WRITING ON THE SPIRIT

An exploration of the role of senior leadership teams in enhancing the mission integrity of selected Catholic schools in the Mercy tradition.

Submitted by

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Abstract

In the twenty-first century, many schools and educational systems are embracing a new paradigm of educational leadership that utilises collaboration and/or leadership teams. Reflecting this movement, this research explored the capacity of senior leadership teams (SLTs) to enhance the mission integrity (Grace, 2002a, p. 19; , 2002b) of selected Catholic schools in the Mercy tradition. The context for this study was two Victorian Mercy secondary colleges.

The research examined the experience of shared leadership for members of SLTs in the selected Catholic schools, the contribution of shared leadership to the overall leadership of the schools, the principles on which this shared leadership was exercised within Catholic schools in the Mercy tradition and the opportunities that exist for SLTs to enhance the mission integrity of their school.

The data collection included a series of semi-structured interviews with members of the schools' SLTs, the examination of foundational school and systemic documents, interviews and correspondence with critical friends - current and former principals and the use of a Research Journal. The data from the interviews was transcribed manually and, together with the document analysis and research journal, was analysed in three stages using the four Research Questions as guides. Data analysis occurred in three stages: data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing and verification (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The research highlighted a number of the strengths that SLTs have brought to their schools including teamwork and synergies, and the opportunity to build leadership capacity. It also highlighted the important responsibilities of the principal within the SLT in setting direction and exerting influence for the team and the school as a whole. The research underlined the passion and commitment SLT members have for Catholic education, the principles on which this passion is based and, particularly, the importance of educating for full human personhood. SLT members affirmed the opportunities that Duignan's framework for shared leadership in Catholic schools (Duignan, 2008) offered

as a template for articulating the fundamental principles underlying Catholic education. The research also investigated the specific lens that the Mercy charism brought to the leadership of each school.

The research also examined a number of challenges to, and opportunities for, the enhancement of mission integrity nominated by SLT members in the selected schools. These challenges included demonstrating leadership in Catholic schools, achieving academic excellence, building teaching and leadership capacity and the need to nurture a culture of hospitality in Catholic schools in the Mercy tradition.

As a result of this research, a number of recommendations and opportunities for further research are offered to Catholic schools and their SLTs, the systemic authorities responsible for Catholic schools and for those responsible specifically for Mercy education.

As a Catholic, I believe that parents are the first educators of a child, so it was with me. As this thesis is completed, I would like to thank my parents, Bram and Marian, for what they have gifted me – a love of family, of learning, of others and of God.

Finally, I would like to express my profound gratitude to the two people without whom this thesis would not have happened. To my beautiful, talented and joyous daughter, D'Arcy, I dedicate this work, that in its words, you too may discover the joy of learning. And, finally, to my wife, Freya, whom I love beyond words, thank you for your encouragement, sacrifice, guidance and wisdom.

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Abbreviations and Terms	
Aptissimi	A phrase used by Ignatius of Loyola which means 'the very best'. Used by Lowney (2003) to describe love-driven leadership, the search to identify and nurture the most talented leaders within an organisation.
CSTTM	*The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium* (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1998)
Charism	Formally defined as "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 and women, and to the needs of the world". (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1994, para. 799).
Commodification of education	The shift in some countries and educational systems to assign an economic unit of worth to all goods and services including the provision of education. It ignores any aesthetic, cultural, developmental or spiritual dimensions of education.
LCS	*Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith* (Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1982)
Love-driven leadership	The notion of leadership where leaders across an organisation are required to have their eyes open to the talent and potential around them (Duncan & Scroope, 2008; Lowney, 2003).
Magisterium	The formal teaching authority of the Roman Catholic Church
RDECS	*The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School* (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988)

Chapter One
Introducing the Research

1.1   Introduction

One of the most significant changes that has occurred in my twenty-five years as a student, teacher and educational leader in Australian Catholic schools has been in the leadership of these schools. As a student in country Victoria and then later on as beginning teacher, the leadership of these schools was solely the province of members of religious congregations: Christian Brothers, a Salesian priest and a Sister of Mercy. Yet, as the second decade of the twenty-first century approaches, less than five per cent of Victorian Catholic schools have religious as principals (Pascoe, 2007). This historic change has influenced a number of changes including the development of senior leadership teams (SLTs) as a key part of the leadership of most schools, not only in Victoria but also nationally and internationally. The development of SLTs in schools and my own membership of an energetic and effective senior leadership team in a large co-educational secondary Mercy college in the outer-eastern suburbs of Melbourne provide the basis for this research. My twenty years of experience as a student and teacher in Mercy schools, and pre-existing relationships with leaders in other Victorian Mercy schools, facilitates the use of two SLTs in these schools as contexts for examination through semi-structured interviews, document analysis, a researcher reflective journal and dialogue with Critical Friends .

Over my professional career, a background in science and science education has been complemented by studies in religious education and the unexpected joy of writing significant pieces for this doctorate; an academic progression that has been accompanied by an increasing awareness of, and passion for, the constructivist paradigm.

My initial interest in the opportunities offered by SLTs in Catholic schools was focused over two years into an investigation of the ways that senior leadership teams in Catholic schools in the Mercy tradition witness to, and nourish, the purpose and principles of Catholic education.

Any investigation into the principles underlying Catholic education must draw heavily on the tradition and testimony offered by Church documents and their exploration of the fundamental role played by Catholic schools in the mission of the Church. Within this rich tradition is the challenge that gave rise to the title of this thesis, "Writing on the Spirit". The Congregation for Catholic Education (1998) argues that students need to develop pedagogical relationships with outstanding educators, as teaching has the greatest influence "when placed in a context of personal involvement, genuine reciprocity, coherence of attitudes, lifestyles and day-to-day behaviour" (para. 18). Therefore, an enormous ontological and ecclesial responsibility is given to teachers in Catholic schools as humans are not 'blocks of stone' looking to be sculpted or empty boxes needing to be filled; rather, they are sacred creatures created in God's image and likeness. Teaching is one of humanity's greatest pursuits as "the teacher does not write on inanimate material, but on the very spirit of human beings" (para. 18). This is a remarkable description of the challenge, beauty and utter humanity of teaching. In a small way, this thesis seeks to explore, identify and articulate what this 'writing' entails.

1.2   Research Context

In mid-1944, six weeks after the allied invasion at Normandy, a much smaller event but of similarly long-term significance involving economists from forty-four countries was held at Bretton Woods in the north-eastern American state of New Hampshire. Responding to the enormous financial challenges posed by the 1929 Wall Street crash, the subsequent Great Depression and the tragedy of World War II, this group designed the international financial system and its institutions that are the foundations of contemporary world trade and money supply (Dawkins, 2003). Although the influence of these important historical institutions remains important, it is two analogous social movements whose philosophies underlied Bretton Woods that have actually driven economic and social changes globally in the last fifty years – the philosophy of neo-liberalism and its consequence, globalisation. Promoting free markets, small government, privatisation and minimal tax regimes (Beck, 2000; Fox, 2001; George, 2001), advocates of neo-liberalism have driven many global reforms in communications,

economies and education. Although these reforms have increased the workload of all educational practitioners, principals have felt their impact most keenly. A number of systemic authorities have argued that this change in the workload of principals and associated impacts of globalisation have decreased the numbers of qualified senior educators applying for principalships (Belmonte & Cranston, 2007; Carlin, d'Arbon, Dorman, Duignan, & Neidhart, 2003; d'Arbon, Duignan, Duncan, Dwyer, & Goodwin, 2001; Hine, 2003; Schuttloffel, 2007). Therefore, examination of the influence of these global economic imperatives on education and educational leadership is important for my research area, as it is an issue to which all educational leaders must respond.

Systemic changes to curricula, greater reliance on objective standards and assessment, emphasis on vocational outcomes and encouragement of competition between educational providers are symptoms of what has become known as the "Market Model of Schooling" (Dwyer, 1999, p. 31). However, the economic imperatives driving these global movements are not without their critics; notable amongst these is the counter-cultural voice of the Catholic Church (Pope John Paul II, 1994, 2001b). In response to the rising dominance of the market, the Catholic Bishops' of England and Wales (1997) argued:

> Education is a not a commodity to be offered for sale. The distribution of funding solely according to the dictates of market forces is contrary to the Catholic doctrine of the common good. Teachers and pupils are not economic units whose value is seen merely as a cost element on the school's balance sheet. To consider them in this way threatens human dignity. (para. 4)

Guided by these calls, yet cognisant of the modern secular imperatives of institutional success and measurable effectiveness, leaders of Catholic schools find themselves in situations of fundamental conflict (Grace, 2002a; Grace & O'Keefe, 2007). This conflict and other issues affecting the leaders of Catholic education have stimulated a rethinking of the traditional hierarchical model of the principalship. My research explores the opportunities that senior leadership teams offer schools wishing to maintain and enhance the core principles of Catholic education in a globalised world.

A radical rethink of what constitutes educational leadership in the 21st century has resulted in some authors identifying a "post-industrial paradigm of leadership" (Spry, Duignan, & Skelly, 2004, p. 9) where the hierarchical leader-as-hero model is replaced by a culture of shared leadership within schools. With the role of principal expanding well beyond educational leadership into management, accountancy, law and industrial relations, less time is available for "the core functions of teaching, learning and fostering strong relationships with students, staff and families" (Carlin, d'Arbon, Dorman, Duignan, & Neidhart, 2003, p. 37). These pressures on educational leaders are not restricted to Victoria or Australia, with studies across the world recognising the increasing complexity of educational leadership and arguing for greater collaboration as a means to more effectively distribute the tasks and responsibilities (Cannon, Delaney, & Host, 2007; Carlin, d'Arbon, Dorman, Duignan, & Neidhart, 2003; d'Arbon, Duignan, Duncan, Dwyer, & Goodwin, 2001; Duignan, 2006; Grace, 2002a; Hine, 2003; Spry, Duignan, & Skelly, 2004; Wallace, 2001). Typical of these comments are those of Carlin, d'Arbon, Dorman, Duignan and Neidhart (2003) who state, "it is important that Catholic education authorities explore ways of restructuring the role of principal and the senior leadership team, in order to more effectively distribute the tasks and responsibilities, so that it becomes more manageable and attractive" (p. 57).

Fundamentally, the Catholic school is a place of evangelization and pastoral action through its work of "educating the Christian person" (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988, para. 33). But what does this mean for teachers and leaders in Catholic schools? What is education of the Christian person? Answers to these questions lie in the raft of Church documents that have articulated, explored and contextualised the task of educators and educational leaders in Catholic schools over the last forty years. Amidst these documents, two inextricably bind the mission of the institutional Church and the Catholic school: *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium* (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1998) which contends that the ecclesial nature of a Catholic school lies at the heart of its identity as a teaching institution; this idea builds on the premise of *The Catholic School* (Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977) which posits as its essential task:

Fundamentally a synthesis of culture and faith, and a synthesis of faith and life: the first is reached by integrating all the different aspects of human knowledge through the subjects taught, in the light of the gospel; the second in the growth of the virtues characteristic of the Christian. (para. 37)

Returning to the seminal call of the Second Vatican Council (1965) to read the "signs of the times", the words of these fundamental documents challenge all Catholic schools and their staff to become interpreters of the new millennium (Simmonds, 2008) or practically to become bridge-builders (Crawford & Rossiter, 1996) to a generation of young people increasingly unchurched and secularised but who seek the spiritual and aesthetic in life nonetheless. It is a challenge that must be embraced by all Catholic educators, especially those in leadership. The path between human culture and expressed faith, which is the goal of Catholic education, must be bridged by the culture of individual schools, the formal and informal curricula of the school, and most importantly, by the witness of those who teach and work in that school community.

The contemporary imperatives of greater accountability to governments and increased workloads have catalysed the call by educational researchers and systemic authorities for greater collaboration in the leadership of schools. In this research, their movement towards greater collaboration is explored through an examination of SLTs in two selected Catholic schools. But given the particular mission of Catholic education -educating the Christian person – an important aspect of this thesis is clarification of the principles that direct and inform the leadership teams in the selected schools.

1.3   Research Problem

This research examined the principles underlying the operation of SLTs operating in two Victorian Mercy secondary colleges: one single-sex, the other co-educational. It acknowledged the movement in many schools and educational jurisdictions towards shared or collaborative leadership. For individual schools, this trend has resulted in leadership of the school no longer totally or solely being vested in the principal but rather in a group or team of leaders – the senior leadership team.

The research explored the foundational principles of Catholic education and the role that SLTs have in nourishing and witnessing to these principles. The study included semi-structured interviews of SLTs members, examination of foundational documents in each school, use of a research journal and dialogue with critical friends.

The research problem was investigated through examination of the gap between *'what is'* and *'what ought to be'* (author's emphasis) in the mission (Schneider, 2004) of specific Catholic schools. The capacity of the school's SLT to address this perceived gap was assessed using Grace's (2002b) definition of 'mission integrity' as "fidelity in practice and not just in public rhetoric to the distinctive and authentic principles of a Catholic education" (p. 432).

1.4   Research Purpose

In the twenty-first century, many schools and educational systems are embracing a new paradigm of educational leadership that utilises collaboration and/or leadership teams. This movement suggests that an examination of the role of leadership teams in schools is both opportune and necessary. Therefore, **the purpose of this research is to explore the capacity of senior leadership teams to enhance the mission integrity of selected Catholic schools in the Mercy tradition.** The context for this study was two Victorian Mercy secondary colleges.

1.5   Research Questions

Given the breadth and complexity of workload within contemporary principalship, leadership teams now play a significant role in Western schools through a range of shared leadership models. However, the enthusiasm for leadership teams, and distributed leadership more generally, needs to be tempered by "context-specific constitution" (Wallace & Huckman, 1999, p. 163), education of the rest of the school community and addressing the issue of whether leadership is actually shared. Recent work (Duignan, 2007, 2008) has queried the appropriateness of contemporary models of distributed leadership for Catholic schools. These realities, and the particular contexts of the schools being examined, suggest my first research question: **What is the experience of shared**

leadership for the individual members of senior leadership teams in the selected schools?

The specific act of calling a leadership group a 'team' articulates more than describing a set of individuals acting in concert. Importantly, it expresses the ideals of teamwork and synergy. In the context of my research, these ideals require analysis, as part of the worth and attraction of collaborative leadership, of the perceived benefits of teamwork and synergy. It is in aiming for such synergies that teams, and especially educational leadership teams, move from mere team work to effective teamwork (Hall, 2002). Yet full democratisation and distribution of school leadership is often unlikely and unwelcome, given the accountability requirements of systemic authorities still incumbent on many school principals. This exploration of teamwork and the synergies possible through reciprocal relationship, complementary skills and constructive conflict are explored through my second research question: **How does shared leadership contribute to the effective leadership of the selected schools?**

Responsibility for leadership of Catholic schools requires knowledge of, and commitment to, the principles underlying Catholic education. The foundation to these principles is provided by the core responsibility of Catholic schools, that of educating the Christian person (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988). This research acknowledged the rich tradition of literature concerning Catholic education but additionally sought to elicit the contemporary perspectives of current SLT members. These perspectives are the focus of my third research question **– What do the members of senior leadership teams identify as the principles underlying their leadership of Catholic schools in the Mercy tradition?**

This research draws significantly on Grace's concept of mission integrity (2002b) which requires fidelity in practice not just in public rhetoric to the public mission of the school. This fidelity is, in part, influenced by the degree to which leaders, and SLTs themselves, remain faithful to the principles of Catholic education. The primary responsibility of SLTs is to direct and influence (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003b) members of school

communities to journey along the road to mission integrity. This challenge for SLT members led to my fourth and final research question: **What opportunities exist for senior leadership teams to enhance the mission integrity of Catholic schools in the Mercy tradition?**

1.6   Research Design

This research uses a qualitative research approach as knowledge is co-constructed between researcher and research participants (Hatch, 2002), an epistemology that allows the articulation of the rich stories of individuals and groups. Qualitative research challenges researchers to gather "thick descriptions" (Eisner, 1991, p. 35) as a means by which these rich and multi-layered narratives can be articulated. The operation of senior leadership teams in Catholic schools is an area that has not been subject to significant research in Australia, therefore, a qualitative perspective facilitates explication of the ways SLT members understand their school environment and carry out their roles as educational leaders (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Data collection for this research was undertaken through the use of four separate yet complementary means:

1.   Document collection and analysis;
2.   Individual semi-structured interviews;
3.   Reflective research journal;
4.   Dialogue with critical friends.

The methods of data collection facilitated the 'thick descriptions' described above as fundamental to qualitative research, with the major focus being the use of semi-structured interviews with all members of the SLTs of the selected schools, as well as semi-structured interviews (and follow up emails where necessary) with critical friends. The interview questions were developed from the four research questions with initial piloting followed by some revision and rewriting. Although these questions formed the scaffold around which the interviews were conducted, care was taken to allow sufficient flexibility within each interview to pursue themes and issues as they arose at the time.

The data obtained through both sets of interviews was supplemented by material from key documents from the research contexts; these documents included College mission statements, strategic plans, annual reports as well as guiding documents from systemic and congregational authorities.

The opportunity to document and reflect upon the research process through a research journal provided me as researcher with hard evidence of new ideas, possible future avenues for exploration, or areas requiring further reading as well as a vehicle for self-reflection.

Wanting to situate myself in the data and the intent of the interviewees once the primary data collection phase had been completed, the interviews were transcribed manually by the researcher. Although a lengthy process, transcription of the interviews facilitated the development of a genuine feel for, and familiarity with, the data and made the data analysis more straightforward. Data was examined and organised according to the four research questions with conclusions and recommendations reflecting these in the final chapter.

1.7   *Significance of Research*

This research is significant for a number of reasons:

1.   The study investigated the operation and effectiveness of SLTs in an Australian Catholic educational context. This research is both significant and timely as it reflects the call by a number of local authorities for greater emphasis on collaborative leadership (Cannon, Delaney, & Host, 2007; Carlin, d'Arbon, Dorman, Duignan, & Neidhart, 2003; Spry, Duignan, & Skelly, 2004). Typical of their comments are those of the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria, "leadership is not a matter of the heroic individual, the lone ranger, achieving momentous feats in the face of difficult odds. Instead, it reflects a collaborative relationship with

colleagues" (2005, p. 5). It provides information on the experiences of two SLTs which can inform future developments in collaborative leadership.

2. This research explored Grace's concept of mission integrity (Grace, 2002a, 2002b) as a framework by which educational leaders, and particularly SLTs, can ensure fidelity to the principles of Catholic education. This is significant because it is the first time that this concept has been explored in relation to SLTs in the Australian Catholic education context.

3. The research facilitated identification of the principles of Catholic education underpinning the leadership actions of the selected SLTs and their membership. Given the proliferation of SLTs in Catholic schools, identification of these principles is significant for teams keen to objectively judge their efficacy.

4. The research allowed critique of the writers (Duignan, 2008; Duignan & Bezzina, 2006b) who queried the appropriateness of distributed leadership for all schools, and particularly, Catholic schools. Investigation of the framework for shared leadership in Catholic schools which was suggested as an alternative to other existing frameworks is significant as it offers a means of articulating the key principles underlying the mission of Catholic schools.

5. This research is also significant as it specifically responds to the challenge issued by Miller (2007a) and Grace (2009) for increased systematic and scholarly research into Catholic education.

6. Other studies (Cardno, 1998, 1999; Eischeid, 2002) have examined the experiences and activities of leadership teams in Catholic schools by using quantitative or mixed-methods methodologies. However, this study is a qualitative project that emphasised joint construction of knowledge through dialogue between researcher and participants. This is significant as qualitative research facilitates the 'thick descriptions' necessary to describe the social reality of schools and their leadership teams.

1.8 The Structure of the Thesis

Chapter 1 Introducing the Research

In this introductory chapter, the research problem, context and purpose are introduced, followed by an exploration of the four research questions underpinning the thesis. A summary of the research design, an outline of the significance of the work and an overview of the thesis are also included.

Chapter 2 Exploring the Context of the Research

This chapter begins the exploration of the background to the research problem with the focus of the writing gradually moving from global considerations into issues affecting education as schools enter the third millennium. Specific focus is then given to Catholic schools and, in particular, Catholic schools in the Mercy tradition; a final and important consideration addressed is the personal story of the researcher in this research context.

Chapter 3 Reviewing the Literature

This chapter initially articulates the conceptual framework through which the research questions are explored. The conceptual framework is expressed symbolically as a cruciform: three arms of the framework are explored in turn through examination of contemporary and seminal literature – educational leadership in the 21st century, the move towards greater collaboration in leadership and the specific context of Catholic education. The literature review then explores the influence of culture, charism and the Mercy tradition, before all aspects are brought together through the concept of mission integrity.

Chapter 4 The Methodology of the Research

This chapter explores the design of the research. My ontological and epistemological perspective, a constructivist perspective, is identified and explored. This standpoint is reflected both in the means by which data is collected through document analysis, semi-structured interviews, dialogue with critical friends and a research journal; and more importantly, in how the data is analysed. Data analysis occurs in three stages: data

reduction, data display and conclusion drawing and verification, each of which is described in detail.

Chapter 5   Exploring the Data

Following the collection of the data, it is organised and analysed according to the four research questions. In this chapter, themes are explored using data from each of the data collection methods. Common aspects emerging across the data streams and school contexts are presented.

Chapter 6   Conclusions, Recommendations and a Personal Note

The final chapter reviews the initial Research Purpose and the overall Research Design. Each of the four Research Questions is examined in turn and the conclusions are presented. A number of recommendations are made as a result of these conclusions and some suggestions for further investigation are outlined. Some final remarks bring the chapter and thesis to a close.

1.9   Summary

This first chapter introduced the research problem that is explored within this thesis, identified the broad contexts for its examination and, from these, a specific research purpose was articulated. Out of this research purpose, four research questions were developed. This provided the basis for the semi-structured interviews with the selected SLTs and dialogue with critical friends. A brief outline of the design of the research was included and introductory remarks were offered with respect to the importance of writing for this thesis, and specifically, for its title, "Writing on the Spirit". The chapter concluded with an examination of the significance of the research and an overview of the structure of each chapter within the thesis.

The next chapter examines a number of contexts within which the research problem is situated, including economic imperatives such as globalisation, issues in contemporary educational leadership and, specifically, those that affect Catholic education. As this research uses the contexts of two Victorian Mercy schools, the ministry of education

offered by the Sisters of Mercy historically, and locally here in Victoria, is explored. The examination of research contexts is concluded with my personal narrative situated within them.

Chapter 2

Exploring the Context of the Research

2.1   Introduction

In this chapter, the various contexts that form the background to my research are

identified and explored. The chapter approaches the contexts as though the researcher

comes to them from a great height, so that, initially, those affecting education globally are

investigated. Visually, this narrowing of focus is expressed in Figure 1 (below).

Global Imperatives

Trends in Educational Thinking

Catholic Education in the Mercy
tradition

Two selected Mercy
secondary schools

The SLTs of
these schools

This
thesis

Figure 1. Exploring the Contexts of the Research
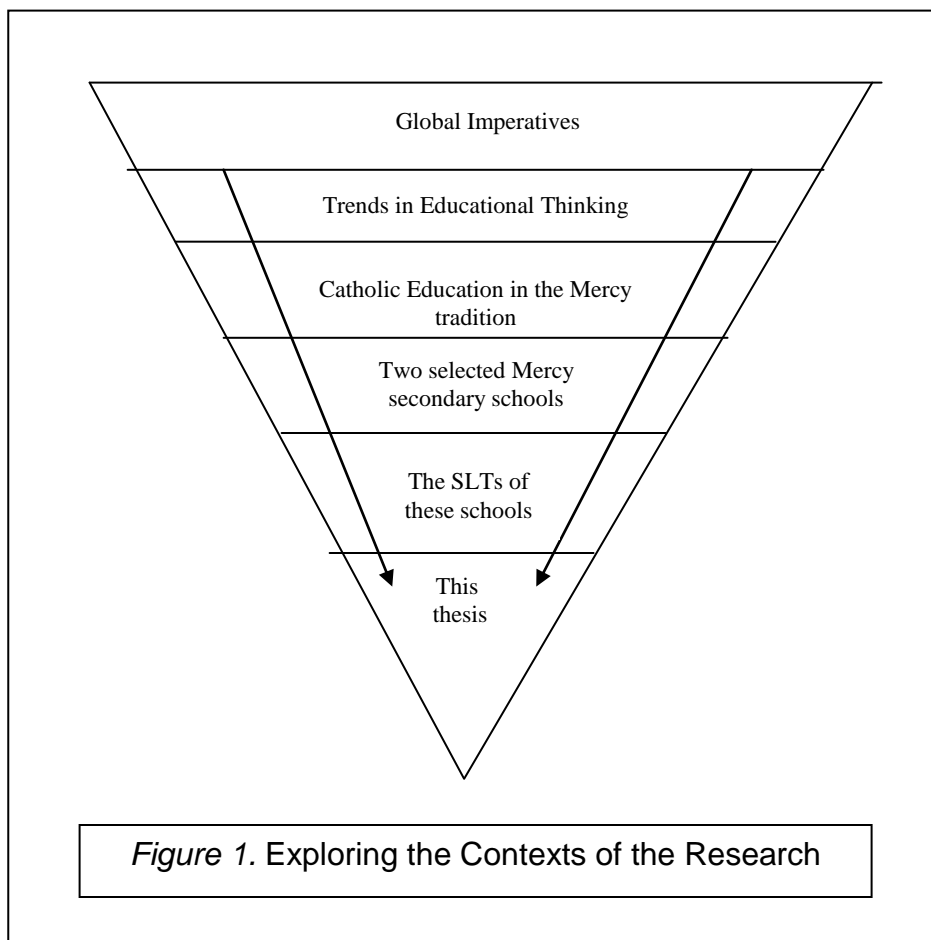
The broadest context, the effect of global issues on education, is explored first with an

investigation of the impact of issues such as globalisation, greater accountability to

government and systemic authorities. The increasing workload of educational leaders is

also investigated. Key effects of these global educational issues are also addressed with

the move by schools and systemic authorities towards greater collaboration in leadership identified and factors driving this change at a local level described.

Following this, the focus of the chapter tightens with an examination of Catholic schools and their leadership within the context of the universal Catholic Church. In particular, the contemporary challenges and opportunities confronting the Church are discussed to highlight their importance for Catholic school leaders.

As this research examines two Victorian Catholic schools in the Mercy tradition, the most specific context explored is that of Mercy education. The historical influence of the Sisters of Mercy, their development of schools in Victoria, and the current governance structures of these schools are discussed. This examination acknowledges that the history and charism of these schools remains a significant influence on the operation and effectiveness of the SLTs leading them.

The context chapter concludes with a personal reflection by the researcher on my links, and those of my family, with Catholic education and the Sisters of Mercy. Given this research sought to provide 'thick descriptions' to illuminate the operation and effectiveness of the SLTs within the selected schools, this final reflection reinforced the insights offered by these links.

2.2   Education in a Globalised World

Sixty-five years on, the United Nations Monetary and Financial Conference held in Bretton Woods, New Hampshire, continues to significantly influence educational institutions and their leadership. In the last twenty-five years, the neo-liberal philosophies promulgated at that meeting have driven economic reforms across a range of endeavours, but for schools and educational jurisdictions, the most important example of this influence has been the economic and philosophical paradigm change termed the 'commodification of education' (Simmonds, 2008).

Characterised by systemic changes to curricula, greater reliance on objective standards and assessment, emphasis on vocational outcomes and encouragement of competition between educational providers, the commodification of education has alternatively been described as the 'Market Model of Schooling' (Dwyer, 1999). Elements of this model include:

1. In the global market place, schools should serve national economies more directly;

2. Market forces provide the most efficient way to plan and deliver the commodity of education;

3. Schools should market their services in competition with each other;

4. Parents, as consumers, should be provided with indicators of performance so that they can make informed choice in an open market;

5. Diversity and marketing are to be encouraged so as to attract customers;

6. Schools should demonstrate accountability by providing value for money and should 'value add';

7. Benchmarks and standardizations will help ensure quality. (Dwyer, 1999)

From this perspective, productivity in the education sphere is viewed as coming not from direct government investment in education but rather through the transformation of education into a commodity, or tradeable unit, that can be bought and sold (Bronwyn Davies & Bansel, 2007).

Reinforcing the influence of economic rationalism principles on systemic educational authorities, Bottery (2006) argues that the commodification of education reflects a growing pressure towards the commodification of many goods within the cultural domains of nations. Bottery contends that cultural goods such as education have been "turned into articles or activities for consumption…leading to an emphasis on economic functionality rather than the pursuit of things in their own right. Education then becomes useful primarily as a means to personal rather than public ends, and notions of public good are damaged or destroyed" (p. 7).

The global movement towards the commodification of education is of particular concern to Catholic schools, their leadership and, therefore, the SLTs under investigation in this research. It directly challenges the capacity of SLTs to effect mission integrity as the principles of Catholic schools often run counter to education being viewed as a commodity. Sullivan (2000) identifies three such challenges:

1. Schools are tempted to emphasise certain priorities and modes of working (such as the annual publication of 'league ladders' describing supposedly objective academic achievement levels) which may sit uneasily with key principles of Catholic education such as the importance of holistic education – which attends to the academic, emotional, psychological and spiritual aspects;

2. School leaders are pressured to establish greater levels of control over key aspects of teaching and learning;

3. Managerialism lacks an over-arching story that inspires, guides and provides purpose for those engaged in its important endeavours.

From an Australian perspective, the pressures of corporate managerialism on Catholic schools cannot be ignored as schools do not exist in isolation from society; rather, they are called to respond critically to the issues affecting the world at large (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1998). Bezzina (2000) argues that Australian Catholic systemic authorities, their schools and the leadership of these schools need to "learn the lessons of experience in the United States, in the United Kingdom, in Canada and even in our own public systems" (p. 8) to ensure that work towards the common good continues to be a key goal of Catholic education.

The movement towards self-managing schools, an increased level of accountability to systemic and government authorities, in addition to an increasingly crowded curriculum, have had an enormous impact on the workload of educational leaders, and in particular, school principals. With this expansion in their roles, it has become increasingly difficult for principals and educational leaders to maintain focus on their core responsibilities of teaching, learning and fostering strong relationships with students, staff and families (Carlin, d'Arbon, Dorman, Duignan, & Neidhart, 2003, p. 37). Speaking at an international conference of principals, Flockton (2001) articulated how the foundations of

good schools (which should be the preoccupation of outstanding educational leaders) have become obscured:

> Many of today's schools feed, counsel, provide health care for body and mind, and protect students, while they also educate and instruct… (with) the principal expected to be legal, health and social services co-ordinator, fundraiser, diplomat, negotiator, adjudicator, public relations consultant, security officer, technological innovator and top notch resource manager, (but) whose most important job is the promotion of teaching and learning. (p. 5)

As described above, the role of educational leaders has grown beyond traditional educational leadership to encompass management, accountancy and legal matters, as well as faith leadership in the Catholic system. Many authors over the last ten years have described dissatisfaction and burnout amongst current principals and noted a significant decrease in the numbers of applicants for senior leadership positions in schools (Catholic Education Commission of Victoria, 2003; Fraser & Brock, 2006; Hine, 2003; Schuttloffel, 2007; Stannard, 2007). Across these studies, a number of common factors have been identified as barriers to aspiring leaders applying for promotion: a desire to maintain the work-life balance; a perception that the principal's role was too demanding and that accountability requirements were too onerous; many potential leaders were satisfied in their current roles, arguing that these roles allowed closer connection with teaching and learning when compared with the principalship (Cranston, 2007).

At the same time as studies highlight the barriers confronting aspiring educational leaders, many teachers and leaders of the baby boomer generation are on the cusp of retirement. Clearly, the next group of educational leaders must be drawn from Generations X and Y, yet research indicates that for these young people alternative models of principalship will be required, models that are more relational, less hierarchical and more team oriented (Queensland Catholic Education Commission, 2006).

As they enter the second decade of the 21st century, schools and systemic authorities are increasingly examining and promoting new models of educational leadership as a means

of responding to increasing workloads, greater accountability requirements from systemic authorities and global economic imperatives such as the commodification of education.

2.3   A New Paradigm of Educational Leadership

In the last ten years, many authors and systemic authorities have argued that collaboration and an increased emphasis on relationship will more effectively and sustainably distribute the tasks and responsibilities of educational leadership (Bush & Jackson, 2002; Cannon, 2004; Carlin, d'Arbon, Dorman, Duignan, & Neidhart, 2003; d'Arbon, Duignan, Duncan, Dwyer, & Goodwin, 2001; Grace, 2002a; Wallace, 2001). Carlin, d'Arbon, Dorman, Duncan and Neidhart (2003) undertook an investigation into leadership succession and possible barriers to future leaders applying for principalships in Catholic schools in Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania (VSAT Project). Reinforcing the call to embrace greater collaboration and distribution of leadership, they argued, "it is important that Catholic education authorities explore ways of restructuring the role of principal and the senior leadership team, in order to more effectively distribute the tasks and responsibilities, so that it becomes more manageable and attractive." (p. 57) These words echo the findings of a similar study in New South Wales (d'Arbon, Duignan, Duncan, Dwyer, & Goodwin, 2001) which emphasised the unsustainable nature of contemporary principalships, "there is a need for more shared leadership in the Catholic school…(as) the job of being principal in today's society has grown beyond what one person can do." (p. 40) This move towards greater collaboration in leadership reflects the seminal articulation by Rost (1997) who sees leadership moving to a new paradigm from an industrial model based on the individual to a post-industrial model where "leadership is an influence relationship between leaders and collaborators who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purpose" (Rost, 1997, p. 11).

