular interest in the culture of schools and the nature of learning. I am interested in how that culture influences learning and personal growth. Specifically, I am interested in the influence of charism in the formation of students, and their witness to the Gospel.

The duty statement for principals in the Archdiocese of Brisbane includes religious leadership of the college. This includes the promotion of the founding charism of the college (Brisbane Catholic Education, 2012, pp. 32-33). As the fifth lay principal in 30 years, I am aware of my own need to understand the Dominican story and the charism of St Dominic so that it may continue to be nurtured with authenticity.

1.2 Research context

This research was conducted at San Sisto College, a secondary school founded and administered by the Congregation of the Dominican Sisters of Eastern Australia and the Solomon Islands between 1961 and 1977. However, since 1978, the college has been fully conducted under the auspices of Brisbane Catholic Education. The heritage of the school's founding Sisters is an overt "Dominican" culture in which the Dominican connections and networks are maintained and fostered. The "Dominican story" is honoured and celebrated. The desire to teach and to live by a particular set of

¹ The college was established by the Dominican Sisters, now known as the Dominican Sisters of Eastern Australian and the Solomon Islands. "In the [Dominican] tradition" is a term used to refer to a school established by a religious order such as the Dominicans but which is now owned, administered by and led by a lay (non-religious) organisation on behalf of the church. Such schools may seek to nurture the charism of the founding order.

² Charism of the Sisters of Mercy, a religious group of women established by Catherine McAuley.

³ This order was established by St Mary of the Cross MacKillop.

values is apparent. Students and staff attend the Dominican Common Ground and Dominican Education Conferences respectively. The college is a member of the Dominican Education Network. Links are maintained with the college's sister-school in Sydney, Santa Sabina College, and staff are in regular contact with the Dominican Archivist, a past pupil of San Sisto, and other Dominican Sisters. Students are taught about the college's connections to the wider Dominican community; they hear the Dominican "stories" and are aware of their link to the founder of the Order of Preachers, St Dominic.

The maintenance of Dominican links and culture has been a concern to school leadership. In the early 1970s, the Dominican Sisters decided to withdraw their governance and management of the college, and return to Sydney. This led to the transfer of the college from religious to lay leadership in 1977/78. College archives note that 1977 was "something of a crisis year" as there was a "sense of loss of a permanent Dominican commitment to the College" (Bushell, 1996, p. 69). Also, it is recorded in 1978 that the first lay principal "was very aware of the need to maintain the school culture's distinctive traditions" (Bushell, 1996, p. 74).

Of the 306 Catholic schools in Queensland in 2014, San Sisto College is the only secondary school that has a Dominican heritage. The only Dominican primary school is the neighbouring St Martin's School (opened as Blessed Martin's Parish School in 1956) which was built adjacent to the Dominican-served parish church and priory, Our Lady of Graces. St Martin's was the eighteenth primary school opened by the Dominican Sisters, and San Sisto was its ninth secondary school – and its last.

The location of San Sisto in Carina, opposite the Priory of the Dominican Friars, assists with the maintenance of the Dominican ethos. A Dominican Father is a member of the College Board and provides spiritual direction to it. Until July 2010, a Dominican Sister maintained a pastoral presence within the college. In July 2010, the Queensland Dominican Sisters relocated to Sydney, leaving no Sisters in Queensland.

Five out of forty-five teaching staff in 2014 are past students, including the Assistant Principal–Religious Education. This situation assists with the continuity of the Dominican ethos. The college enjoys a high level of staff retention. Hence there has been a nurturance of the ethos by the older members of staff.

The college has experienced rapid growth since 2007 when the student population was 448 students. Numbers increased to 600 by 2014. This has meant that staff induction, and particularly in the areas of culture and charism, has needed to be a high priority. To ensure continuity of the charism, students begin their first year at the college with eight days of induction into the culture and ethos of San Sisto. New teachers are similarly instructed in the charism and history of the college.

In 2007, staff generated a list of “values” that they believed to be “Dominican” or as the “perceived identity” and “essence” of the college. These were subsequently documented and provided the basis for the college vision statement and curriculum planning documents. These documents assist in the transmission and enculturation of the ethos.

Because the original written expression of “Dominican charism” at San Sisto in 2007 was derived from a set of identified and agreed values rather than from research, its authenticity as a set of values reflective of authentic Dominican charism is questionable. Nonetheless, subsequent research conducted by college staff when preparing a list “Habits of Spirit⁴”, confirmed that each of the values that staff had identified as being alive at the college in 2007, were characteristics of the Dominican Charism (Dominican Sisters of Eastern Australia, 1999).

Staff have designed a curriculum framework that incorporates the Dominican charism and Habits of Spirit. Therefore, it is reasonable to expect that:

- Students experience a culture rich in Dominican understandings;
- Staff model and expect from their students joyfulness, hope, connectedness to God, respect for self, others and all creation, justice, compassion, standards of excellence;
- Staff understand and appreciate these habits as the expressed Dominican charism;

⁴ The “Habits of Spirit” are 16 attributes taught as part of the college curriculum. They, with “Habits of Mind”, contribute to Dimension 5 of the Dimensions of Learning Framework adopted by the college as its authoritative pedagogy. The 16 “Habits of Spirit” are personal characteristics such as compassion, living joyfully and living hopefully. Staff explicitly teach these habits through regular lessons. These habits are referred to as being evident in St Dominic or later Dominicans. They are dispositions derived from the gospel.

- Students, with an increasing level of understanding, demonstrate both a knowledge and a practice of those Gospel values that form the Dominican charism of the college;
- There is a culture where life and learning are loved with passion;
- There is a strong sense of community where staff and students demonstrate a willingness to offer self in service of others;
- There is an understanding of the contribution of the Dominican charism to the Catholic Christian story.

The focus of this research concerns such expectations and their lived reality.

1.3 The Research Design

The purpose of this research is to explore how students, teachers, and parents experience Dominican charism at San Sisto College. The explanation and justification for this research purpose is provided in Chapter Two.

From the literature review (Chapter Three and Chapter Four) three specific research questions were generated. These questions focus the conduct of the research design. They are:

- What do students, teachers and parents understand Dominican charism to be?
- How do students, teachers and parents experience Dominican charism at San Sisto College?
- How is Dominican charism nurtured at San Sisto College?

Given that the purpose of this study is to explore how students, teachers and parents experience Dominican charism at San Sisto, the research paradigm of interpretivism is adopted and the research design, shown in Table 1.1, was generated.

Table 1-1 Summary of the research design

Epistemology	Constructionism
Research Paradigm	Interpretivism
Theoretical perspective	Symbolic interactionism
Methodology	Case study
Participants	Purposive selection
Data-gathering Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document analysis • Individual interviews • Semi-structured focus group interviews

1.3.1 Epistemology

Constructionist epistemology focuses on how meaning is constructed, negotiated, maintained and adjusted within a specific context within specific human interactions (Schwandt, 1994). Therefore, it provides an appropriate philosophical basis for the conduct of this research. Constructionism (Crotty, 1998; Schwandt, 1994) acknowledges the individual, subjective, way that human beings draw on personal experience and knowledge to interpret the world they are in and make sense of their lives and experiences. This epistemology is based on the view that “reality” is socially constructed by and between the persons who experience it (Gergen, 1999). The meaning making and experience of Dominican charism by each student, teacher and parent is constructed by them in the social, historical, organisational and religious contexts within which they live, work and study.

1.3.2 Theoretical Perspective

Because the participants engage in meaning-making, symbolic interactionism is adopted as the theoretical perspective. This perspective is premised on the understanding that the participants make meaning from their interaction with others and with symbols within their context. Meaning is updated and modified dynamically with ongoing interaction (Dimmock & O'Donoghue, 1997). Participants construct their social world and give it meaning (McClelland, 2000).

1.3.3 Research Methodology

As this study explores the phenomenon of experience within a particular setting, case study is used as the orchestrating rationale for this research. Case study is bounded by the voices of the student, teacher and parent participants of the San Sisto College

community (Tellis, 1997). Case study is an in-depth, empirical investigation into a “contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context” (Yin, 2003, p. 13).

1.3.4 Participants

Participants were selected purposively, that is, on the basis of specific knowledge that they are perceived to have in relation to the nature and experience of charism. Such selection ensures rich and in-depth information about a real-life context (Merriam, 1998). Selective participation included current students in Years 8 – 12, students who had graduated within three years of this study; parents, teachers, and “informed participants” (vowed Dominicans known to the community because of their teaching engagements or visits). All college teachers were invited to participate, whereas parents and students were selected on the basis of their known participation in the life of the college.

1.3.5 Data-gathering Strategies

Strategies chosen for the collection of data for this research are:

- Document analysis
- Individual interviews (n = 29 participants)
- Semi-structured focus group interviews (n = 36 participants in 8 focus groups)

1.4 Significance of the Research

Research into the experience of Dominican charism is important for a number of reasons. First, as the Sisters of the Dominican Order of Eastern Australia and the Solomon Islands experience declining recruitment, and their involvement in schools decreases, it is of value for them to appreciate how the Dominican charism is currently nurtured in the schools it established.

Second, there is a paucity of research concerning the influence of Dominican charism on young people. This study may address this lacuna.

Third, in 2014, 75 schools across Australia and New Zealand expressed a desire to be connected to a network of Dominican schools to enhance the Dominican charism of their schools. This study explores the Dominican charism as a means of transmitting the Gospel message and providing witness to it.

Fourth, this research offers leaders in schools ideas and strategies for the nurturing of charism in a contemporary school setting.

Fifth, there is a lacuna in the literature of the experience of charism in schools by the three stakeholder groups of students, teachers and parents. This study offers a voice to such participants.

Sixth, the connection between the experience of a charism, the message of Jesus Christ in the Gospel and the perception of the Catholic Church offers new insight into the contemporary reality of the faith and spirituality of young people.

Seventh, this research illuminates the intrinsic value of Dominican charism in a school setting. This offers new scholarship and is of value to those in Catholic school systems charged with the responsibility of determining the charism of new schools.

1.5 Outline of the Thesis

A brief outline of the structure of this thesis is provided below.

Chapter One: The Research Problem Identified

This chapter introduces the research context, design and significance. By the outline of its chapter content, it provides the framework for the development and sequence of the research.

Chapter Two: Defining the Research Problem

This chapter provides an explanation of the research context and generates a rationale for the explanation of the research problem.

Chapter Three: Mission of the Contemporary Catholic School

This chapter presents a review of the literature in relation to the research problem. Emerging from the analysis of the literature are specific research questions which are identified and justified.

Chapter Four: The Mission of the Contemporary Catholic School

This chapter provides an explanation of the mission of the contemporary Catholic school and of the Catholic Church. It provides further clarification of and justification for the research problem within the broader context of church.

Chapter Five: Research Design

This chapter explains and justifies the research design.

Chapter Six: New Understandings

This chapter explains the generation of new understandings from an analysis of the data.

Chapter Seven: Discussion of the New Understandings

This chapter presents a discussion and critique of the new understandings concerning emerging themes. The discussion positions the new understandings within the context of other research.

Chapter Eight: Conclusions and Recommendations

This chapter identifies and justifies the conclusions and offers recommendations for policy and practice concerning each of the research questions.

Chapter 2: DEFINING THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to justify the research problem that is explored within this study.

2.2 Conceptualising the Research Problem

The conceptualisation of the research problem is diagrammatically presented in Figure 2.1. This diagram represents the structure of the concepts that will be explored in the development of the research problem.

This research begins with my own story and situation within the college context (see Chapter 1, sections 1.1 and 1.2). An understanding of the history of the Dominicans, the nature of “charism” and Dominican “charism” in particular, and of the educational philosophy of St Dominic and his followers contributes to an appreciation of the research problem (sections 2.3 – 2.4). The global and the Australian experiences of this same phenomenon situate the research problem as broader than the location of this case study. Within these local, national and international contexts, the research problem of the experience of Dominican charism by students, teachers and parents at San Sisto College emerges. This experience is the focus of the research.

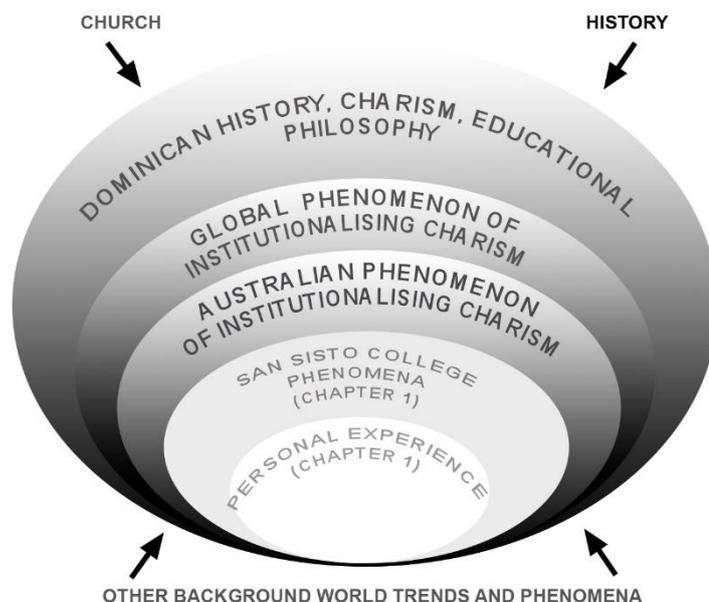


Figure 2-1 Conceptualising the research problem

2.3 Dominican History

An overview of the story of St Dominic and his Order of Preachers gives insight into the evolution and development of a living charism⁵ that provides contemporary witness to the Gospel.

The Dominican story began with the birth of St Dominic Guzman, in Caleruega, Spain, in 1170. St Dominic was born into an impoverished, yet noble family. He was educated by his uncle, a priest, from the age of seven. At fourteen years of age he began ten years of study at the university in Palencia. He was ordained a priest at 23 years of age, in 1196, and became a canon⁶ in the town of Osma.

The Church was in turmoil (Guisepi, 2007). An increasingly literate laity was experiencing the dichotomy between the values of the New Testament, and those exhibited and lived within the institutional church (McGonigle, 2006). Laity in parts of France and Italy were turning away from the institutional church. Lay groups that sought a more simple, and Gospel-aligned way of life were forming.

Confronted with the misery of a Church trapped in ignorance and undermined by widespread clerical corruption, affluence and lack of sound teaching, Dominic became convinced of the power and importance of preaching to bring the light of truth to people's lives. This prompted him to gather together a community of preachers, men and women, lay people and clerics who, by the authenticity of their lives together would give credibility to the word they preached. (Woods, 2006, August 18-19)

Dominic de Guzman preached, with Bishop Diego, to the towns of the Languedoc in southern France. He was particularly concerned at the popularity of the Albigensian cult which taught that human beings had to free themselves from everything material and live a life of austerity, with an emphasis on fasting, chastity, poverty and preaching (McGonigle, 2006, p. xiv). St Dominic countered this dualism by arguing a "holistic" view of the goodness of creation and of the human body – "creation was essentially good because God is the Creator" (Vidmar, 2008, p. x). St Dominic based his argument on scripture: "God looked on what he had made and called it good" (Genesis 1:31).

⁵ A living charism is a charism to which contemporary religious contribute scholarship so that the charism may be better understood and be kept alive with living examples of Christ in our midst (Thea: TI2-12 04/12/12).

⁶ A canon was a priest living within the precinct of or close to a cathedral.

He saw informed preaching, born of a commitment to study and prayer, as the way forward (Irish Dominicans, 2009). He demonstrated that compassion for and support of the destitute was even more important than study or preaching (G. Kelly, 2009, August 14, p. 8).

St Dominic firstly established a convent for a group of former Albigensian women in Prouilhe, France in 1206. He obtained official permission in December 1216 from Pope Honorius III to establish the Order of Preachers, as the Dominicans came to be known. Dominic de Guzman in France and Spain, like Francis of Assisi in Italy, sought a return to the ideals of the Gospel “in new ways” (McGonigle, 2006, p. xiv). He sent his first members of the Order to the universities of France. “They were encouraged to pursue study in order to arrive at and share the truth. Education became a critical part of living the Dominican mission” (Runkel, 2005, p. 1). He argued that it was only when friars had a thorough understanding of scripture could they argue against its misconception and heresy. By St Dominic’s death in 1221, aged 52 years, he had established twenty priories, and three hundred men had joined the Order. Within the next eighty years, there were 20,000 friars and 141 monasteries of Dominican nuns (Vidmar, 2008, p. 3).

St Dominic left only three writings to history (Zagano & McGonigle, 2006, p. 4) and they contain comment only about his own penances, and the need for penance, rules and constitutions. The most authentic writing about St Dominic would appear to be in *The Libellus* by Blessed Jordan of Saxony, the Second Master General of the Order, who wrote of his own and others’ memories of St Dominic (Province of St Albert the Great, 2014). Blessed Cecilia of Caesarini also wrote her memories of the man, and events relating to him (Jarrett, 1955).

From what can be pieced together from biographical accounts, St Dominic was a prayerful man of deep faith. He wanted to be like Jesus, spending his life teaching to all who “needed saving” (Smith, 2007, p. 8; Vicaire, 2000, p. 49). He was a man of deep intellect, who related well to people and enjoyed good humour. His compassion was profound, and his priority was always to provide practical help to the destitute or dying (Smith, 2007, p. 6). St Dominic preached the truth of the Gospel.

The 800 years of the Order of Preachers have witnessed “a mixture of strength and weakness, of fidelity and failure, of serious decline and inspired renewal” (Britt, 2008,

August 15). It was reformed in Nineteenth Century France, following the revolution, and Henri-Dominique Lacordaire has been credited with authentically adapting and accommodating the Dominican charism in the face of a new world order (Udovic, 2007).

The legacy of St Dominic and his followers, such as Thomas Aquinas, St Catherine of Siena and Albert the Great, exists in Australia today through eight Irish Sisters who, in 1867, established the first Australian community of Dominican Sisters in Maitland, New South Wales (MacGinley, 2009, p. 27). Nearly 90 years later, in 1954, the Sisters founded St Martin's Primary School and, in 1961, began their ministry in secondary education at San Sisto College (MacGinley, 2009). San Sisto College, then, was founded on Dominican charism.

To define the research problem, the nature of "charism" and of "Dominican charism" in particular is now explored.

2.3.1 Charism

"Charism" originates from the Greek word "charisma", meaning "gift". In a theological sense it means a free gift of grace from the Holy Spirit for the benefit of the church. "Whether extraordinary, or simple and humble, charisms are graces of the Holy Spirit which directly or indirectly benefit the Church, ordered as they are to her building up, to the good of men [*sic*], and to the needs of the world" (St Charles Borromeo Parish, 1994, par. 799). St Paul too explained the nature of charism (1 Corinthians 12:4, 9, 28, 30, 31). The purpose of these gifts is to "fan into flame the gifts God has graciously given to us (2 Tim 1:6) so that the Church will be healthy and able to live out its mission to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ ("Charism gifts building up the church (Excerpts from the rule of St Michael)," p. 13). Charism, or gift of the Spirit, provides a person with special insight to respond in a unique way to the Gospel, thus making those who possess such gifts to be special vehicles of God's grace and providence for others (Hilkert, 1986; O'Loughlin, 2000).

2.3.2 St Dominic's Charism

Dominican charism is inclusive of the specific gifts of St Dominic and later Dominicans. It also includes those values that communities and schools seek to inculcate into their members as they endeavour to honour the life and story of St Dominic (Dominican Sisters of Eastern Australia, 1999). Dominican charism

incorporates “those specific values espoused by St Dominic de Guzman and his early followers which became part of the philosophy of the Dominican Order and the institutions founded by its members” (Neylon, 1996, p. 17).

The Dominican preaching charism is a faithful and compassionate response to a poorly catechized world; it is a broad weaving together of words and contexts; study, proclamation, teaching and earnest conversation, on the one hand, and books, churches, universities and multiple other social contexts, on the other. (Hilkert, Hintersberger, Legrand, O'Driscoll, & Philibert, 2001, p. 2)

While words, both written and oral, are part of the preaching mandate of the Order, it is also living and living within relationships, within an integration of the contemplative and intellectual sides and the thirst for justice, that constitutes this charism (Goergen, 2002, p. 11). A significant part of the preaching as promoted by St Dominic was his ability to listen and to respond to the “signs of the times”. Dominican charism provokes a response to the Gospel that is appropriate “to the local circumstances of culture, history, and church” (Schillebeeckx in Zagano & McGonigle, 2006, p. xii). While it may be true that a “charism” is a gift to an individual, any attempt to sum up the role and purpose of the Dominicans within the mission of the Church is also referred to as Dominican charism (Britt, 2008, August 15, p. 3). “Dominican charism” is also used to refer to the gifts of subsequent Dominicans to the Church.

2.3.3 Asserting Charism in schools

The Second Vatican Council directed religious orders to reassert the vision and traditions of their founders. A legacy of the charism of Religious Orders in Catholic schools is that they can exhibit a “sharper focus and clearer purpose” (Cook, 2004). Vatican II invited those who seek to develop school communities in the tradition of founders to renew the charism of those communities with authenticity.

Telling the stories, creating the imagery, preserving the “essence” of what is Dominican, imparting the vision of St Dominic to new and successive generations of students, and interpreting the signs of the times within local environments requires knowledge about the charism, appropriate leadership and cultural understanding.

Leadership’s role in para-modern times is one of preserving and recalling the original vision of Dominican identity and mission and simultaneously providing new moments in the tradition of preaching. Leaders are called to bring the spirit of the charism to contemporary culture, making it present to the needs of that culture. It is in bringing that charism of preaching and its core

values to each generation that Dominicans are faithful to the intention of St Dominic. (Runkel, 2005, p. 62)

The recruitment of staff who provide appropriate witness to the Gospel and who preach the Gospel by example is required (Hilkert, 1986, p. 154). The provision of opportunities for staff and students to adequately and appropriately reflect on the stories and their applicability to life and experience nurtures witness to the Gospel in the particular way emphasised by the charism (Rock, 2006, p. 11).

2.4 Dominican Education Philosophy

Eight hundred years after St Dominic, it is appropriate that schools understand the meaning of an authentic Dominican education. An education in “the Dominican Tradition should be rooted in and shaped by the broader intellectual, spiritual and cultural tradition of the Church from which it emerged” (Smith, 2007, p. 3). But through the charism of St Dominic and the particular gifts of other great Dominicans such as Thomas Aquinas, themes, directions and values emerge that are distinctive of, yet not exclusive to, a Dominican education. “[St Dominic’s] spirituality is solidly planted in a foundation of prayer, community, study and preaching ...” (Zagano & McGonigle, 2006, p. 4), and these “four pillars” (Hurley, 2005), that emanate from the Dominican charism, form the essence of any Dominican educational philosophy. A Dominican educational philosophy emphasises:

... an orientation to study, a contemplative attitude and prayer, and collaboration based on respect in order that faculty and students may enrich their lives with the values which flow from St Dominic’s charism... The intellectual, contemplative, and communal expressions of the charism are expected to be more than theological abstractions; they must be a mandate for specific religious and educational activity. (McNicholas, 1990, p. 4)

The intellectual component of a Dominican Education philosophy is expressed in study. St Dominic believed that study not only made for a better cultured and educated person, but it enhanced one’s ability to contemplate the Word of God and to understand the meaning of one’s life within the whole of creation (Hinnebusch, 1985, p. 11). The contemplative component for St Dominic was centred both in the Gospel and within the world in its current times. It implies an attitude of reflection and openness to the Lord wherever He is found: in scripture, liturgical worship, personal and common prayer, people, nature, human events. Community, as the third component of a Dominican educational charism, incorporates principles of mutual respect, right

relationships, collaboration, and democratic governance – each with implications for schools in the Dominican tradition. Within a school setting, the preaching, the fourth “pillar”, is the way that individuals show God to others, or the way they bring the Gospel to others through their actions and presence. The preaching concerns human beings as persons, and who they become by the way they serve others (Tuite, n.d.).

How a Dominican philosophy of education is contextualised and remains authentic to the charism of St Dominic, and how Dominican charism and educational philosophy are experienced by students and staff are questions explored in this study.

2.5 The Global Phenomenon of Institutionalising Charism

How schools authentically interpret and strategise for the experience of Dominican charism has been a question for Dominican schools globally, particularly since Vatican II (McNicholas, 1990; Runkel, 2005). Vatican II called for a return to the foundational elements of a religious congregation’s charism and original vision of the founder. At the same time, congregations were challenged “to read the signs of the times and to act accordingly” (Sammon, 2001). The mixed messages in many religious congregations and countries caused confusion and conflict. The number of men and women following vocations to religious orders after Vatican II declined (McNicholas, 1990). This resulted in the need throughout the world for the leadership of Dominican and other order-owned schools to transfer from women and men in Religious Orders to lay women and men.

The American congregations of Dominican Sisters in the 1980s – 1990s anticipated that the continuation in schools of an authentic Dominican charism under their leadership was in jeopardy due to this transition from religious to lay leadership. This, they said, “would affect every area of the school: its Catholic identity as well as its educational philosophy based on the Dominican charism” (McNicholas, 1990, p. 3). For these Sisters, continuing and sustained staff formation was essential, and the role of the principal in knowing and effectively transmitting Dominican charism through Dominican educational philosophy and practice was considered vital.

Lay leadership in schools in USA is now commonplace, as it is in Australia. The charism of St Dominic has been institutionalised into Dominican-sponsored schools “with noteworthy results” where planned and intentional processes of integration have

been conducted (Runkel, 2005). Nonetheless, the maintenance of the Dominican charism remains a concern for congregations as their involvement in and sponsorship of Dominican schools declines.

A context of declining numbers in religious congregations who are able to lead schools, and a malaise within the Church itself (Sammon, 2001) that has led to a difficulty in recruiting principals interested in religious leadership (Coughlan, 2009; A. O'Brien, 2013), highlight the need for research into the nature of authentic Dominican charism and how it is currently experienced in schools. Contemporary issues in a globalised, secularised, individualistic world, influence students, teachers and parents world-wide (Francis, Astley, & Robbins, 2001). Lay administration of once order-owned and managed schools with a charism, and of religious institutions *per se*, is a global phenomenon that is experienced also in Australia.

2.6 The Australian Phenomenon of Institutionalising Charism

2.6.1 The Phenomenon in Australia in Dominican Schools

Education based on the Dominican tradition is a relatively recent phenomenon in Australia. The need for improving the education of the young was neither a government priority nor organised under a structure of schooling during the establishment of the young Australian colony. However, the Catholic Church availed itself of funding under the Denominational Schools Board so that schools could be established. Teachers were lay – often a husband and wife team, with the parish priest the chairman of the local school board (MacGinley, 2009, p. 41). By the 1860s, the Catholic bishops of Australia were seeking religious congregations to assist with the transmission of faith in the new colony. Bishop James Murray sought assistance from the Dominican Sisters in Kingstown (Dun Laoghaire), Ireland, to help set up a school in Maitland, New South Wales. Subsequently, eight sisters came to Australia in 1867 to undertake this task. By the end of the 1870s, several groups of religious sisters had come to Australia on the invitation of various bishops to establish schools or to work with laity in providing an education to young Catholics: the Sisters of Mercy, Good Samaritan Sisters, Charity Sisters, Good Shepherd Sisters and Benedictine nuns. When the eight Dominicans arrived, they replaced two lay women who had been conducting St John's Denominational School in Maitland since the departure of the Good Shepherd Sisters (MacGinley, 2009, p. 47). The Dominican Sisters were central to

Bishop Murray's dream of expanding educational opportunities. He established "provisional schools" in rural settlements that were eligible for government assistance and he used Dominican ex-pupils wherever he could as the teachers. In 1880 the *Public Instruction Act* was enacted in New South Wales. This effectively withdrew all public aid from church and private schools. Bishop Murray recruited other Sisters to assist in his teaching mission. The Brigidines arrived from Ireland, and then the Josephites, founded by the Australian Saint Mary of the Cross MacKillop, joined others in the area west of Maitland, New South Wales. The Dominican Sisters of Maitland continued with the expansion of their school although money was always an issue.

A novitiate was established at Maitland and from this community the Dominicans in Australia expanded. By 1922 a Dominican Teacher Training College operated at Maitland. The Sisters opened St Martin's School at Carina in Brisbane in 1956, and San Sisto College in 1961. The Dominican Sisters of Eastern Australia and the Solomon Islands had also by this time established four schools for children with disabilities.

The Catholic Church in Australia enjoyed the luxury of booming numbers in religious congregations. These religious men and women provided leadership of, and teachers in schools. Following Vatican II, a significant number of religious men and women left religious orders, and subsequently considerably fewer have entered, causing staffing and other issues in schools – a situation similar to that experienced elsewhere around the world (McNicholas, 1990). Following the Goulburn Schools' Strike of 1962, schools in Australia once again received government assistance financially. In 1972 the Whitlam Government set up a Federal Schools Commission and greatly increased funding for all schools, both government and non-government (Australian Broadcasting Commission [ABC], 1997). Politically, socially and ecclesially, uncertain times followed.

Since the days of the thirty-one schools opened and operated by the Dominican sisters, only four remain under their management (St Lucy's, Santa Sabina and Catherine Sullivan Centre in Sydney, and Siena College in Melbourne), and no secondary school is led by a Dominican Sister. Four other schools in South Australia are owned and managed by three other Dominican Congregations: Cabra, St Mary's, St Dominic's Priory College and Blackfriars College. However, 75 schools across Australia and

New Zealand have some connection with the Dominican charism, wanting to hear of educational activities and have access to resources to nurture their charism (O'Shea, 2014, July 19). These schools perceive benefits for a Catholic school community belonging to a spiritual tradition. "It can provide a graced way to give compelling life to the Gospel.... It becomes the glue that binds the community and gives it focus in its mission" (Green, 2009, p. 12).

Following the 2010 Dominican Educators' conference, the Dominican Sisters appointed a promoter of the charism for Dominican schools within the Congregation of the Dominican Sisters of Eastern Australia and the Solomon Islands. The role holder assists schools in understanding and nurturing "Dominican" charism. Contexts change but the desire to provide an environment of authentic witness to the Gospel in the way of St Dominic exists.

It is within the context of the Australian Dominican story and the parallel international context that San Sisto College is positioned and this case study is conducted.

2.6.2 The Australian experience of institutionalising other charisms

Concern for the authenticity of the charism of the founder, and the students' experience of the same, is not unique to Dominican schools. It is a phenomenon experienced across the world and in Australia in other religious schools no longer led by Religious⁷.

The Edmund Rice schools across Australia have experienced the same "laicisation" of school leadership, with the same concerns of identity, authenticity, and experience (Elvery, 2013; Tuite, 2007). The influence on students of programs designed to develop a sense of relationship with the poor has been studied in Edmund Rice schools (Price, 2008). Schools in the Mercy tradition have been seeking to keep their Mercy charism alive (Schneider, 2006). Similarly, Marist schools have sought greater clarity of the nature of their founder's charism and how this is lived and understood within their schools in contemporary times (M. Green, 2009, July).

⁷ "Religious" is a term used to describe men and women who are members of a religious institute of nuns, friars, brothers or sisters. These men and women take vows of poverty, chastity and obedience to the congregations or institutes to which they belong.

While this research concerns the nurturing of charism in one particular faith-based school in the Dominican tradition, the topic is relevant locally, nationally and globally, irrespective of the founding order.

2.7 Defining the Research Problem

Research has confirmed that charism provides a special way for Catholic schools to exhibit their identity (Cook, 2004; Cook & Simonds, 2011; Farrelly, 1997). The expression of the charism in schools is one means by which the authenticity of a Catholic school is maintained. However, in a changing global context, there is a tension between what schools say they are doing in nurturing charism and the lived experience of charism by students, teachers and parents.

The research problem is to be appreciated within the scholarship of organisational learning. Argyris and Schon (1978) assert that people hold maps in their heads about how to plan, implement and review their actions. They further maintain that few people are conscious that the maps they use to act upon are not the theories they explicitly espouse. Moreover, fewer people are aware of the maps or theories they do use (Argyris, 1980).

This is not merely the distinction between what people say and do. Argyris and Schon suggest that there is a theory consistent with what people say and a theory consistent with what they do. Therefore the distinction is not between "theory and action but between two different "theories of action" (Argyris, Putnam, & McLain Smith, 1985, p. 82). They use the following concepts to explain this phenomon: *Espoused theory* and *Theory-in-use*. The research problem explores participants' espoused theory of the Dominican charism and their theory in use of this charism.

To summarise, the research problem concerns congruence between the espoused Dominican charism and how it is experienced by students, teachers and parents at San Sisto College.

2.8 The Research Purpose

The Research purpose is to explore how students, teachers and parents at San Sisto College experience Dominican Charism.

2.9 The General Research Question

The general research question is:

How do the students, teachers and parents experience the Dominican charism at San Sisto College?

Chapter 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Introduction

This research explores how students, teachers and parents experience Dominican charism at San Sisto College.

The purpose of this chapter is to generate and justify a review of the literature that identifies and illuminates the issues that underpin the purpose of this research.

3.2 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of factors that influence the experience of charism in schools evolved during the process of reviewing the literature concerning the research problem (see Figure 3.1).

From an analysis of the literature five interrelated themes were generated:

1. Charism
2. Society (limited to the areas relevant for this study)
3. Culture (of organisations and of Catholic schools in particular)
4. The experience of charism by students, teachers and parents
5. Mission of the contemporary Catholic School.

Charism has a central position within the framework and plays a key role in forming the identity and ethos of Catholic schools. The essence of the particular charism informs its implementation within the educational context. It influences the school's beliefs and values which form the basis of school policy and activity.

The review of literature identified society and culture as influencing the implementation and experience of charism. Society, within which Church and charism exist, evolves. The source of the predominant authority in society changes over time (Bouma, 2006). Trends are observed in successive societies. Contemporary society is characterised by individualism, globalisation, pluralism and secularisation and an individual struggle with identity and meaning. These attributes cause further social change. They influence ways in which charisms respond to society's needs, and in turn, ways in which a society or school informs the charism.

Charism is imbedded within the culture of a school and is infused into all aspects of it. This is shown by the arrows in Figure 3.1. Culture embraces charism so that a human experience of charism is generated. Likewise, that human experience influences the dynamics of the developing charism.

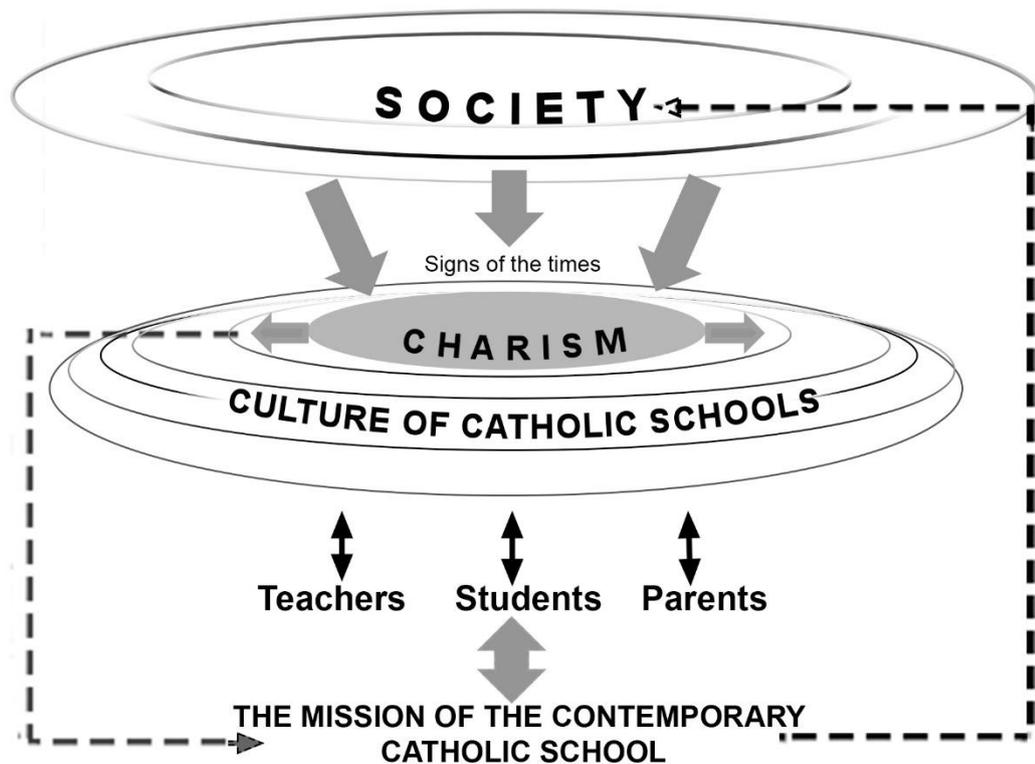


Figure 3-1 Conceptualisation of the literature

The arrows in Figure 3.1 indicate that society influences both charism and the culture of the Catholic school. Through various methods and strategies, charism is implemented within schools and is experienced in different ways by students, teachers and parents. The dashed arrows indicate the connection between charism and the mission of the Catholic School. Authentic charism is pivotal in drawing connections between, and developing relationships across society, culture and stakeholders so that the mission of the Catholic School may be promoted. Just as society influences charism and stakeholders, so too the stakeholders, with their experience of the Gospel of Jesus, influence society.

The final theme that was generated from the literature review is that of the mission of the contemporary Catholic school. This theme is reviewed separately and substantially in Chapter 4.

The exploration of the literature identifies the influences and relationships that illuminate the research problem.

3.3 Charism

3.3.1 Charism: Towards a Definition

Before an exploration of “Dominican charism” is undertaken, the concept of “charism” invites explanation. Definitions used are often contestable, contradictory, or inconsistent and from a variety of perspectives or sources, such as theology, scripture, church, religious orders and Catholic school educational literature.

Some attempts at definition have been described as “downright problematic” because:

... [for] some it means little more than a distinctive pedagogical style; for some a cult-like attachment to a particular founder or foundress; for some an insular or inwardly focussed association of people with a circle-the-wagons motivation for remaining associated; and for others a nostalgic but ill-defined hankering after what it was like when the sisters or the brothers were around. (M. Green, 2009, July, p. 5)

Moreover, the connection linguistically between charism and words such as “charisma” and “charismatic” has added to the confusion. The word “charism” is derived from the Greek word “charisma” meaning “gift” or “gifts”. It refers to the theological concept of those gifts of the Holy Spirit that different people offer for the building up of the Church, for its renewal and vitality. The notion of “spiritual gift” as a gift from the Spirit is consistent with that which is referred to in the scriptures (Corinthians 12: 4 -11 and Ephesians 4: 7 -16). This concept was explored during the Second Vatican Council (1961 –1965).

It is not only through the sacraments and the ministries of the Church that the Holy Spirit sanctifies and leads the people of God and enriches it with virtues, but, allotting his gifts to everyone according as He wills, He distributes special graces among the faithful of every rank. By these gifts He makes them fit and ready to undertake the various tasks and offices which contribute toward the renewal and building up of the Church. (Paul VI, 1964, par. 12)

The concept of charisms or “spirit gifts” is amplified in the following way:

Whether extraordinary, or simple and humble, charisms are graces of the Holy Spirit which directly or indirectly benefit the Church, ordered as they are to her building up, to the good of men [*sic*] and to the needs of the world. (St Charles Borromeo Parish, 1994)

While charism is defined in these terms by the church, “charisms” do not have their origin in the hierarchy of the church, nor are they derived from the sacraments (Gambari, 1983). Because members of religious orders attempt to mirror the character of their founder, any definition of charism also includes the notion that “religious charisms [define] communities as well” (M. L. McDermott, 2006, p. 5).

Though the above definitions are helpful, they invite further clarification. Religious communities have sought to clarify the definition. The following, from a Benedictine perspective, provides some elaboration on the concept.

Charism is the heart of the founder aglow at one period in history
Beating in on us in another day and age...
Charism is tree, branch, flower, fruit.
An ever-changing, always rooted obsession
For the coming reign of God, where the reign of God is needed most,
One that develops from age to age
And then grows up in a new way in the next one.
Charism is a living passion for whatever dimension of the life of Christ...
Peace, truth, healing, mercy ... is missing now.
Here, in our time.
Where we are. (Chittister, cited in Black, 2009, p. 1)

The truth is, since charisms are the saving mysteries
Of the life of Christ
For the church and the world,
They never die.
The problem is,
They can die in us.
They can die in us if we refuse them.
They can die in us if we rigidify them.
They can die in us if we fail to give them away.
(Chittister, cited in Tuite, 2007, p. 16)

The following attempt at definition, from a Marist perspective, explains the intensity of charism but not its nature.

[C]harism, like the wind, is elusive – an unseen but real force which can be felt as a gentle breeze or untamed energy, something that moves and uproots, and carries seed to far away places. And like the wind it can never be captured or colonised. (Dodds, quoted in M. Green, 2000, April, p. 2)

The discourse focussing on charism in the religious community identifies the concept of charism as contained in the word “gift”, and residing within individuals and

communities. Charisms within religious communities overtly offer a community a purpose “beyond those who share in them: they exist to empower people to further the mission of the Church” (M. Green, 2000, April, p. 8). For members of religious communities, charism, as a spirit-gift, consists of three components that evolve over time: a unique faith vision; a unique response to needs; and a unique form of living through a call to wholeness that is dynamic and attractive (Carroll, 1979).

The lack of agreement concerning the concept of charism is also found within the Dominican family. Within this order, a concept is presented of likening different charisms to a:

‘family flavour’ that begins with an order’s founder; each member of the order personally embrac[ing] the charism. The difference [between one family unit or religious order and another] is analogous to that between a family of Gemutlichkeits and their neighbours, the O’Blarneys or the Kolackis”. (Rauenhorst in Gibeau, 1995, p. 1)

An individual’s affinity for a particular type of work (education, missionary, health care, contemplative or active), and an understanding of “how one’s personal gifts fit in with family tradition” determines to which community with which charism a person may be drawn (Gibeau, 1995, p. 2). There is also a view that different members of a religious community “have different charisms and always have had” (J. Miller, 1982). This view has its origin in the belief that “Dominicans are not primarily concerned to set up a way of life or a *modus operandi*; they are primarily concerned to do a job. How they do it must be determined by the job itself” (J. Miller, 1982). In other words, various members of the Dominican Order engage in contrasting ministries because they have been gifted with a variety of “charisms”. Furthermore “(i)f someone has totally different gifts, he is unlikely to survive in the order; and if he does survive, either he remains an odd man out, or he starts something new which in due course becomes part of the tradition of the order” (J. Miller, 1982). While this view offers support to the previous notion of “family flavour”, this definition of “charism” within an Order sharply contrasts with other perspectives as described below.

Charisms are attributed to the particular founders of religious orders whose members from generation to generation seek to pass on those often intangible characteristics of the founder. These characteristics are referred to as the charism of the religious community (M. L. McDermott, 2006, p. 3). It is this charism that Paul VI referred to

when asking members of religious institutes to faithfully respect their “particular characteristics and work” and “their founders’ special spirit and aims” as they proceed with their group renewal (Paul VI, 1965c).

While the discourse on the definition of “charism” for religious orders generally provides a *raison d’etre* for such communities, it is not always relevant to the discourse for the lay leader, teacher, student or parent in the school setting. The way that the laity in schools commit to and live out a charism is different. A definition inviting clarity and simplicity with a sense of reality for the lay stakeholders of a contemporary Catholic school is therefore sought.

The concept of charism within a school may include the definition that charism is a “deep awareness of a Gospel value or values linked to a special need in the world” (Black, 2009, p. 1). Similarly useful is the explanation that charism, in Catholic culture, means a Holy Spirit-inspired insight, a “spirit quake” which ignites passionately one of God’s people to bring forth Christ’s kingdom in God’s people, in a special way (McLaughlin, 2006).

It is a way of:

... giving the Christian faith a context in the physical world: in actual people, in time and place. [It is] a particular way of incarnating, of living, the Christian faith – a way that may be incarnated in a particular person, a particular lifestyle, a particular ministry, or a particular tradition in the Church. ... [O]ne particular way of living the Gospel. ... A way of reflecting Christ. (M. Green, 1997, p. 9)

It is “a Spirit-given way for people to share in the life of the Church, a way of being Christian that is appropriate to them as individuals and groups, and suits the needs and imperatives of their particular circumstances” (M. Green, 2000, April, p. 8).

An explanation useful in educational discourse is the concept that charisms may be defined as “great Gospel ideas” that have given “structure, being and action to the Gospel and have proven over centuries to be fruitful” (Marechal, 2000). These interpretations of charism have “shown themselves to be accessible, inspirational and effective ways of promoting the reign of God, and continue to do so as people are gifted to renew, re-interpret and re-vitalise them. They have given people a story to enter, a language to speak, a group to which to belong, a way to pray, a work to undertake, a face of God to see (M. Green, 2000, April, p. 9).

Dominicans have defined charism as being those “specific values” espoused by the founder, or specifically, St Dominic and his early followers (Neylon, 1996, p. 17). It is also defined as “the mission of the Church” (Britt, 2008, August 15, p. 3), and as “story” that provides a link to, and updates, the Jesus story (Schillebeeckx, 1983, p. 252). But these descriptors invite further elaboration.

If charism is to be institutionalised so that it gives a school a sense of direction and meaning (Price, 2008) and a touchstone for a way of living and teaching the Gospel, then its definition requires clarity and precision. The overlap of concepts and meanings is evidence that defining “charism” is problematic or “elude(s) definition” (Britt, 2008, August 15). However, for the purpose of this research, charism in schools includes the following understandings:

The expression of a charism is a way of embracing the Gospel of Jesus for the enhanced capacity of the Church for the service of the Gospel (M. Green, 2009, July).

It provides both an example of and framework for living, demonstrated by someone, such as a founder of a Religious Order, who demonstrates how to live a Christian life modelled on the life of Jesus. The charism, built on the particular gifts of the founder, develops over time, dependent on different needs, and contributed to by others who seek to follow the ways of the founder. They remain attentive to nurturing the originating charism as the gift of the Spirit, albeit applying it in ways responsive, useful and relevant to the needs of the day and by utilising their own gifts.

The charism of the founder is shared with others, and over time a set of values, and beliefs and philosophy takes shape that gives a school concrete direction, focus and meaning. It provides a touchstone for decisions, policy, behaviour and being. Schools use a consistent language and set of resources (such as a “communal story, a culture, replete with its heroes, legends, sacred places, music, literature, iconography, ministerial style, and its strength of association” (M. Green, 2009, July, p. 6) often developed and shared amongst schools of the same charism to develop a recognisable culture (Elvery, 2013).

This set of descriptors is concrete and constructive but it also demonstrates the complexity of the concept. Even though such a definition is practical for a school setting, the term “charism” is used within a discourse that includes other terminology that similarly invites clarification.

3.3.2 Use of terms

In this study, when reference is made specifically to “St Dominic’s charism”, it refers, in the theological sense, to his gifts to the church and to the world, afforded by the Spirit, for the preaching of the Gospel (Havey, 2007). In simple terms for students, it refers to those personal attributes, philosophy and values ascribed to St Dominic, and methods used by him to bring about “kingdom of God” (see Chapter 4). “Dominican” is also more broadly used to describe or refer to matters related to St Dominic and his followers such as St Thomas Aquinas, Albert the Great and Catherine of Siena. These men and women refined, progressed and developed the charism to address different times or in response to further understandings. The term “Dominican” is used to refer to those persons or organisations who seek to emulate the charism, attributes and work of St Dominic in order to bring the Gospel to today’s world.

The terms Dominican “charism”, “tradition”, “identity”, “story”, “spirituality”, “ethos” or “mission” are often used interchangeably as they each refer to those characteristics and particularities attributed to “Dominicans” or those who seek to create or maintain a Dominican “feel” within their communities or work (Britt, 2008, August 15).

“Charism”, as defined in section 3.3.1, refers to those particular gifts possessed by St Dominic; or in reference to communities such as schools or individuals who seek to emulate St Dominic’s particular gifts or ways of living the Gospel. “Dominican charism” is also used to describe the spiritual climate, community characteristics or the values and qualities of ministry that developed after St Dominic but which assist in the maintenance or creation of a sense of Dominican charism alive now.

In a contemporary sense, spirituality is concerned with a person’s sense of connectedness with self, others, the world and with the transcendent (Crawford & Rossiter, 2006; Hill, 2004). It is the “glue” that binds the interconnectedness of personal relationships (Tacey, 2003). It requires a language so that relational consciousness can be expressed (McQuillan, 2009a, p. 35). Dominican spirituality evolves from a person’s effort to incorporate the charism of St Dominican into his or her own life. It provides a model and guide for developing a relationship with God, self, others and the universe through the example of St Dominic and Dominicans.

Various words are used in the literature as somewhat synonymous with “charism”. They include “tradition”, “spirituality”, “ethos”, “spirit”, “identity” and “culture”. “Culture” is broader than “charism”. Culture refers to the summation of the total experience of schooling. It is inclusive of charism and it can be determined and influenced by the charism. Culture is the “character” of the school. But culture, like charism, presents “a shared vision of values that influences how members of a group act and feel and interpret the world” (Cook, 2001, p. 9).

Ethos (section 3.5) provides the underlying values that animate the culture of an organisation (Eisner, 1994, March). In a Catholic school, it reflects underpinning beliefs and attitudes. It reflects and expresses the charism of the school. Therefore, the word “ethos”, though not synonymous with “charism” can be used in a similar way to “charism” in certain contexts. Similarly, the other words listed above may express, in some contexts, the meaning of charism as defined in section 3.3.1.

The Dominican, Edward Schillebeeckx, uses the word “story” (Schillebeeckx, 1983) to refer to charism. The use of the word “story” addresses the attempt to honour and emulate the charism of a person. It also allows for creative recognition of the evolving and changing “sign of the times”; and it places the Gospel and Jesus in the centre of the story. “Story” acknowledges that each person becomes part of the evolving and up-dated story and has a part to play in its on-going life.

The challenge, as explored in this research, is the authenticity of the story shared. While liberating, telling stories in attempting to infuse a charism requires responsible, deliberate and mindful creativity that honours the central story of Jesus Christ. St Dominic and his first companions take up that story and bring it up to date in their own way, setting a tone and giving the story a theme but always for the purpose of proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Mark 1.1) (Schillebeeckx, 1975).

For contemporary Catholic schools who seek to infuse, create, develop or maintain a charism, there exists a responsibility to aspire towards authenticity in charism.

3.3.3 Aspiring Towards Authenticity of Charism

The pursuit of authenticity of charism is a challenge for Catholic schools. The difference between authentic and inauthentic charism is problematic when the language used to guide authenticity promotes creativity and dynamism. While “...

there is the need for fidelity to the founding charism and subsequent spiritual heritage...” (John Paul II, 1996, par. 36) this simultaneously requires reflection “backward” on the founder’s charism and heritage, and “forward” towards subsequent spirituality. “Let yourselves be guided by the Holy Spirit so that He himself may give the impetus to your creative fidelity” (John Paul II, 2001, May 12). Creativity was further emphasised in the invitation to:

... propose anew the enterprising initiative, creativity and holiness of ... founders and foundresses in response to the signs of the times emerging in today’s world. This invitation is first of all a call to perseverance on the path of holiness in the midst of the material and spiritual difficulties of daily life. (John Paul II, 1996, par. 37)

This invitation continues with a request to “pursue competence in personal work and to develop a dynamic fidelity to ... mission, adapting forms, if need be, to new situations and different needs, in complete openness to God’s inspiration and to the Church’s discernment” (John Paul II, 1996, par. 37).

How to use charism to read and respond to the “signs of the times” “creatively” (John Paul II, 1996; Paul VI, 1965f) while applying a “dynamic fidelity” implies a building on the founder’s charism. The challenge for those whose responsibility it is to apply a charism to contemporary needs is to maintain both its authenticity and its relevance. Such a challenge is negotiated by dedicated professionals understanding the basis of charism and creatively critiquing this against contemporary needs. Throughout history, a number of Dominicans, such as St Thomas Aquinas, Albert the Great, and Catherine of Siena, have advanced Dominican charism. Charism that has experienced further contributions and advancement has been described as *nuanced* (Cook, 2010). Enhancing the charism in this way keeps it alive, appropriate and creatively nurtured. The nurturing and “*nuancing*” of a charism in different times and places brings “faith, culture and life into harmony, to give ... life an integrity and a unity” (M. Green, 2009, July).

The charism of a particular tradition acquires, over time, a cultural expression. To the extent that this expression is faithful to its founding charism and to the Gospel, remains vital and relevant for its present-day protagonists and circumstances, and to the extent that the culture has all the usually accepted elements of a strong and functional organisational culture, then the school could be said to have a *charismatic culture*. It would be a place where the Gospel can be incarnated. (M. Green, 1997, p. 11)

These concepts of charismatic⁸ culture and “nuanced charism” are demonstrated within the Dominican historical tradition.

To be faithful to the charism of Dominic, (it is not necessary) to live like the first nuns of Prouilhe ... in the 13th Century. We produce our fruit in a different country and a different society, but we are drawing up the same sap. (Sister Historians of the Order of Preachers (SHOP), 2011, p. 12)

If “charism” describes the distinctive mission of a group based on the authentic interpretation of the founder’s vision, then it is likely to remain authentic in the way it is lived out (Hayes, 2006). However, there is a danger of cocooning what is understood as charism to its interpretation by those who originally experienced it.

Often we image the charism special to each religious foundation as something that we have to recover to its original purity if we are to move forward while being true to ourselves. Yet many religious groups seem to have experience that a return to such a pristine notion of a founding charism may not be the most effective road to renewal. (Fleming, cited in Gibeau, 1995, p. 1)

The perspective that charisms retain a “constancy of orientation” yet are open to “growth and change” offers a touchstone against which to critique the authenticity of contemporary schools. Charisms are open to interpretation and change because of the different times, needs and challenges. Another reason for this to occur is that often the documented history of founders and/or religious orders has been “excised or the facts massaged into a more virtuous version” to justify contemporary practices (McLaughlin, 2007, p. xvii). Such a process attempts to legitimise inauthentic initiatives. Continuing with inauthentic practices is also a leader’s interpretation of charism to mean “what one wants it to mean because of what one hopes it means” (Britt, 2008, August 15, p. 3).

In grappling with the concept of authentic charism, the foundational touchstone for authenticity has to be the Gospel of Jesus.

⁸ “Charismatic” is used in this study as the adjectival form of “charism”. “Charism” refers to the Greek word meaning “gift”. A “charismatic culture” refers to a culture influenced by the gift of the values, traditions, philosophies, stories and symbols connected with the charism of St Dominic and adopted by the Dominican Order. It is not intended that “charismatic” be considered the adjectival form of “charisma” because “charisma” is more commonly used to mean personality, magnetism or charm.

[T]his story [of St Dominic], often retold and sometimes rewritten, is in itself a particular way in which the thread of an already older story, that of Jesus of Nazareth, is taken up and continued in a new manner. ... Dominican (charism) is valid only in so far as it takes up the story of Jesus and brings it up to date in its own way. (Schillebeeckx, 1983, p. 233)

Furthermore, “[t]here would be something wrong if Jesus were to find himself playing second fiddle to Mary MacKillop or [Dominic Guzman]” (M. Green, 2000, April, p. 21).

A founder’s authentic charism is intended to emphasise a particular interpretation of the Gospel. This perspective has implications for Catholic schools in a socio-cultural-ecclesial environment in which students may, because of lack of allegiance to institutional church, confuse the main message with that of a supporting contemporary example. Students might attribute the experience of Gospel living to St Dominic, instead of to the “historical Jesus” or to the “Christ of Faith” (Pagola, 2009, p. 16).

The role of leaders in self-renewing Catholic schools is to embrace dynamic authentic charisms and be sensitive to distorting interpretations that may legitimise practices that are intended to meet competitive market demands (Grace, 2002, p. 134). “The often subtle slide from being a Christian community with a mission to a professional but secular organisation providing a particular human service” or “mission drift” (M. Green, 2011, September) can describe schools where, for example, the focus is on the creation of a culture of academic excellence rather than on an authentic charismatic culture. This was amplified in a study of sixty Catholic schools in the United Kingdom which concluded that while the majority of schools in the study used a:

... traditional discourse of ‘holiness and learning’ and of ‘service and learning’ to describe their academic missions, there was some evidence that a more utilitarian discourse was beginning to emerge, albeit in a minority of the schools. ... It took the form of a much stronger emphasis upon academic achievement and standards *per se*, not explicitly connected to the religious and social purposes of a Catholic school. (Grace, 2002, p. 132)

While this observation may be neither exclusive of, nor contrary to, the mission of the founder or the authentic charism, it does raise the question of authentic charismatic culture. Leaders responsible for the maintenance of charism are required “to be faithful to the spirit of ... founders, to their evangelical intentions and to the example of their sanctity” (Paul VI, cited in Flannery, 1998, p. 685).

In aspiring to embrace authenticity in charism, the following audit offers a framework with which to critique charism (M. Green, 2009, July, pp. 14-17) . Its use is particularly apposite for those contemporary Catholic schools identified in research as appearing to be embracing market values to the detriment of their authenticity.

- Coherence (School culture matches charism rhetoric.)
- Critical mass (There exists a critical mass of staff who influence others by their strong identification with the charism of the college.)
- Christian discipleship (People’s discipleship of Jesus is nurtured.)
- Constancy of orientation (There is congruence between what the school claims and what its members actually are and do.)
- Continuing formation (For staff to embrace the traditions of the charism, they need formation.)
- Church connection (“Charism and institution are always complementary” for the Church (Pope Benedict XVI, cited in M. Green, 2009, July, p. 17)
- Community of Mission (“All charisms are about empowering the Church for that mission, that is for bringing people into discipleship with Jesus and associating them together as community, so that they can become a “community of mission”).)

It is appropriate to summarise the central issue concerning authenticity of charism in Catholic schools as “essentially concerned with both Jesus and the Church, and leads to each. The essence of charisms is that they are Spirit-given ways that grace and enable people to come to know God and share in the mission of the Gospel of Jesus (M. Green, 2000, April, p. 7).

A shared understanding by all stakeholders of the nature of authentic Dominican charism as a response to the Gospel invites exploration.

3.3.4 Dominican Charism

One of the aims of this research is to explore the nature of the authentic Dominican charism. While beginning with St Dominic, Dominican charism has evolved.

... Dominican charism is ever ancient (at least in the sense that it goes back to the thirteenth century), but within it, it holds the seeds of ever-newness. It is not something static or frozen like a block of ice in a religious or historical deep-freeze; rather it is something fluid, like liquid, always holding within it new possibilities. It is therefore always “becoming” at the same time as it

remains the same. But unless we allow it to develop and adapt in the different cultures and situations in which it finds itself, it will not be able to survive. (O'Driscoll, 2004, p. 95)

This perspective is “authentically Dominican” because St Dominic shared his views and vision with others but he also invited his followers “to make it their own and give it a shape that is to their own liking” (O'Dwyer, 2003, p. 222). The Dominican charism and its traditions began with Dominic Guzman (1170 – 1221). He was a man of the Middle Ages, whose life stories and events were recorded by a few, perhaps changed and mythologised by others, and authenticated through critical investigation by others (Vicaire, 1964, pp. viii - x). He was canonized by Pope Gregory IX in 1234.

St Dominic was a prayerful man who embraced a Christ-like life (Vicaire, 2000, p. 49). In particular, he cultivated the preaching charism of Jesus. Effective preaching demanded rigorous scholarship on both biblical and theological disciplines as well as the ability to communicate these insights to the ordinary person. This demanded a thorough curriculum of studies which the Order has fostered as part of its religious culture. Moreover, St Dominic was a deeply relational person with an intense compassion for others. “He was a man who wept and in his tears glistened... love, Human and tender; human because divine, Divine because wrung from prayer, from an agony of truth. “Ah Lord, what will become of sinners?” (Tugwell, in O'Driscoll, 2004, p. 91). His empathy for others was demonstrated in his choice of an “innovative” itinerant lifestyle (Benedict XVI, 2010, January 13), “at home” living amongst, in solidarity with and preaching to the ordinary people (Willits, 2010, October).

St Dominic’s charism aligns with the framework of the three-fold gift (Carroll, 1979). Firstly, St Dominic’s *unique faith* was expressed in the manner in which he delivered the message of Jesus (Hilkert, 1986; G. Kelly, 2009, August 14; Vicaire, 1964). Secondly, his *unique response to needs* was expressed through his compassion (Hilkert, 1986), and his emphasis on contemplation, with study, reflection and prayer. It was this strategy that St Dominic argued was necessary to preach effectively, knowing and engaging in the world of his listeners (Britt, 2008, August 15; Goergen, 2002). St Dominic’s lifestyle was that of an itinerant preacher. He lived in poverty and established communities of women and men to assist in his mission (Sister Historians of the Order of Preachers (SHOP), 2011), thereby meeting the third criterion

– *a unique form of living*. Consequently, this emphasis on itinerant preaching became the ultimate rationale for the name of the new religious order, the Order of Preachers.

“Dominican charism” is a shared charism not confined to vowed Dominicans. If others witness the Gospel in the same way as do those who name their lens “Dominican” then:

Dominican spirituality can simply say with delight: all the better! It is not our concern to maintain an unparalleled exclusiveness. It is a question of what we, as Dominicans, do here in any case, and do in the strength of the charisma of the Order and our Dominican commitment... If others also do the same thing, this can simply confirm the validity, the correct intuition of our view. When a typical view is universalised, it in no way loses its value: quite the opposite. (Schillebeeckx, 1983, p. 244)

Similarly, the values and ideals of Dominican ethos are not exclusive to Dominicans (G. Kelly, 2009, August 14, p. 3). A number of other religious societies within the Catholic Church share them. A summary of qualities listed as “Dominican” may also be recognised as authentically Catholic (G. Kelly, 2009, August 14, p. 5). But throughout history they have become particularly associated with Dominicans. Furthermore, Dominican charism, like all charisms, is about giving renewed vitality and efficacy to the Gospel of Jesus (Watson, 2007). In a contemporary secondary school, these emphases and values contribute to the ideal of Dominican living. They form the basis upon which a framework for Dominican charism in an educational setting might be adopted. They give expression to the Dominican mission of preaching.

3.3.4.1 Preaching and the Four Pillars

“Holy Preaching” is at the heart of the Dominican mission. Foundational to preaching the word is preaching by example.

Preaching the Gospel simply entails communicating the truth and love of Jesus to others. In every era this will look different, and the ways that Dominicans have preached are many. St Thomas Aquinas preached through his teaching, St Catherine of Siena through her zeal for uniting divisions and mediating disputes, St Martin de Porres through his care for the sick, poor and marginalized, and Bartholomew de las Casas by fighting for the rights of the indigenous people of America. In all these examples, [there is] a harmony of word and action, a balance between preaching and the power of example. [Dominicans] discover creative ways through which [they] can both respond to the needs of [the] day and invite others to experience the power of God that is present in [their] lives. (Hurley, 2005, p. 5)

Dominicans have adopted “The Four Pillars” as a way of supporting their preaching (Hurley, 2005). The four pillars are labelled:

1. Study (or otherwise named Teaching)
2. Prayer (Contemplation or Reflection)
3. Community
4. Service (Preaching or Mission).

Although the pillars have been variously-named in the scholarship as indicated in parenthesis above, there is a consistency of meaning (Goergen, 2008; G. Kelly & Saunders, 2007). Study is “the pursuit of truth and the search for ultimate Truth. [It] is a commitment to life-long learning in infinite areas of focus. ... [I]t is an on-going, organic, and intellectual activity” (Runkel, 2005, p. 4). It involves cultivating an attitude of discovery, a discipline of inquiry and sharing wisdom. Study is the point of connection between prayer and the Dominican mission (Hurley, 2005, p. 3). Furthermore, study is a genuine search for truth which accepts new understandings, is open to challenge, and is never complete (Donovan, 2009, pp. 58-59). It was the means through which St Dominic had his first followers prepared for the task of preaching. Creation and Scripture are two central sources of Dominican study. Dominican prayer “is characteristically human, Eucharistic, and contemplative” (Hurley, 2005, p. 1). That is, it is the simple talking to God, engagement in liturgy and the understanding and appreciation of being in God’s presence. Contemplation, prayer and reflection combine to inform action. Community is that value which brings people together in a common bond. It “gives life to the mission of preaching, in whatever form the preaching takes” (Runkel, 2005, p. 4). “It is through the community that we are inspired, encouraged, admonished and forgiven as we travel on our spiritual journey” (Hurley, 2005, p. 4). Dominican service is defined by the preaching in its various forms. Each pillar represents a number of dynamic values and ways of being that are interrelated.

In addition to the four pillars, Dominican mission is often presented in the form of mottoes. “Each of these mottoes has been used as a way of summing up our role and purpose within the mission of the Church, or what is referred to as our charism” (Britt, 2008). These mottoes include:

- Truth (*Veritas*)
- To praise, to Bless, to Preach (*Laudare, Benedicere, Praedicare*)
- To contemplate and Share with Others the Fruits of Contemplation
- To study and to hand on the fruits of study (*Contemplare et Contemplata aliis Tradere*).

The motto “Truth” describes the quintessentially Dominican mission “to cultivate the human pursuit of truth” (Order of Preachers, n.d.). The Dominican, St Thomas Aquinas, demonstrated the pursuit of truth in his “*Summa Theologiae*” with his searching questions. He pursued knowledge and truth with freedom and courage, in the belief that “the truth is strong in itself, and nothing can prevail against it” (*Summa Contra Gentiles*, IV, 10 in Boland, 2007).

“To praise, to bless, to preach” is a reminder:

that there is more to Dominican life than work. We are called to be with and for each other. These words remind us to pay attention to the mystery of relationship with God and in God through others and all creation. We are not to be judged by our doing but by how we are human beings. Attending to relationships is what makes our preaching authentic. It is how we become living Words of God. (Catholic Dominican Sisters, 2011)

“To praise” is to accept the role of each human being in the wonder of the cosmic creation story and to find new ways of being the prayer. “To bless” is to show compassion towards others and to recognise God in the other. “To preach” is a reminder of the need to live the Gospel in relationship with others. The third motto, “To contemplate and share with others the fruits of contemplation” is closely linked to the four pillars. It indicates that contemplation is a necessary precursor to meaningful ministry and is an essential ingredient in the pursuit of truth (Dominican Sisters of Peace, 2011).

A reconfiguration of the pillars to more appropriately meet the needs of the laity is helpful (Goergen, 2002, 2008). This alternative framework for contemporary living of Dominican charism reconfigures the pillars into 1. integration (wholeness with justice and truth); 2. friendship (community); 3. truth (a way of preaching) and 4. freedom (because of the grace received) In this model, the expression of charism remains the same, but there is an emphasis on integrity within relationship and mission.

These pillars or concepts provide a useful framework or foundation for Catholic schools in the Dominican tradition. They illuminate key values which provide touchstones against which schools might critique their alignment with authentic Dominican charism.

3.3.4.2 *Values*

Those engaged in the Dominican mission embrace a number of “values” which have been identified as “Dominican”. However,

... [t]here is nothing exclusive about the individual Dominican values that have been passed on and remain held by the Order of Preachers today. Indeed these are no more than the Gospel values preached and practised by Christ. While Dominicans do not claim a monopoly on these values, it is perhaps the manner in which they were taken up by Dominic and have been combined, applied and shaped over time which has inspired a unique charism of the Gospel values which can be said to be Dominican. (Dominican Sisters of Eastern Australia, 1999)

The Dominican sisters generated a list of ten core values that could be used to critique the Dominican charism in a school (Dominican Sisters of Eastern Australia, 1999). These values are consistent with other Dominican sources.

- *Inclusion* involves being open to all, especially the stranger and the marginalised (McVey, 2002a). It is the imperative that drives Christians to acknowledge, welcome, be hospitable towards and care for Christ in each other.
- With *justice*, oppression and unjust practices are fought against (Ardito, 2007; Goergen, 2002); equality is restored and liberty is provided (C. A. Costa, 2002, November 7); and the poor are given preferential treatment (Hilkert, 2008; McVey, 2002a).
- *Joyfulness* is a way to experience God, and it is a necessary value in building life-giving communities (Radcliffe, 2007).
- Valuing *aesthetics* is a way of viewing the self as God’s work of art. It inspires the human being to develop the beauty of and potential in the self, to develop imagination, creativity and artistic expression, and it urges the human being to stand in awe of creation and appreciate beauty (S. Flynn, 2007; Horn, 2007; Ormond, 2007).

- *Individuality* is a value when it is used to know one's own gifts and to use them purposefully, while accepting, rejoicing in and celebrating the difference in and giftedness of others (Britt, 2008, August 15).
- The valuing of the *unity of creation* through sustainable practices, responsible use of shared resources and the appreciation of balance in ecology and within God's creation is fundamental to Dominican charism (Britt, 2008, August 15; G. Kelly, 2009, August 14; O'Sullivan, 2007; Smith, 2007).
- *Peace and peace-making* are demonstrated through right relationships, reconciliation and forgiveness (C. A. Costa, 2002, November 7).
- The thirst for *knowledge*, understanding and meaning (or seeking truth) lies at the heart of St Dominic's preaching (Donovan, 2009). Furthermore, and in the educational context, "excellence is non-negotiable in a Dominican school" (McCormick, 2009, October). "Study is a fundamental attitude" for which there is a scriptural basis (Mt 6:21) (Vergauwen, 2007).
- *Contemplation and prayer* nourish the hunger for the sacred, develop spirituality and assist in making informed responses to the contemporary needs of society and church (Donovan, 2009; Hilkert, 2008; Mallon, 2007; Menibus, 2007).
- *Truth* is the essence of Dominican values, and the source of all others. It is sought through prayer, study, action and service (Schillebeeckx, 1983; Smith, 2007).

These values have their basis in the life of St Dominic and in that of his followers who have contributed to the enhancement of Dominican charism (Tugwell, 1979; Vicaire, 1964).

Encapsulated within the concepts of individuality, inclusion, justice, freedom and unity is the appreciation of democratic practices. The Dominican Order is therefore structured on democratic principles and decentralised governance because St Dominic respected the wisdom that resided in the community as well as in its leader. Democracy allows for and values a diversity of views and demonstrates a respect for others and their freedom (Dorr, 2006). "Freedom is our birthright. To deny it to others is to deny them their vocation. Nor should we be tempted in times of stress or crisis to sacrifice or curtail this freedom for the sake of expediency or efficiency" (O'Dwyer, 2003,

p. 229). Consistent, then, with Dominican charism in Catholic schools is the recognition of the importance of democratic principles as an expression of the value of the individual.

For those who follow St Dominic and who seek to emulate his spirit, these values are necessary attributes in supporting the *way* to go about preaching (being and presenting authentic Gospel witness in current times). These values are attributes needed to respond to the signs of the times today in meaningful, creative ways. They assist society and Church in finding just solutions in areas of conflict and in new possibilities of preaching and on hearing the Word of God (Hilkert, 1986, p. 4). They help in finding new ways of making meaning and making spirituality meaningful and desirable and in creating a culture of hope (Goergen, 2002; Nolan, 2008). Furthermore, they are necessary attributes as human beings explore ways of ensuring planetary and ecological sustainability (McDonagh, 2010, February; O'Sullivan in Wainwright, Susin, & Wilfred, 2009). They are particularly useful as touchstones with which to critique the Dominican charism and culture in a Catholic school.

3.3.5 Dominican Charism in schools

The institutionalisation of a charism in a school provides the school with a particular identity through its interpretive emphases of the Gospel.

First, it ... gives people a means of deepening their personal and their communal spirituality, a way of quenching their God-thirst, a path to meeting Jesus. Second, it will give a treasure chest of resources, solid formation programmes, literature, symbols and rituals, strategies for ministry, extra-parochial and extra diocesan links, and collected wisdom, from which the principal and staff can draw. It becomes the glue that binds the community and gives it focus in its mission. (M. Green, 2009, July, p. 12)

The institutionalisation of the Dominican charism in an educational setting requires the inclusion of many elements infused throughout the culture of the school (see Figure 3.2). It requires thorough formation of and commitment to the nurturing of the charism by staff (Donovan, 2009).

[For any] principles to underpin what happens in the classroom, a coherent and explicit understanding of those principles is required at all levels of the school structure. In an ideal situation these principles would be understood and promoted at each level of decision making, from government boards to curriculum designers to classroom teachers. (Britt, 2008, August 15, p. 5)

Furthermore, “charism can be effectively used as the touchstone to structural and pedagogical practice” (Dunne, 2008). With the consistent and strategic application of transformational methodologies (as opposed to transmissional models of teaching), student values and beliefs can be changed (Collier, 2008; Freakley, Burgh, & Tilt-MacSporran, 2008). By using faith-based values (as described in section 3.3.4.2) to critically evaluate culture and society, students are “better prepared to build relationships with others after they have graduated from school” (Cook & Simonds, 2011, p. 329). While these values individually may well be present in Catholic schools, their particular emphasis and orchestration helps generate a Dominican charismatic culture in schools.

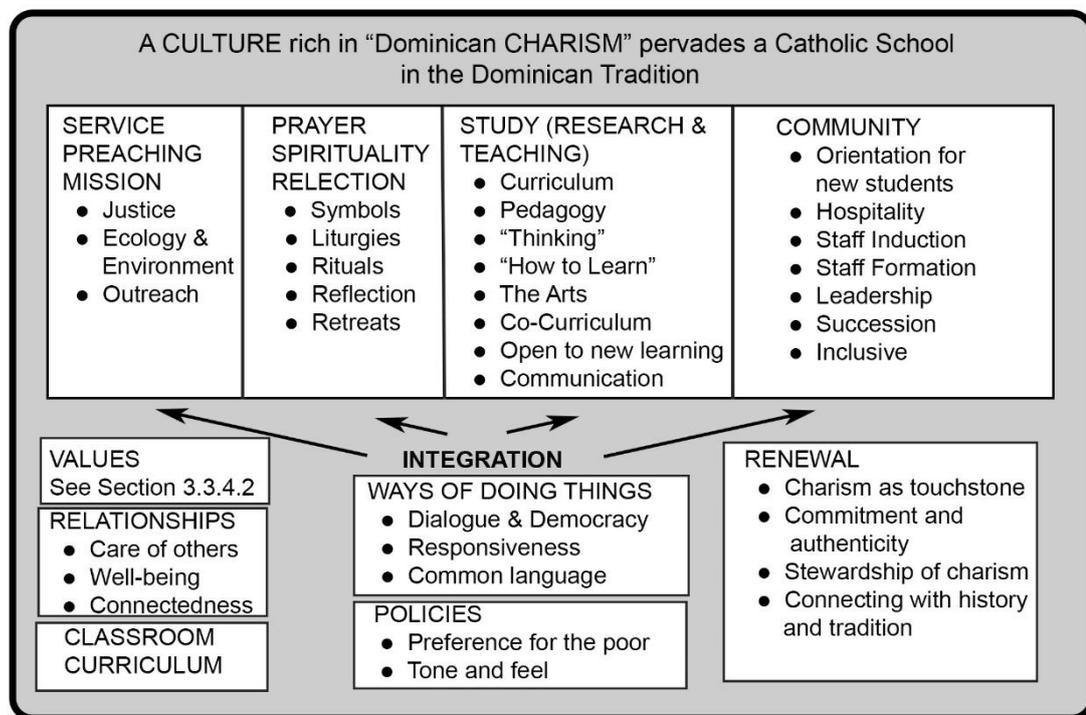


Figure 3-2 Summary of themes concerning the animation of Dominican charism in schools

(Britt, 2008, August 15; Dominican Sisters of Eastern Australia, 1999; Donovan, 2009; Hilkert, 2008; G. Kelly & Saunders, 2007; Kent, 2011, September 24-26; M. L. McDermott, 2006; McNicholas, 1990; McVey, 2002a; Radcliffe, 2009, April 13; Runkel, 2005; Smyth, 2009, September 4; Wainwright et al., 2009).

The Four Pillars are foundational for the structuring and nurturing of the charism. The first pillar, service (or preaching mission), is based on the Dominican respect for all of God’s creation. Contrary to beliefs of his day, St Dominic taught that all creation is

good because it is made by God (G. Kelly, 2009, August 14). At a time when exclusion within the Church was rampant, St Dominic's preaching was inclusive of the saint and the sinner (Woods, 2006, August 18-19). Equally, he showed compassion and listened attentively to opinions of others. "Words and the books they came out of, would never work without the gathering in of the outsider and the sinner by acts of mercy and love" (Woods, 2006, August 18-19, p. 2). St Dominic's message was one of service to others with compassion, justice, and love, with hope (Hilkert, 1986, p. 4).

The second pillar invites schools to develop a culture of prayerfulness and reflection. God is viewed "not primarily as the object of our attention, but rather as the essential subject, with whom we are united as co-subjects, co-operators with him (1 Cor. 3.9) in his work of redemption" (Tugwell, 1982, p. 396). This typical Dominican spirituality values human beings as God's friends, and as such "we do not so much look to God as with him" (Radcliffe, 2001a, p. 8). The literature provides examples of ways of creating strength in a school within this pillar through symbols, retreats, publications, presentations and ministries in school (McNicholas, 1990, pp. 148-165; Runkel, 2005).

The third pillar, study, is as important in contemporary schools as they were in the schools and universities of St Dominic's day (Hilkert, 2008, p. i). St Dominic and other Dominicans such as Thomas Aquinas, Albert the Great and Catherine of Siena were passionate scholars who sought truth through study and contemplation.

An education rooted in wisdom and love of learning for its own sake will foster the students' ability to see with their hearts as well as their minds; the kind of seeing that is not dazzled by the sunny promises of consumerism – with its instant but empty solutions to life's dilemmas. An education nourished by wisdom, will deepen young people's faith in knowing that life is wonderful, mysterious, fragile, and at times etched with lines of suffering; but also full of grace, beauty and surprise. We trust that our students will find a depth of knowledge that will enable them to see through the various distortions of truth that are on offer – whether the distortions of narrow religious dogmatism or of secular ideologies that are incapable of answering their deepest longings. (Smyth, 2009, September 4, pp. 7-8)

Specific attention to the particular pedagogical practice of questioning, "probing, grasping and illuminating reality to its depth" (McVey, 2007, p. 131) is a specific Dominican practice. Dominican education has its foundation in dialogue and debate, "one probing, exploratory conversation after another" (Radcliffe, 2009, April 13, p. 2). It necessitates instruction on "thinking" (Walsh, 1999, p. 6) and communication (Walsh, 2002, September) so that real dialogue and understanding can occur.

Moreover “Our confidence to take part in the *quaestiones disputatae* of our day must derive from our confidence that we are heirs to an intellectual tradition which is not to be preserved in some intellectual deep-freeze” (McVey, 2007). This is both invitational and challenging to the contemporary Catholic school.

The fourth pillar, community, is also paramount in an authentically Dominican educational community. New staff and students require appropriate Dominican induction and orientation so that they identify with the school and its spirituality and ethos (Brien & Hack, 2010, 2011; M. L. McDermott, 2006; Runkel, 2005, p. 114). Principal leadership, formation and succession planning are also identified as elements within this pillar so that the faith community might be continuously built, strengthened, and renewed (M. L. McDermott, 2006).

Dominican charism alive in a school is evidenced by particular values that permeate the culture (Dominican Sisters of Eastern Australia, 1999), including respect for others in relationships (which involve self-awareness) (McVey, 2002a). There are overt and particular ways of doing things. Policies are explicit in their preference for the poor. There is an overt commitment to and passion for the Dominican traditions as being a way of connecting the young to the Gospel message (M. L. McDermott, 2006, p. 97). Connectedness and sharing of a common language (as in Figure 3.2) are referred to in the literature through the metaphors of family and community (Goergen, 2008; O'Donnell, 2001). Both metaphors have a home in the Catholic school and in Dominican charism.

The Dominican contribution to Catholic identity is overwhelmingly life-giving, stressing hospitality, radical freedom and authenticity and ultimately points to what it is to be human. It arises out of contemplation and is shared with others. It becomes our ‘Holy Preaching’ and transforms the world. (MacLaren, 2010)

Furthermore, a Dominican education, framed by the pillars, provides a useful model upon which a contemporary societal-responsive education can be based (Kent, 2011, September 24-26). The experience of Dominican charism is enriched within the educational setting by an overt Dominican philosophy of education.

3.3.6 Dominican Philosophy of Education

A Dominican philosophy of education both enriches the presence of Dominican charism and is borne from it. “Education in its many forms is at the heart of the purpose

of Dominican life: e-ducare – the work of leading forth ourselves and others from less developed or less human pathways to the fullness of human life with God in Christ” (G. Kelly & Saunders, 2007, p. xix). It is, first and foremost, “rooted in and shaped by the broader intellectual, spiritual and cultural tradition of the Church from which it emerged ... although it must be rooted in and reflect Dominic’s spirit and vision” (Smith, 2007, pp. 3-5).

A “Dominican Philosophy of Education” evolved as it “interacted with the various individuals, schools of thought, religions, cultures and historical events that shaped it” (Smith, 2007, pp. 3-4). St Dominic’s curriculum for the preachers was narrow, based on his intention to educate preachers of scripture and theology rather than to educate scholars. However, soon after his death, the program of study was broadened, as the preaching included teaching. Thomas Aquinas, Dominican theologian and Doctor of the Church, developed and refined several distinctive elements of “Dominican education”. Furthermore, he gave academic structure to St Dominic’s vision (Smith, 2007, p. 9). Aquinas saw faith and reason as distinct but inseparable sources of truth. Similarly, he argued that philosophy and theology were separate disciplines but that they could be harmonised. Human reason, for example, could discover certain truths about the existence and nature of God (Smith, 2007, p. 10). Aquinas and St Dominic both insisted on the goodness of the human person and of all created reality because creation comes from the hand of God. Aquinas’s theology on the human person as an image of God and the goodness of creation forms the basis of Catholic social teaching and educational philosophy in relation to human rights, common good, hunger and homelessness, poverty, health care and issues of ecological sustainability (Smith, 2007, p. 12).

A Dominican philosophy of education also promotes study of the liberal arts and its specialised disciplines so that “the whole person” is educated (Smith, 2007, p. 12). Furthermore,

The curriculum [of a Dominican school] stimulates intellectual pursuits, broadens historical and cultural perspectives, hones powers of judgement and discrimination, improves analytical and communication skills and creates a love of learning that will be life-long. ... It should lead to good moral choices... It will influence the thinking and values of society primarily by shaping the insights and morals of its graduates. ... Just as faith cannot be separated from reason in the Dominican tradition, neither can the quest for academic excellence be separated from its Catholic and Dominican character.

...It links academic excellence and religious values, insights of reason and influence of faith, intellectual development and spiritual growth, psychological maturity and moral responsibility for others, especially the less fortunate. (Smith, 2007, p. 16)

Smith (2007, p. 15) further argued that:

It is important to note that the quest for academic excellence is the coin of the realm. In any academic institution worthy of its name, studies should be undertaken, scholarship pursued and truth sought for its own sake. The Church's mission of evangelisation cannot be a substitute for scholarship. If an academic institution fails in its proper function as an academy, it would undermine any role that academics might play in the mission of the Church. It could well deepen the prejudice already existing among some that scholarship and belief, Catholic and university, faith and reason are contradictions in terms.

That "excellence is non-negotiable in a Dominican school" (McCormick, 2009, October) is well supported in the literature. The website marketing of Catholic schools, Dominican and non-Dominican, attests to a common commitment amongst Catholic schools to "academic excellence". Similarly, Catholic school systems make similar claims that "Catholic schools make a distinctive contribution in the provision of educational excellence ... They do so within the context of Catholic teaching and practice" (Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia, 2009). Any tension about the goal of excellence is related to the prioritisation of excellence over evangelisation. This issue will be further explored in Chapter 4.

The Dominican methodology of learning through asking questions and engaging in open dialogue with an attention to the perspective of others invites a challenge for schools.

How can we ever think about anything if we cannot try out crazy ideas, float hypotheses, and make mistakes? Meister Eckhart, a fourteenth-century Dominican, wrote that no one may attain the truth without a hundred errors along the way. We need the freedom for words for which we are not going to be held eternally responsible. Seeking the truth requires times of protected irresponsibility, for tentative exploration. (McVey, 2007)

Other elements of a distinctive Dominican education (Schillebeeckx in Lawson, 2011, April 30) include:

- Hope
- Gospel preaching
- Jesus-centred spirituality

- Contemporary (including the view that the Church should not be apart from society and that it has to respond to contemporary society)
- Respect for creation
- Respect for and recognition of individuals and their gifts (and hence democratic governance)
- Community life – including dialogue with people of other faiths

Not co-incidentally, these elements align with the key values of Dominican charism previously identified (Dominican Sisters of Eastern Australia, 1999).

However:

Having a wonderful philosophy of education, an excellent curriculum and superb learning goals will not by themselves create a transforming experience for students. If the curriculum does not come alive in the classroom, it will remain sterile, incapable of either exciting or transforming. [Teachers] must make the ideas and values embodied in the curriculum their own and communicate them to students with dedication and expertise, love and compassion. When they reach out to students in this way, they model what it means to be an educated person, how academic excellence and spiritual values can be one in seeking truth and serving others. (Smith, 2007, pp. 16-17)

Furthermore, as authentic living traditions ask questions of themselves (Steinfels, 1995, August 24) it is conceivable that as the signs of the times change, and as discernment and reflection bring new insight, so too, philosophy advances. How students, parents and teachers perceive this philosophy is dependent on the educational journeys and on the specific mission and vision of each school. “Above all, we should be known for nurturing our students, fostering their love of knowledge, sharing their dreams, cultivating their character and shaping their hopes” (Smith, 2007, p. 18).

3.3.7 Conclusion and Specific Research Question

The literature confirms the need to seek clarity of definition concerning the nature of charism and of Dominican charism within an educational setting. The former appears contentious, and the latter is complex, multi-layered and evolving. Within the literature there is much written (predominantly by Dominican preachers and scholars) on their own identity and “Spirit”. While scholarship presents a consistent lens through which to view Dominican charism, writers explore values, elements of philosophy and the charism with different emphases. Figure 3.2 provides a framework, based on the four

Dominican Pillars, for how Dominican charism may be conceptualised, structured and audited within a school context.

“Dominican values”, however, are “not ... exclusive to Dominicans ... [and they are] distinctive of universal Catholicism” (G. Kelly, 2009, August 14, p. 5). They are “Gospel values”, as was St Dominic’s intent. “Charisms ... are never meant to create any form or division or elitism within the Church” (Hutton, 2011, June 6). Nonetheless, “[a] school communicates its distinctive identity through its ethos and charism, which finds expression in its religious values, culture, rituals and practices” (Hutton, 2011, June 6). For the purpose of this research, those Dominican values named so in the literature, are referred to as such, as they reflect the “story” of Dominican charism.

From such complexity concerning charism, and Dominican charism in particular, emerges the first specific research question:

What do students, teachers and parents understand Dominican charism to be?

Dominican charism and educational philosophy, to be alive and overt within a school setting, invites particular leadership and a shared commitment by the community to the use of Dominican charism as a way of enriching the Catholic culture of the school. How this can occur within the construct of “culture” is explored later in this chapter. The next section, however, explores the wider notion of society. It is within society that schools attempt to nurture Dominican charism and within which students, teachers and parents participate in Catholic schooling generally. An exploration of culture and society provides an insight into the milieu within which charism is experienced.

3.4 Society

This section illuminates the broader social context within which charism is nurtured in a school. It is this wider context that helps provide an explanation for, and understanding of, the nature of the experience of charism within a Catholic school. A review of the literature relating to five particular trends in contemporary society illuminates the context within which a Catholic school attempts to nurture charism.

These trends are:

- Authority Shift

- Individualism, Meaning and Identity
- Globalisation
- Pluralism and Diversity
- Secularization of Society.

For the purpose of this research, these trends will be explored from the perspective of how they might influence the implementation of charism in an educational setting.

In this study, “society” refers generally to humanity and to the totality of relationships between individuals in developed cultures at designated times in history. Societies are noted for their significant trends and characteristics, and these in turn, influence human beliefs and behaviour, relationships, institutions and systems of the humans in the society as indicated in Figure 3.1. Particular reference is made to Australian society, within which this case study is set.

3.4.1 Authority Shift: Implications

There is evidence that the needs, beliefs and practices of current society are different to preceding generations (Crawford & Rossiter, 2006; P. Hughes, 2007; Mulligan, 2006). This change from one era to another is not unique to the society of the Twenty-first Century. Characteristics of societies through history have differed as its citizens experience authority differently. Each predominant kind of authority “shapes the way people relate to each other, to leaders, to the transcendent and to God” (Bouma, 2006, p. 87).

The dominant forms of authority have shifted in emphasis from “traditional” to “rational or reason” to “experiential/emotional” (Bouma, 2006). Post-modernists want life “on their own terms” (Rolheiser, 2008, November 23). They no longer place authority in the hands of kings, popes and clergy as traditional authority dictated (Bouma, 2006). They neither reason with the Creator about what is rational; nor seek to believe correct theology and avoid heresy, nor unquestioningly accept doctrines of the church or support the established order as expressed in royalty, the governor-general and the prime minister, as was more typical in the Enlightenment or Age of Reason (circa 1650 – 1800) (Bouma, 2006).