When examining the movement of schools and systemic authorities towards greater collaboration in educational leadership, Duignan and Bezzina (2006b) have argued that a number of 'pull' and 'push' factors are behind this change. Pull factors are those that attract organisations and leaders because they produce desirable results; they are summarised as follows:

- Shared leadership actually works in practice improving the quality of teaching and learning;
- Shared leadership builds commitment through a sense of collegiality, trust and mutual support;
- Shared leadership is ethical reflecting a commitment to the ethics of authenticity, responsibility and presence (Starratt, 2004).

Push factors are those that drive educational leaders to share leadership as it improves their effectiveness and capacity to function; they are summarised as follows:

- Principals sometimes operate out of an isolationalist or bunker mentality with the result that they find it difficult to share their leadership responsibilities;
- The increasing complexity of the role;
- School operations are increasingly ambiguous and paradoxical.

Within the disparate environments and circumstances of schools, sometimes even within the same school at different times, these push and pull factors operate dynamically, generating a creative tension that affects the effectiveness of the school and its leadership.

For the Catholic education system, the call for greater collaboration sits comfortably within the tradition of the Church as it arises directly from the social justice principle of subsidiarity which establishes that:

> A community of a higher order should not interfere in the internal life of a community of a lower order, depriving the latter of its functions, but rather should support it in case of need and help to co-ordinate its activity with the activities of the rest of society, always with a view to the common good. *(Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1994, para. 1883)*

The principle of subsidiarity is highlighted in the description of educational leadership posited by Carlin et al. (2003) in the VSAT report, "leadership is not the property of any one individual (the Principal) or group (Executive Team). It grows out of the shared vision, beliefs and efforts of a committed group of staff, students, even parents, who have a sense of belonging, a sense of being valued members of their school community" (p. 52). Although there is consensus regarding the need for collaboration in educational

leadership to ease the pressure on school principals, the means by which this collaboration might occur is not clear. The literature describing the move within education towards greater collaboration, sharing or distribution of leadership is further reviewed in Chapter 3.

Concurrent with the new paradigm of leadership being embraced across educational systems, a series of challenges are facing the broader institutional Church. Given the increasing role Catholic schools have as ecclesial entities (Queensland Catholic Education Commission, 2001), the impact of these challenges on school SLTs and principals could be as significant as globalisation and other global economic forces.

2.4 *Prophets of Hope: Catholic Education in the 21ˢᵗ Century*

Problems across a number of fundamental tenets within the universal Church threaten the ongoing health of the faith as a whole: the celebration of Eucharist and the Sacraments are declining in importance, the moral authority of its magisterium and clergy is under fire, and perhaps most importantly, many young Catholics and young Catholic families are simply indifferent to the Church, regarding it as irrelevant to their lives and to the lives of their children (Collins, 2008). Yet amidst these challenges, there are significant signs of hope. From a broader Australian context, the Australian Church Life Survey (Powell & Jacka, 2008) identified within Generation Y (those born between 1977 – 1991) a strong ownership of the Church's vision and confidence, as well as a desire to be involved in a new and innovative future for the Church. Reinforcing this research was the excitement surrounding celebration of World Youth Day 2008 across Australia which culminated in hundreds of thousands of young people from across the globe coming together to publicly declare their faith and commitment to the Church. The enthusiasm, joy and overwhelming presence experienced at Barangaroo and Randwick Racecourse in Sydney provides an important counterweight to those predicting the slow decline of Catholicism and the consequent irrelevance of Catholic education.

Yet, the reality is that for many young people in Australia, the Catholic Church is no longer a central feature of their lives. Instead, the Church and its teaching have been

incorporated into individual belief and values systems (Crawford, 2000), with the rituals of the Catholic tradition drawn upon only at Easter, Christmas or times of significance or trauma. Highlighting this, a report commissioned by the Queensland Bishops (2001) concluded that the Catholic school system was on the verge of a paradigm shift whereby its traditional role of educating Catholic children is being replaced by "a Catholic school vigorously participating as an ecclesial entity in implementing the Church's mission of evangelization" (p. 5). For many of today's young Catholics, the local Catholic school is 'the face and the place' of the Church (McEvoy, 2006; Queensland Catholic Education Commission, 2001) whose staff, liturgies, curriculum and commitments to justice and service represent the only relationship that these students and, perhaps more importantly, their parents, choose to have with the broader Church.

With this emphasis on the ecclesial role of the Catholic school increasingly becoming the norm, an additional pressure has come to bear on principals and educational leaders in the Catholic system, that of exercising faith leadership (Belmonte & Cranston, 2007). Given the focus of this research is on two Catholic schools in the Mercy tradition, faith leadership poses a key challenge for Catholic school SLTs wishing to maintain and nourish mission integrity in their schools.

Although the principal in a Catholic school and other school leaders have always had a responsibility to provide leadership of, and witness to, the spiritual dimension of the school, this responsibility has grown significantly. A number of factors underpin this growth:

1. The decrease in the number of religious and clergy as principals: in 1975, eighty-two per cent of Victorian principals were members of religious orders, yet by 2009, this figure has decreased to less than four per cent. (Catholic Education Commission Victoria, 2009)

2. A decline in the number of ordained clergy and changes in lifestyle have resulted in decreasing numbers of Catholics attending their Parish celebrations; many Catholics view Catholic schools as the only ecclesial experience necessary for their children and families.

3.   There has been a loss of credibility and moral authority of the institutional Church due to a range of factors including the blight of clerical sexual abuse, unpopular encyclicals such as *Humanae Vitae* and the position of women throughout the Church.

4.   Many of the nominally Catholic staff who are employed in Catholic schools have grown up in a society that is increasingly secularised - these staff often look to the principal and leaders of Catholic schools to inculcate them into the spiritual and religious dimensions of the school.

The continued availability of "committed, faith-mature educators" (Davison, 2006, p. 1) is a key issue for Catholic schools and a particular issue for the leadership of these schools. Ensuring that Catholic schools are led by educators who recognise the fundamental importance of the religious and spiritual dimensions of leadership is a significant challenge for systemic authorities. It is even more complex for the leaders of religious congregations who must also ensure that their schools remain faithful to the charism of the congregation and that of their founders. The degree to which these challenges are recognised and are addressed by SLTs in the selected schools is examined through Research Questions 3 and 4.

In light of the many challenges facing Catholic schools and their leaders, it is timely to return to the historic words of *Gaudium et Spes* (Flannery, 1996); these words articulate a vision designed to re-energise the Church and provide an appropriate launching pad for both the Church and Catholic education to confront the challenges of the twenty-first century:

> The joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the people of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted, are the joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well. Nothing that is genuinely human fails to find an echo in their hearts. For theirs is a community of people united in Christ and guided by the Holy Spirit in their pilgrimage towards the Father's kingdom, bearers of a message of salvation for all of humanity. (p. 163)

The grieved and the anguished, those poor or afflicted, all those seeking salvation, these are the souls to whom the opening paragraph of *Gaudium et* Spes was directed. Yet, perversely, many people today remain grieved, poor in spirit or in need of salvation as was the case fifty years ago; many of these look to Catholic schools to offer an education that is genuinely human and led by teachers united together by the Christian promise of hope. It is an enormous responsibility and one recognised by the Vatican's Congregation for Catholic Education (1998) which identified "a crisis in values which, in highly developed societies in particular, assumes the form, often exalted by the media, of subjectivism, moral relativism and nihilism" (1998, para. 1). What does this responsibility require of the leadership and staff of Catholic schools? A basic answer is the key principle identified earlier, 'to educate the Christian person'. Teachers and principals through their vocation and witness have the capacity to be bridge-builders (Crawford & Rossiter, 1996) to the next generation, interpreting the values, principles and popular icons of contemporary society in light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ making them intelligible to this new generation at this time and in this place (LaCroix, 2001). The fundamental challenges posed to SLTs by the need for Catholic schools to educate the whole human person are examined in this research through the data obtained in response to Research Questions 3 and 4.

2.5   *Victorian Catholic Schools in the Mercy Tradition*

Remaining alert to the signs of the times was a message highlighted by the leader of the Melbourne Congregation of Sisters of Mercy, Sr. Kath Tierney RSM when speaking to a gathering of leaders of Catholic schools in the Mercy tradition. Calling for them to be 'Mercy in this time and in this place', she argued that they (the leaders of Mercy schools) have the ideas and feelings and therefore "must explore the possibilities" (Tierney, 2004). The message of being Mercy in this time and in this place has dual resonances: on the one hand, it challenges educators to heed the call of the Second Vatican Council to be interpreters of the Gospel to a new generation; on the other, it requires those in Mercy schools to become the "torch-bearers and legatees of a long Mercy tradition, the gifted successors of many creative founding Mercy women over the past century and a half" (O'Donoghue, 2004, p. 1).

The Mercy tradition and the life and insights of its foundress, Catherine McAuley, bring a particular lens through which SLT members are challenged to view the message of the Gospels. Challenged to maintain mission integrity (Grace, 2002b), senior leadership teams acting in Catholic schools in the Mercy tradition need to be cognisant of what it is to be Mercy in Australia in the third millennium and what 'this time and this place' means for their Mercy schools and those in their Mercy school communities.

Mercy schools are first and foremost, Catholic schools, a fact emphasised by Mercy Secondary Education Incorporated (MSEI), the incorporated body responsible for the governance of the seven secondary schools owned and administered by the Melbourne Congregation of Sisters of Mercy. Their statement of vision declares that, "Each Mercy secondary school strives to reflect in its structures, curriculum and practices and in the quality of the relationships within it, the particular spirit of mercy which Jesus lived and taught" (MSEI, 1998, p. iv).

In Catherine McAuley, foundress of the Sisters of the Mercy, two key aspects of this research converge: the charism of the Mercy Congregation and the rich legacy it continues to offer Mercy schools; and leadership, with Catherine McAuley as an exemplar of leadership for women, for Christians, and particularly for Catholic educators. O'Donoghue (2004) challenges leaders of Mercy schools to be the torch bearers and legatees of this long Mercy tradition, reflecting upon, and then espousing anew, the founding story of the Sisters of Mercy so it becomes the "well-spring for the river of Mercy flowing out from schools across the land…in those stories (are) found the dream of the vision and mission of Mercy in the past. Your stories are the evidence that the founding dream was realised" (p. 1). This research examines the principles of Catholic education underlying the leadership of SLT members in the selected schools but also the degree to which these principles are informed by the charism of the Mercy Congregation and the life and writings of Catherine McAuley.

The Mercy tradition of education in Victoria and Tasmania originated in the foundation of the first Mercy school on April 15, 1857, when Mother Ursula Frayne and her two companions, Mother Anne Xavier Dillon and Mother Joseph Sherlock, arrived in Melbourne from Perth (Allen, 1989). This small school became the Academy of Mary Immaculate in Nicholson Street, Fitzroy. Mother Ursula had travelled from Ireland to Australia in early 1846 to establish the first Australian Mercy foundation, with its first school opening in Fremantle on February 2, 1846. A "radical, liberated character" (Allen, 1989, p. 25), Ursula Frayne was identified as a leader shortly after her profession in 1837 by Mother McAuley, foundress of the Sisters of Mercy. Ursula spent the first seven years of her religious life under the direct influence of the foundress. Through this close relationship, Mother Ursula came to a deep understanding of Catherine McAuley, her principles and mission; the depth of this understanding was reflected in the request by the Baggot Street community, Dublin, Congregation for Mother Ursula to compose the obituary letter sent to Irish Mercy foundations upon the death of Catherine McAuley in 1841 (M. C. Sullivan, 2000).

In contemporary Victorian Mercy schools, the influence of Catherine McAuley remains profound. Each of these schools is strongly imbued with the Mercy charism (Mercy Secondary Education Incorporated, 2009b) reflecting the influence of Catherine McAuley and the early Sisters of Mercy. For the SLTs of these schools, the challenge of maintaining and nourishing this charism is informed by Catherine McAuley's model of leadership. Rittner (1999) argues that this leadership model was founded on four deeply Christian values integral to the ongoing Mercy tradition in education:

1. Compassion – It should be the animating principle when undertaking the duty of instructing children or adults, it requires one 'to stand under', to hold up, to support – firmly but gently;

2. Justice – To achieve this it is necessary to immerse one's self in the difficult, dirty, demanding, day-to-day work in this world of re-deploying social power and transforming social systems;

3. Hospitality – Although we must always offer our guests a 'comfortable cup of tea', we must go one step more as educators and offer our students an example of openness and receptivity to people, ideas and questions;

4. A Call to Excellence – In whatever ministry within education, teaching, leadership, governance, religious life; education must be excellent and lifelong.

The exploration of the degree to which the SLTs enhance the mission integrity within the selected Catholic schools in the Mercy tradition through Research Question 4 provides some measure of the importance of Catherine McAuley's model of leadership to contemporary Mercy school leaders.

Following the establishment of the Academy of Mary Immaculate, a number of Mercy schools owned or administered by the Sisters of Mercy were established across Victoria and Tasmania (see Appendix A for a full list of all schools established and/or managed by the Sisters of Mercy in Victoria and Tasmania). In 1997, MSEI was established by the Melbourne Congregation and was given responsibility for the governance and operation of the seven Mercy sponsored schools which were, at that stage, owned and administered by the Congregation. MSEI remains the delegated authority overseeing the operation of the education ministry of the Sisters of Mercy, Melbourne Congregation (MSEI, 1998). The Sisters of Mercy, Melbourne Congregation is also the co-sponsor for two additional Victorian secondary schools which are co-sponsored in partnership with a Diocese or Parishes and other Religious Congregations. Details of these seven owned and two co-sponsored schools are included in Table 1 (overleaf).

As described in Chapter 4, the specific contexts for this research are two Victorian Mercy schools. The two schools (School A and B) are both located outside of Melbourne. One is a large long-established single sex secondary college and the second is a medium-sized co-educational secondary college. The characteristics of these two schools are examined in greater depth in Chapter 4.

School	Location	Establishment Date	Owned / Co-sponsored	Single-sex or Co-educational	Student Numbers
Academy of Mary Immaculate	Fitzroy, Melbourne	1857	Owned	Single-sex	631
Sacred Heart College	Newtown, Geelong	1860	Owned	Single-sex	1335
St Aloysius College	North Melbourne	1887	Owned	Single-sex	588
Sacred Heart College	Kyneton	1889	Owned	Co-educational	772
Mount Lilydale Mercy College	Lilydale, Melbourne	1896	Owned	Co-educational	1437
St Joseph's College	Mildura	1906	Owned	Co-educational	791
Our Lady of Mercy College	Heidelberg	1910	Owned	Single-sex	1117
Catholic College	Bendigo	1991[1]	Co-sponsored	Co-educational	1767.2
Emmanuel College	Warrnambool	1988[2]	Co-sponsored	Co-educational	1064

Table 1. *Secondary Schools owned or co-sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy, Melbourne Congregation*

(Material taken from Mercy Secondary Education Inc. Annual Report, 2009)

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[1] Catholic College Bendigo was established in 1988 through an amalgamation of St Mary's College, founded in 1876 by the Sisters of Mercy, and Marist Brothers' College, founded in 1893 by the Marist Brothers.

[2] Emmanuel College, Warrnambool was established in 1991 through an amalgamation of St Ann's College, founded in 1872 by the Sisters of Mercy, and St Joseph's College, founded in 1902 by the Christian Brothers.

The seven Victorian Mercy sponsored schools and their leadership teams share a common mission. They are "united by their commitment to the Gospel of Jesus, and their fidelity to the tradition and spirit of Mercy and the mission of Catherine McAuley" (MSEI, 2008), a mission that is closely supported by MSEI. The MSEI constitution highlights the responsibility that the Mercy tradition requires of all who work in their Schools as follows, "those associated with this tradition of the Sisters of Mercy, are the inheritors of the legacy of the vision and practice of Catherine McAuley" (1998). It is a significant responsibility that teachers and leaders inherit when they commit to work in a Mercy school; they walk in the footsteps and astride the shoulders of thousands of indefatigable women whose lives in Mercy were defined by service, hospitality, compassion and justice. Maxine McKew, Australian federal politician, and herself, a former Mercy collegian, reinforced this charge, challenging Mercy educators to reinterpret contemporary times in light of the charism of the Sisters of Mercy, "The challenge is all the greater as we know in the future this work will be carried out, not by sisters dedicating their lives to apostolic service, but by lay women and men who have inherited the mercy values" (McKew, 2004).

The fundamental role that MSEI plays in Victorian Mercy education is reflected in its Strategic Goals (2008) which are designed to provide a framework for MSEI, its member schools and their school communities, to achieve sound educational outcomes; two of its six goals are of particular relevance for this research:

1. To ensure that Catherine McAuley's vision of the lived Gospel is at the heart of each education community;
2. To ensure there is outstanding, visionary and compassionate educational leadership throughout Mercy Secondary Education.

These goals are relevant for this research as they illustrate the important resource that MSEI offers the SLTs of its member schools in the areas of governance and professional learning. They are also aligned with two of the principles that underlie the Mercy tradition of Catholic education. This research through its interviews with SLT members in the selected Mercy schools and examination of foundational school and systemic

documents indicates the degree to which the SLTs are reflecting these principles and those described earlier in their leadership.

The exploration of the contexts of this research has seen a gradual narrowing in focus starting with the broader issues of globalisation, the commodification of education and the Universal Church, then moving gradually through the Australian context into a specific focus on the SLTs of two Victorian Mercy schools. Completing this gradual narrowing of focus is a reflection on my personal background in Mercy education.

2.6   Locating the Researcher in the Research Context

My connection to Mercy education goes back several generations. This long connection has given me a strong personal commitment to Mercy schools; a commitment I believe that has assisted this research through the relationships I already had established within the schools selected as research sites. From a research methodological point-of-view, these relationships may predispose the research to bias and lack of objectivity. Yet, this subjectivity also provide m as the researcher with great insight into the complex environment of the selected schools: the make-up of their SLTs, their historical contexts and their commitment to the Mercy tradition in education.

My maternal grandmother taught in a small Catholic primary school in Colac, a regional centre in Western Victoria. She inculcated in each of her children, and clearly in my mother, the importance of education and beyond that, the holistic value of Catholic education. My mother was educated by the Sisters of Mercy through primary and early secondary school before boarding for her senior years at Sacred Heart College, Newtown.

My own history in Mercy education started at Sacred Heart Primary School: the same school in which my grandmother had taught. Although the actual numbers of Sisters of Mercy involved in education was decreasing, their influence remained profound. Following primary school, I attended Trinity College, a mid-sized Catholic secondary college. The 1980s were a significant time for Catholic education in Colac as Trinity College became a co-educational College through the amalgamation of St Joseph's

College, owned by the Sisters of Mercy, and Trinity College, owned by the Christian Brothers. With both my parents working there, three of my four siblings at school there and our house located across the road, Trinity College was a major influence throughout my adolescence. My direct involvement in Mercy education then had a ten year hiatus before I returned to teach Chemistry and Religious Education at Sacred Heart College, Newtown. I spent seven years at Sacred Heart as a teacher and in the final two years became Religious Education Coordinator.

For the last eight years, I have been Director of Religious Education and a member of the College Executive (the school's Senior Leadership Team) at Mount Lilydale Mercy College and have experienced for the first time, the opportunities and challenges, frustrations and pleasures of being involved in a team directed by the Principal (the Executive includes the Principal) to lead the College. I have also been fortunate to be involved in and lead the Mercy Seeds of Justice Project over a number of years and through this involvement assist with the development and running of many programs for senior students interested in justice and mercy from Mercy schools across Victoria.

Given the commitment I have to the promise offered by Catholic education and my family history in Mercy education deciding to use Mercy schools as the contexts for this research was logical. Now, reflecting at the end of the doctoral journey, it was a decision that facilitated data collection and analysis in contexts that were well known to the researcher, easily accessible when follow-up was required and whose SLTs provided data that enabled exploration of each of the Research Questions under investigation.

2.7   Summary

This research explores the capacity of senior leadership teams to enhance the mission integrity of selected Catholic schools in the Mercy tradition. These leadership teams operate in a variety of contexts and an examination of these contexts is necessary to situate the research in the world at large and to describe the backgrounds to the literature explored and reviewed in Chapter 3. In particular, this chapter has explored how global economic imperatives such as globalisation and the commodification of education have

impacted on educational systemic authorities and have also 'trickled down' to cause an increase in the workload of school principals and educational leaders.

The chapter has described one response to the increased demands on educational leaders, namely, a call to greater collaboration within the leadership of schools; a call made strongly by Catholic educational authorities who themselves have been affected by the many challenges facing the institutional Church as it enters its third millennium.

The relevance of Catherine McAuley, the Sisters of Mercy and the Mercy tradition in education was explored historically through a brief examination of the place of 'mercy' within the broader Catholic tradition and the history of Mercy education in Victoria.

The context chapter concluded with a brief outline of my own history in Catholic education, particularly Mercy education. It seems an apt way to conclude this chapter before the thesis focuses on the literature review, a review whose conceptual framework has as its base, the researcher as research instrument.

Chapter 3

Reviewing the Literature

3.1   Introduction

In Chapter Two, the research contexts under investigation were examined. The examination involved a gradual narrowing of focus from the global to the personal. The global imperatives affecting education and the leadership of schools were explored followed by the particular spheres of Catholic and Mercy education. The final context was a review of the researcher's own background which is brought to the research.

Chapter Three examines the specific literature and themes that informed the Research Purpose of this thesis and its consequent Research Questions. The conceptual framework describes the literature review's four broad sections with these reflecting each of the four Research Questions.

3.2   Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework (Figure 2 - overleaf) encapsulates the major themes of the literature review, the relationships between these themes that are explored, the context in which the research was undertaken and the epistemological standpoint of the researcher.

Symbolically, the framework has three levels of organisation:

1.   The outer themes represent the broad aspects of the literature review reflecting the first three research questions;

2.   The intermediate ring represents challenges affecting contemporary Catholic school leaders and SLTs; and

3.   The core phrases reflect the central foci of this research: SLTs and their capacity to enhance the mission integrity of their schools.

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                    │  Educational     │
                    │  Leadership in the│
                    │  21st Century    │
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                    │    Building    │
                    │   leadership   │
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Building leadership capacity

Shared Leadership

Fostering teamwork and synergy

Senior Leadership Teams

Leading in faith

Catholic Education

Enhancing Mission Integrity
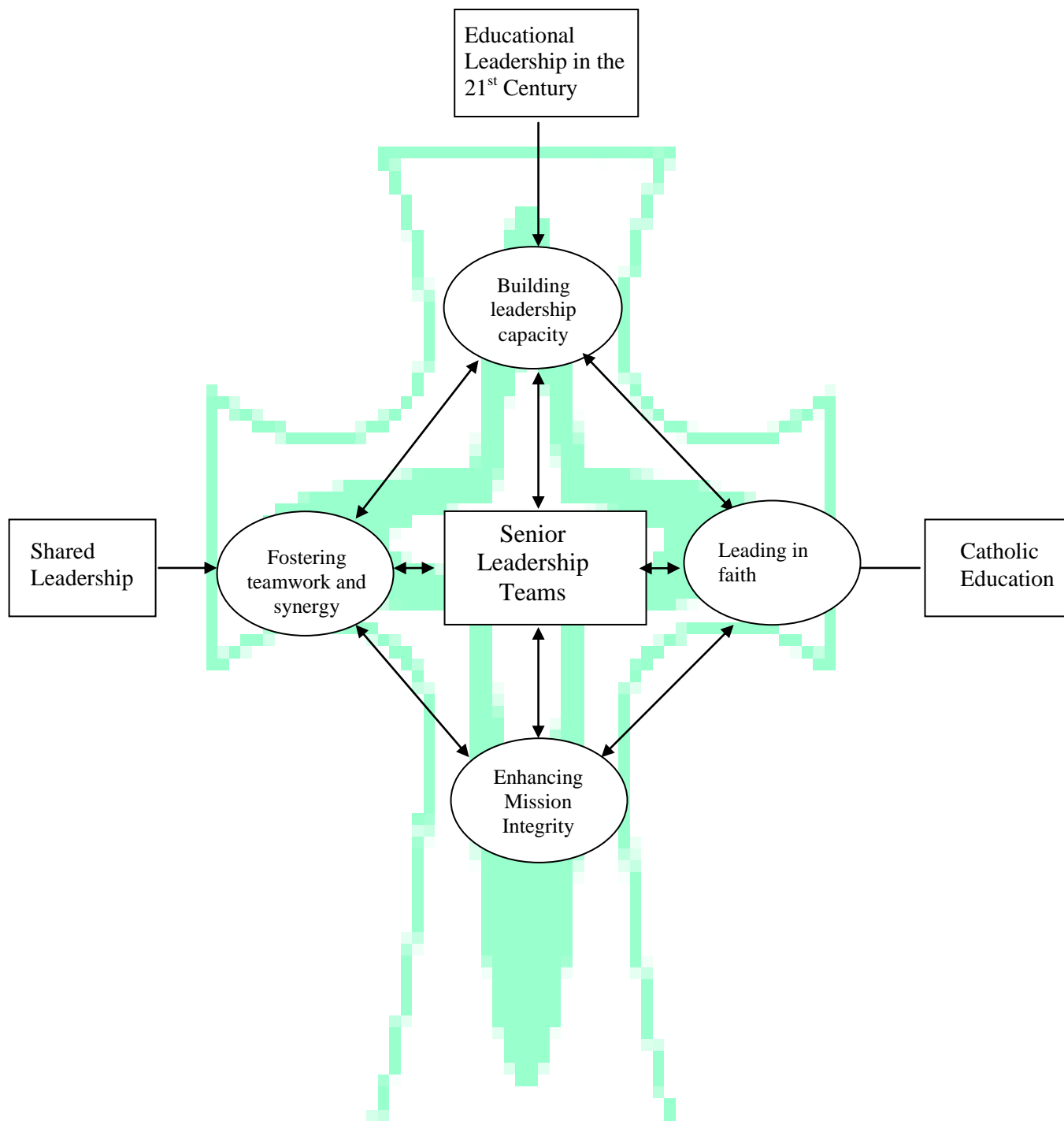
Figure 2. *Conceptual Framework*

An exploration of the role of senior leadership teams in enhancing the mission integrity of selected Catholic schools in the Mercy tradition

The literature review explores the reality of educational leadership in the twenty-first century; the breadth, complexity and levels of accountability required in the role of Catholic school principals has expanded significantly, with the technical and administrative aspects of the position threatening to lessen the pool of potential educational leaders available to systemic authorities. Examination of this theme, one that sits at the top of the framework's cruciform, reflects the challenges facing educational leaders in a globalised world.

The literature on shared leadership has contributed to an increased understanding of organisational culture, with staff, in addition to the principal, working collaboratively to more effectively provide direction and exert influence (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003b) within the institutions they lead. The composition and action of SLTs is of particular interest, with the team challenged to foster synergies whereby the team achieves more than the aggregate of individual members (Hall & Wallace, 1996). These areas of shared leadership, teamwork and synergy constitute a fundamental context for my study and thus constitute a significant portion of the conceptual framework.

The literature explores the essential mission of Catholic education, a synthesis of culture and faith through education of the whole person (Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977). The increasing responsibility of SLTs to provide faith leadership for their educational communities is examined. The conceptual framework's cruciform is focused on senior leadership teams reflecting their centrality to this research. Closely connected to this focus is the central challenge explored in this thesis, the degree to which SLTs can identify, envision, and nourish the mission integrity of their schools (Grace, 2002b).

The framework, as a whole, is informed by a watermarked Mercy cross that reflects how the key principles of Catholic education are mediated through the charism of Catherine McAuley and the Sisters of Mercy.

3.3   Educational Leadership in the 21st Century

3.3.1   What Constitutes Contemporary Educational Leadership?

As was mentioned in the previous chapter, a number of issues and pressures are impacting on the capacity of educational leaders to lead their schools effectively in the 21st century. This section begins with a discussion of what is meant by educational leadership through the identification of a number of definitions. Key dimensions of contemporary educational leadership are examined including authenticity in leadership, servant leadership, the challenge of faith leadership and the need to build leadership capacity in organisations. Finally, the work by a number of systemic authorities to describe educational leadership through the development of leadership frameworks is examined.

Educational leadership is a field often obscured by too many definitions. The simplicity and depth of the definition offered by Leithwood and Riehl (2003b) appeals amongst this field, namely that leaders "provide direction and exercise influence….Formal leaders are genuine leaders only to the extent that they fulfil these functions" (p. 2). This is the definition that will used in this study.

In the 21st century, principals, deputy-principals and teachers are all challenged to be leaders. Outstanding school leadership is a fundamental requirement in improving the learning opportunities and achievement levels for students; in fact, it is second only to the effects of the quality of the curriculum and teachers (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). However, any exploration of the field of educational leadership, whether the leadership exhibited by principals or the membership of a school SLT, could legitimately utilise the work of Sergiovanni (1984) as its foundation. His illustration of the hierarchy of leadership forces (Figure 3 overleaf) remains as relevant today as it was twenty-five years ago, with its key aspects, the cultural and symbolic forces, linchpins in the kitbag of tools carried by leaders determined to develop and nourish school cultures.

Figure 3. *A Hierarchy of Leadership Forces*

(Sergiovanni, 1984, p. 9)
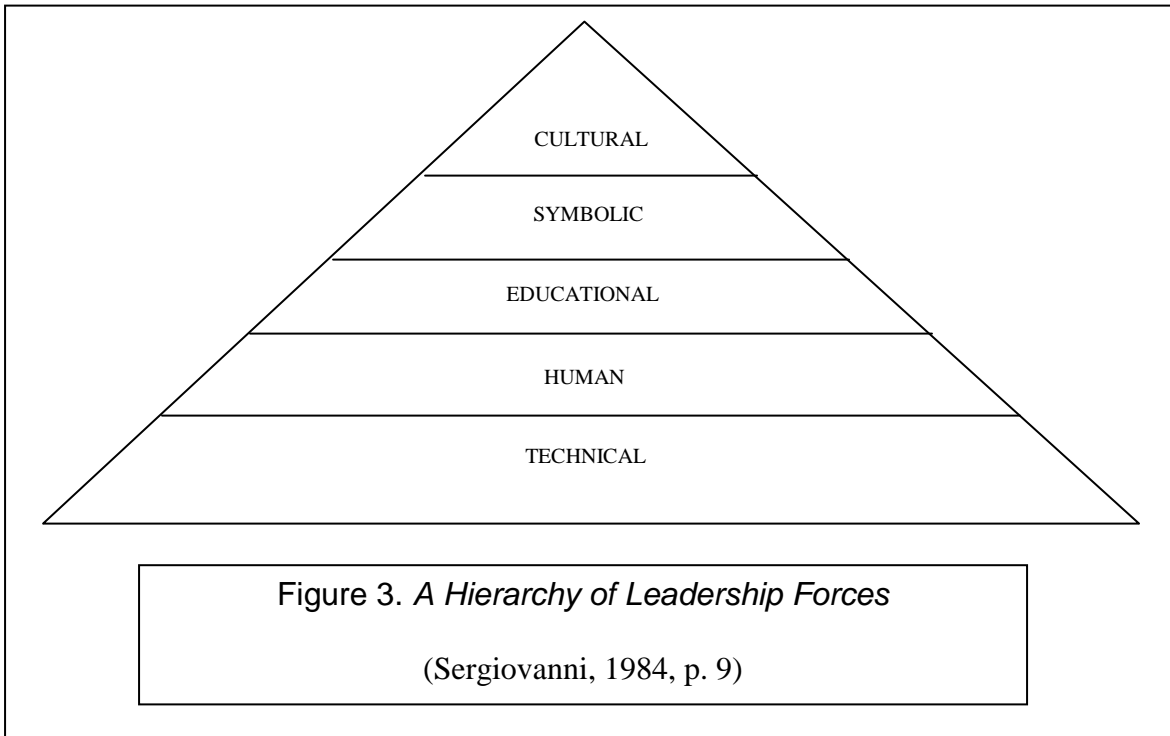
Sergiovanni's (1984) forces describe distinct areas of educational leadership action in schools:

1. Technical – derived from sound management techniques;
2. Human – derived from harnessing available social and interpersonal resources;
3. Educational – derived from expert knowledge about matters of education and schooling;
4. Symbolic – derived from focusing the attention of others on matters of importance to the school;
5. Cultural – derived from building a unique school culture.

Within Sergiovanni's foundational work is the implied recognition that principals, systemic authorities, those in governance of educational institutions and all who have responsibility for the direction, operation and efficacy of schools, have moved well beyond management or administration, with school improvement driven by educational leadership. An important aspect of my research is exploration of the role that SLTs have

in ensuring that their schools are the 'best schools' that they can be (Tierney, 2004). The work of Sergiovanni (1984) assists this by positing that excellent schools are distinguished by educational leaders who can move beyond technical, human and/or educational expertise to the nourishment of the cultural and symbolic aspects of the school. In exercising these higher order leadership forces (and nourishing them in other staff within the school), educational leaders and SLTs are able to most effectively enhance the mission integrity of their schools.

Focusing primarily on the leadership exercised by principals, Gurr (2008) articulates a model of educational leadership that includes both an overarching set of leadership roles and the functions within each role. These four leadership roles are:

1.   Learning and Teaching;
2.   Symbolic and Cultural Awareness;
3.   Accountability;
4.   Future Orientation.

It is a model that has merit beyond the leadership exerted by principals with the leadership responsibilities relevant for anyone who exercises leadership in a school. The model also highlights that educational leaders must also possess a set of appropriate personal characteristics as a precondition for the successful performance of their role. The leadership demonstrated in identifying a school's vision and then working to achieve it, constitutes both the foundations for leadership and the parameters by which success is discerned. True leadership is not a gift to be received, learned or purchased; rather, it is ascribed by the actions, thoughts and respect of abstracted others, especially followers (Gronn, 1999).

Servant Leadership

The treatment of leadership, as an ascribed status, builds on the foundational work of Burns (1978) who argued that leadership must be transformative, reflected in leaders who seek to empower followers to acquiesce personal ambitions for the greater good of the school, its students and staff. These features of leadership are commonly attributed to servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1977, 1996; Sergiovanni, 2007) where leadership is based

on ascribed trust and practised through direction-setting and the capacity to lead and accept the followership of others. From a Christian perspective, servant leadership is a notion grounded in the Scriptures, with Jesus calling for leadership based on service rather than rank, birth or wealth, "Whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave to all" (Mk. 10: 43-44). Recent research in Thailand (Punnachet, 2009) has examined the appropriation of servant-leadership by the secular and business world as a result of Greenleaf's work thirty years ago. Arguing that true servant leadership must reflect the 'spirit of service' spoken of, and witnessed to, in the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth, Punnachet's research posits a model of educational leadership where the exemplary witness of Jesus is central, and leaders live out this example through their commitment to love, selflessness, trust, authenticity, empathy and justice. The characteristics of genuine servant leadership – ascribed trust and a spirit of service – are exemplified in the model of collaborative leadership envisioned by effective SLTs.

Authenticity in Educational Leadership

Reflecting the Christian imperative of holistic education, an important area of scholarship for my research is the exploration of authenticity in leadership, authenticity that is articulated through leaders exhibiting a range of values including trust, service, integrity and a sense of ethics and morality (Duignan & Bhindi, 1997; Terry, 1993). Authenticity is "the challenge of connecting oneself to a wider whole, of finding one's life in dialogue with this wider whole, of discovering that the deepest character of all beings is their relationality, their participation in the larger life around them" (Starratt, 2004, p. 70). The contemporary exploration of authenticity in leadership is fundamental for this research as it reflects closely the core issue of mission integrity. Demonstrating authentic leadership challenges SLT members to bring the reality of a school's operation as close as possible to the ideals articulated in the school's mission or vision statement.

Displaying this perspective in leadership runs counter to many values articulated as being worthy today: wants satisfied instantly, the importance of individuals above community and the primacy of self. Duignan and Bhindi's (1997) description of an authentic

educational leader decries a lack of honesty and integrity; rather, their description brings together "assumptions, beliefs about, and actions related to, authentic self, relationships, learning, governance and organisation, through significant human values, to leadership and management practices that are ethically and morally uplifting" (p. 208). The challenges and opportunities presented by an authentic leadership based on values, integrity and service were recognised in research that investigated the challenges facing leaders in frontline service organisations (Duignan, 2003). In contrast to the perception that leaders were asked to make decisions between options that are clearly 'right' and 'wrong', the study revealed that contemporary leadership often confronts challenges that are complex and multidimensional, with many 'grey areas'. In response to such challenges, the study suggested that leadership in the 21st century needs to be qualitative, subtle and discerning, a contest of values more than a simple choice. Within a school, this is generally the case with decisions required that balance the needs of students versus those of staff or what is ideal from a learning perspective and what is a responsible decision from a financial point of view.

Given the essential task of all schools must be an unconditional commitment to learning; a measure of authentic educational leaders is their capacity to identify, and pursue in their educational community, authenticity in learning. This challenge is one highlighted by authors such as Bezzina (2008) and Starratt (2007); Bezzina describes authentic learning as that which addresses the fundamental question, "What should I do if I am to make a genuine difference to the lives of my students?" (2008, p. 40). Deeply relational, authentic learning takes students and teachers within a school into the broader community, challenging them to work for the greater good of all. Although directed at a broader secular audience, this challenge is one with which Catholic schools and their leadership should be very comfortable. The notions of working for the common good, promoting justice and mercy and leadership as service, are fundamental principles of Catholic education.

Leadership in Faith

Within Catholic schools and across the Catholic educational system, leadership has become more demanding, with an increased emphasis on, and requirements to demonstrate, spiritual or faith leadership. Within Australian Catholic schools, this additional aspect of overlapping leadership has been the subject of much investigation in recent years (Belmonte & Cranston, 2007; Bracken, 2005; Crotty, 2002; Davison, 2006; McEvoy, 2006). For a hundred years, the religious nature of Australian Catholic schools was inherent as they were led by clergy or members of religious congregations; however, this has changed dramatically in recent decades with Catholic schools now led by lay persons. Increasingly, principals are being called upon to not only witness faith leadership for their school community - students and staff - but in some cases for the broader parish community as well (Belmonte & Cranston, 2007). Rather than being seen as a responsibility added to their other educational leadership responsibilities such as leading curriculum, nourishing student well-being and managing finances and buildings, research highlights that within contemporary Catholic education, religious leadership is "intrinsic and specific, articulated in practice…not the icing on the cake (of educational leadership) rather it is the substance of the cake" (McEvoy, 2006, p. 143). This view reflects what is expected of principals employed within the Archdiocese of Melbourne, the archdiocese in which the Catholic schools under investigation in this research are located. In the Archdiocese of Melbourne, the role of the principal is nominated as central to the ecclesial mission of the school, with principals being responsible for "establishing and nurturing a community where the Gospel of Jesus Christ is genuinely lived and cherished" (Catholic Education Commission Victoria, 2006). Essential to achieving this are three elements:

1. Maintaining the visible presence of, and support for, faith development activities;

2. Having responsibility (under the authority of the diocesan Bishop) for the provision of religious instruction; and

3. Maintaining and developing the particular charism of the College.

As ecclesial communities where 'the people of God' are gathered, Catholic schools are increasingly acknowledged as church. In this environment, significant religious or faith leadership must be reflected by principals and the members of SLTs. They are often called on to mediate the dichotomy between the secular and the sacred, between the demands of the State and the expectations and purposes of the Church (McEvoy, 2006). However, supporting sustainable and effective principalships within the Catholic education system in light of this significant role requires the "continued availability of committed, faith-mature educators who are able to maintain and lead schools in the provision of good education and who operate from the assumption that the religious and spiritual dimensions of their leadership are an essential dimension of leadership in Catholic schools" (Davison, 2006, p. 1). Systemic authorities have recognised the importance of nourishing this faith leadership amongst current and aspirant principals, developing programs that emphasise this aspect as being as important, or more important than, other traditional responsibilities of the principalship (Catholic Education Commission of Victoria, 2005; Catholic Education Office - Melbourne, 2009; Spry, Duignan, & Skelly, 2004; Stannard, 2007).

Building Leadership Capacity

As identified in Chapter Two, the increasing pressures on principals and SLTs, as well as evidence that fewer aspirant leaders are applying for principalships, have been the driving force for a number of projects designed to increase the pool of potential educational leaders. Within these programs, a common denominator is the need to develop 'leadership capacity' within schools. The challenge of building leadership capacity in schools is a contemporary issue of interest for this research as it is recognised as a key responsibility of shared or collaborative leadership.

Defined as the "broad-based, skilful involvement in the work of leadership" (Lambert, 1998, p. 3), leadership capacity requires organisations to tap into their own reservoirs of talent (Slater, 2008) thereby assisting the early identification and development of leaders with a view to the organisation benefiting from the time and resources invested. Jones

(2009) explored what was required within the concept of building leadership capacity and identified two implications:

1. Leadership skills, particularly in the field of education, accompany maturity and therefore steps must be taken to investigate how these skills could be acquired more quickly;

2. In recruiting younger leaders to roles that have become all-consuming, educational authorities need to be aware that a healthy work-life balance must be achieved.

Recent work has identified the need for programs directed at building school leadership through the development of 'basic' management skills and the provision of career pathways but, additionally, the programs must identify and nourish the attributes that underlie higher order leadership capacities (Glatter, 2009). Davies (2009) extends this idea arguing that building leadership capacity should be strategic, with planning and resources directed towards the nurturing and development of talented people rather than simply targeting people for specific roles.

Hargreaves (2005) argued that cognisance of the need to build leadership capacity is a contemporary and pressing challenge for educational leadership, noting that it should be a focus from the very first day of a leader's appointment. Within schools (Carlin, d'Arbon, Dorman, Duignan, & Neidhart, 2003) and other service organisations (Duignan, 2003) where there has been recognition that the 'depth' of leadership has to be enhanced, the challenge is not so much identifying leaders because teachers are professional leaders critically responsible for their classrooms (O'Brien, 2005). Rather, the challenge for systemic authorities, principals and SLTs is to encourage teachers to view this professional capacity for leadership as a capability that has application beyond the classroom.

Leadership Frameworks

As a response to the challenge of building leadership capacity, a number of institutions have developed leadership frameworks as a means by which leaders – current, aspirant and those still to commit to leadership – can be formed into future educational leaders.

Notwithstanding the detail of these frameworks and the resources that accompany them, they cannot guarantee increases in numbers of leadership aspirants or improvement in the quality of those already committed to leadership. But in their exploration of the dimensions of educational leadership and the capabilities required in these leaders, leadership frameworks are a powerful tool by which authorities can encourage and support leadership development.

Table 2 (overleaf) explores four of these frameworks, describing their development, identifying the aspects of leadership within each and, concludes with a number of short personal observations.

The frameworks reviewed reflect the emphasis in my research on Catholic schools, with three of the four frameworks developed by Australian Catholic systemic authorities (Catholic Education Commission of Victoria, 2005; Catholic Education Office - Sydney, 2001; Spry, Duignan, & Skelly, 2004). However, the framework developed by the Australian Council for Educational Leaders (ACEL) (2009) has secular origins reflecting contemporary research into the development of educational leadership within schools. The frameworks reflect the capabilities and skills required of contemporary educational leaders and the specific emphases necessary within Catholic schools as viewed by systemic authorities. However, at another level, they reflect a notion of leadership exercised by the individual, whether that is the principal or another school leader. Therefore, the findings of this research, the leadership exercised by an SLT in a shared or collaborative manner, may need to be a consideration in future development of such frameworks.

Title of Framework	Institution responsible	Development overview	Components of Framework	Comments / Critique
A Framework for Leadership in Queensland Catholic Schools	Queensland Catholic Education Commission (QCEC), (Spry, Duignan, & Skelly, 2004)	Formulated through a joint QCEC and Australian Catholic University research project as part of a major review of Catholic education across Queensland sponsored by the Bishops of Queensland.	(a) Identified six significant areas of action for principals: • Inner Leadership • Interpersonal Leadership • Organisational Leadership • Faith Leadership • Educative Leadership • Community Leadership (b) Described four leadership capabilities that represent an integration of knowledge, skills, personal qualities and understanding: • Personal Capabilities • Relational Capabilities • Professional Capabilities • Mission Capabilities	• The Framework succinctly articulates the breadth and depth of leadership within schools. • The key principles and themes within the Framework are strongly based in the Catholic Christian tradition. • The Framework includes guidelines for implementation which themselves are invitational, broadly applicable and multifaceted in their approaches.
Catholic Schools Leadership Framework	Catholic Education Office – Sydney (2001)	Recognising the increasing difficulty in filling senior leadership positions in the Archdiocese of Sydney, the Archdiocese pursued a more proactive approach to complement selection and appointment processes.	Identified six foundations of leadership: • Religious Leadership • Leadership for Learning • Human Resources Leadership • Strategic Leadership • Organisational Leadership • Personal Dimensions of Leadership	• This Framework highlights that the first two foundations represent the core purpose of the Catholic school. • Each of these foundations is described through a number of core leadership competencies and elements. • The Framework argues that leadership needs to be exhibited by all members of a school's SLT.

Table 2. *Leadership Frameworks – Development and Details*

Title of Framework	Institution responsible	Development overview	Components of Framework	Comments / Critique
Leadership in Catholic Schools: Development Framework and Standards of Practice	Catholic Education Commission of Victoria (2005)	Developed for the CECV by the Catholic Education Offices of Melbourne and Sale in partnership with the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER).	(a) The Framework is centred around five guiding conceptions of leadership: • Understanding Change • Moral Purpose • Relationship Building • Coherence Making • Knowledge Creation and Sharing (b) Five areas of leadership action are identified as emanating from these guiding conceptions: • The Faith Community • A Vision for the Whole School • Teaching and Learning • People and Resources • Community	• The Framework emphasises its basis in research and particularly the work of noted authors, Elmore (2000), and Fullan (2001) in the area of educational leadership. • Within the Framework, the overarching context is described as Catholic education yet much of the key material in the framework reflects its secular origins. • Significant support has been offered within the responsible dioceses to current and aspirant educational leaders in the use of the Framework.
Table 2 (Cont.). *Leadership Frameworks – Development and Details*				

Title of Framework	Institution responsible	Development overview	Components of Framework	Comments / Critique
ACEL Leadership Capability Framework	Australian Council for Educational Leadership (2009)	Developed through a study of contemporary leadership development literature and the review of numerous (more than 1000 were examined) leadership capability frameworks.	The framework is organised into three leadership growth areas with a number of capabilities described under each of these areas. (a) Leads self for learning: • Creates personal identity • Understands and develops self • Models moral and ethical behaviours (b) Leads others for learning: • Co-creates a learning culture • Understands and develops people • Implements powerful learning • Communicates for learning improvement (c) Leads the organisation for learning: • Governs for successful student outcomes • Provides opportunities for innovation • Builds partnerships and networks • Acts strategically	• The Leadership Capability Framework is accompanied by a significant amount and diversity of professional support material including: • concept-based Learning Maps that provides a shared language about leadership; • website portal to access additional text-based and multimedia resources; and • a range of professional learning programs. • The framework is the only one of the four described in this table to highlight the need for team-based leadership to be nourished.

Table 2 (Cont.). *Leadership Frameworks – Development and Details*

Across the frameworks, some similarities are apparent with leadership in each example described as being expressed through personal, relational, professional and community domains. Within the three frameworks pertaining to Catholic education, the additional domain of leadership-in-mission was included. Deficiencies within the frameworks are also evident. Most significantly for this research, apart from the ACEL Leadership Capability Framework (Australian Council for Educational Leadership, 2009), the leadership exercised by SLTs or teams, more broadly, was not specifically considered. Given the movement towards shared or collaborative leadership in contemporary schools, this may need to be a consideration in future development of leadership frameworks.

3.3.2 Summary

This section has explored a range of foundational and contemporary literature in the area of educational leadership. The insights of Leithwood and Riehl (2003b) and Sergiovanni (1984) were highlighted as succinctly articulating the responsibilities of educational leaders at the start of the 21st century. A number of issues affecting leaders and systemic authorities were examined including the challenges of servant leadership, authenticity in leadership and faith leadership in Catholic schools. A number of leadership development frameworks were reviewed with common themes identified and some critiques offered.

The challenges of contemporary educational leadership for the SLT members in the selected schools of this research are canvassed through Research Question 1. The role and responsibilities of the principal within the school and its SLT are examined in Research Question 2.

3.4   Collaboration in Leadership

Reciprocity, relationship, interconnections, shared interests - these are not the words and phrases of an hierarchical or heroic leader whose charisma, personality and perhaps autocratic nature provided the authority, opportunity and means to lead schools and those who taught in them. But they represent the key principles and ideals on which contemporary educational leadership ideally is based. The next section examines the broad area of shared or collaborative leadership, which at its most effective, exemplifies

each of the four principles nominated above. For this thesis, shared or collaborative leadership is a fundamental aspect to explore as it underpins each of the first two research questions.

As was identified in the second chapter, a number of authors and systemic authorities have argued that schools must move away from a reliance on heroic or hierarchical models of leadership to a leadership approach that is collaborative, distributed and/or shared. This movement potentially unlocks the capabilities and talents of individuals facilitating their transformation into communal and organisational capabilities (Carlin, d'Arbon, Dorman, Duignan, & Neidhart, 2003). In the United Kingdom, Wallace (2001) summarised the advantages of greater sharing and/or collaboration:

- Staff are empowered to collaborate can create an excellent institution;

- Participation in shared leadership has intrinsic value;

- Staff are entitled to gain this experience to further their professional development and career aspirations;

- As role models, staff have the responsibility to express in their working relationships the kind of cooperative behaviour they wish their students to emulate.

- Empowerment through mutual commitment enables staff to achieve more together than they could as individuals.

While articulating the benefits of greater collaboration in leadership, Wallace (2001) also identified a range of challenges (explored later in this chapter) that needed to be addressed at a school and systemic level. One of these challenges highlights that within Catholic education, the move towards greater collaboration in leadership is complicated by the effects of generational change that is occurring with religious and clerical principalship moving to leadership by the laity. As a result, school communities experiencing lay leadership for the first time may need to reconcile the fact that lay principals have family and outside-of-school demands on their time as well as the unceasing demands of the principalship (Cannon, Delaney, & Host, 2007).

Given the considerable pressures across jurisdictions to develop leadership capacity within schools, some discussion of the choice of terms used to describe the results of this process is fundamental. Included amongst the terms used in the literature have been 'shared leadership' (Duignan & Bezzina, 2006a; Duncan & Scroope, 2008; Lambert, 2002), 'distributed leadership' (Gronn, 2002a; Harris, 2008; Spillane, 2006; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2004) and 'collaborative leadership' (Hall, 2002). Alternative structures such as 'parallel leadership' (Crowther, Hann, & McMaster, 2001), 'co-principalship' (Doyle & Myers, 1999; Glogowski & Austin, 2007; Gronn & Hamilton, 2004) and 'teacher leadership' (Harris & Muijs, 2004; O'Brien, 2005) have been used to characterise specific aspects of the first three. Each of these forms requires exploration. Delineating between the notions of shared, collaborative and distributed leadership is especially important as the different emphases of each highlight the problems that can arise if the terms are used interchangeably. Of these terms, both 'shared leadership' and 'collaborative leadership' reflect the move away from an hierarchical or 'lone ranger' model of principalship: 'Shared leadership' describes a move towards the democratisation of authority, direction setting and decision making; while 'collaborative leadership' describes the working together of a group or team of people. In this section, the differentiation between these leadership approaches commences with a brief definition of each approach briefly outlined in Table 3 (overleaf).

Genuine leadership within a school requires articulation and ownership of a shared vision and deep commitment to collective action towards whole-school success. From the following statement, a powerful understanding of shared leadership in an educational context is possible:

> Shared leadership is a product of the ongoing processes of interaction and negotiation amongst all school members as they go about the construction and reconstruction of the reality of living productively, yet compassionately together each day. Leadership, therefore, can be viewed as a shared communal phenomenon derived from the interactions and relationships of groups.
> (Duignan & Bezzina, 2006a)

Approach	Description	Reference
1. Shared leadership	• Describes a leadership approach where authority, direction-setting and decision-making are democratic.	(Duignan & Bezzina, 2006a)
2. Collaborative leadership	• A group or team of people working together towards an agreed objective.	(Spillane, Diamond, Sherer, & Coldren, 2005)
3. Distributed leadership	• Leadership is shared amongst a number of colleagues or peers, rather than focused in one role, level or individual.	(Gronn, 2002a)
4. Parallel leadership	• A relationship between teacher leaders and principals grounded in mutual trust and shared direction.	(Andrews & Crowther, 2002)
5. Teacher leadership	• By virtue of their profession, all teachers have well developed capabilities for leadership.	(O'Brien, 2005)
6. Co-principalship	• Shared responsibility with two people operating in partnership as leaders of a school community.	(Doyle & Myers, 1999)

Table 3. *Approaches to Shared or Collaborative Leadership*

This dimension reflects significant literature that explored the ideal of 'shared moral purpose' (Fullan, 2001) where a compelling idea or aspirational purpose galvanises a group of educational leaders, allowing them to achieve significantly more than they could as a set of individuals working independently. As a concept, shared moral purpose is instructive for this research as it brings together three key themes within this research: collaborative leadership as exhibited by SLTs, the synergies possible in such teams and the efficacy possible by leaders who clearly 'set direction and exert influence'.

Noting that the complex and multidimensional nature of leadership challenges individuals at all levels of an organisation to take responsibility for the policies and decisions that they need to implement, Spry, Duignan and Skelly (2004) argue that leadership is a responsibility that will be taken on and accepted if these staff members have been

empowered to contribute to the vision from which these policies and decisions have originated. Exploring an Ignatian spirituality, Duncan and Scroope (2008) affirm the authenticity of 'shared' leadership and highlight its equitable distribution of power and capacity to empower all members of the group or team involved. Concluding this discussion are the earlier practical observations of Wallace (2001) who notes that although the sharing of leadership is justifiable, even desirable, the degree to which it should be implemented must be "context-contingent" (p. 153); he identifies two key factors underlying this contingency:

1. Principals now have less room to manoeuvre: their notion of headship is increasingly being constructed for them by external forces, and they can no longer afford not to accept the risk of sharing leadership in some degree;

2. Principals may be inhibited from sharing because empowered colleagues may act in ways that generate poor standards of pupil achievement, alienate parents and governors, attract negative media attention or incur the criticism of systemic authorities.

As indicated earlier, the terms 'parallel leadership' and 'teacher leadership' have also been suggested as means by which school-based leadership capacity could be increased. Both these initiatives have their basis in increasing the capacity of, and opportunities for, teachers to exercise leadership in ways that will impact on student outcomes and overall school improvement. Crowther, Hann and McMaster (2001) examined the role of teachers as leaders of successful school-based reform, arguing that the term 'parallel leadership' provided a rich metaphor for this form of educational leadership. Three principles underlying parallel leadership and successful school reform were identified:

1. When teacher-leaders and administrator-leaders engage 'in parallel' they share a sense of purpose – normally observed as an alignment with the school's espoused vision;

2. Parallel leadership connotes relationships that are grounded in mutual trust;

3. Parallel leadership values individual expression.

The research of O'Brien (2005) examined the perception and experience of leadership by teachers in two Victorian Catholic schools. She argued that despite teachers having well developed personal, interpersonal and professional capacities for leadership, they have limited opportunities to exercise these capacities within schools. In light of these findings, O'Brien suggested that increased emphasis must be given to professional practice and learning within schools to nourish the development of professional capital and therefore the leadership capacity of the organisation (2005). Yet analogous to the concerns raised earlier by Wallace (2001), O'Brien noted that although leadership was viewed by some as collaborative and participative, a number of other teachers observed that leadership was still strongly equated to position rather than to merit or capacity; the very same structures within schools that were designed to encourage the growth of leadership throughout a school have excluded some teachers from developing this capacity.

Within the range of structures and arrangements that have been suggested and/or implemented with the aim of promoting collaboration and increasing leadership capacity within organisations, an approach that has attracted significant interest, research and debate has been distributed leadership. Through an examination of the principles underlying distributed leadership, and by extension, the model's possible weaknesses, the value of leadership teams can be identified.

3.4.1 Distributed Leadership

From a secular perspective, work by a number of writers (Elmore, 2000; Gronn, 1998, 2002a; Harris, 2008; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2004; Spillane & Sherer, 2004) have constituted the term, 'distributed leadership' as a form of collaborative leadership that defines an area of leadership research closely aligned to my research context. A key foundation in the identification and exploration of distributed leadership was Gronn's (2002a) examination of a human resource development unit responsible for the delivery of workplace education and policy development in the health industry. He defined distributed leadership as:

Aggregated leadership behaviour of some, many or all of the members of an organisation or an organisational sub-unit…That is, it is leadership which is shared amongst a number of colleagues or peers, rather than leadership that is focused in one organisational role or at one level, or which is monopolised by one individual. (p. 655)

Gronn took as his starting point for the description of distributed leadership, an examination of the behaviour of individuals within groups and teams by Gibbs (1954); he argued that two types of individuals co-existed in organisations – leaders and followers – and, importantly, the action of leadership moved between these two sets of individuals as the situation demanded. This notion of leadership action being situation-dependent rather than determined by role or position is what differentiates distributed leadership from other approaches to shared or collaborative leadership. Most importantly, distributed leadership emphasises that leadership is a capability that can be demonstrated by any individual when the situation demands.

A second centre of empirical research in this area has been the Distributed Leadership Study - a five-year longitudinal examination of elementary school leadership (Spillane & Sherer, 2004) based at Northwestern University, Illinois. The authors of the project argue that leadership is not merely a function of what the principal, or any individual, knows or does; rather, leadership is distributed, "stretched over the social and situational contexts of the school" (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2004, p. 5). Leadership activity needs to be considered in light of the situation in which it is being exercised – not only is the *what* of leadership important but the *how* of leadership must also be considered – with the practice of leadership distributed across the *situation of leadership* (authors' emphasis) emerging through interaction with others in the organisation and the organisation itself. The tripartite nature of this model is illustrated in Figure 4 (overleaf).

Situation

LEADERSHIP

PRACTICE

Leader(s) ← → Follower(s)

Figure 4. *Constituting Elements of Leadership Practice*

(Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2004, p 10)
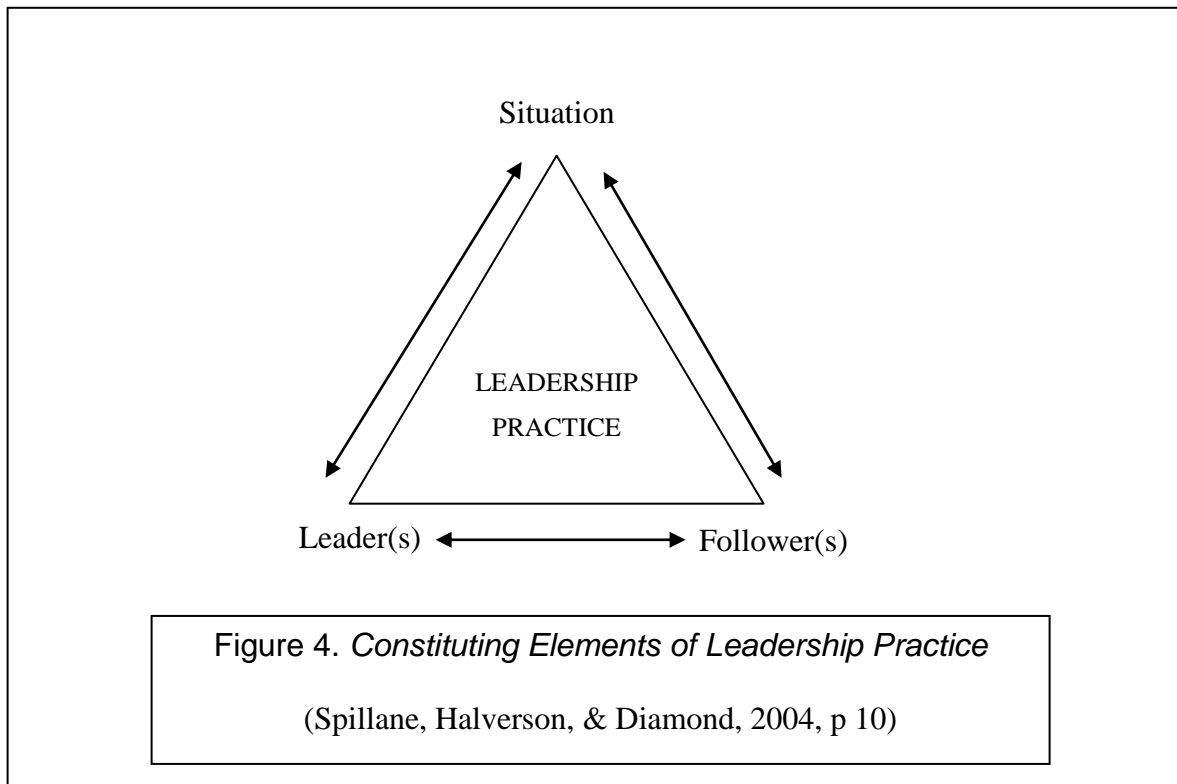
The Distributed Leadership Study (Spillane, Diamond, Sherer, & Coldren, 2005) describes three models (Figure 5 below) in which leadership action can be 'co-enacted' within a group or organisation:

1. Collaborated leadership – Two or more leaders interacting together…involves reciprocal interdependency where the practice of different leaders requires input from one another to produce a particular leadership practice;

2. Collective leadership – Two or more leaders who work separately but interdependently in pursuit of a common goal… there is a 'pooled' interdependency, in which independent activities produce a common resource;

3. Coordinated leadership – Leaders work separately or together on different leadership tasks that are arranged sequentially.

Figure 5. *Models of distributed leadership*

(Spillane, Diamond, Sherer, & Coldren, 2005, p. 38)
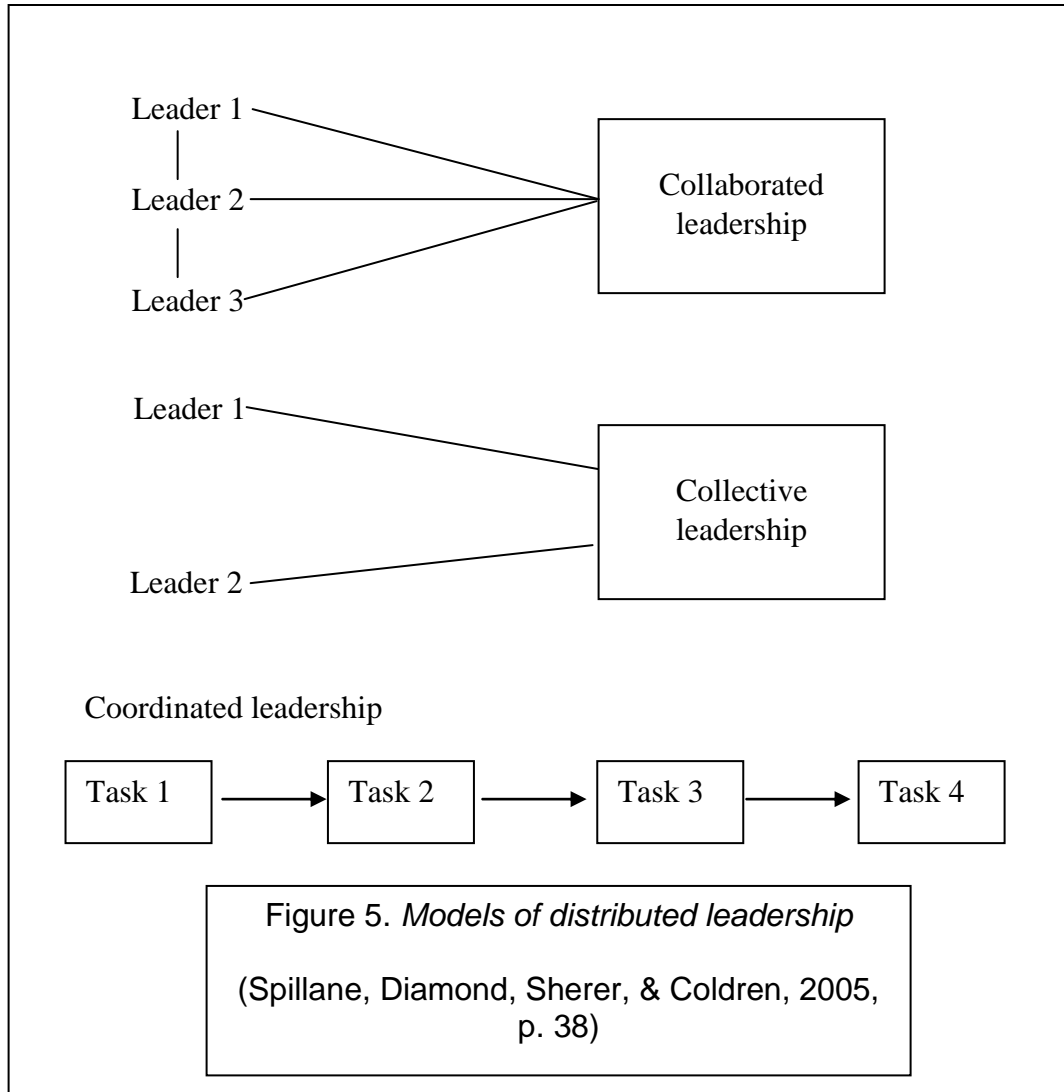
A third major perspective is offered by Elmore (2000) who posits distributed leadership as part of a fundamental re-design of the environment and practices in which both adults and students are expected to learn, a design whose institution has become more urgent in the last ten years since Elmore's comments, with the increasing influence of standards-based reforms and the Market Model of schooling. Elmore (2000) highlights that within a knowledge-based organisation such as a school, the only effective way of attracting and drawing on the diverse range of competencies available amongst a staff group is to utilise multiple sources of guidance and direction acting together within a common, clearly understood school culture, "It is the 'glue' of a common task or goal (improvement of

learning, for example) and a common frame of values for how to approach that task (culture)" (p. 15).

The significant amount of research into distributed leadership as a means of bringing collaboration to educational leadership has continued to influence writers in the field of school leadership. In particular, a recent OECD report into school leadership (Watson, 2009) endorsed distributed leadership as a means by which leadership could be broadened across the staff of schools, improve succession planning and reduce the load on current school principals.

In recent years, some of these same authors have suggested refinements to the model of distributed leadership (Gronn, 2008), to its application to the actions of principals and other leaders (Spillane, Camburn, & Pareja, 2007), and particularly to its suitability within Catholic education (Duignan, 2008). Each of these is examined later in this chapter. Yet the major benefit described by distributing leadership remains clear, namely, its capacity to have a group of individuals pooling their diverse talents and gifts together to achieve a common goal or purpose: in other words, to work as a team.

3.4.2   *Teams, Teamwork and Synergy*

The specific act of calling a working group of leaders a 'team' articulates more than describing a set of individuals acting in concert; rather, it expresses the ideals of teamwork and synergy. In the context of my research, these ideals are investigated as a means of easing the workload on principals, of building leadership capacity within the organisation and, in the longer term, of facilitating leadership for school improvement.