While neither traditionalism nor reason died out, the new emphasis from the mid-Twentieth Century is the experiential approach to authority. “The ultimate source of

authority is to be found in the individual's experience, senses and feelings" (Bouma, 2006, p. 90). As individuals adopt a "If it feels right, do it" and "Trust your feelings" approach to authority, more diverse and individualistic expressions of respect for authority are lived out (Bouma, 2006, p. 91). "From an experiential/emotional perspective, the duty of the follower is to feel the grace of God, to feel saved, spirit-filled and full of joy" (Bouma, 2006, p. 93). Hence, there has been a growth in "mega-churches", often Pentecostal, in which sermons are delivered passionately and with an intention to elicit emotions. This new popular form of "correctness" is not so much with the correct conduct of the precise ritual of Eucharist, with the celebrant and congregation having set roles and ways of doing set things as in the Catholic Mass, but is more to do with a new form of correctness – correct feelings (Bouma, 2006, p. 94). Church and its structures that do not "feel right" not only have significantly depleted numbers in their active membership, but have lost membership from the ordained and Religious Orders (Bouma, 2006, p. 96).

The influence of the shift in emphasis in society to "experiential authority" has not only been felt within institutional churches. Families and neighbourhoods are dissipating and breaking down and civic organisations and clubs are suffering from declining numbers (Rolheiser, 2008, November 23, p. 1). Furthermore, "[m]en are opting out not only of the Church but of other things as well – among them marriage and parenthood" (Coleridge in Falzon, 2011). Relevant to this study is the influence that the shift to experiential authority has had on the Catholic Church and youth engagement in it.

3.4.1.1 Authority Shift: Implications for Catholic Church

The literature is consistent concerning how the shift in authority has influenced the Catholic Church. There appears to be some consensus amongst researchers and scholars about the shift from an originally democratic, Christ-centred church to a hierarchical church of control (O'Meara, 1983, p. 26; Radcliffe, 2009, April 13).

The Enlightenment in eighteenth century Europe included a "culture of control" – the freedom to probe into the Gospel, to dialogue and converse about it, to preach and to give homilies was held with suspicion (Radcliffe, 2009, April 13, p. 2). "To some extent, the church [at that time] ... imitated society, and the hierarchy became almost the sole real power with the church" (Radcliffe, 2009, April 13, p. 2). This was a

notion contrary to the Jesus story which was about “Jesus Christ [who] preached not a religion nor an institution not even himself. He preached the kingdom of God” (O’Meara, 1983, p. 26).

The Church [during the Enlightenment] was seen as an institution that was of its very nature opposed to modernity and it often made the mistake of accepting this image instead of challenging the categories that trapped it in the past... [and which therefore showed it to be] opposed to democracy, to freedom, to new ideas and to science. (Radcliffe, 2009, April 13, p. 1)

Scholars noted the promise of emancipation through the documents that emerged from the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) (Kelty, 2000; Rahner, 1979). However, evidence suggests that while individuals may have welcomed this liberation from a dominating church, the experience of many has been a subsequent reversal to a controlling hierarchy whose rhetoric is often at odds with its reality (Hobson & Welbourne, 2002; Kelty, 2000).

Vatican II offered hope for a renewed Church that would liberate its members from closed and narrow thinking. Unfortunately, some of the thought patterns of the Enlightenment that “locked the church in narrow places, [and] cramped her into ideological positions” continue to exist (Radcliffe, 2009, April 13, p. 1). Furthermore, the spirit of Vatican II was neither consistently applied nor followed through in all its promulgations (McLaughlin, 2000d). The Church and its people were not prepared for the changes of belief and practice that it brought. Hence, the experience of Catholics was not one of the positive renewal that it could have been (Grace, 2002, pp. 17-23). Instead of a post-Vatican II Church celebrating a liberty and freedom of the heart and mind that is “deeply Dominican” (Radcliffe, 1997, May 10) and a democratic, fully inclusive Church, in the face of challenge, it “bunkered down”. “The Second Vatican Council tried to liberate us from this mental imprisonment, but it [was] hard to give up entrenched ways of thought.... Such polarisation [was] deeply wounding and inhibit[ed] the flourishing of the church” (Radcliffe, 2009, April 13, p. 1).

Consequently, and paradoxically, while members of society were seeking validation of their own individual experiences, the Church appeared to disregard the need for individual experience.

Vatican II documents clarified the relationship between culture and faith.

The Gospel, and therefore evangelization, are certainly not identical with culture, and they are independent in regard to all cultures. Nevertheless, the kingdom which the Gospel proclaims is lived by men who are profoundly linked to a culture, and the building up of kingdom cannot avoid borrowing the elements of human culture or cultures. Though independent of cultures, the Gospel and evangelization are not necessarily incompatible with them; rather they are capable of permeating them all without becoming subject to any one of them. (Paul VI, 1975, para. 20)

Yet, this entrée into respect for cultural identity and individual differences was somehow thwarted by post Vatican II hierarchical practice and inconsistency in direction thus making Church authority “seen by many as irrelevant” (McLaughlin, 2000d).

Studies relating to the trends on engagement of students, teachers and parents in relation to Church and spirituality indicate a growing disengagement with institutional church generally. “Most Catholics today do not accept church teaching simply because church authorities tell them, but tend to test these teachings against the experience of their own lives (Treston, 1997, p. 10). This increasing “irrelevance” of the Church is indicated in data from significant Australian studies (Brisbane Catholic Education Office (BCEO), 2009b; M. Flynn & Mok, 2002). One hundred and thirty-six Catholic schools participated in a study of Brisbane schools in 2009 (BCEO, 2009b). Only 20% of Year 9 students in that study claimed to base their lives on religious values (27% are uncertain whether they do or not). Furthermore, 76% of Year 12 students surveyed believe that they probably or certainly would follow their conscience rather than Church teaching on some issues (and 17% are uncertain) (BCEO, 2009b). 79% of parents (with 13% uncertain) answered similarly. 86% of teachers in Catholic schools (with 9% uncertain) responded likewise.

Furthermore, the Brisbane study (BCEO, 2009c) found in its review of the literature that “[y]oung people in Australia and overseas are alienated from Church, Mass and formal religion in general”. The study also found that “[t]his alienation from Church is evident across all age groups except for the grandparents of today’s youth” (BCEO, 2009b, p. 38). Another study presents an even more dire position, showing that the number of people who attend Sunday Mass has been falling in almost every age group since 1996 (Dixon, Kunciunas, & Reid, 2008).

A paradox of this apparent growing “irrelevance of church” now exists if it is true that:

[the] receptivity to religious enlightenment and ... openness [by youth] to religious experience is remarkable when compared to the teen scene of a few decades ago. The fields are white for the harvest, waiting for adults who can tap into the idealism of these young people and help give voice to their strivings. (DiGiacomo, 2000)

Although World Youth Days were intended to bring youth back to the church, statistics do not indicate that any group of Catholics is returning (Dixon et al., 2008). This would indicate that opportunities for the Church to become relevant and life-giving for the young may have been missed thus far. Complicating the paradoxes further is the growing concern about mental wellbeing in young people with more than a quarter of young people ages 16-24 having a mental disorder (Report commissioned by the Australian Christian Lobby reported in Caldwell, 2011, September 6).

The implication of experiential authority for the clergy is that they are no longer respected simply for their position. As people want to experience the transcendent on their own, they do not feel the need to seek the services of a religious professional (Bouma, 2006). Furthermore, scandals, cases of pederasty with possible “cover up” and a hierarchy intent on self-preservation (O’Gorman, 2009; Winter, O’Flaherty, Kenny, MacNeil, & Scott, 1990) cause many to abandon their religious practice. Seemingly inconsistent promulgations, and exclusive practices at the expense of full inclusivity of the People of God are being challenged (Hobson & Welbourne, 2002; Philibert, 2005). It would appear that Church is “out of touch with reality, focusing too much on law, power and authority, and too little on service, justice and compassion” (McLaughlin, 2005, p. 227).

With the shift in society to the authority of one’s own experience, the laity are discerning what “feels right” and what aligns with their own experience. Matters such as celibacy, female roles within the church, and use of power within a church that appears to alienate some of its membership are causes for concern (McLaughlin, 2000d). Student data shows that they see their lived experience as being opposed to the Catholic Church’s teaching on morality, out of date with modern society and the Church no longer as having much impact on their lives (Saker, 2004).

If consideration is given to the number of women who Jesus reportedly considered as friends, then it seems contrary to the example of Christ that women are excluded from roles within the hierarchy and ministry of church (Groome, 2002, p. xv). The “proper

place” of women in the church and within a religious order (that includes women) with an approved “charism of preaching” (Hilkert, 2008) appears vague and contradictory. “From the beginning of Christianity great women have played fundamental roles in the history of the church. ... [W]omen – and us with them – must always seek their proper place” (Pope Benedict XVI, cited in Hilkert, 2008, p. 9). Yet, in practice, women continue to be excluded from positions of authority and influence in the Church. Dominican women, while professed as members of the Dominican Family of preachers, are permitted to be “Gospel preachers” through daily living, without the authority to be “preachers of the Gospel” from the pulpit (Lawson, 2011, April 30).

Another complexity is the position taken by many parents. While they have disengaged from Church, they are increasingly choosing a Catholic school for their children (McLaughlin, 2005). This has generated its own field of research (Brisbane Catholic Education Office, 2009b; Griffiths, 1999; Lee, 2000). Parents do like the Catholic school package as the increase in enrolments show. Herein lies another paradox. Parents say they strongly subscribe to the values of the Catholic faith even though they are not involved regularly in its rituals (BCEO, 2009b). They choose a Catholic school “overwhelmingly” because of its caring community (BCEO, 2009b). The low numbers of students in the Brisbane study who “regularly” attend Church (15%) (BCEO, 2009d) indicates that while parents might “strongly subscribe to” the values of the Catholic faith, they do not want to or do not feel that they or their children need to go to Church.

Furthermore, younger Australians are less interested in the traditional religious denominational churches than they are in those that express an understanding of contemporary culture, music and technology (Kaldor, Hughes, & Black, 2010, p. 21). This is a further demonstration of the importance of personal experience. “A Church which does not engage the hearts and minds of the men who belong to it is a Church which is dying” (Putney, cited in Falzon, 2011, p. xi). “Faith which sustains people is not an intellectual pursuit but something which takes hold of their hearts. The experiential element is the key to both present and future realities” (Brien & Hack, 2010, p. 4).

National and international research indicate that attending a religious school does “not have a noticeable effect on students’ commitment towards a particular faith” (BCEO,

2009b, p. 38). Given the mission and purpose of a Catholic school as detailed later in Chapter 4, this raises questions about the validity of its mission.

In summary, “[t]he movement within the church from the experience of authority to the authority of experience ensures that any narrow concept of Catholic identity will be rejected by an increasingly articulate and theologically literate Catholic laity” (Treston, 1997, p. 10).

If the church is to have a healthy and complex interaction with society, neither retreating into a ghetto nor going down the plughole of assimilation, then [it] need[s] a dynamic Catholic culture. This means ... [that we] have the confidence to explore our faith, to ask difficult questions, to try out new ideas, to play with ideas, to float hypotheses without timidity, not feeling that we have to get it right the first time because otherwise we shall be in hot water.... We need the diversity of styles of life, spiritualities, charism of different Religious Orders to free the church from the heaviness of uniformity. ... We need institutional creativity so that laypeople, especially women, acquire a voice and visibility. (Radcliffe, 2009, April 13, p. 3)

The shift in authority in society from those in positions of power to personal experience and belief challenges a church that appears not to be responding to the needs of its members. Catholic schools seeking to implement or maintain a “charismatic culture” (M. Green, 1997) do so within a society of declining interest in or support of Church teachings.

3.4.1.2 Authority Shift: Implications for Learning

There are implications for organisations such as churches, schools, and faith-based schools in particular, when authority of the learner or member rests more significantly within the authorship of one’s lived experience of what one can see, touch, hear and feel (Bouma, 2006, p. 90). The nature of an effective pedagogy invites exploration. “Clearly, something new is needed ... to make it possible for young people to ... lead productive, fulfilling lives” (A. L. Costa & Kallick, 2008, p. 7). Part of this something is the use of “third things” that invite the full person, including the soul, to engagement (Sommers, 2010, p. 15).

If soul truth is to be spoken and heard it must be approached ‘on the slant.’ We must invite, not command, the soul to speak. We must allow, not force, ourselves to listen. We achieve intentionality in a circle of trust by focusing on an important topic. We achieve indirection by exploring that topic metaphorically, via a poem, a story, a piece of music, or a work of art that embodies it. I call these embodiments ‘third things’ because they represent neither the voice of the facilitator nor the voice of a participant. They have voices of their own, voices that tell the truth about a topic but, in the manner

of metaphors, tell it on the slant. Mediated by a third thing, truth can emerge from, and return to, our awareness at whatever pace and depth we are able to handle — sometimes inwardly in silence, sometimes aloud in community — giving the shy soul the protective cover it needs. (P. J. Palmer, 2011)

The science of how young people learn and how teachers teach to maximise any learning needs to be deliberate and mindful (J. Anderson, 2008; Marzano, 1997). Specifically, in the case of learning about charism (such as values and ways of living) and charism-related activities (such as service-learning), “[s]trong emotional responses to presenting data would appear to be one of the key entry points to deeper learning ...” (Price, 2008, p. 28). Other key strategies include the provision of shock (Price, 2008, p. 28), disequilibrium against one’s own experiences (Dunlap, Scoggin, Green, & Davi, 2007), and a-ha moments – those “illuminative moments that mark people’s lives” (Stringer, cited in P. M. Green, 2006). These strategies have the power to effect transformation. Furthermore, it would appear that part of this emotional, third-thing paradigm “requires the experience to be attended to and reflected upon for learning to occur” (Price, 2008, p. 26).

While such an approach might offer a way forward, findings from the Schools Spirituality Project (P. Hughes, 2007) expose further difficulties for those involved in teaching youth. This project, that surveyed 3500 secondary school students in Catholic, Lutheran and government schools in Australia, found that more than 80% of students said that, at least at times, they found it hard to know what to believe about life (Hughes, cited in Kaldor et al., 2010). In the USA this was attributed to a lack of good teaching (Smith & Denton, cited in Kaldor et al., 2010, p. 50) but:

... this was clearly not the case in Australia.... They [young people] were often quite clear about [what they were taught]. The problem was whether they believed what they were being taught. They had a strong sense that they had to make up their own minds, and many had not done so. (P. Hughes, 2007, p. 135)

The “lack of authority placed in the teacher” is experienced at the same time as there is evidence of confusion in the young, a need for meaning and purpose and high rates of depression and suicide (Crawford & Rossiter, 2006, p. 67).

A further difficulty emerges in relation to learning. The curriculum in an authentically Catholic school should reflect a proper synthesis of religion and culture with faith and life (CCE, 1977, par. 49). Furthermore, the “faith vision should permeate all aspects

of the curriculum and the whole life of the school and all aspects of the curriculum” (Gallagher, 2005, p. 285). The synthesis of culture, faith and life should provide a consistent message to young people about how “to integrate the whole of human life in the search for the kingdom of God” (Houghton, 1979, pp. 15-16). However, this is premised on teachers giving an appropriate form of witness to their faith as part of their professionalism (T. McLaughlin, 1996). This involves full participation in retreats, prayer, interpersonal relationships, appropriate attitudes and skills (McLaughlin, 2000d, p. 42), and by, among other things, having a “mature relationship with Christ” (Mulligan, 1994, p. 120ff). Only 28% of teachers in Catholic schools believe that religious education classes are useful (BCEO, 2009d). Moreover, there is “decreasing numbers of ... staff [in Catholic schools who] practise the Catholic faith” (A. O'Brien, 2013, p. 39). It is evident, then, that a synthesis of religion, culture and faith in a Catholic school is a challenge. Furthermore, “[r]egrettably, the literature offers little information about how this integration can be achieved” (McLaughlin, 2000d, p. 40).

The literature reviewed in this section has illustrated that a societal shift in the predominant form of authority has changed not only what a student chooses to believe, but how a student learns. The pedagogy that a teacher employs in order to teach effectively invites scrutiny in such a paradigm. But further, when the teacher is similarly influenced by the same changes in society and belief systems as the learner, sustainability and transmission of the values and faith being “taught” and/or “caught” invites exploration. Similarly, and more particularly for this study, how students and parents experience charism as learners, and teachers experience charism as both the learner and the teacher of it requires illumination.

Given that the shift in authority has influenced what and how learning occurs, it is appropriate to explore the literature for trends in relation to the spirituality and beliefs of those in schools in which charism is being nurtured.

3.4.1.3 Authority Shift: Spirituality and Beliefs

3.4.1.3.1 Authority of Self

It is evident from the literature that churches that retain more of the traditional and/or rational forms of authority without a good balance of the “experiential” lose numbers (Bouma, 2006). It is equally apparent that “[r]eligious belief and spiritual practices do

not seem to be disappearing from Australians (Evans & Kelley, cited in Bouma, 2006; DiGiacomo, 2000). It is the participation in formal religious services that is declining. “The problem is not so much atheism or even religious affiliation, but participation in the church” (Rolheiser, 2008, November 23). Large numbers have “abandoned the staid and austere institutions for the charismatic fellowship of community” (O’Murchu, 1995, p. 8) and are attracted to meditation, yoga and spirituality groups (Tacey, 2003). These activities “provide an experience, enabling direct connection with the transcendent and feeling in touch with self, other and the universe” (Bouma, 2006, p. 99).

Spirituality is often sought or practised without specialist professionals. This reflects a cultural trend away from reliance on patriarchal professionals and the rational to the authority of the self, feelings and experience. It also reflects the movement away from subservience to system and hierarchy and towards personal agency.

There is a great distrust of the professional, the one who knows what is good for you and is likely to enforce their will by doing unto you what is good for you according to their understanding without consultation. (Bouma, 2006, pp. 99-100)

It would appear that while people may acknowledge their spiritual needs and the need for a relationship with a personal God, they are not attracted to organisations, including churches, that make demands on their beliefs, practices and lifestyles (Tacey, "Catholica," 2013)

3.4.1.3.2 *Language of and dialogue about transcendence*

Not only is there evidence that God needs to be a personal God, and personally experienced, but there is also evidence in the literature that there is a “learned embarrassment” in western society when discussing matters of religion (Hay, 2006). It would appear that most Australians regard religion or spirituality and questions of ultimate meaning as their own business into which others should not pry (Kaldor et al., 2010, p. 60). Youth are in a private world.

Adults are rarely admitted to the half-secret world of youth spirituality, because this world is protected by a great many defences and barricades, lest the cold irrational light of adult consciousness destroys what is regarded by youth as incredibly important and too sensitive to be exposed to ridicule or disrespect. (Tacey, 2003, p. 52)

Furthermore, although students from Catholic schools are more familiar with the language of transcendence (McQuillan, 2001), youth often lack the capacity to dialogue about transcendence and spirituality (McQuillan, 2009a). To provide a means of spiritual expression for young people and help them to understand their capacity for transcendence ... “it is necessary [firstly] to provide a more relevant language of expression for these experiences” (Hay, cited in McQuillan, 2009b).

In the past youth did not protest too much when they failed to understand religious language, because the Church held some fearsome moral authority over their lives and youth were threatened with punishment and eternal damnation if they did not submit to Church authority. But today’s youth are more experimental, with more trust with the integrity of their own experience, so that the old threats of hellfire no longer create guilty conformity to Church expectations. (Tacey, 2000, p. 196)

3.4.1.3.3 *Human need for spirituality*

In spite of the difficulty faced in talking about the transcendent, there is consistent evidence that there is a profound innate spirituality in human nature (Bouma, 2006; Kohn, 2003; Newberg, D'Aquili, & Rause, 2001; Tacey, 2003). In addition, ironically, the young person’s natural hunger for spirituality is not being nourished by the world around them (Tacey, 2003).

Amongst a range of factors implicated in the reasons for the deteriorating mental wellbeing of young people in Australia is the “decline of religion, which “packages” many sources of wellbeing, including social support, spiritual or existential meaning, a coherent belief system and a clear moral code” (Eckersley, 2009, p. 7).

Young people more readily relate to the word “spirituality” than “religion” (Kaldor et al., 2010, p. 34) and:

People are increasingly admitting to a “spiritual” search. ... Yet this is happening at a time when participation rates in major Christian churches continue to plummet. ... [E]ven among the graduates of our Catholic schools, between 92 and 98 per cent of young adults do not “practise their faith” in the usually understood ways, or engage [in] the life of the Church in any regular means. (Tacey, 2000, in M. Green, 2000, April, p. 3)

This more personal, often eclectic, spirituality has been accompanied and accelerated in recent decades by a loss of confidence in social organisations generally, and in church specifically. This has given impetus to notions of spirituality separate from religious institutions. The concept of spirituality as distinct from religion has

increasingly entered common parlance and research literature over the last decade (Kaldor et al., 2010, p. 60).

Put succinctly, the evidence demonstrates that young people have spiritual needs that perhaps were once met by Church. Church is now not meeting their needs. Scandal has rocked the church and young people place less trust and confidence in it than they once did. They are looking elsewhere to have their spiritual yearnings met. Organisations, options and spirituality connected to Church are not likely to be acceptable.

3.4.1.3.4 *Ways forward for Church*

The emerging Catholic spirituality after Vatican II:

... emphasised personal freedom, individuality and responsibility, and its adherents welcomed the personalism and sense of spiritual liberation that it brought them.... Key words like relationships, fulfilment, personal development, individuality, originality, self-knowledge, self-esteem, self-revelation, personal sharing, being 'close' to people, intimacy, sensitivity and wisdom became prominent in the language of psychological spirituality; they gave a distinctive emphasis to personalism, individualism and the experiential. (Crawford & Rossiter, 2006, p. 175)

Within this emerging theology were themes of creation spirituality, feminist theology and spirituality, ecological spirituality, charismatic spirituality, ecumenical and multi-faith perspectives and social justice and social analysis (Crawford & Rossiter, 2006, p. 177). Unfortunately, perhaps for the majority of Catholics who only experienced Catholicism in the church on Sunday, this attention to the needs of society in the Twenty-first Century went unnoticed (Crawford & Rossiter, 2006, p. 175).

While it is evident that the churches need to “reaffirm the origins of their particular faith and the authority of its scriptures, [they also need to] recognise the need to re-apply it to the conditions of contemporary society” (Francis et al., 2001, p. 107). This indicates that the “way ahead [for the Church] is to open up questions of basic assumptions in a spirit of dialogue and social problem-solving” (Francis et al., 2001, p. 107). Possibilities include global ethics (for environmental rehabilitation) and social justice issues, religious universalism (exploring the intuitions of transcendence that they all evoke), and spirituality (Francis et al., 2001). These questions and problems fit within the more inclusive language of missiology in which God has been described as:

... a Movement – more personal than we can ever imagine – who is always and everywhere present in God’s creation, present in the warp and woof of it, working for creation’s wholeness and healing, calling creation to its fullness, and calling women and men on a small planet in a minor galaxy in this vast universe – billions of years old, billions of light years in extension – into partnership in God’s work. (Bevans, 2009, p. 1)

The emphasis in this missiological perspective is that God is the mission, and that the mission has a church (Bevans, 2009). These themes, possibilities and emphasis of universal mission within the Church invite further analysis.

3.4.1.3.5 *Belief in God*

Belief about God is reported somewhat consistently through research. In the Australian 2002 Wellbeing and Security Survey, 46% of the adult population said that they believe that there is something beyond this life that makes sense of it all, and only 18% disagree. Only 35% believe in a personal God; 35% that the universe is unfolding in a meaningful way, and 53% that there is much in the universe that cannot be explained by science. Only 15% believe that there is no spirit, God or life force. A significant 44% say that carrying their spiritual beliefs into their daily life is extremely important (Kaldor et al., 2010, pp. 7-10). An analysis of other Australian data reveals that “[t]hrough most students in Catholic schools acknowledge a belief in God, most were unclear about the meaning of God, even among practising Catholics...” (McLaughlin, 2005, p. 222).

More recent data, as shown in Table 3.1, however, suggests that belief in God is declining (BCEO, 2009b).

Table 3-1 Belief in God and wanting to base life on the values of Jesus

Statement Cohort	I believe in God (Certainly/probably true)	I believe in God (Uncertain)	I want to base my life on the values of Jesus (moderately to very important)
Year 9 – Brisbane	56%	24%	54%
Year 12 – Brisbane	48%	26%	43%

These data relating to a commitment to prayer and building a relationship with God show a similar trend. This may be explained by the possibility that “[t]oday a theology that does not feel right is doomed” (Bouma, 2006, p. 101). “Clarity about God without the possibility of experiencing a relationship with God will never be enough (Putney,

2008, p. 27). However, at best only 48–56% of respondents could validate Queensland Bishop Putney’s claim that people are seeking discourse about God and that they are longing for an experience of God (Brisbane Catholic Education Office, 2009b, 2009d).

In summary, there is a significant dissonance between what young people need spiritually and what is provided by Church. This dissonance has occurred at the same time as the shift in authority throughout society. Ironically, concurrent with this crisis of plausibility in and relevance of Western Christianity, religion is playing an increasingly important and controversial role in global politics (Hay, 2009, p. 13). While there is an aggression towards Christianity and against religion *per se*, there is a pervasive ignorance about religion, suggesting a need for a better understanding of both religion and spirituality (Radcliffe, 2009, August 23, p. 3).

Apart from the authority of self, contemporary society is also characterised by diversity and individuality (Kaldor et al., 2010; P. J. Miller & Fossey, 2004; Mulligan, 2006).

3.4.2 Individualism, Meaning and Identity

3.4.2.1 Meaning and identity

Spirituality and religious beliefs influence the development of adolescent identity, and they contribute to the promotion of personal meaning and an awareness of pro-social issues (Furrow, King, & White, 2004). Unfortunately, youth place a low priority on the role of religion and spirituality in their lives (M. Flynn & Mok, 2002). Therefore, it can be expected that there will be an effect on the person unless well-being is sought in other ways (Eckersley, 2007a). Researchers and psychologists consistently note the search for meaning by youth in contemporary society (Carr-Gregg, 2004a; Crawford & Rossiter, 2006; McQuillan, 2009b). “Humanity’s need for meaning [is] an issue very much at the forefront of people’s minds as the new century begins” (Zohar and Marshall, cited in Crawford & Rossiter, 2006). It is evident that there is a “crisis of meaning” in contemporary Western societies that affects youth in particular” (Crawford & Rossiter, 2006, p. 24).

Young people who express purpose, in the sense of a dedication to causes greater than the self, show high degrees of religiosity, consolidated identities, and deeper sense of meaning than those who do not experience purpose. In addition, the value of purpose to the self continues well beyond the adolescent period – indeed, throughout the rest of the life-span. All of this suggests that purpose plays a positive role in self-development as well as a generative one

for the person's contribution to society. (Damon, Menon, & Cotton Bronk, 2003, p. 126 in Price, 2008, p 36)

Similarly, service to others gives so much meaning to life that it can be considered an antidote against anxiety and depression (Barrett, 2009, October 22).

Identity and meaning for the individual are shaped by numerous realities in contemporary western society. The influence of religiosity in making meaning is declining (BCEO, 2009b) and “spiritual anorexia” is considered a disorder amongst the young (Carr-Gregg, 2004a). Meaning is being made and identities forged through the exposure to numerous negative realities in popular culture: binge drinking, peer pressure, high suicide rate, unprotected sex, abortion, self-harm, anxiety and depression, body image, Botox, media and advertising, sexualisation (D. Miller, 2009; Tankard Reist, 2009; Tankard Reist & Bray, 2011). Film and television (Crawford & Rossiter, 2006, pp. 322-370), various forms of media (Edgar & Edgar, 2008, pp. 63-79), commercialism and consumerism (Edgar & Edgar, 2008, pp. 81-116), and fashion advertising (McCoart, 2004, pp. 239-247) provide the messages that build identity and meaning. Secularisation, consumerism, family dysfunction and values disorientation further distort the psyche (Bishops of NSW and the ACT, 2007). Anxiety, loss of community, breakdown of family unit, greed, hubris, image, need for justice, poverty, sexual liberation, media, noise, suspicion of institutions, technology and relativism are playing their role in identity formation (Mulligan, 2006, pp. 58-82). Access to the internet and digital media (Bouma, 2006, p. 104) puts the world of concepts formerly quarantined for adults in the hands of children.

Girls are excelling in all kinds of ways – academically, socially and on the sporting field to name a few – but underneath that façade of success, our girls are in trouble. While they may appear to be coping with all that life throws at them, behind closed doors many are silently imploding. Teenage girls exist in a world of peer pressure and unrealistic self-expectations, a world subtly skewed by the insidious marketing hype of popular brands such as Bratz, Britney and Bacardi Breezers. And it is poisoning them at a most vulnerable age. (D. Miller, 2009, p. 1)

Psychology seems to have triumphed over sociology. We have been indoctrinated to challenge the traditional order, and to create – and recreate – ourselves as though we could do that in a vacuum, struggling to forge an identity and make a place for ourselves in the world without the guidance of traditional institutions and norms; thrown onto our own resources, and feeling that if we fail to reach our potential or find great personal happiness it's our personal failure, not the product of a messy and confusing society. (Edgar & Edgar, 2008, p. 54)

Unfortunately, however, “[t]here is little evidence that modern youth, having rejected traditional narratives as out of phase with the chaotic kaleidoscope of stimuli that they are experiencing, are framing for themselves better stories, or reasons for living” (Hill, 2001, p. 102).

As police and social workers strive to pick up the pieces when young people collapse (whether through boredom, exploitation, abuse or unwise experimentation) they discover that needs do exist, even in this ebullient generation. The need for a story that makes sense, relationships that affirm, and a future hope that validates deferred gratification, is still there. (Hill, 2001, p. 103)

If all this is happening at the same time as spirituality and connectedness to faith and church is declining, it is worth investigating the role that charism and the contemporary Catholic school can play in counteracting the negative forces on identity and meaning formation.

3.4.2.2 *Individualism*

Exacerbating the already global trend towards individualism, is the preference to view the world as an individual rather than as a member of a distinctive group with cultural or ethnic heritage. In Australian society this has further led to changes in how meaning is made of life. People of the same cultural and ethnic identities began in the 1960s to seek their own identity.

Some maintained their adherence to the traditional religions. Others looked for meaning and hope in alternative ideas and spiritual expressions. Others again chose a non-religious way of life. Taken together, these trends indicate an increase in diversity and individuality in approaches to meaning-making. (Kaldor et al., 2010, p. 1)

Since the 1960s it is evident that people see their approach to life as personal rather than because of an imposed ethnicity or cultural expectation. Changes have come about through the number of options now available: multiculturalism, globalisation, television, 1960s youth culture, smaller family sizes, encouragement by parents of children to question, patterns of relationships, patterns of employment, traditional gender roles (Kaldor et al., 2010, p. 2).

However,

Human beings are not isolated individuals but social beings who need communities in order to celebrate their shared humanity. The Church has always been good at building community; parish communities, base Christian

communities, religious communities and all manner of special interest communities within these communities. Communities give individuals a place to belong. (Brien & Hack, 2010, p. 7)

Unfortunately, there is no evidence to suggest that people will be returning to the Church community at least in the foreseeable future (Wilkinson, 2013). The only faith community that students may experience is the Catholic school. The experience of charism in providing such a community in which students can develop values of the community requires exploration.

Globalisation as another characteristic of contemporary society further influences the experience of charism in Catholic schools.

3.4.3 Globalisation

Globalisation challenges nationalism, ethnic identity, religious and cultural traditions, family values and boundaries that were once held in check by governments and border controls. It is the process of integrating society and cultures through transportation, trade and communication and it causes a transnational flow of ideas, cultures, beliefs and information. The influence of society on anyone now is no longer controlled by those with whom humans come in physical contact (Jackson, 2004). Attitudes, images, language, values, information about everything including religion and spirituality are all available every moment of every day. “Social reality is largely constructed by the commercial media and the Internet ...” (Francis et al., 2001, p. 11) and Catholic schools are not immune to this influence. It “implies a new situation for religious education” (Francis et al., 2001, p. 13). Furthermore, “[w]hile globalisation affects religion, religion may also affect world, and religion clearly has played a role in shaping such conceptions (Schweitzer, 2001, p. 160) (see section 3.4.5).

Globalisation refers also to both the compression of the space and time in the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole and involves the development of deep respect for “the other” (McVey, 2002a; Schweitzer, 2001, p. 161). This provides a particular challenge to the way in which church and the Gospel exist and are presented to students. Deep respect afforded to all – to women as people of God, to the poor and marginalised, to the young with their own needs, to those of different faiths and beliefs appears to be a challenge. Any lack of synthesis of “faith and culture” in a globalised society runs the risk of exposing a lack of credibility for the Church.

Furthermore, the effect of globalisation on society and on the young in particular is that perhaps “those ... born in previous generations can no longer suppose that [they] have the answers to what it will take to survive and prosper in the future” (Hill, 2001, p. 97). This generation has literally, at their fingertips, access to ideas and ideologies, beliefs and myths, falsehoods and truths that can all warrant study, probing and dialogue if the truth is to be revealed (McVey, 2002a).

Religious leaders must overhaul the anachronistic structures of formal worship and Church government that have chained the ageless Gospel, in order to meet an egalitarian and electronic generation on its own ground. ... (We must) invest in new modes of interaction and communication, not waiting for the hierarchies to catch up. (Hill, 2001, p. 111)

The values and beliefs of students, teachers and parents in Catholic schools are influenced by more than those emphasised by families, schools and Church. Ideologies, beliefs, cultures and behavioural patterns from anywhere in the world have the potential to shape, inform or influence school communities. The institutionalisation and nurturing of charism in a school, while authentically integrating faith and culture and simultaneously acknowledging individual diversity and globalisation, is the task of contemporary schools. The experience of charism by stakeholders, given such an environment, is worthy of research.

3.4.4 Pluralism and Diversity

Pluralism, energised by globalisation, is the engagement by all groups irrespective of diversity within society. It is based on dialogue and encounter and assumes that no set of ideas should or has any right to dominate the scene, but rather that a variety of systems and values can and should coexist such that minority groups too are able to maintain their distinctiveness (Walsh, 1999, p. 3). “The plurality of values enriches the possibilities for our living good lives, increases our freedom, motivates us to assert greater control over the direction of our lives, and enlarges the repertoire of conceptions of life that we may recognise as good” (Kekes, cited in J. Sullivan, 2000, p. 21). With the shift in authority, the phenomenon of globalisation, and with the speed of transfer of information through digital media, pluralism is now identified as having a significant influence on society (Bouma, 2006; J. Sullivan, 2000; Walsh, 1999; Ziebertz, 2001).

Pluralism obscures boundaries between traditions and cultures of minority and majority cultures and is also concerned with the diversity within any one culture. “All descriptions, all strategies, all solutions... will in future [have to] grow from the ground of multiplicity... Within this framework, not against it, we [must] conceive of unity” (Welsch, cited in Francis et al., 2001, p. 227). It is this conception of unity within a culture of diversity, and specifically, within single organisations such as church and school, that the challenge lies.

The imperative to dialogue and to converse with “the other” and to develop a listening ear as part of the “Jesus spirituality” (Schillebeeckx, 1983) has long been emphasised by Dominican theologians (McVey, 2002a; Radcliffe, 2009, April 13). The Church itself has recognised the imperative to dialogue.

Dialogue, without ambiguity and marked by respect for those taking part, is a priority in today’s world, and the Church does not intend to withdraw from it ... Given the reality of cultural diversity, people need not only to accept the existence of the culture of others, but also to aspire to be enriched by it and to offer to it whatever they possess that is good, true and beautiful. (Benedict XVI, 2010, May 10)

However, there remains “tension between the rights of individuals to self-expression within the community of faith and the rights of that community to maintain rules for the preservation of its identity, priorities and purpose (J. Sullivan, 2000, p. 23). In a school, this requires a “healthy balance of emphases between fostering a confident individual perspective and a sense of the importance of co-operation and teamwork” (J. Sullivan, 2000, p. 24).

The recent removal and forced retirement from office in Queensland of a priest and a bishop respectively who, seemingly, expressed opinions contrary to official church teaching or practice, attests to the challenge that both church and the Catholic School, have in a pluralist society. This event indicates that “[u]ltimately ... the Church is not a democracy” (Pascoe, cited in Syvret, 2011, May 7-8, p. 62) and that engaging in dialogue can be problematic.

[T]he acceptance and application of pluralism within the Catholic community, with regard to its own members, who display a pluralism of stances towards the Church’s teaching and a diverse range of stages in their own moral and religious development, will in some ways prove more difficult than the Church’s acceptance of pluralism in the wider society. (J. Sullivan, 2000, p. 23)

Such tensions exist in a multi-cultural, pluralist society due to openness to “otherness”, the dignity of individual freedom on one hand, and cultural loyalty, a strong desire to preserve authoritative tradition, Scripture, beliefs and teachings on the other (Groome, 2002, p. 6; McVey, 2002a; J. Sullivan, 2000, p. 27).

Hope in such a society rests in the power of dialogue, conversation, and of deep probing questioning facilitated by self-awareness, an openness to change, community consciousness and a heart of hospitality and imagination (McVey, 2002a).

Theology happens ‘outside the camp’. And so does mission. ... [M]ission begins with an experience of God, and theology is a reflection on that experience. ... Outside the institution, outside culturally conditioned beliefs and perceptions, ‘outside the camp’, God speaks to us ‘face to face’ (Ex 33:11). ... it is outside the camp that we meet the Other who is different – and discover who we are.... In the Gospels it is always those on the margins of society, those living outside the camp, whom Jesus presents of models of belief and action. (McVey, 2002b, p. 5)

The Dominican philosophy of asking questions, dialoguing and appreciating diversity in thought is both a solution and a problem with the existing tensions. The sole purpose of Dominican charism is to illuminate the Jesus story, not to create a diversion (M. Green, 1997). In a pluralist, largely unchurched⁹ society, how the original message of Jesus is presented and how the stakeholders experience the charism of St Dominic without distorting the purpose of charism, invites scrutiny. Furthermore, the extent to which reference to a Dominican charism or St Dominic can be made without confusing the unchurched student, staff member or parent is a question for which answers are sought through this study. In addition, as society becomes characterised not just by diversity and pluralism, but by secularism, the influence and experience of charism in school culture provokes further investigation.

3.4.5 Secularisation of Society

Secularisation of society is the activity of changing society so that it is no longer under the control or influence of religion. There is little doubt that secularisation is influential in shaping contemporary society and the minds of its citizens – including those

⁹ “Unchurched” is used to describe people who do not regularly attend Catholic Mass or any form of regular worship in a Christian church.

connected to Catholic schools and Church (Crawford & Rossiter, 2006; Maroney, 2008; O’Gorman, 2009).

Unfortunately, “[s]o much is ethically bankrupt about ... secular, post-Christian culture. The “order of the soul” (a reference to Leonard Cohen’s lyrics in “The Future”) [is] overturned. Individuals, families and communities lack anchors, meaning and coherence as things “slide in all directions” ... Catholic education has to do with the order of the soul: this is the reason for hope” (Mulligan, 2006, p. 203). This issue of the mission of the contemporary Catholic school is further illuminated in Chapter 4 but it is evident that secularisation provides the Catholic school with a challenge.

It is apparent that secularisation creates a void in human development and that values education has been introduced in Australian schools to address this issue (Bouma, 2006, p. 183). The efficacy of this through generally accepted teaching methods is, however, disputed as “demonstrably ineffective in contemporary, “post-modern” sociocultural contexts” (Collier, 2008, p. 200). Furthermore, the pedagogy used in teaching religious education in the face of secularisation and pluralism requires a paradigm shift from “reconfessionalisation” to “recontextualisation” (Pollefeyt, 2011, September). In a recontextualised school there is dialogue between faith and culture, and “a chance to renew Catholic identity by reconfiguring it in a new context” (Pollefeyt). However, this shift can also be marked by fear in case staff “get it wrong”. A safe position can be to present to students the traditional Catholic view and belief structure – a pedagogy that accepts “the erosion of Catholic school identity” (Pollefeyt). The “safe position” however, does not sustain the Church (Pollefeyt).

The paradox of secularisation is visible in the explosion of new religions. They have been driven by “the need of secular humanity for mystical experience” (P. J. Miller & Fossey, 2004, p. 161). Ironically, as previously cited, youth, in this secularised culture, lack the language of and are embarrassed to speak about the transcendent (McQuillan, 2009b). The Church, in the face of secularisation, has, in some ways, presented a restorationist response (Ang, 2008; Hobson & Welbourne, 2002), not one of consistent and overt renewal that is required if youth are to be engaged in a meaningful way.

Secularisation requires that the Church be taken to the people and where they are at:

Modern people are searching, travelling, not quite sure what is at the end of the journey but, at least intermittently, on the way. We must be with them,

helping people to discover the freedom of the road and glimpse the goal of all our journeying. The Church must offer a pedagogy of freedom which is about more than making the right choices. It is becoming a moral agent whose life is discovered to have a shape and meaning. We will only be able to do this if we are with people where they are, not telling them where they ought to be. We cannot be like the person who was asked the way to Dublin and who replied, "If I wanted to go to Dublin, then I would not start here." (Radcliffe, 2005, p. 42)

The secularisation of teachers, parents and students in Catholic schools is a challenge of post-modern, post-ecclesial society. "There are instances where the Catholic school is not perceived as an integral part of organic pastoral work of the Christian community. At times it is considered alien, or very nearly so, to the community" (CCE, 1998a, par. 10). Some Catholic schools may have not only been seduced by the secular culture but have succeeded within it (Angus, 1988).

Herein lies a contradiction. Australian society is becoming more secular but Australian Catholic schools are becoming more popular than ever (BCEO, 2009b, p. 6). Parents are choosing Catholic schools for many reasons, but religiosity, if rated at all, is not a high priority (M. Flynn & Mok, 2002; Griffiths, 1999; Lee, 2000; Tinsey, 1998). Moreover,

[t]he success of Catholic schools in Australia has sowed the seeds for a major conceptual challenge to the focus, purpose and identity of these schools. In parts of Australia, concerns have been significant enough that pastoral directives have been issued to halt the weakening of religious commitment and composition in Catholic schools. (BCEO, 2009b, pp. 6-7)

This position will be explored in greater depth in Chapter 4.

If the Catholic school is considered to be an official "ecclesial arm" of the Church, then the employment of staff with a commitment to the Church is essential for the continuation of the mission of the Catholic school (Battams, 2002; Coughlan, 2009). With a number of "Gen X" staff employed in schools (those born from early 1960s to the early 1980s) they (at least) could be described as placing more emphasis on the importance of human experience than Catholic educators of previous generations. They are generally more suspicious of institutional authority than older staff (Rymarz, 1999).

St Dominic banded together his troops at a time when society was marked by fear, wars, misuse of centralised, hierarchical power and misunderstandings in Church

dogma. The challenge now is the influence and experience of his charism in a secular society. This invites exploration.

3.4.6 Conclusion

This synthesis of the literature confirms that the signs of the times are clear (Bouma, 2006; Brisbane Catholic Education Office, 2009b; McLaughlin, 2005, 2000d; Tacey, 2003). The globalised society, within which the Catholic school is situated, is pluralistic and secular, with individualism a challenge, and meaning and identity under threat (Crawford & Rossiter, 2006). Traditional authority and the role of Church and the professional are no longer the authority on what is to be believed. Human spirituality, providing identity and meaning, requires nurturing, but the young without religious schooling appear not to have the language to engage with the transcendent or with others about the transcendent. Those in Catholic schools have more of a language of the transcendent than others, but up to 94% of graduates from Catholic schools have “defected from established faith practices within twelve months of completing their education” (Tacey, 2000, p. 190). They show a declining participation in Church and belief in God even while at school.

Teachers, themselves influenced but the same society that influences the Catholic school, are confronted by the need to use new and often experiential pedagogies to maximise learning. The need for students to experience lived witness to Gospel by teachers as role models requires teachers to engage with the mission of the Catholic school.

There is declining commitment to and practice of the Catholic faith as an identifiable part of a person’s identity (Mason, Singleton, & Webber, 2007). While the effects of secularism may have assisted in a declining rate of Church participation and religious belief and meaning systems, there is nothing in the literature to suggest that students reject the stories and examples of living provided through a “charism”. On analysis of questions and answers within research (BCEO, 2009d), it would appear that students, teachers and parents appreciate student involvement in activities that not coincidentally align with the charismatic culture. If “charisms ... free the church from the heaviness of uniformity” (Radcliffe, 2009, April 13) then how they are experienced in a society marked by individual expression, pluralism and diversity is worthy of study.

The parallels between the Twenty-first Century global village and Catherine of Siena's Fourteenth Century Europe described as follows are evident:

A church torn by internal divisions and scandals and in need of reform led by ministers whose lives often fail to reflect the Gospel they preach... A world in which the violence of war is fuelled by intertwined religious, economic and political motivations, with factions ... lacking courageous leaders who are willing to work for the common good and to call people to reform and dialogue...widespread poverty and disease, a burden borne especially by women and children. (Hilkert, 2008, p. 1)

“It is for this runaway world that we must discover a vision and shape a new spirituality of mission” (Radcliffe, 2002, p. 1).

Within a society in which individuals are experiencing such change, the second research question emerges.

How do students, teachers and parents experience Dominican charism at San Sisto College?

3.5 Culture: A Definition

The purpose of this section is to explore the cultural context within which charism is experienced in a school. An illumination of this context helps provide an explanation for, and understanding of, the nature of the experience of charism within a Catholic school.

Defining culture and ethos in schools with a charismatic culture is complex.

Ethos and identity can be defined as distinguishing character; what makes us special, what we aspire to [can] equate organisational culture with its way of life. Culture is what actually happens. Ethos results in a culture. Culture is that which brings identity to life. To some commentators, charism is an element of ethos and identity but not its equivalent. Charism is a characteristic of a school, a definer of its ethos ... Charism can be synonymous with identity and ethos and be lived out in culture (Cook, 2010, pp. 6-7)

While this clarifies to some extent the relationship of each to the other, a more practical definition of “culture” is sought so as to illuminate the influence of charism and culture on each other.

Culture is:

... a pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as

the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems.
(Schein, 1992, p. 12)

Culture is everywhere and ultimately embraces everything that a group is concerned about and must deal with (Schein, 1992, p. 49). Schools particularly: “improve performance by fostering a shared system of norms, folkways, values, and traditions. These infuse the enterprise with passion, purpose, and a sense of spirit. Without a strong, positive culture, schools flounder and die” (Peterson & Deal, 2002, p. 7).

Culture may be defined as “a system of values, symbols and shared meanings, which become part of the artefacts and rituals of a group of people. Culture designates what is important for a particular group and determines how members think, feel, and behave” (Sergiovanni & Corbally, cited in Runkel, 2005, p. 52). Furthermore,

[w]hat seems clear is that culture flourishes when it exists in relation to ethos and that culture is supported and promoted by leaders in organisations ... [Culture] is created when people in an organisation share the fundamental values or ethos of the organisation. This ethos is then realised in shared values, attitudes and symbols which form the organisation’s culture.
(Tuite, 2007, pp. 62-63)

Ethos is more likely to be reflected in a school’s mission or vision statement and concentrates on spiritual characteristics and values, whereas culture is less likely to be written, because it is the “lived experience of those within the organisation” (Elvery, 2013). If charism is foundational to ethos, and ethos results in culture, then for a culture to continue to thrive, its ethos requires transmission. Members of a community (staff, parents and students) require formation in the ethos of the community if it is to be transmitted. In addition, staff, students and parents require formation in the specific charism of the school (Runkel, 2005; Watson, 2007). The phrase “Ethos and Charism” (BCEO, 2009a) holds both the religious meaning of the charism (as gift of the Spirit) and the secular meaning of beliefs and attitudes. Culture, ethos and charism are held in symbiotic relationship to each other.

The culture of a school is the integration, then, of environmental, organisational and experiential features of school existence such that there is a context for teaching and learning, and its subsequent improvement” (Glover & Coleman, 2005, p. 266).

It is people who will shape culture, and give it its strength and direction. It is their meaning-making, self-definition, and ways of relating to each other and their world which is the stuff of culture...when people in an organisation are alienated for whatever reason from the traditional core of the organisation’s

culture, then the culture will become confused, will dilute, and ultimately the organisation will lose its vitality, its sense of purpose, and consequently its effectiveness. (M. Green, 1997, p. 45)

The first indicator of a strong culture will be the presence of people – parents, students, teachers, and other stakeholders – who are sufficiently attracted by the same values and beliefs and have ways of expressing these culturally. The relationships between and amongst these people can be authentically described most of the time by the term “community” or even “family”. Second, the presence of transformational leaders, with moral bases for their authority and a sense of the importance of cultural leadership, is necessary to bring this to effect (M. Green, 1997, pp. 45-46).

Charism provides the school with a framework and lens through which to view the core values and identity to be experienced within the culture of the school.

If the charism is truly embedded in the culture of the community it impacts on decisions and choices at all levels of school life. The gift of charism is drawn on with every decision so that ultimately it becomes an understanding that is simply what we do because in the end it is who we are.
(Brien & Hack, 2011, p. 12)

It is a way of living the Christian Gospel within a cultural context. “A culture which is in symbiosis with the Gospel becomes a way of giving the time and place, the people and events, the story and community, that incarnation of the Gospel needs” (M. Green, 1997, p. 208). In a school, an authentic charism that is responsive to the signs of the times provides such a touchstone. It is evident that for the creation and maintenance of a culture that is influenced by a charism, that the leader or leadership plays a central role (M. Green, 1997; McNicholas, 1990), and on-going staff formation is essential (Tuite, 2007). Charism needs to be strategically infused into the culture of the school in all activities from the mission statement, to student leadership training, to curriculum implementation (Runkel, 2005).

Just as charism exists within the construct of “culture”, charism is also the core of the organisational culture of the Catholic school.

3.5.1 Organisational Culture

Organisational culture is continuously enacted and created through interaction with others within the organisation (Schein, cited in M. L. McDermott, 2006). Charism provides an organisation with identity and direction but the culture of the organisation

is its dynamic identity (M. L. McDermott, 2006, p. 31). The literature (Runkel, 2005) confirms that a study of organisational culture is relevant to the study of school culture (and therefore to the experience of charism) because schools bring people together to achieve a purpose. Those people need to be organised (Handy & Aitken, 1986).

At all three levels of organisational culture, charism is influential. At the first level, cultural artefacts are visible. Identifiable characteristics of the organisational culture may be seen, heard and felt. Culture may be evidenced in architecture, language, clothing, manners of address, emotional displays, myths, stories told about the organization, published lists of values, retreats, ceremonies, and visible behaviours of the group (Schein, 1992, p. 16). The second layer of organisational culture incorporates espoused values. These constitute the shared beliefs, strategies, goals, philosophy that gives the school/organisation its *raison d'être*. The third layer consists of basic assumptions – those unspoken values which everyone takes for granted yet which, if transgressed, is noted as unconscionable (Schein, 1992, p. 21).

The organisational culture of a school enlivened by Dominican charism, is by definition, observable as such, by the display of icons of St Dominic and by the naming of values connected to St Dominic. These values are used as touchstones and staff are lived examples of them for their students. Celebrations and liturgies are held in honour of St Dominic or Dominicans. Assumptions are made about the language and beliefs held by all.

The role of the leader in embedding and transmitting the organisation's culture and the role of formation of new members to the organisation is widely documented (M. L. McDermott, 2006; Runkel, 2005; Watson, 2007). Similarly, leadership and staff formation is essential for the embedding, transmitting and institutionalising charism within school cultures (Elvery, 2013; M. L. McDermott, 2006; Runkel, 2005).

School culture is also dependent on the particular people on staff at any given time (Purkey, cited in M. Flynn & Mok, 2002). A "school's culture is always greater than the sum of the individual contributions and ... school cultures exhibit commonalities based on a set of issues such as leadership. ... Culture is the cohesive bonding that moves a school towards the accomplishment of its goals" (M. Flynn & Mok, 2002, p. 165). Furthermore, this description provides a rationale for understanding a school organisation as a community.

Processes used within an organisational culture so that it can effectively adapt to its external environment include: creating a common language and conceptual categories; defining group boundaries and criteria for inclusions and exclusions; distributing power and status; developing norms of intimacy, friendship, and love; defining and allocating rewards and punishments; and explaining the unexplainable – ideology and religion (Schein, 1992, pp. 70-71). The organisational culture of a school allows or disallows the institutionalisation of a charism by the explicit or implicit support for or rejection of the charism. How a school binds its culture to a charism, or binds its charism within its ethos to enrich its “Catholic culture” determines the influence which the charism has in the school’s community. Furthermore, the receptivity of new members to the culture of the school is pivotal for the culture to perpetuate (M. L. McDermott, 2006). It is appropriate therefore to explore the influence that charism has on a person’s sense of identity, as a member of an organisation and as an individual.

3.5.2 Social Identity Theory

Organisational identity is defined as a set of beliefs that organisational members consider central, distinctive, and enduring in regard to that organisation. The essence of the organisation and its claimed distinctiveness is identifiable by its members, and valued (Albert & Whetten, 1985). While organisational identity can be viewed from the perspective of the whole organisation, it is more relevant in this study to look at the perspective of the self-identity of the members, for this illuminates how and why a person might experience the charism of the organisation to which s/he belongs. “Identification with the essence and core values of an organization has a significant impact on the implementation of the mission and goals of the organisation” (Runkel, 2005, p. 16). The mission and goals of an organisation flow from its core values. The mission and goals become a reality when members of the organisation identify personally and collectively with those values and when they base their own self-identity and integrity upon the core values of the organisation. When these values and members’ own values are optimally aligned, members realise quality productivity and personal satisfaction (Runkel, 2005, p. 16). They make decisions that enhance both the internal and external image of the organization (Runkel, 2005, p. 19).

This indicates that if staff or students or parents have ownership of their college/organisation’s values, they experience quality personal and professional satisfaction in the workplace or school. However, as “postmodern youth culture is

highly resistant to transmission models of values education” (Macnaught, 1995, p. 2), for it to have an effect on identity, values education should be taught across the entire curriculum and with a consistent message presented by staff (Collier, 2008).

Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) proposes that a person has not one “personal self” but several selves that correspond to the various groups within which the person belongs. Different social contexts may trigger an individual to think, feel and act differently, depending on the group. “This can be distinguished from the notion of personal identity which refers to self-knowledge that derives from the individual’s unique attributes” (University of Twente, n.d.). Individuals incorporate knowledge of their group memberships into conceptions of their self-identities and hence “... the perceived social identity of an organization can be a strong factor in members’ self-identity and a catalyst for altering behaviours” (Runkel, 2005, p. 21).

Once a person identifies with an organisation, they participate in its activities and experience a sense of belonging with the organisation. While identification with an organisation does not necessarily mean that its values and beliefs are internalised, if those beliefs and values are accepted as guiding principles, then internalisation does occur (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). In a postmodern society, as identification with organizations is weaker, image and corporate image become stronger (Alvesson, 1990). There is also an interdependence between identity, culture and image (Hatch & Schultz, 1997). Reputation, too, in a postmodern competitive culture is also significant in both organizational and personal identity (Runkel, 2005, p. 41). Respect for individual difference is important. Hence, it is possible for there to exist a multiple of identities with a variety of differing views about what is enduring, central and enduring in an organisation. These views do not have to be conflicting nor do they have to be held by everyone in the organization (Pratt & Foreman, 2000).

The Catholic school, further explored in Chapter 4, has, by definition, a Catholic identity of which charism, in the case of schools whose ethos is defined by a charism, is not only at the heart of the organisation, but is identifiable (M. L. McDermott, 2006, p. 9). As a charism is an emanation from the broader Catholic identity, how this is experienced, as separate, or as indistinguishable, is illuminated in this study.

Connected to this issue, is the matter of how students, teachers and parents make sense of what happens in a Catholic school.

3.5.3 Sense-Making in Catholic Schools

The concept of “sense-making” contributes to an understanding of the role and experience of charism in Catholic schools (Weick, cited in Hardiman, 2005, pp. 32-33). Sense-making is the “placement of items into frameworks, comprehending, redressing surprise, constructing meaning, interacting in pursuit of mutual understanding and patterning” (Weick, cited in Hardiman, 2005, p. 33) . Sense-making is the on-going act of making sense of what is going on around, and by one’s interactions with other individuals and with inanimate objects. In the case of this study, it is how students, teachers and parents make sense of charism as they experience it. In the context of a school seven properties of sense-making are identified, as shown in Table 3.2.

Table 3-2 Weick’s seven properties of “sense-making”

Weick’s 7 Properties of Sense-making	
Grounded in identity construction	Identity construction through experiences in multiple contexts and in multiple environments. Coming to know a variety of “selves”.
Retrospective	Reversal of the traditional cause and effect relationship. Meaning is created by paying attention to that which has already occurred. An action can become an object of attention only after it has occurred.
Enactive of sensible environments	We share responsibility for our environments. We enact upon them and they enact upon us. We are not slaves to the environment. Environments are not monolithic; they are enacted upon by our interactions, decisions, responses to stimuli.
Social	Sense-making is never solitary because what a person does internally is contingent upon others. Even monologues and one way communications presume an audience, and the monologue changes as the audience changes.
On-going	Sense-making never starts. Pure duration never stops and people are always in the middle of things. To understand sense-making is to be sensitive to the ways in which people chop moments out of continuous flows and extract cues from those moments.
Focused on and by extracted cues	Extracted cues are simple, familiar structures that are seeds from which people develop a larger sense of what may be occurring.
Driven by plausibility rather than accuracy	Accuracy is a secondary focus in the context of sense-making. The prime focus is the need for plausibility and coherence.

Source: (Weick, cited in Hardiman, 2005, p. 34)

There appears to be a need to have strong frames of past action from which people can connect cues of present action to make meaning of experiences. Without such frames, there can be a reduced focus on the traditions of the organisations (Weick, 1995,

p. 126). People see patterns in behaviours, beliefs, values, and celebrations so that they take on predictable and therefore “nameable” features. These frames do not lock members into a past, but serve as a basis upon which renewal takes place, and upon which openness and dialogue originate, so as to foster new understandings of the self, the organization and the environment to grow and develop. The images and frames of the past allow individuals to connect to the core or heart of the institution.

When meaning is made, moments of clarity appear. These have been termed the “a – ha moments” (P. M. Green, 2006, p. 104). They are identified when a person’s inner spiritual journey and outward journey towards citizenship intersect (Delors, cited in Hack, 2008, p. 137). The greater the intersections, the greater the meaning, the greater the sense-making, and the greater the chance of identity formation based on those spiritual elements presented.

In summary, a person’s identity is shaped by their experience of what makes sense to them. As experiences connected to the charism of the school abound within the school, it is conceivable, that charism helps a person make meaning of what is going on around them, and that it helps form a person’s identity. This research seeks to identify if and how this is done within a case study.

3.5.4 Catholic School Culture

The culture of a Catholic school is Christ-centred (M. Flynn & Mok, 2002, p. 160). Catholic schools are typically described as “*communities*” rather than educational institutions because of the emphasis on relationships between and amongst students and teachers (Higgins-D'Alessandro & Sadh, 1997). This is consistent with the community dimension of school as being both a sociological and theological construct (CCE,1998a).

When charism is strategically embedded into school culture it has a role throughout all elements of school life in keeping the “organisation” focussed and in a consistent direction.

The most distinctive feature of highly effective [Catholic] schools continues to be their outstanding culture which gives them a special character or spirit. These schools are places where students and teachers find meaning and discover relationships that enrich their lives through the curriculum and daily life of the school. (M. Flynn & Mok, 2002, p. 160)

Frameworks, mapping, and integrating a strong religious culture through a school, assist in maintaining a culture that is authentically Catholic (BCEO, 2008).

Furthermore:

... when a school's lived experiences are in sympathy with its stated purposes, then there is a functional culture. When there are adequate levels of resonance, consistency and coherence between the publicly proclaimed values of the school and the experienced reality of its daily life, then the effectiveness of the school as an educative institution is enhanced proportionately.
(M. Green, 1997, p. 31)

The culture of a Catholic school should be one that fosters solidarity and interdependence with all people; renders care and compassion; demonstrates respect for the "other" in all people; is open to share with and learn from all people, and welcomes and appreciates God's saving work among all people (Groome, 2002, p. 252). The culture of Catholic schools is also noted as possessing noteworthy "social capital" of support, provided by the sponsoring faith community; good collegiality amongst staff; and decentralized governance (Groome, 1998).

There is argument that the organising framework that governs the totality of culture in a Catholic school should be organised around relationships – relationship with self, God, others, the local and world community, creation (Cook & Simonds, 2011). The particular culture of the Catholic school in the Dominican Tradition is one in which relationship is central and where each member shares his or her gifts (Goergen, 2008; McVey, 2002a; Radcliffe, 2001a; Walsh, 2002, September). It is this culture of the contemporary Catholic school that is authentically Gospel, and Catholic and is understood and appreciated by students as noted in the Brisbane Catholic Education "Who's Coming to our School Today" (BCEO, 2009d) statistics for Year 12 students in Table 3.3.

Table 3-3 Year 12 Student beliefs: Comparing all BCE schools and San Sisto (Set A)

STUDENTS	All BCE schools	San Sisto College
My school does a good job at being welcoming and inclusive	90% Strongly agree/agree	96% Strongly agree/agree
My school does a good job at helping students understand the needs of others	82% Strongly agree/agree	92% Strongly agree/agree
My school should provide an atmosphere where people are concerned for one another	76% Very important/important	80% Very important/important
I am concerned about justice to poor and disadvantaged people in society today.	75% Certainly/probably true	82% Certainly/probably true
I am happy at this school.	80% Certainly/probably true	92% Certainly/probably true
My school does a good job at relating to students as individuals.	80% Strongly agree/Agree	88% Strongly agree/Agree
My school should foster respect towards parents and teachers	70% Very important/important	88% Very important/important
My school does a good job at providing a caring community.	93% Strongly agree/Agree	98% Strongly agree/Agree
My school should help students understand the society in which the live.	77% Very important/important	89% Very important/important

Source: Brisbane Catholic Education study “Who’s coming to our School today?” (Brisbane Catholic Education Office, 2009d)

It is a culture of relevance, inclusivity, equality and community, lived out in experience through participation in works of service, acts of compassion, activities seeking the awareness of justice in the world. The culture of the Catholic school is centred and grounded in a way of life: of Jesus’ life (Mulligan, 2006).

For children and adolescents socialized in a culture and everyday life in which they experience so many conflicting values and behaviours, the greatest contribution the Catholic school and Catholic educators can make is to offer certainty about what it is to be human and to be loved by God. This is certainly transmitted through a values-laden curriculum and the lived values of Catholic educators: their joy, hope and tangible manifestation of belief in Jesus. (Mulligan, 2006, p. 299)

Remaining authentic to the Jesus story, however, may cause some tension within a Catholic school because it appears that:

[Young people] may be more interested in spiritual ideas and practices that have some immediate felt relevance or serve some pragmatic function. They seem more concerned about coping with and succeeding in, their own

existential life-world; the idea of a coherent and systematic religious worldview is not something they see a great need for. (Crawford & Rossiter, 2006, p. 207)

“The split between the Gospel and culture is without a doubt the drama of our time” (Paul VI, 1975). It would appear from the literature that this “split” in the contemporary Catholic school is not so obvious. Perhaps the greater split as shown in the statistics within the literature (Brisbane Catholic Education Office, 2009b, 2009d; M. Flynn & Mok, 2002; McLaughlin, 2005) is the perception of the split between the Gospel and the culture of the institutional Church as demonstrated by church attendance.

Catholic school culture, with its core beliefs, values, traditions, symbols and patterns of behaviour provides meaning to the school community and influences the lives of students, teachers and parents (M. Flynn, 1993, p. 39). It would appear that people are not being similarly influenced by contemporary Catholic Church – they are neither attending, nor believing in its tenets as shown repeatedly through studies (Brisbane Catholic Education Office, 2009b; Tacey, 2003).

Culture and identity are closely related (Cook, 2001). However, in the case of the culture of the Catholic school and the identity of its members, and the culture of the Catholic Church (as the ecclesial body of which the school is a component) there would appear to be some incongruence. It is suggested that Catholic schools need to connect their community-building efforts with the culture of the Catholic Church (Cook, 2001). It is similarly argued that students in Catholic schools need to develop the ability to critique culture through the lens of faith (Cook & Simonds, 2011, p. 319). However, the connection of students, parents, and even teachers to the Catholic Church is tenuous and becoming increasingly so (Dixon, 2003; M. Flynn & Mok, 2002; McLaughlin, 2005).

A culture steeped in a theology of Trinity, Final Judgement and Assumption, for example, is out of the realms of belief by the young and is no longer of interest to them (McLaughlin, 2005). This is further demonstrated in the data from the Brisbane Archdiocesan study of Year 12 students as shown in Table 3.4 (BCEO, 2009d).

Table 3-4 Yr 12 Student beliefs: Comparing all BCE schools and San Sisto (Set B)

STUDENTS	All BCE schools	San Sisto College
My school does a good job at practising Christian values	84% Strongly agree/agree	89% Strongly agree/agree
In the future, I want to continue to develop in my Catholic faith	19% Very important/important	15% Very important/important
How important would you say religion is in your life?	36% Very important/ fairly important	39% Very important /fairly important
I think going to Church is a waste of time.	30% Certainly/probably true	29% Certainly/probably true
I never go to church outside of school or only on special or family occasions	81%	82%
As far as I can, I tend to base my life on religious values.	19% Certainly/probably true	16% Certainly/probably true
On some issues I would follow my conscience rather than Church teaching	76% Certainly/probably true	87% Certainly/probably true
My school should help students to come to know Jesus.	50% Moderate to very important	55% Moderate to very important
In the future I want to know and love God.	47% Moderate to very important	47% Moderate to very important

Source: Data from Brisbane Catholic Education study “Who’s Coming to Our School Today” (Brisbane Catholic Education Office, 2009d)

The data suggest a disjunction between commitment to the culture of Church and to that of the Catholic school. Paradoxically, enrolments in Catholic schools in Australia continue to grow and Catholic schools have never been so popular (Brisbane Catholic Education Office, 2009b; M. Flynn & Mok, 2002). A culture of care and of relationships and of Gospel values appears to be what families desire of an Australian Catholic school.

The same type of culture is also described in the USA:

Catholic school identity is a gospel culture, which combines academic excellence, mission, global awareness and multiculturalism. The mission seeks to integrate faith, culture and life; it envisions forming a faith community and a Christian vision of identity and culture. The relationships, which develop within that culture and identity, are called to be inclusive of the world community. (Runkel, 2005, p. 56)

The culture of the Catholic school is complex and changing as it operates within a pluralist, secularised society. It is within this Catholic culture, however, that students,

teachers and parents experience charism. The role of charism in helping to enrich the Catholic culture of a school needs further exploration.

Given that church attendance by students, parents and staff is low and declining and that many students in Catholic schools are unchurched (Wilkinson, 2013), it is possible to extrapolate that “church” does not interest students. Yet, Catholic schools have a mandate to integrate faith and life (E. J. McDermott, 1997, p. 25). The influence of faith and life, and their integration, in the culture of a Catholic school invites illumination.

3.5.5 Culture and Faith

From a Christian standpoint, faith can be integrated into culture and life by living a life steeped in love, justice, peace and reconciliation, simplicity, integrity, compassion, repentance and healing (Groome, 2002). However, “the only way for Christianity to flourish is to have a culture that is vibrant, alive, able to sustain this transcendent way of seeing the world, and yet open to what is not Christian” (Radcliffe, 2009, August 23, p. 4). An integration of faith, life and culture is demonstrated by hospitality towards “the other” and conversion of self in dialogue with others. “So if the tree of the church is to be alive, then its leaves must be open, open to the sun, the rain, bird droppings, the lot (Radcliffe, 2009, August 23, p. 7).

[E]very instance of Christian faith is filtered through some cultural lens. There has never been a cultureless Christianity. Jesus himself took on the identity of a first-century Palestinian Jew and remained a devout one all his life. Thereafter, Christian faith was deeply imbued with its cultural setting and soon reflected a diversity of perspectives. Why else do we have four Gospels rather than one, each “partial” in its understanding of Jesus and of Christian faith?

Over history, Catholicism has had a strong tendency to integrate faith and culture. This has produced as many Catholicisms as there are peoples who embrace it – Italian and French, Kenyan and Nigerian, Korean and Vietnamese, and a thousand more (Groome, 2002, p. 33).

Nevertheless, there would appear to be some dissonance between Groome’s reality, and that experienced by the local church in Australia where consideration of cultural practicalities perhaps was at least part of the reason for a bishop’s reported “early retirement” after expressing views not considered consistent with official church teaching (Baczkowski, 2011, May 2; Calligeros & Hardwick, 2011, May 2).

The ecclesial nature of the Catholic school requires that it bring faith, culture and life into harmony (CCE, 1998a, p. 14). Whether this is possible given the evidence in the literature on the continuing decline of numbers connected with Church, the culture of patriarchal hierarchy and disengagement with stated doctrine will be further illuminated in Chapter 4. Nonetheless, this “harmony” appears to be a challenge and invites illumination.

In previous sections of this chapter, the nature and elements of “charism” have been explored. How the lessons of charism and culture are “learnt” within the curriculum of the school invites exploration.

3.5.6 Culture, Charism and Curriculum

Culture has been found to affect student achievement more than family background (Brookover, cited in Tuite, 2007). It influences student behaviours (Rutter, cited in Dinham, 2008; Tuite, 2007). Planning for an effective learning culture takes time and strategy, and an understanding of the culture of the school (Dinham, 2008). For effective identity development, appropriate values education and transmission of knowledge about the charism of a Catholic school, a commitment by all staff and a long-term strategy appear essential (Runkel, 2005; Schneider, 2006; Tuite, 2007). As a result of a “meta-analysis of thousands of studies”, there is:

... considerable and incontrovertible international evidence ... that the most important factor affecting student learning is the teacher... and [that] it takes time, learning and effort to develop from a novice to an “expert” teacher, and not all teachers become experts ... [and] teacher expertise varies considerably. (Dinham, 2008, pp. 6-7)

Furthermore, the “transmissional” model of belief and values formation (the most typical in Western education) has been found to be ineffective (Collier, 2008) unless schools present a consistent, extended, purposeful pedagogy (Cooling, 2000; Maple, 1997). Similarly, it appears essential that values education be incorporated into every module of the teaching program (Astili, 1998) for it to be influential. Effective values education requires extensive, continuous and across-curricula work (Astili, 1998).

An effective pedagogy would appear to be a “transformational, participatory model”, based on an active, applied and investigative educational philosophy (Collier, 2008). This incorporates a teaching approach where the relationship of faith to contemporary culture is critiqued, cultural norms evaluated, and in which students’ own, yet Gospel-

based values are tested for relevance in today's society (Maple, 1997). Values-education has been shown to have some success (Cooling, 2000) when prompted and developed from the interests and experience of students and when teachers provide a faith perspective based on popular culture. The adoption of a reconceptualisation pedagogy in religious education offers an effective way to counter the effects of secularism (Pollefeyt, 2011, September).

Students learn from the experience of charism and its values, attributes and understandings when these are presented across the curriculum and across the breadth of their engagement at school. Charism needs to be considered a touchstone through all school activities, structures and pedagogy (Dunne, 2008). "Charism [must be] narrated in everyday events so that [it] is a conscious, articulated reality" (CCE, 1988) and for it to be "observable in the school culture and deepened through it" (Elvery, 2013, p. 13). Moreover, the charism should be evident throughout curriculum provision, planned into it strategically and modelled as lived witness to it by staff (Elvery, 2013).

Research into "service learning" (Price, 2008) or doing service for others in a structured way, demonstrates the correlation between the length of engagement, the level of relationship with significant mentors or those involved and the efficacy of such programs of learning. Significantly for educators, Price's evidence shows that there can be existential change in a person who is exposed to service learning when learning occurs through repeated cycles of reflection, meaning making, facilitated learning, instructional reflection, and reframed prompts. The link between emotional reaction, personalisation, increased understanding, connection to course content and transformational thinking in a model of service learning (P. M. Green, 2006), can be made to classroom practice and to elements of charism-learning.

The role of reflection, shock and personal engagement in experiences from which learning is hoped, is evident (Price, 2008). Similarly, curriculum in classrooms is maximised when it includes personal engagement, the experience of "a-ha moments" (P. M. Green, 2006, p. 104), and "third things" (Sommers, 2010) that invoke emotion. Furthermore, service is much more effective when it is integrated into the curriculum, has a clear rationale, follows from subject matter and is the focus of reflective discussion (Youniss & Yates, cited in Price, 2008, p. 31).

The hidden curriculum, too, is a powerful means of transmitting culture.

Teaching is never a neutral stance. ... It can be a deliberate attempt to impose values, to indoctrinate, or to change a person's orientation without rational consent. ... From the teacher, they [students] learn much more than knowledge from the text book. They are taught indirectly how to accept or reject others, how to take power or share it, how to stereotype people or seek out people with special needs.... Every school and every teacher in every school is constantly proposing values to students, and hence, is constantly involved in moral education. (E. J. McDermott, 1997, pp. 53-54)

In summary, research shows that the classroom is an influential place in which to infuse charism, its values and message, but that it requires a whole-school approach, across every classroom by every teacher and for the messages to be consistent and constant. Effective understandings of charism occur when stakeholders make it part of the culture by embedding it across the curriculum and into all aspects of school life. Given the importance of a particular whole-of-school pedagogical approach for effective values transmission, appropriate staffing, and strategic planning of charism through all elements of school life, the role of leadership in institutionalising charism is significant.

3.5.7 Leadership

The role of leader in embedding and influencing culture is consistently presented as integral (Peterson & Deal, 2002; Schein, 1992). This is true for the leader in transmitting charism (M. L. McDermott, 2006; Runkel, 2005). "The vitality of an organization depends on the strength of the culture" (M. L. McDermott, 2006, p. 16). "Only one thing of real importance that leaders do is to create and manage culture" (Schein, 1992, p. 5).

In the school context, the leadership of charism, then, is a key element within the principal's portfolio (and that of other members of leadership). The role of principal is to strategically plan for, pay attention to, measure and control appropriate experience of charism by students, staff and parents (Schein, 1992).

Both Australian and international research (Bryk, Lee, & Holland, 1993; Coughlan, 2009; M. Green, 2000, April) indicate the importance of the principal in setting culture, and translating values and charism into the lived Catholic school experience. Evidence in the literature suggests a range of issues and opinions relating to the role that lay principals have in institutionalising charism in a school. In spite of the importance of

the role of the principal's leadership in this regard, there is argument that a lay principal's preparedness, ability and willingness to take on leadership of charism may not be adequate:

It is difficult to see how a principal could give authentic spiritual leadership to, for example, an Ignatian, Dominican or Lasallian culture without a profound experience of it, an instinctive attraction to it, and a commitment to it. While the Principal may bring his or her own professional skills as a school leader and may be able to develop reasonably quickly a passable knowledge-base of the tradition, these will not be sufficient. How does it seep into the bones? How long does that take? (M. Green, 2000, April, pp. 22-23)

This sentiment is implied elsewhere (McNicholas, 1990) but more recent research demonstrates the efficacy of lay principals in infusing charism in culture when strategic planning, induction and training is conducted (Runkel, 2005). Nonetheless, it is apparent that for the laity, the role of religious leadership generally, spiritual leadership and leadership within an arm of the institutional Catholic Church, specifically, is problematic (Coughlan, 2009; A. O'Brien, 2013). Seeking appropriately qualified principals, who are "practising" Catholic, is becoming increasingly difficult (D'Arbon, 2006) without the added factor of being steeped in a particular charism.

Several styles of leadership emerge from the literature as being of particular importance in Catholic schools with a charismatic culture. Inspirational and visionary leadership sets direction, and inspires others to reach goals (Bennis, 1994; Leithwood, 2003). Shared leadership is particularly useful when re-culturing a school or establishing a learning community (Fullan, 2001). Instructional leadership (Dinham, 2008) acknowledges the powerful influence of the teacher on learning, and of the principal on developing a learning culture. Transformational leadership is concerned with vision, purpose, beliefs and values and about raising people to high levels of motivation and morality (Sleeger, Geijsel, & van den Berg, 2002; Starratt, 1993, 1995; Watson, 2007).

Servant leadership is about the envisioning of:

ordinary conversations between people where at least one, but hopefully many or most, are trying to say things to each other and do things for each other that are in service of a common dream or sense of mission that they share. (Spears, 1998, p. xv)

A core set of shared values exists and are linked to a shared vision. The leader affirms and enables others (Grace, 1995; Greenleaf, 1977; Spears, 1998; Zohar & Marshall, 2000).

Moral Leadership (Sergiovanni, 1996) is a consideration for leaders as they act “in loco parentis¹⁰”. Leaders are concerned with the vision of parents, teachers and students – not all who might come to the school with a vision that is embodied in Judeo-Christian values. Relational leadership (Donaldson, 2001) emphasises the leader’s ability to articulate a value system for the school. Identity-creation in leadership (Starratt, 1993) suggests the need for members of an organisation to have both self- and organisational-identity. Symbolic and cultural leadership (Sergiovanni, 1987) emphasises the cultural strands that give a school its identity. The metaphors of the potter (shaping heroes, traditions, dreams), the poet (using language that reinforces values and sustains a positive image), the actor (such as improvising in school dramas and tragedies) and the healer are also used to describe the principal’s mandate for cultural leadership (Deal and Petersen, cited in Peterson & Deal, 2002, p. 108).

Distributive leadership (Duignan, 2006) recognises the wisdom and expertise that colleagues may contribute, and so has the potential for better decision making in leadership. This also provides modelling for students of healthy, communal ways of living. Ethical, moral and spiritual leadership (Bhindi & Duignan, 1997; Duignan, 2006) promotes and supports core values and challenges others to participate in visionary activity in curriculum.

Charism, or any initiative that a community wants to be sustained, requires succession planning (Dinham, 2008) and stewardship. This planning is included in the authoritative leadership model (Dinham, 2008). In para-modern times there is a role in Dominican leadership for “preserving and recalling the original vision of Dominican identity and mission and simultaneously providing new moments in the tradition of preaching. Leaders are required to bring the spirit of the charism to contemporary culture, making it present to the needs of that culture” (Runkel, 2005, p. 62).

¹⁰ In the place of a parent

The role and influence of leaders in the creation, development or transmission of culture is well documented (Grace, 1995; O'Donnell, 2001; Peterson & Deal, 2002; Tuite, 2007). The transmission of culture, if it is to be authentic to the founding or desired spirit, requires strategy and planning (O'Donnell, 2001). The school leader is aware of how culture can be changed; what one needs to do to retain, foster and transmit positive culture, and in so doing, create a positive school identity (Deal & Peterson, 1999). "Leaders create cultures when they draw groups of people together. Once cultures come together, they tend to determine the criteria for leadership of the groups" (M. Flynn & Mok, 2002, p. 166).

These variously named forms or components of leadership provide ways forward for leaders in keeping charism alive or its values taught and the Gospel message kept alive within a school community. However, Spiritual and Pastoral Leadership (Ranson, 2006) may not be easily accepted by lay principals as appropriate forms of leadership for them. Adopting a position of spiritual or pastoral leadership has become a reality in places because of three contributing factors: parents are choosing Catholic schools for their quality rather than their spirituality; participation in Church is so low that the parish would not be viable without a school; and because of the decline in the number of priests. This situation may lead to "the very possibility that future leadership of our schools will bear a pastoral responsibility, and become the face of local religious leadership, beyond simply the school community" (Ranson, 2006, p. 419). However, "[t]o lead when the objectives are not clear, when directions are elusive, when results are not forthcoming, when we have been cast adrift from the past but realise that the new shore will not be reached in our own lifetime, calls for a particular leadership (D. Ranson, cited in M. O'Brien, 2007, August, p. 421).

While there appears to be concern that the role of principalship in faith-based schools is complex enough without the extra dimensions of spiritual and pastoral leadership (Coughlan, 2009; A. O'Brien, 2013), Flynn and Mok reported in their study (2002) of teacher perceptions of principals that:

- 90% of principals place a high importance on the religious life of the school;
- 78% encourage a sense of community and belonging;
- 74% communicate a clear sense of school's purpose and direction; and

- 77% of teachers feel that the school provides an experience of life based on the values of Christ and the Gospels. (M. Flynn & Mok, 2002)

These figures indicate that Catholic schools have a positive culture, with clear direction by the principal, and that there is a link between the principal's leadership, culture of the school and the lived experience of Gospel by its members.

However, and paradoxically, while assuming that a "pastoral and spiritual leadership" (Ranson, 2006) may link the school more closely to the Church, this may be counterproductive for enrolments. Parents and their children are participating in church activities less, while enrolments are increasing. A close relationship by the principal with church authority might not be the desired "product" for those who "buy" the Catholic school for its pastoral care, values, reputation and caring environment. The connection between the exercise of religious and spiritual leadership (including demonstrated understanding of the charism of the school) by the principal and the experience of charism by students, teachers and parents is worthy of investigation in this study.

Leadership is complex. Charism provides yet another layer with which the leader builds culture. Leadership in faith-based schools with a particular charism has this further dimension that requires exploration.

3.5.8 Implications for Leadership in Schools with a Charism

The combined characteristics of leadership styles and attributes required, often simultaneously, provide an insight into the complex role of principal. Leadership of a school with a charism requires further considerations. Runkel's (2005) study of four Dominican high schools, involving forty interviews, identified nine areas against which a school could benchmark the institutionalisation of Dominican charism. Each way influences the culture of the school and the experience that members have of the sponsoring charism. Each "leverage point" sits within the realm of leadership:

Runkel's nine leverage points (2005, pp. 83-105)

1. Active involvement of the sponsoring organisations;
2. Integration of the mission statement into every aspect of school life;
3. Careful selection of presidents, principals and school heads;

4. Creative use of formal orientation activities;
5. Strong campus ministry programs;
6. Engaging faculty and staff in building the charism into the curriculum and co-curriculum activities;
7. Developing student leaders;
8. Establishing policy that supports the charism and
9. Connecting people with the Dominican history and tradition. (Runkel, 2005)

An alternative Dominican framework for leadership of charism offers similar recommendations (McNicholas, 1990, pp. 272-274).

1. Principals and leaders generally need an on-going renewal program which develops their understanding of charism, mission and traditions of Dominican education.
2. Leadership members in Dominican schools need to evaluate the integration of Dominican values into their vision.
3. Leadership/Principals need to discover additional ways to communicate a vision of study, contemplative prayer, and collaboration as well as to empower the faculty to appropriate and express the vision in the essential features and activities of the school.
4. Principals need to provide regular staff development programs which focus on the mission, charism and traditions of Dominican education to encourage an understanding of and commitment to the mission, charism and tradition among the faculty.
5. Care needs to be applied in the selection of suitable principals.
6. There needs to be formation in Dominican Leadership for new principals.
7. Mentoring between experienced and new principals of Dominican secondary schools could be fostered.

These recommendations are not unique to Dominican charism. Similar suggestions have been listed for leaders of other charismatic school cultures such as those in the Mercy tradition (Schneider, 2006, pp. 67-68) (see Appendix C). Institutionalising a

charism is more complex than simply following a set of procedures. In the first instance, as discussed in section 3.3.1, the nature of the authentic charism can be contentious (Braniff, 2006). A shared understanding is required, as indicated by research in a Marist setting.

[This poses] ... some challenges for a Marist school. Most of the employees are lay and it is intended that they demonstrate characteristics which are embraced individually but expressed corporately, and until recently thought to be held only by Marist Brothers. If the Marist charism can be embraced by laypersons and if it must also continue to be developed for staff and students, then leaders at all levels and areas of the school community are likely to play a part, or be required to play a part. (Elvery, 2013)

The perception of leaders in Edmund Rice schools (those schools whose charism is that of Blessed Edmund Rice) in relation to the charism of their schools has also been challenged. The nature of the core values to which Edmund Rice schools should aspire is often contentious. “While principals are endeavouring to ensure that the schools continue to be faithful to [their] educational mission [with a distinctive Edmund Rice ethos], there [are] distinct differences in the way this is realised in the individual school context which calls into question authenticity to the educational mission” (Tuite, 2007, pp. 285-286). Ensuring authenticity of charism is the role of leader, as is the role of culture creation and of being a “[p]erson who understands ethos and is committed to be a role model for an authentic culture” (Tuite, 2007, p. 289). Furthermore:

[d]espite the best efforts of very committed and hard-working staff, it is possible that the ethos of many Catholic Secondary schools may have been kidnapped by an alternative agenda of the increasingly socially upmarket clientele of those schools. At times it is difficult, despite all the rhetoric, to see a link between the expressed founding charism of the schools and the present day reality. (Price, 2008, p. 360)

This being the case, a role for leadership is to ensure the nurturing of authentic charism.

The role of succession planning to ensure on-going quality leadership and formation in the charism of the school is a further consideration in the institutionalisation of the charism (A. O'Brien, 2013; Runkel, 2005; Tuite, 2007; Watson, 2007). Vital also is the leader's ability to ensure that new members are absorbed into the culture (M. L. McDermott, 2006, p. 16). A coordinated approach to leadership is important (Beare, Caldwell, & Millikan, 1989). The emphasis on coordination is particularly relevant in the transmission of charism. The literature emphasises the need for the charism to be valued across the college, not in pockets of religious education classes. The role of

leadership is broader than the principal. The involvement of everyone is a factor in influencing success.

The issues resulting from the shift from religious leadership to lay leadership are well documented (Coughlan, 2009; Mellor, 2005; Runkel, 2005). Four findings from a United States study (M. L. McDermott, 2006, p. 99) into charism in culture amplify the challenge for lay leadership in diocesan schools particularly.

1. Congregationally-owned schools are preferable to diocesan-owned schools for ensuring that the most supportive environment in order to share religious charism with the larger school community. (This highlights the need for formation in the charism by staff and leadership in particular.)
2. The organizational leader is the single most important variable in sharing and embedding charism in a school's culture. The more intentional, deliberate, and consistent that the leader is in sharing charism, the more easily it will be articulated by the organization's membership.
3. Sharing the foundational story and the spiritual cornerstones of a congregation are important in developing the charism from the level in which it is identifiable by its artefacts to one in which it is articulated by the membership.
4. In its most effective form, charism is clearly taught, discussed, identified, and labelled so that the spiritual legacy of a congregation becomes a grace for all of those who share in the work of the particular congregation. (M. L. McDermott, 2006, p. 99)

A comparison of experience of charism by staff, students and parents with lay or religious leaders is worthy of its own study. Because there are very few secondary schools (and no Dominican school) in Australia who have members of Religious Orders as principals, comparison is no longer constructive. Statements such as the following no longer inform the context within which schools operate:

We should remember that the presence of consecrated religious within the educating community is indispensable, since "consecrated persons are able to be especially effective in educational activities; they are an example of the unreserved and gratuitous 'gift' of self to the service of others in the spirit of their religious consecration. The presence of men and women religious, side

by side with priests and lay teachers, affords pupils ‘a vivid image of the Church and makes recognition of its riches easier. (CCE, 1998b, par. 13)

While the laity are not vowed with pledged commitment to a particular charism, they are the contemporary evangelisers (Philibert, 2005). Furthermore, “[g]iven the enhanced role of the people of God in post Vatican II church and the decline of the clergy in numbers and credibility, Catholic education should be reconfigured as a ministry of the laity; new models of leadership are necessary” (O’Keefe, cited in McLaughlin, 2000d, p. 21).

The role of principal and leadership in the institutionalisation of charism is apparent. However, there is a lacuna in a literature in relation to Dominican school leadership and charism. In fact “no research study [existed in 1990] that examined the relationship between the leadership of a Dominican secondary school principal and the expression of a Dominican educational philosophy based on the charism” (McNicholas, 1990, p. 74). More recent scholarship (G. Kelly & Saunders, 2007, 2014; Runkel, 2005) has sought to readdress this situation.

The role of teacher leaders (through distributed leadership) and leadership teams in understanding the role of these staff and how culture exists and is created is vital for the lived experience of charism. The informal culture of the network of which staff members are a part is a powerful influence over the experience of all members of community, and their experience within it (Deal & Peterson, 1999, in Peterson & Deal, 2002, pp. 8-9).

A concern in Catholic education is the crisis of leadership. Many “well-respected Catholic teachers with leadership qualities, [have] no desire to be a principal” Mulligan (2006, p. 186). Reasons are many (D’Arbon, 2006; A. O’Brien, 2013) but it is evident that the expectations are “frighteningly challenging” (Mulligan, 2006, p. 186) and there are the extra dimensions of faith and spirituality. “We need leaders who encourage creativity...put people first, second and third...listen to people and acknowledge their contributions ...collegiality and co-responsibility... who identify leadership with service in the Gospel model, who know that the school is the Christian message” (L. Howcroft, cited in Mulligan, 2006, p. 192).