In his examination of the human resource team, 'HRTeam', Gronn (1998) offers a useful definition of team, "(a team) is a small, face-by-face body which consists of more than a mere aggregation or the sum of the individuals corralled together around a meeting table, for their respective members share some sense of themselves as a functioning unit with an agreed-upon purpose" (p. 297). This description identifies three important features of effective teams: (a) a willingness by members to share, even to sacrifice, (b) having an

agreed purpose or mission, and (c) the team achieving more than the sum of its constituent parts. A definition offered by O'Neill (2003) reflects the reality, both positive and negative, of schools, "a team is a small group of people who recognise the need for constructive conflict when working together in order for them to make, implement and support workable decisions" (p. 216).

One aspect to be investigated by those exploring the operation of teams is the attributes observed within effective teams as they operate. Following observation of 'HRTeam meetings', Gronn (1998) described four core attributes of teaming:

1. Team well-being – There is no static division of labour into leader and follower roles. Instead…there is leader*ship* (author's emphasis) except that it is dispersed and diffused.

2. Team flow – A system of distributed cognition…the creative solutions and initiatives generated by HRTeam were…an outcome of its pooled reasoning capacity and negotiated working agreements.

3. Team learning – (Reflected in) a remarkably low-level of collective defensiveness.

4. Humour – HRTeam's sense of humour was pervasive and helped sustain team members in their moment-by-moment construction of the workflow.

In schools today, principals have a significant responsibility to model collaborative leadership through the constitution of their own leadership teams. If the principal introduces an SLT just to be seen to be collaborative or distributive, the leadership team will only be an artificial construct. A leadership team, in these circumstances, often includes individuals who have nominally or structurally more power than others; Hall (2002) highlights the effects that this can have on the effectiveness of the team:

> (The) power dynamic between leaders and followers in a team can be seen either as the creative manifestation of shared influence or, from a critical perspective, as a charade in which teams emerge as examples of the 'group practice of demeaning superficiality'…and team ideology as tyrannical. (p. 708)

Leaders, therefore, hold in tension the use of their formal mandated authority to make quick yet unilateral decisions and their belief in, and agreed value of, shared leadership and teamwork (Hall, 2002). Research in an Australian context (Glenn, 2009) has reinforced this, with effective distribution of leadership within a school requiring the clear support of a strong, confident and experienced principal who is willing to relinquish power for the greater good.

An added complication for educational systems considering a move towards leadership vested in leadership teams is that the concept of public accountability is based on a chain of command whereby decisions are made by systemic authorities but end up at the desk of the school principal (Watson, 2009). Hence, accountability systems need to be modified to match contemporary distributed or collaborative leadership structures.

Notwithstanding the issues confronting contemporary educational leaders and the increasing workload of principals, the fundamental reason why schools and organisations have pursued collaborative leadership is the possibility of achieving the intangible quality of teamwork termed 'synergy'. Defined simply by Hall and Wallace (1996) as that state where "team members achieve more than the aggregate of what they could do as individuals" (p. 299), it is more formally illustrated by Gronn (2002a) who argues that synergies result from the creative tensions possible when the individual attributes of team members are co-enacted. As a result, "(team) members endeavour to exploit or capitalise on such synergies to facilitate the co-ordination of their activities and tasks" (p. 682). Necessary to achieve synergy is the harnessing of that most precious of human gifts, our innate individuality. In his foundational book on the value of diversity within 'crowds' – large aggregations of people, Surowiecki (2005) highlights:

> There is wisdom in the 'crowd'… (the) diversity of people and their information
> helps in coming to a better decision or resolution because it actually adds
> perspectives that would be absent if the decision is made by one person, even by
> an expert, and because it takes away, or at least weakens, some of the destructive
> characteristics of group decision-making, for example, 'group think'". (p. 29)

The importance of diversity was emphasised by Drach-Zahary and Somach (2002) in a study of the operation of teams within Israeli schools: nominating diversity as team heterogeneity, they detailed a number of constitutive attributes – gender, values, personality, cognitive style and organisational role. Within the research, heterogeneity within a team was affirmed as a key ingredient of team effectiveness but also noted was the need to increase the time and resources allocated to maintenance of those within the team. In his research into the capacity of SLTs to improve the use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) within a number of Melbourne Catholic secondary schools, Eischeid (2002) reinforced that team heterogeneity needs to be accompanied by a mutual sense of commitment and shared understanding of the goals and mission of the team, "the resultant gestalt ensured that the sum of the whole was greater than the individual contributions" (p. 182). Analogous to this is the work of Gronn and Hamilton (2004) who highlighted the benefits of synergy observed in a co-principalship case study, "in a dual authority co-principalship…the synergy in the working relationship derives, not from negotiating hierarchically defined role boundaries, but from within a jointly occupied domain of responsibility" (p. 5).

The opportunities offered to schools for school improvement through shared and collaborative leadership are central to my research. Much of their value can be attributed to intangible effects such as diversity within teams and the synergies that result, synergies that harness the energy and commitment of the individuals within these teams and creating the possibility of exciting and feasible futures (Carlin, d'Arbon, Dorman, Duignan, & Neidhart, 2003). It is in aiming for such synergies, elusive though they may be, that teams, and especially educational leadership teams, move from mere team work to effective teamwork (Hall, 2002).

3.4.3   Senior Leadership Teams

The role of leadership teams within schools, and particularly Catholic schools, has been the focus of my research since it began seven years ago. At that time, few authors (Cardno, 1998, 1999; Hall & Wallace, 1996) had published research into the role, principles of operation and effectiveness of leadership teams. However, that has changed

over time with significant amounts of Australian and overseas research (Cole, 2006; Cranston & Ehrich, 2004, 2005, 2009; Drach-Zahavy & Somech, 2002; Eischeid, 2002; O'Neill, 2003) published in the last decade.

A number of these researchers have documented the operation and effectiveness of senior leadership teams in secondary schools in Australia and New Zealand. The role, effectiveness and prevalence of leadership teams was examined in a number of primary and secondary schools in New Zealand (Cardno, 1998, 1999) confirming a high incidence of permanent teams in both sectors, with larger schools more likely to have senior leadership teams. Noting the pressure in New Zealand (and most other educational jurisdictions) to move towards 'self-managed schools', Cardno (1999) argued that effective management teams were the "engines of quality improvement…(and the) key to the successful implementation of quality policies" (p. 24). In Victoria, a study of the role of leadership teams in Catholic secondary schools explored their role in encouraging innovation in ICT (Eischeid, 2002) and critiqued the traditional model of hierarchical leadership, arguing "traditional leadership, characterised by top down hierarchies of command and control, may be superficially efficient and effective, however leadership for lasting change requires simultaneous actions" (p. 196).

The dynamics of leadership teams was investigated in a number of Queensland and New Zealand schools (Cranston & Ehrich, 2004, 2005) with the efficacy of the team (termed Senior Management Teams or SMTs by the authors) analysed as a working unit within the various schools in which they operated. The research noted that teamwork and leadership (demonstrated by the SMT) were key determinants in the role satisfaction expressed by SMT members. With the dynamics of the SMT so important, the authors looked to the concept of micropolitics (Hoyle, 1986) as a means of establishing guidelines for the operation of SLTs within schools. Micropolitics examines "power and how people use it to influence others and to protect themselves" (Blase, 1991, p. 1). Cranston and Ehrich (2004) utilised micropolitics as a framework for members of SMTs to critically reflect on their practices and processes as they strived to make positive,

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collaborative contributions to their schools. Following their investigation, five issues or needs for SLTs were highlighted:

1. To clearly define the roles and objectives of the SLT;
2. To ensure the competency, credibility and commitment of SLT members;
3. To develop a shared culture, values or beliefs and effective team work processes among members of the SLT;
4. To develop quality relationships with other staff based on effective communication;
5. To ensure there are learning opportunities available for members of the SLT.

In analysing the efficacy of SLTs in schools, identifying those behaviours and attitudes that exemplify effective or ineffective leadership is critical. In arguing for concerted action by all members of a leadership team, Cole (2006) listed the individual behaviours and attitudes that were counter-productive, challenging the efficacy of SLTs:

- A leader's contribution to the leadership of the school is confined to their specific area of leadership responsibility;
- SLT members feeling that their primary role is to be a champion and defender of the area or function they are leading;
- Team members are primarily concerned with day-to-day operations and administrative concerns;
- Individuals relying on the principal to identify improvement areas and suggest solutions;
- A team that meets infrequently;
- A lack of commitment evident with respect to the decisions made by the team.

In contrast, those leadership behaviours that were regarded as being intrinsic to highly effective educational outcomes included:

- Leaders identify with the long-term vision of the school;
- There is a commitment to working as a team and to developing a team approach to the major issues facing the school;

- Team members contribute their expertise, experience and insights to team planning and decision-making processes;

- The team meets regularly to reflect on the impact of leadership decisions, to establish goals for future improvement and determine strategies for securing staff commitment to achieving these goals;

- Team members share the burdens and responsibilities of leadership with the principal.

Most useful for my research was Cole's use of these principles to derive a 'leadership team charter' as a means by which an SLT can determine, clarify and evaluate its membership, purpose, roles and responsibilities. This charter provides a possible model on which SLTs can base their mission and operation. Notwithstanding this, the principle of a charter would need to be accepted by an SLT to have any utility and in many schools, the charter would need to be informed by core values or mission underlying each school.

As the only Australian review of possible principles underpinning the direction, purpose or mission of school SLTs, Cole's work is significant for this research, particularly for Research Question 2. Cole's draft principles have been identified and described in Table 4 (overleaf).

Element	Description
1. Leadership team purpose	Its key purpose is to assist the principal with the running of the school…(also) to contribute to longer-term strategic directions and plans that will guide the school's ongoing pursuit of excellence.
2. Leadership team values	The key principles underpinning the work of the leadership team
3. Leadership team membership	Membership of a leadership team must balance size with a need to be representative.
4. Leadership team goals	The leadership team needs to adopt a strategic and tactical approach to school improvement as well as means by which this can be achieved.
5. Leadership team roles and responsibilities	The specific contribution each member of the team will make towards furthering the team's purposes will be determined.
6. Leadership team processes	Ensuring team effectiveness, communication and conflict management skills as well as clear decision making models.
7. Leadership team behaviours	Adherence to those principles identified above.

Table 4. *Possible elements in a Leadership Team Charter*

(Cole, 2006, p. 10-12)

One criticism of Cole's (2006) charter is that its principles tend to emphasise leadership residing predominantly in the SLT when other authors have argued that leadership is the responsibility of all teachers by virtue of their profession (Harris, 2004; O'Brien, 2005). It is a criticism that has merit as collaborative leadership should be nurtured amongst teachers, designated leaders and students across a school community.

Although the introduction of leadership teams within schools has encouraged collaboration in educational leadership and decision-making, research has also documented a number of the possible issues and dangers that can arise through the movement towards sharing or collaboration in leadership. Some authors have identified the expectations of the broader school community where principals have delegated authority as an issue (d'Arbon, Duignan, Duncan, Dwyer, & Goodwin, 2001). Investigation of the operation of senior management teams in several British primary

schools (Wallace & Huckman, 1999) advanced the notion of shared leadership being 'context-sensitive', contingent on the circumstances of each school. Wallace (2001) noted the risks that delegation and shared leadership posed for heads (and/or principals) who enjoy exclusive authority but are also "uniquely accountable for their outcomes of their decisions" (p. 156). This accountability reflects the 'Market Model of schooling' (Dwyer, 1999) where schools are increasingly required to be self-managed with the principal as chief executive; ironically, it is the systemic structures and pressures underlying this same accountability that has, in part, led to the introduction of leadership teams in education.

Cole's (2006) articulation of sets of principles to underlie the actions of individual SLT members and the SLT as a whole, provides a framework for school leadership directed at school improvement. But within Catholic schools in the Mercy tradition, these principles sit within the broader context of the Roman Catholic Church and its rich tradition. The identification and exploration of these principles therefore sits as a fundamental arm of my conceptual framework and leads directly into one of its core concepts - mission integrity.

Although these principles are well known and articulated powerfully within the literature, embracing them as the bases by which Catholic schools operate has been complicated significantly by the environment in which Catholic schools exist. Issues such as secularisation, decreasing attendances at weekly parish celebrations, increasing perceptions of the irrelevance of Church teachings for many students, parents or staff, and mounting pressures on schools to meet the requirements of systemic and government authorities, present significant challenges to educational leaders.

The next section begins with an exploration of these issues, their historical contexts and the challenges they present to contemporary Catholic schools. Written initially as a Research Journal reflection in response to Putney's (2005) challenging article on Catholic education, the imagined dialogue provides an important bridge in this literature review,

connecting the two key themes of the chapter: shared or collaborative leadership and the foundational principles of Catholic education.

3.5   The Catholic School

The Catholic School of the Future – A Challenge to Leadership

An imagined dialogue in three voices: My much loved Senior Science teacher, Christian Brother, Principal of many schools, now departed and resting with his hero, Edmund Rice (Patrick); my current Principal, highly respected after many years in a range of schools (Matthew); and me, student, observer and listener, not yet blessed with the wisdom of those before me.

Or indeed with the wisdom and insight of Putney (2005) whose thoughts provoked this response.

As it once was
Patrick: *Forty years ago, Catholic schools were Catholic, in all ways. We served the needs of Catholic families, my teachers were Catholic, and almost without exception, religious. Our students assisted with the Sunday Parish Eucharist with their families watching in the congregation of course. Our Religious Education curriculum included only Catholic doctrine and practices. Most of the school's funding was generated by these same families and the local Catholic community.*
Matthew: *These were my childhood schools. Completely tribal in their Catholicism - to the point that many of us met our future spouses at Church social or sporting events.*
Darren: *My primary school had just appointed its first lay principal ten years after Vatican II.*

Many things have changed – yet some have not
Patrick: *Schools are so different now.*
Matthew: *Yes, many things have changed. Not all families are Catholic, many students and teachers are not Catholic. Some do not attend Sunday Eucharist at all, many only at Christmas or Easter. Our invitation as a Catholic community is to all who are open to and affirming of our ethos.*
Patrick: *And the same Federal funding that allowed me to embark on such rich building plans in the 1970s now contributes up to 80 % of a school's budget.*
Darren: *But the schools continue to be under the governance of Catholic systemic, congregational and Episcopal authorities and include a rich Catholic Christian Religious Education program that includes prayer, celebration of Eucharist and an emphasis on religious symbols throughout the school's environment.*
Matthew: *Most importantly, the mission of the school remains unashamedly Catholic and professes this in public.*

But are these elements really unchanged?

Matthew: *In fact, many Catholic schools are sponsored by a canonical administrator who may not necessarily be a Religious. Religious Education curricula must take into account the fact that many students and families are unconnected with the institutional Church.*

Darren: *Yes, and although we would like it to be different, it is increasingly difficult to have Eucharist celebrated at school; our pastors are keen, committed but fewer in number.*

Patrick: *But are you both ignoring the greatest challenge: the school's values may be 'unashamedly' Catholic but you cannot presume that the same can be said for many of your staff and your families. Governments, themselves, are prescribing programs that may be counter to the core Catholic values of the school.*

Some things are altogether new

Matthew: *Most schools are now led by committed lay women and men and these leaders plus others in school often need to take leadership roles in their local parishes. The staff of Catholic schools, and the schools themselves, are viewed by many in the school community as 'Church' and may be their only experience of the Catholic tradition.*

Darren: *My classroom and curriculum must not only engage students whose families still attend weekly Parish Eucharists but also those Catholic students for whom the Catholic Christian tradition is unfamiliar or foreign, plus those who may belong to another Christian denomination or even a non-Christian faith.*

Patrick: *Literature and newspapers I read describe the increasing pressure on Catholic schools to compete with other schools – secular, independent and even other Catholic schools.*

Matthew: *Related to this, a serious concern I have, are those parents, Catholic themselves and/or with Catholic children who choose to send their children to independent schools as they are more academic or even more concerning those Catholic students we never see as their parents regard a Catholic education as beyond their means.*

Are these schools Catholic schools?

The answer to this question remains a key concern for the principals and SLTs of all Catholic schools. Forty years ago, Patrick did not need even to consider it, the school was defiantly Catholic, a local buttress against Protestantism. Today, Catholic schools remain counter-cultural but they stand against the much more subtle yet still powerful forces of secularism.

In exploring the principles by which SLTs measure their efficacy in leadership, the historical context in which Catholic schools developed is a key consideration. Outstanding leadership in Catholic education must be cognisant of this history as well as understanding of the contemporary challenges described towards the conversation's end.

3.5.1   The Foundations of Catholic Education

As the reflection above reveals, and as those in Catholic schools experience each day, education is a difficult task as the second decade of the 21st century commences. Young people's interest in education is distracted by the profusion of twenty-four hour a day media – iPods, mobile phones, internet access, cyberspace social networks, electronic games, or extraordinary gadgets that can do all of these things in a single unit! Drawing the attention of students away from this entertainment towards learning remains an enormous challenge. Yet for teachers and leaders in Catholic schools, the task is even more complicated; not only are our students distracted by this media saturation but a new creed of relativism has become society's dogma (Pope Benedict XVI, 2007). As a result, the task of the Catholic school, "the work of educating the Christian person" (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1982a), seems quite alien to many adolescents, and increasingly so to their parents. In addition to moral relativism, many issues affect today's world. These include globalisation and the adoption of new technologies, problems of family instability, the global environmental crisis, conflicts which force refugees across the world to flee their land to seek shelter elsewhere, intolerance of cultural diversity, the current financial meltdown and the possibility of resulting unemployment and economic difficulties. These issues and the pressures of today's busy world emphasise the need for Catholic schools and the broader Church to offer young people a holistic education that offers hope, nourishes a positive sense of self and promotes a search for truth and the meaning of human life (Congregation for Catholic Education, 2002).

Cognisant of this challenge and the fundamental issues underlying it, this section of the literature review explores the nature of Catholic education, its guiding principles and the ways these are nourished within schools in the Mercy tradition. A contemporary framework for exploring shared leadership in Catholic schools (Duignan, 2008) is examined and affirmed for the insights it offers into the principles of Catholic education. The review of literature surrounding Catholic schools concludes with a brief examination

of a number of the key challenges facing contemporary Catholic schools and those who lead them.

The nature and purpose of Catholic education originates fundamentally in the mission of the Church itself as

> Education is, in a very special way, the concern of the church…(as the Church) has the duty of proclaiming the way of salvation to all, of revealing the life of Christ to those who believe, and of assisting them with unremitting care so that they may be able to attain the fullness of that life. (Flannery, 1996, p. 579)

Therefore, Catholic schools are not organisations that sit outside the institutional Church in the mission of Christ; rather, they exist as "genuine and proper instruments of the Church" (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1982a, para. 33) and occupy privileged positions within the Church due to their capacity for systematic and critical assimilation of culture. In fact, a Catholic school cannot be simply satisfied with offering a choice of intellectual values (even if they are presented in an academically rigorous and pedagogically engaging way). Given its ecclesial identity, the Catholic school has as its aim "the critical communication of human culture and the total formation of the individual" (Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977, para. 36). Amidst the increasing secularism of the new millennium and the rise of national standards-based testing, there has been a tendency to reduce education to its purely technical and practical aspects. Yet from a Christian perspective, education can never be merely utilitarian as it is radically ontological and transcendental and involves "a definite concept of man and life…attending not only to the 'how', but also to 'why', it focuses on the human person in his or her integral, transcendent, historical identity" (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1998). So, in considering the principles underlying a Catholic school and its leadership team, the starting point has to be the education of the whole person with a view to all in the school community having life in abundance (John 10:10).

During this research, a significant amount of literature which sought to articulate the principles underlying Catholic education was examined. This literature can be classified as reflecting one of two sources:

- Authors inside, and outside, the institutional Catholic Church writing for themselves; and

- Documents written by popes and other Vatican authorities.

However, a detailed examination of all the sets of principles underlying Catholic education is beyond the scope of this thesis. As an alternative, four sets of principles reflecting the first source have been summarised (Table 5 – overleaf). Each summary details the author(s) responsible for the set, information backgrounding their preparation and the principles themselves. The final section in each summary (Implications for this study) identifies the reasons why each set was chosen and the key issues each set of principles posed for this study.

Author	Background	Foundational Principles		Implications for this study
		Principle	**Details**	
Archbishop J. M. Miller (2006)	In his summary of the Vatican's Teaching on Catholic Schools, Miller notes that both Papal and Vatican documents have emphasised particular characteristics that need to be present for a school to be considered authentically Catholic.	1. Inspired by a supernatural vision	*The specific purpose of a Catholic education is the formation of boys and girls who will be good citizens of this world, loving God and neighbour and enriching society with the leaven of the gospel, and who will also be citizens of the world to come.*	• This set was selected because Miller as a previous Secretary of the Congregation for Catholic Education offers contemporary insight and authority on Catholic education. • Written in a form that is easily accessible for Catholic school leaders, the five principles provide possible benchmarks by which the mission of Catholic schools could be inspired.
		2. Founded on a Christian Anthropology	*'The Catholic school sets out to be a school for the human person and of human persons' (CSTTM, 18). Christ is not an afterthought or an add-on to Catholic educational philosophy; God is the centre and fulcrum of the entire enterprise, the light enlightening every boy and girl who comes into a Catholic school.*	
		3. Animated by Communion and Community	*(The values of Catholic schools are clearly different from those) of an individualistic society. This communal dimension is rooted both in the social nature of the human person and in the reality of the Church as 'the home and the school of communion' (LCS, 22).*	
		4. Imbued with a Catholic Worldview throughout its Curriculum	*Catholic education is 'intentionally directed to the growth of the whole person' (RDECS, 29). An integral education aims to develop gradually every capability of every student: his or her intellectual, physical, psychological, moral, and religious capacities.*	
		5. Sustained by Gospel Witness	*A final indicator of a school's authentic Catholicity is the vital witness of its teachers and administrators. With them lies the primary responsibility for creating a Christian school climate, as individuals and as a community....Their's is a supernatural calling and not simply the exercise of a profession.*	

Table 5. *The Foundational Principles of Catholic Education*

Author	Background	Foundational Principles		Implications for this study
		Principle	**Details**	
Queensland Catholic Education Commission (2008)	This set of principles reflects a four-year study of all Queensland Catholic schools; authorities were asked to respond to the question, "What are to be the defining features of Catholic schools?"	1. The Catholic school of the future will promote the dynamic vision of God's love.	*Authentic Catholic schools educate students and families about Jesus and his mission. They reveal his understanding and experience of God's redeeming love.*	• This set of principles was chosen as it reflected the same research (Queensland Catholic Education Commission, 2001) that provided the foundations for the development of the *Framework for Leadership in Queensland Catholic Schools* (Spry, Duignan, & Skelly, 2004). I regard this leadership framework as the most appropriate of those developed across Australia's Catholic educational jurisdictions. • The strengths of this set of principles are the breadth and inclusiveness of the issues covered: from the centrality of God and Jesus, to the importance of quality learning and teaching to the role of parents and community.
		2. The Catholic school of the future will recognise and nurture the spirituality of each person.	*Catholic schools are places where the value of each human person as a spiritual being continues to be recognised and nourished.*	
		3. The Catholic school of the future will be a place of quality teaching and learning.	*Students, teaching and non-teaching staff and parents constitute the Catholic school community, which will continue to value the education of the whole person, academically, psychologically, emotionally and spiritually.*	
		4. The Catholic school of the future will continue to act in partnership with families.	*As first educators of their children, parents have a fundamental role in schooling.*	
		5. The Catholic school of the future will provide an authentic experience of Catholic Christian community	*The Catholic story and tradition are (to be) celebrated, lived and developed through the school community.*	
		6. The Catholic school of the future will be open to those who support its values	*While Catholic schools will give priority to Catholic students, they will be recognised as places that are open and accessible to those who support their religious and educational values. As Jesus in his mission reached out to everyone, especially the weak and the marginalised, so too the Catholic school provides the opportunity of an education and formation for all who attend.*	
		7. The Catholic school of the future will be experienced as a community of care.	*Care is the way in which Catholic schools express love and compassion... which literally means 'I weep with you'. This reminds us that compassion is a movement of our innermost being and not a superficial act of charity.*	

Table 5. (Cont.) *The Foundational Principles of Catholic Education*

Author	Back-ground	Foundational Principles		Implications for this study
		Principle	**Details**	
J. Sullivan (2001)	This book argues in great detail that Catholic education is both distinctive and inclusive.	1. That Catholic education is distinctive: It describes the communication of a specific set of beliefs in an environment that facilitates and enhances their learning.	(a) Within the curriculum, the secular and the sacred are intimately and mutually implicated; (b) The synthesis of faith, life and culture is creatively held in tension with equal emphasis within the curriculum of all disciplines and the pursuit of full human personhood; (c) Christ as a model for human development is central and foundational; (d) All elements in education are interconnected (word, community, worship and message); and the notion that (e) A distinctive worldview underpins each of these.	• This set of principles was included for the challenging premise on which it sits: that Catholic education can only be fully articulated if its twin aspects of distinctiveness and inclusiveness are maintained but in creative tension.
		2. That Catholic education is inclusive: It exhibits a constant openness to the activity of God, in all people, without reservation or resentment.	(a) Students in Catholic schools who are not Catholic will have their educational needs met; (b) Non-Catholic members of staff can contribute positively and with integrity; (c) Dialogue with the world is emphasised; (d) The plurality of views within Catholic is acknowledged; (e) A spirit of tolerance and respect for others is fostered; (f) Wherever possible, promotion of action with those who values are not inimical with the school's is emphasised; (g) Education fosters a critical view of all aspects of the world including questions of belief, worship and moral behaviours.	• This central premise articulates to me the danger of SLTs regarding their mission as being either to nurture a great secular school or a resolute bastion of Catholicism; rather, Catholic schools must be distinctive and inclusive.
		3. Catholic education must be simultaneously distinctive and inclusive, with the two polarities operating in creative tension, both necessary and integral.	• In Catholic education, distinctiveness and inclusiveness are correlative terms, with a reciprocal relationship: each is implicated in the other, with both polarities reinforcing and qualifying their correlates. • The values of the promotion of the common good, subsidiarity and solidarity are also highlighted as essential elements of a Catholic school.	

Table 5. (Cont.) *The Foundational Principles of Catholic Education*

Author	Background	Foundational Principles		Implications for this study
		Principle	**Details**	
T. Groome (1996)	Argues that the distinctiveness of Catholic education is prompted by the distinctiveness of Catholicism itself, and that these distinctive characteristics should be reflected throughout the entire curriculum of each Catholic school.	1. Its positive anthropology of the person.	*Though fallen, humans retain an innate capacity for good and for God. Practically this means that people are always in need of God's grace and have the capacity, with God's help, to make a positive contribution to their personal and common welfare.*	• This set of principles was included because of the profound influence Groome has had on Catholic education over the last twenty years across the world.
		2. Its sacramentality of life.	*This principle reflects the central Catholic conviction that God mediates Godself to humankind and they encounter God's presence and grace through the ordinary of life.*	• Although the five principles highlighted have merit, three other posited by Groome elsewhere in the same publication summarise the commitments required of SLTs and their members in Catholic schools:
		3. Its communal emphasis regarding human and Christian existence.	*Catholicism has a strong emphasis on the 'communal' nature of human existence: that humans find identity and true selves in relationship with others. The environment of a Catholic school needs to reflect community, not simply as an ideal taught but as a value realised.*	- A commitment to people's 'personhood', to who they become and their ethic of life;
		4. Its commitment to tradition as source of its Story and Vision.	*Everything else about Christian faith must be permeated by the Incarnation, the conviction that God became human in Jesus of Nazareth…. Encounter with the person of Jesus Christ and 'his good news of salvation' is mediated now through Christian Story and Vision – the meaning and ethic of Christian faith; they should be at the core of the curriculum of a Catholic school.*	- A commitment to 'basic justice'; and - A commitment to 'catholicity'.
		5. Its appreciation of rationality and learning, epitomised in its commitment to education.		

Table 5. (Cont.) *The Foundational Principles of Catholic Education*

Across the four sets of principles, a number of common themes are identified. They provide a starting point for articulating the foundations by which SLTs can judge their efficacy in enhancing their school's mission. These themes are:

- The dignity of the human person;
- The immanence of God with humankind and the world;
- The exemplar witness offered by Jesus of Nazareth; and
- A commitment to outstanding learning and teaching.

Having these set of principles is one thing; understanding them and being able to apply them in the local context is another. This may have been one of the difficulties that many Catholic school leaders and SLTs have in understanding the principles within the documents. This significantly affects the capacity of Catholic school leaders to use make effective use of the insights offered with the documents. Without significant background in theology or religious education, the sets of principles could remain abstract words and be of little use to SLTs seeking to enhance the mission integrity of their schools. Alternatively, two of the sets summarised below (Miller, 2006; Queensland Catholic Education Commission, 2008) are written in easily accessible language and therefore more easily provide templates for the future development of such documents for use by leaders in Catholic schools.

These principles, and the insights of the authors who developed them, must be considered in light of the key documents underpinning Catholic education – those written by the Vatican over the last 50 years (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1998, 2002; Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977, 1982). Both these sources must be considered to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the principles with which SLTs should be leading their schools.

The Vatican documents and the principles they articulate are explored in the next section through the use of the metaphorical image of a cathedral to describe the contemporary Catholic school (Cook, 1998). Within this metaphor, the SLTs and their members

represent the pillars holding aloft the cathedral nave, and the principles of Catholic education, the foundations on which the cathedral is based.

The next section continues the exploration of the principles underlying Catholic education by examining four particular goals of Catholic schools – the metaphorical pillars holding aloft the school's Catholic identity and supporting its Christian message. These four principles are: (a) evangelisation; (b) the dignity of the human person and an unconditional commitment to justice; (c) communion and community; and (d) gospel witness. They will be examined in turn for what they offer Catholic schools and for the challenges educational leaders face in wishing to maintain and nourish these aspects within their schools.

3.5.2   *The Pillars of Catholic Schooling*
       Evangelisation

Each Vatican document on Catholic education since the Second Vatican Council has emphasised that Catholic schools sit at the heart of the mission of the Church; of these, the document that states this most definitively is *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium:*

> The ecclesial nature of the Catholic school, therefore is written in the very heart of its identity as a teaching institution. It is a true and proper ecclesial entity by reason of its educational activity, in which faith, culture and life are brought into harmony…this ecclesial dimension is not a mere adjunct, but (it) 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. (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1998, para. 11)

As a 'proper and specific attribute' of each Catholic school, the ecclesial dimension of Catholic education is also fundamental to the work and vocation of those who teach, work and lead within these schools. It was highlighted by Pope John Paul II in 1986 when speaking to a group of Victorian Catholic educators in Melbourne:

> Your attitude towards Christ and your personal closeness to him are fundamental. Closely linked to this are your attitudes towards the Church and your sense of

having a special mission within her. You are not isolated agents in an impersonal bureaucracy. You are not merely professional educators. You are called to be faith-inspired collaborators in the heart of the Christian community. (Pope John Paul II, 1986)

Within the mission of the Church, evangelisation can be defined as the proclamation "of the good news of salvation of all, (to) generate new creatures in Christ through Baptism, (to) train them to live knowingly as Children of God" (Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977, para. 7). But given the complexity of the modern world, lay people are in a privileged position to be effective witnesses to the Gospel, ideally situated to evangelise and make the Church present in the world today (Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1982). Expanding on this theme, Miller (2007a) argued that in Australia, the Catholic education system is the brightest hope for evangelising the next generation of Australia's Catholics. As such, Catholic schools must be led and nourished by educational leaders who embrace the challenges of evangelisation, a challenge that must be met with leadership that is vocational, steeped in the tradition of the Church and exemplary in its Christian witness (Miller, 2007a). But on their journey of evangelisation, teachers and leaders within Catholic schools are not alone; the Church has emphasised that this moment in history, as a privileged moment of the Holy Spirit, requires of its teachers and leaders that they be Christian witnesses, witnesses capable of encouraging in students and staff alike, "growth in faith and the maturing of Christian life towards its fullness" (Pope John Paul II, 1979). Pope Benedict XVI (Pope Benedict XVI, 2008) also highlighted the importance of the Holy Spirit to Christian witness when addressing the multitudes at each of the World Youth Day 2008 gatherings. Exploring the celebration's theme, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses" (Acts 1:8), Pope Benedict challenged the young people present – students, teachers and leaders – to reflect on how each was using the gifts released by the Spirit.

Dignity of the Human Person and Commitment to Justice

As detailed earlier, the promotion of the call of Jesus Christ (John 10:10) to full human personhood lies at the very heart of Catholic education. Many of the beautiful yet challenging principles outlined in Vatican documents on Catholic education emanate from it and key characteristics, by which the Catholic identity of Catholic schools is measured, seek to give structure to its transcendent aim. This fundamental purpose of a Catholic school is described by the Congregation for Catholic Education as having:

> a clear identity, not only as a presence of the Church in society, but also as a genuine and proper instrument of the Church. It is a place of evangelisation, of authentic apostolate and of pastoral action – not through complementary or parallel or extra-curricular activity, but of its very nature: its work of educating the Christian person. (1988, para. 33)

In his examination of the Vatican's teaching on Catholic schools, Miller (2006) identifies a number of tenets that embody its essential Catholicity, that is, its work directed towards the integral formation of the human person:

1. It is Catholic because it undertakes to educate the whole child, addressing the requirements of his or her natural or supernatural perfection;

2. It is Catholic because it provides an education in the intellectual and moral virtues;

3. It is Catholic because it prepares for a fully human life at the service of others and for the life of the world to come;

4. All instruction, therefore, must be authentically Catholic in content and methodology across the entire program of studies.

As the goal of Catholic education, the path to full human personhood requires an unconditional commitment to justice, compassion, mercy and personal action. Although these values sit comfortably within the philosophies of many humanist and secular organisations, it is their foundation in the witness offered by the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ that provides their essential truth, "Charity in truth…is the principal driving force behind the authentic development of every person and of all humanity" (Pope Benedict XVI, 2009). In its document on Catholic education,

Gravissimum Educationis, the Second Vatican Council (Flannery, 1996) argued that a spirit of justice and charity based on the Gospel must animate the atmosphere of Catholic schools. Through its curriculum, policies and teachers, the school must "prepare its pupils to contribute effectively to the welfare of humanity and to work for the extension of the kingdom of God, so that by living an exemplary and apostolic life they may be, as it were, a saving leaven in the community" (Flannery, 1996, p. 582). Many Catholic schools, including those imbued with the Mercy charism, offer a large range of social justice initiatives and education programs. The popularity of these programs demonstrates both the commitment of the teachers and leaders to justice and Christian outreach as well as the appeal of activities to young people – they are seen as contemporary, even 'cool'. So the challenge for Catholic schools and their leadership is to maintain and nourish the Christian authenticity of these programs. Authentically Christian programs provide students with opportunities to initiate or nourish a personal relationship with Christ that is witnessed through practical actions such as active, inclusive care for others and the confrontation of contemporary injustices within economic and government structures (McLaughlin, 2000).

Communion and Community

In light of the Second Vatican Council's teaching that the laity have their own specific mission in the Church (Flannery, 1996), it is important for schools and those working within them to take seriously their ecclesial roles and identity. A number of documents in recent years (Congregation for Catholic Education, 2007; Pope John Paul II, 2001b) have explored what it actually means to live out this responsibility as a member of the lay faithful of the Church, with Pope John Paul II arguing that a key aspect of this ministry is to "promote a spirituality of communion" (para. 43). Many institutions, groups and schools provide community: one's neighbourhood, the coffee shop, the local men's group or a walking group. But communion within the Church is much more. It is deeply theological and Eucharistic. It is communion at the deepest possible level: "established by the Holy Spirit, and with God" (Putney, 2008, p. 19); it is the 'essence' of the Church, the foundation and source of its mission in the world. As the greatest challenge in the third millennium for the broader Church, the promotion of a spirituality of communion

must be expressed within Catholic schools; it must become "the living breath of the educational community, the criterion for the full ecclesial development of its members and the fundamental point of reference for the implementation of a truly shared mission" (Congregation for Catholic Education, 2007, para. 16).

In my experience both as Religious Education Coordinator and as Deputy Principal - Mission, a sense of community would be one of the first nominated by staff working in Catholic schools if they were asked – which characteristic best defines an authentic Catholic school? However, this view reflects my initial secular description of community rather than the deeply ecclesial dimension of communion envisaged by Pope John Paul II. Notwithstanding this, the community dimension of the Catholic school retains special significance (Starratt, 2003) and perhaps is the means by which the ecclesial dimension of community can be opened up to staff in Catholic schools is through expression in right relationships. This expression is highlighted by the Congregation for Catholic Education (1998):

> The community dimension should be fostered, since it is one of the most enriching developments for the contemporary school…(it) is not a merely sociological category; it has a theological foundation as well. The educating community, taken as a whole, is thus called to further the objective of a school as a place of complete formation through interpersonal relations. (para. 18)

The commitment to, and importance of, community within Catholic schools stands in contrast to the contemporary pursuit of individualism and self; Starratt (2007) argues that this pursuit and the subsequent emergence of the "autonomous individual" (p. 174) gave rise to the secular ideal of individualism free from relationships with family, community, God or the environment. But with the unquestioned right to individual freedom and success came the dangers posed by greed, selfishness and narrow-minded perspectives on issues. A fundamental commitment to community and right relationships with self, one another, God and the environment is an essential step in path towards full human personhood.

Reinforcing the insights of Starratt, Cook (2003) nominates community built on right relationships as the basis for life within Catholic schools – religious, academic and social - with students formed through development of their hearts, minds and souls. Critical to this description is his understanding of Catholic school culture as a network of relationships, "relationships with God, with self, with others, and with the local and world community; or as a relationship between faith and culture, faith and reason, and faith and life" (p. 15). This emphasis on the theological dimensions of relationship and community in Catholic schools runs counter to the post-industrial paradigm where outcomes, self-management and national (and international) curriculum imperatives are all-important. Sergiovanni (1996) also highlights this idea, arguing that schools which value community nurture *gemeinschaft* where natural will is the motivating force and individuals decide to relate to each other because doing so has its own intrinsic meaning and significance. The flip-side to this is *gesellschaft* where rational will is the motivating force and individuals decide to relate to each other to reach some goal, to gain some benefit - without this benefit, there would be no relationship. This tension between *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft* is being played out in schools across the Western world, thus leaders in Catholic schools need to nurture their school's sense of being a "covenantal community" (Sergiovanni, 1996, p. 66) which shares common purposes, values, and beliefs, feels a strong sense of place, and whose responsibility it is to work together towards the common good.

Leadership in Catholic schools which promotes communion and community based on right relationships must not only be written about and spoken; it must also be witnessed to: lived out daily in the personal vocation of all Catholic educational leaders.

Gospel Witness

The essence of evangelisation and thus Catholic education has been historically highlighted as the witness offered by educators; with its importance recognised in a succession statements from popes and the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education: Pope Paul VI (1975) argued that the Gospel must be proclaimed through witness, in the lives of Christians who demonstrate "their capacity for understanding and acceptance,

their sharing of life and destiny with other people, their solidarity with the efforts of all for whatever is noble and good" (para. 21).

The importance of the witness offered by teachers and leaders in Catholic schools is articulated by the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education (1982), "The lay Catholic educator is a person who exercises a specific mission within the Church by living, in faith, a secular vocation in the communitarian structure of the school" (para. 24). This description recognises that teachers in Catholic are not simply transmitters of a body of knowledge; rather, teachers are 'educators', whose responsibilities include helping to form human persons.

Calling the Church in Australia to a new evangelisation, Pope John Paul II (2001a) highlights the importance of Gospel witness. He argues that the identity and success of Catholic education is inextricably linked to the witness offered by teachers within Catholic schools, "school staff who truly live their faith will be agents of a new evangelization in creating a positive climate for the Christian faith to grow and in spiritually nourishing the students entrusted to their care" (para. 33).

The value of witness with Catholic schools is clearly recognised by writers beyond Rome with Simmonds (2008) positing that the most effective bulwark against the commodification of education, rampart secularism and relativism is the countercultural and prophetic witness offered by teachers and leaders within Catholic education. It is a prophetic witness that allows students and (other) staff to see, touch and feel the living presence of the Incarnate God (Simmonds, 2008). Putney (2008) argues that the contemporary witness possible from within the lay faithful stands as a powerful rebuttal to the doomsayers who decry the loss of religious and clergy from Catholic schools over the last thirty years:

> This is the great challenge for Catholic schools – to help teachers discover their
> personal vocation and to engage in it with passion. People often speak of the loss
> of Religious from our Catholic schools and then rightly affirm the continuation of
> the mission of the schools by lay people. However, unless one recognises that the

personal vocation of the Religious was what mattered and not just that they were Religious, one can fail to recognise that it is the personal vocation of lay people in our schools that matters and not just that they are lay Catholics. (p. 29)

Returning to the architectural metaphor that initiated this exploration of the 'pillars' of a Catholic school, it has been argued that rather than representing the cold, if substantial, pillars of a cathedral, these elements describe the commitment evident in many of the teachers and leaders in Catholic education today. Catholic schools are not simply buildings and certainly not cathedrals; rather, they are communities filled with and led by faith-filled witnesses whose personal vocations call them to educate young people towards fully human Christian lives.

3.5.3   A Critique of Distributed Leadership

Following this extensive examination of Catholic education – its foundational principles and contemporary themes - it is instructive to return, briefly, to collaborative leadership and teams and to the notion of distributed leadership in particular. In recent years, key elements of distributed leadership have been critiqued (Duignan, 2007, 2008); in particular, the relevance and appropriateness of distributed leadership for Catholic schools is questioned. While emphasising the need to develop the leadership capacity within school communities, Duignan (2008) queried the uncritical assumption that distributed leadership is 'the way to do it', positing that hierarchical, bureaucratic and controlled approaches to leadership are in fact alive and well in many Catholic schools and systems. He proposed an alternative leadership framework (Duignan, 2007, 2008), one that draws on the rich tradition of Catholic writings on philosophy, theology, scripture and leadership; and which articulates five imperatives:

1. The Catholic school as a community - As a ministry of the Catholic Church, the Catholic school is not just an institution or organisation, it is a community of the 'People of God'. This principle of *communitas* is reflected in the tradition and scripture, "Just as each of us has one body with many members, and not all the members have the same function, so too we,

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though many, are one body in Christ and individually members of one
another" (Romans 12: 4-5).

2. The Common Good – As defined in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church,*
   "the sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or
   individuals, to reach their fulfilment more fully and easily" (*Catechism of
   the Catholic Church*, 1994).

3. Positive Subsidiarity – As seen earlier, at all levels of society, decisions that
   can be made more effectively at a more immediate or local level should not
   be the province of central or hierarchical authorities.

4. Leadership as Service - Leadership in Catholic schools should be
   emancipatory, elevating, mutually empowering, and driven by love. As
   exemplified in the life and words of Jesus, service is driven by love,
   relational and based on respect for the dignity and worth of each individual
   (Luke 22: 24-27).

5. Love-Driven Leadership – The most radical aspect of Duignan's Framework
   draws heavily on the work of Lowney (2003) in advocating the Jesuit model
   of 'love-driven leadership' where leaders across the organisation are
   required to have their eyes open to the talent and potential around them.

Summarising the framework, the aspects within it and the philosophy behind its
development, Duignan argues that leadership fundamentally is "an influencing process
effected through authentic relationships" (2007, p. 15) and therefore does not lend itself
to distribution, especially within an environment that is hierarchical or controlling.
Rather, leaders are challenged to "seek out and nurture the *aptissimi*" (2007, p. 15) within
their schools, identifying and nourishing the leadership potential of the brightest and best
young Catholic teachers, ensuring that Catholic schools will enjoy innovative and Christ-
like leadership into the future.

Duignan's framework offers an alternative to distributed leadership as it goes beyond
merely allowing leadership opportunities to be made available to a greater number of
staff. Rather, building on the Christian belief in the dignity of the human person, in using
this framework Catholic schools and their leadership are encouraged "to embrace an

approach to leadership that identifies (seeks out) and taps into the talents and expertise of all" (Duignan, 2008, p. 244).

Notwithstanding its capacity to articulate aspects of shared leadership within Catholic schools, the framework has value at another, perhaps far more important level. It brings together a number of fundamental principles of leadership within Catholic education and, as a set, facilitates reflection for aspirant and experienced leaders alike. For this research, the framework enables examination of the Research Problem by providing a means by which the work of SLTs in Catholic schools can be assessed.

3.5.4   *The Charism of Catherine McAuley and the Sisters of Mercy*

As the SLTs being examined in this research are operating in Catholic schools in the Mercy tradition, their actions, and the Mission Statements that are the foundations of their actions, strongly reflect the charism of Catherine McAuley and the Sisters of Mercy. Each school and its SLT have been enriched by this charism and the particular light it shines on the message of the Gospels.

Formally defined in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* as "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" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1994), charisms illuminate a school's particular identity, providing foundational principles on which to build community, culture, an understanding of the world and a distinctive way of being (Brien & Hack, 2005). Fundamentally, a charism is that vision of the Gospel articulated by, and lived through, the life of the founder of the congregation or order and deepened in the witness offered by many generations of religious expressing the charism. It is because of this historical legacy that the charism of each Catholic school must be the touchstone, or mantle, by which all decisions are made and enacted (Barker & Reaburn, 2007). Yet a charism cannot be a historical 'sacred cow'; rather, it must be a living inspiration reflected in the decisions and actions of a school's leadership and enhanced by those who live it out in the community. Research into contemporary issues affecting religious charisms and their transmission (Lydon, 2009) highlighted the

importance of an effective dialogue between religious and their lay successors. A charism will continue to be enriched and nourished only to the extent that those handing on the tradition and those receiving it are open to doing so. The efficacious transmission of the rich charismatic tradition requires explicit action that includes models of religious leadership past and present; exemplary models of educational leaders who, ultimately, will inspire new generations of students in their schools.

In a similar way, McMahon (2004) earlier argues that true charism inspires a school's actions, motivations, and hopes, engaging the souls of those in the community, McMahon proposes four requirements for schools desiring to authentically express their charism. They are:

1. Relational – The spirituality of a charism needs to be shared, communal;

2. Nurtured by Tradition – The continuity of charism is provided by distinctive practices and imagery in the form of visual art, ceremonies and stories;

3. Incarnated in Structures – Charisms come from feeling, from the heart and emerge from a felt need and spiritual experience of the school's founders; they are reflected in an organisation's structures emanating from the moment of its foundation or restructuring;

4. Sensitive to Society – Vatican II reminded us to be sensitive to the signs of the times; and a school's charism must be reconfigured if necessary to respond anew to a new time, audience and/or place.

In these four requirements can be seen clear guidelines by which the SLTs of Mercy schools can judge their effectiveness in nourishing the Mercy charism of their school.

Concluding this section of discussion of the literature is a cautionary note offered by Miller (2006), who notes that despite the importance of transmitting the charism espoused within a particular school, more important is the safeguarding and promotion of the school's Catholic ethos. He says that, "We cannot forget that a school is first Catholic before it can be moulded according to the specific charism of a religious institute" (p. 6).

Clearly, the contributions made by specific charisms to religious order-owned and co-sponsored congregational schools are substantial but it remains only one lens through which the gospel of Jesus of Nazareth can be viewed. The centrality of the gospel message must remain paramount.

3.5.5   *The Challenges of Catholic Education*

An examination of Catholic education and its principles as a context for my research would not be complete without exploring some of the challenges that Catholic schools face as the 21st century enters its second decade. The Catholic education system is influenced significantly by factors such as the circumstances of the universal Church, the increasing secularism and relativism of society and the decreasing numbers of parents, students and younger staff attending parish Eucharists.   A number of articles and presentations have canvassed these issues in recent years (Brugues, 2009; Miller, 2007b; Pell, 2006; United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Committee on Education, 2006). Within these, a number of key challenges can be identified:

1.   Accessibility – Catholic schools need to ensure that all Catholic young people have access to a Christian education regardless of financial constraints, geographical proximity or other concerns.

2.   Catholic identity – Reflecting the various Vatican documents on Catholic education, Catholic schools must be genuine instruments of the Church.

3.   Catholic vision across the curriculum – A spirit of Catholicism must permeate all aspects of the curriculum and structures of a Catholic school, not just through Religious Education, liturgy and prayer.

4.   Vocation and witness of teachers – Increasingly, young adults express a decreasing connection with local parishes and the institutional Church, yet these young adults are the future teachers in Catholic schools whose witness and lives are central to an authentic education in Christ.

5.   Academic Excellence – Notwithstanding the pedagogical questions surrounding the publishing of 'league tables' of schools' academic

achievement, few Catholic schools are listed amongst the highest performers in Australia.

6. Leadership – As mentioned earlier in this review, much needs to be done to prepare the next generation of Catholic school leaders for leadership in faith.

7. The 'face of the Church' – Increasingly, Catholic school populations in Australia and overseas are reflecting the multicultural communities of their country; schools and parishes must reach out to embrace these new communities welcoming their cultures, customs and faith.

Catholic schools remain a vital aspect of the Church's response to the challenges of contemporary society, with adversity often bringing out the best in the women and men whose vocation it is to teach and who remain steadfast in their determination to address these issues (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Committee on Education, 2006).

Within this literature review, the significant aspects of my conceptual framework (educational leadership in the 21st century, collaboration, working within teams, and Catholic education) have been explored; yet my basic research question remains - In what ways do senior leadership teams witness to, and nourish, the values of Catholic education or articulate the values on which they found their mission? The next section explores the core topic of mission integrity and the opportunities it offers SLTs to evaluate their effectiveness within their own schools.

This section concludes the literature review both literally and symbolically, as mission integrity provides the means by which each of the themes identified in the Conceptual Framework can be examined within the SLTs of the selected schools. Examination of the principle of mission integrity also highlights the foci of the remaining chapters in this thesis – data collection, data analysis and conclusion drawing (Miles & Huberman, 1994) directed towards assessing the work of SLTs in the selected schools.

3.6   *Mission Integrity*

In response to the economic, pedagogical and catechetical pressures impacting on the leaders of Catholic schools in the United Kingdom at the end of the twentieth century, Grace (2002b) investigated the degree to which these leaders remained faithful to the principles of Catholic education. His initial response was to acknowledge the place of mission statements in Catholic educational culture, arguing "a serious and distinctive Catholic approach to school effectiveness necessarily involves using mission statements as a fundamental evaluative framework" (p. 432). However, Grace took this initial, specific proposition and expanded its application significantly, arguing that all modern Catholic educational practices need to be assessed and evaluated in terms of their mission integrity; that is, their capacity to maintain "fidelity in practice and not just in public rhetoric to the distinctive and authentic principles of Catholic education" (2002b, p. 432). School leaders, therefore, "have a prime responsibility to guard and enhance the mission integrity of the school" (2002b, p. 433).

The capacity of mission integrity as a means for judging the effectiveness of SLTs is paralleled in recent work undertaken in an Australian context (Cranston & Ehrich, 2009). In developing a research instrument for the examination of Senior Management Teams (SMTs - Cranston and Ehrich's designation for the schools' SLT) in Queensland, they compared the difference between the *ideal* (how team members would like the team to be) and the *real* (how the team is now, how it works, what works well and what does not), and then suggested the alignment or lack of alignment between these two states is where critical reflection can occur and where further work within the team can be directed.

The nourishment of the principles underlying Catholic education, and therefore the enhancement of mission integrity, has been explored in the contexts of school structures and policies by Starratt (2003) who has argued that, given the challenges confronting Catholic schools, educational leadership must be visionary and "re-new-ing" (p. 17). Such leadership is informed by five basic elements (Starratt, 2003):

1. It is grounded in basic meanings about human persons, society, knowledge, human development, the natural world, and schooling.
2. It is energised by a dramatic vision of what education might and should be.
3. It involves the articulation of that vision and the invitation to others to articulate a communal vision of schooling.
4. It seeks to embody the vision in the institutional mission, goals, policies, programs, and organisational structures.
5. It celebrates the vision in ordinary and special activities and seeks a continuous renewal of both the vision and its embodiment.

Beyond these five elements, it is Starratt's 'onion model' (Figure 6) illustrating the dimensions of school life that is especially useful for this area of research. He describes a school as having layers of intelligible activity similar to the concentric layers of an onion.

Figure 6. *Dimensions of school life*

(Starratt, 2003, p. 19)

At the core of the school – the heart of the onion – are the myths and meanings of the community, those key aspects that allow community members to make sense of their school, workplace, vocation and/or education. Reflecting Grace's call to mission integrity, Starratt (2003) argues that these myths and meanings must underlie the witness of educational leaders:

> Those myths – often embodied in story, poetry, highly symbolic literature, sacred texts – shape people's convictions, beliefs, and attitudes about most things. It is in that core of myth, meaning, and belief that leaders find the foundation for their vision of what the school can and should become: the greenhouse for cultivating the educated person. (p. 19)

This metaphor, as well as Sergiovanni's (1984) work in symbolic and cultural leadership, reinforce the appropriateness of mission integrity as a framework for examining educational leadership in Catholic schools, as the 'core myths' of this context are the principles underlying Catholic schools in the Mercy tradition.

These principles as expressed in key Vatican documents on Catholic education, as well as by significant authors and systemic authorities, have been articulated throughout this chapter. The data analysis section of this research examines the degree to which these principles are nourished by SLTs and, hence, extend the capacity of specific SLTs to enhance the mission integrity of their schools.

3.7   Summary

This chapter has attempted to review the different themes underlying this thesis: the exploration of the capacity of senior leadership teams to enhance the mission integrity of selected Catholic schools in the Mercy tradition. A conceptual framework was developed to visually and symbolically represent these themes which broadly correspond with the four Research Questions articulated in Chapter 1.

The contemporary situation of educational leadership was examined with the seminal work of Sergiovanni (1984) highlighted, while Leithwood and Riehl's (2003b) definition

of leadership requiring the provision of direction and the exercise of influence was adopted as the most appropriate for this research. Other aspects contributing to effective educational leadership were explored, including the challenge of faith leadership in religious schools, the need to nurture leadership capacity within organisations and the recent move to develop frameworks of leadership as a means of addressing these and other issues at a systemic level.

A major focus of this literature review was an examination of the paradigm shift in education over the last twenty years towards collaborative or shared leadership. A variety of forms of collaboration were explored with the benefits ascribed to each highlighted; of these, particular emphasis was given to distributed leadership in light of its current prominence in the area of educational leadership. A major advantage identified by sharing leadership was the opportunities it offered schools to establish teams and harness teamwork through combining a diversity of talents and ultimately obtaining benefits from the synergies that resulted. The work of Cole (2006) on SLTs in schools was explored and the need for such leadership teams to operate within clear statements of purpose or 'charters' highlighted.

A significant part of the literature review investigated the principles underpinning Catholic education as detailed in Vatican documents and the work of authors such as Miller (2006), Groome (1996), Sullivan (2001) and Putney (2005). Using the metaphor of a cathedral, key aspects of Catholic schools including their ecclesial nature, the promotion of the dignity of the human person, a commitment to justice and service, a sense of Christian community and the need for gospel witness were posited as the pillars holding aloft the cathedral nave. Alternatively, it was argued, these aspects reflect the shared commitment of those who teach and lead in Catholic schools today.

A framework for describing shared leadership in Catholic schools (Duignan, 2008) was explored as a means of bringing together the twin themes of my research: shared leadership and the principles of Catholic education.

Within Catholic schools in the Mercy tradition (as in all order and congregation-owned Catholic schools), the importance of charism was described as a means of building community, culture and identity.

Examination of Catholic education within the literature review finished with a summary of a number of pressures impacting on Catholic schools from within the Church and from the contemporary, secular world beyond.

The final concept examined in this chapter was the key principle of mission integrity, explored as a means of judging the efficacy by which SLTs nourished the purpose and principles of Catholic education within their schools. Many principles have been suggested as foundational to Catholic education but the merits of each need to be considered in light of their contribution to "a synthesis of culture with faith and faith with life" (Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977, para. 37). If these principles and their analogous statements in Church documents on education (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988, 1998; Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977) are to be actualised, school leaders, and therefore senior leadership teams, have prime responsibility for establishing and nourishing the leavening role of these principles in the mission of Catholic schools.

Having established the theoretical framework and the context for the study in previous chapters, the next chapter describes the research process underlying this thesis. In particular, the epistemological and methodological issues underlying the research are explored. The four methods of data collection are identified and justified within the broader research methodology. The data analysis process of data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing and verification is also described (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Chapter 4
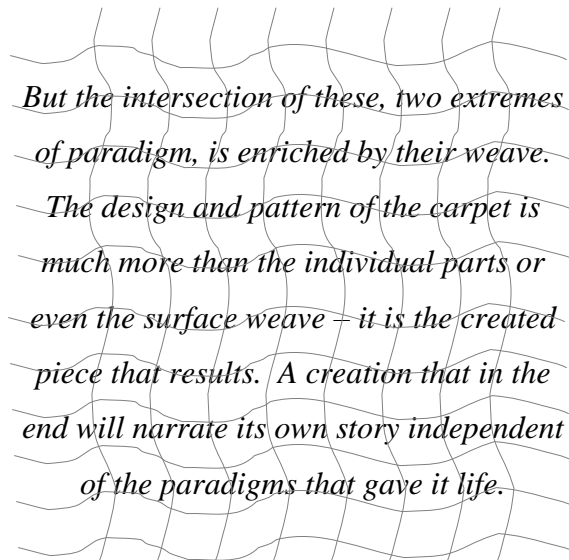
The Methodology of the Research

4.1   Introduction

As both an introduction to this section on research design and a reflection on the development of my world-view, I offer the first of several metaphors in this design proposal; it describes my academic journey towards a dissertation based on an epistemological paradigm of constructivism:

The vertical weft of constructivism runs counter to the expected, bringing turbulence, discomfort, requiring the reader to critique the norm.

The horizontal warp of the threads reflects the formal geometry of the positivist paradigm; the logical, defined steps articulated by the research process, explicitly in some, implicitly in the post-positivist qualitative tradition.

But the intersection of these, two extremes of paradigm, is enriched by their weave. The design and pattern of the carpet is much more than the individual parts or even the surface weave – it is the created piece that results. A creation that in the end will narrate its own story independent of the paradigms that gave it life.

At its heart, this research acknowledges that knowledge is constructed between the researcher and research participants, with the partnership facilitating the gathering of thick descriptions through data collection techniques that included semi-structured interviews, document analysis, dialogue with critical friends and the use of a research journal.

The major part of this data collection was thirteen semi-structured interviews conducted with members of the SLTs of the selected schools – School A and School B. The questions posed in these interviews and those with Critical Friends were developed from the original four Research Questions and overarching Research Purpose.

Data analysis occurred through a number of stages corresponding to those outlined by Miles and Huberman (1994) – data reduction, data display and the drawing of conclusion from these processes. The semi-structured interviews described above were manually transcribed while an accompanying research journal facilitated data analysis during the reduction and conclusion drawing stages.

This chapter initially explores my theoretical framework with its epistemological basis in constructivism and the strengths of qualitative research as reflected in the vivid descriptions offered by metaphor. The research methodology is explored and the use of each of the four data collection methods justified. The data analysis model is described and the chapter concludes with an examination of ethical issues associated with the thesis and identification of the limitations and delimitations of the research.

4.2   Theoretical Framework

4.2.1   Theoretical Perspective

Any theoretical framework reflects the world-view of the individual who constructs it, "the nature of the 'world', the individual's place in it, and the range of possible relationships (for the individual in that world) to that world and its parts" (Guba & Lincoln, 1998, p. 200). The subjective nature of research perspectives is reinforced by Richardson (1991) who challenges any privilege or claim to unquestioned authority arguing that in a post-modern-world, "The core of that sensibility is *doubt* that any discourse has a privileged position, any method or theory a universal and general claim to authoritative knowledge" (p. 173). She argues that the world in which we live, and by extension, the world of educational institutions, is social; that its participants demand their stories be told authentically and accurately, "Postmodern sociologists have unique opportunities....They can write the lives of individuals, groups, and collectives,

grounding social theory in people's experiences and celebrating diversity and multiplicity" (Richardson, 1991, p. 175).

This thesis sits comfortably as an example of qualitative research with its goal being the explication of the ways that SLT members in selected schools come to understand and manage their day-to-day endeavours as educational leaders (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This chapter acknowledges the challenge offered above with the methodology of the research designed to allow the rich stories of individuals and groups – the SLT members and their teams – to be told.

My theoretical perspective is explored in Table 6 with the key research foundations – ontology, epistemology and methodology – described and then explored in relation to this thesis.

	Description	**My Research Study**
Ontology: What is the form and nature of reality?	Constructivists assume a world in which universal, absolute realities are unknowable, and the objects of inquiry are individual perspectives or constructions of reality.	Co-construction of reality
Epistemology: What is the nature of the relationship between knower or would-be knower and what can be known?	Researchers and the participants in their studies are joined together in the process of co-construction.	Constructivist
Methodology: How can the inquirer (would-be knower) go about finding out whatever he or she believes can be known?	Naturalistic qualitative research methods are the data collection and analytic tools.	Constructivist Case Study
Methods of Data Collection		Semi-structured interviews Document Analysis Research Journal Dialogue with Critical Friends
Table 6. *Theoretical Perspective* (Lincoln & Guba, 2003, p. 201)		

The purpose of this research is to explore the capacity of senior leadership teams to enhance the mission integrity of selected Catholic schools in the Mercy tradition, a study

that has, as its essence, the co-construction of knowledge through a series of semi-structured interviews between the researcher and participants (Hatch, 2002). Hence, the research paradigm underlying this study is constructivism.

4.2.2   The Co-construction of Knowledge

The emphasis on constructivism evident in Table 6 resonates strongly with my world-view; it reflects the reciprocal process inherent in qualitative research while at the same time being foundational to the pedagogical process of education and the team atmosphere within effective SLTs. Described by Charmaz (2003), a constructivist world-view recognises the relativism of multiple social realities, the mutual creation of knowledge by viewers and the viewed, while aiming towards the interpretive understanding of subjects' meanings. Hatch's (2002) discussion of the role of research participants highlights the opportunities offered by constructivism, "Constructivists think of their participants as co-constructors of the knowledge generated by their studies" (p. 49). Within a constructivist perspective, the emphasis is on joint construction of knowledge, a reciprocal relationship (Hatch, 2002) in which both researchers and participants have invested heavily.

Building on this notion that relationship facilitates access to the depth data so important to qualitative research, Gergen and Gergen (2003) argue that:

> The intelligibility of our accounts of the world derives not from the world itself, but from our immersion within a tradition of cultural practices we inherit from previous generations. It is only as our accounts approximate these conventions that we make sense at all. Thus it is from our relationships within interpretive communities that our constructions of the world derive. (p. 577)

With Catholic schools in the Mercy tradition as the context for this research, a commitment to right relationships and due consideration of the historical and cultural insights that these relationships facilitate is especially important. My selection of semi-structured interviews as the primary research method reflects this strongly. Through this interview form flexibility is available for extended discussion of issues and question if necessary.

Gergen and Gergen (2003) summarise these ideas around relationship in arguing that even basic terms need deconstruction in a journey of authentic research. Their words provide a bridge into my discussion of metaphor:

> If we first abandon the long-standing scopic metaphor of *re/search* and replace it with the relational metaphor of *re/present*, then those formerly serving as the subjects of research and the readers of research outcomes become relational participants. And if we abandon the traditional goal of research as the accumulation of *products* -- static or frozen findings -- and replace it with the generation of communicative *process*, then a chief aim of research becomes that of establishing productive forms of relationship. The researcher ceases to be a passive bystander who generates representational products communicating to a miniscule audience of researchers. Rather, he or she becomes an active participant in forging generative, communicative relationships, in building ongoing dialogues and expanding the domain of civic deliberation. (p. 598)

Recognising the relational nature of qualitative research also requires assessment of what the research process is fundamentally about. Terms and phrases such as 'meaning-making' or 'seeking truth' articulate particular goals for the qualitative inquirer, goals that must be met authentically by research techniques and writing strategies that reflect their constructivist foundations.

4.3   *Metaphor in Qualitative Research*

For this qualitative research, articulating the principal motivations, considerations and concerns affecting individual SLT members in the selected Catholic schools is the key challenge. However, contemporary schools are complex environments and require subtle yet powerful data analysis tools to illuminate them. Inherent in a constructivist world-view, metaphors allow researchers to explore ontological, epistemological, and even methodological issues. They are the tools by which researchers move towards the illumination of previously undiscovered modes of meaning (Shank, 2002). An instructive starting point for this exploration is Richardson's (2003) artistic and authoritative analysis of the value of metaphor, "Metaphor, a literary device, is the backbone of social science writing. Like the spine, it bears weight, permits movement, is

buried beneath the surface, and links parts together into a functional, coherent whole". (p. 505)

Amongst the many suggested in the literature for describing qualitative research, the two most appealing metaphors to me, as researcher, are those of choreography and dance (Janesick, 2000), and researcher-as-bricoleur (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Janesick's (2000) rich analysis of qualitative research as choreography resonates with my passion for the arts and my own entry through marriage, into a family deeply connected with the world of dance:

> Qualitative research design is very much like choreography…the essence of good qualitative research design turns on the use of a set of procedures that are simultaneously open-ended and rigorous and that do justice to the complexity of the social setting under study. (p. 379)

Just as choreography must have as its source and summit, the human body and its movement, Janesick challenges qualitative researchers to focus fundamentally on the data and its interpretation:

> Like the choreographer, the researcher must find the most effective way to tell the story and to convince the audience of the meaning of the study. Staying close to the data is the most powerful means of telling the story, just as in dance the story is told through the body itself….The role of the qualitative researcher, like that of the dancer or the choreographer, demands a presence, an attention to detail, and a powerful use of the researcher's own mind and body in analysis and interpretation of the data. No one can dance your dance, so to speak. No one can choreograph your dance but you. No one can interpret your data but you. (p. 63)

Janesick's work has great resonance with my theoretical perspective as I believe dance offers a powerful contrast to the strict and occasionally disengaged objectives and methodologies of positivist research: Utilising emotion, energy, rhythm, discipline, space, time and form, a dancer circles, kicks, jumps, falls, is motionless, delights, and bows; composing and narrating meaning, corporally engaged with the text. Yet it is a metaphor that reflected my experience during the data analysis stage of this research. Transcribing the interviews was objective at one level, as I attempted to record faithfully what each

respondent had said. Yet at a deeper level, it was a corporal process whereby all my senses and thoughts were involved simultaneously transcribing, reflecting upon and synthesising the narrative as it was replayed.

Exploring the role of the qualitative researcher as bricoleur, Denzin and Lincoln (2003) argue that the multiple methodologies inherent in qualitative research necessitates production of "a bricolage, that is, a pieced-together, close-knit set of practices that provides solutions to a problem in a concrete solution" (p. 5). Using the Eisenstein's (1925) classic Odessa Steps montage in *The Battleship Potemkin* as an exemplar, they celebrate qualitative research as aesthetically reflecting montage and/or bricolage, "a complex, dense, reflexive, collage-like creation that represents the researcher's images, understandings, and interpretations of the world or phenomenon under analysis" (p. 5).