The leadership provided by all teachers (principal, leadership team and teachers) as role models in their witness to the Gospel through a Dominican lens is worthy of

exploration. How charism promotes the reception of the Jesus story, determines its experience and effectiveness in a school community. This is an area of research to be explored in this study.

3.5.9 Conclusion and Specific Research Question

Understanding how San Sisto College binds its culture to Dominican charism, or binds Dominican charism to its ethos to enrich its “Catholic culture” is essential in the illumination of the research problem presented this study.

It is evident that culture/charism-building is a key role in leadership (the principal, leadership team and all teachers as teacher leaders). For Dominican charism to be appreciated as a coherent, consistent, valued lens to the Gospel that makes sense, it needs to be experienced through every element of life in the school community. Ownership and valuing of the charism by all members of staff, parents and students is important for it to be sustained and enriching. Its value and instruction needs to be embedded within the curriculum and be explicitly referenced and modelled. Staff induction into the story and formation of teachers and leaders is essential.

It is from an understanding of these issues that the third specific research question is generated:

How is Dominican charism nurtured at San Sisto College?

3.6 Experience of Charism by Students, Teachers and Parents

The fourth area of the literature review concerns the experience of charism by students, teachers and parents.

3.6.1 Introduction

Much has been written, particular by Religious Orders, on charism generally and on Dominican charism specifically. There is a wealth of literature on the nature of culture and the culture of Catholic schools. There is a lacuna in the literature, however, on the experience of charism by students, teachers and parents.

The model of Organizational Identity Construction (OIC) identifies “the processes, activities and events through which organizational identity [becomes] embedded in the minds of organisational managers, members and stakeholders” (Scott & Lane, cited in Runkel, 2005, p. 48) . Given the richness of identity-forming elements in Catholic

schools such as liturgies, prayer, images, policies, learning experiences, service opportunities, it could be expected that the values of the school “become embedded in the minds of the [members of the school community]” (Scott & Lane, cited in Runkel, 2005, p. 48) . Whether or not they identify with the charism and how they experience charism is a question to be explored in this research.

3.6.2 Student Experience of Charism

No scholarly research was located indicating the specific role that charism plays on students. There was no literature found from a student perspective of the experience of charism within a school setting. Yet, the socialisation of young people within the culture, with a values-laden curriculum, with lived and expressed values and everyday experiences of a Catholic school is a worthy contribution to society (Mulligan, 2006, p. 299).

Somewhat confusing in Catholic educational discourse is the claim that charism “gives shape and focus for the Christian lives of people in successive generations, as long as it remains relevant to them or they choose to accept it as their way of engaging the Gospel” (M. Green, 1997, p. 10). This latter criterion is problematic in a school environment where students appear to be increasingly less interested in engaging the Gospel (BCEO, 2009b). While it may be that charism does not provide an influence on a young person unless they “choose to accept it as their way of engaging the Gospel”, it would appear from limited research that it at least does influence those students who choose engagement with it. When students choose to experience Edmund Rice charism, for example, by service-learning, engaging with the marginalised on the streets, and follow this with reflection on the experience and mentoring, those students can experience a “personal existential change in terms of values and mindsets” (Price, 2008, p. 358). Students who choose to experience immersion programs in third world countries as part of Dominican, Edmund Rice, Augustinian or any other charism-related service program make the claim that the experience was “life-changing” (Santa Sabina College, 2009).

Not all students choose to get involved in optional activities that facilitate such learning, and not all staff are involved in these (Price, 2008). Only 26% of the year level cohort were involved in the service learning project in Price’s study (2008, p. 282). Catholic social teaching does not influence all students equally even though

service learning opportunities provide avenues for learning consistent with youth spiritual needs (Deberri, Hug, Henriot, & Schultheis, 2003). Nonetheless, schools of numerous traditions continue to infuse charism through numerous ways, as indicated on school websites.

- meditative prayer in the Jesuit tradition at Xavier College in Hervey Bay, Queensland (Xavier College, 2011);
- a Franciscan whole-of-school meditation experience at Assisi College, Coomera (Assisi College, 2011);
- story-telling of the various Sisters lives and contribution to Mercy charism at All Hallows, Brisbane (Institute of the Sisters of Mercy Australia, 2011);
- the engagement of an indigenous elder at Lourdes Hill College, Brisbane, to provide increased understanding of indigenous issues;
- Religious Education classes include studies on the founders and founding orders of schools and of the values and charism developed (Nudgee Junior College, 2011);
- Fund-raising regularly to support awareness of issues in poverty-stricken Dominican communities (San Sisto College, 2014).

These activities involve or are visible by all students. This research seeks to explore the influence of such activities on students.

While 97% of young Catholics are reported to abandon their practice of faith within twelve months of completing high school (Tacey, cited in McLaughlin, 2005, p. 221), this does not suggest that the life-long values infused through charism are abandoned. Nor does it suggest that values learnt of environmental sustainability or appreciation of creation within a Dominican or Franciscan spirituality and charism cease to exist. This is determined by the experience of students of these values and how they have formed their identity. However, spirituality must be given its proper place in the curriculum by placing it in every subject (Hill, 2001, p. 105). If messages about “spirituality” and values are to be valuable in forming identity, an all-pervasive, consistent message is to be experienced (Collier, 2008).

If the lived experience of charism can form part of one’s identity or understanding of religion, then charism can have an influence on those who experience it and it may influence the formation of identity.

Much of what pupils learn at school does not depend on or derive from the tasks they undergo or the facts that are given to them. They learn through observation. Whilst these are not matters that are formally tested, the subject matter of these experiences is of profound importance. Pupils look at the ways that people behave. They see this in the rituals of the classroom and in the behaviours of the playground. Their understanding of the way that society operates is based not on what they are told but on the interactions between people. (Cullingford, 2010, p. 44)

The teacher is “an example and an influence” (Cullingford, 2010, p. xii). How students experience charism (and anything) can be connected to how they experience the teacher.

The overall impression that pupils have of school ... is the way in which the same things happen again and again. There might be some days that are better than others, but the experience is dominated by the rituals of routine from registration to the ceremony of the ending of the day. (Cullingford, 2010, pp. 47-48)

Pupils learn from the examples they are set, and much of their complicated experience depends on how the school works as a community. ... The deepest lessons that pupils learn have little to do with the National Curriculum. They learn about what they are always interested in from the beginning: the meaning of human behaviour... They can see how people are capable of giving mutual support and encouragement and they can also see the opposite. It is this, the essential experience of human behaviour and values that influences them more deeply than anything else. ... At the heart of any good school ... lies a mutual belief in values. Compared to this the curriculum and the official policy statements, with their neutrality in term of values, are not very significant. (Cullingford, 2010, pp. 98-99)

The quality, then, of the students’ experience is determined by the nature of an ever present, consistent message through the total school and curriculum experience. It is also dependent on the quality and emphasis on relationship and community and on a commitment to students’ human development (Cook & Simonds, 2011; Groome, 1998; Shimabukuro, 1993). These requirements are at the core of Catholic school identity and are strengthened by the overt presence of a charism that also has an obvious commitment to the same ideals.

The inclusion of students in this research is justifiable. When students support the presence of the charism they become instrumental in its stewardship and transmission (Runkel, 2005).

This study also explores how teachers understand their role in the experience of charism.

3.6.3 Teacher Experience of Charism

While there is little data about the influence of charism on teachers or their identity, the most common response for why teachers applied for particular jobs in one study (Guarino, Santibanez, & Daley, cited in Plunkett & Dyson, 2011, p. 38) was the “Ethos – religious/special needs/culture” of the school. This is ironic given the decreasing number of staff who attend church. In the Brisbane Archdiocesan study, 82% teachers identified as Catholic, but 37% do not attend Church, or do so rarely outside of school (BCEO, 2009b, p. 110). This concurs with another “undisputed conclusion ... that the vast majority of Catholic teachers [in the study conducted] have reservations about the contemporary Catholic Church, their employer...” (McLaughlin, 2005, p. 226). What is more, “[w]hile in the school, they would do what the school required, ... they [do] not expect the school, or its Catholic ethos, to encroach too much on their personal lives” (P. Hughes, 2008, p. 39). Furthermore, “There is little hard data on what Australian Catholic teachers believe and value” (McLaughlin, 2005, p. 226). This reality contrasts with the conclusion that “In order for the high schools to maintain a Dominican identity, congregations [realize] the Dominican charism and core values [have] to be a vital part of their lay colleagues’ self-identity and consequent behaviour” (Runkel, 2005, p. 114).

In spite of this dissonance between the Catholic Church and the teachers who teach in its schools, “[v]ery few teachers leave Catholic schools to work in State schools [and furthermore] each year a significant number of teachers move from State to Catholic schools. [I]n 1997, 16.7% of all teachers employed in Catholic schools in NSW were non-Catholic” (Canavan, 1999). If it is not the Catholic faith that teachers want to experience, then the role of charism in culture invites exploration as a possibility for why teachers choose to work in Catholic schools.

There is a lacuna in the literature relating to a desire by staff to be witness to authentic Dominican or any other charism. This research seeks to illuminate the reality of staff ownership of and commitment to such frameworks and the activities and processes it requires.

This matter emphasises the role required of leadership, as lay staff are left to:

purify [the charism] of all distortions and inauthentic substitutions that may have occurred over time. This interpretation is a long and difficult task

requiring expertise in critical and historical analysis ... no matter how many conferences and learned discussions are held to interpret the founding charism or learn about it, this does not mean that congregational revitalization has occurred or will inevitably take place. The learning process must at the same time be accompanied by the genuine efforts to live the challenge of the Founder's charism in contemporary life. (Bellows, 1987)

Religious congregations, therefore, need to ensure that their founding story is clear and accurately interpreted, and presented to this generation of teachers (Arbuckle, 1988; Peck, 2011).

Teachers have an obligation as part of their contracts to teach in a Catholic school, to give professional support to the school's ethos. Professional support of ethos through "corporate spirituality", is intended to "nourish personal spirituality as well as to state the religious aspirations of the school as a type of community of faith sponsored by the Catholic Church" (Crawford & Rossiter, 2006, p. 435). However, there is some agreement in the literature that personal spirituality remains "basically private and is usually outside the scope of general disclosure" (Crawford & Rossiter, 2006, p. 435).

The development of a corporate spirituality suitable for teachers that gives them a sense of spiritual identity requires development. This can be fostered by informed and caring leadership; decision-making processes; individual teachers feeling acknowledged and valued as members of staff; by staff giving professional support to the stated aims of the school; by periodic staff prayer or para-liturgies with the emphasis on shared professional commitments rather than on personal beliefs; by the celebration of significant events together and through special professional development opportunities that are designed for the personal benefit of staff (complementing the focus on enhancing students' spirituality) (Crawford & Rossiter, 2006, p. 437).

Notwithstanding, teachers can be invited to spiritual formation, but it is not something to be imposed. For staff, too, it is experiential and involves each individual "in their own journey of discovery" (P. Hughes, 2008, p. 40). Some teachers in one study identified that the school Mass was the only Mass they regularly attended; a few felt alienated and excluded through the practice of Mass attendance; and a few noted that they have felt the school to be "too Catholic" (P. Hughes, 2008, p. 35).

With such diversity of staff spirituality, religiosity, and commitment to charism, the role of teacher in both the “covert” modelling of charism and in the “overt” teaching of or development of experiences in charism needs further exploration. The commitment to and formation of staff in charism, faith and spirituality, the shared understanding of just what is Dominican charism and whether or not charism makes a worthwhile contribution to the contemporary Catholic school (explored in Chapter 4) are issues that require probing.

3.6.4 Parent Experience of Charism

While there is a lacuna in the literature on how parents experience charism, there exists a body of work on why they send their children to Catholic schools. “[Q]uality of teaching, care of children and school discipline” have been cited in one study (Sultmann, Thurgood and Rasmussen, 2003, in McLaughlin, 2005, p. 219). Because of the school’s Catholicity was listed as number 14 on the list. Consistent with this view, other studies show that parents’ choice of school was more to do with perceived values, reputation, quality of teachers and student discipline rather than any overtly religious values or beliefs (Griffiths, 1999; Lee, 2000). None of the studies into why parents choose Catholic schools found that religiosity was rated as the key reason, and none listed “charism”. However, if ethos and charism are key contributors to the culture of the Catholic school, then charism, with its embedded values, reinforces and underlines the mission of the Catholic school for parents (M. Flynn & Mok, 2002; Griffiths, 1999, p. xi). Because an attention to social justice, service, environmental/creation involvement, community and explicit Gospel values forms part of the culture of Catholic schools, and because these form part of the experience of charism, there may be a causal link. This needs illumination.

In the Brisbane study (BCEO, 2009b), parents rated “quite to very highly” those elements of Catholic school life that reflect a number of expressed goals or attributes of a Catholic school related to the school’s charism, viz. caring (100%), helping students understand themselves (100%), caring about the environment and its future (95%), respecting each other (99%), justice to poor and disadvantaged (91%). Similarly, it is noted in American schools that Catholic schools nurture social consciousness in its students through justice activities, with outreach and service to the local community and to people in need (Mulligan, 2006, p. 311).

A difficulty in engaging parents within the charism is in the irony that Australian Catholic schools, while “enjoying extensive popularity” (McLaughlin, 2005, p. 215), Catholic parents are choosing non-Catholic schools, and many non-Catholic parents are seeking enrolment in Catholic schools (McLaughlin, 2005, p. 215). How all parents (Catholic and non-Catholic, Christian and non-Christian) understand charism, experience and make sense of it is justifiably researched in this study.

3.6.5 Conclusion and Specific Research Questions

The Jesus story, retold by St Dominic has survived 800 years. It would appear from the data (Brisbane Catholic Education Office, 2009b; M. Flynn & Mok, 2002) that while Catholic school culture, with its identity and charisms, is growing in popularity, participation in institutional Church activities including Church attendance, is in decline.

Experiences of social justice, of providing help to the poor and marginalised, of spiritual reflection and engagement with issues such as environmental sustainability and ecological appreciation provide students with inspiration and attractive values. The institutional church and its theology, however, appear to lack relevance and provide little meaning to students.

In a society where family as a unit is fractured and often dysfunctional, more is expected of school. There is a mal-alignment between views held by parents and their children, and furthermore, the data indicate a “do as I think best, not as I do” (BCEO, 2009b). 73% of parents, for example, reported that it is moderately to very important for children to attend Mass yet only approximately 10% of parents attend Mass weekly themselves. As values are brought to the school from home (Collier, 2008), this incongruence is becoming more evident. The relationship between the degree to which staff willingly commitment with dedication to charism and the degree necessary for values transmission needs exploration. There is “creative tension” (Senge, 1990) between the institutional Church’s current situation in which there is “a massive abandonment by young people of the practice of traditional rites” (Densley, cited in BCEO, 2009b, p. 13) and the Catholic school being “more popular than ever” (BCEO, 2009b, p. 6).

The society and culture within which charism exists make it both relevant to and needed in schools, yet it presents a challenge. The many issues presented through this

literature review help generate a general research question and three specific research questions that guide an exploration of the research problem.

The general research question that guides this research is:

How do students, teachers and parents experience the Dominican charism at San Sisto College?

The research into the experience of charism by students, teachers and parents, addresses three specific research questions:

- **What do students, teachers and parents understand Dominican charism to be?**
- **How do students, teachers and parents experience Dominican charism at San Sisto College?**
- **How is Dominican charism nurtured at San Sisto College?**

Chapter 4: THE MISSION OF THE CONTEMPORARY CATHOLIC SCHOOL

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to generate a review of the literature that identifies and defines the mission of the contemporary Catholic school. The Catholic school is an agency of the church from which the Dominican charism emanates. It is appropriate, therefore, that the institutionalisation of charism be congruent with the mission of the Catholic school.

4.2 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of the mission of the contemporary Catholic school (Figure 4.1) shows the theological foundations of the school's mission.

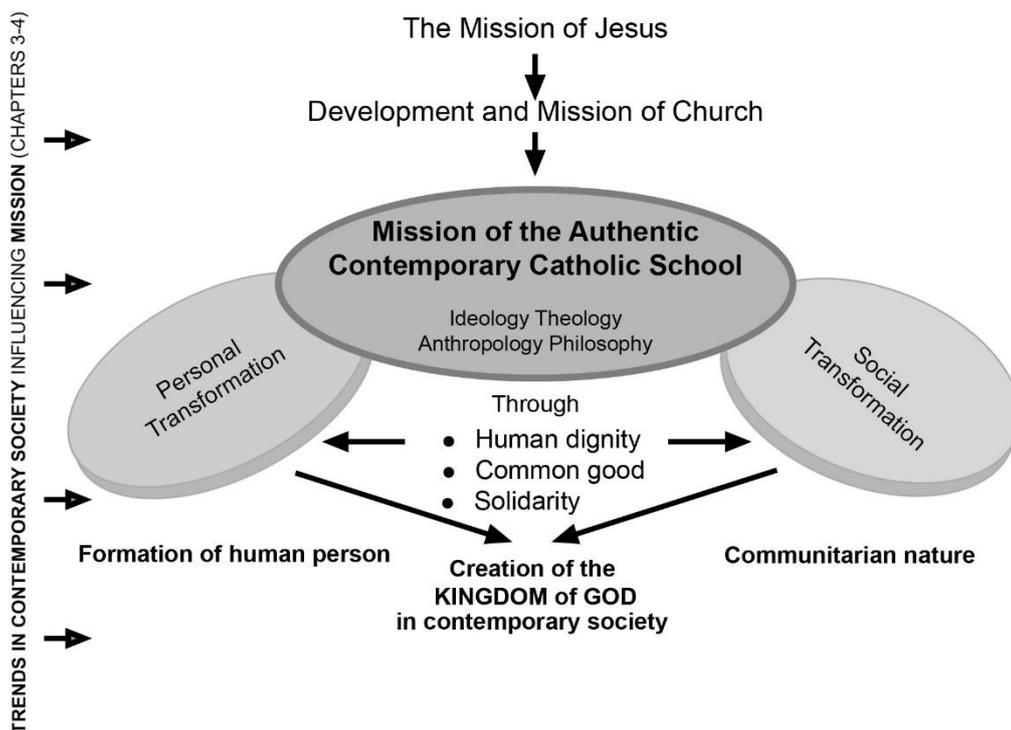


Figure 4-1 Conceptual framework for understanding the purpose of the Catholic school

The Catholic school is a “genuine and proper instrument of the Church” (CCE, 1988, par. 33). Its mission is fundamentally linked to its ecclesial nature (McBrien, 1994) and “finds its true justification in the mission of the Church” (CCE, 1988, par. 34). The mission of the church is ultimately the same mission as the mission of Jesus (CCE, 1998b, par. 9). It concerns evangelisation which is the proclamation of Jesus Christ by one’s words and actions (Schroeder, 2008, p. 3). Therefore, an analysis of the mission of the Catholic school begins with an illumination of the theological understanding of “mission”: the mission of Jesus and the subsequent mission of the Church, as indicated in Figure 4.1.

The Catholic school, as an agency of the church, advances the mission of Jesus through its focus on two inter-related dimensions. The first dimension considered central to the purpose of Catholic schooling, as identified in Figure 4.1, is the formation of the authentic and fully formed human person (personal transformation). The second dimension concerns the communitarian nature of the Catholic school, so as to bring about social transformation (Paul VI, 1965b). Each component is integral to the other in the creation of the Kingdom, a reign recognised in society by the valuing of human dignity, common good and solidarity. The mission of the Catholic school is achieved through an “inspirational ideology” and an “integrated theology”. The arrows on the left indicate trends in contemporary society which influence the mission. These trends were explored in Chapter 3.

Figure 4.1 provides a structure for reviewing the literature in relation to the mission of the Catholic school.

4.3 The Mission of Jesus

4.3.1 Purpose of Mission

The mission of Jesus is to proclaim and establish God’s kingdom (John Paul II, 1990 par. 13). The concept of the “kingdom of God” is Jesus’s central message and is foundational to the message of the Gospel (O’Murchu, 2010b; Sheehan, 2000). However, what exactly Jesus meant by the “kingdom” is debatable.

4.3.2 Reasons for ambiguity

The ambiguity in what Jesus meant by “kingdom” can be explained from a number of perspectives. While Jesus himself chose to use the phrase “kingdom of God” he never

explained what it was (Pagola, 2009, p. 100). Translations of scripture and of what Jesus “said” from Greek or Aramaic to English are not objective or exact (O’Murchu, 2010b). Furthermore, meaning may be lost in the expression of thought from one language to another. Indeed, mistranslations have been made, causing many Christians to have been “misled for centuries” about its intended meaning (Nolan, 2010, p. 58). The language of Jesus’s day, like any language, was symbolic of the context, culture and the society within which he lived and taught (Dunn, 2003, p. 387; O’Murchu, 2010b).

Eschatological argument about an apocalypse and the nature of “kingdom” being future-orientated was a concept culturally understood in the time of Jesus (Crossan, 1992, p. 287). This adds difficulty to the contemporary understanding of “kingdom” as belonging to the here and now. Furthermore, “kingdom” has been described both as a “metaphor” (Dunn, 2003, p. 487), and a “tensive symbol” with numerous meanings (Perrin, 1976, pp. 29-32). Images to portray “the kingdom” have also been described variously and often inconsistently (Struckmeyer, 2007a).

4.3.3 Intended meaning of “Kingdom”

If the word “kingdom”, linguistically, socially and culturally, is laden with meaning not explicitly intended, and if this limits the imagination of what is intended, then the use of alternative terminology is reasonable. Phrases and words such as the “New Reign of God” (O’Murchu, 2010b), Kindom (Scaine, 2011b), “dream of God” (Lavercombe, 2014, July 17-18) and “companionship of empowerment” (John Dominic Crossan in Borg, 1998; O’Murchu, 2010a), provide more suitable alternatives. “Companionship of Empowerment” is consistent with the message of the parables and honours the original language of Jesus in which “kingdom” is said to have been “malkuta”, the root of which is “kut”, meaning empowerment of others (O’Murchu, 2008). Malkuta means “the right to rule” with a connotation of vision and leadership that empowers others towards an empowering future (O’Murchu, 2010b). While this research continues to use the terminology of “kingdom of God” it does so appreciating the merit of “companionship of empowerment” as its more contemporarily and culturally meaningful equivalent.

4.3.4 Kingdom for whom?

There is agreement in the literature that the Kingdom of God that Jesus proclaimed was an invitation to all for an experience of a fuller, more authentic humanity (Bevans, 2009; O'Murchu, 2010a). The invitation was reiterated in *Redemptoris Missio* (John Paul II, 1990).

The kingdom of God is meant for all humankind, and all people are called to become members of it. ... The kingdom aims at transforming human relationships; it grows gradually as people slowly learn to love, forgive and serve one another.... The kingdom is the concern of everyone: individuals, society, and the world (John Paul II, 1990 par. 14-15).

Jesus wanted to proclaim the Good News of the kingdom “to the ends of the earth – in every nation, in every culture, in every time period” (Bevans, 2009, p. 10).

4.3.5 Why Jesus was on a Mission

Jesus' concept of the kingdom and his subsequent mission, grew from his experience of God, with whom he had a close and intimate relationship, as expressed in scripture by his use of the word “Abba” (Father) (Borg, 2006, p. 129; Pagola, 2009, p. 100). Jesus wanted to bring God's reign on earth – a vision that requires the transformation of human beings and human institutions (social, political, economic and religious) (Struckmeyer, 2007b). In fact, the authenticity and message of Jesus' life can only be explained in terms of his relationship with God (Pagola, 2009, p. 291; Scaine, 2011b). Jesus, the Jewish mystic (Borg, 2006, p. 135), “a human being just as we are human beings” (Goergen, 1986, p. 105), filled with the Spirit and driven by compassion, sought to bring about God's kingdom for all. Jesus was at the same time in solidarity with both God and the people (Goergen, 1986, pp. 207-281). This latter characteristic is evident throughout his preaching, in his parables and in his life activities as written in scripture (for example, Luke 6:20-22; *The Growing Seed*, Mk 4: 26-29; *The Mustard Seed*, 4:30-32; *The Lost Sheep*, Mt 18:12-14; *The Great Feast*, Mt 22:2-10; *The Unjust Steward*, Lk 16:1-8; *The Good Samaritan*, Lk 10:29-37; Beatitudes, Mt 5:11-12). Jesus was on a mission to bring about a liberating reign of justice, empowerment, compassion and peace that meant that God was one with mankind (Pannenberg, 2007; Sheehan, 2000).

4.3.6 What is the “Kingdom of God”

While the term “kingdom of God” in relation to Jesus’ mission presents ambiguity and some lack of consistency in meaning, the following key concepts, particularly relevant in an analysis of the “mission of the contemporary Catholic school”, are not contested.

4.3.6.1 Kingdom is authentic humanity in relationship

Jesus’ mission was to bring forward the reign of God, to influence the meaning and experience of life for every human being so that they could live in peace, finding fulfilment in God, in the company of one another and in harmony with the whole universe (Fuellenbach, 1998, p. 79). Jesus sought a more authentic human experience of justice and peace where all people could experience the joy of life (Pagola, 2009, p. 99). This is expressed in scripture: “After all, the Kingdom of God is not a matter of whether you get what you like to eat or drink; but the Kingdom of God is a matter of justice, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 14:17).

Jesus was on a mission from God to re-establish right relationships in our world and to show human beings how to live (Schroeder, 2008, p. 2).

4.3.6.2 Kingdom is liberation and transformation

Jesus’ compassion for the oppressed, marginalised and poor fuelled his mission to liberate human life from evil, pain, injustice, oppression and domination (Pagola, 2009, p. 311). He proclaimed that God’s kingdom is to be:

a total, global and structural transfiguration and revolution of the reality of human beings; it is the cosmos purified of all evils and full of the reality of God. The Kingdom is not to be in another world but is the old world transformed into a new one. (Boff, as cited in Fuellenbach, 1998, p. 72)

The transformation is to be both personal and social: just systems and structures will prevail; violence will cease; debt forgiven and enough food for all (Borg, 2006, p. 187). The transformation of humanity (individuals and societies) will occur as the Gospel message is internalised and accepted as explained in Mark 1:15, “The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!” With God’s reign, all humanity will experience transformation because:

it pulls [all human beings] toward conversion. God is not a conservative force, but a call for change. ... We must begin building a new earth, the way he wants it. Everything must be turned toward a more human life, beginning with

those whose life is not life. God wants those who weep to laugh, those who are hungry to eat; he wants everyone to live. (Pagola, 2009, p. 311)

Such is the extent of God's kingdom, that for Jesus, "[o]nly the kingdom ... is absolute and it makes everything else relative" (Paul VI, 1975 par. 8). It requires the establishment of structures and values in society on earth that ensure liberation from oppression, poverty and hunger (Nolan, 2010, p. 58). It is a mission to reorder "the organization of humanity through action inspired by love" (Ritsch, cited in Sheehan, 2000, p. 17).

The acceptance of "kingdom" requires the faith to make a decisive transformation and change of mind and heart and a "change of allegiance" to the new "kingdom" (Nolan, 2010, p. 101). This radical conversion of human beings will cause "a new world order, marked by right relationships of justice, love, peace and liberation" (O'Murchu, 1997a, p. 116).

4.3.6.3 Kingdom is "For the least"

The "Reign of God" was lived out symbolically by Jesus: his communion with outcasts and his unconditional love for even the most undeserving (Fuellenbach, 1995). His words, actions and his own person revealed the characteristics and demands of the kingdom (John Paul II, 1990, par. 14). It will be a "kingdom" of the poor not the wealthy, as the pursuit of wealth stands in opposition to the pursuit of the "kingdom" of God (Nolan, 2010, p. 62). In contrast to the mores of Jesus' day, rank, status, privilege and prestige are not part of God's "kingdom" – nor is oppression by domination (Nolan, 2010, p. 67 & 84). God's "kingdom" is to be based on the inclusivity and solidarity amongst all the human race (Nolan, 2010, p. 75).

Specifically, Jesus taught a message of justice and liberation for the "least": the poor, the hungry, the destitute, the sinners and outcasts (Fuellenbach, 1995). To fulfil his mission he "lived dangerously" (O'Murchu, 2011). He questioned conventional ways and beliefs as he sought to empower the powerless – the marginalised and the oppressed (O'Murchu, 2011, p. 1). The change and reform that he sought as a "prophetic deconstructionist" is a "dangerous Christian memory... largely suppressed and ignored... through two thousand years [of] living in the shadows of imperial myopia" (O'Murchu, 2011, p. 7).

4.3.6.4 *Kingdom is communion*

The nature of the kingdom is one of communion – communion of all human beings and indeed the entire cosmos (not just the human community) in communion with one another and with God (Berry, 2009). Each human being is united in communion as co-creators in the evolution of a New Creation (Berry, 2009) in which there is a sense of “aliveness” (O’Murchu, 2010a). Being fully alive is a consciousness of dependence for life and wellbeing on all of creation that surrounds the human being (O’Murchu, 2010a, p. 125). Furthermore:

This life in communion spills out into creation, healing and sanctifying, calling all of creation, according to its capacity, into that communion, and once in that communion, sending that creation forth to gather still more of it into communion. (Bevans, 2009)

The inclusiveness and mutual solidarity amongst humanity in God’s kingdom is focused on community.

4.3.6.5 *Kingdom is lived witness*

For the reign of God to be possible, Christian communities need to be examples of God’s Kingdom in the present world. Christian communities need to establish those structures and relationships which Jesus proclaimed so that the dignity of humanity within them “appears like a foretaste of what is to come in fullness in God’s own time” (Fuellenbach, 1998, p. 307). Those who purport to be Christian need to act in service of others, continuing God’s action in the world and among people (Fuellenbach, 1998, p. 308) empowering others in companionship.

4.3.6.6 *Kingdom is here and now*

There is little doubt that within Jesus’ message of “kingdom” there was an invitation to transform the individual and society here and now (Fuellenbach, 1995, p. 122). While God’s kingdom may continue beyond earthly life, the emphasis is on the here and now (Borg, 2006, pp. 143-144; Fuellenbach, 1998, p. 72). Jesus was on a mission for and from God to create a kingdom where God reigned, for the earth, as affirmed in the Lord’s Prayer (Matthew 6: 9-13).

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

The kingdom on earth, evident by personal, organisational and global transformation of structures and societies will be characterised by humanity:

building ... holy and just societ[ies], promoting service to others, fostering virtuous living, a heightened sense of social responsibility, respect for human dignity, and many other ways of articulating a desire to make the world a better place. Personal transformation and subsequently organizational transformation [will] spill over into the culture of the community and the entire society causing an unquantifiable impact on the world. (Dannhausen, 2007, p. 8)

By committing to acting and living as Jesus did, humanity demonstrates its oneness with Jesus and their understanding of what kingdom is here and now (Fuellenbach, 1995, p. 140).

4.3.6.7 Kingdom is life

Jesus said “I came that they might have life and have it to the full” (John 10:10). This is the mission to which the disciples in Antioch committed. This is a summary message of the purpose of the mission of Jesus. This revolutionary message signalled life for all because it contained “a radically personal eschatology that was fulfilled in a new interpersonal ethic” (Sheehan, 2000, p. 59). Mercy would be shown towards each other in the presence of a loving “Father” with whom humans enjoyed a “personalised” relationship (Sheehan, 2000, p. 59). Furthermore, it is evident that Jesus’ strategy (for bringing life) “was based on an egalitarian sharing of spiritual and material power at the most grassroots level...” (John Dominic Crossan in O’Murchu, 2011).

4.3.7 Conclusion

The mission of Jesus is undisputed. He came to establish the “kingdom of God“. When “God [is] one with mankind” (Sheehan, 2000, p. 1) humanity can be lived more authentically. Relationships will be life-giving. Structures and societies will be transformed to ensure a “companionship of empowerment” for all, especially the poor, oppressed, marginalised and weak. Jesus’ mission is for the here and now and the mandate is for all humanity to join in communion, as one with the universe, "To live justly, love tenderly and walk humbly with our God" (Micah 6:8). By so doing, humanity “will have life and (be able to) live it to the full” (John 10:10).

Figure 4.2 locates the mission of Jesus within the framework of this study. The mission of Jesus is in response to Jesus’ understanding of God’s Kingdom and as a response to his own compassion. Jesus’ mission has a church that seeks to make God’s reign possible (Bevans, 2009). It seeks to expand the presence of the Kingdom of God on earth. Similarly, the mission of the Catholic school is to seek alignment with the

mission of Jesus. The question marks in the areas of overlap in Figure 4.2 indicate the presence of the alignment sought. The arrows indicate the shared missions of church and Catholic school to bring about God’s reign in synergy with each other.

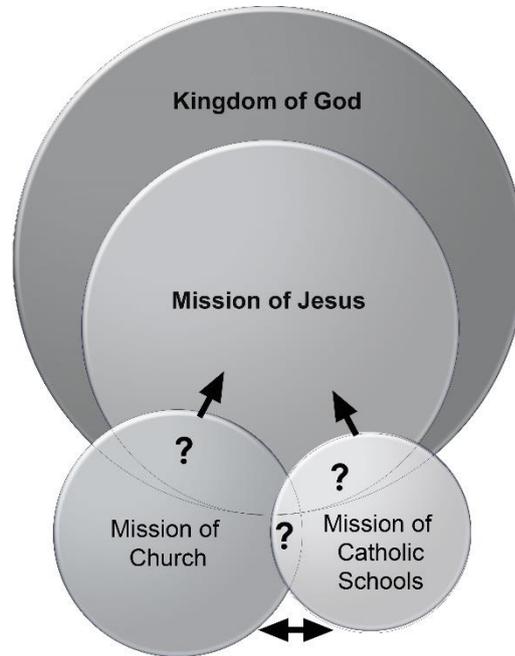


Figure 4-2 Missions seeking alignment with God’s Kingdom

4.4 Mission of the Church

As communities sought to experience the personal and social transformation offered by the Gospel message of kingdom, the mission of Jesus grew. It grew from a movement by a chosen group of twelve, into a church (Bevans, 2009, p. 8). The church came into being to serve God’s purposes. The mission of the church is the mission of God, to be God’s saving, healing, challenging, liberating and transforming presence in the world (Bevans, 2009, p. 11; Schroeder, 2008).

4.4.1 The relationship between Church, Jesus, and Kingdom

The relationship between the mission of Jesus and the kingdom, and the church, is arguably contentious, yet unambiguous. Jesus did not try to establish a religion or an institution (O'Meara, 1983; Pagola, 2009). Nor was he a theologian attempting to define kingdom. By his parables, similes and symbolic actions (eating and drinking with outcastes) he was teaching a way of living that would liberate the oppressed and

create fellowship with the marginalised (Fuellenbach, 1998, p. 135). In fact, Jesus challenges the notion of institutional religion. His message was about the need to restore the Companionship of Empowerment (Scaine, 2011b, p. 16). This indeed heralded the beginning of a “post religious” experience in which the “God of religions” was replaced by the God present among human beings (Sheehan, 2000, pp. 61-62). Evidenced by current trends and crises in the church, there is argument to suggest that “the Kingdom – if it is to survive ... will thrive outside rather than within the institutional churches” (O'Murchu, 1995, p. 123).

[Jesus'] filial experience of God ... impels [him] to unmask the machinery of a religion that is not at the service of life. We cannot justify in God's name the fact that some people go hungry when they could be filled (Mark 2: 23-27); we cannot turn away from someone in need of healing, in the name of some cultic observance. ... A religion that works against life is a false religion; no divine law is unchangeable if it harms people who are already so vulnerable. When a religious law harms people and plunges them into despair, it loses its authority; it does not come from the God of life. (Pagola, 2009, p. 312)

There have been times in church history, when Christian churches have displayed the same oppressive domination of its members with personal abuse by power, victimization and control that it denounces (O'Murchu, 2010c). Misuse of power, misunderstanding of kingdom values as demonstrated through pederasty and its ‘cover up’ is considered amongst the “great cancers of the institutional Church of the present era” (Cappo, 1996, p. 14). It is also argued that the Church has at times so misconstrued the nature and message of Kingdom that it believed itself to be the Kingdom of God on earth, (McBrien, 1994, p. 1132ff). This “ecclesial triumphalism” set the church as being “beyond all need for institutional reform” (Fuellenbach, 1995, p. 16) and led to a form of “ecclesiolatry” that was only acknowledged following Vatican II:

While helping the world and receiving many benefits from it, the church has a single intention: That God's Kingdom may come, and that salvation of the whole human race may come to pass (Paul VI, 1965f).
It is the duty of (the successors of the Apostles) to make this task endure “so that the word of God may run and be glorified” (2 Thess. 3:1) and the kingdom of God be proclaimed and established throughout the world. ... The council Fathers ... feeling deeply their duty to spread everywhere the Kingdom of God ... (Paul VI, 1965a, pars 1 & 42).

The distinction between the Kingdom and the church is clear. “The church's mission is to serve the Kingdom, not to take its place” (Fuellenbach, 1995).

4.4.2 Kingdom and Sectarianism

In the post Vatican reaffirmation of the mission of the Church (Paul VI, 1965f, pars. 1-3), the previously “sectarian pattern” of Church theology and missiology was negated (Ormerod, 2008, p. 218). This was a transformative direction for Church identity and mission and, indeed, the mission of the Catholic school. The previous theology pitted one brand of Christianity against another “with only Catholics being saved” (Robinson, 2002); and the Church distanced itself from the world at large by resisting social and cultural change (Ormerod, 2008). No longer is “[t]here ... but one universal Church of the faithful, outside of which no one at all can be saved” (Knight, 2009) as proclaimed by Pope Innocent III (circa 1160 – 1216). Now there is an understanding that all people are “United in Christ, they are led by the Holy Spirit in their journey to the Kingdom of their Father and they have welcomed the news of salvation which is meant for every man” (Paul VI, 1965f, par. 1).

4.4.3 Church and Theology

The mission of the church is clear in a practical theological sense:

[T]he church is not about the church. It is about what Jesus called the Reign of God. We are most church not when we are building up the church, but when we are outside of it: ... being diligent and honest in our workplace... going the extra mile with our students... living lives responsible to the environment, being responsible citizens, sharing our resources with the needy, standing up for social justice, consciously using inclusive language, treating immigrants fairly, trying to understand people of other faiths. (Bevans, 2009, pp. 2-13)

The Church’s mission “is to serve humanity until it reaches its fullness in Christ” (CCE, 1977, par. 6). That is, the mission of the Church is about promoting the development of the human person (CCE, 1977, par. 8). It does this in a number of ways.

4.4.3.1 Mission of Church concerns Evangelisation

First, the mission of the Church is about evangelisation (CCE, 1977, par. 7). It is “to evangelise, for the interior transformation and the renewal of humanity” (CCE, 1988, par. 66). “Evangelisation” is a term used by Popes Paul VI and John Paul II instead of mission (Schroeder, 2008, p. 3). It is intended to sum up the church’s entire mission and does not mean simply to teach a doctrine, but to proclaim Jesus Christ by one’s words and actions, that is, to make oneself an instrument of his presence and action in the world” (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 2007). It is the intention of the

Church that evangelisation is aimed at all humanity (CCE, 2007, par. 2). Not only does evangelisation mean that “[e]very person has the right to hear the ‘Good News’ of the God who reveals and gives himself in Christ, so that each one can live out in its fullness his or her proper calling” but that social issues and the Gospel are inseparable and every person has a right to evangelise (CDF, 2007, par. 2). Furthermore, “people in the church don’t have a monopoly on working for the Reign of God” (Bevans, 2009).

If the task of world evangelisation is ever to be accomplished, people must work together (Bevans, 2003, p. 50; Scherer & Bevans, 1992, p. 301). Indeed, “engaging in it together” and in community, is what makes mission transformative.

[It] involves making sure that governments and other groups keep making that “conscious choice” and follow that “deliberate policy” toward peace. In a similar way, the church’s commitment to justice cannot but be concerned for personal and institutional witness of simplicity of life, and for support of legislation and movements that promote the integrity of creation and the care of the earth. (Bevans, 2003, p. 52)

4.4.3.2 Mission of Church concerns transformation

Second, the mission of the church is concerned with developing an ethic of human dignity. It includes personal reconciliation through healing, sociocultural reconciliation between members of oppressed cultures and political reconciliation such as apartheid in South Africa (Bevans, 2003, p. 53). It concerns taking action against injustices – socio-economic-political and environmental (Boff, 1994, p. 243; D. J. O'Brien & Shannon, 1992; Paul VI, 1972, January 1, p. 491; F. R. Wilson, 1990).

4.4.3.3 Mission of Church concerns providing witness

Third, the duty of all human beings is to unite to provide witness to the Gospel and its values. Four kinds of missionary witnesses are identified (Scherer & Bevans, 1992). There are those remarkable individual Christians or the ordinary person who, by their good living and values, provide an example to others of Christian living. There are Christian communities of people; and there are the church’s institutional witnesses found in schools, hospitals, orphanages and social service agencies. There are also those who provide a “common witness”. They are “Christians of various traditions committed to common prayer, common educational ventures, common work for justice...” (Bevans, 2003, p. 50; Scherer & Bevans, 1992, p. 301).

4.4.4 Conclusion

The Church “is effectively and concretely at the service of the kingdom” (John Paul II, 1990, par. 20). Her mission includes issues of justice, peace-making and care of creation (Bevans, n.d.) but is focussed on the transformation of the individual and society so that each human being is liberated so as to experience a more authentic humanity. The identity of the Church rests on her “Kingdom consciousness based on Scripture” (Fuellenbach, 1998, p. 310). It is this mission of the Church that informs and influences the mission of the contemporary Catholic school. Both are centred on the Kingdom.

4.5 Mission of the Contemporary Catholic School

The mission of the Catholic school is derived from the mission of the Church because the Catholic school is:

A genuine instrument of the Church, a place of real and specific pastoral ministry.... The ecclesial nature of the Catholic school, therefore, is written in the very heart of its identity as a teaching institution.... It must be emphasised that this ecclesial dimension is not a mere adjunct, but is a proper and specific attribute, a distinctive characteristic which penetrates and informs every moment of its educational activity, a fundamental part of its very identity and the focus of its mission. (CCE, 1998b, par. 11)

The enormity and practical difficulties of this mission are acknowledged (CCE, 1998b). The mission of the contemporary Catholic school (CCE, 1988; CCE, 2007) (as shown in Figure 4.1) is two-fold. Firstly, it concerns the transformation of individuals to their fullest authentic human development.

[T]he promotion of the human person is the goal of the Catholic school.... This affirmation, stressing man’s vital relationship with Christ, reminds us that it is in His person that the fullness of the truth concerning man is to be found. This awareness expresses the centrality of the human person in the educational project of the Catholic school. (CCE, 1998b, par. 9).

Secondly, its mission is directed at the transformation of society.

[The Catholic school] is constantly concerned with the formational requirements of society.... Its binding force and potential for relationships derive from a set of values and a *communio of life* that is rooted in our common belonging to Christ. (CCE, 2007, pars. 4-5)

The extent to which the mission of the Catholic school is the transformation of society is “an authentic and credible *raison d’être* for Catholic education” (Mulligan, 1994, p. 78).

This dual mission is so that the Reign of God (Kingdom) will prevail; that is, that society may be characterised by right relationships, justice for all and peace (McLaughlin, 1998, pp. 29 - 36). The purpose of the contemporary Catholic school is fundamentally to create a learning environment and community characterised by respectful and right relationships, within which individuals can grow to their fullest potential as integral and authentic human beings. Their personal transformation furthers the transformation of society, so that it will be characterised by just and right structures and relationships. The nature of the school is communitarian so that students learn about, value and then create and maintain just structures and right relationships in society.

The Catholic school sets out to be a school for the human person and of human persons. The person of each individual human being, in his or her material and spiritual needs, is at the heart of Christ’s teaching: this is why the promotion of the human person is the goal of the Catholic school. (CCE, 1998b, par. 9)

Catholic education “calls for the fullest development of all that is human” and it “proposes Christ ... as both model and means; to imitate Him, the inexhaustible source of personal and communal perfection” (CCE, 1982, par. 18).

The personally and societally transformative dual purposes of the Catholic school are described consistently through the literature.

Education is one of the most important ways by which the Church fulfils its commitment to the dignity of the person and the building of community. Community is central to education ministry both as a necessary condition and an ardently desired goal. The education efforts of the Church must therefore be directed to forming persons-in-community; for the education of the individual Christian is important not only to his solitary destiny but also to the destinies of the many communities in which he lives. (National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1972)

Both individual and communal transformation is the goal so that society may be characterised by Gospel values. The promotion of the Kingdom as the key mission of the Catholic school is unambiguous, yet clarity concerning this position appears to be relatively uncommon in the scholarly literature” (McLaughlin, 2000, September, 6-9, p. 13).

[T]he Catholic school can be of such service in developing the mission of the People of God and in promoting dialogue between the Church and the community at large to the advantage of both...it is still of vital importance even in our times. (Paul VI, 1965b in CCE, 1998, par. 21)

How the Catholic school actualises its mission to personally transform its members invites exploration.

4.5.1 Personal Transformation

For society to be transformed to the extent that peace and justice prevail, individuals need to experience personal transformation. The special character of the Catholic school seeks to develop the whole, integrated person and demands that Catholic schools embrace the physical, intellectual, vocational, social, emotional, aesthetic, moral and religious dimensions of people (M. Flynn & Mok, 2002, p. 12 & 77).

The school must be concerned with constant and careful attention cultivating in students the intellectual, creative, and aesthetic faculties of the human person to develop in them the ability to make correct use of their judgment, will and affectivity; to promote in them a sense of values; to encourage just attitudes and prudent behaviour; to introduce them to the cultural patrimony handed down from previous generations to prepare them for professional life; and to encourage the friendly interchange among students of diverse cultures and backgrounds that will lead to mutual understanding. (CCE, 1982, par. 12)

It is through an “integrated education” that students are formed. The purpose of Catholic education is to ensure that each individual experiences his or her full humanity. In this way, each person is transformed.

4.5.1.1 Promotion of authentic humanity

There is little ambiguity in recent ecclesial communication about the central purpose of the contemporary Catholic school being primarily concerned with the fullest development of each human being. This goal is derived from the theological understanding of the nature of the human being, and why the human being is afforded such profound dignity. “Every single human being is created in the image and likeness of God and therefore each and every human being has dignity and is worthy of respect. ... [H]uman life is sacred” (Paul VI, 1965f, par. 26). Catholic education is underpinned by the belief that “[t]he human person is the clearest reflection of God’s presence in the world; all of the Church’s work in pursuit of both justice and peace is designed to protect and promote the dignity of every person. For each person not only reflects God, but is the expression of God’s creative work and the meaning of Christ’s redemptive

ministry” (People of Faith Generations Learning Together, 2007, p. 1 Handout 7). Such theology is based on the scriptural reference of Genesis 1:26 and invokes the concept of relationship between the Creator, Created and Co-creator who, with full understanding, furthers the work of the Creator. The imperative of the fullest human development of individuals, psychologically, socially, intellectually and spiritually, can only occur when in relationship with each other. “Because its aim is to make man more man, education can be carried out authentically only in a relational and community context” (CCE, 2007, par. 12).

The Catholic school, characterized mainly as an education community, is a school for the person and of persons.... [I]t aims at forming the person in the integral unity of his being, using the tools of teaching and learning where criteria of judgement, determining values, points of interest, lines of thought, sources of inspiration and models of life are formed. (CCE, 2007, par. 13)

For the individual to contribute best to the formation of an ethical, just society, each person needs to be formed fully in an educational environment that promotes authentic humanity (CCE, 1998b; McLaughlin, 2000b, p. 274).

The person of each individual human being, in his or her material and spiritual needs, is at the heart of Christ’s teaching: this is why the promotion of the human person is the goal of the Catholic school. ...[T]he Catholic school, in committing itself to the development of the whole man, does so in obedience to the solicitude of the Church, in the awareness that all human values find their fulfilment and unity in Christ. (CCE, 1977, par. 35)

The mission to promote the human being to its fullest development is premised on the theology that because Christ is perfectly human, to become fully human is to become more like Christ (CCE, 1998a). There is no aspect of humanity or human activity not touched by the divine (CCE, 1998a, par. 9).

While it is clear that the purpose of the Catholic school is to strive to educate each person to her/his fullest potential, it is also clear that the school does not take this responsibility alone. Each human being has responsibility for his or her own learnings and growth.

Every man is born to seek self-fulfilment. ... Endowed with intellect and free will, each man is responsible for his self-fulfilment even as he is for his salvation. He is helped, and sometimes hindered, by his teachers and those around him; yet whatever be the outside influences exerted on him, he is the chief architect of his own success or failure. Utilizing only his talent and willpower, each man can grow in humanity, enhance his personal worth, and perfect himself. (Paul VI, 1967, par. 15)

It is evident that “self-development ... is not left up to man's option. ... [H]uman self-fulfilment may be said to sum up our obligations” (Paul VI, 1967, par. 16). Even if students of different faith backgrounds do not accept the theological basis of their responsibilities to learn, the role of the school is to lead students towards their highest personal human development (Paul VI, 1967, par. 16).

The ramifications concerning the nature of teaching, the relevance of curriculum, the relationships between teachers and students, then, are many. If the purpose is to lead students to their fullest authentic human development, then the nature of the educational experience includes being one of inspiration, motivation, creativity and relevance in order to engage the learner.

As hard as it is to define, Catholics believe that their schools possess a unique quality, or identity, which is not to be found in other schools and which is located in their religious faith dimension... The special character of Catholic schools derives from their commitment to the development of the whole person, a mission that has traditionally embraced the physical, intellectual, vocational, social, emotional, aesthetic, moral and religious dimensions of people. (M. Flynn & Mok, 2002, p. 12 & 77)

Understanding what it means to be “fully human” and what constitutes “authentic humanity” (Morwood, 1997, p. 3) invites exploration. Humans are “profoundly spiritual” (McQuillan, 2009a, p. 22). The brain is “‘hard-wired’ for transcendent experiences” (Newberg et al., 2001, p. 113), and to be human is to be spiritual (Teilhard de Chardin, 1965). An essential role of the Catholic school is the promotion of personal spirituality and meaning in life. This is a goal of the Religious Education curriculum offered to students in Catholic Schools (Brisbane Catholic Education Office, 2013a, p. 37).

Several themes emerge from the literature that explicate the central mission of the Catholic school in its promotion of an authentic humanity.

4.5.1.1.1 *Witness to Gospel*

First, a pivotal strategy for the contemporary Catholic school is to teach students ways of providing witness to the Gospel (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1998). The practical responsibility of a Christian is to humanize Christ in his or her life (Galatians 2:20). This is the rationale for the priority of “evangelization through witness”: “Modern man (*sic*) listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers...” (Paul VI, 1975, par. 41). The Catholic school is to be “place of evangelisation, of complete

formation, of inculturation, of apprenticeship in lively dialogue between young people of different religions and social backgrounds” (CCE, 1998a, par. 11).

No less than other schools does the Catholic school pursue cultural goals and the human formation of youth. But its proper function is to create for the school community a special atmosphere animated by the Gospel spirit of freedom and charity, to help youth grow according to the new creatures they were made through baptism as they develop their own personalities, and finally to order the whole of human culture to the news of salvation so that the knowledge the students gradually acquire of the world, life and man is illumined by faith. (Paul VI, 1965b, par. 8)

4.5.1.1.2 *Religious and Moral Foundations*

Second, religious education is the “core of the core curriculum for a Catholic school (John Paul II, 1988). Students are challenged in the Catholic school “to live a virtuous life, doing good and avoiding evil, seeking not just their own happiness and fulfilment but the happiness and fulfilment of others, the creation of a just world and the wellbeing of all of creation” (Brisbane Catholic Education Office, 2013a, p. 37). They are guided in their development of moral understanding, moral reasoning and moral decision-making – taking into account the good of all (Brisbane Catholic Education Office, 2013a, p. 37). The sole responsibility for this task does not rest with the school.

[T]he primary responsibility for the education of children rests with their parents. Education begins in the home, where family life is meant to impart social virtues and a love for God and neighbour. At the same time the Council also recognizes that parents clearly need the *help of society* as a whole in order to fulfil their responsibility to educate their children. For her part, the Church has always provided this help to parents so that the lives of the faithful, from their earliest years, might be inspired by the spirit of Christ. It is the Church’s firm conviction that a complete education necessarily includes a religious dimension. If religion is neglected or set aside in the educational process that forms a nation’s heart and soul, then a morality worthy of man will not survive; justice and peace will not endure. It is also the Church’s belief that in providing Catholic education she is promoting “the full development of the human person for the welfare of earthly society and the building of a more human world” (Paul VI, 1965b). (John Paul II, 1988, par. 2)

4.5.1.1.3 *Relationship with God*

Third, the importance of fostering in each person a deep relationship with God is a key focus of the Catholic school (Hutton, 2002, p. 52). This is done by teachers whose own relationship with God provides a model for students (CCE, 1998a).

For the Church, evangelising means bringing the Good News into all the strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new... [T]he Church evangelizes when she seeks to convert, solely

through the divine power of the message she proclaims, both the personal and collective consciences of people, the activities in which they engage, and the lives and concrete milieu which are theirs. (Paul VI, 1975, par. 20 and 21)

4.5.1.1.4 **Knowledge, truth and critical thinking**

Fourth, it is evident from the literature that an authentic Catholic school has a responsibility to teach students to think critically (McLaughlin, 2000, September, 6-9). Schools are to present learning through an integrated curriculum that values the concepts of being “human”; that is, develops in maturity of thought, intelligence and will, freedom and feelings and in the capacity to be an active and creative agent (CCE, 1988, par. 55). Schools, furthermore, are to be “designed not only to develop with special care the intellectual faculties [of each person] but also to form [in them] the ability to judge rightly, to hand on the cultural legacy of previous generations, to foster a sense of values, to prepare for professional life” (Paul VI, 1965b par. 5).

The capacity for the human being to expand in intellect evolutionarily, and grow with assistance from new and emerging technologies is acknowledged. The Catholic school has a responsibility to engage students in higher order thinking, to critically analyse, synthesise, explore evidence in the light of new learnings, and to search for “unfolding insights” (Mayson, 2008). It is to present “a complete picture of the human person” (CCE, 1988, par. 55).

Today's spiritual agitation and the changing conditions of life are part of a broader and deeper revolution. As a result of the latter, intellectual formation is ever increasingly based on the mathematical and natural sciences and on those dealing with man himself, while in the practical order the technology which stems from these sciences takes on mounting importance.

This scientific spirit has a new kind of impact on the cultural sphere and on modes of thought. Technology is now transforming the face of the earth, and is already trying to master outer space. To a certain extent, the human intellect is also broadening its dominion over time: over the past by means of historical knowledge; over the future, by the art of projecting and by planning.

Thus, the human race has passed from a rather static concept of reality to a more dynamic, evolutionary one. (Paul VI, 1965f, par. 5)

By so doing, the mission of promoting the development of each human being to the fullest of their humanity, so that they can then engage more fully with others in kingdom-making, can be realised. The Catholic school promotes excellence in its teaching and learning (Federation of Parents and Friends Associations of Catholic Schools, 2008). It provides an environment in which the Truth is sought through the

engagement of the intellect and with an appreciation of new ideas and evolving thought. It is through this approach that the mission can be served.

4.5.1.1.5 Spiritual search

Fifth, in providing a holistic education for young people, the development of their spirituality becomes an imperative for the Catholic school (CCE, 1998a). There is compelling evidence that spirituality is an innate quality of human life. “It is something we are born with, something essentially dynamic that forever seeks articulation and expression in human living” (O’Murchu, 1997b, p. 37).

The Catholic school’s traditional requirement to attend to the moral and spiritual development of students carries a new urgency with the acknowledgement of a new type of poverty that is spiritual rather than material:

[The poor today are] those who have lost all sense of meaning in life and lack any type of inspiring ideal, those to whom no values are proposed and who do not know the beauty of faith, who come from families which are broken and incapable of love, often living in situations of material and spiritual poverty; slaves to the new idols of society, which, not infrequently, promises them only a future of unemployment and marginalisation. (CCE, 1998b, p. 5)

Meaning in life, and the development of meaningful spirituality are consistently articulated as part of the mission of the Catholic school. “We are language-related, symbol-borne, and story-sustained creatures. We do not live long or well without meaning” (Fowler, 2000, p. 39).

Materialism, depersonalisation and individualism make it difficult for students to discover their true identities, the real meaning of their lives and their personal dignity, for these include the spiritual and the social. And, without the spiritual, students can never hope to have the deeper questions and yearnings in their hearts satisfied or fulfilled”. (Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia, 2009, p. 17)

The Catholic school has a mandate to provide an education that transforms the individual. It does this through the provision of an integrated education of the whole person. This is central to its role in providing for the transformation of society.

4.5.2 Social Transformation

The literature is unambiguous about the social transformation required of the mission of a Catholic school. It is to provide “an irreplaceable source of service, not only to the pupils ... but also to society” (CCE, 1977, par. 62).

The vocation of every Catholic educator includes the work of ongoing social development” to form men and women who will be ready to take their place in society, preparing them in such a way that they will make the kind of social commitment which will enable them to work for the improvement of social structures, making these structures more conformed to the principles of the Gospel. Thus they will form human beings who will make human society more peaceful, fraternal and communitarian. (CCE, 1982, par. 19)

In order for social transformation to occur, the communitarian nature of the Catholic school is essential.

4.5.2.1 Communitarian nature

Just as the fullest formation of the human person is the central theme of personal transformation, communitarianism is central to the dimension concerning societal transformation. The school is given the mandate to ensure that learning is not only about “how to bear witness to the hope that is in [students] but also how to help in the Christian formation of the world in order to contribute to the good of the whole society” (Paul VI, 1965b, par. 2). This ensures that a Catholic school “must be a community whose aim is the transmission of values for living” (CCE, 1977, par. 53). “Community as the essential nature of a Catholic school has its origin in a Catholic understanding of the nature of humans who are an expression of the nature of God” (McLaughlin, 2000c, p. 58). The theme of the communitarian nature of the Catholic school and of the nature of the human person and how these concepts are linked and are central to the purpose of the Catholic school invite exploration.

Six principles are identified that provide the foundation for the communitarian nature of the Catholic school.

4.5.2.1.1 Relationship with Others

First, the “complete formation through interpersonal relations” (CCE, 1998a, par. 18) is the central method through which the mission may be achieved and for which the mission is directed. Catholic social teaching defines these relationships and proposes a critical education with the purpose of transforming society. “This is an authentic and credible *raison d’être* for Catholic education” (Mulligan, 1994, p. 78). Catholic social teachings concerning the common good, solidarity, and human dignity form a framework for the way in which individuals in society relate to, with and for the other.

We are the heirs of earlier generations, and we reap benefits from the efforts of our contemporaries; we are under obligation to all men. Therefore we

cannot disregard the welfare of those who will come after us to increase the human family. The reality of human solidarity brings us not only benefits but also obligations. (Paul VI, 1967, par. 17)

A constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel is active engagement in the world to bring about more just and human conditions for all (Synod of Bishops, 1971). The reign of God can only be present when just economic, political and social conditions exist (BCEO, 2013b) and human dignity is achieved for all (Synod of Bishops, 1971). These factors underpin the need for teaching how to relate to others in such a way that each person is treated with dignity (Boswell, 1996). Other principles of Catholic Social Teaching for which the school is responsible were reiterated in *The Catholic School in the Third Millennium* (CCE, 1998a). They include solidarity with the oppressed, distributive justice, preferential option for the poor, democracy, power sharing, basic human rights and the “common good”.

Catholic Christianity has consistently understood society’s function as serving the *common good*. .. [T]he good served is *common* ... because society serves the personal good of every member. On the other hand, the Catholic understanding avoids rugged individualism, instead making each person responsible for the good of neighbour and community. It is the two together – society’s responsibilities to the person and the person’s responsibilities to society – that realises the *common good*.... That society exists for the *common good* has a parallel in the Church’s function for the reign of God. ...[T]he reign of God is both a personal and a social symbol; God is to rule in people’s hearts and lives, and in the public world of society and culture. Now add to this mix the classic definition of a sacrament by Thomas Aquinas: “an effective symbol that causes to happen what it symbolizes.” (Groome, 2002, pp. 119-120)

The principles upon which a Catholic school is required to conduct itself so that societal transformation is achieved are evident: “It is a school for all, with special attention for those who are weakest” (CCE, 1998b, par. 15).

The commitment to the principle of solidarity within the church is also evident, and it presents a challenge in practice to Catholic schools. Solidarity is not simply a pragmatic response to social crisis or an injustice. It is an imperative that emanates from the Catholic understanding of the nature of God (O’Keefe, 1996, p. 190). It emphasises the relational and inter-relational dynamic that extends to the school’s role in the broader community (CCE, 1998a).

[T]he Catholic school [shares in the] responsibility for the social and cultural development of the different communities and peoples to which it belongs, participating in their joys and hopes, their sufferings and difficulties, their

efforts to achieve genuine human and communitarian progress. (CCE, 1998a, par. 5)

Its role in pastorally helping families negotiate the complexities of modern life is part of this mandate. This social responsibility of the Church extends into the role of the Catholic school (Paul VI, 1975). It does so within the specific sphere of the provision of outreach and social justice activities (Ormerod, 2010, p. 438). It also does so through its pastoral support of each other. “The pastoral dimension of a Catholic school needs to include the mutual care and support staff demonstrate both towards each other and for their students” (Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia, 2009, p. 21).

4.5.2.1.2 *Evangelisation*

Second, the Catholic school has an explicit role in evangelisation (CCE, 1998a), through which it seeks “to bring the Good News into all areas of humanity, and through its impact, to transform that humanity from within, making it new” (Paul VI, 1975, par. 18). Through evangelisation, it:

seeks to convert solely through the divine power of the Message she proclaims, both the personal and collective consciences of people, the activities in which they engage, their ways of life, and the actual milieux in which they live. (Paul VI, 1975, par. 18)

Indeed, for most young people, the contemporary school is church (Angelico, 1997, p. 46). This has become so because of the disengagement of youth from their parish (Wilkinson, 2013). The authentic Catholic school now has an even more critical role in proclaiming or communicating the Gospel message (Paul VI, 1975, par. 27) so as to deepen the faith of its students.

4.5.2.1.3 *Dialogue*

Third, dialogue is identified in the literature as necessary in the search for truth.

Dialogue is...the norm and necessary manner of every form of Christian mission, as well as every aspect of it, whether one speaks of simple presence and witness, service or direct proclamation. Any sense of mission not permeated by such a dialogical spirit would go against the demands of true humanity and against the teaching of the Gospel.
(Pontifical council for inter-religious dialogue and proclamation, 1991)

The mission of the school is one of community. The truth of each person is honoured with dignity and processed through respectful dialogue.

Moreover, the fullness of truth received in Jesus Christ does not give individual Christians the guarantee that they have grasped that truth fully. In the last analysis truth is not a thing we possess, but a person by whom we must allow ourselves to be possessed. This is an unending process. While keeping their identity intact, Christians must be prepared to learn and to receive from and through others the positive values of their traditions. Through dialogue they may be moved to give up ingrained prejudices, to revise preconceived ideas, and even sometimes to allow the understanding of their faith to be purified. (Pontifical council for inter-religious dialogue and proclamation, 1991, par. 49)

Dialogue is central to the Christian mission of education and is justified theologically. “That mission is dialogical is rooted in the reality that God, in God’s deepest reality, is dialogue. God is not a lonely monad but a communion of persons, distinct from one another and yet one in identity and purpose” (Bevans, 2012, p. 2).

It is through dialogue that truth is found (Bevans & Schroeder, 2004). It is through dialogue that an attitude of respect and dignity can permeate the community (Paul VI, 1975 par. 6).

4.5.2.1.4 *Inclusivity*

Fourth, an essential attitude within an authentic community is that of inclusivity. “[T]he Catholic school ... is a school for all, with special attention to those who are weakest (CCE, 1998b, par. 15). The Catholic school has a particular function to serve the spiritually and materially poor (CCE, 1998a, par. 6 and 15), whether they are Catholic, practising or not (CCE, 1998a, par. 7), Catholic or not or non-Christian (CCE, 1998a, par. 16).

While one perspective is that the primary function of the Catholic school is to ensure that the essential doctrines and devotions of Catholicism are transmitted, later documentation offers a more inclusive definition. “Those who practise charity in the church’s name will never seek to impose the church’s faith upon others” (Benedict XVI, 2005). Catholics must think of themselves as Christian, and cherish their union with Protestant brothers and sisters as one Body of Christ in the world” (Groome, 2002, p. 8). Indeed, sectarianism is the antithesis of the purpose of Catholic education (Hutton, 2002, p. 53). Through experience in the Catholic school, students ought to be taught how to engage with the world, in dialogue (Hutton, 2002, p. 53).

4.5.2.1.5 *Synthesis of culture, faith and life*

In achieving its function of “communion”, the nature of the Catholic school is to demonstrate a synthesis of culture, faith and life (CCE, 1977; CCE, 1988) in which each element is integrated with the other (Groome, 2002, p. 33).

To integrate faith and culture, students need to learn how to integrate faith and life ... The Catholic school facilitates learning to live this ‘new life’ by presenting Jesus Christ himself as the ‘Model of genuine human development’”. (Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia, 2009, p. 14)

The rationale for this synthesis is consistent with the mission of the Catholic school in its attempt to transform society.

Students need to learn to challenge, and to work towards changing whatever in Australian society conflicts with the Gospel and its values. In these ways, students learn to contribute to the development of the kind of society Christ envisages.

Students need also to critique the influence of social, political and economic structures in Australian society from a Gospel perspective. Media and other instruments of communication are particularly important. So are social attitudes, values, practices and trends. Finally, to promote a Gospel vision of Australian society, students need to develop a genuine commitment to the human search for truth. Schools need to integrate the truths and values of the Gospel in educationally appropriate ways into everything student learn and experience. (Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia, 2009, p. 14)

4.5.2.1.6 *Values*

Sixth, the transformation of self and society presupposes the transformation of the values that motivate the human being. “The role of the Catholic school today is to be prophetic and to keep before students the values of Jesus in the contemporary world (Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia, 2009, p. 33). Its role in ensuring that Gospel values continue to be focussed with intent is paramount.

For children and adolescents socialized in a culture and everyday life in which they experience so many conflicting values and behaviours, the greatest contribution the Catholic school and Catholic educators can make is to offer certainty about what it is to be human and to be loved by God. This is certainly transmitted through a values-laden curriculum and the lived values of Catholic educators: their joy, hope and tangible manifestation of belief in Jesus. (Mulligan, 2006, p. 299)

Students need to critically evaluate their faith, culture and life against a set of values and counter-values so that they develop awareness of their role in transforming society

(Oldenski, 1997, p. 25). Attitudes borne of these values will concern an appropriate concept of life and of the human person. It will concern freedom, a sincere and constant search for truth; a calm and peaceful critical spirit, a spirit of solidarity with and service toward all other persons, and a sensitivity for justice (Oldenski, 1997, p. 25). This, then, will be the transformation of individuals and societies that the message of God's Kingdom concerns.

The previous sections describe the mission of the Catholic school. Foundational to achieving this mission are underpinning theological, ideological, anthropological and philosophical principles.

4.5.3 Theology, Ideology, Anthropology and Philosophy of the Catholic School

4.5.3.1 Theology

Throughout *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium*, (CCE, 1998b) an "integrated theology" is apparent. This presents as a significant move from the dualist world of previous documents. "Catholic evangelization in Third Millennium reflects an integrated theology, in which it is difficult to distinguish between the concepts of the sacred and profane and in which to honour authentic human values is a dynamically spiritual experience" (McLaughlin, 2000b, p. 7).

In a Catholic school "there is no neutral subject or discipline. The Gospel perspective is the lens through which Catholic educators and students together investigate and analyse all values and actions, attitudes and relationships" (Mulligan, 1994, p. 78).

The declaration *Gravissimum educationis* notes an important advance in the way a Catholic school is thought of: the transition from the school as an institution to the school as a community. This community dimension is, perhaps, one result of the new awareness of the Church's nature as developed by the (Vatican II) Council. In the council texts, the community dimension is primarily a theological concept rather than a sociological category. (CCE, 1988, par. 31)

The theology of the dignity of each child being made in the image of God, and therefore all persons being included in the mission, is the basis for ensuring that "Catholic identity ... is anything but sectarian" (M. J. Miller, 2005, September 14, p. 3). It is this theology of the respect for the individual, having been made in the image of God, that is foundational to the ideology of the contemporary Catholic school.

4.5.3.2 Ideology

The presence of an “inspirational ideology” gives the Catholic school its sense of mission and purpose (Grace, 2002, p. 92).

[It is] the animating force which gives shape and purpose to the Catholic educational mission. At the heart of the inspirational ideology is the belief that a Catholic school is in the service of Christ for the salvation and redemption of all and that it has transcendent as well as mundane purposes. If all are made in the image of Christ then all must be treated with respect and in pursuit of this respect Catholic schooling must be part of a struggle against poverty, oppression, racism and injustice wherever these occur. (Grace, 2002, pp. 93-94)

It is the inspirational ideology that grounds school communities in their mission to achieve the Kingdom.

At its best, the work of the Catholic education offers an inspirational ideology that is beyond economic rationalism, corporate managerialism and human capital theories. Within Catholic education lies the potential of schooling to enhance the growth of the individual, to ennoble the human spirit, to build a compassionate community and to revitalize the culture. (Spry, 2000, p. 63)

In an authentic Catholic school, this ideology pervades the culture of the school ensuring that “[Catholic schools] are sources of great hope and joy” (Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia, 2009, p. 11). The inspiration and strength derived from the Gospel gives the Catholic school its purpose and its mission (Bryk et al., 1993; Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988, par. 47; Grace, 2002, p. 92).

4.5.3.3 Anthropology

Supporting an inspirational ideology, the contemporary Catholic school demonstrates a Christian anthropology in its view of what it is to be human.

Again and again the Holy See’s documents repeat the need for an educational philosophy built on the solid foundation of sound Christian anthropology....The Catholic school is committed ... to the development of the whole man, since in Christ, the perfect man, all human values find their fulfilment and unity. Herein lies the specifically Catholic character of the school. Its duty to cultivate human values in their own legitimate right in accordance with its particular mission to serve all men has its origin in the figure of Christ. He is the one who ennobles man, gives meaning to human life, and is the model which the Catholic school offers to its pupils. (M. J. Miller, 2005, September 14, pp. 3-4)

This Christian anthropology requires that:

the Catholic educator must consciously inspire his or her activity with the Christian concept of the person.... It is a concept which includes a defence of human rights, but also attributes to the human person the dignity of a child of God; ... It establishes the strictest possible relationship of solidarity among all persons through mutual love and an ecclesial community. It calls for the fullest development of all that is human because we have been made masters of the world by its Creator. Finally, it proposes Christ, Incarnate Son of God and perfect Man, as both model and means; to imitate him, is, for all men and women, the inexhaustible source of personal and communal perfection. (CCE, 1982, par. 18)

Catholic anthropology in schools, consistent with an inspirational ideology, is positive, is characterised by a desire to resist social fatalism, and insists that human beings seek to rise above negative influences (Groome, 2003, pp. 33-34). It is an anthropology based on a deep respect for each human being having been made “in God’s own image and likeness” (Genesis 1:27) and is informed by Catholic social teaching and philosophy.

4.5.3.4 Philosophy

A Catholic philosophy of education is multi-pronged and is evident throughout the policies, procedures, pedagogy, relationships, culture and ethos of an authentically Catholic school.

A Catholic philosophy of education has always paid special attention to the interpersonal relations within the educational community of the school, especially between teachers and students. Direct and personal contact between teachers and students is a hallmark of Catholic schools. (M. J. Miller, 2005, September 14, p. 4)

This was emphasised in *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium*.

During childhood and adolescence a student needs to experience personal relations with outstanding educators, and what is taught has greater influence on the student’s formation when placed in a context of personal involvement, genuine reciprocity, coherence of attitudes, lifestyle and day to day behaviour. (CCE, 1998b, par. 18)

The Catholic school:

has not come into being as a private initiative, but as an expression of the reality of the Church, having by its very nature a public character. It fulfils a service of public usefulness and, although clearly and decidedly configured in the perspective of the Catholic faith, is not reserved to Catholics only, but is open to all those who appreciate and share its qualified educational project.... Catholic schools... like state schools, fulfil a public role, for their presence

guarantees cultural and educational pluralism and, above, all, the freedom and right of families to see that their children receive the sort of education they wish for them. (CCE, 1998b, par. 16)

Furthermore, “[t]he Catholic school ... is based on an educational philosophy in which faith, culture and life are brought into harmony” (CCE, 1988, par. 34).

Because Catholic schools seek to develop each student as a “person-in-community” (Bryk, 1996, p. 33) a Catholic educational philosophy is informed by the social equity aims of Catholic social teaching. Consequently, “For Catholic education, academic achievement is not an end in itself but an enterprise serving a larger purpose” (Grace, 1996, p. 70). Individual success is not sought “at the expense of someone else’s failure” (McLaughlin, 2000a, p. 104). “[It] is not simply a place where lessons are taught: it is a centre that has an operative educational philosophy, attentive to the needs to today’s youth and illumined by the Gospel message” (E. J. McDermott, 1997, p. 11). It is a philosophy of “mission” rather than “provision” (Grace, 2002, p. 94). A philosophy of “serving the common good of society” (M. J. Miller, 2005, September 14, p. 7) and with a “preference for the poor” competes in the market place against the desires of upwardly mobile parents, individualism and elitism.

Within an environment where these ideologies, philosophies, anthropology and theology co-exist, the mission of the school is to transform the human person and the society so that the Kingdom may come.

4.5.3.5 Conclusion

The Catholic school is characterised by respect for individuality and dignity of human beings. It teaches a message of freedom through its sense of mission and justice (Konstant, 1981, p. 143). It is concerned with the whole, integrated human being (Hulme, 1989). It provides a challenging, authentic educational environment faithful to the Catholic tradition of offering a synthesis of life, faith and culture. It fosters in young people a personal relationship with Christ and a relationship with others that is based on Christ’s love for humanity. It provides a practical expression of inclusion of all, and a rationale and way of seeking justice and just structures within society so that all humanity can benefit and grow in dignity (McLaughlin, 2000d, p. 34). Catholic education is a public venture that is grounded in the way of life of Jesus (Mulligan, 2006, pp. 297-299). The mission of the Catholic school is to transform individuals and societies so that individuals and societies may experience the reign of God.

Chapter 5: RESEARCH DESIGN

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this research is to explore how students, teachers and parents experience Dominican charism at San Sisto College.

The research questions that focus the conduct of the research design are:

- What do students, teachers and parents understand Dominican charism to be?
- How do students, teachers and parents experience Dominican charism at San Sisto College?
- How is Dominican charism nurtured at San Sisto College?

This chapter explains and justifies the research design adopted in pursuit of the research purpose. It explains the theoretical underpinnings of the research design. The research methodology is detailed and justified. The selection of participants is explained and rationalised. Data gathering strategies, stages of data gathering and methods used in the analysis of data are outlined and justified, and ethical issues are analysed. The chapter concludes with an overview of the research design.

5.2 Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework for research provides a philosophical foundation for, and explanation of, the research design. The research design is “the logic that links the data to be collected (and the conclusions to be drawn) to the initial questions of the study” (Yin, 2003, p. 19). Given that the purpose of this study is to explore how stakeholders experience Dominican charism, the research paradigm of interpretivism is adopted. In order to gain an understanding of the lived experience of the stakeholders in relation to charism, an epistemological framework of constructionism is appropriate (Crotty, 1998). The lens of symbolic interactionism is adopted as the theoretical perspective. Case study is adopted as the methodology (Merriam, 1988).

Table 5-1 Theoretical framework

5.3 Epistemology	Constructionism
5.3.1 Research Paradigm	Interpretivism
5.3.2 Theoretical perspective	Symbolic interactionism
5.4 Methodology	Case study
5.5 Participants	Purposive selection
5.6 Data-gathering Strategies	Document analysis Individual Interviews Semi-structured focus group interviews

5.3 Epistemology – Constructionism

Epistemology provides a philosophical basis for deciding what kinds of knowledge are possible and how adequacy and legitimacy of knowledge may be determined (Maynard, 1994, p. 10). It is a way of understanding and explaining how we know what we know (Crotty, 1998, p. 3). This research is underpinned by the epistemology of constructionism.

Constructionism maintains that different people may construct meaning in different ways in relation to the same phenomenon. “Truth” is not waiting to be discovered, but rather, truth and meaning are constructed from the engagement of the mind of each person with their own reality (Feast & Melles, 2010, June). “Meaning is not discovered, but constructed.... In this view of things, subject and object emerge as partners in the generation of meaning” (Crotty, 1998, p. 9). Using constructionism, the articulation of the experience of each of the “actors” is explored. “[E]ach perspective tells us something very important about what is really true” (Charon, 2007, p. 2). The constructionist orientation assumes “that the interactions and beliefs of people create reality. There is no inner essence that causes the reality people see; it is a product of social processes. ... [F]or the constructionists, people live in, believe, and accept the constructed reality that is linked to but distinct from physical reality” (Neuman, 2006, p. 89). This is relevant in faith-based schools seeking to institutionalise or nurture charisma because the actors ascribe their own meaning to each experience (such as assemblies, liturgies, values and interactions with other stakeholders). Furthermore,

the meanings once assigned to the strategically organised experiences or meaning-making activities “can be changed when they are found to be incomplete, faulty (e.g. discriminatory, oppressive, or nonliberatory), or malformed (created from data that can be shown to be false)” (Guba & Lincoln, 2000, p. 167). The meanings assigned to experiences are evaluated and negotiated depending on the stakeholder’s experience. The connection between an experience and the meaning assigned to that experience differs for each person, and the meaning given to it:

may come from our dreams, or from primordial archetypes we locate within our collective unconscious, or from the conjunction and aspects of the planets, or from religious beliefs, or from That is to say, meaning comes from anything *but* an interaction between the subject and the object to which it is ascribed. (Crotty, 1998, p. 9)

The basis of the constructionist epistemological view is that “reality” is socially constructed by and between the persons who experience it (Gergen, 1999). “It is a consequence of the context in which the action occurs and is shaped by the cultural, historical, political, and social norms that operate within that context and time. And that reality can be different for each of us based on our unique understandings of the world and our experience of it” (Darlaston-Jones, 2007, p. 19). Social constructionism allows for both the differences between individuals and the sameness that unites human beings to be in focus (Ashworth, 2003). Constructionism is therefore a useful epistemology for this study.

Because meaning-making is a dynamic process, the relationship between respondent and researcher in a study such as this requires attention because of the potential for the resultant co-construction of meaning. Ethics, motives and interpretations influence the study and its outcome. Language is constructed and communicated, and meaning negotiated. Therefore, interviews and focus groups are particularly appropriate data-gathering strategies (Darlaston-Jones, 2007, p. 24). Concerns within subjectivity-based research with issues of social action, control, voice, truth, validity, rigour, reflexivity and textual representation in research can be challenging (Guba & Lincoln, 2000). However “[t]here is no such thing as knowledge uncontaminated by any particular system of human purposes, beliefs, values and activities, the world and values [I]t is grounded in experiences and practices, in the efficacy of dialogue, negotiation and of action” (Howe & Berv, 2000, p. 33).

Constructionism, within the interpretivist research paradigm, therefore, focuses on how meaning is constructed, negotiated, maintained and adjusted within a specific context within specific human interaction (Schwandt, 1994). As an epistemology, constructionism acknowledges the individual, subjective way that human beings draw on personal experience and knowledge to interpret the world they are in and to make sense of their lives and experiences (Crotty, 1998; Schwandt, 1994).

Figure 5.1 is a diagrammatic summary of the research design. It shows the relationship of each part of the design to the theoretical construct.

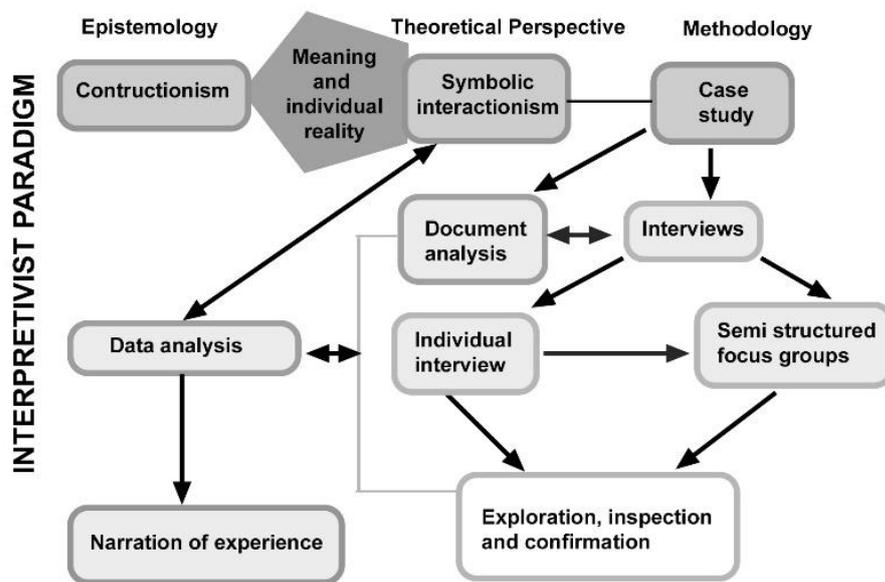


Figure 5-1 Diagrammatic summary of the research design

5.3.1 Research Paradigm – Interpretivism

A paradigm is a world view – a way of explaining the complexity of perceived realities (Patton, 1990) as well as offering interrelated assumptions about the nature of society and of social behaviour (O'Donohue, 2007). Different paradigms are constructed from different assumptions about how knowledge is generated or accepted as valid and about the purposes of research (O'Donohue, 2007, p. 9). The interpretivist paradigm is premised on social interaction as the basis for knowledge (O'Donohue, 2007, p. 9) and on the belief that “the social world can only be understood from the standpoint of the individual actors” (Candy, 1989, p. 3). Furthermore, interpretivism contends that

“reality is not ‘out there’ but in the minds of people; reality is internally experienced, is socially constructed through interaction and interpreted through the actors, and is based on the definition people attach to it” (Sarantakos, 1998, p. 35).

From an interpretivist view, “social reality is regarded as the product of processes by which social actors together negotiate the meanings for actions and situations” (Blaikie, 1993, p. 96). Social settings and subjective points of views help to shape the choices people make, but people create and change those settings and have the ability to develop or form a point of view (Neuman, 2006, p. 90). Symbols such as language and behaviours within a cultural context make meaning of the situation and the human interaction within it (Geertz, 1973; Schwandt, 1994). What charism means to students, teachers and parents and how they experience it is a subjective construct.

Human action ... has little inherent meaning, but it acquires meaning among people who share a meaning system that permits them to interpret the action as a socially relevant sign or action. ISS (Interpretive Social Science) states the social world is largely what people perceive it to be. Social life exists as people experience it and give it meaning. (Neuman, 2006, p. 89)

Interpretive research does not seek to reinterpret the actions and experiences of the actors, but rather to give “a deeper, more extensive and more systematic representation of events from the point of view of the actors involved” (Candy, 1989, p. 5). This approach, then, is grounded in people’s realities, and respects reality as experienced by each person (Lukes, 1973). It acknowledges the existence, therefore, of multiple realities (Schnelker, 2006, p. 45).

The interpretive paradigm honours the notion of *Verstehen* (empathetic understanding) (Tucker, 1965). “[W]e must learn the personal reasons or motives that shape a person’s internal feelings and guide decisions to act in particular ways” (Neuman, 2006, p. 87). The interpretive paradigm is idiographic and inductive, providing a rich, “thick”, meaningful, detailed description of the inner, subjective, everyday experience of the person or persons being studied (Crotty, 1998; Neuman, 2006, pp. 91-93). It explores the values, attitudes and beliefs which influence people to act in a certain way (Punch, 1998). Therefore, *Verstehen* can be interpreted as “the attempt to understand the realities of others” (Schnelker, 2006, p. 45). As this research seeks to understand the experience and reality of others and the social action to which people attach subjective

meaning, it is appropriate that interpretivism guide this research (Neuman, 2006, p. 88).

5.3.2 Theoretical Perspective – Symbolic Interactionism

Within the interpretivist paradigm a number of theoretical perspectives coexist. These provide particular lenses with which interpretive data are conceptualised. Symbolic interactionism is the perspective chosen for this research as it is consistent with the interpretive paradigm, constructionist epistemology and case study methodology.

Central to symbolic interactionism is understanding the perspective of the other (Crotty, 1998, p. 75). The role-taking of the other is an interaction. It is symbolic interaction because of the symbols (language, for example) that humans share and through which communication occurs. Dialogue is the symbolic process through which humans “become aware of perceptions, feelings and attitudes of others and interpret their meanings and intent” (Crotty, 1998, pp. 75-76).

[H]uman interactions are not governed by inviolable laws so much as by agreed rules which are consensually validated by people Many such rule-governed practices are symbolic, and thus interpretive approaches are sometimes referred to as ‘symbolic’. (Candy, 1989, p. 4)

Human beings, as “pragmatic actors”, continually adjust their behaviour to the actions of other actors because humans are interpreting the actions of others (McClelland, 2000). The interpretation occurs through denoting actions symbolically and treating the actions and those who perform them as symbolic objects. Adjustment occurs by the imaginatively rehearsing of alternative lines of action before taking action. Humans are, therefore, seen as “active, creative participants who construct their social world” (McClelland, 2000, p. 1). Role-taking, role-making and improvisation are key mechanisms that permit the taking of another’s perspective and the creation of situations and roles (McClelland, 2000, p. 1). This perspective is relevant in researching the influence of Dominican charism on individuals.

Whether or not stakeholders choose to act according to particular values or beliefs emphasised by a school or whether or not stakeholders see and choose to be influenced by lived examples of “Dominican values” are questions for which answers are sought in this study. Indeed, this study seeks to understand how stakeholders interpret

particular values and symbols, and how stakeholders experience daily life within a particular environment.

Symbolic interactionism is premised on four understandings:

1. Human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings they ascribe to those things.
2. The meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with others and the society.
3. These meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with the things s/he encounters (Dimmock & O'Donoghue, 1997).
4. The complexities of the interactions are not static. There is ongoing interception between groups of individuals within organisations as a result of their actions. Symbolic interactionism seeks an explanation of this action by exploratory and inspection processes (Blumer, 1998).

Humans use symbols such as language, and signification, by interpretation or by deriving meaning from another's actions (Denzin, 1989). Meanings are generated because they are personal and unique to the individual. They are not given by culture or society. Rather, they are constructed from culture by the actors involved. Furthermore, meaning-making is dynamic and is further negotiated by the assimilation of new information (Dimmock & O'Donoghue, 1997, p. 54). Moreover,

The most basic element in this image of human beings is the idea that the individual and society are inseparable units, and that while it may be possible to separate the units analytically, the underlying assumption is that a complete understanding of either one demands a complete understanding of the other. (Meltze, cited in Dimmock & O'Donoghue, 1997, p. 54)

A school is a particular entity comprised of many interrelated units. Symbolic interactionism, therefore, is an appropriate perspective. It is congruent with the research purpose and provides justification for the selection of the methodology and strategies used with which to gather data (Crotty, 1998).

5.4 Research Methodology – Case Study

The research methodology provides a justification for the orchestrated selection of data-gathering strategies consistent with the purpose of the research. The methodology

offers a rationale for the organisation and conduct of the research (Crotty, 1998, p. 3; Gough, 2002, October 4-6, p. 4). It offers both a model and a framework that guides how the research is conducted within a particular paradigm (Sarantakos, 1998, p. 6).

Case study is an in-depth, empirical investigation into a “contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context” (Yin, 2003, p. 13). It describes a unit of human interaction (a phenomenon) in the natural world (Scholz & Tietje, 2002). As an orchestrating justification, case study provides a systematic way of exploring events or themes, collecting multiple forms of data, analysing information and reporting the results for a given timeframe and within a set of boundaries (Creswell, 2008; Gillham, 2004). It is founded on the premise that “human systems develop a characteristic wholeness or integrity and are not simply a loose collection of traits” (Sturman, 1997). It is the case study’s focus on and concern with the cultural context that makes it a distinctive research methodology (Merriam, 1988, p. 23). Because context is integral to the interpretivist paradigm, it is an appropriate methodology for this study (Neuman, 2006, p. 94). Furthermore, because a case study incorporates and presents the views of the “actors” in the case under study (Tellis, 1997, July, p. 3), it is consistent with the symbolic interactionist perspective.

While case-study has strengths and is arguably “the most appropriate format and orientation for school-based research” (D. Hughes & Hitchcock, 1995), it does have limitations (Gomm, Hammersley, & Foster, 2000). In adopting the case-study approach, both its limitations and strengths are considered.

- Because the findings of a single case study relate to a particular site, they cannot be used to generalise (Gomm et al., 2000; Yin, 2003, p. 37). However, as the purpose of the case study is to particularise rather than generalise (Stake, 1995) this attribute does not prevent a challenge as has been suggested (Tellis, 1997). The “thick” description of the case, with the provision of a narrative containing in-depth knowledge of the problem, is both its focus and strength (Stake, 2004). Nonetheless, it is possible that a case study may present a “microcosm of some larger system or of a whole society: that what is found there is in some sense symptomatic of what is going on more generally” (Gomm et al., 2000, p. 99). Readers of studies determine for themselves whether the findings are applicable to other

contexts and cases. “[T]he burden of proof is on the user rather than on the original researcher...” (Gomm et al., 2000, p. 100). Furthermore, the outcomes of a case study are “suggestive rather than conclusive” (Crotty, 1998, p. 13). While this study claims to represent one perspective only, care is taken by the researcher to ensure legitimacy of the voice of the individual participants (Hammersley & Gomm, 2004).

- While criticism has been made of the volume of data that can be gathered in a case study, and therefore, the amount of time needed to analyse the data, this difficulty is addressed by ensuring that questions are focussed. Furthermore, strategies are used to manage the data. “Pattern matching” is used to link data – thus making it more easily manageable (D. Campbell, 1975). While the volume of data can be problematic, it is also a strength because “many more variables of interest than data points... “ can be exposed (Yin, 2003, p. 13). This gives a further richness to the overall narrative. Because a case study is an analysis of a system of action rather than of an individual or group of individuals much data is expected. The case study focusses on one or two issues that are fundamental to an understanding of the system as a whole (Tellis, 1997, July). In so doing, “case studies consider not just the voice and perspective of the actors, but also of the relevant groups of actors and the interaction between them.... They give a voice to the powerless and voiceless” (Tellis, 1997, July, p. 6). It is this rich data that illuminates the problem being explored.
- Ironically, another concern regarding the case study approach is its “lack of rigour”, and the use of “biased views” that can influence findings and conclusions (Yin, 2003, p. 10). These concerns are both legitimised and negated by several arguments. All research should be presented fairly. Bias can enter other methodologies too but perhaps is more common within case study. Other methodologies are supported by numerous methodological texts providing details on how investigations should occur. But there are fewer resources available for the case study methodology (Yin, 2003, p. 10).
- It is claimed that case studies are difficult to do and that the skills for undertaking case study are still being defined (Yin, 2003, p. 11). Nonetheless, the discreet skills required to conduct surveys, interviews,

focus groups and other strategies are documented (ERIC/AE Staff, 1997; Hannan, 2007).

- The case study has been criticised because of the potential for researcher-selective choice of data that may support the generation of recommendations (Yin, 1999). However, it is also possible in case study to present evidence separate from the researcher's interpretations. Doing so assists in the trustworthiness and reliability of the data. In this study, participants are afforded opportunities to check and confirm conclusions or explanations to ensure that the data are interpreted correctly.

Other characteristics of the case study endorse its use in this research.

- Case study is the “preferred strategy” when “how” and “why” questions are being explored, when the researcher has little control over the events, and when the study is of a contemporary phenomenon in a real-life context (Yin, 2003). A response through the data to “how” and “why” explains or illuminates a situation – therefore, responds to the purpose of this study.
- Case study provides a holistic understanding of a total unit or set of interrelated activities or cultural system under investigation (Feagin, Orum, & Sjoberg, 1991).
- Case study explains presumed causal links in real-life interventions that are too complex for the survey or experimental strategies,...“describe[s] an intervention and the real-life context in which it occur[s],... illustrate[s] certain topics within an evaluation... [and] explore[s] those situations in which the intervention being evaluated has no clear, single set of outcomes...” (Yin, 2003, p. 15).
- Because of the “bounded” nature of the case-study, and because of the focus on a limited number of phenomena within a set time period, and given the nature of interviews as a strategy, it is possible to “test views directly in relation to phenomenon as they unfold in practice” (Flyvbjerg, 2004, p. 425). Furthermore, the data can be verified and confirmed by participants who are able to review drafts of case study reports (Tellis, 1997, July). The verification of data by participants increases the trustworthiness of the results, and therefore provides validation for case study as a reliable methodology (Yin, 2003).

- Case study protocol contains more than one data gathering instrument and typically includes a number of the following: documents, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant-observation and physical artifacts (Stake, 1995; Yin, 1994). Indeed, the case study's advantage is in being able to incorporate the full variety of evidence which then contributes to the trustworthiness and reliability of the study. The multiple sources of data provide a triangulation research strategy and confirm the validity of the processes.
- Case study has advantages for the individual researcher operating within a condensed timeframe (Neale & Liebert, 1986).
- The analysis from a case study enables the researcher to develop a set of causal links from which insights, propositions and recommendations can be made (Yin, 2003).
- A case study affords the researcher the opportunity to work in the world of concrete reality rather than abstraction and theory (Walker, 1985).
- As an orchestrating rationale for research, case study allows the voices of the participants to be heard and then explained, described and understood (Tellis, 1997, July).

5.5 Participants

5.5.1 Participant Selection

The main strategy for inviting participants to partake in this research is “purposive selection”. That is, participants are purposively selected on the basis of specific knowledge that they are perceived to have in relation to the nature, implementation and/or experience of charism (Kruger, 1988, p. 150). This selection ensures rich, in-depth information with “high-quality, detailed descriptions” and “important shared patterns” (Patton, 1990, p. 172).

There are five groups of participants within the three stakeholder groups in this study: students (current and graduated), teachers (classroom teachers and leadership members), and parents. An extra group of “teachers” is included, but coded separately. They are “informed” participants – members of the Dominican Order of Preachers as friars or sisters who engage in teaching at the college at various times during the year. They have a long established relationship with the college. While each student, teacher

and parent within the college community potentially has a contribution to make to this study, in the interests of time and cost, and to maximise richness of the narrative, only those persons who met the inclusion criteria were invited to participate. The criteria below determined the selection for invitation to each of the participant groups. Following an invitation to participate, participants were invited to attend a briefing session to gain an understanding of the research and their potential involvement before providing consent.

5.5.1.1 Students

Current students from Years 8 – 12 who met the following criteria were invited to participate:

- Members of Student Representative Council (elected to that position from within each homeroom group);
- Members of the Student Leadership Team in Year 12 (appointed to their leadership position through a multi-process of peer election and staff approval);
- Members of the Year 11 LINCS¹¹ team (appointed to the position by the Assistant Principal in the previous year, following an application and interview process whereby student leadership and commitment to college life is ascertained);
- Each member of the Student Leadership Team was invited to extend the invitation of participation to one member of their committee.

Graduated, past students who met the following three criteria were invited to participate in this study:

- Graduated from the college in the three years prior to the conduct of the study;

¹¹ LINCS is a student peer support team. The acronym indicates the skills that members of the team use when working with younger students: L: Listen and Lead, I: Integrate and Initiate, N: Negotiate and Nurture, C: Care and Concern, S: Support and Share.

- were members of either the Student Leadership Teams or LINC'S teams of the preceding three years;
- Were known to be residing locally.

Recent graduates have a memory of their schooling experience as well as the benefit of hindsight, maturity and time to reflect on their experiences. As such, they form a data-rich source of participants.

5.5.1.2 Teachers

All college teachers were invited to participate because the total population of the group was only 42. The 4 members of the College Leadership Team were also invited to participate. Three members of the Dominican Order who have regular contact with the college were invited to participate. These participants are teachers but are identified as “informed” participants because of their lengthy formation in Dominican charism.

5.5.1.3 Parents

Parents were invited if they:

- Were members of the College Board, regular attendees at P&F meetings, Café Caterina staff or
- Volunteer regularly to do service at the college or
- Are known to be past students.

This selection is justified on the basis that these parents were likely to have a rich experience and understanding of college life. They also demonstrate a willingness to be available for college events and meetings.

5.5.2 Conditions for Participation

Care was taken throughout this research to protect the wellbeing of participants, especially those in “power-less and vulnerable” positions by being minors under 18 years of age, and/or by the researcher being the principal of the college (Jokinen, Lappalainen, Merilainen, & Marjanna, 2002). Consent to participate was obtained in writing from all participants, and parental consent was also required for participating students (Bachman & Schutt, 2008; Jokinen et al., 2002). All participants were reassured of a “commitment to achieving ongoing consent” as it was not considered a “one-time process” (Jokinen et al., 2002, p. 6). Participants could withdraw at any time (Bachman & Schutt, 2008, p. 288). Involvement was voluntary. Participant privacy,

confidentiality and anonymity was guaranteed (Creswell, 2008, p. 238). Wherever possible, student interviews were conducted outside of class time. Had there been any distress caused by participation, it would have been dealt with promptly and through professional debriefing (Bachman & Schutt, 2008, p. 288). Research participants are as listed in Table 5.2.

Table 5-2 Research participants:

Data Gathering Strategy	Stakeholder Group	Participant Numbers		
		Invited	Accepted	%
Individual Interviews	Current Students	68	6	8.8
	Past Students	70	4	5.7
	Classroom Teachers	42	12	28.6
	College Leadership Team	4	1	25.0
	Informed Participants	3	3	100.0
Focus Group Interviews	Parents	100	4	4.0
	Current Students	68	17	25
	Past Students	70	6	8.6
	Classroom teachers	42	7	16.7
	Leadership Team	4	4	100.0
Total participants	Parents	100	6	6.0
	Current Students		20	
	Graduate Students		9	
	Teachers and College Leadership Team		16	
	Informed Participants		3	
	Parents		9	
	ALL GROUPS		57	

5.5.3 Process for Informed Participation

Volunteers to participate were sought from within each of the groups identified (O'Donohue, 2007, p. 145) via an invitational and explanatory letters (Appendix B). Volunteers were invited to stakeholder-specific meetings at which the broad aims of the research, principles of the method, outcomes for the college and researcher, briefing meeting times and role of principal/researcher were explained. The researcher provided, and explained, the meaning of a statement of guarantee in relation to anonymity, respect and protection of privacy; the right to correct or withhold transcripts following interviews and the right to withdraw from the study at any time, as recommended by O'Donohue (2007, p. 146). Two documents that gave an overview of Dominican and college history and ethos was given to participants for background

reading. These documents are publicly available on the college website or are given to students during enrolment or to staff during their employment. Following receipt of consent forms, a final list of volunteers was prepared.

5.6 Data-gathering Strategies

The data-gathering strategies chosen for this study are:

- Document analysis
- Individual interviews
- Semi-structured focus group interviews.

A representation of the data-gathering strategies is shown in Figure 5-2.

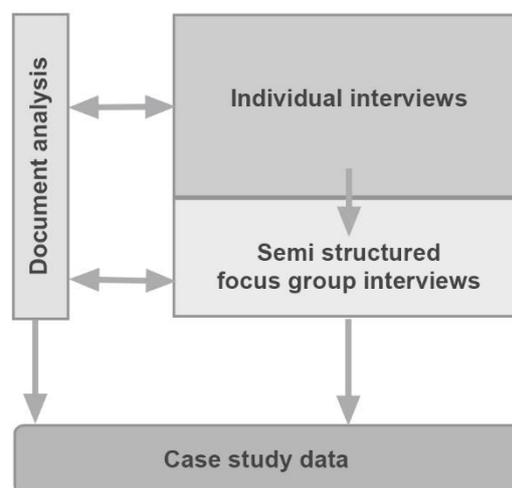


Figure 5-2 Data-gathering strategies

These strategies are consistent with the interpretivist research paradigm, constructionist epistemology and the symbolic interactionist theoretical perspective. They provide a variety of method types that can be conducted concurrently, “allowing data from each to be used to substantiate events, test emerging hypotheses, and make further decisions about the conduct of the research” (Marshall & Rossman, 1994, p. 103). Using this variety of strategies increases the potential for unexpected data to be evoked (Marshall & Rossman, 1994, p. 104), and supports the provision of a narrative that is information-rich (Charon, 2007).

5.6.1 Document Analysis

Key documents or “artefacts” were analysed to develop insights relevant to the research (Goetz & LeCompte, cited in O'Donohue, 2007, p. 167). The documents provided information about the “official view” of charism implementation, helped the researcher understand expectations of staff and how these are practised (Australian Catholic University (ACU), 2012). Although they are prepared independently of the research, documents give insight into “people’s sensations, experiences, and knowledge which connote opinions, values and feelings”(LeCompte & Preissle, cited in O'Donohue, 2007, p. 168). The document analysis involved a study of those documents listed in Table 5.3.

Table 5-3 Documents for analysis

Mission Statement	Vision & Values Statement	Classroom Norms
Staff Handbook	Script for key liturgies and rituals	Unit plans
College website	Habits of Mind and Spirit, lessons, resources	Pedagogical Framework
Professional Development schedules	College Calendar (Feast days, working bees, celebrations, events)	Principal’s presentations to staff re Religious Life of School, charism
Student leadership speeches	College Principal addresses	<i>Verigram</i> articles for community
Schedule of Justice & Service Activities	Review of Immersion Trip to East Timor	College symbols (Including their physical presentation in the college)
Charismic Calendar	Living Towards Integration (Staff Spirituality Policy)	

Data from the document analysis helped inform questions asked in interviews and provided some tentative themes around which charism might be experienced.

5.6.2 Individual interviews

The individual interview is an intensive strategy that “involves open-ended, relatively unstructured questioning in which the interviewer seeks in-depth information on the interviewee’s feelings, experiences, and perceptions” (Lofland & Lofland, 1984, p. 12). The interviewer listens to people, observes and establishes rapport with them as they describe how they understand the worlds in which they live and work (or study) (ERIC/AE Staff, 1997; Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 3). Follow-up, clarifying and probing

questions ensure that the intended meaning is understood (Bachman & Schutt, 2008, p. 281).

The semi-structured individual interview allows for a greater depth of understanding than other data-gathering methods (Cohen & Manion, 1989). For this particular research on a topic about which there is ambiguity, the individual interview allowed the participant to seek clarity of question, for the interviewer to provide an explanation appropriate to the individual's needs, and for the interviewer to ask more complex questions than in other types of data collection (ERIC/AE Staff, 1997, p. 2). It is used to explore the understanding and/or experiences of charisma by each of the participants.

As each participant experiences daily life differently, the one-on-one interview respects privacy and individual difference. The purpose of adopting a semi-structured approach to the interview is also “to ensure an open, non-threatening atmosphere and to create a relaxed atmosphere for discussion rather than that usually associated with more formal ‘question and answer’ interview sessions” (O'Donohue, 2007, p. 134).

5.6.3 Semi-Structured Focus Group interviews

Semi-structured focus group interviews provide a “powerful means of both obtaining information and gaining insights” (Hannan, 2007). They are structured in such a way as to encourage discussion among participants on the topics of interest (Bachman & Schutt, 2008, p. 258). In this way the researcher attempts to be unobtrusive and seeks not to impose her own influence over the participants (Hannan, 2007, p. 11). In a semi-structured interview, the researcher designs a set of key questions but capitalises on the dynamics of conversational exchange. Additional topics might be raised, and flexibility exists in how and when topics are addressed (Hannan, 2007).

Discussions in this less intensive interview tend to reduce the inhibitions of participants (compared to the intensive individual interview) (Bachman & Schutt, 2008, p. 286; V. Wilson, 1997). Focus group interviews have the potential to provoke further ideas and confirm the veracity of individuals' data. An “(i)ndividual's attitudes and beliefs do not form in a vacuum” (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 114). By listening to others in focus groups, individuals formulate their own views on the phenomenon in question. When individuals are in dialogue with others and sharing views, ideas and experiences “data and insights that would be less accessible without the interaction found in the group” are uncovered (Morgan, 1988, p. 12). The focus group allows for

issues and experiences raised in the individual interviews to be moderated, confirmed or rejected as common experiences (Flick, 1998, p. 115). It also checks for shared understandings of issues raised and promotes a broader commentary within a shared, dynamic conversational environment (Creswell, 2008, p. 226).

While the focus group has strengths, it poses difficulties in a number of areas. Dominance of particular individuals or views, the reservation by some participants to speak on sensitive issues or on issues where they might feel they do not have as much expertise as others (Marshall & Rossman, 1999), and the attributing of data to individuals for data analysis pose challenges. Nonetheless, the positive attributes of the group interview make it an effective data-gathering tool for this interpretive research (Punch, 1998). It provides a richness of data and clarifies issues and the experience of stakeholders in this study.

5.6.4 Interview Questions

The questions in both the intensive individual and semi-structured focus group interviews were prepared using three criteria:

- relevance (the question had a good probability of yielding the kind of data desired)
- selection of the proper respondents (purposive selection ensured that the interviewees could provide the information being sought)
- ease of answering (so that interviewees did not feel embarrassed or compromised by their response) (ERIC/AE Staff, 1997, p. 3).

The questions were open-ended but tightly focussed so that the responses were relevant, and complete in both depth and breadth (ERIC/AE Staff, 1997, p. 4). Questions that guided the interviews are provided in Appendix D.

5.7 Data Analysis

5.7.1 Analysis and Management of Data

Data analysis involved making sense out of, and providing structure and order to the volume of data gathered (Anfara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002, p. 31; Merriam, 1988; Patton, 1990, p. 297). It required “taking the data apart” (analysing it bit by bit) and then “putting it together”, drawing conclusions and answers in response to the research questions (Creswell, 2008, p. 10). The analysis required reducing the data into

categories and themes and then interpreting the data by some schema as shown diagrammatically in Figure 5.3.

The sorting, organising, conceptualising, refining and making sense of data is a complex task that requires “skilful interpretation and handling ... and relies on [a] systematic and rigorous method” (Srivastava & Hopwood, 2009, p. 77). This was especially so because the data collection and the analysis processes tended to be concurrent, with new analytic steps informing the process of additional data collection and new data informing the analytic processes (Thorne, 2000). Data collection and analysis occurred simultaneously and iteratively as shown in Figure 5.4. The iterative process was “a loop-like pattern of multiple rounds of revisiting the data as additional questions emerge, new connections are unearthed, and more complex formulations develop along with a deepening understanding of the material” (Berkowitz, 1997).

In this research, a process of “constant comparative analysis” was applied to the data to test for agreement or disagreement against preceding or other emerging data (Dye, Schatz, Rosenberg, & Coleman, 2000, January). Data were constantly being broken down into data bits, analysed for patterns, coded and categorised. By using this iterative process of continuous refinement by constantly comparing with previous events or data, new relationships and key themes were discovered and confirmed. This study relied on inductive reasoning processes (Thorne, 2000) and hence ensured that patterns and themes “emerge[d] out of the data rather than being imposed on them prior to data collection and analysis (Patton, 1990, p. 390). Decisions were made about what is appropriate and useful, and the categories were constantly refined through the data analysis process, which involved reading and re-reading the transcripts (Dye et al., 2000, January). Final categories for the organisation of data were determined and verified, as represented diagrammatically in Figures 5-3 and 5-4. (Creswell, 2008).

Pattern matching was also used in this research as an analytic technique (Yin, 2003). This involved analysing the data for patterns of relationships in one instance and then predicting them in another. In this study, patterns were sought around the experiences of or understandings about charisma by members of the stakeholder groups, and predictability across groups was tested.

The 10NVivo software package (QSR International, 2014) was used to assist in the management of data, to locate textual data, match codes, count incidences of occurrences and find combinations (Yin, 2003, p. 128). This tool assisted in identifying meaningful patterns and frequency of codes. Data were then able to be manipulated, ordered and presented in a number of ways (Yin, 2003, p. 129).

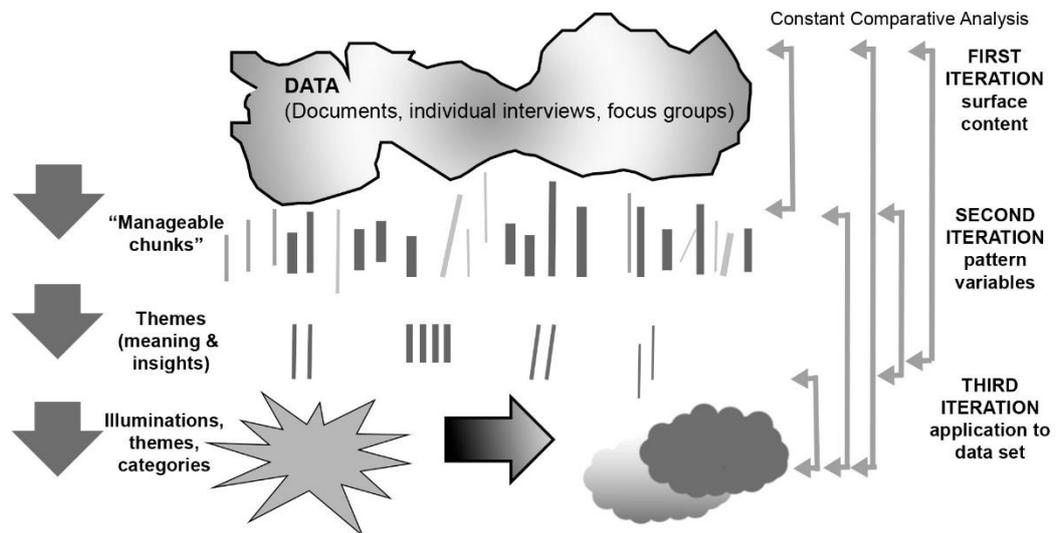


Figure 5-3 Data to themes: three iterations of analysis

Figure 5-3 presents a re-conceptualisation of the processes of analysis described in Anfara et al. (2002) and Cresswell (2008). Figure 5-4 reflects the ordering of the primary research activities over time.

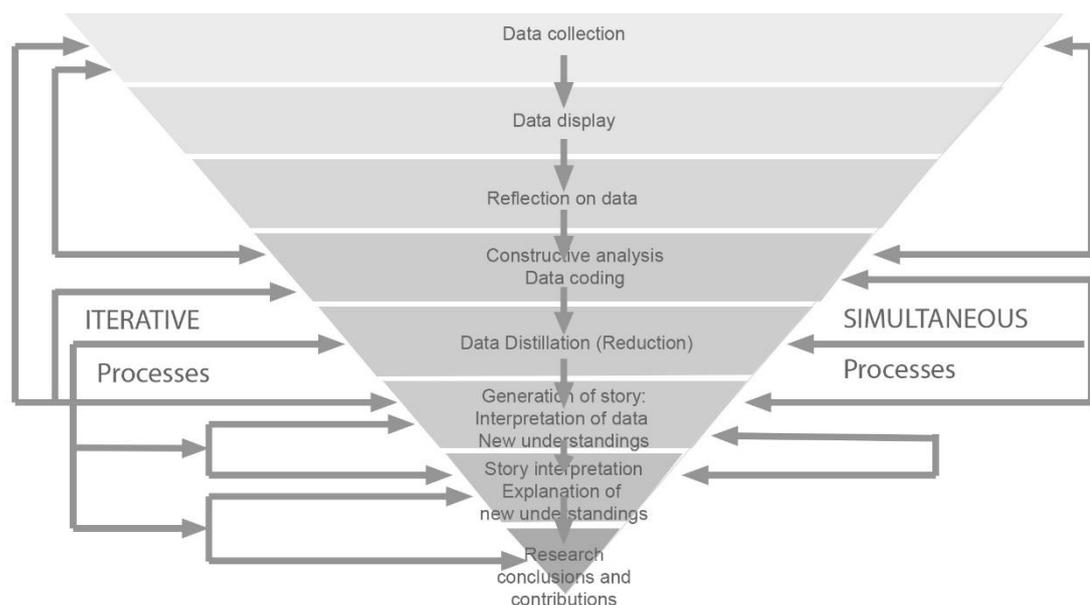


Figure 5-4 Diagrammatic representation of constant comparative analysis

5.7.2 Stages of Data Analysis

Three stages of data analysis were used in this study, as shown in Figure 5.5. The first stage, “*exploration*”, included data gathered from document analysis and individual interviews from each of the three stakeholder groups. During this stage, emerging themes were explored, discounted or reaffirmed as shown in Figures 5.3, 5.4 and 5.5. In the second stage or “*inspection & confirmation*” phase, a deeper analysis was applied through the semi-structured focus group interviews of each of the stakeholder groups. This stage allowed for further themes to be presented, but also for the confirmation of the “re-contextualised” or emerging themes and for the elaboration, clarification and deeping of themes where this was necessary. This process further assisted in the processing, organising and use of the data (Blumer, 1998). Figure 5.5 provides a summary visual representation of the staged, multi- and concurrent processes that lead to the third stage of “*story writing*”.

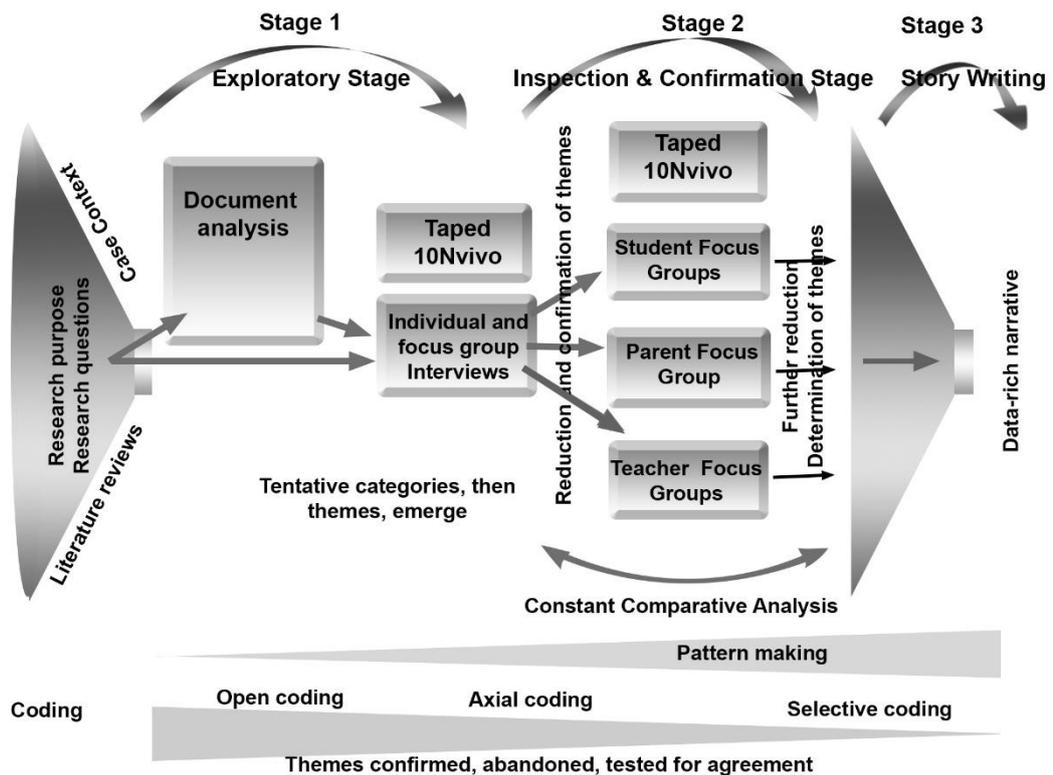


Figure 5-5 Multi and concurrent data analytic processes through stages

5.7.2.1 Stage 1: Exploration

Document analysis

Document analysis consisted of noting relevant college policies, resources and the activities described, and quoting from them. The documents contributed to the formulation of questions that helped guide the research. They provided a common language for discussing charism at San Sisto College.

Individual interviews

As the purpose of the individual in-depth interview is to hear what the participants have to say about their own experience, or their own understanding of charism and its implementation, general questions that guided the participants in opening up and sharing their story were prepared beforehand (Lichtman, 2010, p. 143). Maximum use was made of open-ended questions (Lichtman, 2010, p. 121). Probing questions were prepared in case they were needed. Questions asked were dependent on the depth of participant responses.

The interviews were taped using the audio editor and recorder software, Audacity. Sound files were typed into text files by the researcher, and analysed for emerging themes. Notes were also taken during the interview. Nvivo 10 (QSR International, 2014) is a software tool that assists in the collection, organization and analysis of data. This software was used to assist in the data analysis and retrieval processes. Participants were provided an opportunity to check interpretations of their data to confirm their accuracy.

5.7.2.2 Stage 2: Confirmation and inspection

Focus groups interviews

Themes that emerged from individual interviews and document analysis in the exploratory stage were reduced following coding, rereading of scripts and constant comparative analysis. These themes were then presented to the focus groups:

- to clarify themes and to confirm the strength of experiences or understandings, and then
- to analyse the views expressed more deeply and interactively.

The generation and verification of themes that formed the final areas for narrative description were determined. Open coding was again used with new data. Axial coding was applied to make connections between categories. Core categories selection, relationship validation and the determination of categories that needed further refinement or development was undertaken using selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 116).

5.7.2.3 Stage 3: Story writing

A narrative was written by the researcher about the experience of charisma. A summary of the stages of and timelines for data collection and analysis is outlined in Table 5.4.

Table 5-4 Data collection and analysis stages

Data Collection Stages	Collection and Analysis of Data Steps	
Exploration Stage	Step 1	Seek and receive ethics clearance; complete consent forms August/October 2012 Preparation for interviews
Documentary Analysis	Step 2	Document Analysis September/October 2012
Exploratory Stage	Step 3	Analyse data collected from step 2 to help inform the development of research questions. Prepare questions for individual and focus group interviews: Nov 2012 – March 2013
	Step 4	Conduct individual and focus group interviews October/November 2012 and Feb/March 2013
	Step 5	Apply constant comparative analysis, pattern matching and open coding of data Nov/Dec 2012 and Feb/March/April 2013
Clarification and Inspection Stage	Step 6	Refine questions (if necessary) for later focus groups, using data generated from individual interview data Nov/Dec 2012/Jan-Feb 2013 or from early focus groups
	Step 7	Analyse data applying constant comparative analysis and open, axial and selective coding Feb - July 2013
Clarification Story writing Stage	Stage 8	Provide participants with draft Chapters 6/7 for verification of themes and acceptance of their “story”. Finalisation and reduction of concepts and themes; finalisation of analysis using content and constant comparative analysis and open, axial and selective coding July/Dec 2013
Report Writing	Stage 9	Amendments made August 2014-September. Finalise report: November 2014

5.7.3 Coding

Coding was used to assist in the organisation and management of the data (Hewitt-Taylor, 2001, p. 39). Three stages of coding occurred within this study. In stage one, initial categories were generated from the data. Through the use of open coding,

categories and sub-categories of themes were generated. These tentative themes helped generate a narrative for each of the stakeholder groups (Lichtman, 2010, p. 197). The codes were documented and filed separate to the transcript file. Codes were organized, updated, reduced to ensure that they were used appropriately and meaningfully. Codes were revisited and updated to allow for additional data. During this open coding process:

... [t]he researcher simultaneously code[d] and analyse[d] data in order to develop concepts. By continually comparing specific incidents in the data, the researcher refine[d] these concepts, identifie[d] their properties, explore[d] their relationships to one another, and integrate[d] them into a coherent theory. (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984, p. 126)

In Stage two an attempt was made through axial coding to reduce the number of codes initially established and to collect them in a way that showed relationships between and amongst the data (Moghaddam, 2006, p. 7). This assisted in the development of an integrated set of findings complete with rich data concepts of relationships (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). New data were gathered and new codes were generated until no new insights or experiences emerged (Hewitt-Taylor, 2001, p. 39; Riley, 1990). The categories derived from each data collection method were then clustered around the research question to which it related and to which it responded (Hewitt-Taylor, 2001). Cross analysis of data from each of the data-gathering strategies identified any consistently occurring experiences across each of the three stakeholder groups (O'Donohue, 2007). Core categories of “critical importance” to the study were determined (Moghaddam, 2006, p. 7). Meaning was made about the phenomenon being studied, from the perspective of the participants. Patterns were sought and comparisons were made (Creswell, 2008, p. 264). The interpretations demonstrated an analytic understanding of the experience of charisma by each of the stakeholder groups (Lewins, Taylor, & Gibbs, 2010).

The application of open and axial coding was followed by selective coding (stage 3) (Lichtman, 2010, p. 199). This was “the process of selecting the central or core category, systematically relating it to other categories, validating those relationships, and filling in categories that need[ed] further refinement and development” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 116). Categories were subsequently put into a sequence and in relationship to the core category. Consequences of various conditions were

extrapolated and the “story” illuminating the research questions was developed (Moghaddam, 2006, p. 8).

5.8 Verification

The value of this research rests on its authenticity in reflecting the true state of a sample of human experience (Polit & Beck, 2004, p. 430). Within an interpretive paradigm, there are no single realities, but rather multiple realities that are socially constructed (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). The worth of this study, as legitimate research, is determined by the trustworthiness and authenticity of the data and of the integrity, quality and rigor applied by the researcher to the case study methodology and research design (Anfara et al., 2002). Criteria used for establishing trustworthiness and authenticity are:

- Credibility
- Dependability
- Confirmability
- Transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1986)
- Integrity (Anfara et al., 2002).

If “[m]aintaining trust is the cornerstone to successful research engagement” (Bachman & Schutt, 2008, p. 270), then the criteria applied in this research sought to ensure that trustworthiness was evident in this case study. The use of at least two verification methods is recommended (Creswell, 1998). This study exercised fourteen strategies over five criteria and included the use of an “Integrity Committee” to further strengthen the ethical use of the principal as the interviewer in the research.

5.8.1 Credibility

To ensure the credibility of this study and the reader’s trust in the data and their interpretation, a number of strategies were employed.

5.8.1.1 Appropriate interviewer

The strategy of employing the researcher as the interviewer, while holding the position of principal, makes her an “insider researcher”. This strategy was used with reason and justification.

There are studies that provide support to “insider” research arguing that those inside an organisation are better equipped to conduct the research because of “his/her

knowledge of the relevant patterns of social interaction required for gaining access and making meaning” (Shah, 2004, p. 556). Other studies (Burgess, 1984; Simmel, 1950) highlight the need for an “outsider” researcher in order to establish appropriate distance and detachment from the subjects. Others (Deutsch, 1981; Mercer, 2007; Merton, 1972) suggest that rather than an insider-outsider dichotomy, researchers position themselves on a continuum, “constantly mov[ing] back and forth along a number of axes, depending upon time, location, participants and topic” (Mercer, 2007, p. 1). The strengths and challenges of positions and characteristics along this continuum are argued through the literature. However, the solutions to each potential problem provide not only an ethical way forward, but a justification for the principal assuming the role of researcher in this study.

5.8.1.1.1 *“Insider” trustworthiness*

All researchers, whether “inside” or “outside” of the membership of the participants under investigation seek trustworthiness of their data. “[T]he core ingredient is not insider or outsider status but an ability to be open, authentic, honest, deeply interested in the experience of one’s research participants, and committed to accurately and adequately representing their experience” (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009, p. 59). Furthermore, “[t]here is no paradigm solution to the elimination of error and bias. Different forms of research may be prone to different sources or error, but clearly none are immune” (Norris, 2007, p. 173). Furthermore, there is argument that “human beings cannot be so easily categorised” [into insider/outsider] (Mercer, 2007, p. 5). Indeed, bias can be exhibited in numerous ways other than whether or not the researcher is an “insider” (Norris, 2007, p. 174).

The researcher is required to maintain a sense of detachment, to be open minded, alert to foreclosure and to sources of error (Norris, 2007, p. 173). On the other hand, “[i]f the researcher’s self is to function as a well-calibrated instrument, passion must be valued and harnessed” (Van Heugten, 2004, p. 208). Through numerous strategies, the researcher demonstrated her intent to safeguard the trustworthiness of this study.

5.8.1.1.2 *“Insider” ethics and Integrity Committee*

Being the principal of the college and the researcher posed, like all research, a variety of ethical issues (Mercer, 2007, p. 11) that needed to be addressed. The issue of how much information was shared about the research with colleagues required

consideration. While there is evidence that participants need to be “fully informed” (Powney & Watts, 1987, p. 147), contaminating the study by giving too much information poses issues of truthfulness (Silverman, 2006). In this study, data that were available publically on the college website or are given to students and teachers as part of their induction or learning experiences were provided. Only the general research questions were provided in advance. The briefing, before invitees decided whether or not to participate in the study, provided details of purpose and benefits to the researcher, interviewee and school. It provided details of professional support such as counselling should that be requested or necessary.

Member checking assisted in ensuring that the researcher interpreted the data correctly. Triangulation of data through the various strategies employed increased the validity and truthfulness of the research. Both strategies were used.

To avoid other ethical challenges, an integrity committee was established to:

- safeguard against impositions on staff and students;
- deal with unanticipated intrusion of the research into college life;
- deal with complaints about the process;
- deal with complaints relating to an imbalance of power between the principal and staff, and principal and students.

The college psychologist volunteered to be chair of this group, was prepared to follow-up any issue, and to provide support and direction to the principal-as-interviewer (Degenhardt, 2006, p. 100). Other members of the committee were the college social worker and two classroom teachers. The relationship between the integrity committee, researcher and participants is shown in Figure 5-6. The figure shows ethical considerations, including the establishment of an Integrity Committee, were in place to protect and ensure the wellbeing of all participants. Processes were in place to ensure that the conduct of the research and the influence of the researcher did not cause conflict or concern for the participants. During the course of this study, there were no complaints and the committee did not meet beyond its initial establishment to determine process.

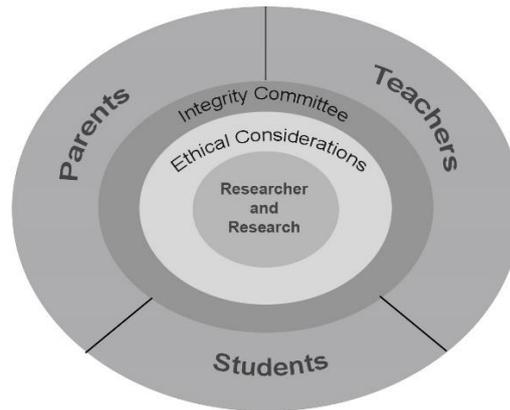


Figure 5-6 Relationship between researcher, integrity committee and participants

5.8.1.1.3 *Principal-as-Interviewer: Power differential*

As this study involved interviewing young people from ages 13 – 17, their comfort and being at ease with the interviewer were important. The researcher considered the benefits of using an external interviewer, but in the interests of the children, considered it appropriate that she (the principal) interview all participants. The topic was not expected to be controversial amongst the participants, and furthermore, consent was informed and completely voluntary.

5.8.1.1.4 *Detachment*

Researchers who defend the neutrality of the outsider in research as preferable, argue that the outsider achieves the appropriate degree of distance and detachment from the participants (Simmel, 1950). However, insider researchers are better positioned for gaining greater access to documents and for making meaning (Mercer, 2007, p. 5). This is a benefit of one end of the “continuum” of researcher position compared to the other. It mitigates against informants giving outsiders a “distorted image” (Mercer, 2007, p. 8).

Given the nature of this research topic, and because participants volunteered for involvement, the need for a detached, neutral stance from an “outside” rather than “inside” interviewer was considered neither necessary nor preferable.

5.8.1.1.5 *Interview reciprocity*

The insider researcher, having access to additional resources, needs to secure that potential benefit by being aware of any emerging difficulty that the access can generate (Hodkinson, 2005, p. 146). Interview reciprocity requires consideration. While conversational-styled, semi-structured interviews may “yield more extensive data” (Mercer, 2007, p. 10), the literature suggests that researchers limit the sharing of their own experiences (Creswell, 1998, p. 133) and that they minimise any guidance during interviews (Merton, 1946). They should also avoid passing opinions or making self-disclosures (Gregg, 1994). In this study, the questions were semi-structured and the interviews were conversational. There was scope for reciprocity but with focussed questions and a clear purpose or interview and time limits, researcher intrusion was minimised.

5.8.1.1.6 *Access*

The principal/researcher had easy, unobtrusive access to documents and had a familiarity and rapport with students, parents and staff. This ensured that data collection was time efficient (Mercer, 2007, p. 6) because she knew what documents were available and relevant (Nielsen, 2012, p. 14). The easy identification of and access to documents within a time-bounded study was an advantage upon which to be capitalised. To ensure that this research did not impact negatively on staff by being intrusive, clear boundaries around interview times and peer review times was managed by the principal’s (researcher’s) assistant.

5.8.1.1.7 *Familiarity*

Having familiarity with the research site, the principal had an understanding of the context, opportunities, information, and the language that the school uses in relation to its culture and charism. Such familiarity may produce a more accurate portrayal of the case (Yin, 2003). This benefit may be likened to “Studying the activities of an engineer ... is not the same as the engineer studying an engine. One must be inside the “mode of social activity” to understand it” (Forbes, 2003, p. 10). In contrast to using an outside researcher, the principal, after seven years at the site, has an established level of credibility and rapport that could enhance the richness of data provided.

The literature suggests that “there are no overwhelming advantages to being an insider or outsider. Each position has advantages and disadvantages, though these will take on

slightly different weights depending on the particular circumstances and purposes of the research” (Hammersley, 1993, p. 219). There are as many arguments in support as against (Serrant-Green, 2002, p. 38).

5.8.1.1.8 *Principal interviewing children*

A particular concern in this study was to ensure that the role of the researcher as principal served as a strength when interviewing students (aged 13 – 17) rather than presenting an ethical dilemma. Fortnightly, for seven years, the principal has met with students over morning tea in her office to seek answers to questions and opinions about school practice and procedures, thus having a long-established routine of meeting and valuing the ideas of young people. Furthermore, she meets regularly in her office with members of the School Representative Committee to further voice issues and concerns. This is consistent with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in which participation and voice is considered a right (UNICEF, 1989).

Apart from the context and location having already been established as safe and positive, relaxed, and welcoming, the literature suggests that when interviewing young people there are other ways to support the young person that would mitigate against fear or anxiety or the presenting of untruthful or unreliable data (Morison, Moir, & Kwansa, 2000). The nature of the topic and the questions asked should be such that young people do not feel compromised, embarrassed or threatened in any way. The attitudes and beliefs of the interviewing principal should not be imposed upon, nor influence or bias the students’ views. The cognitive, social and linguistic development of the student is considered throughout the interview, with the researcher making adjustments to questions accordingly (Morison et al., 2000, p. 127). “The interviewer’s role in continuously monitoring the success of the communication process cannot be overstated...” (Morison et al., 2000, p. 124). Where a power imbalance exists attempts should be made to allow opportunity for the child to set the agenda (Pellegrini, 1996). That is, flexibility should exist in the structure of the interview to permit some digression that is student-driven. This enhances the relationship with the interviewer/principal and may also lead to a fuller explanation of experience (Boggs & Eyberg, 1990). Consideration was made in this study of each of the above suggestions.

5.8.1.2 Prolonged engagement in the field

The time from beginning to end of data-gathering and verification of reports by participants was approximately ten months, thus enabling the researcher to develop an in-depth understanding of the experience of the three stakeholder groups. This also enabled the data to be gathered through a variety of sources including lengthy and intensive interviews, and allowed checking for authenticity and understanding (Lincoln & Guba, 1986, p. 18).

5.8.1.3 Triangulation (Data, method, interview verification)

The confirmation of data was achieved by a process of triangulation (Lincoln & Guba, 1986; Silverman, 2006). Data were gathered from six source groups, and three strategies were used. The semi-structured focus groups verified and confirmed data, and invited further discussion in a more “relaxed” environment, compared to the intensive one-on-one interviews. The documents gave an “official” view about what the teachers are asked to do. Then, each stakeholder group’s views provided an opportunity for further clarification and verification. “Triangulation puts the researcher in a frame of mind to regard his or her own material critically, to test it, to identify its weaknesses, to identify where to test further doing something different” (Fielding & Fielding, 1986, p. 24). The various data gathering strategies ensured that such testing occurs.

5.8.1.4 Member checks

Participants were given the opportunity to read and verify the interpreted meaning of their comments shared in interviews. This checking, arguably, was “the single most crucial technique for establishing credibility” (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). This process enhanced the credibility and truthfulness of the project by being seen to be “keep[ing] the inquirer honest” (Lincoln & Guba, 1986, p. 19).

5.8.1.5 Peer review and debriefing

Debriefing by the researcher with someone who was not involved in the research but who was familiar with the phenomenon, who could play devil’s advocate, challenged the researcher’s assumptions, asked the hard questions about the research methods and interpretations, and discussed conclusions was another strategy used to enhance the truthfulness of the research (Benz & Newman, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 1985 in

Cresswell & Miller, 2000, p. 129). This strategy was employed during the data analysis phase.

5.8.1.6 Negative case analysis

The inclusion of disconfirming or negative evidence (Miles & Huberman, 1994) contributed to the trustworthiness of the research. The preliminary themes and categories in this study included disconfirming evidence. Its presence is consistent with case study methodology because it helps present the full picture within a context (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 127).

5.8.2 Dependability

Dependability is the extent to which the research can be depended upon for its truthfulness and trustworthiness. Two strategies were applied.

5.8.2.1 Audit trail

Throughout the processes of data gathering, organising, analysing and category interpretation and thematic meaning-making, codes are applied and links were made to the research questions. Categories or themes were developed around which a story was built. An auditable trail (the keeping of detailed and accurate records of every aspect of the research process) was prepared so that the findings within each research question could be related back through the study to interpretations from the analysis of particular data.

5.8.2.2 Code-recode strategy

Constant comparative analysis was applied throughout the collection and organisation of data gathering phases. Codes were applied, then reviewed, with selective and the cross-coding applied as data were re-read and deeper understandings and patterns became evident. The process of documenting the changing and developing iterations of de-contextualised and then re-contextualised data, assisted by coding and recoding, contributed to the dependability of the research (Anfara et al., 2002; Tesch, 1990).

5.8.3 Confirmability

Confirmability as a strategy ensured that the research is conducted in an objective manner. This strategy was used throughout the research by applying the audit trail and reflexivity (Anfara et al., 2002).

5.8.3.1 Reflexivity

This research allows for reflexivity in its design. This ensures that the design develops as the research progresses.

Each component of the design may need to be reconsidered or modified in response to new developments or to changes in some other component ... The activities of collecting and analyzing data, developing and modifying theory, elaborating or refocusing the research questions, and identifying and eliminating validity threats are usually all going on more or less simultaneously each influencing all of the others. (Maxwell, 1996, pp. 2-3)

5.8.4 Transferability

5.8.4.1 Thick description

It was not the intention of this research to develop theory and statistical generalisations about charism in faith-based schools. Rather, it was to explore in-depth human experience within a context, and to create a thick description of that experience within that setting from the perspective of the individuals selected to participate (Bachman & Schutt, 2008, p. 263). As such, the transferability of this research to other sites is the responsibility of the reader who believes it (or any part of it) to be transferable. It is not the responsibility of the original researcher to make this research transferable (Lincoln & Guba, 1986).

5.8.4.2 Purposive selection

The participants chosen for study of any site may influence the transferability of any conclusions from the site of study, to any other site (Anfara et al., 2002). When participants have been purposively selected, while there may be some element of representativeness as in this case, the findings cannot be used to generalise or to theorise about the wider population (Walter, 2006, p. 199).

5.8.5 Authenticity

The criterion of authenticity is sought throughout this research by applying the strategy of fairness.

5.8.5.1 Fairness

The application of “fairness” exists within the broader criteria of “authenticity” (Lincoln & Guba, 1986, p. 20). It requires the researcher to present, clarify and honour data in a balanced and even-handed manner. Balance is also sought between the

methodologies used, how the data is used and in the presentation of “confirming” versus “disconfirming” evidence (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 127).

5.8.5.2 Accountability

To develop trustworthiness and authenticity, the processes employed in this research were transparent, accountable and are publicly available through documentation in this thesis (Anfara et al., 2002).

5.8.5.3 Role of researcher

The role of the researcher is integral in constructing and interpreting the social reality of others as explained by those others. The quality of the participant’s contribution is founded upon his or her view of the researcher as credible, trustworthy and warm. It is a privileged position to be allowed inside the participants’ lived experiences, and hence trust should be allowed to build slowly, requiring sensitivity and empathy toward participants’ needs (Blodgett, Boyer, & Turk, 2005). The researcher-researched relationship influences the story and requires the researcher to be sensitive to the relationship, and to ensure a high level of ethics and accountability in the conduct of the research and the data (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992).

This case study was chosen by the researcher/principal because of its intrinsic interest. While a range of data-gathering methods was used to ensure truthfulness and authenticity, the author is aware of her potential bias and hence attempted to compensate by the application of several different strategies that assisted in verifying trustworthiness and authenticity. The role of principal as researcher is justified.

5.9 Ethical Considerations

The exploration, reporting and analysis of the personal experience of individuals (some of whom are minors) required ethical consideration and sensitivity. Ethical principles included respect for individuals and their human dignity, respect for autonomy of persons, beneficence, non-maleficence, justice/fairness, veracity, fidelity and confidentiality (Blodgett et al., 2005; Polit & Beck, 2004; Storch, Rodney, & Starzomski, 2004).

Ethics clearances from the Australian Catholic University Human Research Ethics Committee and from Brisbane Catholic Education Office were obtained before commencing this research (See Appendix A). The College Board endorsed the

research and supported the principal in her undertaking this research (see Appendix A). Ethical issues relating to research involving students, the voluntary nature of participation, their ability to withdraw at any time, guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality and participant wellbeing were explained at introductory explanatory/briefing meetings and in the explanatory and invitational letters (Appendix B).

Measures were taken to ensure that information was secure. Participant data were coded and were securely stored electronically on a password protected hard drive in an electronically secured home site. Consent forms and transcripts were stored in another site under both electronic and manual surveillance. Any identifiable evidence on such documents was removed (Berg, 2004) and names were converted to codes. Table 5.5 provides a summary of the ethical considerations at the various data-gathering strategies.

Table 5-5 Ethical considerations for each data-gathering strategy

Data gathering strategy	Ethical consideration
Document analysis	Consent was sought to use college documents included in this research.
Individual interviews	Information letter, consent forms and participant information forms were distributed and collected by person other than the researcher. Participant identification protected: Coding included information denoting stakeholder group. Stakeholder data received were converted to code and held electronically. Consent forms are stored under electronic and manual surveillance. Further information about research topic was provided in group meetings to ensure that stakeholders were comfortable to proceed. Participants were reminded that they may choose to withdraw at any time. Transcripts were converted electronically from audio to text against a coded participant number to ensure anonymity and confidentiality.
Semi-structured focus group interview	As above Each group was reminded of need for confidentiality and option to withdraw at any time.
Post interview	Participants were invited to review discussion section of research to confirm accuracy of meaning Participants were thanked.

5.10 Summary and Overview of Research Design

This research was conducted from an interpretivist world view. This is consistent with the research purpose of exploring stakeholder experience of a phenomenon within a

bounded system. The study of this phenomenon is premised upon the view that reality rests within the minds of individuals. The construction of meaning, being created through the interplay between and amongst other “actors” and through the interpretation of symbols within a context, supports the constructionist epistemology and symbolic interactionist perspective. Case study methodology provided the rationale for the selection of the particular data-gathering strategies chosen. These strategies served the purpose of this research by providing data in response to the research questions. Table 5.6 provides an overview of the research design. It outlines the link between each strategy and data source with the research questions. It provides a timeline for gathering the data, and a summary of the data analysis methods used at each stage of the research.

Table 5-6 Overview of research design, timelines and the links between elements

Time line	Participant group	Stage of Research	Data Gathering Strategy	Data analysis methodology
Early Sem 2 2012	Nil	Exploratory	Document Analysis	Collation, Analysis and Coding of data Pattern matching Considering themes
Sem 2 2012 – Sem 1 2013	Leadership Team Teachers Graduate Students Students Informed participants	Exploratory Confirming Inspection	Individual interviews Semi-structured focus groups	Coding of data Entry of data into nVivo Synthesising trends and themes Semi-structured interview plan development from themes from individual interviews where possible Constant comparative analysis
Sem 2 2013	Nil	Confirming Inspection Clarification	Nil	Collation, Analysis and Coding of data Verification and triangulation Pattern matching Confirming themes Constant comparative analysis Participant/ “member” checking
Sem 2 2013 – Sem 2 2014	Nil	Report writing and checking	Nil	Narrative writing

This chapter outlines the research design, which was consistent with the purpose of the study to explore how students, teachers and parents at San Sisto College experience Dominican Charism. A justification of the research paradigm, the research strategies and the selection of participants was provided. The methodology used for analysing the data was described and justified. Consideration of ethical issues and strategies to establish trustworthiness and authenticity are explained.

Chapter 6: NEW UNDERSTANDINGS

Presented in this chapter are the researcher's understanding of others' understandings of the research questions (described as the *double hermeneutic* (Norreklit, 2006)). Consistent with the interpretive paradigm used in this study, no attempt is made to reinterpret the experiences of others, but rather to acknowledge the existence of multiple realities. Rather than being "found", this research product is "generated" through engagement with, and an understanding of, the various perspectives of the multiple participants. This being the case, the term "New Understandings" is used as the appropriate title for this chapter rather than the more traditional nomenclature "research findings".

6.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present understandings generated from individual interviews and semi-structured focus groups that explore how students, teachers and parents at San Sisto College experience Dominican charism.

6.1.1 The Participants, Pseudonyms, and Codes

The numbers of participants engaged in this study in individual interviews or in semi-structured focus group interviews are as follows.

Table 6-1 Participants

Participant group	Individual Interviews conducted	Focus Groups conducted	Focus Group Participants	Number of Participants
Teachers (including members of College Leadership Team)	12	2	7	16
Informed Participants	3	0	0	3
Parents	4	1	6	9
Students (current)	6	5	17	20
Past Students (graduates)	4	2	6	9
TOTAL	29	10	30	57

Some participants chose to be interviewed in focus groups only, some in individual interviews only, and some chose to be interviewed in both individually and as part of a focus group. Hence Row 1 of Table 6.1 shows 16 participating teachers, of whom 12 participated in individual interviews and 7 participated in focus groups.

Participants are coded as shown to ensure anonymity.

Table 6-2 Participant codes

Participant group	Pseudonym ¹²	Examples of names
Teachers (including members of the college leadership team)	T	Tess, Tara, Toni
Informed participants	I	Ita, Izzie, Isabelle
Parents	P	Pam, Penny, Pat
Students (Current)	S	Skye, Sally, Sue
Past Students (Graduates)	G	Glenda, Gay, Gail

Also included in participant codes, is an I or FG to indicate that the data came from an Individual Interview or a Focus Group. The number generated indicates a random number assigned to participants in the same activity. For example TI-5 13/10/12 indicates that the data came from a Teacher Individual Interview. This teacher is number 5 (of 12 teachers who engaged in this activity, as per Table 6.1). The interview was conducted on 13 October 2012. Where a second interview occurred, a number 2 follows, as in the case of Thea (Thea: TI2 – 12 13/10/12). A code such as Steffi: SFG2 30/10/12 indicates the date of Steffi’s interview and that she participated in Student Focus Group 2. All participants have been given “female” identifies to increase anonymity. A schedule of interviews is provided in Appendix E.

6.1.2 Research Analysis: Codes to Concepts

Data were coded, analysed, categorised and clustered. Tables 6.3, 6.4 and 6.5 present the key themes and concepts that were generated from the data. The themes and

¹² The pseudonym begins with a letter that identifies the stakeholder group to which the individual belongs. Hence, all teacher names begin with T, all parent names begin with P.

concepts were organised under the research questions from which they were generated. Due to the nature of the problem explored in this research, understandings often overlap or relate to more than one theme or concept. Under the heading “Emerging themes” are those themes that are different from other themes and/or which suggest further exploration.

The three research questions provide a framework for the presentation of understandings from the analysis of individual interview and semi-structured focus group data:

- **What do students, teachers and parents believe contributes to the Dominican charism at San Sisto College?**
- **How do students, teachers and parents experience Dominican charism at San Sisto College?**
- **How is Dominican charism nurtured at San Sisto College?**

Table 6-3 Synthesis of responses: Research Question 1

Research Question One: What do students, teachers and parents understand Dominican charism to be?		
Codes	Themes	Concepts
Focus, emphasis, mission of founder, St Dominic’s way, special identity, credible role model, passed on to others, contributed to by others Values: community, learning, caring for others, balanced education, excellence, prayer, truth, open to new learning, integrity, respect, how we treat people, justice, hospitality, Face of Jesus, manifested in relationships, social justice, helping others, service Builds connection, family, community, inclusive, builds identity Way of living, mission of Jesus, action, Kingdom, study, service, enhances faith, within new contexts, concrete ways of behaving	Understandings of the Charism A Set of values	Dominican Charism at San Sisto
Emerging themes		
Living tradition, now, it’s living, permeates culture, it’s about being fully human For human beings, Dominic - relatable, just like us, kept alive here, experienced at college therefore do-able Dominic – true to Gospel, face of Christ, respect for women, allows access to Gospel. adds value to faith Believable story, fully human role model, makes Gospel clear, enhances meaning and identity, we need role models, in accessible language, presented in appropriate form for young people, normalised into culture, individual difference accepted, proof needed Makes sense, accessible, “normal”, culturally acceptable Meaning, identity, respects women, pride in identity of college, more personal and focus, localised groups more meaningful, young people need connection, Dominican community, unique Relevant values, people-centred, contextualised, underpins everything, students want engagement in social action Responds to needs of the day, evolving, contextualises Gospel, offers balance and integrated lifestyle, developing for new age	Present now Possible Authentic Credible and meaningful Palatable and accessible Local and personal Relevant Responsive	Charism – living Christianity today
Emerging themes	Christian/Catholic/Charism balance and integration in a contemporary Catholic school. Implication for students of no religious background	

Table 6-4 Synthesis of responses: Research Question 2

Research Question Two: How do students, teachers and parents experience Dominican charism at San Sisto College?		
Codes	Themes	Concepts
<p>Personal feeling, positive feelings, community, inclusion, welcoming, positive relationship with teachers/others, Kingdom, feeling of need to help others, making a difference, compassion, family-feel, joy, developing humanity, the Well-being Centre, being fully human</p> <p>Catholic, family, community, unity, shared values, respect for others, distinctive community, celebrations, voice</p> <p>Formative, foundational, benefits, impact, builds sense of self, pride, distinctiveness, our story, group identity, wanting to belong, it's ours, organisational identity, personal identity, narrower focus impacts more on self, language used, "just" Catholic,</p> <p>Worthiness of charism, valuable, want to hand it on, responsibility to hand it on, Dominic and others/Sisters have handed it on, relevance in Twenty-first Century, stewards,</p>	<p>Impact of feelings</p> <p>Life-giving</p> <p>Community</p> <p>Identity</p> <p>Generational responsibility</p>	<p>As a feeling</p>
<p>Emerging themes</p>	<p>Distinctiveness of Dominican charism</p> <p>Teaching and presence of charism with lay teachers</p>	
<p>Dominic acted on issues, action teaches much, students get involved, builds community</p> <p>Service and justice deeply entrenched in culture, opportunities, by actions and engagement students feel</p> <p>Dominican, actions speak louder than words, participation is normal, environment important, act justly, culture of involvement</p> <p>Responsibility to make a difference in world</p>	<p>Importance of action</p> <p>Service and justice</p> <p>Social responsibility</p>	<p>As action</p>
<p>Connectedness to God is personal, prayer important to St Dominic, can pray anywhere, Mass is communal respect for individual connections to God, Mass attendance, meditative prayer, reflection, Mass not necessary</p> <p>Unity between teachers and students, relationships between students and teachers</p> <p>Respect towards each other, St Dominic modelled relational person, connection to other young people, it's all about people and relationships, dialogue</p> <p>St Dominic credible role model, other role models, teacher - teacher</p>	<p>With God</p> <p>Between students and teachers</p> <p>With each other</p> <p>Role Models</p>	<p>In relationship</p>
<p>Emerging themes</p>	<p>Church attendance</p> <p>Right emphasis of Jesus/St Dominic</p> <p>Language</p> <p>Catholic identity</p>	
<p>Stories help memory, Dominican charism offers a story, humans need story, teaching with story, Habits of Spirit as Dominican values, Truth, loving learning, beauty, hope, excellence, Habits of Spirit building pride and identity, accessible language of Habits, teaching method using story, human values,</p> <p>Charism in lessons, stories in lessons, search for truth, learning culture is Dominican, lessons in Verigram, Habits, induction, communication</p> <p>Open mindedness, truth, Study of Religion as opening mind, open to new ideas, thinking,</p>	<p>Appreciation of story</p> <p>Values</p> <p>Learning and Lessons</p> <p>Open Mind</p>	<p>Through story</p>
<p>Emerging themes</p>	<p>Thinking vs Catholic</p>	

Symbols tell story, power in symbol, avoid pigeon-holing belief, tool for memory, students love symbol, personal interpretation is powerful Building names, school names – Caleruega, Bologna, college symbols, oranges, compass, candles, banners, rosary beads, globe, chalice, paten, hands, sacred grass, mosaic	Power and purpose of symbol Experience of college symbols	Through symbol
Emerging themes		

Table 6-5 Synthesis of responses: Research Question 3

Research Question Three: How is Dominican charism nurtured at San Sisto College?		
Codes	Themes	Concept
Planners, calendar, resources, not accidental, the way it's presented, permeating everything, shared language, Habits of Spirit program, overt teaching across the college, integration of programs, sustainable practices, in architecture	Strategy and planning	Strategy
Emerging themes	Leadership	
“The way we do things here”, embedded, integrated/balanced approach covering all elements of charism and across college life, overt, four pillars, Dominican charism = San Sisto, Habits of Spirit, symbols and signs everywhere, teaching of specific units, pastoral and curriculum intertwined, charism “built-in”, normalised, opportunities, prayer, study, service, community	Immersion and enculturation	
Emerging themes	Gospel-focused	
In everything, casual, harmonizing, gentle teaching, not nagged, subtle Explicit, overt, time needed to plan, in everything, shared language, lesson planning, role of teacher Presence in everything, everywhere, posters in classrooms, symbols, relationships	Subtle/Overt Implementation	
Emerging themes	Time and commitment required by teachers Staffing Method of implementation	
On-going professional development, varied PD, training in Habits of Spirit, principal preparation/training, Common ground, Dominican Education Network, Dominican visitors, lectures, induction, OPFAM, visits by Sisters	Formation of teachers	
Emerging themes	Role of laity	
Leadership requirement of charism, role of principal, APRE, alignment of principal's personal attributes/values versus authentic charism, principal's personal alignment, role of teachers	Leadership	Lay leadership of charism
Emerging themes	Formation of principal and community	Formation

Table 6.6 presents the key themes and concepts that were generated from the data analysis. The themes and concepts are organised under the headings of each question from which they emerged, and are numbered to correspond with the section within this chapter.

Table 6-6 Key themes and concepts from data analysis

Q 1: What do students, parents and teachers believe Dominican to be?	Q 2: How do students, teachers and parents experience Dominican charism at San Sisto College?	Q 3: How is Dominican charism nurtured at San Sisto College?
<p>6.2.1 Dominican charism at San Sisto</p> <p>6.2.1.1 Understandings about the Charism</p> <p>6.2.1.2 A Set of values</p> <p>6.2.2 Charism – Living Christianity Today</p> <p>6.2.2.1 A Living charism</p> <p>6.2.2.2 Charism Alive</p> <p>6.2.2.2.1 Possible</p> <p>6.2.2.2.2 Authentic</p> <p>6.2.2.2.3 Credible and meaningful</p> <p>6.2.2.2.4 Palatable and accessible</p> <p>6.2.2.2.5 Local and personal</p> <p>6.2.2.2.6 Relevant</p> <p>6.2.2.2.7 Responsive</p>	<p>6.3.1 As a feeling</p> <p>6.3.1.1 Life-giving</p> <p>6.3.1.2 Community</p> <p>6.3.1.3 Identity</p> <p>6.3.1.4 Generational responsibility</p> <p>6.3.2 As action</p> <p>6.3.2.1 Service and justice</p> <p>6.3.2.2 Social Responsibility</p> <p>6.3.3 In relationship</p> <p>6.3.3.1 With God</p> <p>6.3.3.2 Between student and teachers</p> <p>6.3.3.3 With each other</p> <p>With role model</p> <p>6.3.4 Through story</p> <p>6.3.4.1 Appreciation of story</p> <p>6.3.4.2 Values</p> <p>6.3.4.3 Learning and lessons</p> <p>6.3.4.3.1 Open Mind</p> <p>6.3.5 Through Symbol</p> <p>6.3.5.1 College symbols</p> <p>6.3.5.2 Power and purpose of symbol</p>	<p>6.4.1.Strategy</p> <p>6.4.1.1 Strategic planning</p> <p>6.4.1.2 Immersion and enculturation</p> <p>6.4.1.3 Subtle/Overt Implementation</p> <p>6.4.1.4 Formation of teachers</p> <p>6.4.1.5 Leadership</p>

The first research question is: What do students, teachers and parents understand Dominican charism to be?

Understandings about Research Question 1 relate to two key concepts:

1. Dominican Charism at San Sisto
2. Charism – Living Christianity Today.

Each of these understandings is now discussed.

6.2 Research Question 1: What is Dominican charism?

6.2.1 Emerging Themes

Two themes emerge that illuminate how Dominican charism at San Sisto is understood:

1. Understandings about the Charism
2. A set of values

6.2.1.1 Understandings about the Charism

Charism provides the college with a clear focus, an emphasis and a particular way of living the Gospel. Dominican charism provides a way to access the message of Jesus and a specific way to live out the Christian story in contemporary society. It is a meaningful way of engaging young people in a life-giving message that is identity-forming.

St Dominic managed to live the Gospel values with the game that was given to him. So he devised a way of life. [The values] come out of the ordinary Christian way of living a Christian life. ... Other religions produce a set of values that are comparable. ... I wouldn't say Our Lord's values and the Gospel exclude others ... and there are happy people in other religions. So Dominican values are simply, I think, a way of condensing the Gospels. (Ita: II-1 05/12/12)

While not using religious language, Siri locates charism within, and as an emanation from, the Gospel: “[E]veryone ... believes the same values... of going towards that goal of putting them [Dominican values] into their lives because it gives everyone a sense of ‘we can change the world’ ... to put the values to use for others.” (Siri: SI-6 07/11/12).

St Dominic is the human face of Christ or Jesus. This is particularly illustrated by Soleil:

When I hear Dominican charism or Dominican Tradition I just think of following in Dominic's footsteps... just like following what he did and then

he follows what Jesus did and so it's just joining them all up together and it just really makes you feel like you're really one with God. (Soleil: SFG5 06/11/12)

Dominican charism is an incarnational spirituality – it is about being “fully human” and living life to the full (Isabelle: II-3 20/12/12). It promotes being “integrated” and “balanced” human beings (Ita: II-1 05/12/12). Participants understand St Dominic as a very real, relatable, fully human role model in whose footsteps they seek to follow (Gemma: GFG1 03/12/12; Sammi: SI-5 07/11/12). The Dominican charism is a synthesised effort to enliven human beings with the transformative message of Jesus (Thea: TI1-12 13/10/12). It involves a constant effort to seek to understand the charism so that it can be used to bring the Gospel privilege to any persons, at any time, in any place (Isabelle: II-3 20/12/12). Dominican charism involves a constant effort to mimic the attributes of St Dominic in relationships as a way of living the Gospel in contemporary society.

Participants sometimes struggle with defining what charism is but can explain it in terms of how it is experienced. While “[St] Dominic definitely started it ... it's more of a collective experience. It's more like a community thing” (Steffi: SFG2 30/10/12). Furthermore:

the spirit of Dominic lives within all those who are Dominican because ... it can't be defined down to one person who might live his spirit the most. I think it's ... shared amongst us who [are] part of the Dominican community because, being part of that community we're living in the way he did, which is **his**¹³ spirit, the way that **he** lived. (Sammi: SI-5 07/11/12)

Participants understand Dominican charism as evolving with subsequent key Dominicans as they enriched “Dominican” understandings and responded to changing times and needs. However, the key values and message remain the same (Tanya: TI-11 08/03/13). It is owned by those who seek to identify with and live it (Tomiko: TI-3 25/02/13).

Caution, however, is given by some to those who provide any formulaic response to what Dominican charism means.

¹³ Bolding of text indicates emphasis being placed on the word by the participant during interview.

I don't think Dominican charism is some **thing**. If you think you've got the Dominican charism, it's no longer there. It's a bit like God. If you think you've got God understood, well, God's no longer there. So, it's an on-going thing. ... The biggest gift [at San Sisto] is that you keep trying. ... What does **your** community need at any particular time? And how do you bring the Gospel privilege to bear on these kids in this situation? How **real** are you, I suppose, is the big thing. (Isabelle: II-3 20/12/12)

Charism is understood by all participants to be identity-forming and to have a positive impact on those who experience it. It serves two human needs: it forms identity (both personal and communal) and it gives life meaning (Terri: TFG1 07/03/129). (This understanding is further explained in section 6.4.1.3.)

The presence of something that participants name "Dominican charism" helps them extrapolate or interpret its meaning, and contributes to participant understanding of Dominican charism as "living", "alive" and as emanating from the Christian story. While there may be ambiguity or challenge in defining and describing Dominican charism, there is clarity about it involving a set of values and what these values are.

6.2.1.2 A Set of values

The set of values attributed to Dominican charism and emphasised by the college is readily identified and named. These values are understood by participants to be presented within the college as sixteen Habits of Spirit. Participants refer to different habits, but collectively they reflect the full list shown in Table 6.7.

Table 6-7 The sixteen Habits of Spirit

1. Seeking connectedness with God	8. Offering self in service of others
2. Respecting all God's creation	9. Acting justly and seeking justice for all
3. Seeking and appreciating beauty	10. Acting compassionately
4. Seeking and appreciating excellence	11. Seeking and speaking the Truth
5. Respecting self	12. Passionately loving learning
6. Seeking connectedness with others through inclusive, welcoming, right relationships	13. Living joyfully
7. Building community	14. Living hopefully
	15. Passionately engaging in life
	16. Seeking to be a woman of integrity

Source: Habits of Spirit, San Sisto College, 2013

These "habits" are understood to be those good values that decent, caring human beings exhibit (Penny: PFG1 05/11/12). The values determined by the college to constitute these "Habits of Spirit" are consistent with Dominican charism and are

therefore derived from the Gospel. Regardless of any named “values” or “habits”, Dominican charism is manifested in the way that members of the community relate with each other (Piper: PI-2 07/11/12; Pam: PI-1 09/11/12; Tomiko: TI-3 25/02/13; Toni: TI-7 06/03/13). Gwen (GI-4 05/12/12) explains that she “could come to San Sisto when there’s no one here and it’s just buildings and all those things. But it’s when everyone’s here, when it’s functioning that you **feel** the charism.”

Dominican charism is a synthesis of six elements: 1. living the Gospel in the form devised by St Dominic, 2. in community ... 3. exhibiting Gospel qualities 4. fervent in prayer... 5. diligent in study... and 6, if you’ve got rules, live by them. [These elements] are inseparably interconnected, harmoniously balanced and mutually enriching. ... I think the Gospel values which these girls have... to integrate will make a well-synthesized ... and well integrated human beings. And integration means happiness. ... Dominican charism [is] to be very happy. (Ita: II-1 05/12/12)

6.2.2 Charism – Living Christianity Today

The second understanding generated from from the first research question is that Dominican charism at San Sisto is the living of Christianity today. While this is not always verbalised initially by students, it is couched within their responses when asked for further or deeper explanation. Two elements of this theme emerge from the data and each of these will now be amplified:

1. A Living Charism
2. An Alive Charism

6.2.2.1 A Living Charism

An understanding of a living charism is explained in various ways. Students, teachers and parents describe the charism as a strong feeling, a “vibe” that permeates college life and culture. It is very evident and its capacity to influence the identity of stakeholders within the community is cited throughout the interviews. A “living charism” is an overt presence of the charism, as amplified by Steffi:

Oh, everything that we do relates to [Dominican charism]. So it’s not just you’re talking about it when you go into SOR [Study of Religion]. Or you’re talking about it in Maths. It’s a part of everything and you can relate it to everything that we do. It’s not just like a light switch that you can turn on and off. It’s constant.” (Steffi: SFG2 30/10/12)

Tilly, like other participants, understands a living charism as deepening and enriching of a person’s faith (Tilly: TFG2 14/11/12). It helps integrate faith and

behaviour (Tracy: TFG2 14/11/12). Furthermore, it helps bring students towards “wholeness” by engaging them in concrete ways of experiencing living life to the full (Tracy: TFG2 14/11/12). A living Dominican charism is kept alive and nurtured spiritually and intellectually through the rigorous study and writings of Dominicans who themselves continue to explore the nature of Dominican charism.

[C]oming from a school that [was] not related to ... an Order and a charism, I just was delighted ... to be connected to a living tradition, a living spiritual tradition and saw it as such as, in a sense, an easy way of tapping into the Christian story, the Christian tradition. (Thea: T11-12 13/10/12)

I remember very early on being very grateful for there being a charism. And very early on understanding at least in part the importance of having a living charism to link to. (Thea: T12-12 04/12/12)

It connects up with a living reality. There **are** Dominicans all over the world, living Christianity in a particular way, and they are thinking, they are writing ... by Dominicans **now** who are thinking about Christianity and what it means. They're interpreting it through their personal and their Dominican lens so it gives you people and writings to tap into. They're talking about [it] now. [Y]ou've got a **living thing** to tap into if you've got a charism because it's on-going. It's current and so it's not just about the **history**. It's about the **now**. (Thea: T12-12 04/12/12)

6.2.2.2 An Alive Charism

What contributes to charism and to the understanding of it at San Sisto is that which is experienced as charism present and alive in their community. It is through participant understanding of what is charism that seven characteristics of it are generated. It is:

1. Possible
2. Authentic
3. Credible and meaningful
4. Palatable and accessible
5. Local and personal
6. Relevant
7. Responsive

Each of these characteristics invites deconstruction:

6.2.2.2.1 Possible

The first characteristic that participants raised with regularity was that of Dominican charism being “possible”. St Dominic was not the perfect person as was Jesus, but rather someone with whom human beings share their humanity, complete with human imperfections. St Dominic showed human beings that it is quite possible to live in

accordance with the Gospel. Participants expressed a view that because charism was “felt” as present and alive at the college, that that in itself, was evidence that it was possible to live in a way that was consistent with Dominican traditions.

I think ... that people like Dominic sort of help people understand that ... Jesus is not the only one that can be like Jesus. ... It's possible for everyone. You know, if Jesus was the only one that (*sic*) ever did the right thing all the time then it would seem impossible. But because there are other people around that can also do that, then it seems achievable. (Tori: TFG2 14/11/12)

“It's about being fully human. And it's the breadth of being fully human” (Isabelle: II-3 20/12/12). Dominican charism “is something we can **do**, it's tangible, we can do it, we can aspire to always be better” (Tarni: TI-5 26/02/13).

Jesus is up there on a bit of a pedestal and sort of the Saviour-of-the-World-being ... whereas Dominic was a step removed from that. And we are a bit of a step removed from that. But it's a bit like climbing Mt Everest. It's still a success if you get to base camp. (Peta: PFG1 05/11/12)

St Dominic is a role-model who “is not God-like ... which is sometimes better ... because it means we can achieve it” (Tiffany: TFG1 07/03/12). “The Gospel values ... are designed by God for human beings.... If you live the Gospel values and become habituated to [them] you're a healthy, God-healthy, human being” (Ita: II-1 05/12/12). They are designed to be achievable by human beings, for human beings.

[B]ecause I can't turn water into wine or anything ... (all the miracles and stuff that Jesus and Catholicism are kind of about) I interpret that symbolically myself. [So] it does make it hard to relate [to] on a human level. So having Dominic fully human ... it makes it more achievable. (Gretta: GI-2 03/12/12)

Dominican charism contributes to the understanding of the possibility for human beings to live in accordance with the Gospel and in a way that is authentic to Jesus' mission.

6.2.2.2.2 *Authentic*

The second way in which Dominican charism is experienced and categorised is as authentic. While responsive to the needs of the times, it is authentic to the values emphasised or exhibited by St Dominic or the tradition developed in his name. “*Veritas* (the Dominican motto) means truth, but truth that is reality” (Isabelle: II-3 20/12/12). This paradox is held in tension within the college environment.

I think the values [of St Dominic] have to remain the same because the charism is based on a set of values and a set of traditions too, some kind of practices But I think it's their interpretation ... as society changes [that changes] It's a bit like how do we interpret the Gospel into today's context? Well, to me it would be how do we interpret [or] talk about charism, in today's context. ... I don't know whether you **change**. ... I think it's just being open to the needs of the day (Tanya: TI-11 08/03/13)

Authenticity, too, is a paradox: at once, being true to the values of St Dominic and the charism, but simultaneously, for it to be authentically Christian, being true to the message of Jesus (Thea: TI1-12 13/10/1). Isabelle emphasises the way in which Dominican charism is authentic yet responsive and evolving: “[I]t’s up to each group to decide whether the story is going to be distorted or whether it’s going to be enhanced. And the story begins and ends with Jesus” (Isabelle: II-3 20/12/12). Sian (SI-2 05/11/12), like all participants, recognises that the story of St Dominic is only valid in as much as it supports the Gospel story: “[We should be living] probably more towards Jesus because Dominic was living **like** Jesus.”

Living charism authentically is important within the college community.

I think students [at the school] who are **not** churched ... will look at the atmosphere of the school. They'll look at the sense of community They'll look at the staff and the way the staff care and so on, and then they'll identify **that** with Catholicism or the Dominican charism [and for someone who] maybe has had no experience of Catholic upbringing, she'll start to identify that with the Dominican charism because ... for **her** that's the real expression of it ... And through that, I think they will develop a very positive view of it and a very authentic view of it as well. (Terri: TFG1 07/03/12)

Emerging from the data is a theme that charism is concerned authentically with the mission of Jesus. In contrast this is occurring at a time when the direction of institutional church is questioned (Hay, 2009, p. 13). Ironically, this can raise questions about the authenticity of the Catholic Church in the mission of Jesus.

I think when you look at the Dominican charism it's very much about being a Christian, **living** as a Christian and the Christian values. ... As soon as you throw in ... “Catholic” it becomes about an institution and it's someone's interpretation and a set of rules and things you have to do There are many things that I see or have experienced or perceived as “Catholic” that I actually reject and [they] sit very poorly with my own set of values. With the “Dominican” stuff, the Dominican charism, the Dominican “way”, as I understand it, it actually strengthens my faith [and] ... Christian spirituality ... and I guess in a way it opens a door to the spirituality of what Dominic was about rather than about the “Church”. It's like a way to live, rather than an institution. ... I think ... we seek a connection to God and in some ways the Church and that traditional Catholic way ... is maybe something to be a part

of and can make you feel inclusive and feel you belong to a community ... but it can actually marginalise you or make you feel like I'm not actually a part of this as well at the same time. ... I think everything I hear about Dominican charism is exactly how we should live. (Tegan: TI-6 22/02/13)

Most participants understand that Dominican charism is concerned with an authentic response to the social and educational needs of the time and the context within which these needs emerge (Tomiko: TI-3 25/02/13).

Participants understand the habits named in the Habits of Spirit program to be authentically Dominican (Steffi: SFG2 30/10/12). Students seek to live by these values (Sharon: SI-4 12/11/12).

Authenticity to charism is important, but so too, is the understanding of their origin in the message of Jesus, a challenge put by Thea (TI2-12 04/12/12), Tiffany (TI-8 08/03/13) and Isabelle (II-3 20/12/12). The habits or values need to express what it is to be “**fully** human ... the breadth of being fully human” (Isabelle: II-3 20/12/12). Isabelle emphasises the touchstone for any values: “if they’re Gospel values they have to be human values. And if they were just narrow Dominican values ... would they be worth having?” (Isabelle: II-3 20/12/12).

Several teacher and student participants comment on the authentically “Christian” treatment which St Dominic afforded women (Tiffany: TFG1 07/03/12) as compared with Church-constructed practices of perceived inequality towards them. Dominican charism at San Sisto is experienced as aligned authentically to the Gospel message of Jesus. “I’ve enjoyed it is because it has an authenticity. If there was any hint of hypocrisy there I would sort of cringe at the thought of it. But I don’t see that. It’s very authentic” (Terri: TFG1 07/03/12).

6.2.2.2.3 *Credible and meaningful*

A theme emerges from the interviews about how credible and meaningful Dominican charism is. Participants understand St Dominic to be a credible role model. They “buy” his story. They see him as a human being like them, relatable and real. His story gives meaning to their own lives (Terri: TFG1 07/03/12). “There is an identifiable person there. And it’s a person who carried out Jesus’ teachings” (Tarni: TI-5 26/02/13). “He’s not something that is untouchable. He belonged to a community and he makes it [Christianity] very **real** for the girls. Sometimes the story of Jesus can be lost” (Tarni:

TI-5 26/02/13). Sammi agrees: “[Jesus and St Dominic] are both incredible but I think that Jesus was so long ago and maybe things ... become lost in translation or just lost...” (Sammi: SI-5 07/11/12).

Credibility relates not just to the story itself, but to the role, influence and reputation of the classroom teacher as the purveyor of the charism. Dominican charism provides teachers with a believable story with which to demonstrate a life lived in Christ. “[St Dominic] realised that you had to reach the people and be credible. And so do we... we want to be credible to our students” (Tomiko: TI-3 25/02/13).

In contrast to those who express appreciation for St Dominic’s charism as providing a credible way of living the Gospel, Thea expresses concern that care should be taken to ensure that the story of St Dominic as a role model does not eclipse the message of Jesus (Thea: TI2-12 04/12/12). In spite of this concern, the Dominican charism provides a credible response to the Gospel at a time when tensions exist with institutional church.

Tamara explains:

I see the Roman Catholic Church as being more of a business in a lot of ways. They’re some sort of regulatory structure and therefore that’s why the human element to me does seem to be missing. ... But it is difficult for me to see, as a woman, why certain things would be wrong or banned or frowned upon. Why women **can’t** make their way up through the Catholic Church, in particular given the fact that we have so few priests and so many women that are interested in this. To me, that’s very staid, whereas Dominic was very ahead of his time, and I think that’s why ... that’s how I reconcile it. That I am a Catholic. Dominic was a Catholic but he’s the **human** face that I like to associate being a Catholic with, along with a couple of others because it’s not this **big** structure, Vatican... sealed... secret secrets.... (Tamara: TI-2 26/02/13)

Dominican charism is particularly credible and meaningful within the current ecclesial context.

I very much see the church not as a building – it’s the people. And this is appealing to a church that is struggling and I think that to explain Gospel values in a way that is meaningful and we’re putting into action at some point through [St] Dominic ... and then how do we then put his values into action here, I think makes it a very **real** church, and a practical church that is helping people, instead of a church that is long gone and not meaningful anymore. You know, if we understand the church to be **of people** rather than a building then yeah, it’s helpful to have a model that is not God-like. Dominic was very **human** and he was able to put his beliefs into action. And we might learn from those. I think it’s **very** real. (Tiffany: TI-8 08/03/13)

The nature of Twenty-first Century teenagers is that for things to be credible and meaningful, they also require that stories be “proved” (Piper: PI-2 07/11/12; Peg: PI-4 08/11/12). Piper explains that previous generations were told what to believe and debate was not an option. But nowadays “it needs to be proved to them and I think that linkage [through charism] gives you a way of trying to explain what it’s all about” (Piper: PI-2 07/11/12). Peg explains that young people “need to get a bit of proof around something before they follow it” (Peg: PI-4 08/11/12). Participants believe that Dominican charism meets that need, and is a credible and meaningful way to the Gospel.

6.2.2.2.4 *Palatable and accessible*

Being palatable and accessible is the fourth theme that emerges from the data describing why and how Dominican charism is alive. Evidence of the charism as being palatable is provided by Tilly: “It’s embedded into **everything** that we do. ... but I think [students] need to **want** that. They need to **want** to **feel** that connection with Dominic and I think many of the girls do” (Tilly: TFG2 14/11/12). Connecting with a person in the form of St Dominic and his values, someone who is “more real” whereas “Jesus is kinda (*sic*) some Godly, you know...” (Skye: SI-1 24/10/12) is palatable for young people. Furthermore, Dominican charism is experienced as “common sense or goodwill and for that reason ... it’s not that **unfamiliar** to a lot of people” (Tamara: TI-2 26/02/13). Because it is embedded into the culture, it is experienced as being “on autopilot – you don’t think twice about it” (Tamara: TI-2 26/02/13). For some students there can be a little apprehension about “the church part” but that which is named “charismatic”, is experienced as desirable (Tegan: TI-6 22/02/13). Christians and Christians, Catholics and non-Catholics alike are comfortable with the values because they are “just obviously decent caring values that work for everybody” (Penny: PFG1 05/11/12). Pam uses a very familiar, “accessible” analogy of family to describe charism:

[I]t’s like being in a family. This is the way our family does stuff. When you marry and ... and have your babies, you’ve got to create a culture. You won’t do it exactly the same as mum and dad did. You’ll keep bits of it and then you’ll add your extras. And I think the Dominican charism allows them to have a pathway of living and serving and being ... of service to the community and being just and all that. And then they will take bits and pieces from that. And do their own... make their own path... do it their own way. (Pam: PI-1 09/11/12)

There is a comfort about the charism. It is experienced as something “normal” compared with their religion, which, for some participants, has a stigma attached to it (Gretta: GI-2 03/12/12).

[K]ids don't want to be seen as religious even though they **are** doing stuff that's very, you know, connecting yourself to the world, and all that spiritual stuff. They are **doing** it. They don't want to be **called** religious or “Holy Joe”. [But we are doing all the social justice things.] We're doing that.” It's **constant** and they're doing stuff all the time and they're thinking about other people **all** the time. ... It's very much “We need to help people. We need to get out there and help people.” So I think they enjoy that. Nobody wants to be the do-gooder Christian ... and even though we are meant to evangelise, nobody wants to be seen as a “Oh, here she comes again!” the one who's going to talk about “Have I let Jesus into my life?” Yeah, they're the funny people that, you know, who come and sit next to you in your maths lecture and say “Have you let Jesus into your life?” **Move on!** (Pam: PI-1 09/11/12)

Participants exhibit a level of comfort in talking about St Dominic. While one student does think that “Jesus... might be a bit extreme for girls here” (Sian: SI-2 05/11/12), this view is not reflected by other participants. All participants place value of having a “human”, “real” role model in St Dominic.

Tiffany explains what charism brings to the school:

I think it's access. It allows easy access to a greater story.... You know. Dominic is the face through which we find the Jesus story, I think. And I think our girls **need** easy access to that because they don't want to search. And who does?... [I]t's hard work to search for what a meaning might be, but to look at the example of Dominic who [had] already started to problem solve for us the Jesus story, and how it's important ... So at a younger year level, it's easy access. But at an older level, it's an example of how I might behave too. (Tiffany: TI-8 08/03/13)

Thea adds:

To be **within** the Dominican Family is... it can be good because “I'm not going to waste my time perhaps... looking”.... And I know there's something valuable there ... I've **met** people who I think are wonderful examples of Christian lives ... who are Dominicans. They're contactable. So there is something to do with that **focus** and certain boundaries that a. help you to belong and b. make it pretty easy to tap into. (Thea: TI2-12 04/12/12)

Charism provides the Christian message in an accessible way:

[W]henever you've got anything that's **big** ... the Christian story, that can be very general, and I think sometimes with kids and young people, it can be almost **too** big to get their head around. Whereas if you break that down into different ways of looking at things, it's an easier concept for the girls to grasp

... or for any young person to grasp ... whether it's through a filter ... like a Dominican way... (Peg: PI-4 08/11/12)

The message of **Jesus**... not the message of the **Catholic** church, the message of **Jesus**, I can access that through the life story or some of the values.... or some of the actions of a saint such as Dominic. (Tegan: TI-6 22/02/13)

The life story, message and values of St Dominic provide palatable access to the Gospel message of Jesus. The charism's further characteristics of being local and personal make it even more influential.

6.2.2.2.5 *Local and personal*

The fifth characteristic of Dominican charism is that it is experienced as local and personal. Because it is more "localised" than a larger group (Christianity or even Catholic), a greater "sense of belonging, a reason to live, a way to live" (Tegan: TFG1 07/03/13) can be experienced. Connections are made within the "local" networks such as the Dominican Common Ground conference for students (Shira: SFG5 06/11/12) and Dominican Education Network for teachers and principals (Isabelle: II-3 20/12/12). This produces a more local story that is more specific (Tiffany: TFG1 07/03/12) with greater ownership, pride in identity and a stronger sense of family (Sheri: SFG5 06/11/12).

[T]he Jesus story is a wider story. It's often one that is lost to teenagers. I think that the Dominic story ... it's the idea of how are we a community? And I think the girls connect with that.... That we **are** a small community here. We have the community across the road. But there is an identifiable person there. And it's a person who carried out Jesus' teachings. (Tarni: TI-5 26/02/13)

Charism provides meaning and identity for individuals and communities (Terri: TFG1 07/03/12). Individuality is an important element emphasised within Dominican charism. This is appealing to people who need to feel spirituality or faith as personal and local.