Literary devices such as metaphor reinforce the grounded nature of qualitative research (Grumet, 1990) and encourage research methodologies that connect the researcher with the core data: the participants' narratives. Yet, for this research, the value of metaphor is highlighted during the semi-structured interviews where the SLT members' responses are rich in metaphors. In fact, some of the most vivid images offered in respose to the research questions are metaphorical:

- Students in School B described as human persons not 'cardboard boxes';
- SLTs meeting around around a table in a Catholic school like the apostles gathered for the Last Supper; and
- When employing staff ensuring that the right staff are employed to occupy designated seats on Fullan's (2001) symbolic 'school bus'.

This section has explored the basis of this thesis in qualitative research, its constructivist epistemology and the importance of metaphor as a tool by which meaning can be described. The next section explores the methodologies of data collection utilised in this research.

4.4   Methodological Stance

4.4.1   Introduction

The exploration of matters of meaning in qualitative research can be difficult and therefore easily neglected; however, the words of Eisner (1991) provide a way forward, "Qualitative inquiry penetrates the surface. Qualitative inquirers seek…thick description. They aim beneath manifest behaviour to the meaning events have for those who experience them" (p. 35). But such 'thick descriptions' require data that is rich and multilayered; this material, the depth narratives and lived experiences, can be collected effectively through semi-structured interviews. Interviews allow a skilled researcher to 'penetrate the surface' seeking the motives and meaning (Rapley, 2004) underlying the decisions, actions, and witness of their research participants. Charmaz (2003) supports this, situating the search for thick descriptions firmly in the constructivist paradigm:

> To seek respondents' meanings, we must go further than surface meanings or presumed meanings. We must look for views and values as well as for acts and facts. We need to look for beliefs and ideologies as well as situations and structures. By studying tacit meanings, we clarify, rather than challenge, respondents' views about reality. (p. 275)

However, it is primarily the writing of Kvale (1996) that has awakened me to the capacity of research interviewing to explore and chart the construction of knowledge. His definition of what constitutes a research interview is succinct, namely "to obtain descriptions of the life world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena" (p. 5). But it is the metaphor that Kvale uses to move from the simple term, 'interview' to the much deeper, richer 'inter view' that enlivens my methodology. He nominates and explores Danish psychologist Rubin's Gestalt image of the vase (Figure 7 overleaf) as symbolic of the interaction -- both tangible and intangible -- that occurs between interviewer and interviewee. Kvale's (1996) analysis is instructive:

> I use the figure to illustrate the present perspective on the interview conversation as *interviews*. We can focus on the two faces of the ambiguous figure, see them as the interviewer and the interviewee, and conceive of the interview as the

interaction between the two persons. Or we can focus on the vase between the two faces, see it as containing the knowledge constructed *inter* the *views* of the
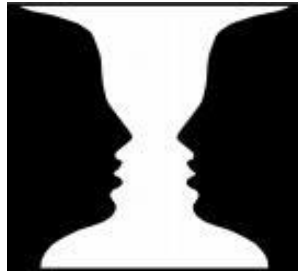
Figure 7. *Rubin's Gestalt Vase*

(Kvale, 1996, p. 15)

interviewer and the interviewee. There is an alternation between the knowers and the known, between the constructors of knowledge and the knowledge constructed. (p. 15)

For the qualitative researcher, the interview process must be simultaneously faces and vase, interviewee/interviewer and knowledge exchanged. The researcher has to access the lived experience and world-view of the interviewee while remaining cognisant of their role as the 'research instrument'.

Within the rich, thick descriptions possible between interviewee and interviewer, Kvale (1996) argues that the knowledge constructed can be described through five distinct metaphors:

1. Knowledge as Conversation: A dialogue between two partners about a topic of mutual interest…about the meaning of the lived world;

2. Knowledge as Narrative: Truth (is) to be worked out locally in small narrative units and with the collective stories contributing to uphold the values of the community;

3. Knowledge as Language: Language constitutes reality, each language constructing reality in its own way;

4. Knowledge as Context: The interview takes place in an interpersonal context, and the meaning of the interview statements depends on this context;

5. Knowledge as Inter-relational: An interview is literally an inter view, an inter change of views between two persons conversing about a common view.

Given my constructivist epistemology, the co-construction of knowledge possible through the semi-structured interview process offered genuine opportunities to identify, explore and critique the role and actions of SLTs in selected Catholic secondary schools. These opportunities were exemplified by stages in the interviews that went beyond simply garnering responses to the planned interview questions; rather, the exchanges included conversation, clarification and reflection on the part of both researcher and respondent. This process is reflected in the transcript featured in Section 5.5.5 with School A - Deputy Principal A.

From a purely methodological standpoint, my research project fits comfortably within the guidelines for case studies:

> A case can be an individual: it can be a group…you can also study multiple cases…(as) a case study is one which seeks to answer specific research questions and which seeks a range of different kinds of evidence, evidence which is there in the case setting, and which has to be abstracted and collated to get the best possible answers to the research questions. No other kind or source of evidence is likely to be sufficient. (Gillham, 2000a, p. 1-2)

What defines this research project more particularly as a case study is not the objective nature of the contexts for study, that is, the SLTs of two schools in the Mercy tradition located in Victoria, Australia; rather, it is the "qualitative elements" (Gillham, 2000a, p. 7) offered by the participants. They constitute the contexts – how they view their roles, their contribution to school leadership, their experiences of what is going on in their schools and, the underlying reasons for why it is occurring. When the views of all involved in a case study are pulled together, they are able to provide a depth that contributes significantly to the understanding of the event under examination (R. Burns,

1994). By maintaining the holistic and meaning-making characteristics of real life situations, the case study allows the focus to be "the case in its idiosyncratic complexity, not on the whole population of cases" (R. Burns, 1994, p. 316) Given the idiosyncratic nature of education and of individual schools, case studies are clearly appropriate. In addition, this methodology allows the researcher to acknowledge and utilise an "intrinsic interest in the case" (Stake, 2003, p. 140). It directs the inquiry toward examination of what is important in the context and, critically, towards the 'thick description' of the case's own issues, situations and interpretations. These features of a case study were present in the data collected from the two schools selected for this research. Taken together – the respondents' interviews and documents analysed from the selected schools – provided a series of 'thick descriptions' by which the four research questions could be examined.

4.4.2   Data Collection

Given my experience as a member of an SLT in a large Mercy co-educational secondary college and my long history of connection with the Mercy schools described in Chapter Two, I decided that the most appropriate context for my research was Mercy secondary education within the broader Catholic education system. Of the seven Mercy Congregation-sponsored schools and two co-sponsored schools in Victoria, two schools (titled School A and School B in this document) were selected as case studies for exploration. The decision regarding the number and identity of schools to be investigated was predicated on the following considerations:

- The length of interview transcripts and amount of data generated and my capacity to deal effectively with the material.
- The need for the SLT to be operating effectively enough to provide valid data for the research questions under investigation. This determination regarding the schools' SLTs was taken in consultation with my principal supervisor.
- The willingness of various SLTs and schools to be involved.
- Using schools of city and regional base as well as single-sex and co-educational.

- The geographical proximity of the schools, as two Victorian Mercy schools are more than three hours drive from Melbourne.

- The thoughts of my supervisors.

I did not use my own school as a context for study; interviewing colleagues about the motivations, decisions, and actions of our own SLT would have been difficult given my ongoing role in the team.

From the remaining six schools, two were chosen. School A is a large single-sex secondary school situated in a Victorian regional centre. Its current enrolment is 1335 students and 110 teaching staff are employed (Mercy Secondary Education Incorporated, 2009b). School B is a co-educational secondary school situated in a smaller Victorian regional town. Its current enrolment is 772 students and 66 teaching staff are employed (Mercy Secondary Education Incorporated, 2009b).

Table 7 (overleaf) briefly describes the two SLTs investigated in this research, the composition of the SLTs at the time, the roles of each member within the SLT and the title with which each SLT member has been designated when quoted in the next chapter.

On reflection, the two selected SLTs provided excellent contexts with which the research questions in this thesis could be studied. Of the nine SLT members in the two selected schools, all but two respondents had been SLT members for at least seven years and therefore had significant experience as senior Catholic school leaders and as members of SLTs. A wide range of leadership responsibilities was represented across the two SLTs including principals, deputy principals with responsibilities for curriculum, student and staff welfare, mission and faith development. Also included were SLT members who had senior leadership responsibilities but were not deputy principals. This breadth of experience in time, leadership responsibilities and positions ensured that data collected was reliable. The SLTs as they were composed at the time of this research differed significantly in the length of time they had operated as units, with School A's SLT having held the same membership for seven years while the School B SLT had only had its

current membership for a few months. However, both SLTs offered useful data for exploring the four research questions under examination.

School	Composition of SLT	Participant's designation in chapter 5	Participant's role and history with the school
School A	Principal and three deputy principals	School A - Principal	• Principal • 14 years at School A, last 7 years as Principal.
		School A - Deputy Principal A	• Responsible for Mission • 20 years at School A, last 7 years in SLT.
		School A - Deputy Principal B	• Responsible for Curriculum and Professional Development • 8 years in School A and as SLT member
		School A - Deputy Principal C	• Responsible for Pastoral Care • 13 years in School A, last 6 years as SLT member
School B	Principal, Deputy Principal and three other staff members	School B - Principal	• Principal • 3 years at School B
		School B – Deputy Principal	• Responsible for Faith Development and Student/Staff Welfare • 10 years in School B and as Deputy Principal
		School B – SLT member A	• Responsible for Staff Development • 2 years in School B and as SLT member
		School B – SLT member B	• Responsible for Curriculum • 1st year in School B
		School B – SLT member C	• Responsible for Daily Organisation • 22 years in School B, 1st year in SLT
Table 7. *The Senior Leadership Teams of Schools A and B*			

My research process consisted of a number of stages, the most important of which was a series of individual interviews. This process is summarised below:

1. Document collection and analysis;
2. Individual semi-structured interviews;
3. Research journal;
4. Dialogue with critical friends.

The data collection process and its relationship to the research questions and research purpose are detailed in Table 8 (below).

Research Purpose: To explore the capacity of senior leadership teams to enhance the mission integrity of selected Catholic schools in the Mercy tradition.		
Research questions	**Data collection techniques**	**Participants / resources**
1. What is the experience of shared leadership for the individual members of senior leadership teams in the selected schools?	• Semi-structured interviews • Research journal • Dialogue with Critical Friends	• Schools A and B SLT members
2. How does shared leadership contribute to the effective leadership of the selected schools?	• Semi-structured interviews • Research Journal • Document analysis	• Schools A and B SLT members • School-specific documents describing the constitution of their SLT's and/or role descriptions
3. What do the members of senior leadership teams identify as the principles underlying their leadership of Catholic schools in the Mercy tradition?	• Document analysis • Semi-structured interviews • Research Journal • Dialogue with Critical Friends	• Schools A and B SLT members • School-specific documents including mission statements, strategic plans, and individual SLT members' role descriptions.
4. What opportunities exist for senior leadership teams to enhance the mission integrity of Catholic schools in the Mercy tradition?	• Semi-structured interviews • Research Journal • Dialogue with Critical Friends	• Schools A and B SLT members

Table 8. *Research Questions and the Data Collection Process*

Document collection and analysis

An important foundation to this research was the identification and exploration of the principles on which Catholic education is based, principles that should be both distinctive and inclusive (Sullivan, 2001). As exploration of these principles was fundamental, an important resource for achieving this was document collection and analysis. Documents are powerful indicators of the value systems operating within institutions (Hatch, 2002) and can provide a behind-the-scenes look at institutional processes and how they came into being. They can give the researcher a sense of history related to the contexts being studied. Additionally, documents are useful as a source of reference and comparison for what is gathered through the interview process.

In this research, documents including the strategic plans of the selected schools and the systemic authorities, the Mission Statements of School A and B and the websites of School A and B were examined. The final document selection was made following initial analysis of the semi-structured interviews and the themes that arose within the data. The documents themselves were obtained from the websites of the selected schools and their systemic authorities or directly from members of the schools' SLTs. A full list of the documents analysed is included as Appendix G.

These documents informed the data collection and analysis process in a number of ways:

1. They provided background that assisted the development of interview questions for SLT members and Critical Friends.
2. Principles within the documents articulated the 'ideals' espoused by the school's mission. Therefore, they provided a powerful means by which the principles of Catholic education in the Mercy tradition as articulated by participants in the semi-structured interviews could be verified.

Individual semi-structured interviews

This key stage in data collection involved individual semi-structured interviews with all members of each school's SLT, resulting in a total of nine interviews. The choice of semi-structured interviews achieved an effective balance between flexibility and structure

as it facilitated discovery while allowing analysis in terms of commonalities (Gillham, 2005). Kvale (1996) reinforced the appropriateness of semi-structured interviews for qualitative research, arguing that they are "neither an open conversation nor a highly structured questionnaire" (p. 27). Semi-structured interviews maintain this balance as the following features are emphasised:

- The same questions are explored with each participant;
- Questions are developed to ensure their focus remains on the key themes under investigation;
- Equivalent coverage is ensured and interviewees (can be) prompted by supplementary questions;
- Approximately equivalent interview time is allowed in each case;
- Questions are *open* – that is the direction, or character, of the *answer* is open;
- *Probes* (emphasis is author's) are used according to whether the interviewer judges there is more to be disclosed. (Gillham, 2005)

Given the complexity, depth and sensitivity of the material required, semi-structured interviews provided a powerful means to achieve these aims. The greatest strength of the interview process is the richness and vividness of the data uncovered (Gillham, 2000b); notwithstanding this, the quality of this data remains dependent on the skills of the researcher-as-interviewer. The literature (Gillham, 2005; Kvale, 1996) emphasises that practised interviewers must be fully prepared: they need to be skilled listeners, capable of empathising with the interviewee, affirming when appropriate, and finally, able to follow up as necessary on completion. The need to obtain quality interview data is clear for my research with its foundation in the joint construction of knowledge by the researcher and participants. Hatch (2002) emphasises the capacity that interviews have for achieving this:

Qualitative interviewers create a special kind of speech event during which they ask open-ended questions, encourage informants to explain their unique perspectives on the issues at hand, and listen intently for special language and other clues that reveal meaning structures informants use to understand their worlds. (p. 23)

The importance of ensuring that the interview as a whole is carefully developed is reinforced by Gillham (2005) who argues that, "the most striking difference between an expert and a novice interviewer is the clarity, focus and economy of the questioning on the part of the former; and the redundancy and lack of clear focus in the questions posed by the latter" (p. 18).

Responding to this, Figure 8 (below) describes the process by which the interview questions used in this research project were developed and piloted within an overarching context of semi-structured interviews. The questions posed in each of the semi-structured interviews and their relationship to the four research questions are detailed in Appendices B – E. Although semi-structured interviews provided the best means to record the thick

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│  ┌─────────────────────┐          ┌─────────────────────┐         │
│  │ Review of literature│          │ Context of research │         │
│  └─────────────────────┘          └─────────────────────┘         │
│                                                                    │
│         ┌──────────────────┐      ┌──────────────┐                 │
│         │ Question topics  │      │   Prompts    │                 │
│         └──────────────────┘      └──────────────┘                 │
│                                                                    │
│           ┌────────────────────────────────────┐                  │
│           │ Trialling – Using members of my     │                  │
│           │            school's SLT.            │                  │
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│                                                                    │
│           ┌────────────────────────────────────┐                  │
│           │ Piloting of questions, prompts and  │                  │
│           │        interview structure          │                  │
│           │ (using SLT members from my school)  │                  │
│           └────────────────────────────────────┘                  │
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│           ┌────────────────────────────────────┐                  │
│           │ Formal data collection through      │                  │
│           │   semi-structured interviews        │                  │
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│  │   Figure 8. Process for Development of Semi-structured     │    │
│  │                      Interviews                           │     │
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Figure 8. *Process for Development of Semi-structured Interviews*

descriptions offered by interviewees, the centrality of the researcher-as-instrument in this process also provided an opportunity for a formal self-reflection through the use of a reflective research journal.

Given the volume and quality of data generated, this aspect of the data collection process was the most important of the four utilised in this research. The piloting and trialling of interview questions described in Figure 8 facilitated ongoing development of interview questions and allowed the researcher's skills as an interviewer to mature. The effectiveness of the semi-structured interview format is illustrated in Appendix F which details the dialogue between the researcher and School A – Deputy Principal B regarding SLT teamwork and the role and responsibilities of the principal. Within the transcript section (and others), the following features can be noted:

- The flexibility of the semi-structured interview format with the researcher able to diverge from the set questions to pursue points of interest;
- The informal nature of the interview with humour and emotion reflected in the transcript at different times;
- The vividness of descriptions possible as reflected in the dialogue included in Section 5.5.5

Research Journal

The opportunity to document and reflect upon the research process achieved dual purposes: it provided hard evidence of new ideas, possible future avenues for exploration or areas requiring further reading; alternatively, the journal provided a vehicle for self-reflection following each stage of the process – document analysis, interviews and dialogue with Critical Friends.

Gillham (2000b) advocates journalling as a tool to record the 'to do' moments, "Real-world research involves keeping an informal log where you record a range of material: things people have said to you, what you have observed, things to be followed up, insights or hunches – a thousand and one details that you may lose if you don't record them" (p. 19). My research journal became a clearing house for the progress of the

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research, whether it was the summary of a day's work, a reference to follow up, a question to pose to my critical friends or an idea to be pursued within data analysis; it was the place where for two years I reflected on fears, frustrations and the occasional 'small wins' (Hatch, 2002). The real worth of the research journal was revealed when I reviewed its hundred or so pages as a whole and found, amidst the incidental observations, references and many frustrations, the thick descriptions so valuable in qualitative research. These descriptions grounded my writing firmly in the research contexts so that complexities within particular events, characters or situations could be adequately rendered (Barone & Eisner, 1997). An example of this is the excerpt below which reflects on what having a non-teacher as part of an SLT offered to its decision-making:

> Reading through SLT member C's responses and reflecting upon them has made me realise that she offers that unique perspective that I believe someone outside the normal sphere of SLTs is able to. By that I mean the perspective that ___ offered the school Executive for the two years she was present. At its most basic, it is common sense and a real understanding of where a school's staff are with a situation, program or decision that has to be made.

<div align="right">(Research Journal - February 26 2009)</div>

Dialogue with Critical Friends

To reinforce the multiple methods of research being used, I invited two experienced practitioners in my research area to comment on the data and the themes emerging from it during the research process. Given the title, 'Critical Friends' they were invited formally to be involved, with the reflections to be collected through interviews or email (the interview questions for Critical Friends are Appendices C and D). Use of these Critical Friends resulted in three additional interviews being included in the data analysis. An overview of the expertise of those involved as Critical Friends is included in Table 9 (overleaf).

The dialogue with Critical Friends assisted this research by providing perspectives on the research questions from outside the contexts of the selected schools.

Title	Background	Details
Critical Friend - Current Principal	• Has been a principal of three Catholic secondary schools over a period of more than twenty years. • Has spent the last ten years as principal of a large co-educational Catholic school in the Mercy tradition.	• Completed a semi-structured interview. • Completed some follow-up questions via email. • Two additional personal communications.
Critical Friend - Former Principal	• Has been a principal of several Catholic secondary schools over many years. • Remains involved in the governance of congregation-owned schools.	• Completed questions via email. • This Critical Friend was not interviewed one-on-one.

Table 9. *Critical Friends consulted during the Research Process*

These external perspectives were compared and contrasted with the data obtained from the SLT members in the selected schools. An example of where contrast was instructive was the SLTs' lack of response to the need for a formal charter (Section 5.3.2) where as both Critical Friends advocated this clearly.

The process of data collection described in the previous section provided a starting point for knowledge co-construction but the process of reflection, a movement ever deeper into the interview transcripts, required the researcher to move out of the comfort of interview transcriptions and routine journal entries into the more complex and less structured world of data analysis.

4.5   Data Analysis

The process of data analysis in this research was straight-forward and rigorous, directed towards identification of the key themes present in the collected data. The analytical process reflected the core objectives of all qualitative research, "the creation, testing, and revision of simple, practical, and effective analysis methods" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 3).

The process of data analysis occurred in three stages:

1. Data Reduction – Data was selected, focused, simplified, abstracted and transformed from interview transcriptions or other data sources;

2. Data Display – The organization, compression and assembly of information was undertaken to facilitate conclusion drawing; and

3. Conclusion Drawing and Verification – The process of assigning meaning by noting patterns, explanations, causal flows, and propositions was undertaken. However, conclusion drawing was only part of this third stage of analysis; conclusions also needed to be verified through reflection, argument and/or peer review. (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 10-11)

Although these three stages are identified as discrete processes, in reality, they are interwoven with each stage (data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing and verification) possible at any time.

This interconnectedness and the actual titles for the stages of data analysis used in this research are described in Figure 9.

Figure 9. *The Data Analysis Model*

(Miles & Huberman, 1994)
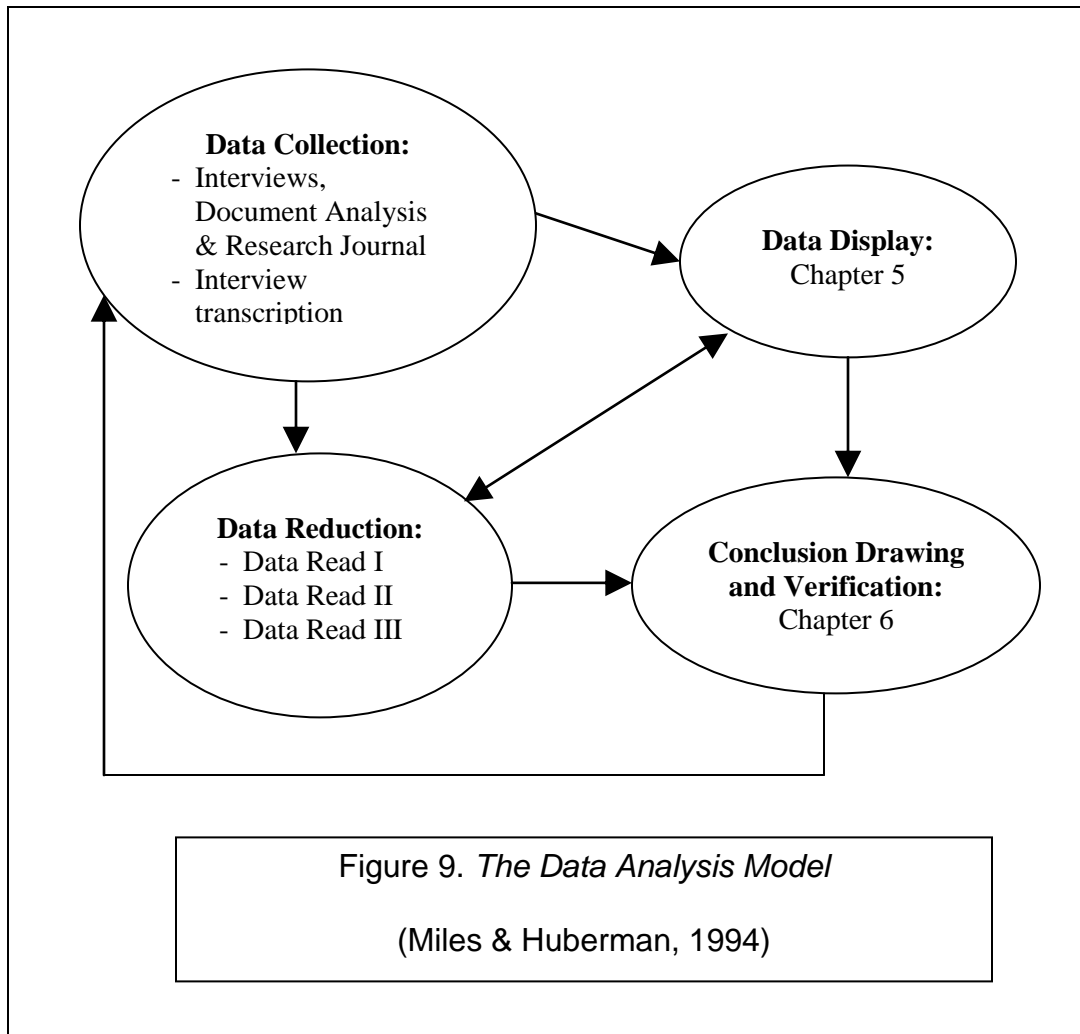
The actual means by which the data was explored in this thesis closely reflected this theoretical model. Although the amount of raw data generated by the semi-structured interviews and document analysis was significant, summarising each interview transcript, identifying themes and sub-themes with the data and data summaries, and classifying these themes and sub-themes into finding and possible conclusions was enjoyable and effective.

The process by which this was done is articulated in Table 10 (overleaf). The table details the foundations of the data analysis model (Miles & Huberman, 1994), the steps by which this analysis was carried out, and a sample analysis of the material used to the develop the theme of 'Building Leadership Capacity'.

The results of this data analysis and, in particular, the data reduction stage became the themes described in Chapter 5. However, the process of theme identification, classification according to the four Research Questions and final validation as research findings was a gradual one. A number of possible themes initially identified as significant were later omitted, while other themes were only considered and included towards the end of the data analysis process. This process of data reduction, display and conclusion drawing is reflected in the following two examples:

- In the first brainstorm of possible themes (following Data Read III), a number of leadership capabilities were identified from the data: capacity to nourish and maintain relationships; openness and honesty; collegiality; creativity; discernment; ability to demonstrate witness; and good humour. However, as a list of leadership capabilities was regarded as unnecessary for this research, the capabilities were incorporated into other themes within the four Research Questions.

- It was decided late in the data analysis process that the final theme described in Chapter 5, "Nourishing a Culture of Hospitality" which detailed the capacity of SLTs to nourish laughter and good humour within their school was better described under the Mercy quality of hospitality.

Appendix H includes a full list of the themes initially identified compared with those finally included in Chapter 5.

Stage of Data Analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994)	Stages in this Analysis	Description of what occurred in this analysis	Sample Analysis (The process by which the findings under 'Building Leadership Capacity' were generated)
Data Collection	Collection Methods	• Semi-structured interviews with SLT members • Document analysis • Research journal – This included notes on responses that were unexpected and possible avenues for further exploration in subsequent interviews or emails. • Dialogue with critical friends	Not applicable
	Transcription	• All interviews were transcribed by the researcher before being returned to interviewees for verification and validation. • Significant points and insights were noted in the Research Journal. • Some reflection after initial School A interviews resulted with particular questions being prioritised in the School B interviews	Not applicable
Data Reduction	Data Read I	• First formal analysis of transcripts completed with significant quotes, descriptions, metaphors and 'emotive moments' noted.	• Overlap noted between questions that examined Leadership Succession, aspects of Duignan's (2008) Framework for Shared Leadership and Building Leadership Capacity. • Commitment of SLTs to Building Leadership Capacity in their schools noted as a common theme with six out of ten respondents nominating it as a core priority.
Table 10. *The Data Analysis Model in detail*			

Data Reduction (continued)	Data Read II	• Second in-depth analysis of transcripts and documents, identifying new areas of interest and reinforcing the worth of key elements already highlighted. • For the first time, noted that 'Building Leadership Capacity' may be the most appropriate overarching theme for data in this area. It would bring together responses to Leadership Succession, Nurturing Leadership Talent, Duignan's Community and Love-Driven Leadership, and Building Leadership Capacity.	• The response of School B Principal to the concept of subsidiarity moves away from the common definition (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1994) using an example of leadership as nurtured in School B's Year 7 and 8 homeroom teachers to describe it instead. • School B - SLT member A highlights her belief that is part of her leadership role to nurture potential leaders, *"So, in leadership, we have to target x, y and z because I think they've got really good leadership skills, it's good for them"*.
	Data Read III	• Final reading and analysis of transcripts including detailed thoughts and observations by the researcher. • Emphasis of this stage was on my comments and analysis; quotes were included that supported each of these ideas. • These longer analyses became the bases of many of the explorations of themes and sub-themes in Chapter 5.	• The responsibility for senior leaders in an organisation, and in each school, to be proactive in building the leadership capacity of the community was noted, *"you bring people within the community to a position where they see themselves as leaders too, or at least to an understanding that they contribute to the leadership of the community. People develop through this model…"* School A – Deputy Principal C

Conclusion Drawing and Verification	Classification	• Material from earlier Data-reads is classified under the four Research Questions. Within each Research Question, my comments and respondents' quotes were organised under themes and sub-themes.
		• A series of large posters were the basis of this classification process.
			• Under the themes of Leadership Succession & Building Leadership Capacity, the following comments were typical of mine:
			  - *There is a real commitment to this by the School A SLT;*
			  - *Building Leadership Capacity needs to be a process of open invitation and subsequent appointment; or*
			  - *The difficulties of nurturing leadership when many experienced staff are part-time (noted by School B Principal)*

	Writing	• Material from Classification stages and Data-reads is synthesised into paragraphs and sections to form Chapter 5 – Exploring the Data..	• Building Leadership Capacity was included as Section 5.3.5 with a quote from School A – Deputy Principal A featured. • The number of respondents nominating the importance of this responsibility for SLTs was highlighted.

Table 10 (Cont.). *The Data Analysis Model in detail*

Although my documentation of the data collection and data analysis stages of this research was rigorous, as qualitative research, findings and conclusions arising from them remain subjective. Steps were taken to ensure as far as possible that such subjectivity was not a barrier to the verification of conclusions. The next section examines the validity and reliability of the research within the broader field of qualitative research.

<p style="text-align:center">4.6   Triangulation and Crystallisation</p>

Although this research is firmly in a constructivist paradigm, some discussion of the research's validity and reliability is essential for the research to have merit beyond the narrow confines of Schools' A and B. However, reinforcing the important principle that the knowledge within this research was constructed in a dialogue between researcher and research participants, the discussion of reliability and validity is enriched if literature that explores the related ideas of triangulation and crystallisation is included.

The importance of multiple methods of data collection, or triangulation, to qualitative research is emphasised by Denzin and Lincoln (2003) as it introduces "an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question (as) objective reality can never be captured" (p. 7). My penchant for metaphor was initially piqued by Richardson's (1997) extension of triangulation using the image and features of the crystal. Arguing that the triangle (of triangulation) derived strongly from the rigid, two-dimensional geometry that typified scientific method, she argues in an extended quote that there are many more than three sides through which the world can be viewed:

> The central imaginary is the crystal, which combines symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multidimensionalities, and angles of approach. Crystals grow, change, alter, but are not amorphous. Crystals are prisms that reflect externalities *and* refract within themselves, creating different colours, patterns, arrays, casting off in different directions. What we see depends upon our angle of repose. Not triangulation, crystallization. In postmodernist mixed-genre texts, we have moved from plane geometry to light theory, where light can be *both* waves *and* particles. Crystallization, without losing structure, deconstructs the traditional idea of

<p style="text-align:center">133</p>

'validity' (we feel how there is no single truth, we see how texts validate themselves); and crystallization provides us with a deepened, complex, thoroughly partial understanding of the topic. Paradoxically, we know more and doubt what we know. (p. 92)

Richardson's paradoxical yet beautiful image is a powerful one and one that reinforces the need for my research method to be multilayered. Using a range of data collection methods (Anfara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002): semi-structured interviews, document analysis, dialogue with critical friends and use of research journal - increased the number of lenses through which the situations of SLT members and their capacity to enhance mission integrity, were viewed. When coupled with the flexibility and clarity offered by the data analysis model that was employed (Miles & Huberman, 1994), many sides and perspectives within the research problem (like the many facets and refractive possibilities of a crystal) were brought to light.

The data analysis process described in Table 10 detailed several stages of data-reading that ensured themes identified within the data were tested and verified before they were articulated as finding and conclusions. The range of data collection methods, the rigorous data analysis process and the appropriateness of the two selected schools as contexts for research have helped to ensure that the findings and conclusions described in Chapters 5 and 6 are dependable (M. Punch, 1998). They provide a reliable qualitative account of the actions, and the principles underlying these, in School A and B SLTs at the time of the research.

4.7   Ethical Issues

A key aspect of the research process is its ethical considerations and, in particular, the considerations around the interview process. Fontana and Frey (2003) summarise these:

Because the objects of inquiry in interviewing are human beings, researchers must take extreme care to avoid any harm to them. Traditionally, ethical concerns have revolved around the topics of *informed consent* (receiving consent by the subject

after having carefully and truthfully informed him or her about the research), *right to privacy* (protecting the identity of the subject), and *protection from harm* (physical, emotional, or any kind). (p. 88)

The study was conducted according to the ethics guidelines required of all researchers at Australian Catholic University (ACU). Formal ethics clearance was received from the ACU Human Research Ethics Committee (Appendix I) and permission to undertake the study was received from the Catholic Education Office, Melbourne and the Sisters of Mercy Melbourne Congregation.

Some of the ethical aspects considered during the data collection and analysis process included:

1. Permission and consent: Participants in the study were invited formally by mail to be involved and agreed through their signed consent;

2. Confidentiality: The information from the interviews will not be released to others. The names of the SLT members and their schools have been not been used in order to protect their identities, while narrative quotes are identified generically;

3. Security: Paper records and cassette tapes are being kept in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's school office, computer information is protected by password;

4. Data destruction: When no longer needed, interview tapes, transcripts, and documents will be destroyed and computer files erased;

5. Right of review: Participants were given copies of their interview transcripts for review and revision in order to validate the data;

6. Document use: Permission was sought from school authorities to analyse school documents.

Given my current role as an SLT member of a Mercy school, this school was excluded from the outset as a potential participating school, given the difficult ethical issues which can arise in that situation. Due to my previous employment at one of the case-

study schools, and the close-knit nature of Mercy Congregation-owned schools in Victoria, I was personally acquainted with some of the potential participants in this study. The precautions outlined above in respect to consent, confidentiality and right of review were carefully adhered to in order to address the potential influence my relationships with SLT members might have on their participation in the research.