[I]t has a good impact in terms of things like, feeling distinctive, connecting you to a smaller story. So for instance, when it comes to supporting charities, we can connect with some communities. So okay, we support Caritas and Catholic Mission, these big global kind of charities, but we also support what you might think of as "our own". And so there is something about belonging to a smaller family within that larger family that's probably important. ... There is something that is "family-like". It is about connection and about belonging that might mean it's easier to be involved. (Thea: TI1- 12 13/10/12)

Terri further explains the importance of this more personal or individual understanding of charism, as opposed to the broader Church:

Your own uniqueness may tend to make you think and express your faith, and express your beliefs in a particular way and that may tie in with a particular charism more strongly than with others. (Terri: TFG1 07/03/12)

The particular support that St Dominic gave women during his life and ministry is appreciated by the students (Tegan: TI-6 22/02/13). St Dominic is appealing to students because he was “fighting our fight” (Tiffany: TFG1 07/03/12). He took up a “local” cause in working with women.

I think a young person would always be attracted to ... they'd be looking for someone that (*sic*) aligns with their **own** values of society and treatment of anyone really Someone like Dominic who's been ... caring of women or respectful of women, or encouraging of women or promoting women, or setting up the first group which was women ... I mean that would be very appealing to them. And I think we all do that. We all kind of search for role models that align with our views. (Tanya: TI-11 08/03/13)

Bringing the Christian message down to the local, individual level is explained further.

I think that Jesus is the main actor on the stage, but that's the way we've recorded it. I think the story is bigger than the main actor. I think the story is those people who walked the footsteps since ... those people who've taken what was a core message and lived it and developed it and evolved it and taken it and ... My readings on Jesus and ... that is **exactly** what Jesus would have wanted and therefore by extension, it's not an either/or. It's a bit like saying the Dominican Tradition is infused in everything we do. Well, Jesus is **infused** in Dominic and by that nature [I]t's ridiculous to think that we will not make our own interpretations... that we will not bring our own flavour to things. And if we couldn't do that then we couldn't access Jesus in the first place. So if I can access the message of Jesus **not** the message of the **Catholic** church, the message of **Jesus**, I can access that through the life story or some of the values.... or some of the actions of a saint such as Dominic.... (Tegan: TI-6 22/02/13)

Dominican charism adds :

[a] specific focus that I think would be missing if it was just a normal Catholic [school]... And generalized themes and notions and all of that ... that's still important... but it's not as direct and I don't think it's as powerful ... [or] more **real** [as a charism]. (Peg: PI-4 08/11/12)

Several participants understand the “tangible story” of St Dominic as something that “differentiates” them from “just basic Catholicism” or “just Catholic” (Gretta: GI-2 03/12/12) or “just a normal Catholic (school)” (Peg: PI-4 08/11/12). There is a feeling that the localisation of the experience of Gospel is more meaningful within a charismatic culture.

I think it's familiarity. Because we share the same values. Whereas ..., for example, another school that is Catholic, have the same intentions, but not specifically the same values. We like to connect with something we **know**. I'd say that Santa Sabina would be our family. Iona and Villanova would be like extended family. ... they're **not** blood related! It's true. That's what it's like!!!! That's what it's like! (Glenda: GFG1 03/12/12)

Strengthening of identity is yet another benefit of the localising attribute of charismatic culture as explained by Toni.

To say you're a Christian is one thing. To say you're a Catholic is a narrowing of that focus. And to say that you're a Catholic in the Dominican Tradition is another level of narrowing, another subset. I think, to say "Do we **need** that?" Probably not. We could still, as humans, we could still get on. But it helps to narrow that focus a bit without ignoring the wider picture. You've always got to show how you fit into the wider picture. I think it gives it a more directed sense of purpose, a sense of identity because you're not just a Catholic or not just a Christian ...to be with other Christians ... there's some other Dominican school that maybe ... a few thousand others spread widely ... and it's nice to know you're part of a bigger thing, but it makes your community small and knowable and gives you a sense of identity. (Toni: TI-7 06/03/13)

Further to the experience of Dominican charism as being local and personal, it is also understood to be relevant.

6.2.2.2.6 *Relevant*

Emerging from the data is a consistent understanding of relevance as a characteristic of Dominican charism. Jesus would have adapted his own approach if he were to be born in a different society and age – just as Dominic did (Tegan: TI-6 22/02/13). Participants understand that relevance of charism has a multi-fold positive effect. If students experience the authentic charism in their "own unique way" they can identify with it better. It is witnessed as more personal. By being relevant, student Sammi says students would "probably benefit more from it" (Sammi: SI-5 07/11/12).

Tamara amplifies the relevance of Dominican charism.

I think [the relevance of] Dominican charism becomes **more** and more evident. **His** values are **needed** now. It's not just that they are **relevant**. They are **needed**. ... Our girls are experiencing all sorts of social media, networking. They have the information of the world at their hands and they need to make sense of it even **more so** now than what they did previously, ... So I don't see them as being old fashioned values – they are not just relevant. They are **more** than relevant. They are needed to have the girls finish and leave the college in the way that we see them being able to contribute positively to the community. And look after themselves as well. (Tamara: TI-2 26/02/13)

Tiffany presents a different perspective of relevance. She argues that Dominican charism at the school is indeed building up the church:

because I very much see the church not as a building – it’s the people. And this is appealing to a church that is struggling and I think that to explain Gospel values in a way that is meaningful and we’re putting [them] into action at some point through Dominic ... and [Dominic’s] put his values into action here, I think makes it a very **real** church, and a practical church that is helping people instead of church that is long gone and not meaningful anymore. ... [I]t’s helpful to have a model that is not God-like. Dominic was very **human** and he was able to put his beliefs into action. And we might learn from those. I think it’s **very** real. (Tiffany: TFG1 07/03/12)

The issue of relevance to a church that is in a “very vulnerable state” has particular meaning for Dominican charism. St Dominic and St Catherine [of Siena] too were in the midst of “a church much worse than ours will ever be” (Isabelle: II-3 20/12/12).

Graduate, Gina, believes that her work and study life, pursued within Catholic organisations, ensures that she maintains a spiritually-connected life (Gina: GFG1 09/01/13) even though she does not attend church regularly. Gabi, too, does not attend church regularly but has a “saddle connection” (Gabi: GFG1 09/01/13) with Catholicism, having been raised a Catholic. Both graduates, consistent with most other participants, express the view that a Dominican way of life does not necessarily include church attendance. Gabi presents an argument implied or expressed by others:

I think because probably in the Twenty-first Century I think definitions of having a Catholic life or a Dominican life would be more flexible than they used to be. You know, probably once upon a time it might have meant having to go to church every Sunday or being a part of your church community. But now I think it’s a bit easier revolving around your life and your family ... you know you can still have those values and morals and understanding but not need to go about that in a practical weekly routine. (Gabi: GFG1 09/01/13)

At a time when there is a disconnect between Church and students, teachers and parents, Dominican charism is understood by participants to be a “relevant” way to live the Gospel.

6.2.2.2.7 *Responsiveness*

Responsiveness of Dominican charism is the seventh theme that emerges from the data. It highlights the need for any group that wants to remain relevant in any society to retain its purpose in contemporary ways. The experience of Dominican charism at

San Sisto is that it is nurtured in ways that respond to student needs and interests, while remaining authentic to its core philosophy and *raison d'être*.

I think the world changes and we've got to change with it. And if we don't change **with** it, we're **lost**. It's something outdated. And I think what Dominic went through in his time is totally different to what we're going through right now. But the underlying message should be the same. (Tess: TI-1 28/2/13)

[St Dominic] saw the ... various needs of the people. So would he want people to be subjugated, to be in a situation where they would feel oppressed for the smallest thing? Would it be regarded as a **sin**? Such a dreadful sin? It seems to me that he was really somebody who pulled things **out** from the dark ... from the dark ages ... and wanted to make it different. He wanted the people to experience Christ in that joyful and open manner, I guess. I think he would have been one of **the** enlightened minds and fortunately he managed to make some differences. (Tomiko: TI-3 25/02/13)

Tanya draws together the themes of the nature of Dominican charism, its credibility, authenticity and relevance and emphasises its responsiveness.

I think people can **see** that authenticity ... you know, like the APRE has brought in that meditative prayer, and I just think that's something **new** but it hasn't been done because "oh well, I think we should do this". It's been really linked in with who we are, or where we are at the moment and what we need. I mean we need a quiet time. Our lives are very busy. So in the sense that's ... linking... to charism, or ... our faith. ... **We need** a quiet time. ... Maybe 50 years ago it wasn't as necessary because we had more quiet time... we didn't have computers and rushing life and whatever... whereas now it's applying it to what we need today. ... I think if there's a commitment to the values, people will find a way of changing ... of applying those values in a changing society. (Tanya: TI-11 08/03/13)

Isabelle affirms the need for charism to evolve and to be responsive to changing needs and times:

I think [Dominican charism] is something that you grow into, and you try to keep on reading and obviously other Dominicans **are** developing new ideas **for this age** and I think that's the difficulty but the richness of the charism that it must reflect the age. (Isabelle: II-3 20/12/12)

Dominican charism is understood and appreciated for these attributes, which collectively, make it alive, responsive to student needs, Gospel-centred and a vital part of life experience at San Sisto. In contrast, the Church is experienced as "staid" (Tamara: TI-2 26/02/13), "stuck a little bit in the past" and needing to "move into the future" (Gay: GI-1 17/12/12).

It seems **unDominican** to be disenfranchised from the church. And I know that this is a **huge** challenge for Sisters. It's a **huge** challenge for anyone who's trying to take the Gospel of Jesus seriously.... And it's very difficult, I think,

for schools, Catholic schools today... It's a huge question for our time just as Dominic had his heretics. But I think it's a challenge Dominicans have carried always as everybody else is ... whatever congregation you belong to, or whatever Christian ... anyone who takes Christianity seriously has to see that we are in a very difficult period. (Isabelle: II-3 20/12/12)

This tension provokes further analysis as teachers seek to ensure that the mission of Jesus, the mission of the Catholic school, the purpose of Church and Dominican charism are each understood.

In response to question one, participants describe Dominican charism as a possible, authentic, credible and meaningful, palatable and accessible, local and personal, relevant and responsive way of living the Gospel. The Dominican charism provides a way of living Christianity today as decent, wholesome and integrated human beings.

6.3 Research Question 2: How is Dominican charism experienced?

The second research question is: How do students, teachers and parents experience Dominican charism at San Sisto College?

Five concepts are generated from this research concerning how Dominican charism is experienced:

- As a feeling
- As action
- In relationship
- Through story
- In symbol.

6.3.1 As a Feeling

While some participants find it challenging to explain precisely what Dominican charism is, there is no hesitation in providing an understanding of it through the experience of the feelings that it evokes. It is described as an essence, a feel, a vibe, an overarching feeling (Tina: TI-9 28/02/13). It is described as what you feel when you are in a place where you are making a difference (Tracy: TFG2 14/11/12). The experience of many participants is best explained by Tiffany (TFG1 07/03/12): "... it's hard to put into words I suppose because it's a real **feeling**... it's a **feeling** amongst the staff, the students, the community, that this is how we do things." Sally (SI-3 29/10/12) similarly, says: "I think ... to me ... I'm not sure like ... if technically it's

correct, but Dominican I feel is more something you **feel**, whereas being Christian or Catholic is more a **faith**.”

Belonging to the college community gives participants a comforting feeling likened to being at home and amongst family (Susan: SFG2 30/10/12; Sally: SI-3 29/10/12). A comparison is made between the San Sisto community and the Kingdom of God. In both, “you’re ... ‘entered in’ but you’re also not just **in**. You’re ... **welcomed** and you have a sense of belonging and ... you almost just know that you **fit** there” (Sammi: SI-5 07/11/12). For many participants, feeling is more powerful than “just an ‘I believe’” (Shelby: SFG4 06/11/12).

For me personally ... I like it better ... because if I **feel** this emotion, it feels more **real** than [if I have] just a belief in something. And ... I love having beliefs too but a **feeling** is more **real** and I can **act** on it and I can talk about it and grasp my head around a **feeling** more.” (Sue: SFG4 06/11/12)

These positive feelings are attributed by all participants to the presence or nature of Dominican charism. One participant suggests that knowing that she is part of a Dominican community with strong traditions and strong foundations makes her feel affirmed and feel strength in what she does on a daily basis (Tina: TI-9 28/02/13).

Four themes emerge from the data relating to the specific feelings that participants experience Dominican charism.

1. Life-giving
2. Community
3. Identity
4. Generational responsibility.

The understanding of each of these four specific feelings is now amplified.

6.3.1.1 Life-giving

The first feeling about Dominican charism that participants express relates to its life-giving essence. Students, teachers and parents say that what they experience in the charism is for the good of others and themselves. They understand that Jesus and then St Dominic, were doing God’s work here on earth (Gretta: GI-2 03/12/12). The values exhibited by St Dominic and emulated by those who seek to follow his charism are human values that help live life well and with compassion for others (Gretta: GI-2 03/12/12). While the use of the phrase “life-giving” is not used by participants, charism

is understood to improve life experience for others by fostering a feeling of worth and dignity.

Participants actively seek to help others live life to the full (Terri: TFG1 07/03/12). One way in which students do this is through engagement in social justice activities (Terri: TFG1 07/03/12). Shirley (SFG5 06/11/12) explains that being part of a Dominican community “enhances how you live, just by being at this school.” Sammi was more specific:

I think we are giving life in how we act through obviously serving others but I think we’re giving life in [a] way with the Habits of Mind and Spirit. They really assist us and they’re kind of just reminders on the classroom wall in the ways that we can **act** through those. ... [B]y using those Habits of Mind and Spirit we can bring life and you can bring all of that into what Jesus said and what Dominic led us to. (Sammi: SI-5 07/11/12)

Several participants recognise that education at San Sisto is holistic, integrated and life-giving (Tiffany: TI-8 08/03/13).

Students frequently cite St Dominic’s qualities (or values acknowledged as belonging within the Dominican Tradition) by quoting Habits of Spirit or giving examples of how St Dominic helped others or showed compassion. Students appreciate that there are personal and communal benefits in the expression of those attributes. It helps people be better Christians by being a part of the San Sisto community where people are trying to live the values of St Dominic and those embedded in the charism which takes his name.

There’s all the charities so you sort of [are] bettering [the] lives [of other people]. So there’s also a sense of life just in the school grounds in general. You know, whether it be the closeness of friends at lunch time, the laughter, everyone connecting together, like students and teachers alike, you know, you see that teachers will come around and chat with students during lunch breaks. Teachers will take the time to help out students and ... joy, community, life, all of that together, you’ll see it every day on the school grounds as well. (Gemma: GFG1 03/12/12)

Student Shirley endorses that view: “It enhances how you live, just by being at this school.... Mum knew it was a better school [than my previous one]. And it’s just that feel of family and community...” (Shirley: SFG5 06/11/12). Tammi, like others, says she’s not entirely sure about what is “Dominican” and what is “Catholic”, but she does get a sense that “when you come [to San Sisto], it’s definitely about being a better person and being a better person for your community” (Tammi: TI-10 26/02/13). Joy

is felt in the community when it is known that past students, even the least motivated at school, are “developing their humanity” (Thea: TII-12 13/10/12) by doing volunteer work abroad. Stacy explains it from a student perspective: “I feel our school and our community does a good job at responding to what’s needed in the world to make it a better place” (Stacy: SFG3 31/10/12).

The college tag line “Women of integrity shaping the future” draws comment from participants for a number of reasons. Ita links it to its Dominican origin and to resultant life-giving feelings:

I don’t know where you got the formula “integral women” but it’s a very essential one. It belongs to the [Dominican] fundamental constitution. Integration is happiness; happiness is normal, therefore ordinary life claims access to God. (Ita: II-1 05/12/12)

For Gretta (GI-2 03/12/12) the tag provides the main religious message of the college. It is about having integrity, being a good person, serving others and being less focused on self. There are “set beliefs” that people have. But she explains that because charism is “optional” if you [choose] to practise [it, you] have more of a purpose of going about God’s work. It gives you more direction” (Gretta: GI-2 03/12/12). She explains the passion within herself to help others and to change the world in whatever way she can. She, as others, attributes these feelings of being and bringing life to others as emanating from the charismatic culture of the college rather than from any religious motivation. Ita observes the expression of life and one’s humanity differently: “Another thing I like about the Mass [as you have here], you’ve taught the girls to celebrate. That’s marvellous. Not everyone, not every culture, allows celebrations, (they’re too dower?) [Your] girls [are] joyful!” (Ita: II-1 05/12/12).

From the data, then, there is a message that Dominican charism fosters feelings of joy, of life-giving wholeness. It also evokes a feeling of community.

6.3.1.2 A feeling of Community

The second feeling that participants name is the feeling of a sense of community. Most participants explain “community” or “community-building” as part of what constitutes “Dominican charism”. Specific feelings of being welcomed, inclusive, safe, united and caring are named as evident. While a number of participants (each coming from a Catholic background) identify this spirit as primarily “Catholic”, they also identify it

as being considerably more evident than in other schools with which they have experience. This “**feel**” is “very uplifting... [and] energy-charging...” (Paris: PI-3 06/11/12).

Tanya (TI-11 08/03/13) explains the sense of community from a teacher’s perspective: “I just absolutely love coming to work here... It’s all those little things that people are more than happy to do and more than happy to just drop everything and help you if you need help.” Tanya couldn’t distinguish anything distinctly “Dominican”, but definitely “Catholic” and “community”. But Tammi (TI-10 26/02/13) makes the link back to St Dominic as she believes that the strong sense of community is what St Dominic tried to achieve within the groups he formed. Sue (SFG4 06/11/12) and other students believe that being Dominican is being community. Being Dominican (which Sue described herself as) means “a great sense of community, and being joyful in everything, as Dominic was. [Being] joyful and part of a community and a lot of camaraderie” (Sue: SFG4 06/11/12). Sally (SI-3 29/10/12) cannot define exactly what is Dominican but it gives her a sense of feeling at home. Siri (SI-6 07/11/12) says that being Dominican is about “community” because “when anything happens to any member in the community there’s always someone to talk to or to help. Everyone just seems to join together when someone needs it”. Sonya agrees:

When I was at primary school, I never really felt **family**. Like I was always friends with people, friends with teachers, but I never really felt really close, but when I came here I noticed that I am **really** close to everyone. Like instead of just feeling the ... the feeling of having friends, I feel actually... I feel they are almost family. It’s almost like ... they probably know everything about me. (Sonya: SFG1-30/10/12)

Penny explains the inclusive nature of the college community:

[What] I really love about it is the whole feeling of it. You don’t have to be Christian at all. [If you come to San Sisto] [y]ou [are] learning from the Gospel, you’ll be learning about Jesus’ ways, ... there’s a lot of love and ... respect. ... I’m sure there are so many at San Sisto [who] aren’t even [of] Christian background. They’re happy here. They blend well and they respect what we do here or what you do here at this school and find it quite comfortable. ... I think they can enjoy and respect... because it’s just obviously decent caring values that work for everybody. (Penny: PFG1 05/11/12)

Parent Peg also identifies a strong feeling of community.

For me it is just very much the sense of community... as a value unto itself, I guess. The feeling of being part of a community where everyone is welcome

and there are conversations that are allowed to happen and just all of that sense of being part of something that is kind of special (Peg: PI-4 08/11/12)

The sustainability of Dominican charism at San Sisto is helped by the employment of “core people” who support the community (Tara: TI-4 25/02/13). While students articulate the invaluable contribution of teachers in making their experience of charism meaningful, Tara (TI-4 25/02/13) names the importance of employing teachers who are committed to the building of community and having the right attitude towards, and commitment to the culture of the college. This view is endorsed by other teachers who could not imagine teachers “lasting” if they weren’t actively involved in or supportive of the Dominican charism of the college (Tiffany: TFG1 07/03/12).

Graduates explain the opportunities at San Sisto for giving back to the community (Glenda and Grace: GFG1 03/12/12). Being involved in justice breakfasts, the Masses and giving to St Vinnies (Glenda: GFG1 03/12/12) are examples cited. The opportunity to help out at Rosies street retreat for the homeless is particularly appreciated as it engages girls in “outside organisations” with which students can be involved after they leave school (Glenda and Grace: GFG1 03/12/12). Gwen explains the “community feeling”:

My state [primary] school didn’t really have a community feel. It was just go to school. That’s my teacher. These are the people in my class... go home and that’s the end of it. Whereas when you come to San Sisto, you’re going home but San Sisto is still a part of you, so it’s in a way, connected, it still goes home with you, you come back to it. That’s why I’m here now. I’m still coming back! Whereas I’m not linked to (my primary school) at all, whereas I feel ... I’ll always be linked to San Sisto. (Gwen: GI-4 05/12/12)

Participants experience the community feel, understand the unity in sharing a set of values that are named “Dominican” and in celebrating that sense of community (Shira: SFG5 06/11/12) through particular events such as San Sisto Day, Dominican Family Day and feast days (Gay: GFG1 09/01/13; Pam: PFG1 05/11/12).

6.3.1.3 Identity

The third area relating to feelings is the feeling that Dominican charism influences identity. Participants understand identity formation to be fundamental to the purpose of charism, as illustrated by Terri.

... [T]he ancient philosophers ... spoke about ... two basic human needs: the need for identity and the need for meaning. And I think a charism serves both those needs ... It provides us with an identity – it might be a communal

identity, but still an identity and it also gives us a framework for meaning that helps in meaning in our work or in our studies or anything like that. They're basic human needs. (Terri: TFG1 07/03/12)

Identity is formed in three key areas:

1. Personal Identity
2. Organisational Identity
3. Church Identity

6.3.1.3.1 *Personal Identity*

Dominican charism influences personal identity. While students usually do not use the word “identity”, they are certain that charism has influenced who they are (Storm and Steffi: SFG2 30/10/12). Graduates Gay and Gina (GFG1 09/01/13) explain how formative it was for them while at San Sisto. School culture and the prevalence of social justice activities in which Dominican attributes are “embedded” teaches community members to help others – something that they say is still a big part of their lives (Gabi: GFG1 09/01/13) and from which they learnt much (Grace: GFG1 03/12/12).

Parents agree.

[Students] won't realize it but injustice will annoy them [after they graduate]. They won't know that it's school that's created that in them but when they see an injustice they will immediately think 'that's not right... if [my teachers] stumbled across that **they** wouldn't be tolerating that'. (Pam: PI-1 09/11/12)

Graduate Glenda reflects on where her own set of values come from and the contribution of family. She is clear: “I think San Sisto bed it in me and I've carried it out with my family now, and I project it onto my sister as well.... So I think San Sisto really formed it in me” (Glenda: GFG1 03/12/12). She now believes that she projects “influence – structured influence in her [sister's] life. That's how I preach” (Glenda: GFG1 03/12/12).

There is a sense of pride in being connected to San Sisto and in particular to its Dominican charism:

Because it's **our** story, it's **our** history, it's **our** tradition. [I]t would be devastating [if] this school lost that charism because it's our history. And it's what unites generation from [generation] and it's lovely to see now that women are sending their daughters and their granddaughters ... That's part of building a great school I think ... is having tradition. (Tiffany: TI-8 08/03/13)

Being Dominican and being the only (secondary) Dominican school in Queensland is a source of pride. Ironically, it is the sense of being connected to “something bigger” (to other Dominican schools around Australia and the world) that makes students “feel great” (Sue: SFG4 06/11/12). Being connected to a larger, but specifically, Dominican community enhances pride and identity:

because you feel like you’re connected to someone and you share the same passions as them even though I’ve never met her ... a Dominican from overseas, but I’d like to think if I met another Dominican, we’d have that in common and we’d have that bond and together we’d both be proud to say “Yes, we’re Dominican” and talk about it. (Sue: SFG4 06/11/12)

Sue and Shelby further explain that their pride is not so much the name “Dominican” but what the school does in its being Dominican (Sue and Shelby: SFG4 06/11/12).

I think it’s a human thing to seek some identity.... If you don’t have a strong sense of identity then ... you’re not reaching your potential as a human. And if that identity is tied in with a particular figure or set of beliefs within the church, then that’s not ignoring the rest. It’s saying I’m part of a huge team, but I’m in **this** part of it. Just the way ... we might say we are Queenslanders; we are Australians. [Dominican charism provides] a sense of identity ... an emphasis, a more understandable, “hold-able” framework I suppose. (Toni: TI-7 06/03/13)

Many participants feel such a strong connection to the Dominican charism that they call themselves “Dominican” (Glenda: GFG1 03/12/12) or at least “there’s that sense of Dominican values within me and the way I live my life” (Gemma: GFG1 03/12/12). While Toni identifies that Dominican charism is “out there” and “public” and that charism needs to be overt particularly for teenagers (Toni: TI-7 06/03/13), and that the “four pillars are clearly and overtly stated and carried out” (Toni: TI-7 06/03/13), she, like others, recognises the key values as primarily “very Christian” (Toni: TI-7 06/03/13). Nonetheless:

To say you’re a Christian is one thing. To say you’re a Catholic is a narrowing of that focus. And to say that you’re a Catholic in the Dominican Tradition is another level of narrowing, another subset. ... Narrow that focus a bit without ignoring the wider picture. You’ve always got to show how you fit into the wider picture. I think it gives it a more directed sense of purpose, a sense of identity because you’re not just a Catholic or not just a Christian.... [Dominican charism] makes your community small and knowable and gives you a sense of identity. (Toni: TI-7 06/03/13)

In contrast, Gwen posits her identity as primarily having been formed by her parents, but their choice of school reinforces their values. She says that when she came to San Sisto:

I was like a piece of play dough ready to be shaped. And just growing up through the five years here [the school] ... pushed me into certain ways I could be and so it hasn't changed me, it's just helped me get to be where I was going to be. (Gwen: GI-4 05/12/12)

While not acknowledging that Dominican charism shaped her, nor that she is now somehow different, she does acknowledge that the school values have made it possible for her “to grow into something that I was put into” (Gwen: GI-4 05/12/12).

Whether it's being Dominican within the Catholic tradition or Catholic within the Christian tradition or Christian within the human ... or whatever ... it gives you an identity and that's **so** important to teenagers ... that they've got to have an identity within a group. (Toni: TI-7 06/03/13)

Tanya further explains that students are involved in prayer and social justice activities that “define” who they are. “It's not just this is what we are doing.... We are part of what we are doing. It's... this is our **identity**. What we do here makes us who we are” (Tanya: TI-11 08/03/13).

Charism influences the way participants live. It influences their faith, ideals, the way they treat people and expect to be treated in return, and the way they bring up their families (Tess: TI-1 28/2/13; Tegan: TI-6 22/02/13). The charism helps form personal identity. It also plays a significant role in the creation of organisational identity of the college.

6.3.1.3.2 *Organisational Identity*

Employees in any organisation need to feel a sense of belonging and own the values of the organisation (Tiffany: TFG1 07/03/12). Participants experience this connection at San Sisto. The Dominican story enhances both the personal identity of participants and the identity of the San Sisto as an organisation (Tarni: TFG1 07/03/12). Newer staff comment on the role that the charism has in the school's organisational identity (Terri: TFG1 07/03/12).

[H]earing about the story of Dominic and Dominican charism [when I first came to this school] ... helped **me** to feel a part of the school more quickly, like I suddenly identified with the school, and [felt] that I knew something about [it] and I was feeling more a part of it. So I **do** think **identity** is very

important and when it's this shared story and that story is continually put out there, and spoken about and discussed and debated, that becomes **real** for people and helps develop that **identity**. (Terri: TFG1 07/03/13).

Participants argue that being a part of organisational culture is so important that if you did not feel that connection you would feel a sense of “alienation” (Tarni: TFG1 07/03/12) and “you wouldn't last” (Tiffany: TFG1 07/03/12). Tina explains the nature of identity transformation and charism transmission:

Even if you don't intentionally [convey Dominican charism] then [it] becomes that, I think, accidentally. It just ... it happens. I mean I find myself in conversations with my loved ones having ... a deeper sense of who I am and my place in this world just having been part of this community for [a number of] years. I think it is hard to pin point specifically what this is but ... it's just that feeling that there's **more**. I have been employed in a Dominican school for the last [few] years and I have just developed this sense of understanding of what it is to be somebody who goes out ... who **cares** for people and ... and helps them understand what their life purpose, why they should follow the teachings of Jesus. (Tina: TI-9 28/02/13)

The distinctiveness of identity associated with Dominican charism as compared with any other charism in a Catholic school or as distinct from a Catholic school without a specific charism is an issue that some teachers and parent Paula raise.

Having come from a Catholic background, in my own schooling, I see [here] nothing more or less than celebrations of the Feast Days we had through those different experiences I had anyway. And that's where I struggled a bit at the start with the Dominican charism. In as far as is it just the teachings of the Catholic faith or Christianity versus reinforcing Dominic's teachings?" (Paula: PFG1 05/11/12)

How participants understand their identity within Church is the third theme that emerged from the data concerning identity.

6.3.1.3.3 *Church Identity*

While participants generally locate Dominican charism into the Catholic Christian faith, identity as Catholic or charismatic appears influenced by the participant's sense of belonging to and engagement in the Catholic church or not. Identity foremost as Catholic or Dominican is explained by Tess: “You look to the hierarchy and you go Dominican, and then Catholic and then Christian. So that what touches your life immediately is Dominican but it is also Catholic” (Tess: TI-1 28/2/13). When Tina tries to make sense of prayer, she says that she **knows** it is Catholic, but **feels** it is Dominican (Tina: TI-9 28/02/13). Dominican charism plays a significant role, then, in

forming an identity as a Christian. It is charism that activates a feeling rather than a belief; a feeling which students say propels them to action.

The complexity of identity as being firstly Church or Dominican related is amplified by Tegan:

I think when you look at the Dominican charism it's very much about being a Christian, **living** as a Christian and the Christian values. It's very much along those [lines].... As soon as you throw in the "Catholic" it becomes about an institution and it's someone's interpretation and a set of rules and things you have to do. (Tegan: TI-6 22/02/13)

Undisputed by participants is that the Dominican charism helps develop faith and that it "adds a very specific focus that ... would be missing if it was just a normal Catholic [school]" (Peg: PI-4 08/11/12).

Not only do participants generally say that charism influences their identity, but they express a sense of stewardship over the Dominican charism, and a sense of responsibility for passing it on.

6.3.1.4 A feeling of generational responsibility

The fourth feeling that Dominican charism generates is that which relates to participants' valuing of the charism, of their ownership of it, of the need for it to be sustained into the future, and the feeling that they have a responsibility to pass on what it is that they deem "Dominican". The feeling of generational responsibility is expressed in two key ways:

1. Acknowledgement of worthiness of charism
2. Transmission of charism

6.3.1.4.1 Acknowledgement of worthiness of charism

Participants all agree that Dominican charism is worthy of handing on to others. Sally reflects on its value: "It's like us, our school hymn, like "Standing on the shoulders". I always think of that. Like for me to pass on the good words and messages" (Sally: SI-3 29/10/12). Shelby identifies the values named in the school's "Habits of Spirit" program and says "They are always mentioned by teachers ... they are definitely, absolutely worth keeping. ... There is something really unique about this school. I don't know how to explain it or pin point all the words to say but I think this Dominican

charism and all the work put into it is definitely worthwhile” (Shelby: SFG4 06/11/12).

Gemma restates the importance of those values emphasised by the college.

[When] we are still growing, it’s a time when we’re still learning a lot of things. We’re not really sure, maybe getting to know who we are still, so all of these Dominican traditions, values, morals that we’ve learnt, integrity, honesty, truth, all of those things have definitely had a large impact. And will stay with me for the rest of my life. (Gemma: GFG1 03/12/12)

Glenda, as a graduate, is conscious of her recognition of college values in past students and seeks to uphold them herself.

My little sister’s best friend’s ... mum used to come here years and years ago, and she still remembers San Sisto’s values and they still might be the same over the years. They might have changed slightly with the different things, like the generations, but she still upholds that in her life so I’m looking at her and going “Wow, there’s a San Sisto’s sister that is upholding those values in her life **now** in her 40s and here’s me in my 20s and I’m still living what San Sisto teaches me. (Glenda: GFG1 03/12/12)

Glenda, unlike other students, emphasises her role as “preacher”.

I think [St Dominic, Jesus and God] are linked. But I think God [indicating at the top]... That’s the person I go directly to in prayer... so I think obviously he’ll be at the top, and I think Jesus and St Dominic were put on this earth to spread his word and then I think ... I think I’m actually up there with Jesus. ... I do ... because I believe if you’re going to live a charismatic (*sic*) life you need to be able to preach the word. I’m not talking like preaching as in a priest. But like be able to preach God’s word as well. So because maybe you aren’t a saint ... you are still doing the same things they are in the Twenty-first Century. (Glenda: GFG1 03/12/12)

Participants, particularly graduate students and teachers, hold Dominican charism in high esteem compared to their sometimes negative view of the Catholic church which they describe as “institutional” (Tegan: TI-6 22/02/13), as “a business in a lot of ways ... some sort of regulatory structure” (Tamara: TI-2 26/02/13), and as “stuck in old ways [with] some modern issues and things that it can’t address” (Gay: GI-1 17/12/12).

While participants, particularly teachers and graduates, are ambivalent about structures, practices and requirements of institutional church, Dominican charism is seen as something completely wholesome, worthy of living and transmitting.

6.3.1.4.2 *Transmission of charism*

Participants vary in response from feeling that they are “Dominican” (Suzy: SFG1-30/10/12), to being “like St Dominic” (Glenda: GFG1 03/12/12) to knowing that

“there’s ... that sense of Dominican values within me and the way I live my life” (Gemma: GFG1 03/12/12). But whatever their identity, they recognise that they have a role to play in the transmission of the charism. This sense of responsibility is explained by teacher Tanya: “We have a role to keep that flame alive. You know, to keep that charism going and to pass it on to the next generation (Tanya: TI-11 08/03/13). Student Sian gives a young person’s perspective, providing a link from Jesus to St Dominic to current times:

... [I]f you just had Jesus and then he died and then no one else knew about him, we couldn’t know about him today. And so Dominic and all those other people that followed him, they passed it down and so knowing that St Dominic was there, that helped pass the stories along ... (Sian: SI-2 05/11/12)

Grace adds: “It’s kinda (*sic*) like someone has an idea but other people like stakeholders will [carry] the idea through. They carry it on” (Grace: GFG1 03/12/12) and “they spread it throughout the world” (Glenda: GFG1 03/12/12).

Glenda’s view is shared by many participants.

I think he [St Dominic] **gave** it [his charism] to the church, but he wasn’t the only one that sought it to be high and spread ... across the world. I think people like Rose of Lima did. Jude, Catherine, ... carried it, but even down to having nuns here when San Sisto originated. ... I just don’t think it was one person. I think it takes a **lot** of people to carry [the] Dominican tradition throughout the world. (Glenda: GFG1 03/12/12)

Glenda expresses a commonly-expressed view: “It’s like St Dominic and Jesus aren’t here anymore. [But] we still keep preaching their word” (Glenda: GFG1 03/12/12). Teachers express a similar view of their role being “equally valuable” albeit “different” (Terri: TFG1 07/03/12) to that of religious. Lay teachers are now the “caretakers” of Dominican charism (Tegan: TFG1 07/03/12). Participants believe that the charism needs to continue to be nurtured and lived albeit in an era with few or no Dominican Sisters (Gemma: GFG1 03/12/12).

There is a sense of regret expressed by some that the vowed religious sisters are no longer a presence in schools (Tiffany: TFG1 07/03/12). However, Terri expressed the view that:

Hopefully, the Dominican tradition and the Dominican story, ... is **broader** than the Religious Order And perhaps as Catholics we need to face up to the fact that, especially in these days, when I mean you look at diocesan priests, unless they come from Africa, you don’t have too many around. That

we are the church. We are the church and so we give expression of that and we keep the story alive and so while it's **very** important to honour the memory of the Religious Orders and that, and contributed and how they've inspired us and taught us, [but] it's like the baton's been passed to us. And we carry that on. So it's not just limited to the Orders And the truth ... will have **real** relevance in the Twenty-first Century. (Terri: TFG1 07/03/12)

The successful manner in which lay staff are understood to be transmitting charism is evident. Three participants raised the issue of charism simply being “lived” rather than “explicitly taught” by the Religious sisters. One participant remarked:

I don't think it was as overt then [as now] but I think now that the sisters have gone and there is that less of the visible presence of the Dominicans here, I think there seems to be a stronger emphasis on heritage, of being Dominican, with the sisters **not** being here. But ... I think things like bringing Sr Helen back for the Awards Night and for the Thanksgiving Night... The ability to be able to bring them back or relate things that the college is doing to the original history of the [college] and the presence of the nuns here... sends strong messages, and I think that helps to reinforce the Dominican heritage. (Piper: PI-2 07/11/12)

Feelings are a powerful means through which participants connect with charism. It is experienced as life-giving, community-focussed, identity-forming and participants feel a sense of stewardship over it and responsibility for passing it on. Tanya expresses a shared belief, “I think ultimately we are the stewards ... because ... we are going to be the ancestors for future generations” (Tanya: TI-11 08/03/13). Participants also experience charism through active participation in various activities and events (Tanya: TI-11 08/03/13). This will now be amplified through the second way that charism is experienced – as action.

6.3.2 As Action

The second way that participants experience Dominican charism is as action. Action is understood by participants to be integral to the way the Dominican life is lived.

I think that the acting in service ... yes the love of learning and knowing what's going on in our world [is important] but I think all schools are going to do that. But my thing with Dominic is there was this “Once you know, you do... something.” Once you know, you do. And that's what I wanted [for my daughters]. I wanted to make sure that there were opportunities for that... because as a parent you can't say to them, “Oh, look at that! Vinnie's need help collecting clothes ... let's go and collect clothes” because they'll go “Oh, mum!!!” But if they come to school and [a teacher] says “We need a batch of girls to go and collect clothes” they're very likely to say, in the context of school “Yes, I'll go and sign up and do it”. And so, to know that there's all those opportunities there... and we can't just go and feed the homeless... they need to go through Rosies... they need to go through those structured groups.

So the fact that you guys work so closely with those groups is wonderful.
(Pam: PI-1 09/11/12)

Tarni expresses another shared view:

I feel that it's the idea of love of neighbour and service. Very much **that** story. And it's the idea that it's great to be a Christian but unless you enact on that Christianity you really are only a Christian by name. And the girls here are shown in our different ways that they can enact and they **do**. And I think that with the staff too. (Tarni: TI-5 26/02/13)

Pam reiterates the essential way of living Dominican charism in San Sisto:

They **study** the Jesus part, but in terms of how we get up and **do** the Jesus part, they are doing it with a Dominican twist, or a Dominican **feel**. ... It's almost like they don't want to be do-gooder Christians and too religiousy. They don't want that. But it's almost like it's okay because we're a Dominican school. ... so it's okay to do it because that's what San Sisto ... [**does**]. (Pam: PI-1 09/11/12)

Students understand social action to be consistent with being “a good Dominican” (Steffi: SFG2 30/10/12). Action is closely aligned to the understanding of Dominican charism. Steffi rationalises the importance of “actions” such as giving to charity compared to church attendance:

I ... came to realise that you don't have to go to church every Sunday to be a good Christian or a good Dominican. And I think that's one thing I'm going to keep with me because no matter how busy you get it's sort of **your actions** that's bigger than words. You know, you may not be able to go to church every day or every Sunday but if give to charity, if you do the little things every day that can make a difference and make you a good Dominican I suppose. (Steffi: SFG2 30/10/12)

Even though Gretta avoids religious language, and talks of religion as a “stigma” and “taboo” (Gretta: GI-2 03/12/12), she has developed a sense of what Dominican values are as outlined in the Habits of Spirit program. She says she “tries to infuse ... [them into her] everyday life” (*INDI p. 13*). She talks of “action” and that the need to make a difference in the world has become a “consuming” desire for her (Gretta: GI-2 03/12/12).

There is an understanding by participants that “Dominicanism” is expressed through actions more than words and that teachers lead by example, some more so than others (Sue: SFG4 06/11/12). This understanding of Dominican charism being lived through action is amplified in two key areas:

1. Service and justice
2. Social responsibility

6.3.2.1 Service and justice

Participants identify service and justice as the core of lived charism within the college. It is tangible, observable and deeply entrenched in culture. Participants link service and justice activities directly to Dominican charism and its focus on helping others and showing compassion. Catholic parents and teachers are more likely to also make the observation that service and justice are indeed “Catholic”. One graduate remarked that she would “probably be disappointed if we weren’t very social justice orientated. I think it sort of comes with who the school is. With Catholicism...” (Gay: GI-1 17/12/12).

Participating in justice activities is part of the culture.

All the service activities ... are promoted here and **really** promoted. Like they’re not just part of what we do and if you look for it you might find it. It’s really **out** there and it’s publicized and those sorts of things. I think the girls have a real sense of needing to do that in the world ... to make a difference. Not that it’s not a choice, but it’s just ... it just has to be like that. I think that’s the ... the feeling that it **is**. That it’s not really something you chose to do but it’s just the way it **should** be done and **has** to be done. (Peg: PI-4 08/11/12)

Pam comments on the importance of acting responsively and “in relevant ways”:

You ... don’t do the old fashioned fund-raising.... You’re looking at what’s needed and what’s topical and what’s happening to people right now. And... the money goes to that and the learnings are based around that
(Pam: PI-1 09/11/12)

Sammi (SI-5 07/11/12) explains that Dominican charism is “really ... alive [at San Sisto] because we ... don’t just say that ... we follow St Dominic’s footsteps. We really put that into action.” Shelby (SFG4 06/11/12) explains that it is Dominican charism that influences “the way you **act** and what you **do** and how you **think**. It draws from your faith and makes it into a real life action” (Tori: TFG2 14/11/12). Because it is “lived” it strengthens and extends faith (Tilly and Tracy: TFG2 14/11/12; Peg: PI-4 08/11/12).

Sue (SFG4 06/11/12) says: “... there’s justice, ecology, environment and outreach ... we have justice groups, environment groups, we have outreach groups... so we cover

all of them and they're Dominican.” Opportunities for involvement in justice activities are numerous (Toni: TI-7 06/03/13).

Tina describes the importance placed on service:

I mean you can offer service activities probably in any school but I think here, there is a strong sense of emotion and dedication that goes with that so it's not just “Okay... I'm doing this today because it's one of the things I need to tick off”. ... Rosies is a perfect example. There is ... [the] ensuring that the girls are briefed and understand the value in what they are doing and debriefed to ensure that they got what we would hope that they would have achieved from that, so ... that's one way definitely... the depth of the service activities that are offered, and the way they are presented by the people who are running them or organising them. (Tina: TI-9 28/02/13)

Steffi, Storm and Susan refer to a number of Habits of Spirit. Number 9 is “Acting justly and seeking justice for all” (Steffi: SFG2 30/10/12).

The thing I was just thinking about then was you always hear stories about people who try and change ... things that aren't just. But they don't start with the little things. The thing I love here is that we strive to be the best people we can be ... and then, by doing that that allows us to go out and change everything, change the world, change what's unjust, but you can't do that unless you start with yourself. So I think that's the one thing this school does do really really well. (Steffi: SFG2 30/10/12)

The involvement of teachers in the “doing of social action” is applauded (Glenda: GFG1 03/12/12). Students appreciate this as good role-modelling. It demonstrates that teachers value charism and social justice. Tara emphasises the importance of being actively involved as a preference for learning in “academic” ways:

I don't necessarily connect with the reading out of the scriptures as providing me with a better moral standing I think [charism is] more **action** based—it's what you're **doing** as opposed to what you're **reading** or **interpreting**. (Tara: TI-4 25/02/13)

From the data it is evident that all participants are aware of the presence of social justice activities and their consistency with Dominican charism. It is seen as normal to belong to the social justice groups and students are “subconsciously” inspired by the activities on offer. Even if a student is not involved directly, she cannot avoid being engaged in the activities. Graduates describe belonging to social justice groups and activities as “never nerdy ... It was quite the done thing” (Gabi: GFG1 09/01/13). Students appreciate that social justice activities are offered for a reason. Students understand their responsibility to engage in these activities.

6.3.2.2 Social responsibility

Students understand that seeking justice, helping others and exercising compassion is essentially a Christian activity and that they have a responsibility to make a difference in the world. They feel a responsibility for engaging in social justice activities.

From [Year] 8 you just ... not an assumption but... you just felt like that was the thing you did and it felt like the right thing to do that at San Sisto because of the kind of school it was, given its history, that ... it was just a big part of the school's life and therefore your life as well." (Gabi: GFG1 09/01/13)

Gina explains that "it was always just ingrained in our minds that it's okay to do it" (Gina: GFG1 09/01/13). Gabi adds:

I can't specifically remember the story of Dominic, but I can imagine what he was doing probably wasn't in the norm. I can imagine in his day, helping people probably wasn't a priority of most people. So I think that that probably started the tradition which we took on at San Sisto. (Gabi: GFG1 09/01/13)

While Gretta talks of being consumed with a passion for making a difference in the world and with a sense of responsibility for humanity, she also emphasises the need to do so quietly without show. "I don't like it when people are overt about it. I do it quietly. Just as long as I can see I'm making a difference and I guess I know I'm doing my job" (Gretta: GI-2 03/12/12). Acting justly and seeking justice for all is apparent as a lived value in the college. Students appreciate that it is a Christian imperative, but also that it was lived by St Dominic and attributed to the Dominican tradition.

6.3.3 In Relationship

The third theme that emerges from the data concerning how participants experience Dominican charism relates to how it is experienced in relationship. Participants understand that charism enhances the life experience of humanity in and through relationships with others. These relationships enhance spiritual growth, social and human connectedness, promote a better humanity and the capacity to live life more fully. Understandings are amplified through four relationships:

- With God
- Between students and teachers
- With each other
- With a role model.

Positive relationships between and amongst members of the college community are valued and fostered. While some might attribute them to being apparent in any Catholic school, others see them as emanating from Dominican charism. All participants understand that they are at least consistent with Dominican charism or that which St Dominic would have expected.

6.3.3.1 *With God*

The first relationship around which a theme emerges relates to connectedness with God through prayer. Participants connect the experience of prayer at the college to St Dominic as they know he had a close connection with God. Some participants name prayer as significant to the charism and name it as one of the four pillars of Dominican life. Others state that they do not initially link prayer and a relationship with God to charism because they understand prayer to be connected to the “community feel” of the college. They experience prayer most deeply in the whole of college liturgies as community celebrations. Prayer then, for some, is a sub-set of community (Stacy: SFG3 31/10/12). Prayer for others is difficult to talk about for other reasons as explained by Sonya:

You’ve created your own way of praying and you’ve created your own connections so you don’t really know how to describe it or how it came into being.... It’d take a while to figure out how to describe it to someone. (Sonya: SFG1-30/10/12)

Prayer is described as within, overarching and underpinning college culture (Tegan: TI-6 22/02/13) yet there is strong theme that emerges from the data about prayer. It is a very personal thing (Susan: SFG2 30/10/12) and because it is so personal, every person is afforded the right to pray in her own way (Steffi: SFG2 30/10/12). This has an interesting effect on students. They say that they value the fact that girls have different understandings and beliefs about God. They explain that the reason why community Mass is so profound is because students demonstrate absolute respect for each other in their silence. This allows each girl the space to communicate with her God in her own way (Stacy and Sally: SFG3 31/10/12). Steffi says “It’s expanding your spirituality to whatever point you’re comfortable with.... [I]t allows [people] to express themselves without being pressured into or forced into what other people want them to believe” (Steffi and Storm: SFG2 30/10/12).

Emerging from the data is a variety of beliefs and practice relating to prayer. Students note that prayer to St Dominic is not a regular practice in the college but because St Dominic had such a close connection to God, the provision of many opportunities for prayer, or connectedness to God, is consistent with Dominican charism (Sian: SFG5 06/11/12). Soleil expresses a strong connectedness with God: “I think a day without feeling some sort of connectedness with God is like a day without your family” (Soleil: SFG5 06/11/12) and that connecting with God is “revitalising” (Soleil: SFG5 06/11/12). Steffi comments on the way she has come to understand prayer:

I think it’s taken me this long to figure it out. But you can do it anywhere. You can pray anywhere. ... [Y]ou don’t have to sit down and say “I’m going to pray now”. It’s like if you see something on the news and you think “Oh, I wish I could do something. I feel so sorry for those people.” That’s like a prayer going out to them. Like the fact that you’re thinking about it.” (Steffi: SFG2 30/10/12)

Steffi provides some explanation around language traditionally used with prayer.

I think when people on the streets hear “prayer” they think “kneeling” and going to church you know... every single morning and afternoon, like they’d sort of stare at you. I suppose you could say it’s “prayer” but I think it’s probably more than that for us now. (Steffi: SFG2 30/10/12)

Storm continues: “It’s like a very personal thing, prayer. Like I feel like as a community we can all do it, pray together, but, really it’s like **you** personally” (Storm: SFG2 30/10/12). Susan agrees that prayer is “very personal. I think that other students think that prayer is very personal. And you only do it when **you** want to do it. Like you don’t share it (unless you want to)” (Susan: SFG2 30/10/12). Mass is viewed as a whole of college celebration and as a positive experience. Parent Pam comments that the local parish Mass “just doesn’t feel the same to ... [students] because it’s so intimate at their school (Pam: PI-1 09/11/12). Sharon explains that college Masses are good experiences because of the way in which students are actively involved (Sharon: SI-4 12/11/12).

[T]he experience [of Dominican charism] is more profound for girls [who] **do** go to church because they can connect it back to more experiences they have at church and words that they’ve listened to and that kind of thing. So probably a more profound experience for the girls [who] do go to church but I think [Mass] is still an experience that is very valid for the ones [who] don’t. (Peg: PI-4 08/11/12)

Gwen provides her perspective on her relationship with God through the Mass.

Mass is ... a nice kind of break. It's relaxing. I think that's a personal thing. Some people ... might be purely sitting there relaxing and having that time out. But I think even having that time out is a way of God having a connection to you because if your life is so full of stress he's able to give you this one time where you can just sit there and not... don't necessarily have to think about him, you just have that time to have a break. ... You make the effort to go to Him, He'll give you the time to just be with yourself. (Gwen: GI-4 05/12/12)

Mass is experienced as a personal prayer, appreciated as a communal experience of respect while at school, and a time for reflection (Suzy: SFG1-30/10/12). It is considered worthwhile (Susan: SFG2 30/10/12).

A number of reasons make it difficult for students to attend Mass on Sundays (work, busyness, lack of parental support). However Sonya explains: "I think trying to find God in everyday life instead of going to church is better for me" (Sonya: SFG1-30/10/12). While she explains that she does connect with God when she has problems and that she always surrounds herself with "spiritual happiness and [a] connectedness to God" (Sonya: SFG1-30/10/12), she does not find Mass important. Individual prayer is. Ita remarks that the Sisters "would [not] have let the girls be so casual with their religious observance as the current staff does (Ita: II-1 05/12/12). However, a consistent theme by many participants is that Mass attendance is not necessary.

I don't think you have to go to Church to be Catholic. ... If you live by the Gospel and by Jesus' teachings everyday... so you respect others, you help others, things like that, it helps you become a good Catholic. If you strive to do well and be nice to everyone in everyday life. ... I just don't think it's a **crucial** part of being Catholic. (Gail: GI-3 10/12/12)

Steffi explains that doing charity is a form of prayer and that "the amount of charity work we do here is incredible" (Steffi: SFG2 30/10/12). Most participants agree that the daily practice of two minutes of meditative prayer is a positive experience. Tanya explains that "quiet time" is necessary in busy lives. She understands that meditative prayer is an example of a "commitment to the Dominican values ... of applying those values in a changing society" (Tanya: TI-11 08/03/13). Participants agree with the importance of staff modelling engagement in and respect for prayer. Tamara sees a connection between her own valuing of meditative prayer and student appreciation of it (Tamara: TI-2 26/02/13). Several participants name Dominican charism as having a positive effect on their faith, and that their connectedness to God through meditative prayer is beneficial for a person's spirituality (Steffi: SFG2 30/10/12).

6.3.3.2 *Between students and teachers*

Participants identify the positive relationships between students and teachers as being a characteristic of Dominican culture and charism.

Definitely relationships in our community are **so** important. Without a relationship with a teacher, I don't feel that I could learn from them. Because I have known from past experience in my other schools that I've struggled to learn from a teacher that (*sic*) I may not have liked completely... because we might have had completely different opinions or viewpoints that have made us not connect entirely. ... [S]o relationships with each other are really really important especially in the Dominican community because we are always taught to be a community, not to victimize anyone or discriminate against anyone. (Sally: SI-3 29/10/12)

Students (current and graduates) speak of the effect of student-teacher relationships in helping to build community and in maximising learning. Glenda said that teachers were the “biggest part of my life” and she believes that the camaraderie shared in working together to help others brought a unity between the teachers and students (Glenda: GFG1 03/12/12). Steffi explains that teacher – student relationships is a “constant” in the community:

I think this is the one school where teachers sit down and talk to you at lunch. ... I noticed at the Formal for us in particular when ... we all brought dates from different schools the guys were really surprised how the teachers talked to us. (Steffi: SFG2 30/10/12)

Glenda explains that her “teachers were the biggest part of my life” at school (GFG1 03/12/12) and that working together with them in justice activities “brought unity” between students and teachers.

6.3.3.3 *With each other*

Emerging from the data is a theme that the Habits of Spirit, while listing a number of ways that students should act, are simultaneously stating how students would like to be treated by others. Steffi, Storm and Susan spoke of several of the habits and how the language of them is used “most of the time” (Storm: SFG2 30/10/12) in the classrooms. Steffi (SFG2 30/10/12) talks about the mutual respect experienced:

I suppose the first thing I notice is the respect ... not just what we showed the teachers to never coming in, and standing before we sat down and saying ‘good morning’. They also showed us respect even though we were new. ... so respect was a big thing for me. (Steffi: SFG2 30/10/12)

Steffi says that respect is a mark of Dominican charism in the school.

When asked what constitutes Dominican charism at San Sisto, Piper explains that it is the way in which the person, the college, the participants in the college, live the values of the school – values and behaviours showed and demonstrated by St Dominic (Piper: PI-2 07/11/12). Toni too attributes Dominican charism as at least in some way contributing to the general culture of the college.

So I think that the biggest change [when you come here new is]... the culture of behaviour and relationships. Interpersonal relationships [are] quite different to most other places I've been. Now that could just be because it's a girls' school. But it may, I'm sure, it has a lot to do with the Dominican charism. (Toni: TI-7 06/03/13)

Tamara also experiences Dominican charism in relationship:

[R]elationships is the biggest one, particularly in recent history that has really resounded with me. ... That this **isn't** like another school. This is like a community. It is like a **home**. I think the fact that we work in a building where the sisters used to live and sleep themselves is that constant present reminder that we **are** in someone's home, or what used to be someone's home and they believed in it that much that they spent their whole time here and put a lot of effort into that. So relationships is the big thing. I think again it's that we are aware of ... this charism and that it's just every day for us. (Tamara: TI-2 26/02/13)

Participants experience charism through their relationships with each other. One participant expressed the value and importance of “*disputatio*” (Tegan: TI-6 22/02/13) – in seeking truth and honesty between people, without feeling confrontational. She experiences this as “Dominican charism at work because there's enough trust for someone to be truthful ... that's the charism being lived” (Tegan: TI-6 22/02/13). Ita raises this as the “essential” dialectic in argument in order to synthesise theses (Ita: II-1 05/12/12). (This will be further discussed in section 6.3.4.3 Learning and Lessons.)

Tina (TI-9 28/02/13) says that St Dominic was all about people and connections.

... that message ... is carried forth through all sorts of connections... through connections that are fostered between our Year 12s and our Year 8s, between our Year 11s and our Year 8s, and now between 7s and 8s in the future, and 9 and 10s, and 11 and 12s. There's more access promoted between teachers and their students. Yeah, I think it's all about... sharing that message that we are a connected community and we want each and every member of that community to feel like they have a place in this community and thus, you know, hopefully that translates into feeling you have a place in the world. (Tina: TI-9 28/02/13)

... Dominic somehow managed to get other people to find him trustworthy, to find him inspirational, to find him a good companion ... And in the end I suspect it's all about **relationships**. And if you go back to the four pillars ...

living in community, whether it's under the same roof or not, caring for one another, praying together, and spreading the word about how good it is to do these things, that to be these people, that's to do with the interaction between peoples, so it's more than just a job for staff I would think. It has to be **more** than that. They have to feel a sense of the community themselves. (Isabelle: II-3 20/12/12)

Attendance at and promotion of the various Dominican networks and relationships with Dominicans and Dominican schools (all located in other Australian states), enhances the “depth of relationship” between the various groups. Students “have shared experiences. They've shared photos. They've shared stories. [I]t allows for that continued connection” (Tilly: TFG2 14/11/12).

I think you **feel** like you are in a place where you are making a difference... where you work with and relate with people with integrity as a focus and because we place such importance on that that's generally the way people act. With integrity and that feels ... feels like you are making a difference and when students and staff get involved in other things like justice activities or ... joyful things... Adds to wholeness really. (Tracy: TFG2 14/11/12)

Relationships are indeed at the centre of why many elements of charismatic culture still thrive.

6.3.3.4 Role models

The fourth relationship named is that of the connection to role models. These are influential in the experience of Dominican charism. First, participants relate to St Dominic as a role model. Participants seek to emulate and live by values named to be “Dominican” (presented as Habits of Spirit). Second, students and parents observe teachers as examples of living the charism. Teachers become the conveyor of the charism by living Dominican values. They give charism and Dominican values credibility and possibility. “[I]t's helpful to have a model that is not God-like. Dominic was very **human** and he was able to put his beliefs into action” (Tiffany: TFG1 07/03/12).

Penny too understands the importance of having a credible role-model. Her comments are shared by many.

Because he like many other saints ... does lead by example and he is human and with his human weaknesses and imperfections like all of us we can strive with God and Jesus' help and guidance. We can be or resemble [the] perfect role model of how he would like us to be. And living through Dominic's story and all the ones gone past him who have really dedicated their life to the Gospel, he shows us [how] to be better people, to be more loving,

compassionate and God-minded. And I think it is very essential in our climate today to have these sorts of role-models that we can look up to and say ‘well, it is possible, no matter how many materialistic influences, spirituality is our foundation’. (Penny: PFG1 05/11/12)

Relationships between and amongst staff are observed by students. The adult to adult relationship is a role model for young people.

The thing that I realized as a student is also you pay attention to how ... to how teachers relate to each other and you do note there are friendships in certain areas; that they are looking after each other in many ways and that in itself provides you with a sense of Well, it provides you with role models as to what right relationships are, how to behave, how to create community. And that’s the strongest way of demonstrating community is by living it with your peers. (Tara: TI-4 25/02/13)

Student Storm says that St Dominic is a particularly relevant role model in the school because all students can be inspired by his love of learning (Storm: SFG2 30/10/12). Steffi provides a specific way in which St Dominic is a role-model:

Schools teach that you have to learn. So does ours. But I feel [St Dominic] is a stronger role model for enjoying what you are learning. I think [he] helps us to discover what we are passionate about and even though we are not all wanting to do the same thing, we all sort of striving to be the best in whatever we are passionate about. And I think that that’s something the whole school probably relates to.... (Steffi: SFG2 30/10/12)

Steffi (SFG2 30/10/12) clarifies the extent to which St Dominic is a role model: “If it’s not being like Dominic, it’s being the best version of [yourself].” Tori does not draw a distinction between role models. For her, everyone in the community is a role model (TFG2 14/11/12) and Glenda (GFG1 03/12/12) understands that she becomes the role model for younger people and that this brings responsibility.

Thea, on the other hand, presents a caution if there is any overemphasising of a relationship with St Dominic.

[I]n ... not putting enough emphasis on Jesus, we’re allowing the role-model thing to be all there is without that kind of profound understanding of life or approach to life that comes out of the original Jesus story or you **could** miss out on that. (Thea: TI2-12 04/12/12)

Role-modelling then is an important element of learning about how to live, and St Dominic provides a model as do others in the community. Participants all experience charism through relationships, as it is through relationship that other experiences occur.

6.3.4 Through Story

The fourth theme that emerges from the data relating to how participants experience Dominican charism is through story: the creating, telling, sharing, hearing, acting out and promoting of story in various forms. Understandings are amplified in three key ways:

1. The appreciation of story
2. Values
3. Learning and Lessons.

6.3.4.1 *The Appreciation of Story*

“Story” is an appealing method of teaching. It is the means through which meaning is made and memory stored. In describing their own experiences of charism, participants engage in story-telling. They describe how real the story of St Dominic is. One student suggests that this might well be the appeal of the Dominican charism: “I’m not going to read [the Gospels] front to back” (Gwen: GI-4 05/12/12). She wants something that is “graspable” (Gwen: GI-4 05/12/12). Ita explains that “Dominican values are simply ... a way of condensing the Gospels” (Ita: II-1 05/12/12). That has appeal for many people. Human beings need “memory pegs” (Tegan: TI-6 22/02/13) and story provides these.

A junior student recalls the basic story of St Dominic’s life:

I think I know probably not his whole life story but a fair bit. His name was Dominic Guzman. He was born in Spain. While his mother was pregnant with him she had a dream that she gave birth to a dog holding a torch and it ran around spreading light everywhere. And that symbolizes that Dominic was running around preaching of Jesus and spreading the light of the Truth. (Sian: SI-2 05/11/12)

The story of St Dominic is something that girls connect with (Tarni: TI-5 26/02/13). Tamara teaches students in her classes about the need to share and to help others, especially the hungry. She does so with story and metaphor.

I constantly relate to the girls [about the story of St Dominic and the oranges]. ... [Students] really value that and they see that story and it’s relevant **now**. It’s not just you know 800 years ago when there were people that (*sic*) were poor. (Tamara: TI-2 26/02/13)

Terri too emphasises the importance of story in charismatic culture. “Don’t we all need a story too? We’re individual... we’re an institution You need a story, don’t they, to help give meaning?” (Terri: TFG1 07/03/12).

Gay agrees:

I think it is easier to relate back to something if there’s a story with it and a person, a name or a symbol to go with it. You know, if you just tell people a bunch of morals and values, they may take some of it from them, but when there’s an actual story behind it, someone was actually out and doing these things then it’s a lot easier to relate to and remember and take on board. ... When there’s an actual story to it and stuff I get a lot more out of it. (Gay: GFG1 09/01/13)

Specific stories of St Dominic are used by one teacher in her home life.

I think as a woman myself and as a mother of ... daughters, the story really appeals to me most at that level of the fact that Dominic was **so** adamant about the important role of women. (Tegan: TI-6 22/02/13)

The stories about the college itself are important.

[I]t’s a **young** school in terms of itself, but it’s not young if you look at the other Dominican schools. And the nuns from Santa Sabina came up to start this little school off so when people say “oh, up here, think it’s a young and nothing school..... It’s got such a **deep story**. (Pam: PI-1 09/11/12)

Isabelle appreciates the analogy of “story” in an educational setting:

The Dominican story is big enough for everybody ... [W]e can do all the supporting we can, but the charism is bigger than us. The story is bigger than us. And Schillibeckx writes that powerfully about how each group has to write its own chapter. And it’s up to each group to decide whether the story is going to be distorted or whether it’s going to be enhanced. And the story begins and ends with Jesus. (Isabelle: II-3 20/12/12)

It is with story that values and lessons are taught and with which symbols are given meaning (section 6.3.5.1). It is through story that the Dominican charism remains alive and becomes meaningful for everyone.

6.3.4.2 Values

Values at San Sisto are articulated through story and images in the Habits of Spirit program. They become the focus of the second theme within the concept of story. College documents indicate that sixteen Habits of Spirit or “Dominican values” are promoted through the sixteen posters in each classroom, through explicit whole of college lessons, through curriculum units, prayers, assembly addresses, newsletter

articles and a shared language. Their implementation is strategically managed through the Charismic Learning Calendar¹⁴. In referring to any values or “habits”, students, teachers and parents in this study name directly or refer indirectly to specific “habits”. They use language similar to that used within the program. For example, when Sally is asked what she identifies as the main religious values of the college, she says:

[T]here’s Truth, and there’s respect. I think the main value is respect: to respect others, to respect yourself, to respect anybody else... All the values are really written in the Habits of Spirit or the Habits of Mind. Like they all talk about the things that should be our values and most likely **are** our values. (Sally: SI-3 29/10/12)

In the document “The Sixteen Habits of Spirit”, the habits Seeking and speaking the Truth, Respecting self, and Respecting all God’s creation are listed, reflecting Sally’s understandings. Similarly, Piper links a particular Habit of Spirit (“Passionately loving learning”) to an attribute or value of St Dominic.

He was a very strong educator, wasn’t he? ... [Y]ou hear the comments around the college of a love of learning. So maybe that’s a direct reflection on the role-modelling that St Dominic has back into the college. So that comment about the love of learning you hear about the Habits of Mind and Habits of Spirit, I think those things are perhaps are direct relationship to [how] St Dominic would have led his life. (Piper: PI-2 07/11/12)

Storm recognises that she doesn’t know the exact words but can name “seeking and appreciating beauty”, “seeking and appreciating excellence”, “living hopefully” and “[living] joyfully” as “habits”. These are indeed four of the named “Habits of Spirit” (Storm: SFG2 30/10/12).

The importance of values or habits taught through story helps create a sense of school pride and identity:

I think at a lot of schools even though they are Christian, it doesn’t mean much to the students... they say they are proud of their school name... like they say they are proud of ... going to that school, but being proud of what the school is **about** is ... a different thing... I think it is like we know **exactly** who we are and what the school is about and I think a lot of schools don’t take the time to figure that out. Or at least the students don’t. They don’t educate themselves on the school values, and I think because everyone here knows at least something about Dominic... (Steffi: SFG2 30/10/12)

¹⁴ The “Charismic Learning Calendar” is the name that San Sisto College gives to its calendar that documents events that relate to the charism of the college.

The Habits of Spirit provide an “accessible” way for young people to learn about Dominican charism because they are in a language with a visual story that students find appealing (Tegan: TI-6 22/02/13).

The influence of the way in which the habits are taught is evident:

We were doing an extended homeroom on a particular habit, and [a new student] looked around and almost laughed and then realised that actually all students took it seriously and it’s just part of everyday life. And I think in that respect again, it’s that air that we breathe. It’s the autopilot that they’re just used to And I explained it to her that it’s not necessarily anything **Catholic** or **Dominican** although it **is**, but it’s about being a good person. And when I put that into context [for] her, a sort of light bulb moment came on . . . [T]hat’s why I think it’s such a resounding success here . . . because it’s that sense of being a good person and it’s just that we give it a name and explicitly teach those values. (Tamara: TI-2 26/02/13)

Tammi explains that for a teacher, the Habits of Mind and Spirit are “a kind of a toolkit now to think on if I’m stuck on how I should behave or what I should do” (Tammi: TI-10 26/02/13)

Documents relating to Habits of Spirit provide resources, ideas and stories that can be used when teaching students about each habit. All participants, except Thea and Tiffany, are unequivocally supportive of the program as a means of nurturing charism. Tiffany reflects on how effective she really is at bringing “Habits” back to the Gospel, rather than being solely the attributes of St Dominic.

Thea expresses:

a level of discomfort in pushing them **so** much as “Dominican” Habits of Spirit because . . . in teaching Year 12 SOR Sacred Texts and the idea of Kingdom, they are incredibly useful those Habits of Spirit. . . . [P]resenting them as Habits of the Kingdom is incredibly useful. Now I know . . . I can still do that, but I feel I have to **work** . . . I then have to work a bit to **add** something about them [about being] “Dominican”. I have a greater level of comfort using them as Habits of Spirit that put into practice Kingdom - a greater level of comfort with doing that than I do with talking about them all the time as Dominican Habits of Spirit. (Thea: TI1-12 13/10/12)

Thea, like Tiffany, reflects that it may be that she is not doing anything “wrong” but that maybe for her “It’s like anything, getting the balance quite right” (Thea: TI1-12 13/10/12).

The values, presented as Habits of Spirit, are taught through story. For example, documents relating to the Habit of Spirit Respecting God’s Creation is taught with the

assistance of the first creation story in Genesis 1:1 – 2:1 and the Dominican story of An Tairseach, Wicklow. These “Habits” are explicitly taught to all students. The naming and teaching of them so “explicitly” prompts Tamara to suggest that that is why the program is such a “resounding success” (Tamara: TI-2 26/02/13) and perhaps why Steffi remarks on the time that the college takes to educate students about values, ensuring that by graduation they “know **exactly** who they are” (Steffi: SFG2 30/10/12).

6.3.4.3 Learning and Lessons

Participants experience charism through the lessons they learn or give and through the stories they share or hear. Learning and study is understood by participants to be closely, but not exclusively, connected to Dominican charism. However, study for Dominicans “is just **so** strong. It’s almost like a fourth vow because you cannot preach with an empty head” (Isabelle: II-3 20/12/12). While students, teachers and parents aren’t vowed religious, many do consider themselves “Dominican”, and most understand the importance of study to the Dominican charism. Learning and lessons becomes the third theme within the experience of story. Various documents name “excellence” and “study” as connected to and attributed to St Dominic or Dominican charism. Habits of Spirit name “Passionately loving learning” and “Seeking and appreciating excellence” as key values.

The Charismic Learning Calendar and other college documents indicate the overt teaching of Habits of Spirit across the college in a systematic manner. All units the curriculum document the requirement to for infuse Habits of Spirit into regular lessons. This is acknowledged by all participants. “Dominican charism [is] “built in” and “integrated” into the learning process at San Sisto” (Piper: PI-2 07/11/12). Stacy experiences numerous elements of charism in her daily life at the college – teachers’ language, assemblies, newsletters, symbols, but she says that: “For me probably the most obvious is how the habits of mind and spirit are put into our everyday classes and life” (Stacy: SFG3 31/10/12).

Study and the pursuit of excellence are described within the college as “Dominican” and stories are told of St Dominic going to university and highly valuing books and learning and encouraging his friars to go to university (Skye: SI-1 24/10/12). St Dominic was open to continuous learning (Sian: SI-2 05/11/12). Sammi says “he did

a lot of studying before he got ordained as a priest and I think we really follow in that in the way that we apply ourselves to that and so did **he**...” (Sammi: SI-5 07/11/12). In various lessons in Religious Education, History and Home Economics and other classes across the curriculum, students are specifically taught about various elements of St Dominic’s life and the Dominican charism.

The learning culture at San Sisto, steeped in Habits of ... Spirit reinforces “that sense of wanting and desiring to constantly learn and improve your own mind... and the importance of learning” (Tara: TI-4 25/02/13). But Tara adds that “what I like about San Sisto in particular is it’s not just the pursuit of knowledge, it’s also the pursuit of wisdom—being able to use that knowledge in an appropriate manner to help others” (Tara: TI-4 25/02/13). Tiffany reflects on her teaching, and like Thea (TI2-12 04/12/12), thinks about how the main message of Jesus is portrayed, compared to the story of St Dominic.

...the tradition of St Dominic, it’s a very real story ..., but to me that story isn’t as great as the story of Jesus. And to me if you came in and took Dominic away from here, yes you would lose **his** tradition, etc etc, but you wouldn’t lose **me**. I would still come back to school as long it was going to be a school that was rooted in Catholic ethos, that we were going to show compassion, and those core Gospel values. ... [W]hilst charism is important, actually it’s **vital** for a school, I don’t know that I feel like it matters which [charism] I have as long as they marry my Catholic beliefs. (Tiffany: TI-8 08/03/13)

Thea adds a complexity to the notion of teaching and learning about charism: “[O]ur girls most of them are coming from nothing much [in a religious background. Hence the need to ensure a balance in the lessons and learnings about charism and Christianity” (Thea: TI2-12 04/12/12). Participants however, indicate an unambiguous understanding of the location of charism and “Habits of Spirit” within the wider Christian story.

All participants link St Dominic to learning and/or the search for truth and/or to elements of the learning process at San Sisto. Sonya, as a relatively new student, experiences the learning environment as noticeably different to her previous Catholic school and “Dominican”, for her, includes “Truth and ... being the best you can be” (Sonya: SFG1-30/10/12). She defines Truth as:

the search for knowledge... to know what **is** true. If you’re well informed then you’re able to make positive decisions in your life. ... With religion, if you

know all the backing through the bible and everything through those beliefs, you live them out. (Sonya: SFG1-30/10/12)

Sonya explains that learning at San Sisto is “forever. It’s in your being” (Sonya: SFG1-30/10/12). She names the role model of St Dominic has influential in her thinking this way (Sonya: SFG1-30/10/12). For Steffi, the Dominican search for Truth is essential in life: “You [can’t] teach [something] if you didn’t know it yourself” (Steffi: SFG2 30/10/12).

Dominican charism is also experienced in the learning process through the “dialectic” (Ita: II-1 05/12/12). In fact,

Study demands dialectic. That is, most propositions are true but not fully true. The moment you institutionalize them or express them in your person or write an essay on them, almost immediately that Hegelian idea that the antithesis rises to meet your thesis. Thesis and antithesis are an essential part of intellectual life, particularly study. Once you’ve managed to formulate a thesis there will be an antithesis capturing the truth that you haven’t got. And they will conflict as you say, argument. That’s what arguments are for. (Ita: II-1 05/12/12)

Ita highlights the importance of the dialectic within the learning process in a Dominican school and reinforces the comments by Tegan and Tarni (TFG1 07/03/12) about the presence of “*disputatio*” in the Dominican classroom. This open, informed mind is explored as a separate theme because of the surprising connections students and teachers make between having an open mind, Dominican charism and Catholic church.

6.3.4.3.1 *Open mind*

The pursuit of Truth (“*Veritas*”) is understood by many participants as essentially Dominican (Sally: SI-3 29/10/12; Glenda: GFG1 03/12/12). It is the college motto and “Seeking the Truth” is a Habit of Spirit. Participants understand from story in lessons that St Dominic encouraged study in his communities, and that he pursued Truth. From graduates particularly emerges an understanding of the connection between St Dominic having an open, informed mind and religious belief. Gretta hints at a contradiction: “I’ve always had Catholic values growing up... but I’m open-minded as well” (GI-2 03/12/12). She explains why religious belief (irrespective of religion) should not be “forced upon ... this generation”.

[Y]oung people are learning at a younger age that it's okay to have their own beliefs and maybe they are going away from that [religion] because they don't like the structure of it, or they don't like the fact that they are forced to think a certain way. So I don't really think it has a reflection on the church specifically. ... It's becoming more optional, I guess. Not so much the rebellion kind of attitude towards it, but people are able to see other things in the world and they are allowed to. It's accepted. It's kind of seen as wrong to **not** allow someone to think the way they want to. (Gretta: GI-2 03/12/12)

Gina is more specific: "SOR [Study of Religion] makes you more open to different religions... I don't think you appreciate [it] until you've done it" (Gina: GFG1 09/01/13). Sally too refers to being "open minded to different situations" and attributes this to the accepting of others and inclusiveness of Dominican charism (Sally: SI-3 29/10/12). Sammi explains that:

San Sisto, it's **so** open and welcoming that I think we'd all have our own opinion and the opportunity to **give** ... opinion here... I think ...they're very open ... to new learning and they [teachers]... **will** listen ... I think the school is open to all these new opinions and open to ... change. (Sammi: SI-5 07/11/12)

Teacher Tomiko links St Dominic to the promotion of an open mind and to enlightenment. Having an open mind is presented as a positive and Dominican attribute.

We promote an open mind I think and that is charism for me as well. So I also think that Dominic wanted enlightenment ... I think that in many ways because we **know** as the educators, as the leaders, **you** know, **we** know that we are working in a school that embraces the Dominican tradition, and **knowing** what we do know, I know little about Dominic, even if it's in the subconscious of the teacher, that you would **do** that because it is a Dominican school. The open-mindedness can be regarded as a much bigger and broader thing anywhere else but knowing that you **are** in a Dominican school you may go back to the roots and go back to Dominic and what he was trying to do and to respond openly. And he was man ahead of his time, wasn't he? I'm not saying we're ahead of our time, but in valuing that... he obviously valued women, when the others didn't and the church didn't.... (Tomiko: TI-3 25/02/13)

Tarni considers Dominican ethos and philosophy in her teaching and she "[tries] to instil in the girls the love of learning and also the idea that learning brings a certain amount of freedom. And empowers them..." (Tarni: TI-5 26/02/13). Deep thinking and searching for truth is overtly embedded within the college pedagogy.

[A] thinking woman as an intellectual person, who seeks information and wants evidence and lives consciously trying to be a good person, a just person and so forth, there are a lot of things within the Catholic tradition that don't

sit well with me or within the Catholic beliefs and even the process that you are supposed to just believe and accept.... And whether that is transubstantiation, whether that is about gender roles, whether that's about the role women can play within the church, whether it's about... many many things, that doesn't sit well with me. And it doesn't sit well with me ... if you look at the teachings of Jesus and certainly when you look at people like Dominic ... and I think the **core** of a Christian belief, or the **core** of Christian beliefs are around our actions and how we treat others... and if I put that in contrast to some of the beliefs I am effectively told I must believe, I think they contradict **core** Christian beliefs about not being judgmental, about accepting our brothers, about ... I can't think of the ones I want to say but yes, there are some.... (Tegan: TI-6 22/02/13)

While the Dominican charism may assist with faith development, participants compare Dominican charism to a Church that is not experienced as inclusive or accepting of different views or overtly “open minded”. Charism is described as having a mature attitude to life. That is, it demonstrates an appreciation of contemporary complexities in life. It displays a “maturity” in its promotion of open-mindedness (Gail: GI-3 10/12/12). Gabi extends the open-mindedness concept that she attributes to Dominican charism. She argues that such an attribute allows for responsive and logical thinking (Gabi: GFG1 09/01/13). St Dominic sought the Truth; he valued and respected all people; he loved learning; he respected difference; people are now very busy; times have changed; it is okay not to engage in weekly community worship; contemporary youth connect with God in other ways (Gabi: GFG1 09/01/13).

Symbol is one such way that has emerged from the data as a powerful tool in teaching and learning about Dominican charism.

6.3.5 Through Symbol

The fifth way in which students experience charism is through symbol. All participants value symbol as a means by experiencing and accessing charism and making meaning of it. Symbol illustrates the story, provides rich meaning and by so doing, brings charism alive. Participants experience symbol as everywhere and through the college grounds, buildings, classrooms, in liturgies, gatherings and ceremonies. The presence of symbols generates meaning. Importantly, symbols can be experienced as liberating and provide seed for the imagination and creative thought.

6.3.5.1 College Symbols

All participant groups and individuals observe symbols and express a sense of ownership or pride in them, as expressed by Pam: “I think that they **love** all those

symbols ... [the] orange tree and the hat... I **love** it. ... It is a **real** symbol, that hat. You know, it **is** a part of topping things off... [W]e want all those little finishes” (Pam: PI-1 09/11/12).

Students explain that the story behind the symbol is important. The statue of Dominic at the front of the college reminds students of their presence at a Dominican school. The orange fruit and tree is a reminder of students’ connection to the broader Dominican community, connecting the college to Santa Sabina in Sydney and Rome (Grace: GFG1 03/12/12).

Students feel the sense of stewardship when they hand the symbols over to incoming leaders in ceremonies. Student leaders become a part of the Dominican story of handing down traditions and work to the next generation (Gretta: GI-2 03/12/12). Students do not necessarily connect a symbol with a personal attribute – but rather, to a role within community. For example, the liturgy captain, carrying up the chalice and paten in ceremony, is not seen as necessarily a prayerful person, but rather someone who “makes the teacher’s job a lot easier, ... They don’t have to plan the liturgies all the time themselves (Sally: SI-3 29/10/12). Symbols are many, as shown in Table 6.8.

Table 6-8 Dominican symbols

COLLEGE	BUILDINGS	SCHOOLS	SCHOOL SYMBOL	HOUSE NAMES	COLLEGE SYMBOLS
San Sisto College name	Prouilhe	Caleruega (Yrs 7 – 8)	Key	Dominic	Candle Book of the Word
College Badge and its elements	Dominic Aquinas	Fanjeaux (Yrs 9 – 10)	Sunflower	Rose	Oranges
Sacred turf	Café Caterina Siena Centre	Bologna (Yrs 11 – 12)	Shoes	Catherine Jude	Hands Chalice and Paten
Statue of St Dominic	Fra Angelico Creative Arts Centre				Globe Compass Banners Rosary Beads

Symbols are a useful tool in remembering story.

[Y]ou don't always remember things You're not going to remember every single detail whereas I remember in maths the one thing that I remember is the pi that was around the room. So that is one symbol that I remember from things. So it was kind of like a little capture of things... so instead of remembering every single detail of what went on in that Maths class, I have one thing that I can just remember ... and go "Oh yeah", and I remember all these memories and things that come up... so symbols definitely ... help me in remembering things, and they're sort of triggers to things that I can't [immediately] pull out of my brain. (Gwen: GI-4 05/12/12)

6.3.5.2 Power and Purpose of Symbol

From the data emerges a theme about the power and purpose of symbol and how participants conceptualise and consider symbol. New understandings emerge about how symbolism is conceptualised and utilised, and the ways in which it influences people

First, the need for symbol is evident as amplified by Tess.

[Students] **need** something tangible. They need something. A symbol speaks to them. So if they see a compass they can immediately say that's a compass and it's for direction... The rosary beads... the hands... the oranges... all those things have a significant meaning to the symbolic... The kids **need** that. ...So those sorts of things trigger something in the head. ...And **that's** significant because it all has a meaning. ... It all fits in. ...It's **there** but it's very clever, very clever. (Tess: TI-1 28/2/13)

I think they are incredibly important. And I think they're poignant. The symbols that the kids take them on as part of their lives and they are significant in the leadership in the student body. They take on that symbol ...and that symbol **means** something to them and that sort of guides them. (Tess: TI-1 28/2/13)

Second, symbols provide a way of linking the yesterday story of St Dominic with today's students. Tess adds that those who were taught by the Sisters are able to remember them, but young people don't have such memories.

There'll definitely be a time... there'll be a gap... Because we can still remember. So the only think you can probably do is do what you've been doing and instil in the young **symbols** rather than people. Because we had people to remember. (Tess: TI-1 28/2/13)

Third, inherent in the use of symbol is personal interpretation. Gretta, who, typical of some students who don't want to be "pigeon-holed" into a way of thinking, sees college symbols as "distinctly Dominican and I guess the good thing about symbols is up to interpretation as well as the base kind of meaning" (Gretta: GI-2 03/12/12). Students like to be able to add to the authentic meaning something of their own creative thought, thus adding appeal to the meaning of the symbol.

Fourth, symbols are “graspable”, powerful and provoke “images” that vary from person to person (Gwen: GI-4 05/12/12).

I think [symbols are] very strong... symbols are very strong aspect of San Sisto and I think they make statements that aren't projected out there in writing, but make ... a linking statement. For example, Sr Sheila, someone all the way across on the other side of World in Africa, and the things she is doing here, we can carry on here. So I think then like the embroidery that she did for us.... I think it's great... and I think symbols are everywhere ... it presents who you are, so I think Dominican symbols here represent who **we are**. (Glenda: GFG1 03/12/12)

Symbols remind students that they are part of the Dominican family (Glenda: GFG1 03/12/12).

[The statue of St Dominic at the front of the college] just kind of sets me into the mind-set that day. I can go on with those values and that ... in the morning it just helps me get into a mental state for the rest of the day.” (Siri: SI-6 07/11/12)

6.3.6 Conclusion

Charism is experienced across the breadth of college life by all participants. Participants feel it. It forms identity and informs behaviours. It is experienced as particular action to help others. Dominican charism has a particular impact within a learning environment in which thinking and exploration of Truth are focii. While some participants experience a tension with this understanding and what they believe to be official Church requirements, others justify their own non-alignment with Church teaching as inadequate thinking that they can personally “adjust” to suit their personal needs and beliefs. Dominican charism provides an authentic connection to the Gospel of Jesus, celebrating what is fully human within an environment that seeks to enrich their spiritual being. Charism provides a useful overarching framework for the development of the whole self within an educational setting. It is understood to emanate from the Christian message, but how distinctive it is against it or compared to other charisms seeks exploration. It is driven and nurtured by sustainable relationships in which participants share common understandings of a set of values and it is on the basis of these that identity is formed. Presenting Dominican charism in a somewhat unchurched society and community in the right way so that the message of Jesus remains understood as the essence of charism invites further illumination. Data demonstrate that participants have a positive experience of charism about which

they claim a responsibility as stewards, to pass on. This invites an exploration of the third research question.

6.4 Research Question 3: How is Dominican charism nurtured?

The third research question is: How is Dominican charism nurtured at San Sisto College? Understandings of this research question relate to the following five themes:

1. Strategic planning
2. Immersion and Enculturation
3. Subtle-Overt Implementation
4. Formation of teachers
5. Leadership.

6.4.1 Strategic planning

It is evident from both the documents analysed and from the interviews that the nurturing of charism happens within a planned framework and at a strategic level.

The Charismic Learning Calendar diarises themes, lessons, teacher in-service, newsletter articles and assembly addresses. “Living towards Integration” documents an effort to strategise staff spirituality over a five year period. Unit planners and the Habits of Spirit program (complete with training and resources) indicate strategy and on-going leadership and direction. All participants indicate that they either know of the strategy, are a part of it, or assume one exists. Peg sees “a deliberate attempt to bring those ways of Dominic into the school. I do see it as a planned effort to bring that alive in the school” (Peg: PI-4 08/11/12). Graduate Gwen experienced charism not as “something that just happened... [or] accidental”. But neither was it “forced” (GI-4 05/12/12). While Piper (PI-2 07/11/12) cannot refer to any exact strategy, she does observe that charism:

permeates [through a] significant number of initiatives and teaching strategies and educational strategies here at the college ... [and] that without knowing what they are, you'd have to say there is something there that all this is built on. It's not just something that is bubbling up by accident. There must be some strategy there that underpins it. (Piper: PI-2 07/11/12)

Teachers identify an obvious strategy for the nurturing of charism. They see that at San Sisto, charism is valued and resourced. Toni says that:

This school [has] the most overtly published unified pedagogy – where all the training at the start of the year and I assume it’ll continue ... I’ve never been in a school where that is so strong. ... I could see the reason [why] Dimensions of Learning [could be] implemented separately in any other school. But the **way** it’s being presented in the presentation and training that I’ve been to is coming out of that pillar of the Dominican charism. And again, it’s being overtly stated “This is what we’re about. This is **how** we implement that aspect of our Dominican way.” (Toni: TI-7 06/03/13)

Tamara, too, says:

I definitely see it as strategic. ... I missed the induction process and found that the resources were all there to instantly put my hands on and that wouldn’t have happened in a school where it wasn’t strategically a part of how we educate the girls. So in that sense, it offers clarity to staff and students about what we are on about. It’s a formal recognition that they are the values and Habits of Spirit and Mind that we follow and that we foster. I do see it as deliberate in the sense that as a staff we deliberately try to teach and outline what it **is** and I think that’s our role really. (Tamara: TI-2 26/02/13)

Tegan appreciates how the various elements of college pedagogy, spirituality and pastoral work are strategically linked. “[T]hose things are not there in the school accidentally or coincidentally reflecting the values of the school. They deliberately became part of our culture... (Tegan: TI-6 22/02/13).

Tara, like all teachers, identifies a definite strategy but raises a tension that might exist because of the amount of work and the time it requires of staff to prepare lessons in the way described in the resources. This reflection offers insight into Tegan’s remark that perhaps teachers who are not wholly in support of the charism would not stay at the school.

6.4.2 Immersion and Enculturation

How Dominican charism is immersed and encultured into life at San Sisto is the second theme explored in response to how charism is nurtured. Students, teachers and parents talk of Dominican charism as being “just the way we do it here” (Tanya: TI-11 08/03/13); it is a “constant” (Steffi: SFG2 30/10/12); it is “everywhere”; it is “almost a second language” (Peg: PI-4 08/11/12); it “drives your decision-making” (Tracy: TFG2 14/11/12) and “[i]t’s embedded into everything we do” (Tilly: TFG2 14/11/12). Interviews of fifty-seven (57) people and an analysis of college documents (listed in Table 5.3 in section 5.6.1) expose ways in which charism is implemented and/or nurtured at the college. The interviews endorse the documents as being implemented.

Table 6-9 Nurturing Dominican charism

COMMUNITY	STUDY	PRAYER	SERVICE
<p>Student 8-day Induction</p> <p>Welcome to College Assembly –symbols bookmark for new staff and students</p> <p>Welcome to School – Reception of Badges (Caleruega, Fanjeaux, Bologna)</p> <p><i>Verigram</i>: Weekly Commentary on a “Dominican value” (Habit of Spirit)</p> <p>Opening Mass</p> <p>WELL – centre for wellbeing, and its activities and services</p> <p>Dominican Schools Networking days</p> <p>Days of Celebration: Dominican Family Day, San Sisto Day, House Feast Days</p> <p>Connections with other Dominican Schools; Common Ground Conference</p> <p>Symbols: College, Schools, Houses and College Badge</p> <p>Visible signs:</p> <p>Mosaics on buildings Names of buildings Statue of St Dominic 32 Posters in every room</p> <p>Staff Formation in Dominican charism, spirituality, Religious life of school</p> <p>Immersion Trip</p>	<p>16 Habits of Spirit program</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 16 “Dominican Values” • Named in every unit • Shared language • Resources • Staff professional learning <p>Specific Classroom Instruction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Units in RE, History and other subjects • Yr 11 RE and SOR units • Yr 12 SOR Preaching <p>Charismic Learning Calendar integrating</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principal’s address • College & school prayer <p>Whole-of-college Habits lessons</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lunch time craft • Life coaching <p>Parenting program</p> <p>Dominican Education Network attendance (Principal & APRE)</p> <p>Assembly addresses – Principal, APRE, students</p> <p>College Board Formation</p> <p>Optional: Formation lectures, guest presentations by Dominicans</p> <p>Learning Series – Dominican Educational philosophy, charism</p> <p>Attendance at DEN Conference, Common Ground Student conference</p> <p>Service Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Briefing • Debriefing • Community Commissioning <p>Awareness Raising</p>	<p>Meetings begin with prayer</p> <p>Homeroom, School, College Prayer</p> <p>Meditative Daily Prayer at 10.25 am – time for contemplation</p> <p>Weekly article in <i>Verigram</i> concerning Catholic, Christian, Dominican matters</p> <p>Roster for college and homeroom prayer based on Habits of Spirit themes</p> <p>Spirituality Days, Retreats and camps</p> <p>College Masses and rituals</p> <p>Use of symbols during prayer experiences and celebrations</p> <p>Walking the labyrinth</p>	<p>Fundraising for various Dominican ministries</p> <p>St Vincent de Paul Christmas hampers</p> <p>Project Compassion</p> <p>Greenies Group</p> <p>Social Justice Group</p> <p>Year 11 Service at Year 12 Graduation Dinner</p> <p>Social Justice Breakfast</p> <p>Attendance at Social Justice functions at other schools and service for outside agencies</p> <p>Year Level Community Service Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yr 8 Trading Circle • Yr 9 Bulimba Ck Sustainability • Yr 10 Salvin Park Aged Care • Yr 11 St Brendan’s Homework Club <p>Yr 12 Rosies Street Retreat</p>

Elements of charism, as named in interviews or as located in documents, fit within the framework of the four elements of a Christian life, or as noted by Isabelle (II-3 20/12/12) and Sammi (SI-5 07/11/12), the four “Dominican pillars” of study, prayer, community and service. The examples of charism in action, displayed in Table 6.9, support stakeholder comments that the implementation of charism is worked at “consistently”, and is “strategic” (Tara: TI-4 25/02/13). Table 6.9 lists many of the ways in which Dominican charism is experienced at the college.

While participants cite the overt and visible programs and activities as in Table 6.9, they also cite relationships and role-modelling by members of the community as integral to the credible implementation of charism.

Charism is encultured into San Sisto in a way that makes Sammi (SI-5 07/11/12) identify “Dominican charism” as synonymous with “San Sisto”.

I think [Dominican charism] really follows closely on the footsteps of St Dominic but it ... falls under ... what ... San Sisto is. ... I think we have 4 pillars: community, service, prayer and study and I think they are just the 4 pillars that kind of hold up a table. They hold up our community. They, together, form San Sisto, together as one, following all in ... St Dominic's footsteps. (Sammi: SI-5 07/11/12)

Other students don't use the term “four pillars” but they do express experience in the breadth of opportunities provided, and they cite their link to St Dominic.

During interview it is not always clear that these elements are offered as a direct response to charism or in response to Catholic ethos but participants always make a link to their charismatic connection. Tanya explains the experience of a very strong sense of community within the college as “It's just a whole lot of factors I think that come together really well. ... I mean I think a lot of it is Catholic. I really do. I think that there is just something about Catholic schools.... You just sense it...” (Tanya: TI-11 08/03/13). Table 6.9 provides evidence why Isabelle (II-3 20/12/12) says that “There's heaps, heaps, heaps, heaps.... [of Dominican activity at the college]. A strategy of immersing students into charismatic activity is evident in the college so that it becomes just “the way we do things around here” (Pam: PFG1 05/11/12).

With the breadth of opportunities offered to engage students in an authentic response to Gospel, whether it named as Dominican or Christian or Catholic, participant groups experience things differently. This difference is explored in the next section.

6.4.3 Subtle – Overt Implementation

Data suggest new understandings about how students and teachers experience the nurturing of charism. The experience of each group, teachers, parents and students, adds insight into the complex reality of nurturing charism.

Teachers say that Dominican charism is “embedded into **everything** that we do” (Tilly: TFG2 14/11/12). Students say that it is “interwoven into everything” (Sonya: SFG1-30/10/12). Parents experience it as being “**so strong** ... that ... the girls feel a connection to what’s almost like a foundation of who they are... [They have a] sense of belonging to something that is special” (Peg: PI-4 08/11/12). Teachers experience charism as “overt”. However, students and parents see it as “subtle”. An analysis of the data reveals “two sides of the one coin” in this third theme.

Graduates explain charism as being implemented in “a **casual** way”, “harmonizing” “[Teachers] uphold it. And you can **see** they uphold it. And then they don’t **have** to push Dominican charism on you to do it. You tend to just travel along with them (Glenda: GFG1 03/12/12). Glenda further explains that teachers:

embedded [charism] in every day. So I guess it carries on. Like in their lives after school I think. I think as well by teaching us at school, you’re expected to **teach** it and I think like don’t put yourself in this position if you don’t **want** to teach it. So that’s probably why all of them **are** here because they are willing to, they’ve experienced it, and like it. (Glenda: GFG1 03/12/12)

Tiffany agrees with Glenda, saying that she could not imagine anyone “lasting” at the college if they didn’t have a desire to be engaged within a Dominican culture (Tiffany: TFG1 07/03/12). Gwen (GI-4 05/12/12) says that it is just “something that seems to happen”. Gabi (GFG1 09/01/13) says “I think it was the subtle things...” and she lists social justice activities and helping each other. Gina (GFG1 09/01/13) confirms that “it was always just ingrained in our minds that it’s okay to [be involved in social justice activities].” Gretta (GI-2 03/12/12) references the “subliminal” impact of Habits of Spirit posters in the classroom. Sharon (SI-4 12/11/12), Sammi (SI-5 07/11/12) and other current students see charism evidenced in the classroom in the Habits of Mind and Spirit program. Sammi (SI-5 07/11/12) sees the posters as reminders of what “Jesus said and Dominic led us to”. Siri (SI-6 07/11/12) explains that the “Habits of Spirit” are “not nagged at you.” Sonya (SFG1-30/10/12) acknowledges “It’s important to be your own person spiritually.... And this school promotes that.” She cites

daily meditative prayer as a means through which this happens. Steffi and Storm explain the subtle, inclusive approach adopted by teachers. They argue that its influence is because it has not been “shoved down their throats” (Storm: SFG2 30/10/12).

These views of the subtle implementation of charism are shared by parents. Piper expressed a view shared with others:

[Dominican charism] is built in to the learning process. ... I just think it's not being forced on students or rammed down their throats ... it just seems to be that when you hear about an aspect of the college life, whether it be the justice group, the environmental group or just a learning activity... it just seems to have an underpinning or under-current that you can link it back to Dominican life. So not being a psychologist or an expert in the field, but perhaps it's been woven into the way of life at school, that students come away thinking it hasn't been rammed down their throat. Probably the last thing a [teenage girl] wants is this almost rammed down her throat, but it's sort ... subtly being weaved into everything they do that it just becomes a way of life. (Piper: PI-2 07/11/12)

In contrast to the view that the nurturing of charism is done subtly, teachers explain that charismatic elements are “out there... and...public” (Toni: TI-7 06/03/13). They have no doubt about there being a strategy of which they are a part. For teachers particularly, though, charism is “overt” (Tess: TI-1 28/2/13); a bit like a “sledge hammer” (Tarni: TI-5 26/02/13), “obvious” (Tina: TI-9 28/02/13) and “explicit” (Tamara: TI-2 26/02/13). Tarni provides a logical explanation for the different experience:

I would say as teachers you **plan** their lessons. You **plan** their curriculum. We have it constantly as a very **loud** focus and possibly the fact that we are trained and we have experience and we have a large knowledge base. We are actually **aware** ... like, for example when I ... see what our values are and all of that... [It] connects to a deep amount of learning. So that's not subtle to me. That's very deliberate. But to a 12 year old or a 14 year old with far more limited background knowledge, they may not even register that that this there... or what it means... So that subtlety also signifies that there are things they don't recognise as Dominican. (Tarni: TFG1 07/03/12)

Tess explains it differently:

You have to be overt and you have to actually teach them the Habits of Mind [and Spirit]. You have to make them understand what it's all about and once they **do** understand they can move to the next level. And the being subtle is a higher level of thinking. (Tess: TI-1 28/2/13)

Tegan offers another possible explanation, consistent with the “immersion” strategy:

... I would suggest that possibly the fact that it is **so** everywhere, **so** all the time, actually is the opposite of subtle, but the fact that it is there **so** obviously **so** all of the time ... at every level, that the girls don't realise it... And I think also possibly the fact that the change in the way we prayer ... All of those things ... there has been a significant shift in the way we approach things across the last 100 years. We have gone from fire and brimstone to God as life-giver and so I know first-hand from my mother [who] said, "it was shoved down our throats". Now they may have only had that once a week or you know, maybe once a day [but] It was the **way** it was done that made it aggressive or fear-mongering or that kind of thing. ... My mother won't go back to church because of that... I would suggest that if she came here there'd be **far** more exposure to the Dominican charism and the religiosity of our school. It's **everywhere**. On the folders in every room there's *Veritas* symbols. It's everywhere. But it's a little bit like trying to look at something and see what is always there. We actually don't see it and I think that may well be [why students think it is subtle]. (Tegan: TI-6 22/02/13)

Tina offers palatability in the way Dominican charism is presented as a reason for why students are not affronted by it.

Perhaps it's more digestible the way it's presented ... so you're given ... concrete but kind of clear messages about how important it is to live by the Gospel, but you're given that in a way that's ... it **can** be carried on, it can be acted out. Okay, that's not impossible, I can't part a sea but I can definitely give more of myself to the community. and as Dominic did and you know if he was such a loved person who did so much for that community around him, then I will aspire to be like him. (Tina: TI-9 28/02/13)

Terri says that the method of implementation is "very direct" but "delivered softly. It's not bashed into them if you like" (Terri: TFG1 07/03/12).

Tara explains the Habits of Spirit strategy of posters and shared language:

It does make a difference having those posters and having the constant language and reminders that which so often does something. But I remember something that a student said to me last year ... She said "Oh I don't know ... why this school continues to support this" But then she paused for a moment and she said "well, I think it's because maybe later on in our lives when we're ready to take on one of these habits and to take it on seriously when we are mature enough (this is paraphrasing her words) when we are mature enough, then it's going to impact our lives." I really think that's true because a lot of the times students don't, they realize that it is something important, they're just not ready for it. (Tara: TI-4 25/02/13)

Tara also emphasises the time and willingness required of a teacher to present charism in the way that it is planned.

I think if as a teacher you're willing to make that connection and spend the time as well in creating lessons that are wholistic in terms of the learning experience, then everything fits in quite nicely. But again, it just comes down to the time that is sometimes, **sometimes**, not present, ... and it **can** seem

ad hoc if you don't spend the time to see the connection between it all. ... As a teacher, I can see how everything connects. ... I mean, the resources are there for teachers to make those connections but I think the lack of time sometimes promotes the idea that it is *ad hoc*. (Tara: TI-4 25/02/13)

Tiffany says that she “can't imagine that someone would last here” if they didn't feel that they wanted to be a part of our Dominican community (Tiffany: TFG1 07/03/12). Tara provides an added bonus of the requirements to teach charism through the Habits of Spirit program.

I **know** [that the] explicit teaching of Habits of Mind and Habits of Spirit has provided me with a positive edge. I think because as a teacher you're constantly ... listening to it and you're also teaching it in some way it does make you more aware of those habits that make successful people, of those habits that make for a better person. So, I think that has definitely helped me. Yes. It continues to provide me with a sense of wanting to be a better person in many dimensions not just the spiritual dimension but also you want to improve your mind as well [and in my] relationships with others. (Tara: TI-4 25/02/13)

It is apparent that because teachers are the nurturers of charism, and the implementers of the Habits of Spirit program, that they are required to have at least a working knowledge of Dominican charism. They are required to plan lessons based on it and its values. For them, charism involves work and time. For students and their parents, they are the passive yet receptive participants in the program and experience it through lessons in which the message “while being very direct, is delivered softly” (Terri: TFG1 07/03/12).

6.4.4 Formation of Teachers

The fourth theme in response to how charism is nurtured relates to the formation of teachers. The emphasis placed on charism over the years varies from principal to principal (Tess: TI-1 28/2/13). However, when the emphasis on charism is as strong as it now is, and as overt, working at San Sisto becomes more than just a job. Formation “enable[s] continuing staff to build on and to become stronger, more aware of the tradition of the charism” (Tess: TI-1 28/2/13).

The college provides a variety of formation approaches and opportunities including professional development in the form of guest lectures, school induction, explanation and use of symbols, liturgies, lectures and OPFAM newsletter (Tegan: TI-6 22/02/13), Habits of Spirit training. The teaching of Habits of Spirit to the students throughout the curriculum is a type of formation in itself, because as teachers prepare and then

deliver their lessons, they are learning more about the habit themselves, becoming reflective of their own habits and seeking improvement for self (Tammi: TI-10 26/02/13; Tina: TI-9 28/02/13; Tara: TI-4 25/02/13).

Immersion and social justice activities are valuable in forming teachers. One participant expressed the view that these activities are so valuable that they should be made compulsory for teachers. They are more effective than “listening to a lecture” which is not “digestible for a lot of teachers” (Tara: TI-4 25/02/13). Action-based learning is more effective for Tara than any scriptural study or reading and interpreting (Tara: TI-4 25/02/13).

Teachers who were taught by Religious Orders indicated that they were usually not taught about the founder to any great degree. The Dominican Sisters were no different. All participants except students do not consider their own formation in charism with an understanding of the founder to have been an important part of their education. Tiffany does not think her aunt who came to San Sisto would know anything about St Dominic (Tiffany: TFG1 07/03/12). Another participant feels that she had to educate herself in the charism, even having been taught by the Dominican sisters, because Religious Orders did “not necessarily think [that] they had to educate students in their charism because they were just living it” (Thea: TI1-12 13/10/12).

The need for on-going and strategic formation of teachers is evident. The role of leadership is explored in this fifth area of nurturing charism.

6.4.5 Leadership

The area of leadership is the final theme raised in response to how charism is nurtured at San Sisto College. Teachers and parents comment on the role of leadership within the college. The experience of charism:

always comes down to who **leads** the Dominican charism, how does your leadership team ... make it manifested and make it lived in our students and in the rest of the school community so that [whoever visits here] they feel a sense of ... peace, welcome, acceptance and hospitality. I think that people **do** feel that [here]. (Tomiko: TI-3 25/02/13)

All staff have a level of responsibility in relation to charism. All teachers try to model it, although some more explicitly and authentically than others (Sue: SFG4 06/11/12) and they are engaged in teaching elements of it. While all participants want to support

and contribute to it and feel a level of responsibility for its nurturing, the principal and the APRE are seen to be the key drivers of charism (Thea: TI2-12 04/12/12). Furthermore, the passion of the principal and APRE for nurturing of Dominican charism is both evident and contributes to its existence (Thea: TI1-12 13/10/12; Tanya: TI-11 08/03/13).

Whether the presence of particular “Dominican attributes” such as the appreciation of excellence is because the principal has sought to authentically infuse this “Dominican value” or whether it is an existing personal characteristic of the leader that finds alignment within the charism, invites discussion.

Tanya explains that the principal’s obvious commitment to the value of excellence makes this “Dominican attribute” very overt.

You bring your strong sense of values to it anyway and I know that even without Dominican charism you are very committed to excellence and doing one’s best, and second best won’t do etc. And I think you have been able to tap into that... into that Dominican pillar of excellence ... personal excellence or striving for excellence and I think that’s... so that’s worked well. In that sense I see the charism aligning with your personal values and those of the APRE. (Tanya: TI-11 08/03/13)

Paula contends that the leadership and influence of the leader of any organisation impacts upon that organisation irrespective of charism. She argues that the breadth of the experience of Dominican charism in the school is the result of the principal’s influence, more than it is the result of the school being Dominican because of its heritage (Paula: PFG1 05/11/12). This is a view generally shared by teachers and parents.

San Sisto provides a culture with an obvious presence of charismatic activity that participants identify as strategic and with leadership. This requires the formation of and professional learning for all staff who require commitment to the charismatic culture, planning by leaders, effort by teachers who need to plan appropriate lessons and use a particular shared language, reception by students and valuing by parents. How much a principal’s personal values drive a school in comparison to what is authentically charismatic and how “formed” principals are in the charism of their schools are issues emerging from research question three.

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter identifies a number of new understandings about the experience of charism. These are summarised conceptually in Figure 6-1.

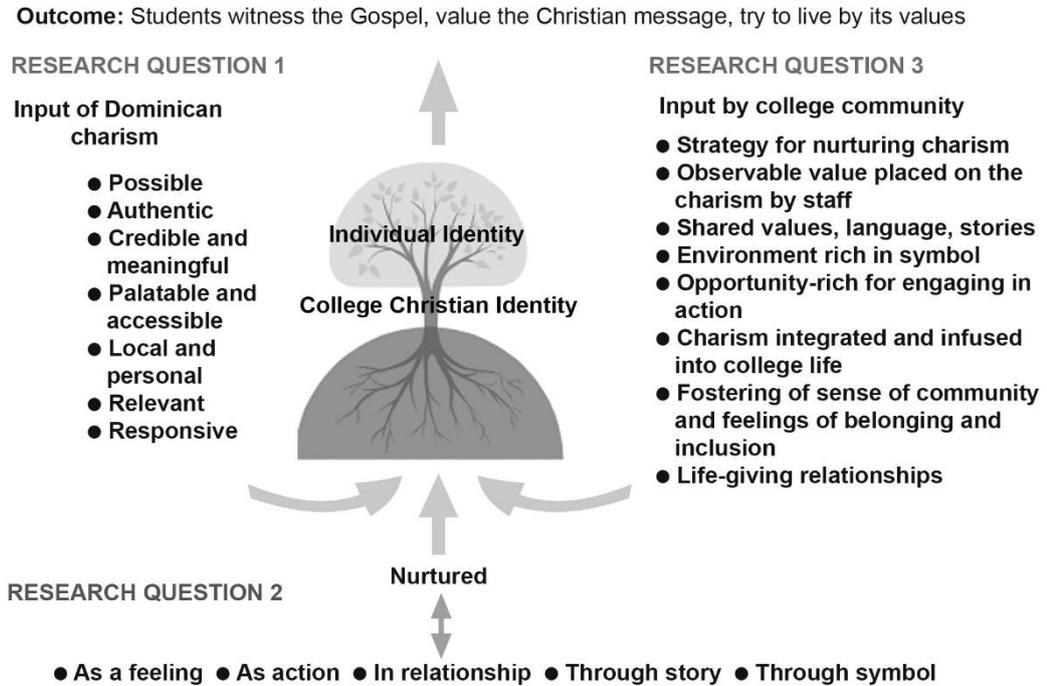


Figure 6-1 Charismatic culture

The understandings that emerge from the research questions require synthesis, reconceptualisation and further discussion.

Chapter 7: DISCUSSION OF THE NEW UNDERSTANDINGS

7.1 Introduction

The purpose of this research is to explore how students, teachers and parents at San Sisto College experience Dominican charism.

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss issues that were generated from the new understandings.

There are three issues that structure the discussion of this chapter:

- Dominican charism: providing an authentic way to live the Gospel
- Dominican charism: offering a relevant response to the Gospel
- Dominican charism: leading for mission

These issues emerged by synthesising the new understandings generated in Chapter 6 (Table 7.1).

Table 7-1 The link between the research questions, new understandings and the key issues

A	B	C	D
Specific Research questions	New understandings	Issues that structure the discussion	Origin of issues in Chapter Six: New Understandings
<i>What do students, teaches and parents understand Dominican charism to be?</i>	<i>Authenticity of Dominican Charism</i> <i>Naming whatever is experienced as “Dominican”</i> <i>Perceiving alignment of charism to Gospel</i> <i>Developing a spirituality</i> <i>Searching constantly</i> <i>Distinctiveness of Dominican charism</i>	<i>Dominican charism: providing an authentic way to live the Gospel</i>	<i>6.2.1.1; 6.2.1.2; 6.2.2.2.1-7</i> <i>6.2.1.2; 6.2.2.2.2</i>
<i>How do students, teachers and parents experience Dominican charism at San Sisto College?</i>	<i>Generational changes</i> <i>A relevant spirituality – practical, individual and global</i>	<i>Dominican charism: offering a relevant response to the Gospel</i>	<i>6..3.1 – 6.3.5</i> <i>6.2.2</i>

<p><i>How is the Dominican charism nurtured at San Sisto College?</i></p>	<p><i>Mission Leadership Tensions and paradoxes Models of leadership Mission made explicit Strategic Planning Immersion Employment and formation within a Catholic school in the Dominican tradition</i></p>	<p><i>Dominican charism: Leading for mission</i></p>	<p>6.4.1.1 – 4; 6.3.1 – 5;</p>
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Figure 7-1 provides a conceptual framework for the discussion of issues. It shows the influence of leadership in ensuring the continued authenticity and relevance of the charism. The interplay between leadership and the Dominican charism nurtures a charismatic culture. Leadership adopts authentic and relevant charism to engage a school community in the mission of the Catholic school.

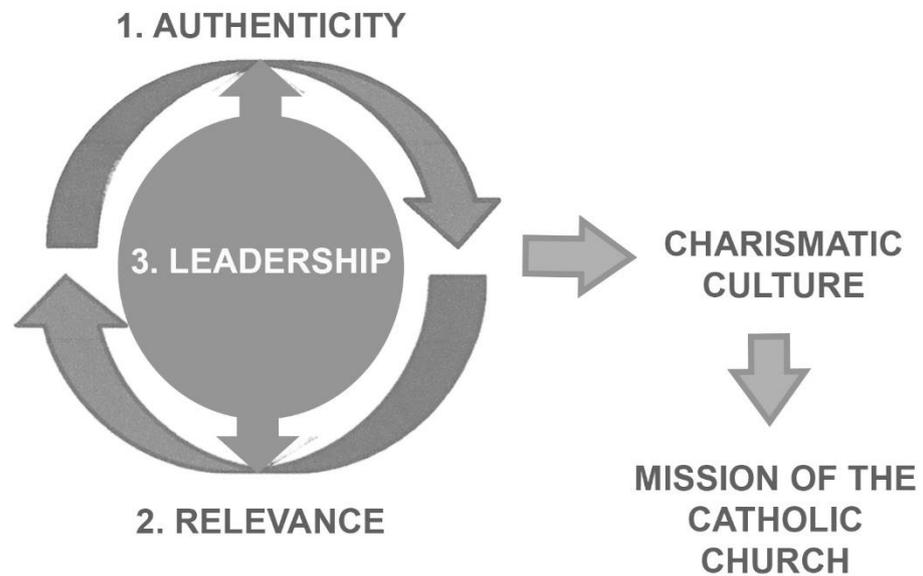


Figure 7-1 A conceptual framework of the discussion of issue

Table 7.2 offers a diagrammatic structure for the discussion of these new understandings.

Table 7-2 Structure for the discussion of new understandings

7.2 Dominican charism: providing an authentic way to live the Gospel
7.2.1 Issues with a charismatic culture in schools
7.2.1.1 Perceptions of relationship between charism and Jesus Christ
7.2.1.2 Religious Identity
7.2.1.3 Faith-based language
7.2.1.4 Demands on teachers
7.2.2 Authenticity of Dominican charism
7.2.2.1 Holistic understanding of Dominican charism
7.2.2.2 Dominican charism provides a lens to the Gospel
7.2.2.3 Spirituality and wellbeing
7.2.2.4 Authenticity: A paradox involving a constant search
7.2.2.5 Conclusion
7.2.3 Distinctiveness of Dominican charism
7.2.4 Conclusion
7.3 Dominican charism: offering a relevant response to the Gospel
7.3.1 Generational changes
7.3.1.1 Parent beliefs
7.3.1.2 Teacher beliefs
7.3.1.3 Student beliefs
7.3.2 A relevant spirituality
7.3.3 Conclusion
7.4 Dominican charism: Leading for mission
7.4.1 Understanding mission
7.4.1.1 Type 1 mission
7.4.1.2 Type 2 mission
7.4.1.3 Presence of both types of mission
7.4.1.4 Dominican charism fosters mission authenticity
7.4.2 Leadership of charism
7.4.2.1 Explicit
7.4.2.2 A shared responsibility
7.4.2.3 A framework for the leadership of charism
7.4.2.4 Charismatic continuance
7.4.2.5 Mission made explicit
7.4.2.5.1 Strategic planning
7.4.2.5.2 Immersion
7.4.2.5.3 Employment and formation of staff
7.4.3 Conclusion

7.2 Dominican charism: Providing an Authentic Way to Live the Gospel

Issue 1 originates from the first specific research question:

What do students, parents and teachers understand Dominican charism to be?

Members of the college community understand Dominican charism as an authentic and meaningful way to live the Gospel. This is demonstrated by the consistency of participants' descriptions of charism, their experience of its existence, and their identification with it. A set of values and a particular role model are identified by participants. These inform their way of living the Gospel (Dominican Sisters of Eastern Australia, 1999; Havey, 2007).

I think that it's obviously incredibly important that Jesus came ... [but] I guess Dominic was just like **proof** that it is really possible to be able to live such a beneficial and pure life. (Sammi: SI-5 07/11/12)

Students understand Dominican charism to be experienced through feelings, actions, relationships, stories and symbols as described in the new understandings in Chapter 6. Charism offers community members a lens through which values are explicitly modelled in order to influence Christian living. It is lived in a community that exercises right relationships, where all members are included and respected. Respect for the ideas and beliefs of others is considered "Gospel-authentic" and connected to the Dominican mission "to seek the Truth" (McVey, 2002b). Truth is generated through "probing, grasping, and illuminating reality to its depth" (McVey, 2007, p. 65). Students link seeking new knowledge, being open to new learnings, and deepening their understandings of certain issues, in ways consistent with the Dominican scholarship (McVey, 2002b, 2007; B. Reid, 2012, March 19).

Charism is understood by students to be concerned with a connection to God that is cultivated through liturgies, meditative prayer, reflection, and by "trying to find God in everyday life" (Sonya: SFG1-03/10/12). Their learned perception of their relationship with God and their prayer practice is that they are to be experienced individually and collectively, anywhere, anytime (Steffi: SFG2 30/10/12). Charism is also experienced through engagement in service and justice activities, in which participation is considered "normal" (Gabi and Gina: GFG2 09/01/13). Dominican charism includes, for students, an appreciation of ecologically and environmentally sustainable practices, and ethical responsibility for the planet (MacGillis, n.d.). "Looking after God's creation" is considered an important part of school culture (Shelby: SFG4 06/11/12).

Through their experience of Dominican charism, students develop a spirituality of connectedness to humanity (Gretta: GI-2 03/12/12). They discover common ground

with each other through dialogue, communication, compassion, and care – for each other and for creation (S. Flynn, 2013, July 12; Goergen, 2008; Woods, 2006, August 18-19). The school culture, or “the way we do things around here” (Pam: PFG1 05/11/12), is voiced in similar ways by the three participant groups, as explained in section 6.2.2.

Students experience a close teacher-student relationship that is respectful and empowering. The school is a place where everyone’s views can be expressed and ideas shared (Sammi: SI-5 07/11/12). Students describe school culture as religious, with a shared set of values (Sue: SFG4 06/11/12; Shelby: SFG4 06/11/12). Values are expressed as Habits of Mind and Spirit, and are practised as “just second nature” (Shelby: SFG4 06/11/12).

From a parent perspective, a culture of “community” and “belonging” that is attributed to the school’s Dominican heritage and culture exists. Parents believe that this culture facilitates the development in students of a sense of wanting to make a difference in the world. They appreciate the influence on their daughters of the school’s attention to living the Gospel in a focused way. There is an obvious “connection between people” (Peg: PI-4 08/11/12). “[T]he whole staff system is ... like one body ... it just seems to be ... teacher, admin, principal, groundsman, cafeteria person – they all just form part of this one body...” (Paris: PI-3 06/11/12). This unity is consistent with the ethos of the Dominican Family (Cadore, 2014, p. 3).

Teachers describe the school culture as being one of “very, very high ideals, very high expectations of learning and good role models with very strong faith” (Tess: TI-1 28/2/13), where “we encourage thinking” (Tess: TI-1 28/2/13). It is a culture within which girls develop a practical faith (Tess: TI-1 28/2/13). “I wouldn’t be here if it [didn’t]” (Tess: TI-1 28/2/13). There is an overt focus on helping others (Tara: TI-4 11/12/12; Tegan: TI-6 22/02/13). Teachers understand that values are explicitly taught by teachers, irrespective of the teacher’s faith background or religious practice. These same values are experienced to the extent that they are “the air that we breathe” (Tamara: TI-2 26/02/13). “It is this vulnerability and sensitivity to the needs of others that determined the very structure of the Order...” (McVey, 2007).

These participant descriptions of the charismatic culture of San Sisto align with research into the mission of the contemporary Catholic school (Coughlan, 2009,

p. 215; McLaughlin, 2000e). (See section 7.4.1 and Chapter 4.) Principals and employing authorities identify the pursuit of authentic relationships and Gospel values as central to their educational mission (Coughlan, 2009; A. O'Brien, 2013). The formation of a life-giving community and the provision of service and outreach opportunities in response to the message of Jesus are at the heart of the mission of the Catholic school (Johnston & Chesterton, 1994, April, p. 68; Watson, 2007). They are consistent with the focus of a Dominican school (Oliveira, 2007).

The culture of San Sisto is described variously as “life-giving” (Sammi: SI-5 07/11/12), Dominican, Catholic and Christian. Teachers believe that the Dominican charism makes it easier for them “to tap into the Christian story” (Thea: TI1-12 13/10/12). This research identifies the faith and spirituality of students and teachers as being nurtured by the school’s Dominican charism.

Creating a Gospel environment in a contemporary Catholic school, through the lens of charism, is a complex dynamic. The deliberate cultivation of the charism in a secular, globalised culture of growing religious illiteracy may generate some tension (Moore, 2008, p. 1). Before discussing the authenticity and distinctiveness of Dominican charism, four issues which generate such tensions invite scrutiny.

7.2.1 Issues with a Charismatic Culture in Schools

7.2.1.1 Perception of Relationship Between Charism and Jesus Christ

The first issue concerns how students perceive the relationship between the Dominican charism and Jesus Christ. Charism provides role models like St Dominic, who live the Gospel of Jesus. St Dominic strove to live the “Good News” of Jesus. He did not seek to create an alternative story (Schillebeeckx, 1983). Modelling life on the pattern lived by Dominicans for over 800 years is not an additional layer of belief and practice as a Christian, but rather it is “a way of being a Christian... that captures all of the essential elements of Christian life, but shaped according to the distinctive grace, vision, genius and example of St Dominic” (J. J. Reid, 1997, p. 6).

A charismatic culture, through its relevant and contemporary strategies, invites students into an understanding of Jesus and his mission. The charism provides a means through which students come to know Jesus (Brien & Hack, 2010, p. 4). Jesus, not St

Dominic, is the “super hero” (Tiffany: TFG1 07/03/13). Teachers try to ensure that possible ambiguity and confusion is clarified (Tiffany: TFG1 07/03/13). Nonetheless, this presents a perennial challenge.

We make him [St Dominic] so important like he is a God, like he’s Jesus like ... But he is a really important person [and] without him we wouldn’t have anywhere to go. We wouldn’t have anyone to follow. (Sally: SI-3 29/10/12)

A similar issue is registered in other research. A study concerning the institutionalisation of Edmund Rice charism identified the existence of a problem when institutions focus, for their own agenda, on their own particular interpretations of a religious founder’s “charism” over the authentic charism (Finn, 2013, p. 170). A challenge inviting constant scrutiny is the generation of a “pseudo-charism”, in which the founder of a Religious Order is so emphasized, as to diminish the mission of Jesus (McLaughlin, 2007).

In a largely unchurched student population (Wilkinson, 2012) (Stacy: SFG3 31/10/12), there may be confusion concerning the relationship between charism, Catholicism and Christianity (Thea: TI1-12 13/10/12). Consequently, teachers understand the importance of “[getting] the balance right” to ensure an authentic representation of their relationship to each other (Thea: TI1-12 13/10/12 and Tiffany: TFG1 07/03/13). With declining connection to Church, there is an increased need within a charismatic culture to “make explicit what once was known implicitly” (Belmonte & Cranston, 2009, p. 1). When nurtured authentically, charism has the potential to provide the “creativity” (Francis 1, 2013, par. 134), structures and focus necessary for contemporary youth to “frame [their] journeys to God” (H. Anderson & Foley, 1998, p. x).

7.2.1.2 Religious Identity

The second issue in a charismatic culture relates to religious identity. Participants indicate that they understand the difference and relationship between Dominican charism, Catholic and Christianity. Students and teachers claim that they “are” and “feel” “Dominican” (Steffi and Storm: SFG2 30/10/12), but “know” they are also Catholic (Tess: TI-1 28/2/13; Storm: SFG2 30/10/12). Given the current context of a Church experiencing division and confusion (Treston, 2000), diminished credibility (Norton, 2013; F. Sullivan, 2013, October, p. 33), and falling attendance rates at Sunday Mass (Wilkinson, 2012, p. 3), these claims invite scrutiny.

While students identify as Catholic, their only connection with Church is their school experience (McLaughlin, 2000d) (Gay: GI-1 17/12/12). This phenomenon “flags” the necessity for further research into how students define “Catholic”. In an increasingly secular social context, Dominican charism, particularly as experienced through a set of values, is accepted by students as an influential contributor to their identity. “We know **exactly** who we are, and what this school is about ...” (Steffi: SFG2 30/10/12). This same phenomenon is identified in research concerning Marist (Elvery, 2013) and Edmund Rice charisms (Finn, 2013).

The overt presence of the charism and the desire by students to name themselves “Dominican” may appear contrary to the “pervasive cultural marginalisation of religion in the wider community” (Coughlan, 2009, p. 227). Several reasons provide an explanation why, in the context of San Sisto, being “Dominican” is a positive identity.

The first explanation is that Dominican charism seems to offer students a sense of pride, distinctiveness and individuality. Charism nurtures their passion for, and engagement with, their school and vice versa. They own the charism. “It’s ours!” (Storm: SFG2 30/10/12; Sally: SI-3 29/10/12). A similar phenomenon was identified in a study of staff in a Marist school (Elvery, 2013). That study, too, identified ownership of the charism as promoting school pride and high morale. In both Elvery’s (2013) and this study, the charism is identified as a reason for the development of influential relationships, and bonded community. It fosters pride in, and a sense of belonging to, a particular work place or school. Students and staff come together in solidarity with the school’s mission through planned service and justice activities (Elvery, 2013, p. 163). The pride and solidarity experienced promotes a feeling of distinctiveness. Rather than distinctiveness being a sense of superiority in relation to others, it offers a sense of belonging to a particular group of others who value Jesus’ challenge.

[C]harisms of individual Religious Orders and different spiritualities are never meant to create any form of division or elitism within the Church. They are different ways of being part of the life of the Church and leading people to faith in Jesus. (Hutton, 2011)

While elitism in Catholic schools provides a challenge for educational authorities in Australia and internationally (Grace, 2002, p. 96), it was not identified at San Sisto.

Issues concerning charismatic distinctiveness, and the related sense of “being different” are discussed in section 7.2.3.

In the charismatic culture in this study, teachers and students not only express ownership of the charism, but they also articulate responsibility for, and commitment to, holding the charism in stewardship and passing it on to future generations. “I certainly feel responsibility to pass it on in a way which is ... with integrity ...” (Tegan: TI-6 22/02/13). This augments Elvery’s (2013, p. 163) conclusions regarding the notion of “charismatic circularity” (CCE, 2002, par. 13). This concept explains how the charism of Orders continues through dialogue between religious and lay successors (teachers). This study, however, concurs with Runkel’s conclusion concerning the role of students and student leaders in the sustained transmission of Dominican charism (Runkel, 2005, p. 95). Student stewardship of the charism broadens its capacity for transmission. This phenomenon identifies the importance of ensuring that what students experience is authentic Dominican charism.

While research has investigated the capacity of schools to maintain a distinctive religious charism (Elvery, 2013; Runkel, 2005), there is a paucity of research concerning identity, charism and spiritual development. This study addresses this deficiency in section 7.2.2.1.

A second explanation for why students name themselves Dominican is because Dominican charism might be a “safer”, more socially acceptable “identity” to adopt than “Catholic”. Discussing matters of faith amongst some young people is considered “just not normal” (Gwen: GI-4 05/12/12). In this study, participants identified the unequal manner in which women are treated within Institutional Church. Students and teachers agree that, as with Jesus, St Dominic’s relationship with women was based on respect. In contrast, they do not experience the same respect for women in today’s institutional church. Young people and teachers have a perspective that members of any contemporary organisation of integrity should be able to engage in open dialogue with freedom to explore any issue. Dominican charism and philosophy of education is considered positively.

‘Talking about it together,’ is, I would think, a better motto for the Dominican Order than the traditional ‘to contemplate and give to others the fruits of our contemplation’. Even though this includes the all important ‘to others,’ it

overlooks the fact that we also ‘contemplate’ with others – and that, without them there is something missing in our contemplation. (McVey, 2007)

In contrast, the Catholic Church is experienced as a “closed system” (F. Sullivan, 2013, August 5) that “hides many secrets” (Tamara: TI-2 26/02/13). Issues concerning the image of the church are discussed in section 7.3.1.

The third explanation for the students’ identification with “Dominican” relates to the complex nature of identity formation. Identity is not a singularly definable concept. Students name identity in nuanced ways (Sonya: SFG1 30/10/12). While most students acknowledge a “Catholic” identity, what that means for them is unclear (Rymarz, 2011, p. 157). They identify more clearly with the smaller Dominican school community, and with the “wider community” of Christians. There are several reasons for this.

Dominican charism is experienced at a local level. It engages students personally in action and evokes positive feelings concerning their action.

Steffi: Being Dominican feels more real than being Catholic... I don’t know why, but... it just does. Storm: It’s more individual to me. Like, it’s more personal. (Steffi and Storm: SFG2 30/10/12)

Because of the nature of charism, students become so involved in their practical Christianity that they acquire the “smell of the sheep” (Francis 1, 2013, par. 24). They become collectively engaged in the mission of the Kingdom and in the practice of their Christian faith.

Paradoxically, students also assert that they do not need to go to Church or Mass to practise their faith. They meet God in their everyday lives (Sonya: SFG1 30/10/12; Gabi: GFG2 09/01/13). Contemporary youth understand Church membership to be increasingly irrelevant. This offers one explanation for their rejection of formal and public expressions of religion (McCann, 2003). There is:

... an unwillingness to become a subscribed, paid up member of something. I mean I’ve got children and I’ve got students and the last thing they want to become is a member of anything. My generation were (sic) very happy to become members of this and members of that. But now I think there’s a new metaphor... It’s interconnectivity. ... There’s a complete sense now that we are moving to a new stage of consciousness which is not about being part of a club anymore.... (David Tacey in "Catholica," 2013)

Student comments concur with a movement away from specific religious membership: “Religion is kind of seen as a bit of a stigma and that’s not just Catholicism. It’s in general” (Gretta: GI-2 03/12/12). (Indeed, “[f]or most young people, as for most adults, the Catholic Church is a quaint, obsolete institution of yesteryear: backward-looking, with authoritarian structures and a strange morality” (Kung, 2013, p. 230).

In spite of student rejection of religion, the values of Christianity and the Gospel of Jesus remain relevant in their lives. “[I]f you know all the backing through the bible and everything through those beliefs, you live them out. ... [F]or our generation we’ve got a different way of going about “living our faith [compared to previous generations]” (Sonya: SFG1 30/10/12).

Students identify more overtly with a broad “Christian” ethos or identity, than they do a Catholic identity, because of their desire to be “inclusive”. This is the identity which all students accept by their enrolment in the college, irrespective of their faith. They consider an exclusively “Catholic” identity as insensitive to those not of the Catholic faith. In this regard students express an understanding of an emerging Church identity:

A future church will reconstruct a Catholic identity that is compatible with a climate of ecumenism. We can never return to a ghetto church where a subculture of Catholicism casts its mantle of protection against the dangers of “the world”. In a quest for Catholic identity the church is not designing a new Catholic club to find out who can be ‘in’ and ‘out’! Such an incestuous activity has nothing to do with Jesus of the Gospel who longed that everyone would hear the Good News. (Treston, 2000, p. 135)

The value that participants ascribe to “inclusivity” confirms their belief in a paradigm where sectarianism does not feature. They acknowledge multiple pathways to God (David Tacey in "Catholica," 2013). It affirms that perspective that:

Today there is a growing reaction against dogmatism of exclusive ideologies and religious systems that claim to be the one and only authentic revelation of God to us. All religions offer a way towards some vision of salvation. ... An emerging consciousness in humankind is coming to recognise the oneness of God and the mystery of God’s revelation over the millions of years of creation. We know that God as creator is beyond all the words and dogmas of religious traditions. (Treston, 2000, p. 108)

The emergence of this broader identity has been confirmed in research on Catholic teachers and principals (Coughlan, 2009; Elvery, 2013; Finn, 2013; A. O'Brien, 2013). There is an understanding that all Christians are involved in the mission of God, and that this “mission has a Church” (Bevans, 2009). The “Church” is “the global

community of committed believers, a community that extends beyond the narrow boundaries of individual denominations. This community of faith is the true Church” (Kung, 2013, p. 60). The imperative is that life be lived according to the Gospel. “[T]he Kingdom is bigger than the Church” (Connolly, 2013, p. 9). “Christianity does not have simply one cultural expression ... it will also reflect the different faces of the cultures and peoples in which it is received and takes root” (Francis 1, 2013, par. 116). This can create tension for those authorities seeking to develop a relatively exclusive “Catholic” identity in schools (Bishops of NSW and the ACT, 2007; McKinney & Sullivan, 2013).

Given the preference for the broad Christian religious identity, it might appear ironic that participants also assume a specific “Dominican” identity. However, identifying as “Dominican” satisfies the need to belong to a local, distinctive group. The specific Dominican charism provides a praxis that fosters personal transformation in living the Gospel in a particular way (Hall, 2012, November, p. 5). What is understood to be “Dominican” is discussed in section 7.2.2.1.

This research has identified and defended new understandings of the concept of “identity”. Charism is understood to be a way of authentically living the Gospel. Students identify charism as an integral part of school life. Therefore, students, irrespective of faith practice, belief or Christian denomination, experience its influence. The challenge of assuming a singular identity through religion is expressed by a student:

I just assume that he’s [St Dominic’s] Catholic. I just made that assumption because I see like why would we follow a man who wouldn’t be... what we believe in? ... But then I think the same thing with Jesus. Jesus wasn’t Catholic. He was Jewish. (Sally: SI-3 29/10/12)

The challenge concerning identity has been identified in research. “Identity Leaders” (school leadership personnel responsible for the fostering of the religious identity of the school) experience tension when they interpret theology differently from official church teaching (Finn, 2013, p. 168). They appreciate the freedom from traditional positions in the emerging theology that “[t]he church does not have a mission, but the mission has a church” (Bevans, 2009, p. 11). This research resonates with scholarship that identifies that it is “both possible and authentic for [charismatic] schools to embrace and honour the Catholic tradition, while not being confined by it” (Finn, 2013,

p. 168). “The Church, rather than being the dispenser of ministry, stands with ministry within the Kingdom as something derivative, fragile, secondary and temporary” (O’Meara, 1983, p. 29).

Similarly, a study of Middle Leaders in a Marist school concluded that they, too, are capable of identifying with the Marist charism irrespective of their connection with the Catholic Church or indeed, belief in Jesus (Elvery, 2013, p. 180). These perspectives resonated with research concerning Catholic principals. Coughlan’s (2009) study concluded that the contemporary paradigm of what it means to be an authentic “Catholic”, that is, to be an active participator in the liturgical life of the Church, is no longer the dominant belief. By contrast, the emerging paradigm is one in which a person’s identity is influenced by a commitment to the “other” (Coughlan, 2009, p. 227).

Identity is shaped not only by one’s own tradition but also by engagement with ‘the other’ which in this case is a multi-faceted other, including other Christians and other believers but above all, the secular post-modern culture of Australia today. (Putney, 2007, July)

The concept of the “other” emerges in this research through the importance participants attribute to the inclusive nature of “Dominican charism” (McVey, 2002b). The inclusion of all “others” is of particular importance. Parents, teachers and students express satisfaction in belonging to an organisation where inclusivity is experienced and valued.

Participants experience the Dominican charism as devoid of the negative connotations that they, and research, link to the Catholic Church (Crawford & Rossiter, 2006, p. 96; Mellor, 2005, p. 261). It offers an appealing and ethical framework concerning “exactly how we should live” (Tegan: TI-6 22/02/13).

The Dominican contribution to Catholic identity is overwhelmingly life-giving, stressing hospitality, radical freedom and authenticity and ultimately points to what it is to be human. It arises out of contemplation and is shared with others. It becomes our “Holy Preaching” and transforms the world. (MacLaren, 2010, p. 7)

The issue of identity is indeed complex.

Too much emphasis on identity will stifle the mission and make the organisation sectarian.... [N]ot enough emphasis and the mission will lose its specifically Catholic character. Too much emphasis and it will become a

generalised form of humanism; not enough and it loses its specific contribution to the transformation of the world. (Ormerod, 2010, p. 439)

That is why some researchers advocate a ‘whole’ Church, rather than a charism-based approach in schools (Braniff, 2007, p. 34). Colleges and universities in the United States embrace this perspective with its associated tension. Their leaders believe the strategy of naming schools and universities firstly as “Dominican” “undermines vibrant Catholic institutional identity” (Morey & Piderit, 2008, p. 23). This research counters this perspective. “The current generation of primary-school-aged children will be the first where the majority will have no memory of a Church involvement at some stage in their upbringing” (Kaldor, Hughes, Castle, & Bellamy, 2004). The contemporary society and changed cultures invite school leaders to explore new ways of understanding God and religion (Eugene Stockton in "Catholica," 2013). The nature and function of charism in schools is one such exploration. If charism offers an authentic and relevant understanding of the Gospel, then its presence is a creative response to “... bring[ing] the Gospel message to different cultural contexts and groups” (Francis 1, 2013).

Current research concerning “Catholic identity” in schools indicates concern held by Catholic authorities for its maintenance (Morey & Piderit, 2008; Pollefeyt, 2011, September, 2013, May 29; Rossiter, 2013a, 2013b). For students, however, a distinctive charism, that is authentic and relevant, is appealing. It engages them actively in the mission of God in a way that they experience as credible and appropriate.

Referencing a saying of Jesuit founder St Ignatius of Loyola that charisms need to be lived according to the place, time, and person, [Pope] Francis continued: "The charism is not a bottle of distilled water. It needs to be lived energetically as well as reinterpreted culturally." (McElwee, 2014, January 3)

This research identifies the influence that charism has on the identity of students when it is “lived energetically” and “interpreted culturally”. Charism provides a means through which the Catholic school can “contribute to the Church’s mission to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ” in a manner that is “appropriate to the multicultural and pluralistic faith dimensions of modern Australian society” (National Catholic Education Commission, 2014). “Like the disciples, we listen to Jesus calling us out from our boats of security and doubts to walk across the heaving seas of being faithful Christians in a threshold time” (Treston, 2000, p. 136). Participants in this study

believe that the charism that they experience is their way of living their Christianity. “I feel more connected to God in everyday life than being [in church]” (Sonya: SFG1 30/10/12). They embrace a credible approach to living the Gospel through the lens of Dominican charism.

7.2.1.3 Faith-based language

The third issue that may create tension concerns the language used within the school’s Habits of Spirit program. The program, which focuses on sixteen “habits”, is considered effective in fostering the charismatic Gospel culture.

[Our Habits of Spirit are] so closely related I guess to how St Dominic fulfilled his life and acted throughout his life, caring for others. ... So I think for us having the Habits of Mind and Spirit is almost like a reminder of how to successfully fulfill our life. (Sammi: SI-5 07/11/12)

However, one teacher expresses a concern at how they are explained.

I **do** have a level of discomfort in pushing [the Habits of Spirit] so much as “Dominican” Habits of Spirit ... I have a greater level of comfort using them as Habits of Spirit that put into practice Kingdom – a greater level of comfort with doing that than I do with talking about them ... as Dominican Habits of Spirit. (Thea: TI2-12 04/12/12)

Similar concern at the possibility of any confusion concerning the authorship or derivation of authentic Gospel values is registered by Finn (2013). Tension relating to the naming of “Dominican” values is also located within the Dominican and other scholarship. The Habits of Spirit are derived from Dominican sources on “Dominican values” (Dominican Sisters of Eastern Australia, 1999). However, the values named as “Dominican” are “widely recognised as those of authentic Catholicism” and “are not necessarily exclusive to Catholicism.” “[Dominicans] have no ownership of human and Christian values” (G. Kelly, 2009, August 14, pp. 5 - 6). Nonetheless, concepts like “Gospel values”:

... can be difficult for a school community to wrap its arms around. These concepts are almost too big and difficult to define, which renders them generic and unmanageable and unwieldy. Students and others have trouble explaining them. (Cook, 2010, p. 8)

Charisms focus on *particular* values (Cook, 2010; G. Kelly, 2009, August 14). When immersed into the school culture by specific teaching, students take ownership of them (Cooling, 2000). Students identify personally with a faith-based vocabulary which is specific to their own school (Cook, 2010, p. 8). Normalising the specific language of

the charism by constant use and reference (as in the Habits of Spirit) ensures that “[it becomes] the air that we breathe. It’s the autopilot that [we’re] used to” (Tamara: TI-2 26/02/13).

The relevance of the Gospel message for each member of the school community increases when the Catholic vision for the specific school context is tailored to the specific school (Cook, 2004). Providing a faith-based vocabulary defines and focuses the school’s core values (Cook, 2004, p. 18). This perspective is confirmed in Brien and Hack’s (2011, p. 5) study, which also endorses the benefits of a charism-specific language that has meaning within the school community. A specific language, shared within the community, is integral to the formation of a shared perception, culture, understanding and reality. It generates new ways of “being community” (Ross, 1998).

This research identifies the benefits of a faith-based language specifically tailored to the charism of the school. However, it also identifies the need for teachers to be explicit about the scriptural basis and spiritual context upon which a charismatic language is derived (Cook, 2004, p. 3; M. Green, 2012).

7.2.1.4 Demands on Teachers

The fourth issue that has the potential to create tension relates to the increased demands made of the teachers to cultivate charism, particularly through the explicit teaching of the Habits of Spirit. Classroom teachers, irrespective of faith, spirituality or religious practice, are expected to incorporate instruction about the “Habits of Spirit” into their normal lessons, and to teach about the habits in specific “Habits” lessons. They are expected to model these habits which are identified as being characteristic of St Dominic (Dominican Sisters of Eastern Australia, 1999). Regardless of time and effort required, teachers identify positively and with satisfaction about the program and the outcomes from it. There are several reasons for this.

First, staff identify a professional approach to the translation of the college mission into program goals and activities (Twale & Schaller, 2002). The goal of maintaining a Dominican charism is supported by college-wide initiatives, with appropriate resourcing, symbols, professional learning opportunities, pedagogy and policy. The College Leadership Team recognised that time and effort that would be required of teachers. Therefore, it orchestrated the writing of quality lessons for easy delivery by teachers (Tara: TI-4 11/12/12). Sample lessons were prepared; strategies designed;

resources written and background readings prepared; and scriptural references identified, to help explain the worth and practical application of the habits for contemporary Christians. Teachers and students use the particular language and resources of the Habits of Spirit program. In so doing, they are collaboratively developing and adopting resources. This allows teachers to experience change in a practical and professionally satisfying way. Furthermore, collegial respect is developed for those who are giving practical support to others in the development of resources (Duignan, 2006, p. 32).

Second, the Habits of Spirit make sense to students, teachers and parents (Weick, 1995). Teachers and students seek to express their freedom to create themselves and be the “author” of their own lives (Kegan, 1994; Wheatley, 1998). This research identifies the values implicit within the habits as being useful for personal growth.

Teachers experience the transformative benefits of the habits for themselves and their students. It is not necessary to “engage [students and teachers] in the impossible and exhausting tasks of “selling” them the solutions, getting them “to enroll”, or figuring out the incentives [for teaching or learning about Habits of Spirit] that might bribe them into compliant behaviours” (Wheatley, 1998, p. 2). As they helped create the Habits, experience their value and transformative influence, they share in the vision of the charism and in the mission of the organisation that seeks to nurture that charism. They do not need to be convinced of their value (Wheatley, 1998, p. 3).

Third, charism, with its Habits program, is integrated into school culture. “It’s interwoven into everything” (Sonya: SFG1 30/10/12). Teachers endorse the perspective that “our faith vision should permeate the whole life of the school and all aspects of the curriculum” (Gallagher, 2005, p. 286). “It shouldn’t be an *extra*, because it should *envelop* everything” (Tiffany: TFG1 07/03/13). However, other Australian scholarship concludes that “there is not much evidence that this is actually occurring in Catholic schools or that [if it is] it is occurring only sporadically” (McLaughlin, 2000d, p. 40). Furthermore, other research identifies that “[t]eachers [are] often working so hard at the demands of their job that there [is] little time to think about and reflect on the core values around which their work [is] based (Battams, 2002, p. 343).

When a key element of the religious life of the school is accepted by all stakeholder groups as meaningful and identity-forming; is embedded in the culture with

professional support; and experienced across the full gamut of school life; the potential for transformation is maximised (Collier, 2008). Tension is minimised. No longer are teachers engaging in “extra work”, but their vision of their work is changed. What they experience as personally meaningful and shared with all colleagues, becomes shared vision and a transformed organisation (Wheatley, 1998).

These four issues underlie the nurturing of authentic charism in a contemporary Catholic school. The experience of charism by participants is discussed in the following section.

7.2.2 Authenticity of Dominican charism

What actually constitutes or defines the Dominican charism is debatable. An analysis of participant responses has generated a tentative framework for understanding what constitutes an authentic expression of the charism. This framework consists of four dynamics. They are:

1. Dominican charism is understood as holistic;
2. Dominican charism provides a lens to the Gospel;
3. Dominican charism nourishes spirituality and wellbeing;
4. Dominican charism is a living dynamic.

Aspects of these dynamics are interconnected. Figure 7-2 provides an illustration of the conceptual links (noted by shading and lines) that frame the discussion occurring in this chapter.

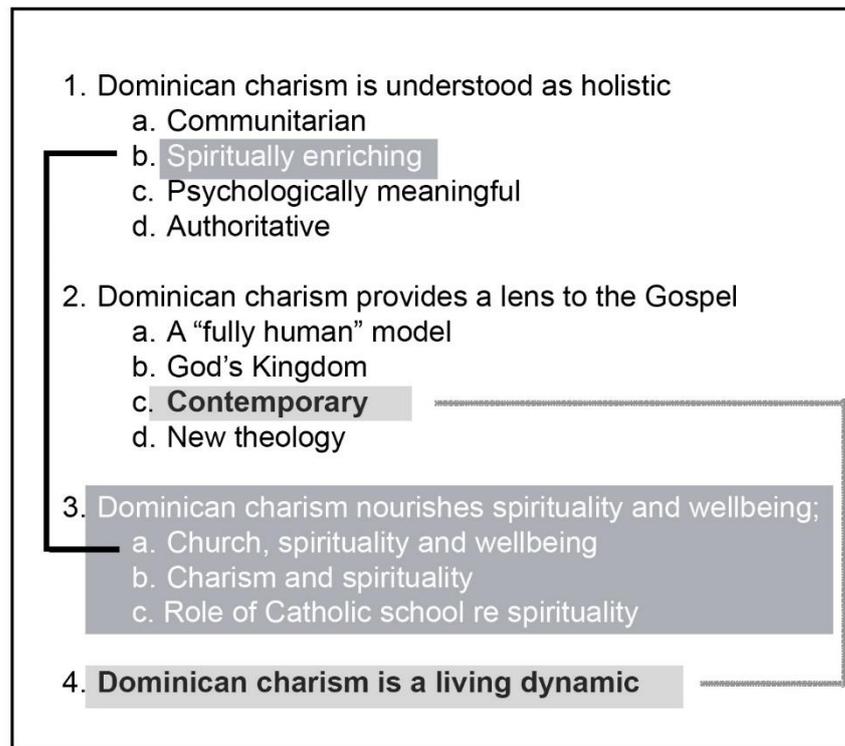


Figure 7-2 Conceptual links across four dynamics

7.2.2.1 Dominican charism is understood as holistic

Many participants from each of the three groups identify Dominican charism as a specific tradition within the Catholic Church.

[It is] authentically Catholic. Catholic and Christian. ... [T]here’s a lot of diversity within [the] order but it’s deliberate. It’s diversity that responds to the social and educational needs to the time and context. We do that now. We do that in our best belief that we are acting in a Christian and Catholic tradition. (Tomiko: TI-3 25/02/13)

What is particularly insightful though is that participant experiences of Dominican charism extend beyond the parameters of Catholicism. It is more than a particular expression of Catholicism. “Dominican [charism] – it’s not just religion. It’s also learning and community... so you know it’s easier to relate God to our life experiences ... (Steffi: SFG2 30/10/12). This understanding contributes to a rationale suggesting that charism is a holistic dynamic, which extends beyond a religious expression, to become the basis of a “way of life”. “[I]t’s about [a] holistic approach towards life as a Christian” (Paris: PI-3 06/11/12).

[W]e try to follow [Dominic’s] way of life, his beliefs and the way he responded to his society. I guess you build up a philosophy of spirituality and Christian way of behaving and acting and dealing with your day’s work and

relationship to others. ...I ... think that charism is tied to the philosophy, moral values and ways in which we respond to life through our Christian spirituality, rooted ... in this case in Dominican charism ... rooted in Dominican's decision to preach [the] Word. (Tomiko: TI-3 25/02/13)

Charism influences the “whole person, and the whole girl and her whole journey” (Pam: PI-1 09/11/12). In explaining what Dominican charism is, a parent says that “it’s not actually called charism at Mass during the sermons, but it’s about the holistic approach towards life as a Christian” (Paris: PI-3 06/11/12). This resonates with the student perspective.

[E]very thing that we do relates to it. So it’s not just you’re talking about it when you go into SOR [Study of Religion]. ... It’s a part of everything, and you can relate it to everything that we do. It’s not just like a light switch that you can turn on and off. It’s constant. (Steffi: SFG2 30/10/12)

This research offers four explanations for this phenomenon.

7.2.2.1.1 *Communitarian*

First, the culture of the school is understood to be community-based, and inclusive of everyone (Stacy: SFG3 20/10/12). Students understand “community” to be a Dominican value (Skye: SI-1 24/10/12; Sally: SFG3 31/10/12) even though it is consistent with the Catholic theology that defines the nature of the Church as essentially communitarian (McBrien, 1994, p. 670). Communitarianism is also a concept that supposedly defines the nature of the Catholic school (CCE, 1998a, par. 18). However, what is particularly insightful from this research is that the experience of “community” is understood as a consequence of the school’s Dominican charism, and not derived from its Catholicity.

Participants use “community” and “inclusivity” to describe the values and beliefs experienced at San Sisto. These dynamics are catalytic in unifying the diverse socio-economic and religious population of students.

[Charism] means being part of a community... part of a family, that teach[es] us about our values and morals that we should believe in because they are the right things to do. ...At this school I feel really like part of a family like it’s a second home to me because it’s a really nice place to be. [I]t’s really welcoming and comforting and there are so many support services and different things like that that can help you. You’re also able to be an individual and make your own decisions. ...You’re just guided in the right direction. (Sally: SI-3 29/10/12)

“Community” also describes the bond that students, teachers and parents share. “The teachers are just really genuine. ... It’s just like family. It’s like I’m at home” (Sally: SI-3 29/10/12).

The community dynamic of the Dominican charism is experienced irrespective of specific faith background or none (Steffi: SFG2 30/10/12; Skye: SI-1 24/10/12; Penny: PFG1 05/11/12; Pat: PFG1 05/11/12). The “feeling” of being “community” transcends the Christian or Catholic belief system (Sally: SI-3 29/10/12). It constitutes a human need to belong. “[Y]ou’re ... not just *in* [the community]. You’re ... *welcomed* and you have a sense of belonging and ... you ... just know that you *fit* there” (Sammi: SI-5 07/11/12). “What I really love about [Dominican charism in the school] is the whole feeling of it. [It’s] ... just obviously decent, caring values that work for everybody” (Penny: PFG1 05/11/12).

This phenomenon has also been identified in Elvery’s (2013) study. “Maristness” (or the practice of those attributes considered to belong to the Marist Tradition) does not depend on whether a person is Catholic or not, but rather on the practice of Christian values emphasised within the Marist tradition (Elvery, 2013, p. 160).

7.2.2.1.2 *Spiritually enriching*

Second, Dominican charism is experienced by participants as being spiritually enriching (Tanya: TI-10 26/02/13), and thus contributing to an essential component of their humanity.

I have become a much more spiritual person – not that I didn’t want to be before but it is difficult to see where that fits into life until you’re shown how... someone like Dominic made spirituality such a huge part of his every day, normal life. ... It’s just kind of a fuller feeling in your heart that you have ... more purpose in what you do. ...It’s just a nicer ... fuller sense [that life] has meaning and purpose. ...For human beings who also have capacity then to feel like **their** life can have meaning and purpose. (Tina: TI-9 28/02/13)

Graduate students attribute their ongoing spiritual development to their engagement at school in activities that they identified as “Dominican”.

I don’t go to church ... But to me I don’t feel I need to to still be part of that world, to still have that spiritual sort of feeling. ...And definitely all the social justice that ... was offered to us at the college. I think certainly helped [me] to want to volunteer and give back to my community. (Gay: GI-1 17/12/12)
I’m big on my spirituality, so having had it nurtured so well during school has really kept me grounded and kind of consolidated any values I may have had

or have been nurtured throughout school. ... So being grounded as a person especially in the real world because you can get kind of caught up. (Gretta: GI-2 03/12/12)

Participants acknowledge the centrality of joyfulness within a Dominican spirituality. “[B]y coming to San Sisto and looking through this lens of St Dominic’s perspective and by living the Gospel, I think we’re enriched with all these feelings of joy and just plain happiness” (Sammi: SI-5 07/11/12). “It is not an accident to be happy. Not an accident of your personality. It is practically an achievement of the school and the Dominican charism to be very happy” (Ita: II-1 05/12/12).

These perspectives resonate with the views of a number of scholars. Joy is at the heart of Dominican spirituality (Murray, 2006; Radcliffe, 1998). Students are attracted to a framework that celebrates joy as a human characteristic that allows them to flourish (Seligman, 2012). In terms of the spiritual, young people sift through the believable and palatable and separate it from the “fantastical” and the irrelevant (Maroney, 2008, p. 43). This is where the Dominican charism has an influence on nurturing spirituality. “[The] inherited story [from the founder] becomes charism when it is lived out as it takes hold of the community and they make sense of their experiences of life from the perspective of that story” (McDonough, 1993, p. 648). Consequently, Dominican charism offers a plausible and engaging experience linking daily living with spiritual values from which connections are made to those things of importance to them such as their attraction to a sense of the sacred in nature and their desire for authentic relationships (Cullinane, 2007, p. 418). It leads to new ways of understanding self, others and the world. This, in turn, nurtures spirituality. In contrast, for many, institutional religion seems pastorally inadequate to engage the nature of contemporary people’s spiritual journey (Ranson in Cullinane, 2007, p. 418). How Dominican charism nurtures spirituality is discussed in sections 7.2.2.3 and 7.3.2.

7.2.2.1.3 *Psychologically meaningful*

Third, charism makes sense psychologically. Participants make links from numerous school activities to St Dominic, who they understand as being integral in teaching them how to “[bring] the Kingdom of God to earth” (Gretta: GI-2 03/12/12). San Sisto deliberately attempts to make this connection very tangible through its policies, practices, celebrations, family culture between staff and students, its pervasive

nurturing of community service and social justice and its academic ethos. While these experiences promote the “Dominican tradition”, they do not confine it.

... [W]hen you look at the ancient philosophers and what they spoke about [they identified] two basic human needs: the need for identity and the need for meaning. And I think a charism serves both those needs... . It provides us with an identity – it might be a communal identity, but still an identity; and it also gives us a framework for meaning that helps in [providing] meaning in our work or in our studies or anything like that. They’re basic human needs. (Terri: TFG1 07/03/13)

It makes sense in a school “in the Dominican tradition” that the experiences and activities offered are connected to the school’s Dominican charism (Sammi: SI-5 07/11/12; Storm, SFG2 30/10/12; Sally: SI-3 29/10/12) (McVey, 2007). The Dominican charism provides the model for living that satisfies students’, parents’ and teachers’ need for plausibility and coherence (Weick, 1995, pp. 55 - 61). From a psychological perspective, participants interact with the environment, respond to the stimuli, reflect on what happens and constantly try to make sense of it (Weick, 1995, pp. 43 - 49). As they interact with each other, and with charismatic language, activities and symbols, they attribute meaning to their experiences (Fine, 1984, p. 239). Dominican charism provides a coherence because it is based on the profoundly human experience of daily life (Radcliffe in Murray, 2006, p. vii). It points to novel ways of being the Church Christ intended.

Dominican charism positively influences the psyche of community members because it honours the wholeness of being human and the primacy of relationships (O’Murchu, 2010a; Wheatley, 2006). “We are beginning to seriously appreciate the internal longings for togetherness, meaning, dignity and purpose, with an admission that feelings are a major element for human development” (Scaine, 2011b, p. 20). This characteristic of the charism is consistent with the description that “[deep] within the Dominican spirit lies an urge toward integration, balance. Dominican spirituality is an integrative, integrating, integral spirituality” (Goergen, 2008, pp. 1-2).

Because participants understand Dominican charism as being a way of living that is consistent with Jesus’ mission, it is experienced as an authentically Gospel phenomenon (Murray, 2006). It offers a palatable, credible, responsive and relevant unifying lens (see Chapter 6 sections 6.2.2.2) with which to make sense of the school experience. It also provides the foundation of a creative faith community, responding

to global changes and changing spiritual needs (Teasdale, 1999). In contrast, the contemporary Church is perceived by younger participants to lack coherence, as institutional and dogmatic. Students identify it with authoritarian teachings, empty rituals, and meaningless dualism (Tacey, 2003, pp. 114-115).

7.2.2.1.4 *Authoritative*

Fourth, because charism is experienced as life-giving, it is perceived to be authoritative and, therefore, is valued and influential in identity formation.

[You] always hear stories about people who try and change... things that aren't just. But they don't start with the little things. The thing I love here is that we strive to be the best people we can be...and then by doing that, that allows us to go out and change everything, change the world, change what's unjust. But you can't do that unless you start with yourself. (Steffi: SFG2 30/10/12)

Participants understand the connection between the Dominican charism and Jesus' message that "I have come that you might have life and have it to the full" (John 10:10). They understand their role as Christians in helping to bring life to others.

I think we are "giving life" in how we act through obviously serving others but I think we're giving life in the way with the Habits of Mind and Spirit. They really assist us and they're kind of just reminders on the classroom wall in the ways that we can *act* through those. Like by using those Habits of Mind and Spirit we can bring life and you can bring all of that into what Jesus said and what Dominic led us to. (Sammi: SI-5 07/11/12)

... I probably see myself as Dominican because of the groups that we have that *are* Dominican that follow in St Dominic... like Social Justice, and Greenies and all the service activities that I've gone in. I think that I'm really following in what Dominic left us for us to follow and I think he's following in Jesus's... so I think ultimately I'm still following in God but I think more closely to Dominic and what he's left behind. (Sammi: SI-5 07/11/12)

Dominican charism is experienced as a concept that students identify as having an authoritative influence in their lives. The way in which they engage with it through daily school life (see Table 6.9), their pride in it and sense of responsibility for its stewardship and transmission explains why they say they would be "at a loss" (Gretta: GI-2 03/12/12) without the guiding influence of it.

Dominican charism is experienced as a feeling, therefore making it authoritative to contemporary youth. "I'm not sure If [it's] technically correct, but Dominican ... is more something you *feel*, whereas being Christian or Catholic is more a faith" (Sally: SI-3 29/10/12). "For me being Dominican feels more real than being Catholic. I don't

know why but... it just does” (Steffi: SFG2 30/10/12). “It’s more individual to me. Like it’s more personal” (Storm: SFG2 30/10/12).

These perspectives resonate with scholarship that identifies personal experience, rather than directives and regulations from positional leaders, as authoritative (Bouma, 2006). Unless young people personally experience something, they have difficulty believing in it (Mason et al., 2007).

These student perceptions of authority are likewise identified in the scholarship in relationship to religion.

Jesus in Galilee was not teaching a religious doctrine for his listeners to learn and follow. He was proclaiming an event, so they could accept it joyfully and faithfully. ... They knew a prophet with a passion for a fuller life for everyone, who only wanted people to embrace God, so that God’s reign of justice and mercy would become ever wider and more joyful. His goal was not to perfect the Jewish religion, but to hasten the coming of the long-awaited reign of God, which meant life, justice, and peace. ... He was telling them the news: “God is already here, seeking a happier life for everyone. We must change our outlook and our hearts.” (Pagola, 2009, p. 99)

Students identify charism as offering their faith depth, direction and meaning (Gretta: GI-2 03/12/12) (Cullinane, 2007, p. 418). They name many authoritative and life-giving components of college life as charism-related. This suggests that charism is a relevant lens with which to make sense of the Gospel (McLaughlin, 2000e, p. 69).

The second dynamic concerning authentic charism is the perception that Dominican charism is a lens to the Gospel.

7.2.2.2 Dominican charism provides a lens to the Gospel

Dominican charism is experienced as an entry into understanding the Gospel. “I think everything I hear about Dominican charism is exactly how we should live” (Tegan: TI-6 22/02/13). Four ways of explaining this perspective of the Dominican lens to the Gospel are offered.

7.2.2.2.1 A “fully human” model of Gospel

First, students and teachers understand that St Dominic offers them with a credible, “fully human” model for practically living the Gospel.

... I can’t turn water into wine or anything so that for me, all the miracles and stuff that Jesus and Catholicism kind of [are] about, I interpret that symbolically myself, but it does make it hard to relate on a human level, so

having Dominic fully human ... it makes it more achievable. (Gretta: GI-2 03/12/12)

I would say [St Dominic is important to my Christianity] because he was human... It's easier to understand him because he is not divine. 'Cos you relate to him and how his journey was with his faith. (Siri: SI-6 07/11/12)

Charism is a way of offering the Christian faith an entry into the physical world: in actual people, in time and place (M. Green, 2000, April, p. 5). Participant views are consistent with the perspective that charism, in a school context, offers an organising set of principles relevant to the community (Pfeil, 2007, p. 226). Indeed, charism offers an heuristic, demonstrating how people might live for the common good of society (Pfeil, 2007, p. 225).

7.2.2.2.2 *God's Kingdom*

Second, students want to help bring about a just and peaceful world. Graduates in particular, have a sense of mission and want to make a difference in the world. While they generally do not use “kingdom” or “mission” language, participants make the connection between charism and the Gospel message of transformation of self and the world. Their inspiration for transformation in society is a “higher power” and they feel a responsibility to bring about change in the world (Gretta: GI-2 03/12/12). Participants indicate that this imperative is the Christian message of Jesus Christ (Isabelle: II-3 22/11/12). Students, teachers and parents identify St Dominic as providing them an authentic and credible way of living justly according to Jesus’ message (Tegan: TI-6 22/02/13).

Students and graduates seek to be a part of global change for a more just world, but only one student regularly engages with a Catholic community outside of school. Students and teachers want something more than “an institution and ... someone’s interpretation and a set of rules and things you have to do...” (Tegan: TI-6 22/02/13). This emphasis on the personal, in contrast to organisational imperatives, has been expressed by the Congregational Leader of a religious order:

For so long we have based our religious observance on beliefs and propositions. We worry about the real presence and the virgin birth, on the two natures in Christ, and the infallibility of the Pope, about Transubstantiation and the Immaculate Conception. But when one reads and reflects on the Sermon on the Mount, the heart and soul of the Jesus vision, what the early Christians referred to as The Way, we find nothing about what to believe but an alternative ethic, a way of behaving, a way of living life. Jesus was telling us that there was another way of living life, another way of

relating to people, and he called us to change the world from the inside. It is about behaviour rather than belief. We are invited to embrace what is truly eternal. And what is truly eternal is love! (Pinto, 2011, June, p. 2)

In other words, the participant perspective resonates with the fundamentals of Christianity as concerning life now, rather than preparing for a future life. Christianity is living in accordance with the Gospel way of life. The message of the Gospel concerns “fullness of life” (Radcliffe, 1998, p. 2). Participants express an understanding of the Kingdom of God as being here, now, on earth, and that it exists in relationship with each other (Pam: PI-1 09/11/12) so that everyone may experience life more fully. This is consistent with current theological perspectives (Nolan, 2010, p. 58).

The Kingdom is both an outcome and a present reality. It is a process of how to go about life and the means for advancing life. It is a phenomenon that involves movement from a mind-set that is narrow, self-centred and static to a mind-set that is vast, outwardly focused and dynamic. It is the development of a way of life applicable in all areas of human existence. It is a way of looking at the world and a way of operating in the world. It is not about prescription of what to do, but a description of what life might be like if a kingdom imagination were to be lived out. (Sultmann, 2012, p. 27)

While “[t]he Church is effectively and concretely at the service of the kingdom” (John Paul II, 1990, par. 20), it is not perceived to be engaging with contemporary society. In contrast, San Sisto students are engaged positively with teachers in a range of activities. Through these charismatically-related activities, students identify, in a practical and relevant way, with the building the Kingdom of God.

They study the Jesus part, but in terms of how we get up and *do* the Jesus part, they are doing it with a Dominican twist, or a Dominican *feel*.... It’s almost like they don’t want to be do-gooder Christians and too religiousy (*sic*). They don’t want that. But it’s almost like it’s okay ‘cos we’re a Dominican school. We do.... You know... and so it’s okay to do it because that’s what San Sisto and [other Dominican schools] do. (Pam: PI-1 09/11/12)

Students provide numerous examples of “charismatically-related” activities, including: being involved in justice and service activities such as Rosies Street Retreat, Aged Care visits, refugee homework club, raising money for charities, volunteering for various projects both in and outside of the college, helping people in financial and emotional need. Parents concur:

On a daily basis the girls are taking part in ... all the service activities that are promoted here and *really* promoted. Like they’re not just part of what we do

and if you look for it you might find it. It's really *out* there and it's publicized and those sorts of things I think the girls have a real sense of needing to do that in the world... to make a difference. Not that it's not a choice, but it's just ... it just has to be like that. I think that's the... yeah, I think that's the feeling that it *is*. That it's not really something you chose to do but it's just the way it *should* be done and *has* to be done. (Peg: PI-4 08/11/12)

This phenomenon identifies a reordering of the central realities of the Christian faith (Phan, 2001, October 26-28). Institutional church is no longer experienced as relevant as it once was. Living a Gospel life is, indeed, somewhat independent of church affiliation.

[T]o me the measure of someone's faith is not their attendance at a church on a Sunday. It's more about how they lead their life and how they exhibit the principles of the Catholic faith. [This] is more important than the physical presence. (Piper: PI-2 07/11/12)

7.2.2.2.3 *Contemporary*

A third explanation for this phenomenon concerns the contemporaneous nature of charism in its response to the Gospel. Teachers and students identify that Dominican charism responds to the signs of the times in an authentic and relevant way (Isabelle: II-3 22/11/12). The values of the founder inform practices and philosophies in the contemporary world through the college mission statement, interpersonal relationships, the way people treat each other, and in the way learning is encouraged (Toni: TI-7 06/03/13).

It is not just applying Christian values, but it is relating them to a contemporary society by seeking the truth, interrogating perspectives respectfully, appreciating individual differences, valuing men and women equally, and being open to new ways (Tegan: TI-6 22/02/13). “[Jesus] would expect the ideology of [the Gospel message] to be transferred to whatever ... is needed in contemporary societies. And I think Dominic did that” (Tegan: TFG1 07/03/13).

In contrast, young people perceive church as irrelevant because it appears to be adopting yesterday's responses to contemporary problems (Coyne, 2011). They reject church authority and are indifferent to organised religion *per se* (Mason et al., 2007). Furthermore:

The Christian churches have largely neglected the prophetic cutting edge for which Jesus lived and died. This leaves growing numbers of Christians feeling distrustful of, and ambiguous toward, all Christian institutions, churches in

particular. Many more informed Christians prefer to explore a fresh sense of their faith outside rather than within ecclesiastical contexts. (O'Murchu, 2011, p. 171)

This same theme was identified in Mellor's (2005) research of the changing contexts of the contemporary Catholic school from the perspective of principals. Mellor concluded that the church had lost contact with families and that the school has a substantial evangelising influence on families through its promotion of "Gospel values" (Mellor, 2005, p. 305). This perspective resonates with more recent research (Belmonte & Cranston, 2009; Coughlan, 2009; Elvery, 2013).

Charism is perceived to be free of a church that is no longer in touch with its people (Tamara: TI-2 26/02/13) (Brown, 2008). In contrast, the church is considered to be "out of touch with reality, focusing too much on law, power and authority and too little on service, justice and compassion" (D. McLaughlin, 2005, p. 227). Students have little interest in dogma and consequently, are not positively disposed towards church (Coughlan, 2009, p. 226).

[O]n the whole, the Church appears to be disappearing more and more from the consciousness of the younger generation. This younger generation does not even feel annoyed any more by the out-of-touch backwardness of the Church hierarchy in so many ways of morality and dogma. The younger generation simply is no longer interested in the Church: it has become meaningless to their lives. (Kung, 2013, p. 18)

This perspective is summarised by a graduate student:

[R]eligion is kind of seen as a bit of a stigma and that's not just Catholicism. It's in general. Like you aren't interested. ...young people are learning at a younger age that it's okay to have their own beliefs and maybe they are going away from that [Institutional Church] because they don't like the structure of it, or they don't like the fact that they are forced to think a certain way. So I don't really think it has a reflection on the church specifically. (Gretta: GI-2 03/12/12)

Recognising the influence of a charism's authenticity and relevance for young people, Pope Francis 1 appealed to Religious Orders to "wake the world" with their charisms and not to be afraid of making mistakes. "We must be careful not to administer a vaccine against faith to [young people]" (Francis 1 in McElwee, 2014). In the perceived absence of a Church that provides authentic and relevant witness to the Gospel, an emerging paradigm ascribes meaning and purpose to charism, in a way that may once have been more universally attributed to "Church".

7.2.2.2.4 *New theology*

A fourth explanation is that students and teachers have an appreciation of the theology that “we are the church” (Terri: TFG1 07/03/13) and that “[t]he church does not have a mission, but the mission has a church” (Bevans, 2009, p. 11). This theology invites flexibility, diversity and multiple ways through which the Gospel can be taught and lived. It is invitational of a re-imagining of a faith and belief that reflects life’s experience and contemporary reality (Morwood, 2007).

Most students generally do not express a connection to church other than that which they experience at school (D. McLaughlin, 1996; Mellor, 2005; Mulligan, 1994). Indeed, there appears to be something about Church which many of today’s youth see and do not wish to be a part of (Wilkinson, 2012, p. 24). While some participants say that they would like to go to Mass more often, none do. Others indicate that attendance at Mass is an inconvenience in a busy life (Gemma: GFG1 03/12/12), not necessary (Gail: GI-3 10/12/12) or even irrelevant (Gwen: GI-4 05/12/12). This reality is confirmed in the research (Dixon, 2003; Wilkinson, 2013).

For most students, San Sisto, or the Catholic school, is probably the only contact they will have with Catholicism (Collins, 2008, p. 144).

We believe in God and everything. But we’ve just never been... go to church every Sunday kind of thing. So you know most of my church experience has come through the school. And yeah, but I think for me, church and school, because I’ve never been a church-going part of that sort of environment, it hasn’t been...they’re kinda the same thing for me. I know they’re not the same thing, but to me, when I think church, I think of school, and when I think of school, I think of church. (Stacy: SFG3 31/10/12)

Students rationalise that they do not need to go to Mass. “I think for our generation we’ve got a different way of going about [our faith]” (Sonya: SFG1 30/10/12). Regular Mass attendance is not considered one of those ways. An emerging paradigm from this research is that the school has become the new Church. It identifies the presence of a post-ecclesial phenomenon caused by the absence of any personal experience, emotional attachment to, or involvement in, parish life. This is consistent with and confirmed by other research (Battams, 2002; Coughlan, 2009; Finn, 2013, p. 226; Mellor, 2005).

When combined with the limited relationship between the diocese and schools, the negative perceptions many had of the wider church in general,

and the fact so much of students' positive experience of church was contained within school boundaries, it was inevitable that for many, their school became *the church for them*". (Battams, 2002, p. 330)

The theme of the "disconnect" between the Church and the people is also present in Dominican literature.

What we are all beginning to recognize is that religious institutions tend to become fossilized, legalistic, dogmatic, and authoritarian. But, whatever we choose to call it, there is a very powerful hunger for spirituality today that cannot find the nourishment it seeks in our churches, mosques, synagogues, or temples. (Nolan, 2009, p. 12)

While the charism is unambiguously rooted in the Catholic Church (John Paul II, 1988, December 30 n. 24) and participants acknowledge this fact, students more directly link charism to the Gospel. This understanding is consistent with an emerging theology of "regnocentrism", in which the Kingdom, Jesus' central message, is the focus of religious belief and practice (Bevans & Schroeder, 2004, p. 310; Ratzinger, 2007). This emerging theology is registered in other recent studies as the predominant paradigm. It compares with "ecclesiocentrism", in which the Church dominated Catholic thinking and practice (Coughlan, 2009, p. 216; Elvery, 2013; Finn, 2013; Union of Presentation Sisters, n.d.).

In this contemporary reality, people are more interested in spirituality than in institutional religion (Radcliffe, 2008, p. 1). How charism enriches spirituality in a contemporary Catholic school invites discussion.

7.2.2.3 Dominican charism nourishes spirituality and wellbeing

The third dynamic relates to the way in which the authentic Dominican charism nurtures spirituality, and therefore, wellbeing. This is explained in three ways.

7.2.2.3.1 Church, spirituality and wellbeing

In section 7.2.2.1 the spiritually-enriching nature of Dominican charism was discussed. This section discusses the inter-relationship between the roles played by church, school and Dominican charism in fostering spirituality and wellbeing.

Teachers identify that the Church is not fostering youth spirituality. This concurs with Ranson's finding that "the churches are seen by many as devoid of spirituality" (Ranson, cited in Cullinane, 2007, p. 417). Teachers recognise the value of charism in this regard.

For me, I think spirituality, but also [the Dominican] tradition should span beyond the four walls of the church. I think that Dominic ... showed us how that could work. And I think that is so important because you can't behave one way in ... it's hard to describe.... (pause) I think that there are mixed messages that you hear from the church, depending on who is in power, or who is leading at the time. I think that Dominic's messages, and he as a person, seem wholesome and generally valuing of all people. (Tina: TI-9 28/02/13)

Dominican charism nourishes the spirit. It is wholesome and holistic. Tara describes the “holistic” dynamic of promoting “the idea that learning isn't just within the four walls. It's something that is beyond that. Fostering the wellbeing of children, their mind, their social surroundings, are very, very important” (Tara: TI-4 11/12/12).

Students, too, identify the link between spirituality, charism and wellbeing. The development of spirituality, and of a faith that helps provide answers about the meaning of life, gives life purpose. “[M]y knowing exactly where I want to go and exactly what I want to do for the rest of my life for me... takes a lot of stress off [me]” (Steffi: SFG2 30/10/12). Students recognise that wellbeing is important to a healthy life. An environment rich in charismatic, and physically and spiritually-enriching opportunities maximises the capacity for wellbeing to be achieved. When this happens, the capacity for an individual to further the kingdom of God is also enhanced (Sammi: SI-5 07/11/12).

Graduate student participants identified that their wellbeing was fostered while at school. They attributed this to Dominican charism and spirituality, and faith-related activities and instruction. No students directly related their wellbeing or spiritual development to their church experiences. This is to be expected as only one student participant out of twenty-nine attends church regularly.

Research concludes that young people no longer engage with a religious tradition in any meaningful way and that without connection to Church, they are spiritually marginalised (Watson, 2007, p. 182). The loss of church as a means of spiritual fulfilment for contemporary youth is concerning for schools and psychologists (Eckersley, 2007a, 2009). Indeed, religion is identified as “packaging” many sources of wellbeing, including social support, spiritual or existential meaning, a coherent belief system and a clear moral code (Eckersley, 2009, p. 7). These “ingredients of health and wellbeing” were once accessible to people through church practice (Eckersley, 2007a, p. 54).

Compounding the problems identified by the disconnection with church structures, is the apparent burgeoning of materialism and individualism that threaten the way young people understand themselves, what they value, and how they find meaning in life (Biddulph, 2013; Eckersley, 2009; Tankard Reist, 2009; Tankard Reist & Bray, 2011). Hope and coherence, concepts formerly accessible through the parish church, are now missing in many young lives (Bouma, 2006, p. 205; Eckersley, 2007b, p. 42). While psychologists refer to a “spiritual anorexia” (Carr-Gregg, 2004b), others identify a spiritual hunger in youth (Douglas, 2003, June 3; Eckersley, 2009; Nolan, 2009, p. 7; Radcliffe, 2008; Tacey, 2003). They conclude that young people are trying to search for meaning in their lives without any allegiance to organised religion (O'Murchu, 1997b; Tacey, 2000). In spite of their spiritual needs, young people increasingly make a distinction between religion *per se* and spirituality (Maroney, 2008, p. 16), choosing not to nurture their spirituality through church affiliation. This reality resonates with Coughlan's (2009, p. 232) study. It identifies an emerging paradigm in which there is a search for “faith but not ... church, ... questions but not ... answers, ... religious but not ... ecclesial, and ... truth but not obedience” (Rolheiser, 1999, p. 5).

7.2.2.3.2 *Charism and spirituality*

Second, this research identifies that Dominican charism satisfies the spiritual hunger of students and teachers during their time at the college.

Storm: It's not shoving it down your throat.

Steffi: It's expanding your spirituality to whatever point you're comfortable with. (Steffi and Storm: SFG2 30/10/12)

The connection between a relevant charism and a contemporary spirituality is explained by Isabelle.

[The] Dominican charism is ... an incarnational spirituality ... [Dominic] was a man of his own horizons ... [I]t was actually a **crime** not to be a Catholic in those days. You could go to jail for not being a Catholic. So it was a whole different [situation]... and Catholic meant something completely different anyway. But if we keep in touch with *our* reality well, we can't do any more, and if you keep in touch with **your** reality you'll *see* the humanity. So that there would be no kid here who would be able to look at the children being put on Manus Island today and think that that was a good thing to do. You know, there are *so* many imponderables. I mean how do we deal with Syria? How do we deal with Israel? How do we deal with the refugee situation when you hear *good* people saying they're queue jumpers and they're illegal? Even if we can get teachers and kids to raise the questions, we're doing something. (Isabelle: II-3 22/11/12)

Young people are indeed “hungry” for spiritual growth, but if the opportunities that lead to growth are not palatable to them, “spiritual anorexia” is possible. “New expressions of spirituality are emerging that transcend, rather than confront, the powerful individualising and fragmenting forces of modern Western culture” (Eckersley, 2007a, p. 55). The new spirituality, as epitomised by Steffi and Storm, is consistent with the scholarship. It is existential and practical rather than creedal. Students engage in opportunities that are spiritually uplifting and which foster the practical dimension of their spirituality (Teasdale, 2000, p. 8). A study into the spirituality of boys in a Brisbane Catholic school confirms this conclusion (Tuite, 2007, pp. 136-137).

Raising questions such as Isabelle (II-3 22/11/12) proposes, and exposing issues of a global nature through the curriculum and extra-curriculum deepens students’ sense of connection to the cosmos. It gives life a coherence and meaning that enhances spiritual growth (J. P. Miller, Selia, & Denton, 2005).