4.8   Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations are those factors or conditions that are unavoidably present in the research (K. Punch, 2000). In my research, these limitations included:

1. The data obtained from the two schools was specific to those contexts, and the SLTs that lead them and therefore may not be generalisable to other schools or SLTs.

2. The complexity of the role of principalship in the 21st century may not be the only reason for the perceived lack of appropriate candidates applying for the principalship (Barty, Thomson, Blackmore, & Sachs, 2005), particularly in the case of women (Carlin, d'Arbon, Dorman, Duignan, & Neidhart, 2003). As a result, increased collaboration in educational leadership through the development of leadership teams may not address the shortage of leadership applicants observed by systemic authorities.

3. The degree to which the participants contributed meaningfully and honestly to the study through their semi-structured interviews. Specifically, the degree of respect and friendship present within a school's SLT may have made SLT members less likely to directly criticise each others' actions or motivations.

4. The capacity of the researcher to source all necessary documents to inform the document analysis and subsequent in-depth interviews. Some documents may have not be made available by the schools under investigation.

Delimitations are the boundaries the researcher places around the study to ensure it remains manageable (K. Punch, 2000). In my research, these delimitations included:

1. Only two schools were examined from within the seven Victorian Congregation-owned schools, with nine SLT members interviewed. This ensured a manageable amount of material was collected in terms of time employed and data collected.

2. Interviews were conducted for approximately one hour to allow for some depth of interview, while remaining conscious of the busyness of the participants and the consequent length of transcripts. Longer interviews would have made the transcript lengths more difficult to analyse in the depth necessary to obtain the 'thick descriptions' desired.

3. To limit the amount of data collected, the researcher made a decision to limit the examination of SLTs to the views of the SLT members and the principles as outlined in the documents analysed. Other possible sources of data in this research area could have included staff, students, parents, other members of the school communities or representatives of systemic authorities.

4. The wealth of literature in the secular domain on teams, teamwork and their roles within organisations was not included in of the literature review to keep the scale of Chapter 3 manageable.

5. My relationships, professional and/or personal, with members of the SLTs under examination were clearly detailed. I believe that the data collection and analysis within this research remains objective notwithstanding these pre-existing relationships. Possessing deep understanding of the research contexts and participants facilitated enlightened insights into the complex environments of Schools' A and B.

6. Not using my own school as a formal context for study, although members of the SLT were involved in the trial/pilot process before interviews.

4.9   Summary

This chapter has described the research methodology. In particular, the chapter initially explored the epistemological and methodological issues underlying the research. This exploration highlighted that the essence of the study reflected the co-construction of

knowledge through a series of semi-structured interviews between the researcher and participants (Hatch, 2002).

An examination was made of the capacity of metaphors to explore, and bring together, the epistemological basis of the research and the data collected (Richardson, 2003).

The importance of 'thick descriptions' to qualitative research (Eisner, 1991) was emphasised with semi-structured interviews identified as the most appropriate means to effect responses of the depth necessary to illuminate the contexts under examination.

Each of the four data collection methods was identified and their role within the broader research methodology clarified. The data collection methods included:

- A series of semi-structured interviews with SLT members from the two selected schools;
- Analysis of foundational documents from the selected schools and their systemic authorities;
- Dialogue with Critical Friends; and
- The use of a Research Journal.

The chapter included a detailed examination of the process of data analysis: (a) data reduction; (b) data display; and (c) conclusion drawing and verification (Miles & Huberman, 1994). An extended example of how this process was implemented was included. The chapter concluded with an exploration of the importance of triangulating and crystalising knowledge generated to the process of qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Richardson, 1997), an acknowledgement of relevant ethical issues and an outline of the limitations and delimitations of the research.

The next chapter explores the data generated by the research methods; responses are organized and examined according to the four Research Questions that formed this thesis.

Chapter 5

Exploring the Data

5.1   Introduction

This research was designed to explore the capacity of SLTs to enhance the mission integrity of two Catholic schools in the Mercy tradition. This chapter explores the responses elicited to the four Research Questions. The data has been organised according to the four research questions. Within these four research questions, data was classified according to sets of interview questions as well as initial themes that arose from the research data. As Table 11 (overleaf) indicates, responses to Research Question 1 have been organised around three themes. Four themes are explored in discussion of the responses to Research Question 2, while responses to Research Question 3 have been organised around five themes. Responses to Research Question 4 have been organised around five themes.

The organisation of these themes in this chapter (shown in Table 11) initially reflected the order in which the themes were reviewed in Chapter 3. As it was analysed, data was classified according to these provisional themes; however, a number of initial themes were rejected as insufficient data was generated during the research process to justify their retention, consequently new themes were developed to take account of themes that arose during the data analysis process. These new themes were classified under one of the four Research Questions. As each theme is introduced in Sections 5.5.2 through to 5.5.6, the number of times it was addressed or raised by interview respondents is indicated.

The chapter concludes with an examination of some of the similarities and differences between the SLTs of the two schools as seen in their responses to the semi-structured interviews.

Research Question	Section	Theme
Research Question One: What is the experience of shared leadership for the individual members of senior leadership teams in the selected schools?	5.2.2	The Complexity of Educational Leadership in the 21st Century
	5.2.3	The Challenge of Faith Leadership
	5.2.4	Shared Leadership
Research Question Two: How does shared leadership contribute to the effective leadership of the selected schools?	5.3.2	The Expression of Shared Leadership in Senior Leadership Teams.
	5.3.3	Teams, Teamwork and Synergy
	5.3.4	The Role and Responsibilities of the Principal in Senior Leadership Teams
	5.3.5	Building Leadership Capacity
Research Question Three: What do the members of senior leadership teams identify as the principles underlying the leadership of Catholic schools in the Mercy tradition?	5.4.2	Exploring the Catholic Identity of Catholic Schools
	5.4.3	Educating the Whole Person – The Foundation of Catholic schooling
	5.4.4	Witnesses to Faith – Walking the Talk
	5.4.5	An Exploration of Duignan's Framework of Leadership in Catholic Schools: • Community • The Common Good • Subsidiarity • Leadership as Service • Love-Driven Leadership
	5.4.6	Being a Catholic School in the Mercy Tradition
Research Question Four: What opportunities exist for senior leadership teams to enhance the mission integrity of Catholic schools in the Mercy tradition?	5.5.2	The Challenge of Leadership in Contemporary Catholic Schools
	5.5.3	The Challenge of the Christian Narrative in Contemporary Catholic Schools
	5.5.4	Achieving Academic Excellence
	5.5.5	Building Leadership and Teaching Capacities in Catholic Schools
	5.5.6	Nourishing a Culture of Hospitality

Table 11. *Research Questions and Emergent Themes*

5.2   Research Question One:

What is the experience of shared leadership for the individual members of senior

leadership teams in the selected schools?

5.2.1   Introduction

This Research Question was designed to explore the degree to which individuals experienced shared leadership within their particular school contexts. Research participants were asked to describe the make-up of their SLT and whether this had altered during their time as members. The timing, frequency and format of SLT meetings were examined with a particular focus on the balance the meetings maintained between administrative issues and those dealing with mission and vision. A major focus of this research question was the exploration of what individuals understood by the phrase 'shared leadership' and the degree to which they had experienced or observed its practice in their school and SLT.

The main themes emerging from this research question were:

- The challenges of contemporary educational leadership;
- The challenge of faith leadership; and
- Shared leadership.

These themes are explored below.

5.2.2 The Challenges of Contemporary Educational Leadership

The exploration of what SLT members understood as the nature and challenges of educational leadership begins this section. Four of the ten research interviewees made specific comments in this area.

After the appointment of School B's first lay principal a few years beforehand, a major review led by outside facilitators was completed. One aim of this review was the examination of possible models of, and roles within, School B's SLT. The results of this review led to the School B SLT being expanded from four members to five. The

principal of School B identified the increasing complexity and workload of contemporary educational leadership as one of the key reasons for this leadership review:

> *Education has just become much more complex….Schools and teachers and*
> *people in these sort of leadership roles, there's more expected of them now; we're*
> *seeing bigger picture issues and (we're prepared) to take those on a bit more and*
> *that's leading to some of the structural changes.* (School B - Principal)

More specifically, in explaining his reasons for undertaking the leadership review, School B - Principal detailed the difficulties that can occur when one or two senior staff have too many priorities and responsibilities in organisations as sophisticated as contemporary Catholic schools:

> *(There were) too few people (who) were doing too much. To have an extra person*
> *on the Leadership Team and to divvy up those roles differently and play to*
> *people's strengths…was my belief on the way to go.* (School B - Principal)

The challenges inherent in educational leadership were acknowledged in one of the goals in Mercy Secondary Education Inc's Strategic Plan (2008) which highlighted the importance of continuing to support leadership within Victorian Mercy schools:

> *To ensure there is outstanding, visionary and compassionate educational*
> *leadership throughout Mercy Secondary Education.*

Although exploring the many elements of leadership style and practice was not one of the research areas under exploration, participants identified a number of characteristics of effective leadership, particularly those characteristics that needed to be exhibited by a single leader within his or her areas of responsibility or across a group or team of leaders acting collaboratively. These characteristics support contemporary educational leaders in their roles, particularly when the challenges of leadership become more difficult. One characteristic nominated by three participants as fundamental to contemporary leadership was the requirement for leaders to display passion: passion for their principles, for the vocation of teaching, and for the ultimate goal of bringing each young person to their full humanity:

> *As leaders, we need to show real passion and let (students and staff) see, "Hey.*
> *This is what it's all about!" It's like what the kids said last night. When I get*

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excited about something, they can see that. Whereas other times, maybe, we're
too calm and it's like, 'don't rock the boat'; this is a nice steady little ship, don't
upset people. Or we're trying to create the impression, (that) we're in control, as
if passion is a bad thing. Passion is something the leadership team has to have.

<div align="right">(Critical Friend – Current Principal)</div>

The importance of passion to those being interviewed was obvious and noted in the
Research Journal entry below:

Passion is the most apt word to describe how all of my interviewees feel about
Catholic education and its fundamental place in the lives of the young people who
seek growth towards full human personhood.

<div align="right">(Research Journal: February 24 2009)</div>

This passion was also evident in the emotion and intensity with which some responses
were delivered during the interviews, the principles and practice of Catholic education
were close to their hearts!

The challenges of contemporary educational leadership are significant but they are
tempered by the increasing presence of SLTs within schools and the ongoing
commitment and passion of leaders for the students, staff and schools in their care.
However, for leaders in Catholic schools, the dimension of faith leadership is an added
challenge to consider.

5.2.3   The Challenge of Faith Leadership

For participants in this research, the particular responsibility of providing faith or spiritual
leadership within a Catholic school was one with which seven of the SLT members
appeared quite comfortable. In addition, three of these seven respondents nominated it as
not only an obvious responsibility but the most meaningful of their various
responsibilities:

Strangely, I do not find this aspect difficult. This is why I joined Catholic
education and whilst I did not have the theological background initially, I wanted
to share my faith.   (Critical Friend - Current Principal)

This capacity to derive deep spiritual meaning within the everyday functioning of the school was evocatively explored by School B - Deputy Principal:

> *We're in the business of people and schools are an awful place when the students aren't here…. God is in relationship, God is in people.*

However, the challenge of faith leadership is a reality; one acknowledged by School B - Principal below who linked it to the growing issue of the 'unchurched' situation of many students and families in Catholic school communities:

> *(As a lay person), it is a challenge to be a religious leader in a Catholic school…because I know that most of our families are unchurched. They might be Catholic but they're not going to Church.*

Conversely, faith leadership can also be an issue if principals and educational leaders are confronted by staff and families concerned that their Catholic school is not Catholic enough. This was one of the issues raised in the area of faith leadership by School A - Principal:

> *(They) express a disappointment about the Catholicity of the school and the fact that we're not Catholic enough and …(this) raises the interesting question about the extent to which we as a Catholic school ought to be leading, giving the students here at the school, chapter and verse of what the Catholic Church believes on a whole range of issues.*

Of some relevance to the broad issue of faith leadership were the issues that arose when Catholic schools moved from leadership by members of religious congregations to lay leadership. One of these related to the situation of staff who had had many years of experience and service under the leadership of members of religious congregations within Catholic schools. The data suggests that these staff tended to be quite polarised in their attitudes to shared leadership, with some staff very happy to be in a new, more democratic (as they perceived it) environment while others, perhaps viewing the past through rose-coloured glasses, wished for a return to what they previously enjoyed:

> *This approach has not always been in the school. I think there has been a change that has come about over the last seven years and given that we're in an environment where people…have been employed in the school for twenty and thirty years, there's considerable baggage there in terms of what people are*

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carrying with them from that previous style of leadership.

(School A - Deputy Principal C)

At another level, the reality that lay leaders have priorities beyond the school was noted as a change in the way that the role of the principal needed to be viewed. This was evident when priorities of a lay principal were compared with those of a previous religious principal:

> *I actually think, collectively, we got used to the fact that her life revolved around the school…she was available from seven in the morning until whatever time at night. Principal C is a family man. He's here very long hours too but he has a life outside.* (School B - SLT member C)

Of particular relevance to my research given its emphasis on mission integrity was the degree to which members of SLTs took responsibility for the faith leadership of their school. Given the variety of academic and professional capacities represented in an SLT, even joint responsibility for the faith dimension of a Catholic school presents a significant issue for some SLT members. A Critical Friend highlighted this challenge:

> *Members of Senior Leadership Teams in Catholic schools need to recognise that their role entails a responsibility to respect and support the Catholic identity and values of the school. Ideally, they would be people with a strong and genuine faith commitment, but this may not always be possible. What is essential is that they be people of integrity who accept that upholding the faith dimension and practices of the school is an integral part of their role.*

(Critical Friend - Former Principal)

The essence of this reflection, '(that SLT members) be people of integrity who accept that upholding the faith dimension and practices of the school is an integral part of their role', reflected the insights of Bezzina (2008) and Starratt (2007) and reinforced the importance of authenticity to contemporary educational leadership. But within this research, the importance of faith leadership is reflected in a number of powerful descriptions and metaphors offered by research participants to describe the principles of Catholic education underlying their leadership roles within each school. These descriptions and metaphors are highlighted throughout this chapter.

The thoughts of a current principal provide a useful conclusion to this examination of the challenges and opportunities posed by faith leadership in contemporary Catholic schools. The principal affirmed the willingness of all within an SLT to fulfil this role, while emphasising the role of the Religious Education Coordinator or Deputy Principal – Mission in recent years:

> *I do think that the role of Director of Mission, or similar role, has helped spread the opportunity to demonstrate faith leadership....I think that the increased role of SLTs has enabled principals to share that responsibility with others.*
>
> (Critical Friend- Current Principal)

Clearly, there is an expectation that through a move to shared or collaborative leadership, the responsibility for faith leadership within Catholic school communities will be distributed. But this expectation is predicated on the assumption that sharing and collaboration of leadership is occurring in Catholic schools: the degree to which this is the case is examined in the next section.

5.2.4   Shared Leadership

Amidst the interview data, several themes were universally accepted by each interviewee. The first of these was the importance of shared or collaborative leadership both in theory, and as practised within their own SLT. This aspect of leadership was answered most directly by research participants in reference to teams and teamwork (Section 5.3.3) but four participants addressed it directly under Research Question 1. A useful starting point for the examination of this theme was the acknowledgement that the capacity for leadership is shared across many members of the school community:

> *I think there's a real recognition that a leader can't be all things to all people, can't hold all knowledge, can't possess every skill and (that) there is a richness that comes from the distribution and sharing of leadership.*
>
> (School A - Deputy Principal C)

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But what did members of SLTs view as shared leadership? One perspective identified the benefits offered by having to hold one's individual responsibilities in tension with those of others with the SLT:

> *You are charged with responsibility for a specific area but that is held in positive tension with all other areas within the school, so there is accountability...I need to refer back constantly to all the other aspects of school life to make sure that my decision is sound and that's what I see as shared leadership.*
>
> (School B - SLT member B)

Alternatively, shared leadership can be defined not only by what it should be but what it is not; in particular, School A - Deputy Principal decried leadership that eschewed common goals to which a team or group of people aspire for something that was merely disguised hierarchy:

> *If it's relieving one person at the expense of another person, that's not shared leadership in my opinion….It is more about…we've had a common goal that we're aspiring to, we're talking the talk but we're also walking the walk…people are going to be empowered by the knowledge of why things are happening this way, why we are leading this way and why we are leading people to this goal.*

Indirectly, School B - Deputy Principal B illustrates this problem from another perspective, that of an SLT member whose responsibilities legitimate a hierarchy within the SLT:

> *Deputy Principal means to me that I deputise for the Principal, in his absence. I have overall responsibility for what I would call good order in the school.*

In conclusion, given the breadth of contexts within Catholic schools and the variety of leadership models offered within them, the degree to which the collaborative 'ideal' is achieved is mixed. But more important than whether all schools are as effective as they need to be in this respect, is the commitment described by all participants to this ideal of shared leadership, a commitment reflected in the thoughts of School A - Deputy Principal C:

> *Shared leadership is about a team decision….I think there's a tremendous mutual respect for the strengths, talents and skills of each member of that leadership*

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team. I think we come to those meetings very much on a level footing, on an equal footing. Decisions, discussions occur but each one has as much to offer as does the Principal.

5.2.5   *Summary*

As the data analysis moves towards examination of the second research question, a number of important themes are evident: the complexity of contemporary educational leadership, the challenges posed by faith leadership in Catholic schools and the commitment and enthusiasm displayed by all participants for shared or collaborative leadership as the preferred model of educational leadership.

All participants were also interviewed about the strengths and weaknesses of Duignan's Framework for Shared Leadership in Catholic schools (2008) but as the components of the framework focus strongly on aspects of the Catholic tradition, these comments and the suitability of Duignan's framework for describing shared leadership in Catholic schools are examined as part of Research Question Three.

The next section takes as its starting point the nature of shared or collaborative leadership; that is, how shared leadership has been expressed in the SLTs of the schools under examination, what SLT members regard as the key aspects of teams and teamwork and the role and responsibilities of the principal within a school's SLT.

5.3   Research Question Two:

How does shared leadership contribute to the effective leadership of the selected

schools?

5.3.1   Introduction

This research question was designed to explore the ways in which shared or collaborative leadership contributed to the effectiveness of leadership overall in the selected schools.

In this chapter, the key advantages of leadership being team-focused rather than being the traditional hierarchical model of leadership are described as being the intangible synergies possible when individuals working in a group come together to achieve teamwork. This section examines whether these aspects of effective teams were present in the selected SLTs and, if so, the degree to which the teams embrace related attributes such as reciprocal relationships, a diversity of talents and decision-making that is honest and forward-thinking.

The efficacy of the SLT within the selected schools is explored by identifying the principles by which SLTs make decisions. The degree to which these principles are informed by foundational documents such as the Mission Statements of the selected schools is also examined.

The role of the principal in ensuring the selected SLTs are effective is investigated in keeping with Leithwood and Riehl's (2003a) definition of educational leadership for contemporary principalship as the setting of direction and the exertion of influence examined.

Examination of this research question concludes with an exploration of the important responsibility that SLTs have to nurture and build the leadership capacity of their schools.

5.3.2   The Expression of Shared Leadership in Senior Leadership Teams

The move towards collaborative leadership in schools advocated by researchers and educational authorities over recent years has been strongly supported by data from the interviews. In particular, this support was evident in those most affected by the paradigm shift – experienced principals – with each principal interviewed supporting the change. A Critical Friend – Current Principal described why leadership within a Catholic school needed to move away from leadership being invested in only one or two people:

> *I have always felt that the concept of one deputy didn't work. I just don't know why you have one deputy because that deputy basically does what you (the Principal) don't want to do.*

But more than simply avoiding giving deputies ill-deserved duties and responsibilities, the key value of SLTs was identified as the bringing together of a diverse set of skills and variety of educational visions, as well as the intangible benefits offered by unexpected capabilities and ideas:

> *It's a bit like a pie-chart, you've got to cover all sections of the pie….At the same time, it's good if you've got people who will be able to look beyond their particular sector or look into the other sectors of the pie that are not their own, and, in a positive way, bounce ideas and challenge people in that way.*
>
> (Critical Friend - Current Principal)

The initial constitution of the SLTs in each of the schools under investigation was to some degree ad hoc, and with SLT members appointed for specific lengths of time, the capacity for significant review was limited. In the schools for which MSEI is responsible, deputy principals are formally appointed by the leader of the Sisters of Mercy, Melbourne Congregation, for a period of five years with formative and summative appraisals in the third and fifth year of appointment; yet, with the notable exception of School B and the formal leadership review undertaken there in 2007, no other external examination of the SLTs has occurred.

Review of the effectiveness of SLTs can occur at a number of levels:

1. At the most formal level, SLT performance can be judged against a formal set of principles or charter within a school;

2. Annually, SLT performance can be judged against goals set each year; or,

3. Periodic internal assessments of the SLT can be done by its membership.

The value of formal SLT reviews and/or charter was examined in a number of the interviews but neither of the teams investigated had such a structure in place. However, their value was reinforced by both Critical Friends:

(A charter or statement of mission) is essential. The team must know that it operates as a team and, not just as a group of individuals that reports occasionally, so that other individuals know what each is doing…. The role (of the SLT) should spell out how the team acts as a team of individuals, each with their own approach and particular gifts to offer. (Critical Friend - Current Principal)

I believe it would be an advantage for Senior Leadership Teams in Catholic schools (or any schools) to have a Charter or role description that articulates issues such as team purpose, values, membership processes, review mechanisms etc. Not only is it essential to clarify these matters, but also the process of defining purposes, values etc. can in itself be one which leads to a deeper mutual understanding and respect between team members.

(Critical Friend - Former Principal)

Of interest in this discussion was the fact that all members of the two SLTs under examination indicated little interest in having such a formal document as part of their guiding principles although there was some acceptance of the need for SLTs to have common purposes and agreed directions. This confusion was evident in the response of School A - Deputy Principal C as to whether there is a set of principles or charter driving the team's responsibilities:

I think that's a really good question….The answer is 'no', in that, I don't think that I could go to anything on paper and say here's the charter, here's our vision, here's what really drives us.

Each member of the School A SLT echoed this response, arguing that such a formal document was no longer needed; instead they posited that the medium and longer term

directions of the group were driven by individual Annual Operational Plans which themselves reflected aspects of the College's Strategic Plan:

> *...as a group, we're led by our Strategy 2010 which is a planning document that looks five years into the future.* (School A - Deputy Principal A)

School A's strategic plan reflects the core values of the College Mission Statement: Spirituality, Learning, Community, Respect and Social Justice and challenges those within the College community to revisit its aims annually:

> *Strategy 2010 is a dynamic development that will be revisited regularly to ensure it is responsive to changing times and needs. This will be achieved through review and consultation and reflected in Annual Operational Plans.*
>
> (School A Strategic Plan 2006-2010)

Yet the danger remains that without formal charters or at least sets of annual goals for the SLT, a school's leadership team may become directionless and have no means by which the team's efficacy or mission integrity can be objectively judged. The possible end point of this failure to formalise goals and directions is failure to acknowledge or address the most difficult yet most important matters of mission and vision. At a less theoretical level, the existence of an SLT charter could ease the entry of new members to the team, a difficulty noted by School A - Deputy Principal C when he joined the team in 2002 (the team having been mostly in place for three years beforehand):

> *When I began there was nothing put into my hands as a member of this team to help me understand what we are trying to do.*

One theme relating to the operation of SLTs that was highlighted by three interviewees was the importance of clear communication within the SLT and between the SLT and the rest of the school community. One of the strongest affirmations of this was offered by the School B - Deputy Principal who described why the model of shared leadership sits comfortably within the framework of Catholic education:

> *Through a shared leadership model, we have very open and frank discussions and sharing of views. We all agree that whichever way the discussion goes, that's the way leadership has decided and we all support it. So, it's a very supportive and respectful approach.*

These views were supported by the interviewee most recently appointed to either school's SLT:

> *The leadership is…a very open forum and I can actually say whatever I like.*
>
> (School B - SLT member C)

Although effective communication must be respectful, it must also be robust and directed towards the ongoing improvement of the school. Therefore, despite the need for SLT members to be cognisant of the major issues affecting a school, they must also be strong and passionate advocates for their individual areas of responsibility. This was highlighted in the comments of School A - Deputy Principal B when describing the general operation of the SLT:

> *…we have tried to divide the operation of the school into what we think are the most important functions of the school. Personally, I think the core business of a school is curriculum, I don't think the core business of a school is pastoral but having said that you can't run the best curriculum unless you look after the students.*

The movement towards shared and collaborative leadership within schools has resulted in the constitution of SLTs as a means of distributing the workload of leadership, thereby bringing a greater and more diverse range of skills to school leadership and encouraging greater clarity of communication within schools. The next section explores the features of teams as experienced by SLT members and the degree to which effective teamwork could be achieved.

5.3.3   Teams, Teamwork and Synergy

Of all areas examined through the semi-structured interviews, those which generated the most interest related to what is understood by the concepts of team and teamwork and how these qualities have either helped or hindered the effectiveness of the school's SLT. In total, there were more than twenty-five separate responses in the interviews that related directly to these concepts, with each participant highlighting the importance of teamwork to the operation of SLTs.

Surowiecki's (2005) thesis about the wisdom offered by diversity of opinions within a team was reflected in the following comments:

> *I really do think…that if you're talking to other people, you pick up ideas from them…pick up ideas that challenge you. It makes you think a little bit differently about something….That's where you need people within your leadership group who will ask those questions or stimulate that discussion.*
>
> (Critical Friend - Current Principal)

Evident in this response is the important notion that team effectiveness is not defined by good humour within its membership, or even by friendship; rather efficacy requires the robust exchange of ideas, having one's ways of thinking challenged and having the capacity to have critical questions asked or stimulating discussions initiated. The following description defines succinctly what is meant by 'the wisdom of the crowd':

> *(A team requires) putting a group of people together with diverse talents, gifts, abilities to work on a particular project or an ongoing project.*
>
> (School A - Deputy Principal A)

The above description brings together the theoretical and practical elements within a team: diversity of skills and talents, capacity to work together and having a shared and agreed commitment to a specific goal, result or principle. The following description provides an excellent conclusion to this examination of integrating the importance of having a diversity of skills and opinions within an SLT:

> *No one person has got all the answers. Everyone brings something to the table…My notion of shared leadership (is that) the responsibility of the Leadership Team (is to) get the best out of each other but also to create opportunities…for other people to shine.* (School B - Principal)

Notwithstanding the universal acceptance of the importance of teamwork, the reality is that a group of experienced and passionate professionals will occasionally struggle to agree on an issue. The result of such an impasse could lead to no decision being made, to the principal being forced to make a decision or, most beneficially, to a decision that reflects compromise and common sense. The next extended quote describes the process underlying such a decision in School B; the issue under discussion was not a major policy

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change or significant program initiative; rather, it concerned the everyday problem of justifying significant expenditure on school infrastructure:

> *Well, (the SLT is) looking at putting a projector in the hall….Now we've really got in the group, very diverse opinions on that. I actually think eventually we'll come to the right decision about that and everyone will be happy with it. If (the principal) had made the decision that that was the way we were going to go, it would have disappointed one particular member of the Leadership Team. In actual fact, (the principal) made sure that the agenda item was discussed when everyone has been here. So in the scheme of things, it's no big deal but when we make the decision, I actually think the person who is really adverse to us going that way will be happy with the decision that we make.*
>
> (School B - SLT member C)

This quote is important as it provides the clearest example in the data of how SLTs can work together to reach a consensus position.

An additional benefit of teams leading schools was highlighted by one Critical Friend who argued that individual SLT members communicating an agreed direction and message facilitates broader communication with, and possibly increases the influence over, a greater number of the school staff:

> *As a leadership team, there are six of us who can then be in touch with six different people each day; whereas if it's just left to me, I might only see the one person. (By each member of the SLT acting), we can influence more people.*
>
> *(Critical Friend – Current Principal)*

The responses above illustrate the profound commitment expressed by SLT members to influence the direction of their school through concerted action amplified by the intangibles of teamwork and synergy. In order to realise these intangible benefits, an effective SLT requires a principal who is willing to empower SLT members in their leadership. The next section examines the role and responsibilities of the principal in the selected schools, especially the impact that a principal can have symbolically and culturally on the efficacy of the SLT.

5.3.4   The Role and Responsibilities of the Principal in Senior Leadership Teams

In the semi-structured interviews, participants offered a range of observations on what principals are seen to do, as well as what principals ideally should do. Rather than exploring these observations as a block, they have been classified under two headings, reflecting the fundamental definition of educational leadership offered by Leithwood and Riehl (2003b): (a) the setting of direction; and (b) the exertion of influence.

All of the principals interviewed for this research highlighted the first of these aspects and suggested direction-setting was key amongst their responsibilities. This point is made initially by one of the Critical Friends:

> *I think the Principal has to set the parameters. The Principal's primary responsibility is to set the direction of the school. In a Catholic school, obviously, the Principal's role is to say," okay, we are a Catholic school. We're here to develop the human person and to 'call them to be'".*

> *(Critical Friend – Current Principal)*

This goal of calling young people to full human personhood is reinforced in the next response, which has as its focus, the students within the school community:

> *My role is to keep people coming back to, "What are we here for?" You know, in all of our discussions and decisions and there are a number of them on the agenda. Right now, we're a Catholic school – what does that mean?...Really, we're here for the students.*   (School B - Principal)

An alternative answer is offered by School B - Principal, who argues that a fundamental role of the principal is to encourage strategic thinking within the SLT, and more broadly, across the school community:

> *To focus on the future, the long term goals of the school and the vision and how we were actually going to meet those. To encourage ideas within the school community, not just the leadership team, but all ideas.*

However, it was the follow-up to this initial response which specified what School B - Principal saw as a principal's key responsibilities: the formalising of these ideas into

policies, and longer-term, into the strategic plan that informed and directed school improvement and the Annual Operational Plans of the SLT membership for the next five years:

> *What I felt responsible for both initiating and seeing through to completion (was the school's strategic plan). Not being the sole writer, rather saying, "Let's get this into some sort of document that means something". So that, we, as a school community, can refer to that and say, "That's what we're saying, we're on about for the next five years".*

In addition, direction-setting was also detailed as a key responsibility for principals by four SLT members.

The following observations highlight the second aspect of Leithwood and Riehl's (2003b) definition, arguing that the key responsibility of a principal was to exert influence, not only for the purpose of implementing decisions already made by the leadership of the school but, more importantly, to encourage and facilitate the expression of ideas and opinions from all staff:

> *(The role of the principal is) to encourage conversation, to encourage people to feel comfortable expressing their opinion, challenging people, really questioning them. You know, "Why do you think that? Is there evidence to show why we should go that direction?" I think also, at times, (the principal needs) to set a bit of direction for him- or her-self, "This is where we need to go (or) how we could go about it".* (School B - SLT member A)

Inherent in this description was the suggestion that part of the role of the principal is to encourage, if not insist upon, a number of the characteristics of teams and effective teamwork identified earlier. However, exerting influence occasionally requires more overt leadership than that described by SLT member A. After a full and frank discussion has occurred within an SLT, principals need to be able to make a decision. It is a responsibility highlighted by four of the respondents, School A – Deputy Principal C's comment is typical of these:

> *Shared leadership is about a team decision. (However), it may be that, from time to time, the principal still makes those kinds of decisions – "On this point, in this case, this is how it is going to be and that is all there is to it".*

School B - Principal goes further than this in one of the most evocative interview responses where it was argued that there are some issues, situations and principles where principals must carry the debate within an SLT:

> *I think the role of a Principal fundamentally is about relationships with people….People in whatever area of responsibility that they've got within the school or classroom can run things by the Principal. There's a mutual respect between the person at the top and everybody else at the school and people know that from time to time there'll be disagreement; from time to time, the answer's going to be no, and from time to time you're not going to like it. Probably from time to time, there's decisions taken within the school that wouldn't be my personal decision either but you know, as a leader, you don't have to win everything but you have to win 'the big ones'.*

This compelling argument and fundamental articulation of the role of the principal within a Catholic school is founded on two premises - the importance of nourishing right relationships as the leader of an educational community and being able to identify which issues are the 'big ones', the debates that have to be won. Alternately, principals who fail to recognise issues or debates as being fundamental to the identity of the school are abrogating their responsibilities both within their SLT and within the broader school community that they lead. This danger is reflected in the comments below:

> *The role and responsibilities of the Principal within the team was to exercise really strong leadership in terms of all the areas that DPs have to deal with. Be actually out there and involved in those things. To be visible, to be here, to be in classrooms, to be a very strong vocal support for initiatives, to be supportive and acknowledging of effort and to be very much available.*
>
> <div align="right">(School B - Deputy Principal)</div>

The passion, emotion and thought reflected in the contributions offered by all participants in response to this issue reflects the ongoing importance of the principal to educational

leadership, and particularly, to the shared or collaborative leadership model exemplified in senior leadership teams.

The next section explores the role that SLTs are increasingly playing in building leadership capacity within their school, nurturing the next generation of school leaders.

5.3.5   Building Leadership Capacity

One aspect of leadership which has become a priority for educational leaders over recent years is the need to nourish leadership amongst the younger members of staff and/or those who have been teaching for a number of years but have not, to this stage, taken on leadership roles. This emphasis that has been embraced wholeheartedly by the SLTs of both selected schools with six out of ten respondents commenting on its importance for their SLT.