7.2.2.3.3 Role of Catholic school re spirituality

Third, the Catholic school is charged with the role of fostering the spirituality of its students and teachers. Charism in a school provides a framework within which this can occur (Pfeil, 2007, p. 226). A goal of a Catholic school is to promote the human person (CCE, 1998a, par. 9). Its mission is to meet “[the student’s] material and spiritual needs ... [This] is at the heart of Christ’s teaching (CCE, 1998a, par. 9). However, in the absence of a real partnership between students and the Church, this task is now greater.

This study identifies that charism provides an authentic way for students to make meaning in their lives. It nurtures their spirituality in a way that is consistent with the Gospel and which is personally and communally life-giving. “I think I’m nourished here. I really do. I think I’m nourished here ... spiritually and emotionally and intellectually and ... I’m challenged. I’m challenged and I’m nourished” (Tanya: TI-10 26/02/13). This same phenomenon was identified in a study concerning Marist charism in which participants found their spiritual fulfilment from the charism of the school, rather than the parish (Elvery, 2013, p. 125).

Spirituality grows out of the individual person from an inward source. It is intensely intimate and transformative. It is not imposed upon the person from an outside

authority or source (Tacey, 2003). This is confirmed by students and parents who comment favourably on the existence of a charism that is not “shoved down [students’] throat[s]” (Storm: SFG2 30/10/12).

Charism, within the school culture, is experienced as providing “a choice”. Similarly, engagement in charismatic culture fosters, from a psychological perspective, some sense of autonomy, both for the individual who chooses to belong, and for the organisation or school which can be creative in shaping culture. When persons have a sense of autonomy or “directed autonomy” they have a greater “buy-in”, passion for, and engagement in the culture or activities (Fitzgerald, 2010, pp. 4-5). This is confirmed by students. “You have your set beliefs, as a person, religiously and spiritually. And then, I guess, Dominican is optional. I mean I wasn’t always Dominican” (Gretta: GI-2 03/12/12).

There is a degree of irony in these particular new understandings. Although Dominican charismatic culture at San Sisto had its origins with the Dominican Sisters, publically professed members of the Catholic Church, the way it is nurtured and experienced by students, teachers and parents, is not confined to the Church. Charism addresses the personal and spiritual needs of students and teachers. It gives their lives meaning (Cook, 2004, pp. 18-19) and helps them live life. On the contrary, church is perceived to be limited to dogma, and matters of morality.

The real problem ...is that the Church has spent all this time commenting on people’s lives instead of helping them **live** life. The reason is it’s a closed system, not an open one. An open one welcomes other views and opinions, looks to other agencies for complementary enlightenment and nurturing support” (F. Sullivan, 2013, August 5)

The connection that students and teachers identify between Dominican charism and their spirituality and wellbeing exists while they are members or immediate members of the college community. The long-term sustainability of the spirituality developed from the charism of one’s school is not explored in this study. Such a study could explore whether or not the spiritual void created by a lack of church connection, as described in the scholarship, can, in the long-term, be filled through charismatic cultures.

Issues relating to the relevance of the Dominican charism in nurturing an emerging contemporary spirituality are discussed in section 7.3.2.

7.2.2.4 *Dominican charism is a living dynamic*

The fourth dynamic operating within the experience of charism concerns its capacity to be “alive”. To be both “living” today, and yet authentic to the charism that is over 800 years old, exposes not just a paradox, but a reason for why it is still relevant. Dominican charism constantly evolves in the way that it meets new needs in new times (Isabelle: II-3 22/11/12). This is one of the benefits of having a “living charism” (Thea: TII-12 13/10/12). The on-going engagement with the scholarly theological and spiritual writings of Dominicans provides the opportunity for the Dominican charism to be continuously understood, updated and critiqued to ensure that while remaining relevant, it maintains its authenticity.

The constant search, with contemporary reading of the signs of the times, results in a charism that is “living” (breathing life into others, while being relevant and responsive). As such, charism possesses the capacity to evolve and develop, all the while remaining authentic to the “essence of the tradition” (Tegan: TI-6 22/02/13). “Dominic was a man of *his* horizons. We have to be people of *ours*” (Isabelle: II-3 22/11/12). To be formed in the Dominican Tradition “is not the moulding of passive matter, so as to produce a standard product, “a Dominican”. It is to meet the demands of God’s mission in ways relevant to person, place, need and times (Radcliffe, 1999, p. 1).

A constant search accepts that humanity is changing.

We are living at the most incredible time on the planet, on the verge of our planetary adulthood – a time that is asking all of us to sit up, wake up, and stand up to co-create a new reality. We can leap forward with an inspired vision of the future, rather than being held back by decaying pattern of the past! (Judith, 2013, p. 3)

Charism has the capacity to evolve with unfolding insight (Mayson, cited in O'Murchu, 2008, p. xiv). Dominicans, like Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas, demonstrated courage in being open to new thinking (O'Sullivan, 2007, p. 224). Similarly, contemporary work by Dominicans in relation to issues such as cosmic thinking and planetary sustainability captures the interest of students (O'Sullivan, 2007, p. 220) (Sammi: SI-5 07/11/12). Activities such as school immersion trips to a third world country (Shelby and Sue: SFG4 06/11/12) and opportunities to provide service to needy groups engage the hearts of young people who want to be involved in current

issues. The presence of the charism of the Order of Preachers 800 years after its foundation attests to its constant evolution in order to remain authentic and relevant.

A living charism capitalises upon the need to be “midwives to [a] new consciousness” (Diana Woods in G. Kelly, 2009, August 14, p. 11). The Catholic Church, on the other hand, is variously described by participants as “an institution” (Tegan: TI-6 22/02/13), “bureaucratic”, judgmental and fear-mongering (Tegan: TI-6 22/02/13); “very staid” and missing the “human element” (Tamara: TI-2 26/02/13); “strict” and needing “some leniency” and understanding about not being able to attend Mass; and part of a story that seems “lost in translation or just lost” (Sammi: SI-5 07/11/12). Indeed:

... one of the problems with the church today [is] that we are not dealing with the central truths of what Jesus said. We’re dealing with peripherals. And we haven’t contextualised that for today’s society as much as we should have. And if we really understand the charism and we understand what is *true*, I don’t see that much of a danger [in contextualising] because we wouldn’t surrender that kernel of truth that what makes it special and unique. But we would just use it in our own context and in our own present day situations. (Terri: TFG1 07/03/13)

During the enlightenment period, evolving and being contemporary meant “to cast off the shackles of the past, especially the philosophy of Aristotle and the dogmas of the Catholic Church” (Radcliffe, 2009, April 13, p. 1). However, evidence shows that with the new insight available, ecclesial structures are not “evolving” (Mayson, cited in O’Murchu, 2008, p. xiv). Recent studies in schools concur with this viewpoint (Coughlan, 2009; Finn, 2013; G. Kelly, 2009, August 14; A. O’Brien, 2013).

Charism is experienced as authentic to the Gospel and it can, by being responsive, be appreciated as “alive” (see section 6.2.2).

Exploring the future of the Dominican charism in the church ..., I am reminded of the description of fidelity to tradition attributed to Picasso: It doesn’t mean wearing your grandfather’s hat; it means having a baby! Loyalty to the heritage of Dominic and Catherine and all who have gone before us in this family called Dominican demands our own unique response – at once creative and courageous. The Second Vatican Council sent Religious Orders back to the spirit of their founders – not to the times of their founders, not even to the essential elements of the life as developed in its foundation, but to the “original inspiration behind a given community.” (Hilkert, 1986, p. 149)

A new theology of empowerment that is responsive to new times is burgeoning. This is the challenge put to Church by charisms that are living traditions, who:

allow God to challenge us through our reading of the signs. What we have to avoid is the imposition of our pre-conceived ideas upon the reality of today. Our aim must be to face the truth about what is actually happening – whether we like it or not. Pointing fingers and finding people to blame for today’s problems will simply blind us to the significance of the signs we are looking at. (Nolan, 2009, pp. 1-2)

The constant search, and energy required to maintain relevancy and authenticity is not easy (Finn, 2013, p. 177) but acknowledged as attributing to the evolving, dynamic and renewing nature of charism (Falchetto, 1993, p. 50; Finn, 2013, p. 174). A study set in a Christian Brothers educational context identified the tension between the charism remaining relevant and the Church being out of touch with contemporary needs (Finn, 2013).

7.2.2.5 Conclusion

The four dynamics of Dominican charism identified in this research resonate with Dominican scholarship which describes the charism as being steeped in the spirit of integration and balance (Goergen, 2008, p. 1). Seeing all things integrally is the basis of the motto of the Order “*Contemplare et contemplata aliis tradere*”. “All action must be contemplative action and all contemplation must ... boil over into a sharing of the fruits of contemplation” (Goergen, 2008, p. 3).

Students name a broad range of activities and experiences as “Dominican”. Their understanding of the charism as holistic and encompassing a whole way of life is captured in the student belief that “Everything we do relates to it” (Steffi: SFG2 30/10/12). One teacher provides an explanation for this view:

If I weren’t a practising Catholic and I’m not kind of You know, been in Catholic schools and my kids not gone to Catholic schools, I would *think* that everything good that happened here, everything that kind of nurtured my spirituality, I would think that that was Dominican, because that would be the only thing I know. (Tanya: TI-10 26/02/13)

An informed participant confirms the student perspective of the integrity of the charism.

We do our best to live of one accord ... [in] the common life, ... observing faithfully the evangelical counsels, ... fervent in prayer, ... diligent in study and constant in regular observance. ... The life of the order comprises a synthesis [of] these six elements, in-separately interconnected, harmoniously balanced and mutually enriching. ... [C]harism [is] a synthesis of about six identifiable, not elusive, but quite definite ways of life. ... But the idea is to balance and harmoniously live those things. [W]hen I’m asked what

Dominicans do [I answer] “Anything, as long as it’s balanced.” (Ita: II-1 05/12/12)

Furthermore, and consistent with the literature, is a perspective that young people reject dichotomies and dualisms (Tacey, 2003). A contemporary spirituality rediscovers that the sacred is not the rejection of the secular. Rather, the previously modern worldview of dualism (separation of sacred and secular) is being replaced by a postmodern holistic worldview of that integrates life, creation, material and spiritual (T. Palmer, 2013). Dominican charism, which offers an integrated framework for contemporary living is, therefore, appealing.

7.2.3 Dominican Distinctiveness

Further to the experience of Dominican charism through four dynamics, it is also identified as a distinctive charism that is proudly “owned”. Dominican charism invites the school community into being part of a story 800 years old, that is engaging and enduring. Students and staff share a badge and a story with students and staff from other Dominican schools. Symbols, language and images around the college, and connections to other Dominican schools, allow students to experience Dominican charism as their “own”. “This is our **identity**. What we do here makes us who we are” (Tanya: TI-10 26/02/13). A “family” analogy is used to describe distinctiveness (Pam: PI-1 09/11/12). Dominican schools are “blood-related”; other Catholic schools are “extended family” (Glenda: GFG1 17/12/12) (Gibeau, 1995).

Dominican charism is Christianity brought with a story to students’ own school in a localised way. It provides an emphasis and an approach to a distinctly Catholic education (Cook & Simonds, 2011, p. 321). Students are empowered by its connection to the broader Christian message of Jesus, satisfying their need to belong to something “big”.

The distinctiveness of Dominican charism from other charisms is derived from its emphasis on a particular way or ways in which the Kingdom is sought, and the constancy of that orientation (Paul VI, 1971, No. 12). In a religious sense, it is differentiated by its emphasis on itinerancy (S. Flynn, 2013, July 12, p. 1) and preaching (Rocks, 2006) – two ways that Ordained and Religious Dominicans evangelise. The applicability of preaching for the laity (students, parents and teachers) is equally relevant.

We preach by our actions and we would like the girls to be able to do that. ... With our own children we pass on our values ... if you define preaching as living the Gospel then, yes, we do want this to happen. (Toni: TI-7 06/03/13)

Indeed, the laity is “crucial” for the preaching mission of the Order because they provide a “diversity” among men and women “to make the presence of Christ alive in the midst of the people (Prologue to the rule of 1968)” (Cadore, 2014, p. 3). Itinerancy is “always [being] on the move, traversing boundaries, being shaken and shaped by the world we enter into, bringing to bear upon these experiences all our capacity for living, knowing and loving” (S. Flynn, 2013, July 12, p. 1). It is an itinerancy of mind rather than place. It is relevant in a contemporary school because of the need to constantly review areas of support, issues of justice and methods of involvement (Pam: PI-1 09/11/12).

Dominican charism is experienced by teachers to be quite different to others they have experienced. It is different from the Salesian or Edmund Rice charisms (Toni: TI-7 06/03/13) and different to the Mercy and Oblate charisms (Tiffany: TFG1 07/03/13). In the experience of almost all participants, there is something distinctive about Dominican schools that differentiates them from schools of other charisms. It is not just the emphasis on study, prayer, service and community (the four marks of the early apostolic church), or separate experiences of each of them. Rather, it is the particular coherent way in which the elements are integrated and synthesised into life at the college that make the school clearly “Dominican” (Tamara: TI-2 26/02/13) (G. Kelly, 2009, August 14, p. 1).

One parent, however, disagrees. Paula challenges the notion of “distinctiveness”, claiming that what she experiences at the college is “the teaching of the Catholic faith or Christianity” (PFG1 05/11/12). It is “just very much along the lines of how the Catholic environment I’ve grown up in [was]” (Paula: PFG1 05/11/12). She observes a similarity between her San Sisto experiences and her own Edmund Rice education and contends that it is the principal who makes the difference between schools rather than the charism.

This belief could emanate from the participant’s pride in her own schooling within the Edmund Rice Tradition. Her questions and remarks might also be an indicator of how as a parent, she is a step removed from the proximity of the actual experience of Dominican charism. She may see the college as fitting within the scope of “Catholic

school” which is perhaps what she intended for her daughter – rather than necessarily a school in the Dominican Tradition. Her remarks, however, do indicate the influence of the Catholic Christian culture of the college acknowledged by participants (Tanya: TI-10 26/02/13; Gay: GI-1 17/12/12; Stacy: SFG3 31/10/12). Her comments confirm that the school is using the Dominican charism to authentically transmit the message of Jesus Christ, and therefore serving God’s mission at this time (G. Kelly, 2009, August 14, p. 10). Furthermore, they confirm that a charismatic school uses charism to lead its community into an appreciation of the Gospel, while attending to the mission of the Catholic School (CCE, 1998b, 2007). “Dominicans themselves say that when the Order has been most true to itself, it has been least concerned with being Dominican” and more concerned about preaching the Gospel (Simon Tugwell in Radcliffe, 1999, p. 4). This confirms the authenticity of the charism in committing “to taking up the story of Jesus and living it in a new way” (Britt, 2008, August 15).

7.2.3.1 Authenticity and distinctiveness

Authenticity and distinctiveness may appear oxymoronic. The paradox in seeking to label Dominican charism as “distinctive” lies in the implicit notion of “difference”. Being “different” infers an identifiable identity. In contrast, “identity is inherently exclusive and the mission [of Jesus Christ] is inherently inclusive” (MacLaren, 2010, p. 7) . Participants, however, identify Dominican communities as being inclusive. A distinctive identity (Dominican) and an inclusive community (San Sisto) co-exist. A Venn diagram image (Gretta: GI-2 03/12/12) supports this concept. Students have an intuition of “inclusive distinctiveness”. They like to be different, but they need to belong (Shira: SFG5 06/11/12). What is positively experienced through a charism of the church, paradoxically, is what they perceive to be lacking in the church – that is, value placed on their individuality and difference. These views are consistent with the emerging paradigm of the complementarity of religions and convergence of consciousness, rather than of sectarianism and difference (Tacey and Treston, in "Catholica," 2013; Cousins, 1999; Du Toit, 2006; Finn, 2013; Teasdale, 2000; Treston, 2000, p. 108). (The notions of inclusion, complementarity and convergence are discussed in section 7.3.2.)

Dominican charism is one of many charisms or structures within Church through which mission can be achieved.

What is important for the life of the Church is that through the full variety of structures and institutions which emerge from its life, all aspects of its identity and mission be expressed, not that each individual structure reflects that totality. (Ormerod, 2010, p. 431)

In the same way that differences between family members do not exclude legitimate membership, Dominican charism is a distinctive “personality” within the Catholic Christian family (Cook, 2010, p. 6). Just as participants referred to distinctive “family” feel, Dominicans too, use this analogy. Certain family resemblances are recognisable and when amongst other Dominicans, “you find that you belong. You are at home...” (Radcliffe, 1999, p. 3). Participants feel at home with the charism and the way that it focuses on “God’s mission” (G. Kelly, 2009, August 14, p. 1).

7.2.3.2 Distinctiveness and difference

Ironically, while students identify as “Dominican”, and they are proud to belong to a network of other Dominican schools, they are pleased to be different to other (non-Dominican) schools. Being “different” in charism gives students a sense of uniqueness and of being “special”.

Being there [at Common Ground – a conference for students from Dominican schools] with all the other Dominican schools in Australia ... it made you feel really special because there were only a very small number of schools” (Shira: SFG5 06/11/12).

Uniqueness is not to infer elitism (McLaughlin, 2000e, pp. 78, 86); rather, difference. “Difference” and “distinctiveness” satisfy the need for “individualism” and the need to feel valued and special. The influence that Dominican charism has on a young person’s identity and spirituality is related at least in part, to her connection with and pride in her school:

I think at a lot of schools even though they are Christian it doesn’t mean much to the students... they say they are proud of their school name... like they say they are proud of ... going to that school but being proud of what the school is **about** is ... a different thing... (Storm: SFG2 30/10/12)

From this research emerges a link between the depth of participant pride in a student’s school and her participation in the range of activities she names “Dominican”. There is a paucity of research to confirm this. Nonetheless, research does indicate that students have an influence on the continuity of charism when they are proud of living “in the mission of being Dominican” (Runkel, 2005, p. 95). Another study linked boys’ pride in service-learning engagement and their experience of it (Price, 2008). By

localising and particularising the Gospel experience through the lens of Dominican charism, it becomes distinctive and attractive for students.

7.2.4 Conclusion

Students, parents and teachers understand Dominican charism to be an all-embracing, integrated phenomenon that influences their development as integrated, balanced human beings. It does this through four dynamics as shown in Figure 7-3.

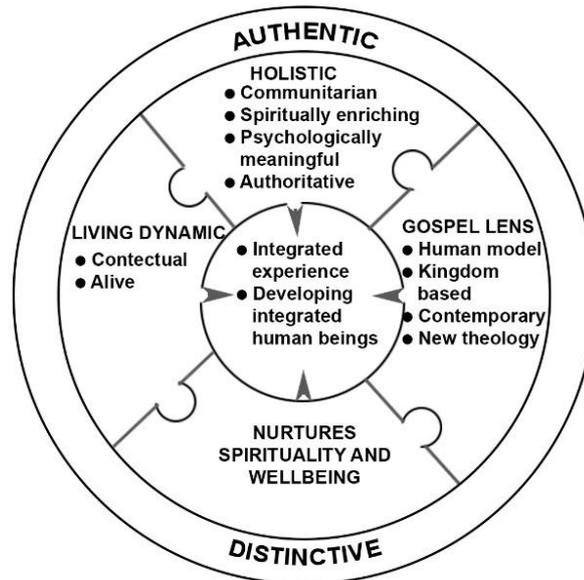


Figure 7-3 Dominican charism: Four dynamics for integrated living

The integration of these dynamics makes the Dominican charism distinctive. Students enjoy the sense of difference from other schools and feel proud of their school’s Dominican heritage. The charism provides a framework for the development of an integrated, spiritual, whole person who values relationships within community. The predominant understanding emerging from this research is that the experience of charism and the values emphasised by the college make sense. Students want to belong to, and identify with the charism of their school. It offers psychological coherence.

The experience of charism as a religious phenomenon or not is unclear. This may be because of the participants’ desire to live a more integrated way of life, which, ironically, is a characteristic of Dominicans from its beginning (Goergen, 2008). Rather than acting as they do because of their understanding of the Christian message, they act according to values that make sense. “I don’t in-depthly (*sic*) look ... to

making the” kingdom” better. I think [being involved in justice and service activities] makes the **world** a better place (Glenda: GFG1 03/12/12).

These behaviours are later identified as “Dominican” or “Christian”. The lived expression of these values leads the student to a deeper faith or a deeper sense of connection to their world. Authentic charism, through action and in relationship, deepens faith. It makes it more profound (Peg: PI-4 08/11/12).

7.3 Dominican Charism: Offering a Relevant Response to the Gospel

The second issue is generated from the specific research question:

How do stakeholders experience Dominican charism at San Sisto College?

Parents, teachers and students, in this study, experience the Dominican charism as a relevant, contemporary response to the Gospel. It is experienced in practical terms rather than through belief in religious dogma. They describe it as a way to live that is consistent with their understandings of the Gospel (Pam: PFG1 05/11/12; Gretta: GI-2 03/12/12). It forms a legitimate basis for nurturing a spirituality that is relevant at this “axial”¹⁵ time in history.

Religious “truth” is evolutionary (Mayson, cited in O'Murchu, 2008, p. xiv). Charism invites people into a contemporary spirituality that responds to the needs of the cultural evolution which humanity is experiencing (Tacey, 2003). “Everything [in creation] co-evolves in a process governed and guided by the inherent wisdom of the evolutionary process” (O'Murchu, 2008, p. 168). Students, empowered by a charism that purports to “seek truth”, are thereby engaging with a new consciousness to make sense of their world (Berry, 1990).

¹⁵ “Axial” refers to Karl Jaspers’ description of the great changes in human consciousness (Cousins, 1999). Pre-Axial Period consciousness was collective, inter-relational and cosmic. The First Axial Period 800 – 200 BC was the period of emerging world religions. It was characterised by individual identity, and discord between nature and tribe. Monasticism was a particularly distinctive, and individualistic, form of spirituality. Humanity is experiencing a new consciousness (Cousins, 1999, pp. 215-216). This “Second Axial Period” is marked by a global consciousness, a shift from divergence to convergence, attracting cultures into “a single planetized community”. Unless humanity re-adopts a collective consciousness, in which world religions work together on global issues, it will perish.(Cousins, 1999, pp. 215 - 217).

How and why Dominican charism is perceived to be relevant is discussed through two issues:

1. Generational changes
2. A relevant spirituality

7.3.1 Generational Changes

This discussion identifies the changing religious context within which charism is experienced. It identifies, amongst Catholic participants, changing beliefs and patterns of religious practice, that are consistent with the scholarship (D'Antonio, 2011, October 24). This changing context provides some explanation for why charism is perceived to be relevant.

7.3.1.1 Parent Beliefs

A minority of parent participants expressed an unquestioning allegiance to, and faith in, the Catholic Church. They expect that their daughters will continue to be members of the Catholic Church. Other parents (Catholic and other Christian denominations) value their daughters' own decisions in relation to faith practice. Nevertheless, these parents value their daughters' personal happiness, involvement in social action, and the development and practice of Christian values, more than regular Sunday worship. This conclusion resonates with research that indicates that long-held ecclesial beliefs and practices are no longer considered (Battams, 2002; Finn, 2013; A. O'Brien, 2013; Peters, 2011).

I think even when you baptise them in [any one] religion, in my mind, you are putting them on a pathway. Now, they might not go to Mass every week and be one of those sort of Catholics. They might decide, having researched and studied, that Buddhism is more their thing, and they really connect with that. And I think that as long as they are a good and decent person and they're tolerant and accepting, then they're part of a community that brings out the best in them and [if] it's positive and tolerant and [a] pleasant influence then, I would sort of accept that as being a good thing. (Pam: PFG1 05/11/12)

I think ... to me the measure of someone's faith is not their attendance at a church on a Sunday, it's more about how they lead their life and how they exhibit the principles of the Catholic faith... which I think is more important than the physical presence. But having said that, that presence is obviously important... and is encouraged at the school. ...You could be living that mandatory attendance sitting in the back row sleeping... playing with your iPhone. (Piper: PI-2 07/11/12)

This is not a recent phenomenon. There is evidence that the disconnect between young people and the church began with the changing faith practice of parents (Bengtson,

2013). Catholicism is identified as “just one model” for living life (Pam: PFG1 05/11/12). This is consistent with research concerning Mass attendance (Dixon et al., 2008; Wilkinson, 2012, p. 12).

Since the National Count in 2011 [when Mass attendance was 10.6% of the population], there is nothing to suggest that the decline in Mass attendance has either slowed or reversed. ... If there is to be any hope that ordinary Australian Catholics will return to the Eucharistic table, there will have to be credible evidence from church leaders that their commitment to reform and renewal of the Church and its governance is genuine and imminent. (Wilkinson, 2013)

Church leaders no longer are perceived to live “in the same world” as ordinary Catholics (Wilkinson, 2012, p. 36). Indeed the monastic celibate life of the clergy is a distinct form of individuality (Cousins, 1999, p. 214) unrelated to the family life of Catholics. Families have lost attachment to the institutional Church for reasons of “indifference to disillusionment” (Mellor, 2005, p. 305). They find the institution “either irrelevant or unattractive” (Mellor, 2005, p. 293).

7.3.1.2 Teacher Beliefs

Teachers understand the “disconnect” between young people and the Church. They recognise that the spiritual needs of young people are different to the way they once were. Their beliefs about a number of matters such as transubstantiation and the role of women in the church (Tegan: TI-6 22/02/13) are inconsistent with church teaching. They do, however, value theologies of kingdom, proclamation and mission (Tarni: TI-5 26/02/13; Thea: TI2-12 04/12/12).

Dominican charism is experienced by teachers as a way of bringing the face of Jesus to young people in a meaningful and relevant way (Tess: TI-1 28/2/13; Tarni: TI-5 26/02/13). They believe that the Habits of Spirit program is packaged in a “language that is more accessible to people” (Tara: TI-4 11/12/12). Teachers appreciate the positive influence that charism can have on the meaning of “Church”.

I very much see the church not as a building – it’s the people. And this is appealing to a church that is struggling I think that to explain Gospel values in a way that is meaningful (and we’re putting into action at some point through Dominican or whichever lens you look at and then how do we then put his values into action here) I think makes it a very **real** church, and a practical church that is helping people instead of church that is long gone and not meaningful anymore. ... [I]f we understand the church to be **of people** rather than a building then ... it’s helpful to have a model that is not God-like. Dominic was very **human** and he was able to put his beliefs into action. And

we might learn from those. I think [charism is] **very** real. (Tiffany: TFG1 07/03/13)

In contrast to clergy, teachers' beliefs about what the contemporary church looks like, and their frustrations with it, suggest that they live in a new paradigm of "Church". They, like students, see charism as being able to transcend church issues and discord in providing a practical way of living the Gospel.

7.3.1.3 Student Beliefs

Most students (current and graduate) do not engage with the Catholic Church outside of the school experience (Belmonte & Cranston, 2009; Collins, 2008; Coughlan, 2009). Few families participate at Sunday Mass, making it difficult for young people to travel to the Church (Gay: GI-1 17/12/12). Students are too busy studying and working to go to Mass (Gabi: GFG2 09/01/13). These are excuses because the fundamental reason for their lack of participation is because the Catholic Church is "stuck in the past" (Gay: GI-1 17/12/12) and that they do not need to go to Mass to be Catholic (Gail: GI-3 10/12/12). These reasons concur with other research (Dixon et al., 2007, February).

In contrast, students consider their involvement in action towards service and justice to be more important in the development of their spirituality and faith than "words" said in Church. They link these activities as being central to their Dominican Christian identity. Practically making a difference in the world by one's actions and charity towards others is more important than going to Mass every week (Steffi: SFG2 30/10/12). This understanding is contrary to the official Church teaching that "[t]he Eucharist is the source and apex of the whole work of preaching the Gospel" (Paul VI, 1965e).

Students want to effect transformation and global change and to make a better world (D'Antonio, 2011, October 24) (Steffi: SFG2 30/10/12). They do not believe that any person should be told what to believe (Gwen: GI-4 05/12/12; Gail: GI-3 10/12/12). They are open to others' ideas (Gretta: GI-2 03/12/12). There is an ethic of hospitality towards "the other" that they name Dominican. They infer that the Catholic Church, on the contrary, does not exhibit this same ethic towards difference and the "other". Typical of the young people interviewed, one graduate said, "I've always had Catholic values growing up ... but I'm open-minded as well. I like to see the values from other

religions. I'm not closed to anything" (Gretta: GI-2 03/12/12). An underlying theme in this study is that to be an orthodox Catholic is to have a closed mind. The invitation to explore ideas and opinions, and to search for Truth, are positive elements of a Dominican philosophy of education frequently named by students. No one specifically names this enquiring attitude characteristic of Catholicism. Gretta (GI-2 03/12/12) adds "I don't like things that pigeon hole me in a way of thinking". Indeed, truth itself evolves. "It [truth] is not given once and for all in particular traditions. Rather, these traditions undergo decisive changes as modern people cannot view them in the same way as people from past times" (Mayson in O'Murchu, 2008, p. xiv).

I feel as though if we are **truly** Christian people, if we are **truly** believers in a God and in a great power, and this wonderful spirit, then surely our minds and questioning and our intelligence are gifts from that, and not to be ignored.
(Tegan: TI-6 22/02/13)

The Dominican charism honours the principle of inclusivity (Ita: II-1 05/12/12). "We are mendicants for the truth, happy to beg a little illumination from everyone whom we meet on the road" (Radcliffe, 2001b, pp. 170-171).

While young people are discerning about what to believe, the source of their beliefs is inconsequential (Gay: GI-1 17/12/12). Graduates entertain the validity of changing churches in order to find a religion or church that is life-giving, and which nurtures a healthy connection with God (Glenda: GFG1 03/12/12). This perspective is consistent with research into the spirituality of young people (Kaldor et al., 2004; Maroney, 2008; Tacey, 2003). For many youth, "one religion is as good as another" (Treston, 2000, p. 135). They understand that most world religions share the same message; they just present it differently (Gay: GI-1 17/12/12). This same concept is referenced as religious universalism and an appropriate choice in a global, pluralised world (Francis et al., 2001).

Young people articulate the role of feelings and passion that come from the search for greater independence: if you choose to do something you do it with greater passion and it gives you clear direction. To be involved in activities that students describe as "Dominican" is to choose to be involved (Gretta: GI-2 03/12/12).

I like it better when ... I **feel** this emotion. It feels more **real** than just a belief in something. And like I love having beliefs too but a **feeling** is more **real** and I can **act** on it and I can talk about it and grasp my head around a **feeling** more.
(Sue SFG4 06/11/12)

Students are influenced by their feelings, which, they say, develop from their own experiences or reflections about something, rather than from another authority (Bouma, 2006). This concept is reinforced from a theological perspective. It is when we choose to act like Jesus that our soul is reconfigured (Rohr, 2005, pp. 114-115). It is through the experience of Dominican charism that students and teachers become familiar with how to “act like Jesus”. The charism “opens a door to the spirituality of what Dominic was about, rather than about the “Church”. It’s like a way to live, rather than an institution” (Tegan: TI-6 22/02/13).

Students are indeed concerned about life and the sustainability of life on the planet. This is identified in other research (Denison, Hooijberg, Lane, & Leif, 2012; Heelas & Woodhead, 2005; North American Association for Environmental Education, n.d.). Young people exhibit a growing sense of ecological connection (C. Campbell, 2007) and interconnectedness (Heelas & Woodhead, 2005). They exhibit a “profound sense of responsibility for others and the earth” (Heelas, 1996, p. 25). These are issues participants identified as fitting within the spectrum of “Dominican charism”, and are named as such. The church has not been observed being actively engaged with these issues of concern, yet they are of vital importance for humanity (Francis et al., 2001, p. 107). Involvement in action for environmental and ecological sustainability engages students in action for the Kingdom (McDonagh, 2010, April, p. 30). Young people engage with these matters actively while at school. These same issues are generally not issues in which the Church engages (Crawford & Rossiter, 2006, p. 175). It is therefore easy for people to associate a response to them as being more “school-related” (see school activities of service and justice listed in Table 6.9), and therefore Dominican. These issues are relevant to young people and are provided in this research as examples of an evolving charism in action.

Graduate students and younger teachers are more concerned with gender equality than other participants. They commented on the respect that Jesus and St Dominic displayed towards women. They fail to register similar respect demonstrated by the Church which they believe excludes women from full membership. This issue of justice was the reason given by one participant for why she feels unable to have her own children baptised. She explained that she will not be involved in the Church because of the way she perceives women’s rights are denied within the church (Gay: GI-1 17/12/12). Indeed, reference is made in the scholarship to this same issue. “[An] urgent need that

I see, to which Dominican intellectual tradition can make an important contribution, is the work for greater equality for women in the global world and for the fuller use of women's gifts and wisdom at all levels in the Church" (B. Reid, 2012, March 19, p. 7). "[I]t cannot be denied that hardly any major institution in Western democratic countries ... discriminates so strongly against women ... " (Kung, 2013, p. 45).

Another challenge that is identified in this research, relating to generational differences, concerns the image of the Catholic Church.

A marketing agency, commissioned by the Bible Society, found evidence from its focus groups that the idea of Christianity and its central Gospel message was well accepted, but that for a number of reasons the image of the organised church was far from attractive. The article suggested: "the church is virtually the last image that should be used by Christian organisations to attract followers to God." A list of reasons for the poor image included: abuse of children, intolerance, narrow views on sexuality, hypocrisy, being too judgmental, and prejudice against women.... The findings applied to all age groups, but particularly to youth.(Crawford & Rossiter, 2006, p. 96)

While this situation applies to all the mainstream Christian churches in Australia, it is ironic that Catholic schools have never been so popular. "It is apparent that what the schools are offering is regarded as desirable, while the Church itself is not" (Crawford & Rossiter, 2006, p. 96). Students concur with Crawford and Rossiter's study. They identify a stigma of association with a particular religion (Gretta: GI-2 03/12/12). In contrast, participants do not have a problem with "Church" under a local banner of "school" or "Dominican charism". They identify positively with learning about, being engaged in and being surrounded by opportunities for reflection and confrontation of conscience in order to make the world a more just place (S. Flynn, 2013, July 12, p. 3).

There is a generational shift represented across the participant groups: from complete acceptance of the tenets of faith and teachings of the Catholic faith (some parents); to a critiquing of what a person chooses to believe and practise (teachers); to an understanding that no one should accept tenets of any church or organisation without critiquing it (students). This new understanding is consistent with the findings from the Enhancing Catholic School Identity Project (ECSIP) (Pollefeyt, 2011, September).

While all participants identify charism as belonging to the church, young people name their religious, faith-based and spiritual experiences as relating more specifically to, or at least connected with the Dominican charism. This perspective resonates with an

“informed participant” (a teaching Religious): “[the Institutional Church] is a huge challenge for anyone who’s trying to take the Gospel of Jesus seriously” (Ita: II-1 05/12/12). Charism is relevant and appealing. This may be explained by the influence of the school charismatic environment on young people. However, this research identifies another reason for this phenomenon. Dominican charism, more than Church, is relevant to the changing spiritual needs of the younger generation. How Dominican charism engages individuals in a spirituality that is relevant to their interests and concerns is now scrutinised.

7.3.2 A Relevant Spirituality

An authentic, Gospel-based spirituality is practical, as discussed previously in this chapter (Hall, 2012, November; Maroney, 2008). It is appealing to students. But also identified in this research is an emerging spirituality that is relevant to young people.

First, many students are interested in dialoguing with others about their religious beliefs and practices. The subject “Study of Religion”, studied in Years 11 and 12, is identified as particularly enlightening. It offers knowledge about other belief systems, thereby promoting a greater appreciation of the “other”. Study of Religion was:

[an] awesome subject. It was great. I loved how in the senior years we got to learn about the other religions and I think I took a few morals and values from those as well, and a few messages. It sort of kind of opened my eyes as to what else there was. (Gay: GI-1 17/12/12)

Graduate students say that it allowed them to understand other belief systems better. It removes fear of other religions (Gay: GFG2 09/01/13) and enriches an understanding of a person’s own religion, by exposing students to other values. Gina adds that knowing more about other religions allows students to be “more open to other people’s way of living” (Gina: GFG2 09/01/13). Students (current and graduate) link the studying of world religions to Dominican charism. They connect the encouragement to think about and debate truths of each religion to the Dominican search for Truth (Gabi and Gina: GFG2 09/01/13).

Students understand that the Kingdom of God involves everyone, irrespective of faith (Sammi: SI-5 07/11/122). Students are excited about the way that the internet enlightens “people’s minds to global differences, cultural differences” (Gretta: GI-2 03/12/12). Furthermore, they identify the many similarities between religions, because

“the messages cross anyway” (Gay: GI-1 17/12/12). They exhibit a consciousness of convergence¹⁶, of looking for unity, and understanding of difference. This notion is frequently referenced as the “inclusive nature” of Dominican charism.

Second, students indicate that they are thinking broadly and cosmologically. They are concerned about, and interested in, working together with like-interested others on real-world problems such as peace, justice, poverty, discrimination, global ethics, non-sectarianism and care of the earth. Their global ethic transcends religious boundaries (Sharleen: SFG5 06/11/12; Sally: SFG3 31/10/12) and is an indicator of a more cosmically-aligned spirituality (Hefner, 2003, March). This emerging new consciousness is “the most radical, far-reaching and challenging transformation in history” (Cousins, 1999, p. 210).

Dominican charism fosters in students a spirituality that emanates from Church but is perceived to be more global, more personal, more relevant and more consistent with evolutionary truth (Mayson, cited in O'Murchu, 2008, p. xiv).

There is a new question in the spiritual life; it is the spirituality of the spiritual life itself. Life here, and how we relate to it, rather than life to come and how we guarantee it for ourselves, has become the spiritual conundrum of our age.(Chittester, 1998)

This study confirms the presence of a new spirituality that brings the wisdom of the Gospel into a spirituality of convergence of cultures and religions (Cousins, 1999, p. 216). This is a spirituality in which religions and cultures of the world meet each other to “face together the challenges of the Second Axial Period”. The new “consciousness” (Cousins, 1999) reshapes thinking into an awareness of unity of creation and reconnects humanity to its true nature in creation (Scaine, 2011a, p. 35).

¹⁶ Cousins (1999) explains that humanity is now in the Second Axial Period, which is characterised by the complex convergence of consciousness, the rediscovering our roots in the earth, and it will repossess the spirituality of the primal peoples in its understanding of the entire human race to one tribe, a turn toward the material world as the locus of spiritual reality. Through “dialogic dialogue, spiritual resources will be channelled toward the solution of real-world global problems, such as peace, justice, poverty, discrimination and care of the earth (Hefner, 2003). He claims the religions of the West and the East must work together with a global consciousness as opposed to the individual consciousness of the previous period. “This new global consciousness will not level all differences among peoples; instead it will generate ... creative unions in which diversity is not erased but intensified” (Teilhard, in Cousins, 1999). “If such a creative union is achieved, then the religions will have moved into the complexified form of consciousness that will be characteristic of the Twenty-First Century... it is an absolute necessity if we are to survive” (Cousins, 1999, pp. 217-218).

It is a convergent and inclusive ideology that allows for difference. It is a paradigm of unity rather than division (Teasdale, 2000, p. 1).

Studies on contemporary youth spirituality provide evidence to support this emerging view (Maroney, 2008; Mason et al., 2007). Scholarly literature resituates humanity (both men and women) within the cosmos and planetary context, and brings in the power of God as nourishing and sustaining (O'Murchu, 2008, p. 7).

The spirituality of students is nurtured by those “Dominican” activities in which they are involved. They name activities such as those related to environmental and ecological sustainability, and actions for peace and against poverty, as “Dominican”. Engagement in such activities provides a basis for the development of an individual, yet global spirituality, which is practical. Student passions and interests, and comments about life and spirituality, suggest that they might already be glimpsing a vision articulated by theologians: a personal, Christ-centred cosmos evolving with a divine-human energy (Teasdale, 2000, p. 7). This is a consciousness of “dialogic dialogue” – in which mutual understanding is sought, and where values merge in creative union (Cousins, 1999, p. 217). Students are witnessing the necessity for the integration of human activity:

All human professions, institutions, and activities must be integral with the earth as the primary self-nourishing, self-governing and self-fulfilling community. To integrate our human activities within this context is our way into the future. (Thomas Berry in Webb, 2007)

Consciousness precedes Being, and not the other way around, as the Marxists claim. For this reason, the salvation of this human world lies nowhere else than in the human heart, in the human power to reflect, in human meekness and in human responsibility. Without a global revolution in the sphere of human consciousness, nothing will change for the better in the sphere of our being as humans, and the catastrophe toward which this world is headed, be it ecological, social, demographic, or a general breakdown of civilisation, will be unavoidable. (Havel, 1990)

Theologians write of the need to engage once more with the spirituality of the primal peoples¹⁷ by developing a cosmic, collective conscience. Students are doing this now. They use the language of “collective experience” (Steffi: SFG2 30/10/12) and explain

¹⁷ Primal peoples understood the entire human race to be one tribe. Their dominant form of consciousness was cosmic, collective, tribal, mythic and ritualistic. There was a creative harmony between primal peoples and the world of nature (Cousins, 1999, pp. 209-212).

the benefits of community work that demonstrates “that we’re one larger community rather than one little school” (Sally: SFG3 31/10/12). They appreciate ways of bringing people’s ideas together (Shira: SFG5 06/11/12). They want to make the world a better place (Stacy: SFG3 31/10/12). One student recognises that:

At every assembly we have... there is something mentioned about the poor people that (sic) are struggling. ... We may be ... sponsoring or helping or donating any money to them just to sort of help them. ... it could be in so many different countries [where they] are so desperate for food or ... water to drink—things that we just take for granted a lot of the time. (Sally: SFG3 31/10/12)

Theologians, philosophers and commentators describe the emerging spirituality of the current era in remarkably similar ways and with similar characteristics. Students name the same characteristics and experiences in ways that denote importance to their personal wellbeing, to their sense of worth and to their spirit. A number of implications for religions emerge from this new global consciousness, and indicate a new paradigm of religion.

- Religions must enter creatively into the dialogue of religions and channel their energies into solving the common human problems that threaten our future on the earth;
- They must strip away negative and limiting attitudes toward other religions;
- They must avoid both a narrow fundamentalism and a bland universalism;
- They must be true to their spiritual heritage, for this is the source of their power and their gift to the world;
- They must make every effort to ground themselves in their own traditions and at the same time to open themselves to other traditions;
- They must tap into their reservoirs of spiritual energy and channel this into developing secular enterprises that are genuinely human.

(Cousins, 1999, p. 218).

This new paradigm is one of relationship (O'Murchu, 2010a). World religions face the same critical issues: ecological crisis, escalating violence, economic instability, hunger, poverty, disease, population explosion, racism. This new spirituality will be organically ecological, supported by structures of justice and peace, and the voices of the oppressed (the poor, women, racial groups and other minorities) will be heard and heeded (Teasdale, 2000, p. 6).

The new cosmic spirituality finds relevance in the lives of young people who are interested in environmental sustainability, Mother Nature (Sharon: SI-4 12/11/12) and the work of the school “Greenies” club (Sammi: SI-5 07/11/12; Skye: SFG1 30/10/12), (Heelas & Woodhead, 2005). It provides some explanation for why Dominican charism is experienced so positively. It also explains why students are so interested in studies of other religions, of having an open mind, of being involved in justice activities and of having a global ethic of care for the planet. The Dominican charism incorporates these values into its spirituality (O'Sullivan, 2007). If charism is “the realisation in practice of grace, a gift which enables the believer to contribute to the common good” (Lydon, 2009, p. 43), then the spirituality fostered by Dominican charism is relevant to contemporary needs.

Participants seek to be engaged with a practical theology in relationship with God in private and public prayer. The Christian faith, however, has become identified as concerning beliefs and doctrines rather than discipleship, truthful action, social praxis and values (Hall, 2006, October, pp. 3, 5). The experience of charism provides a catalyst for discipleship and solidarity, borne of an “integral vision” of global consciousness with appropriate values (Gebser, 1985). This discipleship leads people into responsibility for what they do or choose not to do for self and others (Metz, 1981, p. 27).

Young people do believe in God, as shown in other research studies (P. Hughes, 2007; Mason et al., 2007; Rossiter, 2004). They identify a “yearning ...to make a difference”. “There’s a greater meaning behind the things I do. ... I do it because it needs to be done and I guess God wants me to do [it] with God” (Gretta: GI-2 03/12/12). The responsibility to work with God is empowering (Orique, 2006). Studies make connections between culture, the search for meaning and spirituality (Maroney, 2008). The presence of Dominican charism in the culture of the college nurtures spirituality and meaning in life.

The connection with the cosmos, as God’s creation, provides an emotional re-connection between God, self and the universe (Crawford & Rossiter, 2006, p. 91). In this new cosmology, each person experiences through their own religious traditions an expanded perception of reality (Schillebeeckx, 1981). Albert the Great pronounced that “[t]he whole world [is] theology for us” (O'Sullivan, 2007, p. 224). Dominican

spirituality reverences humanity's connection to the earth and the responsibility to care for the planet (McDonagh, 2010, April; O'Sullivan, 2007, p. 225). It leads students into a contemporary theology. Students are thereby being prepared to join a humanity that is "moving toward a new Jerusalem where the world becomes the temple" (Tacey in "Catholica," 2013).

Participants are looking for a relevant way of doing and being that gives life meaning. This phenomenon is not new and concurs with other studies (Finn, 2013; Maroney, 2008). In these new times, experience informs thinking (Rohr, 2005, pp. 114-115) and is the source of authority (Bouma, 2006). It also informs religious and spiritual practice. The change to this new spirituality resonates with the claim that "... we are on the verge of the most significant transformation in Christianity since the time of Constantine in the fourth century" (Hall, 2006, October, p. 7).

7.3.3 Conclusion

In the face of a Church that is becoming increasingly irrelevant, charism is an effective vehicle for the delivery of the Gospel. Various elements of school life, although they also respond to Catholic Social Teaching and to requirements of a Catholic school in developing its religious life, are perceived as "Dominican". Dominican charism is perceived to be responsive to needs and relevant to the lives of young people. It helps develop a practical spirituality that is both individually enriching, globally responsive and cosmically aligned. The spirituality offered by the Dominican charism is represented in Figure 7-4.

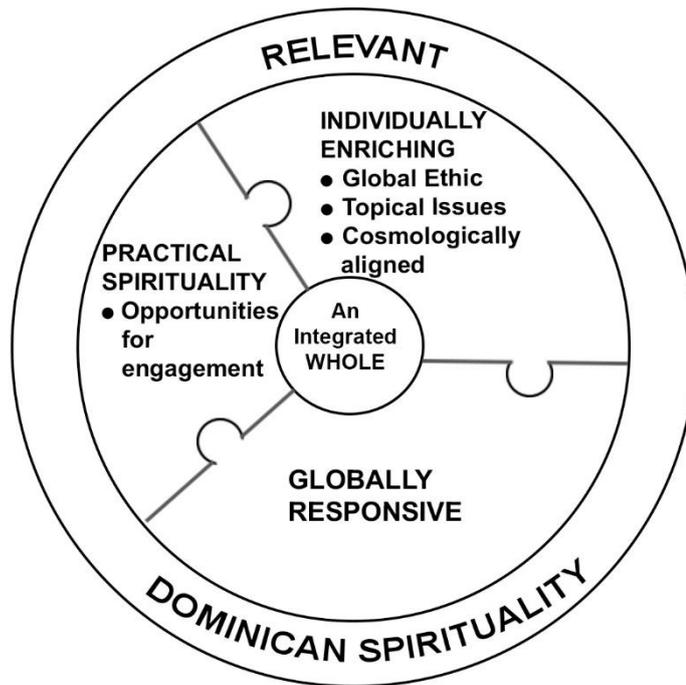


Figure 7-4 Spirituality of Dominican charism

How a spirituality that is individual yet global, relevant and Catholic, can be nurtured within a community is the realm of leadership and constitutes the third issue for discussion in this chapter.

7.4 Dominican Charism: Leading for Mission

The third issue emanates from the specific research question:

How is Dominican charism nurtured at San Sisto College?

Students believe that “you [don’t] have to go to Church to be Catholic.... [If] you respect others, you help others, if you strive to do well and be nice to everyone in everyday life ... things like that, it helps you become a good Catholic (Gail: GI-3 10/12/12). Others consider that their non-attendance at regular Mass is acceptable to the church because being Catholic in the Twenty-first Century is “more flexible” than it used to be (Gabi: GFG2 09/01/13). Teachers identify that the role of the Church and religion in contemporary society needs analysis, and whether or not the church is still relevant “as it exists in its traditional format” needs to be “debated” (Tarni: TFG1 07/03/13). With such tension and confusion concerning church (Treston, 2000), the leadership of church agencies, such as schools, faces scrutiny (A. O'Brien, 2013).

The lay principal's cultural and spiritual capital and formation provides some explanation for the tension that exists between the Church and its schools (Belmonte, Cranston, & Limerick, 2006, November 26-30; Finn, 2013; Grace, 2012; McLaughlin, 1998, 2000, September, 6-9; Peters, 2011). Inconsistencies between official Catholic instruction and practice by its members are identified in scholarship as another challenge (Coughlan, 2009; McLaughlin, 2000e; A. O'Brien, 2013). In addition, the Catholic school is experiencing unprecedented social, educational and ecclesial change (Belmonte & Cranston, 2009).

The third research question invokes a discussion firstly about how the mission of a contemporary Catholic school is understood. Secondly, it invites a discussion about the exercise of leadership of the charism in such a way that the mission as a Catholic school can be authentically honoured.

7.4.1 Understanding Mission

The purpose of the Catholic school is “to proclaim the Kingdom by developing within it an ethos and structures that mirror transformation through the living of values that Jesus proclaimed” (McLaughlin, 2000c, p. 34). As explained in Chapter 4, it is also the case that “The Catholic school finds its true justification in the mission of the Church” (CCE, 1988, par. 34). Yet, approximately 30% of students in Australian Catholic schools are not Catholic, and those who are Catholic generally do not participate in regular Church service (National Catholic Education Commission, 2011, p. 32). One study suggests that this has provided justification for labelling the Catholic school culture as “not ideal” (Belmonte & Cranston, 2009). Rather than considering Catholic school culture in a pluralist, secular society as “not ideal”, this research identifies the presence of two types of mission which co-exist with mutual benefit and which honour the authoritative mission of the Catholic school.

7.4.1.1 Type 1 Mission

The first type of mission identified is broad. It is inclusive of all students because all students are enrolled at the college. At this level, all participants experience the existence of a religious environment that nurtures personal spirituality, deepens their faith in God or a “higher power” (Gretta: GI-2 03/12/12), enriches their prayer life, and encourages them to be involved in action for justice in the Kingdom. At this level, students learn an appreciation of Gospel values, experienced through Dominican

charismatic-related activities. There is a network of shared understandings that members find both personally and collectively meaningful. Students, teachers and parents experience a practical way to live the Gospel, irrespective of religious denomination or faith. One teacher explains: “When you come here, it’s definitely about being a better person and being a better person for your community” (Tammi: TI-10 26/02/13). She says: “I don’t feel out of place not being Catholic and I feel like it’s something that anyone could benefit from” (Tammi: TI-10 26/02/13). A student who comes from a family that has “never been ... church-going” or Catholic, explains a “type one”¹⁸ mission in action.

I find our liturgies and Masses so moving especially, you know, the Masses do a good job of making us not just aware of God and but aware of the world. ... There are definitely moments in Masses and stuff that I’ve found really really moving and I’ve been, that night, sitting in bed thinking about. The respect that everyone shows at these events to other people where, you know, it may not be touching everyone, but they acknowledge that it is touching *some* people. And they need to give those people a chance, to, you know, get into it ... really connect with it. (Stacy: SFG3 31/10/12)

Students may not experience the sacramentality of the Eucharist. But they identify the meaningfulness of the liturgies they experience. Such liturgies provide a prayerful environment, consistent with the mission of the Catholic school. The function of this broad mission is acknowledged in the enrolment policy of Brisbane Catholic Education. It welcomes all those who seek to share and support its values (Archdiocese of Brisbane - Catholic Education Council, 2004).

7.4.1.2 Type 2 Mission

The second type of mission is experienced by Catholic students or by those who practise their Christian faith. The religious life of the school enhances the faith and religiosity of these students within a specific Christian tradition as explained by Sally.

I’m brought up in a community where we believe in Dominican values and Christian values and ... like I’m brought into a Christian and Catholic faith. ... I’ve never experienced [life] outside the bubble, you could say. In a sense it is a set journey for me, but... I’ve always had the opportunity to leave if I ever wanted to ... it’s never forced upon me. (Sally: SI-2 05/11/12)

¹⁸ Type 1 is a term coined by the author/researcher for the purposes of this study.

Similarly, parents explain the depth at which the Catholic school influences the Catholic faith of their daughters. Parents appreciate that Dominican charism enriches their daughters' experiences and faith development.

I went to primary and secondary Dominican schools so therefore I was very aware of what Dominican values meant. So therefore it was more of the *Veritas*— speaking the Truth, living the Gospel life and basically the Catholic beliefs that I grew up with that I wanted instilled in my daughters. (Penny: PFG1 05/11/12)

I don't fully understand or don't fully know the philosophies or teachings of St Dominic. I was brought up in the Augustinian ways so it's slightly different to St Dominic's. ... I'm not 100% sure of the Dominican or St Dominic's philosophies or teachings of the Dominicans were. But they would have to be within the whole Catholic situation or Catholic belief and as much as they may be specific to the Dominicans they would still reflect the whole Catholic philosophies. (Paris: PI-3 06/11/12)

Catholic teachers acknowledge the way that the college culture deepens their Catholic faith and their spirituality within the Catholic tradition (Tanya: TI-10 26/02/13; Toni: TI-7 06/03/13).

7.4.1.3 Presence of both types of mission

Participants identify the influence of charism on students of different religious backgrounds. By so doing, they are acknowledging the concept of the two types of mission identified in this research. They acknowledge the influence of charism over students who are not Catholic or who are not practising their Catholic faith through Mass attendance.

I think they [unchurched students] **do** understand the desire of **this** school and this community to feed the needs, the spiritual needs of the students and of the community. And that spiritual need is connected to the emotional needs ... and intellectual needs as well, because we are of the mind and heart, aren't we. ... I think the **feeling** of the place is obvious. I don't think it can go unnoticed. I don't know that they will immediately think "Christ" or St Dominic... or the saints, but I think they will think that welcoming, ... caring, I think those basic virtues and values ... are made manifest by the way that people are greeted ... are treated. ... You feel it in so many ways, and you know that you're respected... (Tomiko: TI-3 25/02/13)

Another teacher identifies the changing ecclesial culture identified in the literature (Belmonte & Cranston, 2009). Her comments resonate with the identification in this study of two types of mission.

I think in past generations the whole idea of Catholic was very set. ... [A]nd now there are a lot more challenges. [Students] *do* confront you about different things and my attitude has always been "*If you don't question your*

faith, it's not alive.” So we need to be able to respond to their questions and sometimes that's not easy. ... And I think if... we could be a bit of an ostrich and put our head in the sand and say well we'll just look after the churched ones. That leaves a **whole** group out. Or just say “well, they're in a Catholic school, so they're all Catholic.” Well, you know that doesn't always happen. So I think we just have to be more open. (Tarni: TI-5 26/02/13)

Tanya identifies the co-existence of the two types of students for which mission is directed. In a society where so few students can be labelled “practising Catholic”, mission, inclusive of all students, is essential.

If I weren't a practising Catholic and [if I had not] been in Catholic schools and my kids not gone to Catholic schools, I would **think** that everything good that happened here, everything that kind of nurtured my spirituality, I would **think** that that was Dominican, because that would be the only thing I know. (Tanya: TI-10 26/02/13)

A student presents a common feeling amongst peers.

I still think [Eucharist is] quite important but obviously with the way everybody's lives are going at the moment, it does get quite difficult to make it to church to be able to receive the Eucharist. ...I just don't think it's a **crucial** part of being Catholic. (Gail: GI-3 10/12/12)

A parent explains the difference of influence of school liturgical experience on students at different levels of faith development.

I don't think [students] need to be [church-going to experience this Dominican charism]... I don't think they need to be church-going to experience it because they experience it here as a school community, and, as we know, there's a lot of girls here that aren't ... girls that go to church regularly ... I think perhaps the experience is more profound for girls that *do* go to church because they can connect it back to more experiences they have at church, and words that they've listened to and that kind of thing. So probably a more profound experience for the girls who **do** go to church but I think it's still an experience that is very valid for the ones that don't. (Peg: PI-4 08/11/12)

Both types of mission are compatible and co-exist. The broader mission is characterised by full inclusion and “non-critical awareness” (Belmonte & Cranston, 2009, p. 4). “[The school community] is a foundational means of evangelisation and, ultimately, must be both accountable to, and evaluated by, this fundamental orientation” (Ranson, 2006, p. 419). Because the more general, inclusive mission exists, the mission of evangelisation, by laity, for the Church, is possible (Cadore, 2014). The inclusive mission invites all students into God's mission. This research identifies that the more inclusive the “Dominican charism” is perceived, the more inclusive and clearer the mission of God is understood. When the mission of God is

understood to be at the heart of the Catholic school, a religious culture and the mission of the Catholic school, to the extent that it is Gospel-authentic (John Paul II, 2001, November 22, p. 18), can be maintained. The scholarly literature provides some support for this contemporary perspective.

[T]he movement within the church from the experience of authority to the authority of experience ensures that any narrow concept of Catholic identity will be rejected by an increasingly articulate and theologically literate Catholic laity. (Treston, 1997, p. 10)

The emergence of the phenomenon of two types of mission assists the principal in “embracing a robust sense of Catholic identity without carrying a chip on [his or her] shoulder” (Allen, 2009), or being apologetic in any way. The secular culture can marginalise the religious dimension of Catholic schools for which they were founded (Coughlan, 2009, p. 226). The presence of a credible and palatable Dominican charism minimises such marginalisation. It presents an authentic model of evangelisation by Christian laity (Cadore, 2014).

Participant descriptions of the charismatic culture of San Sisto align with research into the mission of the contemporary Catholic school (Coughlan, 2009). Principals and employing authorities name the pursuit of authentic relationships and Gospel values as central to their work. The message of Jesus forms the basis of these experiences. The formation of a life-giving community and the provision of service and outreach opportunities to respond to the message of Jesus are foundational to the mission of the Catholic school (Coughlan, 2009, p. 215). Inner transformation in this emerging paradigm takes precedence over “acting Catholic” (T. Kelly, 2009). Focusing on two types of mission addresses the reality of the pluralistic school community and its relationship to its ecclesial identity (Coughlan, 2009, p. 225). A focus on all those in the “market square” (Rymarz, 2011) provides an example of Gospel living that young people find attractive (Treston, 1997).

7.4.1.4 Dominican charism fosters Mission authenticity

Participants name prayer, service and justice activities, and the values within the Habits of Spirit as essentially a part of the mission of a Catholic school although “they’ve probably been tailored into the Dominican ethos or methodology” (Paris: PI-3 06/11/12). The “Dominican twist, or a Dominican feel” (Pam: PI-1 09/11/12) localises, personalises and empowers a response to the Gospel. The activities and ethos

generated from a student perspective too is “Catholic with a Dominican spin” (Sue: SFG4 06/11/12). The Dominican charism adds the “feeling” (Sally: SI-2 05/11/12), the “pride” (Storm and Steffi: SFG2 30/10/12), “ownership” (Thea: TI2-12 04/12/12), and “passion” (Sally: SI-2 05/11/12) to the school religious experience. However, Catholic schools are inclusive of more than Catholics. It is their inclusivity and sense of community, that students identify as “Dominican”, that provides a real demonstration of the Gospel messages of love, inclusion, hospitality and welcome.

A distinct, authentic Dominican charismatic culture provides an environment that is consistent with the mission of the contemporary Catholic school. An unambiguous task of the Catholic school is to provide a “binding force and potential for relationships [that] derive from a set of values and a communion of life that is rooted in our common belonging to Christ” (CCE, 2007, par. 5). The Catholic school “aims at forming the person in the integral unity of his being, using the tools of teaching and learning...” (CCE, 2007, par. 13). The “transmission of the Gospel” is central.

The synthesis between faith, culture and life that educators of the Catholic school are called to achieve is in fact, reached by integrating all the different aspects of human knowledge through the subjects taught, in the light of the Gospel [and ...] in the growth of the virtues characteristic of the Christian. This means that Catholic educators must attain a special sensitivity with regard to the person to be educated in order to grasp not only the request for growth in knowledge and skills, but also the need for growth in humanity. (CCE, 2007, par. 24).

Basically, the school is called to be a living witness of the love of God among us. It can, moreover, become a means through which it is possible to discern, in the light of the Gospel, what is positive in the world, what needs to be transformed and what injustices must be overcome. (CCE, 2007, par. 46).

The charism makes the mission more possible, authentic and credible, and it engages students in ways they perceive to be beyond Church. Students concur with Fuellenbach: “Kingdom awareness means that ministry is much broader than church work. Christians who understand the meaning of God’s reign know they are in the kingdom business not church business. They see all activity as ultimately having kingdom significance” (Fuellenbach, 1995, p. 272).

If the mission of the Catholic school, “like a true ecclesial subject,” is to integrate a “faith” (CCE, 2007) that is that of the Catholic church exclusively, students interpret this as contradictory to the inclusive nature of the Gospel. Students, parents and teachers concur, however, that the Catholic school is a:

privileged place for the formation of young people in the construction of a world based on dialogue and the search for communion, rather than in contrast; on the mutual acceptance of differences rather than on their opposition. In this way ... the Catholic school can contribute considerably to illuminating the minds of many, so that there will arise a generation of new persons, the moulders of a new humanity. (CCE, 2007, par. 53)

By accepting and respecting that different perspectives exist, but remaining faithful to the Gospel, there is no tension with the mission of God. Differences between teacher beliefs and official church catechetical belief do not present as problems as far as teachers are concerned. Teachers are comfortable with, and justify, why they believe as they do. Disagreement with official church teachings regarding transubstantiation and Mass attendance, for example, are simply stated as differences – not as substantial issues of tension.

I guess I reconcile in my mind that I am a Catholic because ... not just by baptism but also in the way that I support the church and I guess, more of a Christian side of Catholicism. And that Dominic was a Catholic but he is perhaps more the human face of Catholicism and I see the Roman Catholic Church as being more of a business in a lot of ways. They're some sort of regulatory structure and therefore that's why the human element to me does seem to be missing. I think that's something that I am very conscious of, of obviously the ethics and appropriateness of discussing this with students, particularly the younger ones at the college. (Tamara: TI-2 26/02/13)

Leading with the mission of God in mind is not contradictory, ambiguous or incompatible with contemporary needs of the young (or teachers). “Jesus Christ preached not a religion nor an institution, not even himself. He preached the Kingdom of God” (O'Meara, 1983, p. 26). If the mission of the Catholic school concerns creating “[t]he visible Kingdom of God” (Catholic Encyclopedic Dictionary of Biblical Terms, 1996) then, in a growing non-sectarian environment, students experience the Gospel inclusively, and the mission, authentically.

The predominant level of mission emerging from this study is inclusive of all people enrolled, irrespective of faith. This reflects a regno-centric theology and a global consciousness (Cousins, 1999; Du Toit, 2006; O'Murchu, 2008; Phan, 2001, October 26-28). A “collective and cosmic” spirituality with a global consciousness that is “organically ecological supported by structures that will ensure justice and peace” appears to be at work. “This emerging global consciousness is not just a creative possibility to enhance the Twenty-first Century; it is an absolute necessity if we are to survive” (Cousins, 1999, p. 218).

The challenge of the mission of the Catholic School is that:

We have not been spiritually prepared for a more interactive understanding of faith and our engagement with it. We also suffer badly from a petrified sense of time and history, forever waiting for a “promised messiah” to rescue and redeem us from our earthly plight. The mess from which we seek to escape is the one we have created for ourselves through our ignorance and lack of an eschatological vision. (O’Murchu, 2008, p. 212)

[The] realistic and enduring hope is postulated not on religious escapism, but on spiritual engagement embracing every aspect of our lifework as planetary-cosmic creatures. (O’Murchu, 2008, p. 215)

Leadership of the charismatic culture of the school, while honouring the mission of the Catholic school in a contemporary way, invites discussion.

7.4.2 Leadership of Charism

Participant reflections on the leadership of charism indicate that the principal is influential in determining the strength of charismatic presence in a school (Paula: PFG1 05/11/12). Leadership of the charism is considered the principal’s “job” (Tiffany: TI-8 08/03/13) and “responsibility” (Tiffany: TFG1 07/03/13). However, through an analysis of participant responses, a breadth of responsibility and ownership is apparent and consistent with research (Runkel, 2005). Two ways of exercising leadership of charism are identified.

7.4.2.1 Explicit

Charism is identified in this study as being “overt” (Tegan: TI-6 22/02/13) and “constant” (Steffi: SFG2 30/10/12). “It’s *out* there and it’s *public* and it’s *spoken* about” (Toni: TI-7 06/03/13). This resonates with the need for leadership of the mission of the Catholic School to be deliberate across every dimension of the school (Belmonte et al., 2006, November 26-30, p. 11). It supports the research that identifies that the religious and spiritual nature of the school needs to be made more explicit because the Catholic character of schools is changing (Belmonte & Cranston, 2009, p. 7). With an increasing proportion of students not practising their Catholic faith through regular Church or parish involvement (Rymarz, 2010a; Wilkinson, 2013), Catholic culture, practices and traditions are rapidly vanishing from the memory of students in Catholic schools (Kaldor et al., 2004). For young people to make sense of the religiosity of the ethos around them, it needs to be made explicit, and it needs explanation (Sue: SFG4 06/11/12; Shelby: SFG4 06/11/12)

Furthermore, this research resonates with the literature concerning the need for the special culture of a Catholic school to be made more explicit than it was when vowed Religious led the school (Belmonte & Cranston, 2009, p. 1). This paradox was evident in this research across each of the participating groups.

I don't think it was overt [in my mother's time] but I think now that the sisters have gone and there is that less of the visible presence of the Dominicans here, I think there seems to be a stronger emphasis on heritage, of being Dominican, with the sisters not being here.... [W]hile Edmund Rice was always **there** [at the school I attended] , and some of his attributes were referred to, I don't think it was as 'built in' to the learning process that I think St Dominic has been integrated into the learning processes within San Sisto. And maybe it's just an evolution or evolution of the educational process, but it didn't seem to be as strongly integrated into the school/college way of life. (Piper: PI-2 07/11/12)

Lay principals are charged with the responsibility for, and play a critical role in, influencing the Catholic character and culture of Catholic schools (Belmonte & Cranston, 2009, p. 4; Bryk et al., 1993; M. Flynn & Mok, 2002). However, their leadership is shared.

7.4.2.2 A Shared responsibility

While the principal enables, sponsors and determines the strength of charismatic culture, the leadership over it, and "ownership" of it, are shared responsibilities of all the community.

I think I own the charism **full stop**. I own it. Yeah. I think I... coming from a school that didn't have... a religious tradition ... [from] an *order* and a charism, I ... was delighted ... to be connected to a living tradition, a living spiritual tradition and saw it as such as , in a sense, an easy way, of tapping into the Christian story, the Christian tradition. So, yeah, I do own it and the fact that I came to this school gives me a level of comfort with it but really, it was still something that I had to learn about... educate myself in because of that story that has been told so many times about Orders not necessarily thinking they had to educate students in their charism because they were just living it. (Thea: T11-12 13/10/12)

Students and teachers agree that they "own" the charism and that they have a responsibility for its generative stewardship.

I think there's probably a responsibility to be the stewards of the charism. ... I think there's a place for honouring your ancestors but I think ultimately **we** are the stewards and because ... we are going to be the ancestors for future generations. I feel strongly, that ... we should ... honour the ancestors, honour the people that actually set up this school and... we have a role to keep that

flame alive ... to keep that charism going and to pass it on to the next generation. (Tanya: TI-10 26/02/13)

The concept of shared responsibility resonates with the scholarship (Runkel, 2005). It is also consistent from an organisational perspective concerning the benefits of shared vision and shared corporate values (Sergiovanni, 2000; Wheatley, 1998). How charism is led so that it is explicit and its transmission and stewardship shared by the community invites further scrutiny.

7.4.2.3 A framework for the leadership of charism

This research identifies a tentative framework for the leadership of charism in a school setting in Figure 7-5.

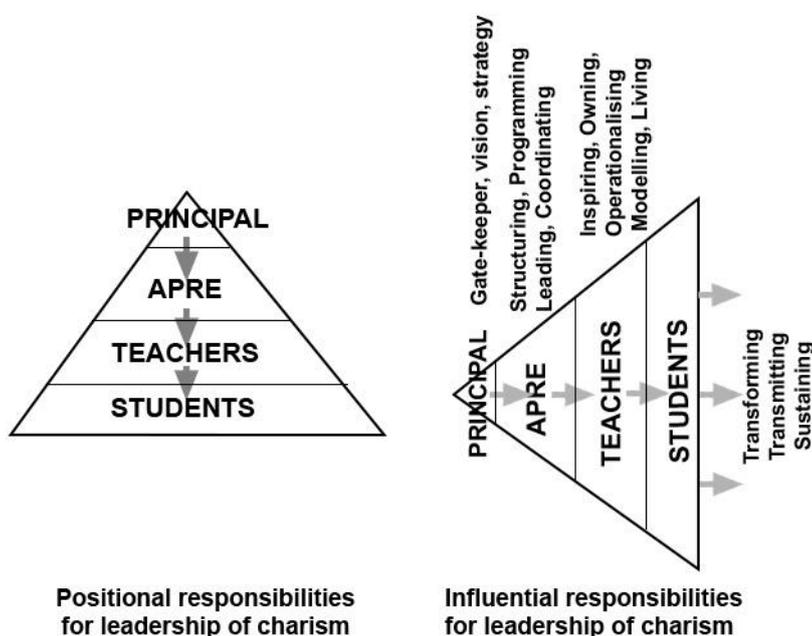


Figure 7-5 A tentative framework for leadership of charism

Parents and teachers locate the principal at “the top” of a hierarchical model. While teachers acknowledge the influence and role of the principal, they look to the APRE for particular leadership and specific initiatives (Tegan: TI-6 22/02/13). Students note the involvement of college leadership, but specifically acknowledge the leadership of teachers – classroom and homeroom teachers. When viewed horizontally, however, this model identifies the role of students, and the formation of student leaders, as an important element in the nurturing and transmission of charism. This is confirmed by

Runkel (2005) in her study on the implementation of Dominican charism. New understandings about each role within this structure are now discussed.

7.4.2.3.1 *Principal leadership of charism*

The first new understanding about the contribution of leadership to the nurturing of charism concerns the principal. Parents and teachers concur that the principal has a pivotal role in developing a charismatic culture. They identify that the presence of Dominican charism is determined by the principal (Paula: PFG1 05/11/12).

[T]o me, you (interviewer/principal) are still ministering in your day job, and your job still is to do what a nun does but also have the family life. (Tiffany: TI-8 08/03/13)

I think you do have a responsibility to [nurture charism]. Because if you don't do it, who *is*? And therefore the tradition of the school will be just as school. ... [E]verything stems back to charism. ... If one teacher did it, it wouldn't be as meaningful as the person who runs the school. (Tiffany: TFG1 07/03/13)

These expectations of the principal are somewhat consistent with a “quasi monastic” style of leadership (Hansen, 2000) and reflect the confusion about, and changes within the Church in transition in the new millennium (Treston, 2000). They also reflect the tension that exists for the role holder of Principal, and the diversity, complexity and multi-faceted nature of leadership of a Catholic school (A. O'Brien, 2013, p. 219). Ironically, the lay principal needs to do the job of a vowed Religious and do the ever-growing job of educational and organisational leader without the formation of a Religious. The principal is to be more strategic and overt in religious leadership than the Religious Sisters were (Belmonte & Cranston, 2009). The sustainability of this model is questionable (Coughlan, 2009; A. O'Brien, 2013, pp. 219-220).

The principal provides overarching responsibility for policy in and strategic direction for the implementation and nurturing of charism (Paula: PFG1 05/11/12).

The priorities and the school-renewal and the strategic planning ... It [used to be] a bit hotch-potch. It was here's a policy, there's a policy. You tied them in under an umbrella and then that sort of gave it meaning. (Tess: TI-1 28/2/13)

Parents and teachers share the view that the principal is the “gate-keeper” and determines whether or not charism continues to have a focus (Paula: PFG1 05/11/12). This perspective resonates with other studies (Belmonte & Cranston, 2009; Cook, 2001; M. Flynn & Mok, 2002; Grace, 1996).

Such leadership requires appropriate formation in the culture and charism of the school. This too resonates with scholarship.

It is the Principal who is the enabler or disabler of the vision of the school. The Principal is the umbrella, helping the growth of all sorts of initiatives for the teaching of the faith, or the Principal is a saucepan lid, closing off such creativity. The influence of the Principal in creating the atmosphere, furthering the vision, animating the staff has no equal to match. It all comes back to the head ... A school will advance or decline according to the cultural leadership of the head. Cultural leadership means the head must be able to tell the narrative of the school, its meaning and purpose past, now and to come. Cultural leadership demands the knowing thyself, a head that is reflective. (O'Kelly, 2012, April, pp. 4-5).

While formation in the charism is further discussed in section 7.4.2.3.3, it is evident from the scholarly literature that principals may lack such preparation and formation (Belmonte & Cranston, 2009; A. O'Brien, 2013). In contrast, the person who operationalises the religious life of the school (Assistant Principal – Religious Education, Identity Leader or Religious Education Curriculum) is well prepared for religious leadership (Belmonte & Cranston, 2009).

7.4.2.3.2 Leadership of Assistant Principal – Religious Education

The second new understanding about the contribution of leadership to the nurturing of charism concerns the Assistant Principal – Religious Education. All groups acknowledged the particular leadership of the Assistant Principal – Religious Education in developing the faith, spiritual, prayer, liturgical, service and justice elements of college life. The role is critical in operationalising the vision and in ensuring authenticity of the charism. Personal relationships with Dominican Sisters and Fathers, breadth of reading and professional development, depth of spiritual and faith understanding, and the capacity to model the same, ensure that the college maintains legitimacy as Dominican Catholic Christian community (Lydon, 2009). The role itself is justified by, and consistent with, the growing expectations placed upon principals, and the breadth of the religious life of the school. Indeed, the role of Assistant Principal – Religious Education is now “more critical than ever” (Belmonte & Cranston, 2009).

7.4.2.3.3 *Teacher leadership*

The third new understanding relates to the particular role that teachers play. Students identify the vital role that teachers have in modelling an understanding of Dominican charism and its values through their relationships with them.

Stacy: I can definitely see how it's emphasized at the school through our teachers and everything.

Sally: Yeah, especially with the teachers. They really like to sort of like show respect to everyone and treat everyone equally. (Stacy and Sally: SFG3 31/10/12)

This is consistent with the literature that identifies the need for teachers to lead by the way in which they embody the values (Smith, 2007, p. 16).

In the Dominican school setting there will be a number of significant staff imbued with the Dominican charism, but all staff within our schools may powerfully witness to the Gospel through the quality of their relationships with their students, who come to seek knowledge, understanding and respect from their teachers. (Havey, 2007, p. 334)

Students also demonstrate acuity in observation of teachers who appear more or less supportive of the Dominican culture of the school.

7.4.2.3.4 *Student leadership*

The fourth understanding about the leadership of Dominican charism concerns students, and their particular contribution to the ongoing charismatic culture. There should be a capacity for everyone to have input (Sammi: SI-5 07/11/12). Ownership and a sense of community are important to students, and, consistent with Dominican organisations, democratic ways of operating are understood to enrich the charism.

We talk together – teacher and student, preacher and hearers – and something mysterious happens that both can claim as their own. This is something that St Thomas, in his methodology – and perhaps even more importantly, in his spirituality – implements to perfection. (McVey, 2007, p. 126)

The need to involve students in both formation and leadership in the charism was identified in Runkel's (2005) study.

Students were the recipients of the benefits of the Dominican identity of the high schools; they also contributed to the spirit and integrity of the charism. Most of the schools (in the study) had leadership training of some sort to enable the students to become immersed in the school's identity. (Runkel, 2005, p. 95)

Students appreciate being able to contribute ideas through committee and representative structures of the college. They identify that leadership is “strategic” and that it is shared, with the Assistant Principal – Religious Education, and with all others in the community – teachers and students. Indeed, the communitarian legacy of St Dominic is that the Order be conducted under democratic principles of collegiality, representation and accountability (Fisher, 2010, August).

7.4.2.3.5 An emerging paradigm for charismatic leadership

An emerging religious leadership paradigm includes the notions of parallel, shared and distributed leadership models (Andrews & Crowther, 2002; Crowther, Hann, & Ferguson, 2008). It also identifies the effect of “influence” as the companion to “hierarchical position”. It is characterised by all members of the community having an understanding of their responsibility for influencing others in a way consistent with Dominican charism. This concurs with wider educational research. “What is imperative is that attention needs to be given to developing a critical mass of educators, parents and students in schools who can give human embodiment to the professed goals of the schools” (Rymarz, 2010b, p. 307).

Formation for everyone is therefore an important element of charism continuance. This phenomenon draws together and extends the work of Runkel (2005), Otte Allen and Best (2013) and Belmonte and Cranston (2009) and positions everyone within a Dominican community within a sphere of influence and appropriate inclusion.

Whatever the type of leadership required of a charismatic culture, no one expects that it happens by accident (Hayes, 2006; Runkel, 2005). Throughout Runkel’s (2005, p. 83) nine key leverage points for the integration of Dominican charism is a theme concerning the critical role of leadership in various forms.

Just as other areas of school leadership have changed with contemporary reality, the methods of an era gone are no longer effective. Contemporary leadership is different to the leadership exercised by the vowed Religious sisters during their administration of the college, as suggested by participants in this study. Religious leadership needs to be “formally modelled” to others “in a planned and organised way that [is] integrated into the organisational life of the school” and informally transmitted by the leaders’ values, attitudes, philosophy and norms (Belmonte et al., 2006, November 26-30, p. 7).

Students identify that the religious culture of the school is transformative and relevant to their spiritual lives, and must be authentic to the Gospel. All stakeholders observe “a deliberate and conscious approach to integrate the religious and academic purposes in every dimension of the school” is undertaken (Belmonte et al., 2006, November 26-30, p. 11). Specific strategies for charismatic continuity are discussed in sections 7.4.2.2 and 7.4.2.3.

7.4.2.4 Charismatic continuance

Dominican charism has developed through five successive lay principals, indicating that its existence is beyond the patriarchal model of paternalism (the conveying of already formulated symbols, insights and language of an Order to lay colleagues) (Sharkey, 1997, p. 2). It is beyond the partnership model where vowed and lay work together, although there is evidence of close connections with both the Friars and the Sisters (Thea: TII-12 13/10/12). From the study of the experience of charism at San Sisto, a new model for the nurturing a charismatic culture is identified. The charism of the Religious Order and founder is nurtured with lay leadership because of community endorsement (Tina: TI-9 28/02/13) of its intrinsic worth, and for which the community feels a sense of stewardship (Tegan: TI-6 22/02/13). This perspective is consistent with the role of the Dominican laity (Cadore, 2014). New understandings emerge concerning factors that co-exist, and involve college leadership, in the nurturing of the Dominican charism.

First, “plausibility structures” (Berger, 1990) and critical infrastructure and social networks which support the community in maintaining its legitimation as a Dominican community are present. These structures require maintenance, development and maximisation (Lydon, 2009, p. 53). Regular visits by the Sisters, who share friendship with a number of staff, are encouraged and celebrated (Thea: TII-12 13/10/12).

Second, Dominican charism fits naturally into a school context. It has a particular focus on study. The emphasis on four pillars of study, prayer, service and community gives it structural clarity within a school (Isabelle: II-3 22/11/12; Sonya: SFG1 30/10/12).

Third, the continuing contribution of “core” staff ensures that the charism is evident (Tara: TI-4 11/12/12) (Rymarz, 2010b).

Fourth, the effort of staff continues to infuse the Dominican charism into the college by particular activities, symbols, events, relationships, stories, lessons and language (Sally: SI-3 29/10/12) (M. Green, 2000, April, p. 10).

Fifth, the contribution of successive principals and APREs has held the charism in stewardship and ensure that it is nurtured (Tess: TI-1 28/2/13).

Sixth, the presence of Dominican charism and a sense of charismatic distinctiveness and pride gives students both corporate and personal identity (Steffi and Storm SFG2 30/10/12). It links students to a wider church world (M. Green, 2000, April, p. 11) yet engages them in a localised expression of Church and spirituality. It gives meaning to their lives, and explains their sense of stewardship over it (Tess: TI-1 28/2/13; Suzy: SFG1 03/10/12).

Seventh, participants make sense of the charism in various ways: it is Catholic, yet they do not believe that a person needs to be Catholic to engage with or in it. Ironically, however, it enriches a person's faith (Peg: PI-4 08/11/12; Gretta: GI-2 03/12/12). It is inclusive of everyone and it is linked to the history, identity and culture of the school. Dominican charism can shape an understanding of the Gospel, Church and of the Kingdom in a way that is palatable and appreciated by young people (Tara: TI-4 11/12/12) (M. Green, 2000, April, p. 6). It is inclusive of a global consciousness that is endorsed by students.

Eighth, a wealth of shared resources (including websites and OPFAM newsletter), formal and informal networks (such as Dominican Education Network, Dominican Education Conferences, Common Ground conferences) exist that support its maintenance (Rymarz, 2010b, p. 306). Lay and Religious contribute to this resource bank, keeping it current and relevant (Brien & Hack, 2011; M. Green, 2000, April, p. 11).

Ninth, leadership by the principal and others in continuing the story of connections and traditions is obvious (G. Kelly, 2009, August 14, p. 3). Explanations of Dominican charism and the Dominican educational philosophy, the meanings of symbols and descriptions of liturgies and rituals are documented and shared. These documents provide evidence of the value placed on the enduring and sustainable presence of the Dominican charism (Corley & Gioia, 2003). From an educational perspective,

documentation not only demonstrates worth in the exercise, and is empowering, it is also an effective tool in professional development, in the evolution of local knowledge and in growing cultural identities (Given et al., 2009, p. 37; Runkel, 2005, p. 85). Evidence of such documentation is noted within Table 5.3.

These nine factors which nurture charismatic continuance are dependent on the determination by the principal to foster an explicit charismatic culture in order to achieve the mission of the Catholic school.

7.4.2.5 Mission made Explicit

Nurturing of charism requires commitment and clear leadership by the principal (M. L. McDermott, 2006). It also requires, as demonstrated at San Sisto, leadership and commitment by others who provide specific leadership in this area of college life. It requires among other things, the articulation of philosophy, beliefs, values and vision (Watson, 2007, p. 196) and overt and clear planning and leadership so that it is everywhere and constant, and well understood. From a cultural perspective, it is always one person's "duty to be the keeper of the fire, so that the fire [never goes out]" (McCorley, cited in Catholic School Studies, 1999). Being the "keeper of the fire" is a central role of the principal (M. Cook, 2007), a fire which, in this context, is burning because it is fanned, with intent, by the community.

The achievement of an explicit mission in this study identified three key approaches: strategic planning, an immersive method and the employment and formation of staff. These approaches work dynamically to foster an environment in which charism thrives, and the Gospel lives. Each approach sits within the domain of the principal, but each involves a team of others sharing responsibilities and roles for its continuance.

7.4.2.5.1 Strategic planning

A key influence on the capacity to nurture a charismatic culture is strategic planning. Participants experience Dominican charism¹⁹ "everywhere", as a "constant" (Steffi: SFG2 30/10/12) and as a touchstone for decision-making (Tracy: TFG2 14/11/12).

¹⁹ While participants name numerous activities as "Dominican" or being connected to Dominican charism, these activities could more accurately have originated from the college's broader Catholic /Christian identity and practices and from Catholic social teaching.

Most participants recognise that while they do not contribute to a strategy for charismatic continuance, they appreciate that it does not exist by accident. They recognise the existence of a planned, strategic approach supported by documentation and resources, including Living Towards Integration (concerning staff formation), the Charismic Learning Calendar, and Habits of Spirit lessons (Tegan: TI-6 22/02/13).

From a business perspective, the impact of strategy and the owning of, and supporting the strategy by stakeholders is an essential component in determining its overall and long-term “success” (Gimbert, 2011). Strategic management of the nurturing of charism involves extroversion – it looks outward at the environment as well as inward at the participants (Gimbert, 2011, p. 6). This process ensures cultural and contemporary relevance. Because strategic management is proactive and long-term, there is an imperative to be “on the lookout” and “one step ahead” of where people are at.

The synthesis of charism into the Catholic culture of San Sisto affirms the potential for creating and sustaining a particular culture. “A new language [is required] for a post-ecclesial generation, a new Gospel-artistry to refire the romantic imagination of a secularised mind, a new way to connect the Gospel to the streets” (Rolheiser, 2001). Habits of Spirit program provides this new language that is accepted and valued.

The role of strategic planning by school leaders is evidenced in documentation. By sharing assumptions, vision, values and beliefs that are at the heart of the organisation, the culture of the organisation is made overt and unified and “serves as a compass setting, steering people in a common direction” (Sergiovanni, 2000, p. 1). There is, however, a lacuna in the literature in terms of how it can be achieved in, or for, the development of a charismatic culture.

From a psychological perspective, sociologists and psychologists propose that the future requires people to think differently. In this new time, new skills and ways of operating strategically and creatively are required (Pink, 2005). Organisations are challenged to work more like designers, artists, story-tellers and care-givers. Schools need meaning-makers and big-picture thinkers. The combination of graphics and text in making meaning in these new times of new skills and technologies is essential in engaging learners, participants and society (Pink, 2005). The experience of charism, through feelings, action, relationships, story and symbol (see Chapter 6), and the use

of posters (Gail: GI-3 10/12/12), liturgical drama (Glenda: GFG1 03/12/12), symbols (Stacy: SFG3 31/10/12) and “big picture” thinking through strategies, aligns with Pink’s proposition about future thinking and the powerful ways of making meaning for students, teachers and parents (Beare et al., 1989).

The need to use appropriate language that has shared meaning across the school, as exemplified through the Habits of Spirit program, develops and nurtures culture (Denison et al., 2012, p. 143). As the world becomes more global, people are wanting to feel more “local”. People identify themselves primarily with their locality or that which is more local (Castells, 2010). This is also true from an educational perspective. For deep change or for cultures to be created in schools, community-based and localised strategies are more effective (Sergiovanni, 2000, p. 164). These strategies and activities require overt and clear school leadership. “It is not enough to talk about [living fully and preaching a word of life]; we must actively plan and build such Dominican [sustainable, flourishing] communities” (Radcliffe, 1998, p. 2).

The use of a shared language across all school subjects is consistent with the literature on values education (Brien & Hack, 2011; Collier, 2008; Freakley et al., 2008). However, as time passes, the college will be staffed by fewer people who were College employees when the language was agreed upon. The development, purpose and meaning of the shared language requires repetition and clarification as part of the strategy to maintain its effectiveness (Curriculum Corporation, 2003, August, p. 3).

Paradoxically, the strategic planning required if charism is to be nurtured and understood is not cited as a feature of Dominican charism during the period of religious leadership of the college (Tiffany: TFG1 07/03/13; Thea: TII-12 13/10/12). Some participants who attended San Sisto during its period of religious leadership say that they have no memory of anything being taught about St Dominic or Dominican charism. The Sisters “lived” the charism but did not educate students in it (Thea: TII-12 13/10/12). They taught it “innately” through their lifestyle (Tiffany: TFG1 07/03/13). The charism itself is not remembered as being overt in the way that participants describe it now. Under lay leadership it is described as observable and ever-present. Paradoxically, principals and staff do not receive the monastic-like formation (Hansen, 2000) of vowed religious. Furthermore, the contribution to what constitutes “charism”, as understood by participants in this research, is far broader than

how charism is frequently described in the literature. It includes an understanding of contemporary theologies, relevant spiritualities, pedagogies and curriculum. The role and importance of on-going, appropriate formation is confirmed in recent studies (Elvery, 2013; Hayes, 2006; A. O'Brien, 2013; Runkel, 2005) and is discussed in section 7.4.2.3.3.

This research supports scholarship concerning the understanding of culture creation (Schein, 1992), culture creation through intentionality (Cook, 2001, p. 10) and thorough planning (Arbuckle, 2004). It provides evidence that culture, and a charismatic culture in particular, can indeed be created and nurtured. The strategy of immersion provides one method whereby culture may be created (Peg: PI-4 08/11/12).

7.4.2.5.2 *Immersion*

The second approach identified in this research to nurturing a charismatic culture is the adoption of the strategy of immersion, that is, of surrounding students in an environment of overt charismatic activity (as referenced in Table 6.9). Immersing students and staff in charismatic elements and opportunities across each of the “Four Dominican pillars” has the effect of “normalising” charism (Tiffany: TFG1 07/03/13). It clearly makes it “the way we **do it** [here]” (Tanya: TI-10 26/02/13). Immersion contributes to participant understanding of the value of charism within the organisation. Students experience charism face-to-face in lessons, at assemblies, in prayer and liturgies, in symbols around the college, in staff expectations of them, in the shared language required of teachers, and in relationships (Tegan: TI-6 22/02/13). The use of immersion as a particular strategy offers new research in the area of charismatic culture. There is a lacuna in the literature in relation to immersion *per se*. But, as a strategy to enhance learning it resonates with other research.

Catholic schools should immerse students in a living Catholic culture that permeates all aspects of school life. They should experience the traditions of prayer that mark the passage of hours, understand the rhythm of the liturgical year from fasts to feasts and experience in sound, sight, taste, touch and smell the living tradition which they inherit. Young people come to faith through invitation and attraction, not coercion. (O’Keeffe, 1999)

Spiritual absorption through immersion in the Dominican tradition is acknowledged within the Dominican scholarship (G. Kelly, 2009, August 14, p. 11). An international perspective on immersion as a context for learning, while not specific to charism, describes it as transformative (Dagron, 2006, p. 596) and as an essential quality of

good teaching (Wendt, 1967). When persons are transported into another world culture, the impact as a learning experience is profound (Van Klinken, 2012, p. 929). In an environment that is rich in influential experiences, learning can occur subliminally, as well as intentionally (J. Green, 2003).

Maintaining an immersion strategy is a challenge. For it to be effective, it is a strategy that requires constant reviewing and updating (Rossiter, 2013b, p. 8). Its effectiveness in a school context is because students can be oblivious to the particular strategy of “forming” them. They experience it as “subtle” (Gretta: GI-2 03/12/12; Gay: GI-1 17/12/12). Teachers understand it to be “intrinsic” to everything they do (Tamara: TI-2 26/02/13). “It’s that air we breathe. It’s the autopilot that they’re just used to...” (Tamara: TI-2 26/02/13). Yet it is also the hard, extra work that teachers put in to create that environment (Tara: TI-4 11/12/12).

The immersion strategy of Dominican charism is aligned to the “constant search” of which Dominicans speak and write (Isabelle: II-3 22/11/12). Changes, updates and enhancements to the strategy are noted through the college documentation. Immersion (or permeation) is a process of ensuring that:

[t]he Gospel of Jesus Christ and his very person are to inspire and guide the Catholic school in every dimension of its life and activity – its philosophy of education, its curriculum, its community life, its selection of teachers, and even its physical environment. (J. M. Miller, 2006, p. 2)

It is therefore a valid form of inclusive enculturation in an authentic contemporary Catholic school whose mission it is, as an agent of Church, to help spread the “Kingdom of Christ throughout the earth” (Paul VI, 1965d, par. 2). This research offers new scholarship in how this is achieved. An implication of this is the appropriate staffing of the school with people who preach the Gospel by their lives (Rocks, 2006; Rymarz, 2010b). Employment of staff and their formation in the charism is the third approach identified in this study as a way of fostering charismatic culture that achieves the mission of the Catholic school.

7.4.2.5.3 Employment and Formation of Staff

7.4.2.5.3.1 Employment of the right teachers

The importance of the employment of staff who commit to sustaining the charism of the school is a thread that runs throughout this study. Teachers identify that staff need

to adopt a visible and identifiable connection to the charism and spirituality of the college. Teachers indicate that the responsibilities of being in a charismatic culture do not pose a problem for them. They do suggest, however, that if a teacher did find it problematic, they simply “wouldn’t last” (Tiffany: TFG1 07/03/13). “[It’s not] a choice. And it’s not to say you can’t be yourself. It’s to say that it is all encompassing ... (Tegan: TI-6 22/02/13). “If you don’t see a reason [for] why we are Dominican, then you shouldn’t be here!” (Tiffany: TFG1 07/03/13). Teachers believe that teaching at San Sisto is beyond “a job” and they sense whether or not “someone ...really believes in the charism or whether it’s just something they have to do to fulfil their job requirements” (Tanya: TI-10 26/02/13). “If you don’t see a reason [for being] Dominican, then you shouldn’t be here” (Tiffany: TFG1 07/03/13). Teachers understand that charism, and Dominican charism in particular, requires of teachers extra commitment and effort. It should not be considered “another thing” but rather, should “envelop everything” (Tiffany: TFG1 07/03/13). The recruitment of teachers of the “right” disposition or “personal mind-set” towards charism is essential (Tegan: TI-6 22/02/13; Tara: TI-4 11/12/12). So too is maintaining a critical mass of “core people” who treasure the heritage of the college (Tara: TI-4 11/12/12).

From a student perspective, the role and contribution by teachers in maintaining the college charism is vital (Sally: SI-3 29/10/12). The need for staff to engage in the corporate requirements of charismatic culture by teaching the Habits of Spirit program, for example, does require of staff non-negotiable practices (Tara: TI-4 11/12/12).

These perspectives align with the Dominican scholarship. Dominican charism is distinctive by its “preaching” nature, and preaching “includes not just written and oral preaching, but also preaching by the witness of one’s life and daily contacts” (Runkel, 2005, p. 61). Teachers’ perceptions of the importance of personal ownership of the charism is logical. Two positions are presented in the broader scholarship: one is from a general perspective, and the other from the specific personal spirituality perspective.

7.4.2.5.3.2 General Perspective

From a general perspective, this study concurs with the literature that identifies the need for staff to endorse the religiosity of the school. “The employment, induction, ongoing formation and pastoral care of committed and competent staff are matters for careful attention if the Catholic school is to be successful in its mission” (Archdiocese

of Brisbane, 2013, pp. 10-11). In addition, the importance of high quality teacher-student relationships and the role modelling of teachers in fostering young people's meaning in life, identity and spirituality is identified in the literature (Crawford & Rossiter, 2006, p. 232; Eckersley, 2007a, 2007b, 2009; Maroney, 2008). The need to staff Catholic schools in a way that honours their special character with "constant reference to the Gospel and a frequent encounter with Christ" (CCE, 1977, par. 55) is acknowledged by participants either directly or indirectly as being essential for the school's culture to be maintained. This perspective resonates with the literature.

Having a wonderful philosophy of education, an excellent curriculum and superb learning goals will not be themselves create a transforming experience for students. If the curriculum does not come alive in the classroom, it will remain sterile, incapable of either exciting or transforming. Faculty members must make the ideas and values embodied in the curriculum their own and communicate them to students with dedication and expertise, love and compassion. When they reach out to students in this way, they model what it means to be an educated person, how academic excellence and spiritual values can be one in seeking truth and serving others. (Smith, 2007, p. 16)

Employing a staff that maintains a particular culture and charism is an issue facing Catholic schools world-wide. In a changing global culture in which religious commitment is declining, the ability of Catholic schools to maintain a vibrant and distinctive sense of religious identity is problematic (Rymarz, 2010b). Many Catholics today, born well after the Vatican Council, are characterised by a somewhat casual, less committed type of religious affiliation (D'Antonio, Davidson, Hoge, & Gautier, 2007). These teachers might otherwise be well suited to teaching as a profession, may support the ethos of the Catholic school, and may describe themselves as "spiritual". However, the staffing of schools with staff who do not give "concrete witness to the goals and aspirations of the institution" presents a dilemma (Rymarz, 2010b). A critical mass of committed Catholic teachers who are passionate about the school's distinctive Catholic culture is an imperative (R. O'Brien, 1994).

From an organisational behaviourist perspective, "one of the most subtle yet most potent ways in which culture gets embedded and perpetuated is in the initial selection of new members" (Schein, 1985). In a post-Christian cultural context, where the overlap of "Catholicism" and "culture" is disappearing (Pollefeyt, 2013, May 29), the requirement of staff in Catholic schools to ensure that the authentic message of the Gospel is effectively transmitted, presents both challenge and opportunities. Just as

staff are required to contribute positively to the pastoral care and discipline aspects of school life, they have a responsibility to nurture the spiritual dimension of the school (Crawford & Rossiter, 2006, p. 436).

The ecclesial perspective is similarly clear about the role and value of teachers in maintaining a Catholic culture. The public witness to the way of Christ, as found in the Gospel, both inside and outside the classroom, is a requirement of teachers (Benedict XVI, 2008). It is the teacher who will substantially determine whether or not a school realises its aims and accomplishes its objectives (CCE, 1982).

While the literature and this study concur in relation to the importance of the general alignment of religiosity of individual staff and the corporate charism, there is some difference of perspective concerning personal spirituality.

7.4.2.5.3.3 Specific spiritual perspective

Research identifies that for secondary schools to maintain their Dominican identity, the Dominican charism and core values have to be “a vital part of their lay colleagues’ self-identity and consequent behaviours” (Runkel, 2005, p. 114). Within a culture where the teacher is redefined as “leader” (Crowther et al., 2008; Institute for Educational Leadership, 2001), and in an immersive charismatic culture (see section 7.4.2.3.2), all teachers play a role in student spiritual formation. For charism to be effectively institutionalised, the whole community of staff needs to own and share the charism (Starratt, 1986) and organisational culture (Ashforth & Mael, 1989).

However, literature identifies personal spirituality as a private matter (Crawford & Rossiter, 2006, p. 435). There is research that concludes that the spirituality of a school should be invitational to teachers, not a requirement (P. Hughes, 2008). Whether or not a teacher can model the charism and its spirituality without genuine personal engagement with it invites further study beyond the scope of this research. However, while personal spirituality may be freely chosen, this study identifies the imperative that “staff involvement in, and professional support for, the school’s corporate religious practices” is not an option (Crawford & Rossiter, 2006, p. 435).

7.4.2.5.3.4 Formation

The issue of principal formation was raised in this study as an assumption. It is expected that the lay principal has “a full understanding almost like a religious person

because you [have] to keep [the charism] going. ... It's the lay principal's job to keep that spirit and that action going" (Pam: PFG1 05/11/12). Yet, the principal in this study had no knowledge of or training in Dominican charism before taking up the position as principal (Paula: PFG1 05/11/12). The need for appropriate preparation for, and induction into principalship, and continued professional learning thereafter, is a conclusion also drawn in O'Brien's (2013) research concerning the recruitment of new school leaders.

The observation that the laity needs to be more explicit in their teaching of, living and celebrating charism than the Sisters is both challenging and paradoxical (Belmonte & Cranston, 2009, p. 7). "Just living it" as opposed to "teaching it" and actively seeking to keep it alive suggests a level of commitment not in the duty statement for a "system" or lay principal. This requirement is, however, akin to the expectations of the lay apostolate (Cadore, 2014; Paul VI, 1965d). Yet, early formation in the charism is neither a requirement, nor a possibility for principals in "system" schools.

From a practical, school perspective, it is noted that "[o]ur vowed religious forebears benefited from built-in, lifelong religious formation. Today, ironically, Disney provides more specialized formation for their cast members than we provide for Catholic school personnel" (T. J. Cook, 2007, p. 3).

Recommendations concerning the formation and professional growth of principals and staff have been made in several recent studies (Elvery, 2013; Finn, 2013; A. O'Brien, 2013; Runkel, 2005). The maintenance and authenticity of the charism requires sustained and specific formation for all concerned (Arbuckle, 2006). A study of "Middle leaders" in a Marist school concluded that the capacity to reference the "deep story" of the charism influences the effectiveness of the teaching about the Marist charism. The moral perspectives and behaviours of staff are influenced by their understandings of the charism" (Elvery, 2013).

A directive by Pope Paul VI reminded Religious Orders of their obligation "to be faithful to the spirit of their founders, to their evangelical intentions and to the example of their sanctity" (quoted in Flannery, 1998 p. 685). On the basis of this instruction, the "charism of the founder and spirit of the order is intended to be a significant influence upon the culture and work of those Catholic schools derived from these traditions and origins" (Grace, 2002, p. 129). This, it is, according to all participants.

Staff experience spiritual, emotional and intellectual nourishment from the Dominican charism (Tanya: TI-10 26/02/13). However, there does not appear to be substantial or constructive instruction to lay principals or schools regarding the continuing with or nurturing of charismatic culture outside the realm of “the Order”. It would seem that to keep Dominican charism alive and authentic, through a constancy of orientation and research, the principal does indeed need formation in that charism. The directive to Orders has no equivalent extrapolation for those laity who now fill these roles. Directives by the Church to the laity are neither constructive nor instructive.

Charism is noted as one of the areas of the religious life of the school in the Brisbane Archdiocese (BCEO, 2008) but specific leadership training in specific charisms is not a prerequisite to appointment. Reference is made only to the principal showing an ability to “articulate and promote the school’s mission, vision and founding story” and to “foster the identity of the school community” (Brisbane Catholic Education, 2012, p. 3). The Dominican Sisters of Easter Australia, however, expect that principals employed within their religious congregational schools be formally formed in Dominican charism in ways such as participation in pilgrimages, immersion experiences, membership of Dominican Education Network, and participation in Formation Series workshops. They require the principal to ensure that all of their employees receive orientation and induction into and development in Dominican charism (Dominican Education Council, 2011).

If the role of charism is important to a school, as identified in this research, formation in it before, or early into an appointment to the position is assumed by research participants. Formation in a particular charism assumes firstly that the principal wants to be “formed”. The strength and presence of charism in a school can vary depending on that interest (Tess: TI-1 28/2/13). San Sisto, as an “Archdiocesan” or “system” college, is not affiliated in any formal or official way to the Dominican friars or sisters. Although the college is located within a Dominican parish, the on-going relationships with the sisters and their charism is by choice by mutually interested parties (Thea: TII-12 13/10/12).

Fidelity to a religious tradition to which a person is appointed by virtue of a recruitment process, when it is not a “job requirement”, exposes the fragility of “charism continuance projects” (Sharkey, 1997, p. 4). A recent policy statement in the Brisbane

Archdiocese does state that Catholic schools engage in their evangelising mission “in a manner appropriate to the context and charism” (Archdiocese of Brisbane, 2013, p. 4). Catholic school “systems” (distinct from religious congregations or Orders who “own” or “sponsor” schools) have a responsibility to ensure the suitability and readiness of new principals as models and promoters of the core values of the charism (Runkel, 2005, pp. 85 - 89). When staff are oriented into and developed in the charism of an organisation and its values, they embed those components into their own “personal life patterns” (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Runkel, 2005, pp. 113-114).

The appointment of principals in “system” schools that have a rich charismatic culture and history is an issue for school systems. There is a dilemma concerning equity with non-charism system schools regarding initial formation and formation programs such as pilgrimages. This is problematic industrially and invites further scrutiny.

This issue resonates with a more serious concern world-wide: that is, of recruiting principals who want to and are able to take on the broader challenge of spiritual and faith leadership in Catholic schools (Coughlan, 2009; D'Arbon, 2006; A. O'Brien, 2013). Seeking someone with an understanding of “Dominican charism” adds another requirement which makes recruitment even more difficult.

7.4.3 Conclusion

This research highlights the capacity for a school to foster a faith-based Gospel culture at a time marked by growing irrelevance of institutional church, individualisation, pluralism and secularism. Leadership, thorough planning, a shared language across curriculum that is consistent with the charism, and appropriate staffing with on-going formation and development of principal and staff are identified as influential for charismatic continuance. With the provision of such an environment, a personal and corporate identity develops which enhances the sustainability of charism as a desirable means with which to live the Gospel.

Charism offers a school community a palatable and credible way for students to process meaning, form identity, develop a relevant spirituality. It leads them, in a secular, pluralised, individualised society, towards the Kingdom. It leads to the formation of a truly Catholic school, in keeping with the declared mission of the Catholic school.

Figure 7-6 illustrates the dynamic nature of charism in a school. The arrows between Church, Society and the Mission of the Church and Catholic school represent the direct connection between each element and the charismatic culture of the school. Charism provides the basis upon which culture grows and life and learning is experienced. Dominican charism is in a constant state of renewal and development, always seeking out new ways of being relevant. The forces of influence on parents, teachers and students inform charismatic response to the Gospel. While the Dominican charism remains authentic to the Gospel, it continues to be relevant in forming the Christian identity of those who belong to the Dominican school. Dominican charism provides a means of leading young people to the Gospel, the message of Jesus and to the Kingdom of God.

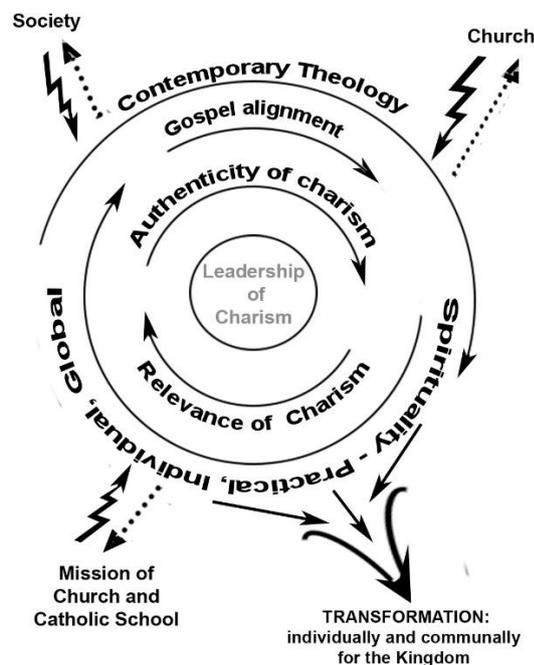


Figure 7-6 Conceptual framework of the new understandings

This framework demonstrates the connection between the new understandings and the themes synthesised in the literature reviews in Chapters 3 and 4. The strategic nurturing of charism is a responsibility of school leadership. The authenticity and relevance of the charism make it a valid means through which the Good News may be heard. The reciprocity between charism and the school, church and society within which it is located, as shown by the arrows, ensures its constant relevance. Charism is, therefore, an effective way through which the transformation of individuals and society (the central mission of the Church and the Catholic school) may be promoted.

Chapter 8: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present the conclusions of and recommendations from this research which explores how students, teachers and parents at San Sisto College experience Dominican charism. This chapter also demonstrates how this research contributes to scholarship.

8.2 Research Design

This study is an exploration of the experience of the Dominican charism within one Catholic secondary school. It investigates what stakeholders understand Dominican charism to be, how it is experienced and how it is perceived to be nurtured. The conceptual framework synthesises the literature into five interrelated areas: charism, society, culture, experience of charism and the mission of the contemporary Catholic school. The research design focuses on three specific research questions:

- What do students, teachers and parents understand Dominican charism to be?
- How do students, teachers and parents experience Dominican charism at San Sisto College?
- How is the Dominican charism nurtured at San Sisto College?

An interpretivist philosophical approach is adopted in this study. Because an understanding of the experience of stakeholders within a specific context is sought, a constructionist epistemology is adopted (Crotty, 1998). The experience of students, teachers and parents occurs in the minds of people. Reality is internally experienced, is socially constructed through interaction, and is interpreted by them (Sarantakos, 1998). Symbolic interactionism acknowledges the existence of the “multiple realities” of participants (Schnelker, 2006, p. 45). This is the perspective used to understand how students, teachers and parents experience Dominican charism. As this study explores the phenomenon of experience within a particular setting, case study is used as the orchestrating rationale for this research. The case study is bounded by the voices of

the student, teacher and parent participants of the San Sisto College community (Tellis, 1997, July). Selective participation included current students from Years 8 – 12 and students who graduated within the three years prior to the study. It also included teachers, parents, and “informed participants” who are members of the Dominican Order and known to the community because of their teaching engagements or visits. Two types of interviews were used to gather data:

- Individual, in-depth, semi-structured interviews (29 participants)
- Focus group interviews (10 focus groups with 36 participants).

A total of 57 individuals participated, with all interviews being conducted in the period October 2012 to March 2013.

College documentation was used to inform and confirm data.

The data-gathering processes, participant selection and the conduct of the research meets with the ethical standards required of the ACU Research Ethics Committee and Brisbane Catholic Education (Appendix A).

8.3 Limitations of the Research

This research is conducted within one Catholic secondary college administered by the Brisbane Catholic Education Office. Data-gathering across the participant groups ensures rich, in-depth information that is high-quality and detailed, and relevant to the case (Patton, 1990). Transferability to other groups or contexts, however, is made by the reader through their engagement with the discussions and understanding of the applicability of the research (Stake, 1995).

The value of this research rests on its authenticity in reflecting the state of human experience (Polit & Beck, 2004). It may be limited by the researcher’s bias and interpretation of the data. My position as both principal of the college and researcher is acknowledged as a limitation and is discussed in section 5.8.1.1 (5.8.1.1.1 – 5.8.1.1.8). I am aware that my position may deter students, teachers or parents from volunteering or telling the truth. However precautions were adopted to respond to that possibility. Through the use of trustworthiness strategies such as triangulation (Lincoln & Guba, 1986; Silverman, 2006), member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1986, p. 19), negative case analysis (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 127) and professional integrity,

researcher influence has sought to be minimised (Merriam, 1998). These strategies are described in sections 5.8.1.2 – 5.8.1.6.

8.4 New understandings concerning each of the Research Questions

8.4.1 Research Question One

The first specific research question is:

What do students, teachers and parents understand Dominican charism to be?

New understandings contribute to the general conclusion that Dominican charism is an effective and meaningful way of providing Gospel witness in a contemporary Catholic school. The research generates eight new understandings that contribute to this conclusion.

The **first new understanding** concerns the perception of the nature of Dominican charism. It is identified as an all-embracing, all-pervasive dynamic that influences the culture, ethos and traditions of the school. Charism is experienced through feelings, action, relationships, story and symbol. Dominican educational philosophy and the four pillars of community, prayer, service and study provide the cornerstone for life at the college. Dominican charism is understood to be holistic in its breadth of influence. Because of its defined elements expressed as pillars, it provides a structure around which to frame a school Gospel-based experience. This structure is a guide for formation in, and life as a Christian. Charism nurtures spirituality and wellbeing and deepens the faith of those who experience it. A charismatic-specific language that is school-specific and understood by stakeholders deepens the sense of connection between members of school community.

This new understanding contributes to the existing scholarship concerning the practical understanding of charism. It contributes further knowledge to the research on what charism is perceived to be, how it is experienced, how it may be structured into a school culture and how it may authentically respond to new challenges.

The second new understanding concerns the relationship between the Gospel and charism. Charism is considered to be an effective and meaningful way of providing students with authentic Gospel witness in a contemporary school. The Dominican charism, as it is experienced, is credible, relevant, palatable, authentic, and responsive

to young people's spiritual needs. It nurtures spirituality in a practical rather than dogmatic way, and in a manner that is inclusive of all students. It is not "pock-marked with the abuses and grounds for disillusionment" (O'Kelly, 2012, April) as the Catholic Church is perceived by many (Tapsell, 2014). In a secular, pluralistic, individualistic society, it is experienced by many in the school as valuable and worthy of emulating. Dominican charism is understood to be a way of "taking up the story of Jesus and living it in a new way" (Britt, 2008, August 15, p. 6). At a time when the church is perceived to be irrelevant, Dominican charism provides members of the school community with a model for authentic Christian living. The perception of Dominican charism and its relationship to the Gospel offers new understanding about the relevance of the charism in contemporary times.

The third understanding concerns how the school has become a credible and relevant expression of the New Church (Coughlan, 2009). Care is required to ensure that in a non-churched society, students do not confuse the Dominican story with the Gospel of Jesus, and do not disassociate the charism from the role of the Church in the Mission of Jesus (Bevans, 2012).

The **fourth new understanding** is that Dominican charism influences identity. This is achieved by immersing students in an environment within which connections to the charism are made. There are numerous opportunities for engagement across the four pillars of college life: service, prayer, community and study. A particular language of charism is consistently used and valued across the college. Students are explicitly taught "habits" which they seek to develop as worthy and valued attributes demonstrated by St Dominic and later Dominicans. Participants believe that these values transform self, and they also form them in ways that encourage them to seek transformation in society. Students understand this to be co-creating with God in the Kingdom.

Students accept the values of the charism as worthy of being lived. They are conscious of their identity as "Dominicans" and they appreciate their sense of belonging to a Dominican school. Charism contributes to the formation of a specific religious identity within a broadly based general identity of "Christian". The "Catholic" identity, particularly for graduated students and some teachers, appears fraught with negative connotations of sexual abuse, unequal treatment of women and a lack of authentic

response to the Gospel. The Catholic Church, for many, lacks credibility. Charism is an authentic alternative presence in such a situation. It credibly presents God's mission. It helps strengthen the faith of those developing a healthy Gospel spirituality. Charism, therefore, has an influential role in the personal development of individuals and in the culture of the school.

The **fifth new understanding** concerns the importance of ensuring that what is experienced by a school community is the authentic charism and not something simply “to justify contemporary practices” (McLaughlin, 2007, p. xvii).

Because charism is used by participants as a touch-stone in their decision-making and policy formation, and is the lens through which the Gospel is understood within the college, it is beholden of college leaders to ensure that the community understands the nature of the authentic gift of Dominican charism.

The **sixth new understanding** emerges from the contemporary, responsive and relevant characteristics of charism. The language of it and the way that it can be presented to young people is experienced as relevant and credible. It offers a way of living that is consistent with the “sign of the times”. It evolves with new insight. While the charism is attributed to St Dominic and his later followers such as St Thomas Aquinas, Albert the Great and Catherine of Siena, it is made relevant by those committed to the exploration of its contemporary message. All participants understand the “Habits of Spirit” program as providing an invitation to the Gospel in a way that students appreciate and value.

The **seventh new understanding** about charism presents a paradox. Because it is understood to be inclusive of all within the community, irrespective of religious background, it is considered to be consistent with the Gospel and not confined to, or limited by, the Church (Elvery, 2013; Finn, 2013). This inclusivity is experienced as welcoming and contrary to the experience of “exclusivity” inherent within an exclusive identifier of “Catholic”.

The **eighth new understanding** concerns particular characteristics of the charism that teachers and students believe to be empowering and sensible. The first concerns the search for truth and being open to dialogue in the search for that truth. Being open-minded and being invited to explore new learnings, irrespective of perceived

impediments from science or church, and being able to generate and have one's own view appreciated, is considered "common sense" in an educational institution. The second characteristic emanates from St Dominic's relationship with women. Students and teachers experience this as empowering, and use it to critique the Catholic Church which they do not experience as welcoming and fully inclusive.

Teachers are disappointed in the Catholic Church for a number of reasons, including its treatment of women, lack of transparency and openness in dialogue, and in not genuinely seeking renewal and contemporaneity. Dominican charism is perceived as the authentic contemporary face of the Gospel whereas the Catholic Church is understood to be increasingly out of touch with reality.

8.4.2 Research Question Two

The second specific research question is:

How do students, teachers and parents experience Dominican charism at San Sisto College?

New understandings confirm the conclusion that, while the institutional church is increasingly perceived as irrelevant, Dominican charism is experienced as relevant and credible, and offers a spirituality that is local and personal. The research generates four new understandings about the experience of Dominican charism.

The **first new understanding** is that charism is a dominant religious identifier and influence of Christian living for young people. When the college was staffed fully by vowed Religious who had received a life-time of formation in the charism, and when the Catholic identity of students in Catholic schools was more overt, charismatic identification appears to have been negligible. Now, with no vowed religious in the college, and at a time of reduced participation in Catholic Masses in the parish (Wilkinson, 2012, 2013), there is a strong identification by participants with the charism of the school.

The **second new understanding** indicates a shift in theological understanding within the Catholic school. It is evident that the school is a place of a practical theology where students are taught values of how to live their lives based on the mission of God, as explained in the Gospel. A spirituality aligned to sustainability of creation, justice for all, equality of gender, respect for individuals and their differences, living the Gospel

with God in co-creation, with a passion to help make the reign of God apparent in the world, is evident. “I have come that you might have life and have it to the full” (John 10:10) is central to this theology. This understanding contributes to conclusions in other research about the need in schools for a practical spirituality for young people (Maroney, 2008).

The **third new understanding** relates to the means through which charism is experienced. It is identifiable and overt. It is experienced through feeling, action, relationship, story and symbol, and is planned. The strategies used for implementation in this case include strategic planning, immersion, documentation, a shared language, specialised and particularised attention to teaching Habits of Spirit. Collectively, these strategies provide students with a clear message of its priority in the school as a way to live the Gospel. While the ramifications for teachers are overt, and need their attention, effort, planning and their time, students experience the strategies as subtle yet effective. The subtlety has an influential role in charismatic effectiveness in young people.

The **fourth new understanding** about how Dominican charism is experienced is that it provides the rationale for the creation and operation of the learning community. Participants experience the charism as providing the philosophy or foundation for the type of education they receive. Seeking truth, engaging in justice-promoting activities, exploring issues in depth, and asking probing questions are perceived to be characteristics of a Dominican learning environment. The depth of relationship between students and teachers and the inclusive nature of the community is likewise considered characteristic of the experience of a Dominican education.

8.4.3 Research Question Three

The third specific research question is:

How is the Dominican charism nurtured at San Sisto College?

New understandings contribute to the conclusion that Dominican charism offers a worthwhile vehicle through which a distinctive Gospel culture can be created and nurtured in a school context. This research contributes to five new understandings.

The **first new understanding** is that a distinctive Gospel culture can be created and nurtured in a school run by a fully lay staff. The Dominican charism is able to influence

a distinctive school culture. Its overt presence is the product of strategic planning so that the community is “immersed” in the experience of it. Students, teachers and parents acknowledge the breadth and constancy of experience in elements across the four Dominican pillars of study, prayer, community and service. Participants appreciate that opportunities for engagement in and across each of the pillars is culturally and contextually normal and natural and that this culture has been strategically planned.

The **second new understanding** is that a charismatic culture requires leadership in the charism. The principal and Assistant Principal – Religious Education have integral roles in the the continuity, breadth and depth of charismatic experience. Charism continuity is considered to be a significant role of the principal (M. Cook, 2007). For an understanding of the authentic charism, so that it can be faithfully transmitted and encultured, the principal and APRE need to be well formed in the charism and conversant in the means through which it can be maintained, sustained and nurtured within an educational community. Formation and education in the charism in ways appropriate for college leadership, parents, teachers and students is essential for charismatic continuity.

The **third new understanding** of how a charismatic culture can be created relates to language. It is evident, particularly from a student perspective, that the language of charism should be contemporary, student-friendly and inclusive of other belief structures/faiths. Its use should be considered “normal” amongst young people. The central Gospel message is well accepted by young people, but the image of organised church is poor (Crawford & Rossiter, 2006, p. 96). How references and links are made to faith, spirituality, and instruction on how to live a Gospel-based life need to be framed in ways and language that are palatable to students. Because Dominican charism seeks to remain open to the signs of the times, it has the capacity to be offered to students in a language that is acceptable, contemporary and inclusive.

The **fourth new understanding** of how charism is nurtured concerns the staff appreciation of the importance of fostering a Gospel culture and faith-based school. The role of staff in nurturing charism is vital. Teachers need to be constantly formed in the charism and in their faith. They need to constantly seek to be involved as role-models in the various elements of the culture for a charismatic culture to be nurtured.

The role of teachers in influencing the identity of young people through his/her example of Gospel living, consistent with the charism, is crucial.

The fifth new understanding is that charism requires students to be its stewards and promoters. The role of students in the stewardship of the charism, through their pride in the school, their sense of charismatic distinctiveness, and of their belief in the worthiness of the charism, contributes to its continuity.

8.5 Conclusions of the Research

8.5.1 Contributions to New Knowledge

This research generates nine conclusions that contribute to new knowledge:

8.5.1.1 Gospel versus Institutional Church

The local Church as a place of worship is irrelevant in the lives of young people, as indicated by participant Mass attendance and confirmed in the scholarship (Finn, 2013; Kung, 2013; Maroney, 2008; Wilkinson, 2012). When other members of the family no longer attend regular church service; when the distance between home and church is often difficult to travel; when families and young people are busy with work and study lives, and as family structures change, church no longer provides the community “social scene” that it once did. Going to church is inconvenient and not considered necessary in order to live life in accordance with the Gospel.

Institutional Church *per se* does not “sit comfortably” with many participants. It is blighted by its handling of child sexual abuse issues (Conlon, 2012, September 6), its treatment of women (Kung, 2013), its unwillingness to listen to divergent thinking or to engage in open dialogue. There is a perception that the institutional church is unable to stay contemporary and that it has not been engaged in issues of importance, such as the environment.

The Church as offered within the school, however, is considered worthwhile. When Church is structured around a charism, it is given a relevance and meaning that students, teachers and parents, experience as identity-forming and authentically Gospel-based. The Church of the parish does not have the same relevance or meaning. It is not part of a student’s faith life (Wilkinson, 2012).

This study confirms the research of Elvery (2013) and Finn (2013), in its conclusion that the experience of charism as a way of living the Gospel is not confined to or limited by Church. Charism offers a broad and inclusive invitation to the Gospel.

8.5.1.2 Charism nurtures practical, individual and global spirituality

Charism, as experienced in the school environment, nurtures individual spirituality in a way that leads individuals towards an authentically Gospel way of living. It fosters an appreciation of God's mission and of involvement in it by all members of the school community so that society may be transformed. Dominican charismatic culture engages students in practical ways of transforming their own local area and those global communities in which students provide practical assistance. Dominican charism is appealing to students because it gives "life" to their contemporary regno-centric and cosmological theological beliefs. It informs a personal, global and practically-based spirituality. In so doing, it provides an environment that fosters the development of a spirituality that students experience as practical, personally empowering and responsive to their desire to be connected globally. Other scholarship supports this conclusion ("Catholica," 2013; Maroney, 2008). Dominican charism offers a worthwhile set of values, resources and spirituality for a contemporary Catholic school (Brien & Hack, 2010, 2011; Lee, 2014).

8.5.1.3 Dominican charism builds Gospel capacity in schools

This research concludes that Dominican charism provides a Gospel-based framework for living Christianity in a way that is appropriate and effective within a contemporary school. It provides a useful structure for planning across four pillars which have relevance to a school context. Environmental sustainability, service to the needy, justice for all, an appreciation of the arts and sciences, and of excellence in learning can be attributed to Dominicans. They are relevant issues in schools. Furthermore, the charism provides living role-models for students. This appeals to young people and gives the charism credibility and relevance. Charism fosters capacity-building of a Gospel culture.

8.5.1.4 Student personal identity links with organisational identity

A fourth conclusion that generates new knowledge is that the charism of the school gives the school an identity with which students want to be associated. Their connection to their school and the people in it and the values taught are influential in

forming student identity. This identity is Gospel-based and understood to be transformative. Graduate participants want to remain connected with the school and its identity. They “own” and feel proud of their connectedness to the values learned. Participants feel responsible for the stewardship and transmission of the distinctive charism of the school.

This conclusion contributes to the small body of scholarship (Runkel, 2005, p. 95) relating to the role of students in the transmission of charism, their feelings towards their school, and to their identity.

8.5.1.5 Preparation for principalship within a charismatic culture

The fifth conclusion is that principals in “system” schools require a formation period in the charism before or early into appointment. The role of principal is considered to be integral in continuing a culture based on a charism that is valued by the community yet there is no formal training or preparation provided. New principals of schools where a charism is well-established and integral to the culture of a school require early formation in the charism as a necessary condition of employment to ensure the authentic continuity of the charism (Dominican Education Council, 2011).

8.5.1.6 Charism – Working for God’s Mission

The sixth conclusion of this study is that the Dominican charism is a worthwhile and effective means through which the Gospel may be offered to students. In the absence of a church to which students are connected, the Dominican charism, whose purpose was to enrich the Church, provides a means through which to work in the Mission of God. God’s mission is the same mission for whom the Church works. This is consistent with the theology that “the church does not have a mission, but the mission has a church” (Bevans, 2009, p. 11).

8.5.1.7 Charism without an Order

This research concludes that the charism of St Dominic and of the Dominican Order is an enduring legacy of women and men who, for over 800 years, have become role models for living the Gospel. When nurtured authentically, and with a constant and genuine attempt to ensure its relevance, the charism can exist and thrive in ways that can be sustained without direct sponsorship by or partnership with the sponsoring religious order. Charism in a lay setting can provide a legitimate way of understanding,

teaching and modelling the Gospel while it is believed to be of intrinsic worth. The maintenance of “plausibility structures” (Berger, 1990) and social networks (Lydon, 2009, p. 53) help maintain the charism. Leaders need to have a correct understanding of the charism for it to be authentic. Enculturation of the authentic charism so that it becomes synonymous with the identity of the college, ensures that charism does not necessarily require a Religious Order to exist for the charism be present. This conclusion is consistent with Sharkey’s (1997) finding that “the spirit of ... congregations will ... continue in their institutions if lay people give priority to them in their professional practice” (Sharkey, 1997, p. 1). Also consistent with Sharkey’s (1997, p. 1) work is the conclusion that people, other than those in Religious Orders, can find meaning within a charismatic culture. Extending Sharkey’s (1997) work, however, is the conclusion that charism continuance operating by lay educators is not confined to paternal or partnership paradigms. A charism can, in a new context, grow and mature into a legitimate “vessel” (Sharkey, 1997, p. 4) for the charism, even when it is no longer tied to, answerable to or bound to a Religious Order.

8.5.1.8 Mission of the School

The final conclusion of this study is that there is an emerging paradigm of the mission of the Catholic school. This mission incorporates two levels or types of mission – each mission legitimate in the evangelising role of a Catholic school. At one level, all students are engaged because they are enrolled. This fully inclusive mission exists irrespective of faith background or practice. At this level, all students can participate in and experience Dominican charism as a way of living the Gospel. Another mission exists that enriches the faith lives of Catholics and other practising Christians who seek specific faith development. Both missions co-exist and enrich the other. Given that Catholicism is the basis upon which Dominican charism exists (G. Kelly, 2009, August 14), this conclusion invites a clarification of the purpose of the Catholic school. This conclusion offers new scholarship.

8.5.1.9 Emerging paradigms

It is evident from the presentation of the new understandings that new paradigms are emerging from within Catholic schools, the Catholic Church and in the spirituality and theological/religious beliefs of young people. These new paradigms require consideration by Catholic ecclesial and educational authorities. They include:

- The school is the “New Church”. The school operates within a post-ecclesial and non-sectarian context, offering an inclusive “Church” community for a diverse and pluralistic membership. This conclusion has been confirmed by Coughlan’s (2009) research into the changing landscape of the Catholic school.
- Spirituality is not nurtured by “Church” but rather by practical engagement in issues and activities that are meaningful and responsive to the needs of the world and of the spiritual needs of young people (Maroney, 2008; McDonagh, 2010, April). This paradigm endorses the charismatic culture as appealing to young people compared with a dogma-focussed Church (Hall, 2012, November).
- Spirituality is nurtured through non-sectarian ways of living the Gospel and in ways that seek cosmic harmony. A global ethic requires an appreciation of difference as humanity works towards common goals irrespective of religious belief (Berry, 1990; Cousins, 1999; Tacey, 2003; Teasdale, 1999, 2000).
- New ways of understanding God and religion, religion and Church are consistent with new theologies (Tacey, 2003).
- An emerging theology of regnocentrism is consistent with research. Students, teachers and parents have increasingly little regard for the importance of church, compared to the importance afforded Proclamation, Mission and Kingdom (Phan, 2001, October 26-28) . This research resonates with Coughlan’s (2009) study which drew the same conclusion.
- The emerging mission of Catholic school is a dual mission in a pluralistic secular society, inclusive of both Catholic and non-Catholic and non-Christian students.

This study confirms the presence of these paradigms which have been the conclusions of a growing body of other scholarly research.

8.5.2 Contributions to Practice

The following conclusions, generated from this research, contribute to practice.

8.5.2.1 A framework for charismatic cultural creation

This study concludes that a charismatic culture is able to be created and nurtured in a school environment as a way of connecting students meaningfully to the Gospel. A framework for nurturing charism in schools is generated from an analysis of the charismatic experience, through new understandings, and to some extent, supported by the scant literature in this regard (Arbuckle, 2004; Runkel, 2005). While Church documents provide some guidance, they offer no framework that is consistent or applicable for lay practitioners in developing charismatic cultures in schools (Cook & Simonds, 2011, p. 321). Indeed, there is an implication in some literature that charisms can exist only when Religious Orders are associated with a school (through paternal or partnership relationships (Sharkey, 1997), in some capacity (Cook & Simonds, 2011, p. 321) or in a sponsored relationship with a congregation (Runkel, 2005). However, charism, is a valid way, in a lay-led and lay-staffed school, of experiencing and understanding the Gospel. It provides an environment for the outward manifestation of a person's understanding of and commitment to the Gospel, and for the inward manifestation of the message of Jesus in influencing students' identity (see 7.3.2.1). The capacity to achieve this rests on the adoption of a comprehensive and coherent plan to ensure that the charism remains in focus, relevant and responsive to the spiritual needs of students, and to the needs of humanity within the scope of student life. The framework offered in this study includes the institutionalisation of Runkel's (2005) nine leverage points (see section 3.5.8) and is consistent with Arbuckle's (2004) proposed four stages of "para-modern inculturation":

- Clarifying reality;
- Identifying what conforms or does not conform to values;
- Choosing how to witness to values;
- Implementing a chosen plan (Arbuckle in Runkel, 2005, p. 108).

This model in Figure 8-3 contributes new scholarship.

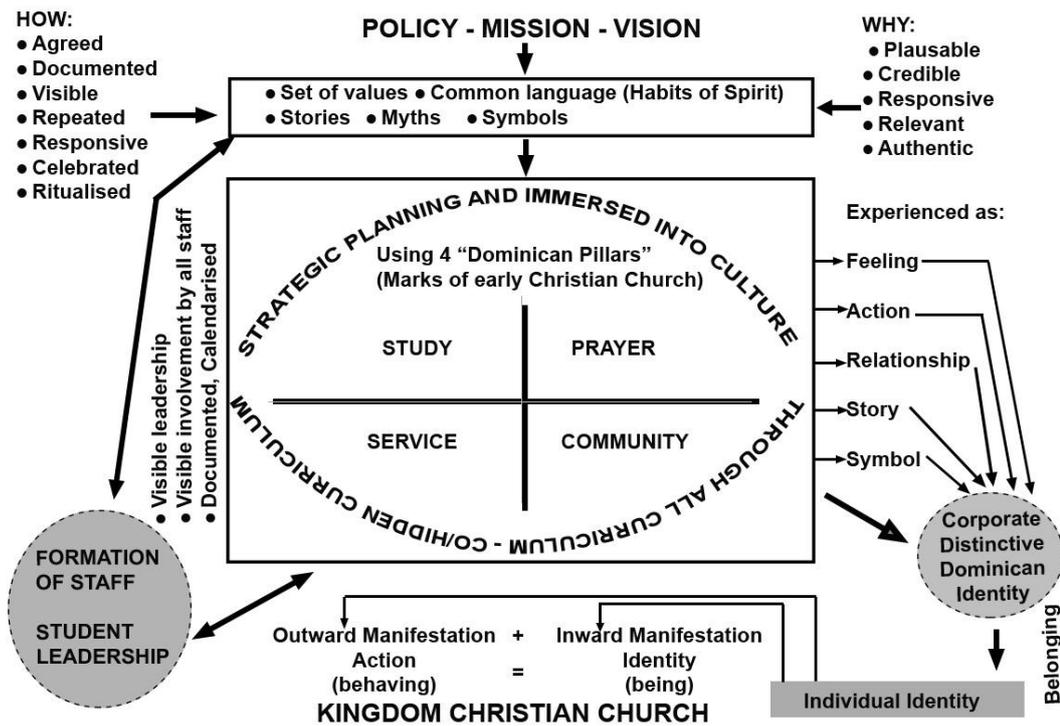


Figure 8-1 Framework for nurturing Dominican charism

8.5.2.2 Shared language and curriculum infusion

This study concludes that a shared language particularising a school’s values to the charism, and the intentional teaching about such values makes the message of the Gospel explicit in a relevant and palatable way. The involvement of all staff across all curriculum areas places charismatic Gospel values as central to the Catholic school. The methodology used through the Habits of Spirit program offers new scholarship.

8.5.2.3 Formation for Principal, Staff, Students and Parents

This thesis concludes that induction, information about and formation in the charism at levels relevant for each stakeholder (students, including student leadership, parents, teachers and principal) is a priority for a school that nurtures a charismatic culture. Likewise, student leadership programs should include charismatic formation, information and formation.

8.5.3 Contributions to Policy

The following conclusions contribute to new policy.

8.5.3.1 Charism in “System” schools

The special charismatic character of “system” Catholic schools requires acknowledgement, strategic and on-going nurturing, and support by the diocesan educational authorities.

8.5.3.2 Appointment of principals to schools with charismatic cultures

This study found that stakeholder expectations of principals in the systemic school with a charismatic culture assumes that the principal is formed in and has knowledge about the charism of the school. This study offers a contribution to new policy in relation to the necessity for a commitment by newly appointed principals to schools with a charismatic culture to be formed to an appropriate level in the charism.

8.5.3.3 Contracts of new teachers re charism

The importance of staffing charismatically-encultured schools with teachers who commit to actively supporting and role modelling the charism emerges as a contribution to new policy. Teachers model the charism as a way of living. Students learn from and identify with such attributes as being worthy of mimicking, thus ensuring charismatic continuance as an effective evangelising strategy. Contracts for newly appointed teachers to schools should be inclusive of this expectation.

8.5.3.4 Involvement of women in church

Equality for women in all church organisations and structures needs to be a goal in a renewed church.

8.6 Recommendations

This research offers a number of recommendations which address the key conclusions. The recommendations attempt to provide a way forward for those involved in the life and culture of Catholic schools.

8.6.1 Policy

The recommendations are:

- That school systems review the sabbatical leave provisions of principals so that this leave can be taken at the beginning of a contract rather than at the end. Principals should engage in professional learnings appropriate to their personal/faith/spirituality/charism needs before commencement of duties or

early into their appointments. New principals should be able to avail themselves of pilgrimages, study, formal and informal, and other programs of development in the charism so that they have an understanding of the authentic charism before taking up duty or soon thereafter.

- That those responsible for the appointment of principals to schools with a charismatic culture give consideration to the succession planning of candidates with particular attributes that align with, or understandings about, the charism.
- That contracts for teachers new to schools with a charismatic culture include a commitment to active engagement in the various priorities of the charism. They need to commit to modelling their professional behaviours on the charism. In this way, both corporate and personal identity is nurtured in the charism and students are provided appropriate role models.
- That the Catholic Church as owner/sponsor of Catholic schools, work in partnership with school authorities to define the role and mission of the Catholic school in contemporary society.

8.6.2 Practice

The recommendations are that:

- Exploration of new paradigms, theologies, spiritualities, and global ethic be explored by schools with support from and in dialogue with the local church.
- Research be conducted into the connection between school pride, involvement in school life and in the charismatic culture of the college and its spirituality.
- A longitudinal study be conducted into the effect of Dominican charism at school on post school spirituality, personal value systems and engagement in mission activity, faith and church connection, to confirm the conclusion of this study that Dominican charism influences the identity of students. The long-term effectiveness of Dominican charism on personal identity will confirm the actual benefit of charism to society.
- Schools develop practices that allow for student voice in the management and leadership of charism. Using complementary “hierarchical models” and

“models of influence” maximises the generational potentiality of charism in schools (see Figure 7-6).

- Because charism provides a contemporary way to the Kingdom, school structures, resources and activities be developed to foster the presence of charism. In the increasing absence of an ecclesial connection, charism, and Dominican charism in particular, engages people with the Gospel in a meaningful way.

8.7 Conclusion

This research has identified a number of issues pertaining to the experience of Dominican charism by students, parents and teachers in one Catholic school. The identification of the role that charism plays in a contemporary Catholic school and in the spiritual formation of young people affirms its presence and on-going nurturing as a gift of the Dominican Sisters, the Dominican Order and of St Dominic. This research affirms the professional, dedicated and committed service of teachers who play a vital role in the engagement of young people in the service of God’s Kingdom in a relevant and appealing way.

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Appendices

APPENDIX A: Approval Documentation

FROM: Kylie Pashley Kylie.Pashley@acu.edu.au on behalf of Res Ethics Res.Ethics@acu.edu.au
To: Denis McLaughlin; Margaret Lee
Cc: Gabrielle Ryan; Kylie Pashley
Subject: Ethics application approved! 2012 212Q

Dear Denis and Margaret,

Principal Investigator: A/Prof Denis McLaughlin Student Researcher: Margaret Lee Ethics Register Number: 2012 212Q Project Title: *The Institutionalisation of Dominican Charism in a Catholic School* Risk Level: Low Risk 2 Date Approved: 20/09/2012 Ethics Clearance End Date: 30/06/2013

This email is to advise that your application has been reviewed by the Australian Catholic University's Human Research Ethics Committee and confirmed as meeting the requirements of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research.

This project has been awarded ethical clearance until 30/06/2013 and a progress report must be submitted at least once every twelve months.

Whilst the data collection of your project has received ethical clearance, the decision and authority to commence may be dependent on factors beyond the remit of the ethics review process. For example, your research may need ethics clearance or permissions from other organisations to access staff. Therefore the proposed data collection should not commence until you have satisfied these requirements.

If you require a formal approval certificate, please respond via reply email and one will be issued.

Decisions related to low risk ethical review are subject to ratification at the next available Committee meeting. You will only be contacted again in relation to this matter if the Committee raises any additional questions or concerns.

Researchers who fail to submit an appropriate progress report may have their ethical clearance revoked and/or the ethical clearances of other projects suspended. When your project has been completed please complete and submit a progress/final report form and advise us by email at your earliest convenience. The information researchers provide on the security of records, compliance with approval consent procedures and documentation and responses to special conditions is reported to the NHMRC on an annual basis. In accordance with NHMRC the ACU HREC may undertake annual audits of any projects considered to be of more than low risk.

It is the Principal Investigators / Supervisors responsibility to ensure that:

- 1. All serious and unexpected adverse events should be reported to the HREC with 72 hours.*
- 2. Any changes to the protocol must be approved by the HREC by submitting a Modification Form prior to the research commencing or continuing.*
- 3. All research participants are to be provided with a Participant Information Letter and consent form, unless otherwise agreed by the Committee.*

For progress and/or final reports, please complete and submit a Progress / Final Report form:

http://www.acu.edu.au/about_acu/research/staff/research_ethics/

For modifications to your project, please complete and submit a Modification form:

http://www.acu.edu.au/about_acu/research/staff/research_ethics/

Researchers must immediately report to HREC any matter that might affect the ethical acceptability of the protocol eg: changes to protocols or unforeseen circumstances or adverse effects on participants.

Please do not hesitate to contact the office if you have any queries.

Kind regards,
Kylie Pashley

Ethics Officer | Research Services
Office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research) Australian Catholic University

THIS IS AN AUTOMATICALLY GENERATED RESEARCHMASTER EMAIL



A11.096 WB:cf ref:40

24 July 2012

Ms Margaret Lee
11 Pinnacle Place
BELMONT QLD 4153

Dear Margaret

The Brisbane Catholic Education Research Committee met on 23 July 2012 and considered your request to conduct the research project, "*The Institutionalisation of Dominican Charism in a Catholic School*." Approval was granted by the committee to contact the principal of the school you have nominated seeking her involvement in the project. This approval is conditional upon you providing this office with evidence that you have ethical clearance approval from Australian Catholic University prior to you commencing your research project.

Please note that participation in your project is at the discretion of the principal. Should the school you have nominated not wish to participate, please advise the names of any replacement schools that you wish to approach before contacting them.

You are reminded that there is a requirement of all researchers to provide a full research report when it is finalised.

If you have any further queries, please contact me on (07) 3033 7427.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Warren Bath".

Warren Bath
Professional Officer (Governance and Policy)
Catholic Education
Archdiocese of Brisbane

ALL CORRESPONDENCE:

Brisbane Catholic Education
GPO Box 1201
Brisbane QLD 4001
Phone: (07) 3033 7000
Fax: (07) 3844 5101
www.bne.catholic.edu.au
ABN 49 991 006 857



OFFICE LOCATIONS:

Dutton Park
243 Gladstone Road
Phone: (07) 3033 7000

West End
189 Montague Road
Phone: (07) 3033 7000

North Lakes
12 Endeavour Blvd
Phone: (07) 3480 1700

Springwood
5-7 Laurinda Crescent
Phone: (07) 3440 7900

Fr Bernard O'Shea
Inservice Centre, Wilston
19 Lovedale St
Phone: (07) 3033 7111

Ngutana-Lui Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander Cultural
Studies Centre, Inala
100 Liac St
Phone: (07) 3033 7200

Teaching Challenging Transforming



San Sisto College Board

Women of Integrity Shaping the Future

July 2012

San Sisto College Board
97 Mayfield Road,
Carina Qld, 4152

Mrs Margaret Lee,
The Principal,
San Sisto College
97 Mayfield Road,
Carina Qld, 4152

Dear Margaret,

As discussed at the College Board meeting on Tuesday, 10 July 2012, I'm able to confirm that the College Board has considered and approved your request to undertake your proposed Research Project as part of your Doctorate studies –

Authentic identity of a Catholic school in the Dominican tradition: A Case Study of the Experience of charism by students, teachers and parents at San Sisto College.

The approval includes, but is not limited to, access to College documentation and data, along with access to interview parents, staff and students through individual and focus groups. It is noted that the participation in these interviews are optional and participants can withdraw at any time.

The Board acknowledges and supports the mechanisms that you will be establishing to oversee the ethical conduct of this research including the establishment of an Ethics Committee that would leverage the resources of the "WELL".

The Board supports your research and wish you well in the project.

Yours Sincerely,

Mr Les Sellwood
Chair, San Sisto College Board

Approval to use College Documentation

TO: Stephen Montgomery, Acting Area Supervisor
From: Margaret Lee, "Margaret Lee" <mlee@bne.catholic.edu.au>
Time: 26/06/2012, at 9:27 PM
Re: Ethics Clearance Procedures

Dear Stephen

I seek your support in undertaking an analysis of college documents for the purposes of my doctoral research.

I would like to analyse many documents which either I have authored or shared authorship or which are publicly (within the college community) shared. These include the college vision and values statement, the college Staff Handbook, pedagogical documents, college leadership addresses, calendar of events, Verigram articles, Habits of Mind and Spirit and liturgies.

I seek your permission to use these college documents for the purpose of my study.

Thanks very much.

Margaret Lee

Principal

San Sisto College

97 Mayfield Road

CARINA Q 4152

Ph: 07 39009800 Fax: 07 3843 1921 Mobile: 0429 727 407

Email: mlee@bne.catholic.edu.au

Website: www.sansisto.qld.edu.au

_____ Veritas _____
A Catholic Secondary Girls College in the Dominican Tradition

TO: Margaret Lee
From: Stephen Montgomery, Acting Area Supervisor
Time: Wed 27/06/2012 11:07
RE: Ethics Clearance Procedures

Hi Margaret,

I have no issue with you doing this and I have mentioned this to Nev McDonald as well. You have our support.

There is a gentleman, Warren Bath, from BCE who would be worth talking to should you need to gain further ethical clearances.

Good luck with all of your hard work and thanks again for inviting me to San Sisto Day Celebrations last week.

Cheers,
Stephen

Stephen Montgomery

(Acting Area Supervisor, Brisbane Catholic Education)

Sent by Email 11 September 2012

To the Chair of Ethics Committee (ACU)

I write in support of Margaret Lee conducting interviews with her own staff, students and parents at San Sisto College, as part of her research. I would like to stress the following points.

- Critiquing progress of all elements of a school progress is an essential component of a principal's role. It not only is NORMAL but an EXPECTED part of Margaret's job to interview people (staff, parents and students) in relation to 32 components of school operations and strategic development. This is a rigorous process that involves forming 5 – 7 panels/committees every year and then analysing college data, interviewing people and writing a report with a view to suggesting changes, developments, improvements. The principal is central in conducting, managing and leading this process.
- San Sisto is a school in the Dominican tradition. It is therefore further charged with the responsibility to develop a culture of "disputatio", whereby students, staff and parents are encouraged to bring new ideas or diverse and different ideas for discussion. This is how we improve. We "argue" our way to shared and better understandings. We seek "truth" through this means. This is part of our charism as Dominican.
- This research is about individual's experience and perspective. It is therefore expected that the experiences will be diverse. Any coercion would be counter-productive to Margaret's own intention to expose reality in a school.

Regards,

Neville.



Neville McDonald | Area Supervisor
School Service Centre South

Catholic Education Archdiocese of Brisbane
5-7 Laurinda Crescent, Springwood | GPO Box 1201, Brisbane Q 4001
p. (07) 3440 7903 | m. 0417 750 859 | f. (07) 3844 5101 | e. nmcdonald@bne.catholic.edu.au

Teaching Challenging Transforming

APPENDIX B: Letters to Participants: Information and Consent

Australian Catholic University
Brisbane Sydney Canberra Ballarat Melbourne



8 October 2012

Australian Catholic University Limited
ABN 15 050 192 660
McAuley Campus
1100 Nudgee Road
Nudgee, Qld 4014
Faculty of Education
PO Box 456, Virginia, Qld 4014
Telephone (07) 3623 7531
Facsimile (07) 3623 7431
www.acu.edu.au
W: www.acu.edu.au

INFORMATION LETTER TO STUDENTS and PARENTS/GUARDIANS

TITLE OF PROJECT: The Institutionalisation of Dominican Charism in a Catholic School

NAME OF PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR: Denis McLaughlin

NAME OF STUDENT RESEARCHER: Margaret Lee

NAME OF PROGRAM IN WHICH ENROLLED: EdD

Dear Students and Parents/Guardians,

Your daughter is invited to participate in a research project. This research forms part of the Doctorate in Education program in which Margaret Lee (Student Researcher) is enrolled. This letter is to provide you with some information to help you decide whether you want her to contribute to this research. The purpose of this study is to explore how students, teachers and parents at San Sisto College experience Dominican charism. We are asking students to talk to the researcher (College Principal, Margaret Lee) in focus groups and/or individually, to tell us about their experience of Dominican charism at San Sisto College.

Mrs Lee will be conducting interviews with students at San Sisto at mutually convenient times. Your daughter will be given the choice of talking with her in a focus group (of about six – eight other students) and/or individually. All interviews will be audio-taped. There will be optional briefing sessions organised to help inform your decision for her to participate or not. At these sessions, you and/or your daughter will be able to ask questions about the research topic and its purpose and the benefits for San Sisto. These briefing sessions for students and their parents will be held on Monday X August at 8.15 am, 12.45 am, 3.15 pm or 5.30 pm in Room 3 in the college library. Other sessions will be conducted at your request, by emailing Mrs Lee on mlee@bne.catholic.edu.au or by phoning her on 3900 9800.

Involvement in this research will take about 1 hour for the individual interview and/or 1 – 1.5 hours for the focus group interview. Every effort will be made to conduct the interviews and focus groups out of class time. Lunch or morning tea will be provided should you agree to a session during these breaks.

Through your participation, you will be giving us valuable information about your experience of Dominican charism (the particular values and attributes of St Dominic) at San Sisto College. The research will provide a better understanding of how Dominican charism is implemented and experienced. It will contribute to knowledge about any challenges and/or lessons learned that might be applicable to San Sisto and other schools in the Dominican tradition or to other schools who institutionalise a charism. Furthermore, it will contribute to knowledge about the role of charism in the formation of the personal identity of its students. The findings will form part of a report which will provide support to schools and other organisations about the implementation and experience of charism in Catholic schools. The findings will also be written up in an academic journal. The results from the study may be summarised and appear in other publications or may be provided to other researchers in a form that does not identify you as a participant in any way.

Participation is voluntary and you can withdraw at any time without giving a reason, including after the focus group or interview has begun. Your decision for your daughter not to participate or to withdraw at any time will not have any adverse consequences for your daughter's education or assessment.

Should you decide to participate in the focus groups, your identity will be known to others in that group, and staff may be aware that you are involved in the focus group or in individual interviews. However, we will change or delete any information that might identify you in our notes.

Any questions regarding this research can be directed to the supervisor or student researcher (Mrs Lee) by contacting them:

Principal Supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Denis McLaughlin
School of Educational Leadership
McAuley Campus, Australian Catholic University
Denis.McLaughlin@acu.edu.au
Ph: (07) 3623 7154

Student Researcher: Margaret Lee
San Sisto College mlee@bne.catholic.edu.au
Ph: (07) 3900 9800

A report will be provided to Brisbane Catholic Education and ACU. On request a summary of our findings will be available for you to read. Furthermore, you will be provided with an opportunity to read and verify those findings based on your own contributions. This study has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at the Australian Catholic University and by the Ethics Committee at Brisbane Catholic Education.

In the event that you have any complaint or concern about the way you have been treated during this study, or if you have any question that the principal supervisor or student researcher has not been able to satisfy, you may write to the chair of the Human Research Ethics Committee, care of the nearest branch of the Researcher Services Unit:

Chair, HREC
C/o Research Services
Australian Catholic University
McAuley Campus
F Block, Level C, 1100 Nudgee Road
NUDGEE, Queensland 4014
PO Box 456 Virginia Queensland 4014
Ph: +61 7 36237429 Fax: +61 7 36237328 W: www.acu.edu.au

Furthermore, the researcher (Mrs Lee) has taken steps to safeguard against any imposition on students or other participants because of her role as Principal of San Sisto. An Integrity Committee has been established to deal with issues that might arise because of her dual role. Any complaints or issues of concern may be addressed to this committee through the Chair, psychologist, Kyra Greisbach. Any complaint or concern through either process will be treated in confidence and will be fully investigated. The participant will be informed of the outcome.

If your daughter agrees to participate in this project, you should sign both copies of the consent form, retain one copy for your records and return the other copy to the principal supervisor or student researcher. Similarly, if your daughter agrees to participate, she should sign the lower section of the forms marked "Assent of participants aged under 18 years".

We thank you most sincerely for giving this research your consideration.

.....
Assoc. Prof. Denis McLaughlin
Principal Supervisor

.....
Margaret Lee
Student researcher

.....
Kyra Greisbach
Integrity Committee

PARENT/GUARDIAN CONSENT FORM
Copy for participant

TITLE OF PROJECT: The Institutionalisation of Dominican Charism in a Catholic School

NAME OF PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR: Assoc. Professor Denis McLaughlin

NAME OF STUDENT RESEARCHER: Margaret Lee

I.....(the parent/guardian) have read and understood the information provided in the Letter to the Participants. Any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree that my daughter, nominated below, may participate in the following interviews at times yet to be advised:

- individual interview only for about one hour focus group only for about 1.5 hours
 interview and focus group for a total of about 2.5 hours (please tick preference)

I understand that the research will be audiotaped and that I can withdraw my consent at any time (without comment or penalty/without affecting my daughter's studies or relationship with the college in any way). I agree that research data collected for the study may be published or may be provided to other researchers in a form that does not identify my child in any way.

I realize that I can withdraw my daughter at any time. I agree that research data collected for the purpose of the study may be published in a form that does not identify my daughter in any way.

NAME OF PARENT/GUARDIAN

SIGNATUREDATE..... NAME OF CHILD.....

.....
SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR DATE SIGNATURE OF STUDENT RESEARCHER DATE

ASSENT OF PARTICIPANTS AGED UNDER 18 YEARS

I..... (participants aged under 18 years) understand what this research project is designed to explore. What I will be asked to do has been explained to me. I agree to take part in the interviews and/or focus groups as noted above and agree to having this research audiotaped. I also realize that I can withdraw at any time without having to give a reason for my decision.

NAME OF PARTICIPANT AGED UNDER 18:

SIGNATURE: (block letters) Date:

SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR: Date:.....

SIGNATURE OF STUDENT RESEARCHER: Date:.....

PARENT/GUARDIAN CONSENT FORM
Copy for researcher

TITLE OF PROJECT: The Institutionalisation of Dominican Charism in a Catholic School

NAME OF PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR: Assoc. Professor Denis McLaughlin

NAME OF STUDENT RESEARCHER: Margaret Lee

I.....(the parent/guardian) have read and understood the information provided in the Letter to the Participants. Any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree that my daughter, nominated below, may participate in the following interviews at times yet to be advised:

- individual interview only for about one hour focus group only for about 1.5 hours
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I realize that I can withdraw my daughter at any time. I agree that research data collected for the purpose of the study may be published in a form that does not identify my daughter in any way.

NAME OF PARENT/GUARDIAN

SIGNATUREDATE..... NAME OF CHILD.....

SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR DATE SIGNATURE OF STUDENT RESEARCHER DATE

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NAME OF PARTICIPANT AGED UNDER 18:

SIGNATURE: (block letters) Date:

SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR: Date:

SIGNATURE OF STUDENT RESEARCHER: Date:

8 October 2012

Australian Catholic University Limited
ABN 15 050 192 660
McAuley Campus
1100 Nudgee Road
Nudgee, Qld 4014
Faculty of Education
PO Box 456, Virginia, Qld 4014
Telephone (07) 3623 7531
Facsimile (07) 3623 7431
www.acu.edu.au
W: www.acu.edu.au

INFORMATION LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS (TEACHERS)

TITLE OF PROJECT: The Institutionalisation of Dominican Charism in a Catholic School

NAME OF PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR: Assoc. Professor Denis McLaughlin

NAME OF STUDENT RESEARCHER: Margaret Lee

NAME OF PROGRAM IN WHICH ENROLLED: EdD

Dear Participant,

You are invited to participate in a research project. This research forms part of the Doctorate in Education program in which Margaret Lee (Student Researcher) is enrolled. This letter is to provide you with some information to help you decide whether you want to contribute to this research. The purpose of this study is to explore how students, teachers and parents at San Sisto College experience Dominican charism. We are asking people who teach at San Sisto to talk to the researcher (Margaret Lee) in focus groups or individually, to tell us about their experience and to share their beliefs about what contributes to the Dominican charism at San Sisto and how it is implemented.

The researcher will be conducting interviews with people at San Sisto at mutually convenient times. Participants will be given the choice of talking with her in a focus group and/or individually. All interviews will be audio-taped. There will be optional briefing sessions organised to help inform your decision to participate or not. At these sessions, you will be able to seek further clarification about the research topic, its purpose and design. These sessions for teacher participants will be held on Monday X August at 7.30, 1.45 or 3.15 in Room 3 in the college library. Other sessions will be conducted at your request, by emailing Margaret on mlee@bne.catholic.edu.au or by phoning her on 3900 9800.

Your involvement in this research will take about 1 hour for the individual interview and/or 1 – 1.5 hours for the focus group interview.

Through your participation, you will be giving us valuable information about your experience of charism at San Sisto College. The research will provide a better understanding of how Dominican charism is implemented and experienced. It will contribute to knowledge about any challenges and/or lessons learned that might be applicable to San Sisto or to other schools in the Dominican tradition or to other schools who institutionalise a charism. Furthermore, it will contribute to knowledge about the role of charism in the formation of the personal identity of members of the school community. The findings will form part of a report which will provide support to schools and religious institutes about the implementation and experience of charism in Catholic schools. The findings will also be written up in an academic journal. The results from the study may be summarised and appear in other publications or may be provided to other researchers in a form that does not identify you as a participant in any way.

Participation is voluntary and you can withdraw at any time without giving a reason, including after the focus group or interview has begun. Your decision not to participate or to withdraw at any time will not have any adverse consequences on your employment.

Should you decide to participate in the focus groups, your identity will be known to others in that group, and staff may be aware that you are involved in the focus group or in individual interviews. However, we will change or delete any information that might identify you in our notes.

Any questions regarding this research can be directed to the supervisor or student researcher by contacting them:

Principal Supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Denis McLaughlin
School of Educational Leadership
McAuley Campus, Australian Catholic University
Denis.McLaughlin@acu.edu.au
Ph: (07) 3623 7154

Student Researcher: Margaret Lee
San Sisto College mlee@bne.catholic.edu.au
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Furthermore, the researcher has taken steps to safeguard against any imposition on staff or other participants because of her role as Principal of San Sisto. An Integrity Committee has been established to deal with issues that might arise because of her dual role. Any complaints or issues of concern may be addressed to this committee through the Chair, psychologist, Kyra Greisbach. Any complaint or concern through either process will be treated in confidence and will be fully investigated. The participant will be informed of the outcome.

If you agree to participate in this project, you should sign both copies of the consent form, retain one copy for your records and return the other copy to the principal supervisor or student researcher.

We thank you most sincerely for giving this research your consideration.

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Assoc. Prof. Denis McLaughlin
Principal Supervisor

.....
Margaret Lee
Student researcher

.....
Kyra Greisbach
Integrity Committee



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8 October 2012

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS (TEACHERS)
Copy for participant

TITLE OF PROJECT: The Institutionalisation of Dominican Charism in a Catholic School

NAME OF PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR: Assoc. Professor Denis McLaughlin

NAME OF STUDENT RESEARCHER: Margaret Lee

I.....have read and understood the information provided in the Information Letter to Participants (Teachers). Any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in the:

- individual interview only for about one hour
- focus group only for about 1.5 hours
- interview and focus group for a total of about 2.5 hours (please tick preference)

I realize that I can withdraw at any time. I agree that research data collected for the purpose of the study may be published in a form that does not identify me in any way.

NAME OF PARTICIPANT.....

SIGNATURE DATE.....

.....
SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR DATE

.....
SIGNATURE OF STUDENT RESEARCHER DATE.....

CRICOS registered provider:
00004G, 00112C, 00873F, 00885B

8 October 2012

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1100 Nudgee Road
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CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS (TEACHERS)
Copy for researcher

TITLE OF PROJECT: The Institutionalisation of Dominican Charism in a Catholic School

NAME OF PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR: Assoc. Professor Denis McLaughlin

NAME OF STUDENT RESEARCHER: Margaret Lee

I.....have read and understood the information provided in the Information Letter to Participants (Teachers). Any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in the:

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INFORMATION LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS (PARENTS)

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NAME OF PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR: Assoc. Professor Denis McLaughlin

NAME OF STUDENT RESEARCHER: Margaret Lee

NAME OF PROGRAM IN WHICH ENROLLED: EdD

Dear Participant,

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Margaret will be conducting interviews with people at San Sisto at mutually convenient times. Participants will be given the choice of talking with her in a focus group and/or individually. All interviews will be audio-taped. There will be briefing optional sessions organised to help inform your decision to participate or not. At these sessions, you will be able to seek further clarification about the research topic, its purpose and design. These sessions for parents will be held on Tuesday X August at 7.30 am, 2.00 pm, 5.00 pm or 7.00 pm in Room 3 in the college library. Other sessions will be conducted at your request, by emailing Margaret Lee on mlee@bne.catholic.edu.au or by phoning her on 3900 9800.

Your involvement in this research will take about 1 hour for the individual interview and/or 1 – 1.5 hours for the focus group interview.

Through your participation, you will be giving us valuable information about your experience of charism at San Sisto College. The research will provide a better understanding of how Dominican charism is implemented and experienced. It will contribute to knowledge about any challenges and/or lessons learned that might be applicable to San Sisto and to other schools in the Dominican tradition or to other schools who institutionalise a charism. Furthermore, it will contribute to knowledge about the role of charism in the formation of the personal identity of members of the school community. The findings will form part of a report which will provide support to schools and religious institutes about the implementation and experience of charism in schools. The findings will also be written up in an academic journal. The results from the study may be summarised and appear in other publications or may be provided to other researchers in a form that does not identify you as a participant in any way.

Participation is voluntary and you can withdraw at any time without giving a reason, including after the focus group or interview has begun. Your decision not to participate or to withdraw at any time will not have any adverse consequences on your daughter's education.

Should you decide to participate in the focus groups, your identity will be known to others in that group, and staff may be aware that you are involved in the focus group or in individual interviews. However, we will change or delete any information that might identify you in our notes.

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Furthermore, the researcher has taken steps to safeguard against any imposition on parents or other participants because of her role as Principal of San Sisto. An Integrity Committee has been established to deal with issues that might arise because of her dual role. Any complaints or issues of concern may be addressed to this committee through the Chair, psychologist, Kyra Greisbach. Any complaint or concern through either process will be treated in confidence and will be fully investigated. The participant will be informed of the outcome.

If you agree to participate in this project, you should sign both copies of the consent form, retain one copy for your records and return the other copy to the principal supervisor or student researcher.

We thank you most sincerely for giving this research your consideration.

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Assoc. Prof. Denis McLaughlin
Principal Supervisor

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Margaret Lee
Student researcher

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8 October 2012

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS (PARENTS)

Copy for participant

TITLE OF PROJECT: The Institutionalisation of Dominican Charism in a Catholic School

NAME OF PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR: Assoc. Professor Denis McLaughlin

NAME OF STUDENT RESEARCHER: Margaret Lee

I.....have read and understood the information provided in the Information Letter to Participants (Parents). Any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in the following interviews at times yet to be advised:

- individual interview only for about one hour focus group only for about 1.5 hours
 interview and focus group for a total of about 2.5 hours (please tick preference)

I realize that I can withdraw at any time. I agree that research data collected for the purpose of the study may be published in a form that does not identify me in any way.

NAME OF PARTICIPANT.....

SIGNATURE DATE.....

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SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR DATE

.....
SIGNATURE OF STUDENT RESEARCHER DATE.....

CRICOS registered provider:
00004G, 00112C, 00873F, 00885B

8 October 2012

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS (PARENTS)
Copy for researcher

TITLE OF PROJECT: The Institutionalisation of Dominican Charism in a Catholic School

NAME OF PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR: Assoc. Professor Denis McLaughlin

NAME OF STUDENT RESEARCHER: Margaret Lee

I.....have read and understood the information provided in the Information Letter to Participants (Parents). Any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in the following interviews at times yet to be advised:

- individual interview only for about one hour focus group only for about 1 – 1.5 hours
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NAME OF PARTICIPANT.....

SIGNATURE DATE.....

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SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR DATE

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SIGNATURE OF STUDENT RESEARCHER DATE.....

8 October 2012

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INFORMATION LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS (PAST STUDENTS)

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NAME OF PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR: Assoc. Professor Denis McLaughlin

NAME OF STUDENT RESEARCHER: Margaret Lee

NAME OF PROGRAM IN WHICH ENROLLED: EdD

Dear Participant,

You are invited to participate in a research project. This research forms part of the Doctorate in Education program in which Margaret Lee (Student Researcher) is enrolled. This letter is to provide you with some information to help you decide whether you want to contribute to this research. The purpose of this study is to explore how students, teachers and parents at San Sisto College experience Dominican charism. We are asking past students to talk to the researcher (Current principal, Margaret Lee) in focus groups or individually, to tell us about their experience of Dominican charism while at San Sisto College.

Margaret will be conducting interviews with people at San Sisto at mutually convenient times. You will be given the choice of talking with her in a focus group and/or individually. All interviews will be audio-taped. There will be optional briefing sessions organised to help inform your decision to participate or not. At these sessions, you will be able to seek further clarification about the research topic, its purpose and design. These sessions for past students will be held on Monday X August at 5 pm and at 6 pm in Prouilhe Building (admin). Other sessions will be conducted at your request, by emailing Margaret Lee on mlee@bne.catholic.edu.au or by phoning her on 3900 9800.

Involvement in this research will take about 1 hour for the individual interview and/or 1 – 1.5 hours for the focus group interview. Every effort will be made to conduct the interviews and focus groups out of class time. Lunch or morning tea will be provided should you agree to a session during these breaks.

Through your participation, you will be giving us valuable information about your experience of Dominican charism (the particular values and attributes of St Dominic) at San Sisto College. The research will provide a better understanding of how Dominican charism is implemented and experienced. It will contribute to knowledge about any challenges and/or lessons learned that might be applicable to San Sisto and other schools in the Dominican tradition or to other schools who institutionalise a charism. Furthermore, it will contribute to knowledge about the role of charism in the formation of the personal identity of its students. The findings will form part of a report which will provide support to schools and other organisations about the implementation and experience of charism in Catholic schools. The findings will also be written up in an academic journal. The results from the study may be summarised and appear in other publications or may be provided to other researchers in a form that does not identify you as a participant in any way.

Participation is voluntary and you can withdraw at any time without giving a reason, including after the focus group or interview has begun. Your decision for your daughter not to participate or to withdraw at any time will not have any adverse consequences for your daughter's education or assessment.

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Any questions regarding this research can be directed to the supervisor or student researcher (Mrs Lee) by contacting them:

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Principal Supervisor

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Margaret Lee
Student researcher

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Kyra Greisbach
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8 October 2012

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CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS (PAST STUDENTS)

Copy for participant

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NAME OF PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR: Assoc. Professor Denis McLaughlin

NAME OF STUDENT RESEARCHER: Margaret Lee

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NAME OF PARTICIPANT.....

SIGNATURE DATE.....

.....
SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR DATE

.....
SIGNATURE OF STUDENT RESEARCHER DATE.....

8 October 2012

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Copy for researcher

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NAME OF PARTICIPANT.....

SIGNATURE DATE.....

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SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR DATE

.....
SIGNATURE OF STUDENT RESEARCHER DATE.....

APPENDIX C: Components of a Mercy school culture audit

3. The general environment – a happy, positive place
4. Clear Mission Statement describing vision and values
5. Positive learning environment
6. Pastoral care for students, staff and parents
7. School community celebrates its Catholic and Christian faith
8. School acts in creative partnership with parents, parishes and wider community
9. Leadership is life-enhancing and empowering
10. People in the school communicate well with each other
11. Decision-making is shared responsibility in a spirit of collaboration
12. There is a priority in curriculum for religious education.
13. School is a just place and it promotes harmonious relationship with the earth.
14. Each person is respected and made welcome.
15. Curriculum is relevant.
16. Members have access to and use of school resources.
17. Physical environment contains appropriate religious signs and symbols.
18. School ceremonies reflect school's vision and mission.
19. Mercy ministries, both at home and overseas, are publicised and supported.
20. School publications reflect school's vision and mission.
21. Stories are told of school's heroes and heroines who personify school's vision and mission
22. School-based policies and procedures reflect school's core values.
23. On-going teacher learning and professional development for all staff are actively promoted.
24. Achievements of members of community are appropriately celebrated and rewarded.

(Schneider, 2006, pp. 67-68)

APPENDIX D: Interview Questions

Questions prepared as a guide	Question 1	Question 2	Question 3
<p>TEACHERS (individual and focus group questions)</p>	<p>What do teachers and leaders believe contributes to the Dominican charism at San Sisto? WHAT IS???</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We say we are a school in the Dominican Tradition. What does this mean? 2. What do you think the term “Dominican charism” means? 3. What do you believe contributes to the Dominican charism at San Sisto? 4. What specific examples can you give to detail the expression of Dominican charism at San Sisto... If you were to do a Y chart, what would it look like, feel like, sound like? 5. What contributes to Dominican charism in the classroom? Within co-curriculum program/service? Religious life of the school? 	<p>How do stakeholders experience Dominican charism at San Sisto? HOW/WHAT EXPERIENCE????</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In what ways do you experience or are you involved in anything that could be related to Dominican charism? 2. What activities consistent with Dominican charism are you involved in in any way? Can you explain how you feel/felt through a typical “Dominican” activity? 3. Are there any symbols around the school that you identify as Dominican-related? 4. How do you make sense of various activities (fundraising, immersion trips, prayer, meditation, service)? Do you see these activities as “Dominican”, Catholic, Christian, everybody does it? Important? Identity forming? Explain. 5. Do you think that you have changed in any way spiritually, religiously, personally, because of your employment at a school in the Dominican tradition? 6. Do you feel coerced or willing to be involved in activities related to Dominican charism/culture? 7. Have you had any experience of other charisms or Catholic schools to appreciate anything different? How do you think a school in the Dominican tradition is different from any other Catholic school with no particular charism, or a different charism? 8. Does Dominican charism help you understand your role as a Christian educator? Explain. 9. Can you tell me about the religious life of San Sisto? How do you experience it? Is it meaningful? Helpful in developing your own faith or spirituality? 	<p>How is Dominican charism implemented at San Sisto? HOW IS????</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Is there an overt program of formation of Dominican charism for new staff? For other staff? How does this happen? 2. What elements, programs, strategies, symbols, liturgies... have been developed or have you developed or have been a part of to implement or foster charism? 3. How do you own the charism and work to ensure that it is used as a touchstone in what you do? What does it mean to you? (if relevant) or Is it important to keep the charism alive at San Sisto? 4. What is your role in fostering charism?

Questions prepared as a guide	Question 1	Question 2	Question 3
<p>CURRENT STUDENTS</p> <p>(individual and focus group questions)</p>	<p>What do teachers and leaders believe contributes to the Dominican charism at San Sisto? WHAT IS???</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> We say that we are a school in the Dominican Tradition. What does being in the Dominican Tradition mean to you? Do you have any experience of other charisms or Catholic schools to appreciate anything different? <p><i>FOCUS GROUP</i> <i>Girls have said that they just know that Dominican charism is important. HOW?</i></p> <p><i>What did Dominic want to achieve?</i> <i>What do you know about St Dominic?</i> <i>If you know it's important to honour St Dominic, then do you DO things that you know were important to him?</i> <i>Visible strategies of Dominican charism??</i></p>	<p>How do stakeholders experience Dominican charism at San Sisto? HOW/WHAT EXPERIENCE????</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> What activities or programs are you involved in on a daily/regular basis that relate to our Dominican charism? How do you think a school in the Dominican tradition is different from any other Catholic school with no particular charism, or a different charism? How do you make sense of various activities (fundraising, immersion trips, prayer, service)? Do you see them as "Dominican", Catholic, Christian, everybody does it, important? Identity forming? Explain. What appears to be the main religious message of San Sisto? What specific examples can you give to detail the expression of Dominican charism at San Sisto... If you were to do a Y chart, what would it look like, feel like, sound like? What activities are you involved in in any way because San Sisto is Dominican? Can you explain how you feel/felt through a typical "Dominican" activity? Do you think that you have changed in any way spiritually, religiously, personally, because of your education at a school in the Dominican tradition? Do you think it is important to honour the charism of St Dominic as established by the original sisters? <p><i>FOCUS GROUP</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Check comments against other groups if other information is added. Check for shared experience.</i> 	<p>How is Dominican charism implemented at San Sisto? HOW IS????</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Do all/some/ what sort of teachers have a good understanding of Dominican story and values and infuse it through their lessons with an ownership and sense of commitment to the charism? Explain. Who is responsible for the charism? Is charism important? <i>FOCUS GROUP Pick up other ideas and check for shared belief</i>

Questions prepared as a guide	Question 1	Question 2	Question 3
<p>PAST/GRADUATE STUDENTS</p> <p>(Individual and focus group questions)</p>	<p>What do teachers and leaders believe contributes to the Dominican charism at San Sisto?</p> <p>WHAT IS???</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Now that you are finished school do you think that the religious, spiritual, life of school or Dominican response to living the Gospel has prepared you for life? 2. What is Dominican charism? What is meant by that term? 	<p>How do stakeholders experience Dominican charism at San Sisto?</p> <p>HOW/WHAT EXPERIENCE????</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What activities or programs were you involved in on a daily or regular basis that related to our Dominican charism? 2. Can you explain how you feel/felt through a typical "Dominican" activity? 3. How do you think a school in the Dominican tradition is different from any other Catholic school with no particular charism, or a different charism? 4. How do you make sense of various activities (fundraising, immersion trips, prayer, service)? Do you see them as "Dominican", Catholic, Christian, everybody does it, important? Identity forming? Explain. 5. What specific examples can you give to detail the expression of Dominican charism at San Sisto... If you were to do a Y chart, what would it look like, feel like, sound like? 6. What appears to be the main religious message of San Sisto? 7. Do you think that you have changed in any way spiritually, religiously, personally, because of your education at a school in the Dominican tradition? 8. Do you think it is important to honour the charism of St Dominic as established by the original sisters? Why? 	<p>How is Dominican charism implemented at San Sisto?</p> <p>HOW IS????</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Did all/some/ what sort of teachers have a good understanding of Dominican story and values and infuse it through their lessons with an ownership and sense of commitment to the charism? Explain

Questions prepared as a guide	Question 1 What do teachers and leaders believe contributes to the Dominican charism at San Sisto? WHAT IS???	Question 2 How do stakeholders experience Dominican charism at San Sisto? HOW/WHAT EXPERIENCE????	Question 3 How is Dominican charism implemented at San Sisto? HOW IS????
PARENTS (Individual and focus group questions)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What do you think constitutes "Dominican charism"? 2. Do you think a student needs to be a church-going Christian or Catholic to feel Dominican spirit? 3. Do you have feeling of the spirit of this school by having been here on and off for a variety of functions? Explain. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What activities are you involved in regularly at the college? 2. When you hear of various activities (fundraising, immersion trips, prayer, service)? Do you see them as "Dominican", Catholic, Christian, everybody does it, important? Identity forming? Explain. 3. How do you think a school in the Dominican tradition is different from any other Catholic school with no particular charism, or a different charism? 4. Do you think that you or your daughter has/have changed in any way spiritually, religiously, personally, because of their education in a Dominican school? 5. Can you tell me anything about the religious life of San Sisto? How do you experience it? 6. What appears to be the main religious message of San Sisto? 7. Do you think it is important to honour the charism of St Dominic as established by the original sisters? 8. What specific examples can you give to detail the expression of Dominican charism at San Sisto... If you were to do a Y chart, what would it look like, feel like, sound like? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do you know of any ways that the college tries to infuse a Dominican charism into the ethos of the school?

APPENDIX E: Schedule of Interviews

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE				
	Current Students	Type	Individual (I)	Time
1	Skye	I SFG1	24-Oct-12	12.30-1.15
2	Sian	I SFG5	5-Nov-12	12.30-1.15
3	Sally	I SFG3	29-Oct-12	12.30-1.15
4	Sharon	I	12-Nov-12	12.30-1.15
5	Sammi	I	7-Nov-12	12.30-1.15
6	Siri	I	7-Nov-12	11.30-12.30
7	Sonya	SFG1		
8	Suzy	SFG1		
9	Storm	SFG2		
10	Susan	SFG2		
11	Steffi	SFG2		
12	Stacy	SFG3		
13	Sue	SFG4		
14	Sheri	SFG5		
15	Soleil	SFG5		
16	Sharleen	SFG5		
17	Shirley	SFG5		
18	Shira	SFG5		
19	Sheree	SFG5		
20	Shelby	SFG4		
			Focus Groups	
		SFG1	30-Oct-12	Periods 3 - 4 (11.00 - 11.45)
		SFG2	30-Oct-12	12.30 - 1.20
		SFG3	31-Oct-12	10.30 - 11.45
		SFG4	6-Nov-12	11.00 - 12.30
		SFG5	6-Nov-12	12.30 - 1.20
	Teachers	Type	Individual	Time
1	Tess	I	28-Feb-13	3.15 - 4.15
2	Tamara	I	26-Feb-13	1.30 - 2.30
3	Tomiko	I	25-Feb-13	7.30 - 8.30
4	Tara	I	11-Dec-12	2.30 - 3.30
5	Tarni	I TFG1	26-Feb-13	2.00 - 3.00
6	Tegan	I TFG1	22-Feb-13	3.00 - 4.00
7	Toni	I	6-Mar-13	3.00 - 4.00
8	Tiffany	I TFG1	8-Mar-13	11.00 - 12.00
9	Tina	I	28-Feb-13	1.30 - 2.30
10	Tammi	I	26-Feb-13	7.30 - 8.30
11	Tanya	I	8-Mar-13	2.00 - 3.00
12	Terri	TFG1		
13	Thea 1	I	13-Oct-12	9.30 - 10.30
	Thea 2	I	4-Dec-12	9.00 - 10.30
14	Tracy	TFG2		
15	Tilly	TFG2		
16	Tori	TFG2		
			Focus Groups	
		TFG1	7-Mar-13	3.15 - 4.30
		TFG2	14-Nov-12	8.30 - 10.30

Interview Schedule continued				
	Informed	Type		
17	Ita	I	5-Dec-12	9.30 - 10.30
18	Izzie	I	20-Dec-12	9.00 - 9.30
19	Isabelle	I	22-Nov-12	1.00 - 2.30
Parents				
		Type	Individual	Time
1	Pam	I PFG1	9-Nov-12	7.00 - 8.00
2	Penny	PFG1		
3	Peta	PFG1		
4	Paula	PFG1		
5	Polly	PFG1		
6	Pat	PFG1		
7	Piper	I	7-Nov-12	8.30 - 9.30
8	Paris	I	6-Nov-12	8.30 - 9.30
9	Peg	I	8-Nov-12	9.30 - 10.30
Focus Group				
		PFG1	5-Nov-12	4.00 - 5.30
Graduate students				
		Type	Individual	Time
1	Glenda	GFG1		
2	Gay	I GFG2	17-Dec-12	3.30 - 4.30
3	Gretta	I	3-Dec-12	2.30 - 3.30
4	Gail	I	10-Dec-12	6.00 - 7.00
5	Gina	GFG2		
6	Gabi	GFG2		
7	Grace	GFG1		
8	Gwen	I	5-Dec-12	5.30 - 6.30
8	Gemma	GFG1		
Focus Group				
		GFG1	3-Dec-12	5.30 - 6.30
		GFG2	9-Jan-13	4.30 - 5.30