Each member of School A's SLT nominated the nourishing of future leaders as one of their shared goals. The following observation illustrates their commitment to succession planning and leadership development as well as to the means by which it was promoted:

> *We tap into the skills and gifts that each staff (member) may have; whether very directly through a Position of Leadership within our POL structure or tapping people on the shoulder and inviting them to take part in or lead particular activities….Often it's people who need to be encouraged to think about leadership and, through that mentoring, they gain the confidence to take the next step….Also, it is about allowing people to move from one leadership position to another, to find the best one for them or the most suitable, and we nurture them in that as well.*   (School A - Deputy Principal A)

The belief expressed by SLT members in Schools A and B that within their staff is the next generation of leaders was heartening and provided one of the surprises of this research; that there was such unanimity indicates the broader commitment of the SLTs and their membership to nurturing full personhood in both students and staff in their school communities.

5.3.6   Summary

The second Research Question asked, "How does shared leadership contribute to the effective leadership of the selected schools?" This question generated significant data from the research participants. This interest seemed to reflect the degree to which respondents have embraced shared leadership and their individual and collective belief in the benefits that teams, and SLTs in particular, offer to schools and to their ongoing improvement.

The development and nurturing of SLTs in schools was recognised as being fundamental to contemporary educational leadership, with teams and team members encouraged and empowered to:

- express a range of opinions;
- question assumptions that previously may have gone unquestioned;
- be honest and open in their communications internally and externally; and,
- be willing to embrace change and, when necessary, initiate change.

The importance of teamwork was highlighted through examples that explored how the intangible quality of synergy contributed to effective decision-making and better outcomes for the schools under the leadership of SLTs.

The role and responsibilities of the principal within the SLT was explored. It was acknowledged that principals need to set directions for both the SLT and the school itself, while also exerting sufficient influence to achieve these directions. Although achieving a consensus decision when considering issues is the objective for SLTs, there are times when a principal needs to make a final decision. This was reinforced by principal respondents who highlighted the need to win the 'big ones', when such issues arose.

The final aspect reflecting the expression of shared leadership in the selected schools was the determination with which the development of leadership capabilities amongst staff was identified and nurtured. Rather than it being simply a means to plug future

leadership vacancies within their schools, SLTs viewed building leadership capacity as an integral part of Christian leadership.

The next research question explores the fundamental principles of Catholic education. Its exploration assisted in identifying the foundational issues, the 'big ones' alluded to previously, and the particular lens offered by the Mercy charism within the Catholic schools under investigation.

What do the members of senior leadership teams identify as the principles underlying the leadership of Catholic schools in the Mercy tradition?

5.4.1   Introduction

Given the richness of the Roman Catholic tradition that has informed Catholic education over hundreds of years, the researcher does not contend that the following is a thorough review of the values and principles underlying Catholic identity in Catholic schools. Rather, exploration of the third Research Question provides a lens for identifying the foundations by which leaders in Catholic schools set directions, make decisions and exert influence in their quest to ensure the best outcomes for students and staff. Identification of these foundational values and principles was achieved through examination of the interview responses of SLT members in the selected schools and from Critical Friends as well as the broader ideals expressed in key documents of these schools and relevant systemic authorities. These values and principles were then compared and contrasted with those principles identified in Chapters Two and Three.

This section begins with an examination of a broad theme evident in the research (Catholic schools exist as countercultural institutions focused on holistic education) before focusing on the most important goal of Catholic education - education of the whole person. The implications of this key goal for the staff and leadership of Catholic schools are explored. These include the call to justice, to witness and to communion. This section continues with an extended examination of the Framework for Leadership in Catholic schools offered by Duignan (2008) and its strengths and weaknesses as identified by the research participants. Examination of this third Research Question concludes with an exploration of what research participants identified as the key issues for leaders within Catholic schools in the Mercy tradition.

5.4.2   Exploring the Catholic Identity of Catholic Schools

As Catholic schools enter the third millennium, their mission, teachers and leadership must be profoundly counter-cultural, capable of critiquing the structures, values and false

gods in the world today that otherwise go unchallenged. Four of the research participants highlighted the need for Catholic schools to be counter-cultural. Amongst these, the words of School B - Deputy Principal are instructive. The SLT member uses the critical Christ-centred teaching evident in her son's Religious Education class (unconnected with School A or B) to illustrate the principles underpinning leadership in School A:

> *This is what guides my leadership I think….We deal with students at a very impressionable and questioning time of their lives. I have a seventeen year old son who stills comes to church with me and he's on the brink of not coming to church with me. But he loves his RE lessons…loves them. Do you know why? Because (his teacher) is effectively tapping into his culture, his faith and his interpretation of life, what he sees out there in the real world.*

Although School B - Deputy Principal's perspective here is that of a mother talking about her son, it reflects a broader reality: young people are adolescent, questioning and impressionable and therefore engage with experiences that connect with their realities.

5.4.3 *Educating the Whole Person – The Foundation of Catholic Schooling*

The call to be counter-cultural challenges Catholic schools to develop and impart an educational vision that goes beyond learning, teaching and pastoral care; what is required is education of the whole person. The importance of holistic education within Catholic schools was nominated by six respondents as being the core responsibility of Catholic schools.

The following introduction to School A's prospectus challenges all parents considering the school for their child's secondary education to reflect on the nature of Catholic education:

> *(School A) is a place where generations of young people have been taught that success is more than academic results and high profiles; (rather, success is judged by) the contributions we each make to society. At (School A), our goal is to educate young people in the Mercy tradition, so that they go on to make a difference to the lives of others.*

A similar theme is reflected in School B whose ethos is summarised by the School B - Principal as follows:

> *(School B) is a community of students, teachers and parents within the Kingdom of God with Christ as its centre and focus. It strives for the total development of the human and spiritual faculties of its members who, in response, are inspired to commit themselves to serve God and their fellow people and make the world a better place in which to live.* (Principal's message, School B website)

Notwithstanding the clarity and challenge of these two statements, the response offered by another current principal served to highlight the importance of holistic education even more strongly. This principal's answer was in response to the question of increasing pressure on Catholic schools to pursue academic excellence to the detriment of other educational imperatives such as spirituality, liturgy and community:

> *Surely the concern should be (that) we have been under-represented in developing a knowledge and love of Jesus as the revelation of God. However, I do acknowledge that judgements are made externally on academic results and this may get even worse with academic (league) tables. We must sell who we are and what we do. We cannot sell our souls and give away the holistic development of each individual.* (Critical Friend - Current Principal)

This emotive call is reinforced in those documents which represent the raison d'être for each school - their Mission Statements. The Mission Statements of both Schools A and B share many common emphases; these can be summarised in the identification of four values on which the ethos of the schools is founded:

(a) Spirituality

(b) Learning

(c) Community

(d) Social Justice

Prefacing these values in a number of the Mission Statements of Victorian Mercy schools is a short prologue, which perhaps most succinctly and powerfully summarises the mission of Mercy education across Victoria (and certainly many Catholic schools beyond those):

Inspired by the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, and sustained by the Mercy

tradition, we at (School A), commit ourselves to a love of God, of life, of others

and of learning. (School A Mission Statement)

A common foundation supports each of the four values listed above: the dignity of the human person. Within the Christian tradition, the belief that every human person is sacred, created in the image and likeness of God (Gen 1:26), provides the depth and profundity for not only the Mission Statements of Schools A and B but to a significant extent, the Catholic identity of the schools as well. Certainly, each of these four key values, when viewed together, provides an outstanding framework for nourishing the education of the whole person:

1. Spirituality – With a transcendent reality as inspiration and in Jesus of Nazareth a model of exemplary life, this value must underlie all other aspects of Catholic schools;

2. Learning – Encompassing intellectual, emotional, psychological and physical aspects of learning with a view to educating the whole person;

3. Community – Humans are social creatures who are nourished through right relationships and when given the opportunity they should love and care for each other; and

4. Justice – Humans are called to work for the Kingdom of God in their lives through education and service.

The centrality of the call to work towards education of the whole person in Catholic education and Catholic schools provides both the foundations for analysis of the data in this chapter, as well as the point of confluence for the various themes identified.

The importance of demonstrating a commitment to holistic education is illustrated in the powerful metaphor coined below by School B - Deputy Principal to describe the responsibilities of a leader towards both students and staff:

(Educational leadership is) perception of teaching as a vocation not a job. We're

not making cardboard boxes. These are people and, if you're not willing to give it

everything, go and make cardboard boxes…. Teachers do change kids' lives for

good or ill. So, as a leader in the school, it's a heavy responsibility to ensure that

> *what you're doing, particularly in curriculum, is something that changes kids'*
> *lives for the better and that, in a Catholic school, you're actually challenging*
> *unjust social structures and not perpetuating them.*

This argument is a compelling one. Within Catholic schools, teachers and educational leaders are not dealing with cold, featureless cardboard boxes, containers simply to be decorated on the outside with skills in sports and the Performing Arts, crammed full of facts and figures inside and then packed into pallets upon graduation, ready for distribution into the world at large. No, the vocation of teaching and the task of Catholic schools is a noble and sacred one. And it is a responsibility that the participants in this research embraced passionately; this enthusiasm was summarised in the following response to questions about the principle(s) underlying leadership in the Catholic school:

> *I think, for me, it's about the fact that (the College is) there to provide an*
> *experience of Catholic education that shapes people's lives. (Therefore as*
> *leaders of the school), you're not there to run a business. You're not there to*
> *manage a product. It is about human beings and that is your core responsibility.*
>
> <div align="right">(School A - Deputy Principal C)</div>

As stated earlier, the commitment of each research participant to full human personhood as the basis tenet of Catholic schools was remarkable. Most interviewees could articulate what this fundamental principle entailed for the school as a whole and specifically for their responsibilities within the school SLT. They were also able to add colour and passion to these responses through metaphors and personal anecdotes. It is the latter which indicates that this commitment to holistic education is not simply theory and talk; it is lived out and witnessed to.

5.4.4   *Witnesses to Faith – Walking the Talk*

The prime responsibility for developing and nourishing the unique school climate found within a Catholic school falls to the teachers and educational leaders of that school. Paralleling the embrace of holistic education described above, the interview data suggests that it is a responsibility that the leaders accept unconditionally. Although only three of nine participants interviewed directly mentioned the importance of personal witness as a

Catholic school leader, the responses of other interviewees to similar issues (such the education of the whole person) suggest that most recognise its importance.

The response below allows examination of the contemporary implications of the Vatican's call to 'a synthesis of culture, faith and life' (Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977):

> *That the day-to-day activities of teaching and learning, are underpinned by the teachings of the Catholic Church and we actually live it out, even though we may not verbalise it; we must role model it. That it is faith in action in terms of students seeing us in our interactions with them.... We're explicit about it and we're explicit about why we do it.* (School A - Deputy Principal A)

Role-modelling the aspects that exemplify a Catholic school certainly constitutes offering faith witness, but the understanding which comes even more strongly through the data is the notion of witness offered through journeying with students and staff. This theme is reflected in a response that immediately prefaced the statement of School A - Deputy Principal A above:

> *The human dignity of each individual, that we take the young person as they present, we acknowledge that they bring a richness to our school and our role is to enhance that and broaden that by journeying with them.*

This response highlights how walking alongside, journeying together - teacher and student, teacher and educational leader, and teachers, students and parents - brings together a number of Christian themes. These include gospel witness, the call to pilgrimage, to right relationships, and perhaps most importantly, acknowledging the reality that education in faith is not an easy task, either for those being educated or those educating. The metaphor of walking alongside is reinforced in the response below which summarised how leaders should respond to students (in this case) and staff in personal need:

> *So accepting, recognising that that's where that child is at, at the moment there's enormous torment going on. So we can walk with the child.*
>
> (School B - Deputy Principal)

Walking alongside, journeying together, is also a metaphor that brings to mind two powerful images from the Christian and Mercy traditions:

1.   The Emmaus story (Lk 24:13-35), where the risen Jesus journeys with two of his disciples, enlightening them as to the true meaning of His life, death and resurrection and, in return, is received with hospitality and joy.

2.   Catherine McAuley's commitment to each of the Mercy foundations established in her lifetime; notwithstanding the distance and time required in travel, she spent the first month with each new foundation. This ensured that the leaders and members of each new foundation felt supported in its important first few weeks and energised to succeed, following Catherine's return to Dublin after the first month.

Clearly, the theme of walking together, journeying with, resonates with the Mercy tradition and the example offered in the life and writings of Catherine McAuley, where the value of hospitality requires leaders to go well beyond 'a cup of tea', when engaging with others in authentic Christian relationships. The challenge of Christian hospitality is highlighted in the following response to what constitutes educational leadership in a Catholic school:

> *Certainly Gospel values, and if you're looking at a Catholic school in the Mercy tradition, I think there are some areas there that are picked up in the Mercy area that are not picked up in other schools….Things like hospitality, Gospel hospitality. Treating the human person with the dignity of the human person, so you don't do anything like keeping a person waiting; that sort of thing, that somehow says to the person, 'you don't count, you're not as important as me, you're not as important in this place as someone else is', so I think that's a very strong thing.*   (Critical Friend - Current Principal)

Previous sections have highlighted the common foundations that important aspects of Catholic educational leadership have in the notion of education directed to full human personhood. However, each of these themes cannot merely be subsumed within one or two broader ideas. Rather, the richness of Catholic education is reflected in the particular

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lenses these individual themes bring to the vocation as a whole. This richness is explored in greater detail through an exploration of Duignan's (2008) Framework for Leadership in Catholic Schools.

5.4.5 An Exploration of Duignan's Framework of Shared Leadership in Catholic Schools

Within the semi-structured interviews, each of the five aspects of Duignan's framework was examined, with research participants invited to comment on each aspect and then the framework as a whole. The theme most commonly noted in these conversations about the framework was the absolute commitment of all respondents to the principles of Catholic education as described within the parameters of the framework. My comments to one of the research participants following his deep reflections on the framework reflected this:

> *The fact is that you believe many things at (School A) are deeply Christian, deeply modelled after Christ. It's more than the fact that they are being articulated, but the fact that they are being done, (that) says an awful lot about the people who drive them.*   (Researcher commenting to School A - Deputy Principal A)

My comments point to a more general conclusion: that the real benefits offered by Duignan's framework are not necessarily as an alternative framework for describing the nature of shared leadership in Catholic schools. Rather, the framework allows the identification and exploration of key principles underlying Catholic education, in a form that makes these principles accessible to a wide range of Catholic school leaders. The analysis which follows explores each of the Framework's five elements.

The Element of Community

As discussed in Chapter Three, community is often named by members of a Catholic school community – students, staff and parents - as that intangible quality that differentiates a Catholic school from the local government or independent school. This was reinforced by the responses of research participants with six interviewees arguing that community lies at the heart of what leaders of Catholic schools are called to do. This is most clear in the following response:

You can't have a Catholic school without community...gathered around the
Eucharist, gathered around the Body and Blood of Christ. We are part of the
body. It's the symbolism - different parts of the body make up the whole.
The...principal is not the one part. The principal may be the head if you like, but
you just need the extra parts, otherwise you're not fulfilling the whole.

(Critical Friend- Current Principal)

This unsolicited image, prompted by the simple question posed beforehand, was probably
the most profound offered across the research data as it incorporated Eucharist, shared
leadership teams and Christians' baptismal gift as the Body of Christ. It is a metaphor
that this Critical Friend returned to a number of times when describing his commitment to
shared leadership and the range of gifts and talents available when the right team is
brought together within a Catholic school:

In a sense, how does the one body function using its several parts? The parts of
the body are not just Directors of Mission, Studies, Staff, and Students. They are
also the personalities, leadership styles, intuition, empathy for others and so on,
that enable the team as 'one body' to see the bigger picture.

(Critical Friend – Current Principal)

Another response highlighted that, from a Christian perspective, community is not simply
a term that describes the larger school body of staff and/or students; rather, it represented
the respect and relationships within the SLT:

Each of us is valued, we are all valued for what and who we are, for what we
bring and what we don't bring, for where we are going and how we are growing
and our failings and so on. And that's an area in which shared leadership can
certainly show a model of leadership to the rest of the school community; that we,
as five people, are all very different in our strengths and weaknesses and abilities
and so on, but that we all value each other and we form a small community, a
leadership community, a cohesive team.   (School B - Deputy Principal)

As a value, community has been previously nominated as one found explicitly and
implicitly within the Mission Statements of each of the schools under investigation. The
following statement from the website of school A is typical of the importance of this
value:

> *(School A) aspires to: lead our community into communion with God. To foster interpersonal relationships that reflect the Mercy values of love, mutual respect, justice, hope and service.*

A final response explored the most important element of community as expressed in Catholic schools, that is, the relationships nourished between staff and students and the ways that these relationships can nourish the common good within a school:

> *Schools are dynamic places and we have our ups and downs and it's okay for people to ride that rollercoaster of emotion, to be disappointed in students, sometimes to be disappointed in each other, to celebrate together, to share sadnesses together because all of those things are part of who we are and contribute really to the common good or to what (School B) is about.*
>
> (School B - Principal)

> *The Element of the Common Good*

Six out of nine interviewees and a number of foundational documents nominated the promotion of the common good as core to the mission of the Catholic school. This is succinctly reflected below:

> *The common good is an essential part of a Catholic school. You just can't have a Catholic school and claim to be a Catholic school without that. It seems to me that's the core of the Gospel….*   (Critical Friend- Current Principal)

If the key to promoting the common good is education, and particularly education directed at addressing the systemic and structural injustices affecting the poor and marginalised of society, then it is a principle clearly understood by educational leaders represented in this study. This understanding is reflected in the following response to what constitutes the key principle underlying Catholic education:

> *I think the Catholic schools that I've been in have been such an eclectic mix both academically and socially…that embracing of the marginalized, that bringing in of the lonely is such a cornerstone of any school I've taught in.*
>
> (School B - SLT member B)

From a different perspective, it is an understanding articulated by key school and systemic documents:

(MSEI) colleges will be characterised by openness to students of all diverse backgrounds, mindful of our special obligation for the marginalised and disadvantaged. (Mercy Secondary Education Incorporated, 2008)

Each (Mercy) school endeavours to reflect its commitment to these values (those which Jesus lived and taught) by expressing its unity and solidarity with the poor, the unemployed, the distressed and the marginalised through its service to the community. (School B website)

The statements in these documents are reinforced in one of the key challenges posed to current and future leaders in Mercy education:

Inspirational and visionary leadership will be encouraged through excellent formation programs for both staff and students, who will demonstrate a commitment to social justice and a willingness to advocate for those who are marginalised and disadvantaged.

(Mercy Secondary Education Incorporated, 2008)

The discussion now moves to the specific implications that the notion of the common good has for shared leadership and the paradigm shift towards collaborative leadership in Catholic schools. Within School A, these implications were clearly articulated:

The Common Good and allowing people to be fully human…I'd like to think that we strive to make sure that activities that people are engaged in are life giving for them even though they can sap them of energy….Also it is about allowing people to move from one leadership position to another to find the best one for them or the most suitable and we nurture them in that as well.

(School A - Deputy Principal A)

Beyond these direct responses, the commitment to promotion of the common good may be regarded as a broader acceptance across the participants of the justice imperatives inherent in a well developed model of shared leadership in Catholic schools.

The Element of Subsidiarity

Given the nature of subsidiarity, respondents found it easy to relate this term to shared leadership, and, particularly, the need as contemporary educational leaders to nurture future leaders within their schools. Of the nine interviewees who responded to Duignan's

framework, five spoke specifically on the relevance of subsidiarity to Catholic schools. This is reflected in a School B initiative where responsibilities for the welfare of junior year levels have been delegated to year level teams and teams of homeroom and subject teachers, rather than to year level coordinators. Given the significance of this structural change within the school, it requires ongoing and substantial support from the school leadership. School B - Principal acknowledged this need when responding to a question as to how the small group of (generally) young staff can be given the confidence and/or be empowered to operate as a team and drive ideas at that level:

> *Well, it sounds easy but it's not and part of the reason that it's not is that I think we've got a long way to go. No, we've got some way to go in terms of how these teams are developed and even in our Leadership Team in some ways. I think according to the literature, we're some way towards working as a team but some of our Year Level teams, they're really just groups of people.*

In a different school, the formal means by which subsidiarity can be encouraged is illustrated in this description:

> *In terms of the delegation of decision-making to lower levels…(we promoted the idea that) leadership allows staff to try new initiatives and explore; in doing that responsibility was delegated to those people in year levels and in their faculties, in their role in social justice or liturgy, whatever their role may be.*

> (School A - Deputy Principal A)

The Element of Leadership as Service

Servant leadership is a model of leadership that has been promoted and celebrated widely in the secular domain. It is well understood by leaders in Catholic schools with six out of nine interviewees commenting on this aspect of Duignan's framework. For Catholic schools, it is a model of leadership whose relevance and example should be all the more pointed, given Catholic education is founded on the words and life of Jesus of Nazareth whose leadership exemplified service, compassion and love. The direct relationship between leadership as service and the ministry of Jesus was reflected strongly in the following succinct explanation of what leadership means for School B - Deputy Principal B:

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Certainly, we are (providing) service. It's ministry, the ministry of leadership is how I term it actually. We are ministering to one another. We are ministering to the school. Ministry of service is a better term.

At a more practical level, leadership as service seeks to take the purpose or goal of leadership away from the personal rewards to what leadership can offer to others. As such, it is a clear example of the counter-cultural basis of contemporary Catholic education described earlier. The counter-cultural nature of servant leadership is highlighted below:

I'd argue that we emphasise and model at (School A) that notion of leading the College not for what you gain from that leadership position but what you can do to make (School A) a better place. We also emphasise that with our student leaders, it's not about what they're going to gain, it's about how they can improve (School A) and make it an even better place. (School A - Deputy Principal A)

Within School B, School B - SLT member B identified service as the most noteworthy feature of leadership within the school. Her extended description below brought together several of the features of Duignan's framework, highlighting that leadership within the school is shared:

Leadership as service…I would think that it's pretty current here…as soon as there is a need, an obvious need, not always a spoken need, people are very quick to respond and the Leadership Team, in particular, it seems to me, move in very quickly to support each other but to support the staff as well, in very real and tangible ways. For example, in helping to serve a meal on Parent-Teacher evening as well as supporting staff who might need time off or need an extra person in the classroom. So, it goes right across all of the human needs of the community and doesn't just stay with the working needs of the community. I think the two here are very closely interlinked, the community and the service thing.

The Element of Love-Driven Leadership

This aspect draws heavily on the Ignatian model of identifying and nourishing leadership potential and therefore provides a means for exploring the capacity of organisations, in this case, of Catholic schools, to nurture future leaders. Of all Duignan's categories

explored with the interviewees, it was the least familiar to them, with only half of the respondents reflecting on its usefulness for describing shared leadership in Catholic schools. As a result, the depth of responses was mixed. Nonetheless, those examined below illustrate acceptance of the need by educational leaders to have their eyes open to the talent and potential within their schools.

In a long discussion about the capacity of School A's SLT to nurture leadership within the College, Deputy Principal C explored the concept of love-driven leadership in light of the Christian call to full human personhood:

> *I think there is an awareness amongst our leadership team of the big issues that face Catholic education; one of the biggest being staffing of key areas by people who are driven by the same passion, and who share a sense of vocation. I think Catholic education faces enormous challenges of finding people who view teaching in Catholic schools as more than a job, a nine to five job to pay bills and sustain a particular lifestyle. So I think within the leadership team there is a real awareness of that. I think the awareness enriches the school, it enriches students….After going back and rereading the question, I am thinking of the John 10:10 line about "life to the full" and I see something of that reflected in that component of the Framework.*

All members of School A's SLT showed similar evidence of a commitment to identify and nourish leadership. One means by which this was attempted was through the development of a body called the College Executive, whose role was to allow all staff holding Positions of Leadership the opportunity to contribute to policy discussions and longer term planning within the school. The origin of this body is described below:

> *We had a school Executive which was all the middle leaders and they had specific responsibility as either Heads of Faculties or Year Levels….(The) Executive was seen as shared leadership of the College and (was designed to) have input into the bigger picture and the Executive meetings were really about professional growth of all those on the Executive and the other aim of those meetings was (promoting) vision.* (School A - Principal)

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Continuing to fully support love-driven leadership through such a body posed significant challenges for the school leadership; challenges reflected in the descriptions by SLT members of the subsequent decline in effectiveness of the Executive. The longer the Executive stayed in place, the more its meetings became preoccupied with matters unrelated to vision and leadership:

> *One of the aims (of the Executive) was professional growth. We would do reading, professional reading, and our own PD and that sort of fell away a little bit and…got bogged down in the immediate nitty-gritty concerns, which was never the aim of the meeting but sometimes that was what was uppermost in people's minds when they came to the meeting.* (School A - Principal)

The decline in effectiveness of the School A Executive exemplified the need for school leaders to provide sufficient and ongoing support for initiatives designed to nurture future leadership and/or foster collaborative decision making. Failure to provide such support may, in fact, send a message to the school community that 'love-driven leadership' is a façade, initiated merely to give succour to those calling for greater collaboration and less hierarchy.

The challenges of love-driven leadership are reinforced in the responses of other research participants to this aspect of the Duignan framework (2008). Without alluding specifically to its basis in the Ignatian call to *aptissimi,* the following highlights the importance of the ongoing development of leaders, both for those being developed and for the senior leaders of the school itself:

> *(Leadership development) is an important aspect of the way in which a good school functions. If you've got independent learners amongst the teachers, learners, in that sense, about leadership then that whole teamwork approach is going to be so much better and the school will function far more efficiently. People will be confident to make decisions. They'll know to make them within certain boundaries.* (Critical Friend - Current Principal)

But even more insightful is the Critical Friend- Current Principal's response to my follow-up question on what type of leadership would not be 'love-driven':

I suppose when people are prohibited from taking a risk or having a go, you're afraid of trying something new or something different because of recriminations of one sort or another. Then you're going to have people who'll just keep doing the same thing and education will be stagnant and the school will be stagnant.

Clearly, a danger for schools wishing to improve and provide the most effective opportunities for learning and teaching is the climate of stagnation detailed above. Although neither positive in its nurturing of staff nor in what is offered to students, of most concern is how antagonistic such an environment would be to the holistic education to which Catholic schools aspire. Within this description of what does not nourish leadership is found an important illustration of what is necessary to bring about healthy leadership development within Catholic schools!

A Critical Friend's concerns are highlighted by another principal who argued that success in nurturing leadership is occasionally limited by those staff within the College who are not prepared to improve themselves:

When you look around, there are people (at this College) who are talented and have got potential yet at this school there's quite a cohort of people (who are) good operators, good classroom teachers but they've 'been there, done that'….So that's passed them by and they think well it's now up to somebody else.

(School B - Principal)

To conclude this exploration of Duignan's framework of leadership in Catholic schools, the words of School B - Deputy Principal are useful as they effectively summarised how most respondents embraced the framework as a summary of the key principles underlying Catholic education:

As a community, we need to do that (nurture and share leadership) in terms of the way we approach leadership and the model that is presented here is very much one, in my understanding, of human dignity and the way we should treat people, and should come across in the way that we lead our school.

I return to Duignan's framework for shared leadership in Catholic school in the next chapter, to explore its possible use as a means of exploring the principles underlying Catholic education and as a tool for investigating the nurturing of leadership potential

within schools. The final aspect of this research question investigates the particular values, principles and leadership qualities emphasised within the schools founded by the Sisters of Mercy over the last one hundred and fifty two years in Victoria.

5.4.6   Being a Catholic School in the Mercy Tradition
While only one interview question focused specifically on what it means to be a leader within Catholic schools richly endowed in the Mercy tradition, a significant amount of material was generated in response to this question. In particular, all respondents except one emphasised the importance of the Mercy charism for their schools and their leadership.

The lens brought to the Catholic tradition by virtue of being a Mercy school was identified as having an impact on the schools, their students, staff and leadership in various ways. These effects included the profound legacy offered by the life and work of Catherine McAuley, the influence of Sisters of Mercy in Ireland and in Australia over one hundred and fifty years and the opportunities offered to current educational leaders to interpret the Mercy charism anew for the 21st century.

School A - Deputy Principal A has direct responsibility for nourishing the Mercy charism in School A and her capacity to do this was reflected in the degree to which the Mercy charism permeates all aspects of life and leadership in the school. The particular lens that the Mercy tradition brings to leadership was reflected in this response to the open-ended question on what being an educational leader in a Mercy school means:

> *I suppose knowing the Catherine story, you're taking on the elements of that story and then developing them in myself and passing them on to students. It is all about life-choices and that is the sort of message that we try to get across to the (students), that they do have choices. We talk about making a difference, about transforming the world but we have to see things differently (to do this) and Catherine offers a different way of seeing things in a very enlightening and sound way changing our world. That's what education is about.*

Clearly, the fundamental aspect of leadership highlighted here is the capacity to bring elements of the Mercy story espoused by Catherine McAuley and other founding Sisters of Mercy to this time and this place.

The challenge of bringing these insights to the contemporary contexts of Catholic schools in the Mercy tradition is one embraced by the leadership of these schools:

> *We're a Mercy school and we're taking Catherine's interpretation and we're taking it the next step, to future generations. To ensure the story continues, we can shape it, so it fits young people.* (School A - Deputy Principal A)

It is at the same time, a challenge that articulates a core aspect of charism, gifts of the Holy Spirit directed towards achieving full human personhood:

> *We preserve and celebrate Mercy tradition, keep the Mercy story alive and continue to pass on the tradition to future generations.*
>
> (School A Strategic Plan 2006-2010)

The need for the Mercy charism to speak anew to each generation calls leaders and staff in Mercy schools to understand and witness to the long history of the Sisters of Mercy. These are no easy tasks. The founding Sisters in Ireland and Australia were formidable women committed to their vocation; their success remains a significant inspiration to current leaders in Mercy schools:

> *I think that we always have that awareness of where we come from. We talk about that Mercy story and there's no doubt in my mind that it colours everything we do. It shapes our understanding of what we have inherited and I feel a great sense of responsibility for the part that I am playing at this point in time, on this particular journey, in this community. Coming up to (School A's) one hundred and fifty year anniversary, I feel pretty small in that big picture but, at the same time, have an enormous responsibility to this community.*
>
> (School A - Deputy Principal C)

In both of the schools investigated in this research, and in most of the other schools owned (and administered) by the Mercy Congregation – Melbourne, a clear sense of what it means to be a Mercy school pervades. Although, first and foremost, Catholic, this 'groundedness in Mercy' is evident when interviewees were asked what differentiated their school from a Catholic diocesan school:

> *Well, it's the charism of Catherine McAuley that still lives on. We've inherited this tradition and we stand on the shoulders of those before us and fortunately we still have the sisters' stories.* (School A - Principal)

> *I think in a way it's nicer to be in an order school because you have a set of values and a set of absolute connectedness to the core values of, say, Mercy or Brigidine or whatever.* (School B - SLT member A)

Yet, beyond the Mercy charism imbuing the school with a particular set of values or guidelines on how to live a Christian life, the Mercy charism offers particular challenges for educational leaders within these schools. The challenge of exercising leadership in the spirit of Catherine McAuley and her successors was illustrated in the following extended example that explored the depth required of Mercy hospitality:

> *It's the image of Catherine McAuley at Baggot Street with the hand out inviting the unmarried mother and young child into her home. Now here's a wealthy, upper-class woman inviting someone in off the street to come walk into a nice, clean home. The dignity of the person is what counted, not what clothes she wore, not that she had a child. (Her actions exemplified), "Come in. You are made in the image and likeness of God. Welcome to my home. Welcome to my company". I'm prepared to share with you, my life and the things that are important to me.* (Critical Friend- Current Principal)

This beautiful story also highlighted that the Mercy story is ultimately only a lens for examining and exploring the fundamental story at the heart of all Catholic schools, the life, words and mystery of Jesus of Nazareth. This connection is emphasised in the vision articulated for Mercy education in Victoria:

> *The Sisters of Mercy see education as a major form of responsibility which flows out of their particular vocation in the Church as sharing in the mission of mercy*

of Jesus Christ, who came to reveal to all people the steadfast love of God for

them. (Mercy Secondary Education Incorporated, 2009a)

5.4.7   Summary

The third research question explored "What do the members of senior leadership teams identify as the principles underlying the leadership of Catholic schools in the Mercy tradition?"   The key finding recorded was the overwhelming commitment of SLT members in the two schools to the life-giving opportunities offered by Catholic schools, particularly by their schools being in the Mercy tradition. This commitment was most clearly reflected by the volume, depth and originality of the material received in response to questions which explored the principles underlying the leadership actions of SLT members.

Catholic schools in the 21st century were identified as being counter-cultural, standing firmly against the contemporary secular imperatives of love of self, money and pleasure. It emerged that amongst the key principles underlying Catholic education, the one most strongly seen in this research was a firm insistence on the dignity of the human person, expressed in Catholic schools through an unconditional commitment to holistic education. Essential to ensuring that this commitment is authentic was the expectation that education for full human personhood must be witnessed to by those who work in and lead Catholic schools.

This section also included an examination of the thoughts of research participants on Duignan's Framework for Leadership in Catholic schools: the elements of which are community, the common good, subsidiarity, leadership as service and love-driven leadership. Initially included in this research as an alternative to the secular notion of distributed leadership, responses indicated that Duignan's framework reflected programs that schools had initiated to nourish shared leadership amongst their staff. More importantly, it also facilitated the examination of a number of the key principles of Catholic educational leadership articulated by the SLT members themselves.

The final set of interview responses reviewed the priorities that SLT members identified as fundamental, given their schools' Mercy tradition. The key features which emerged from the research data acknowledged that the rich history of the Sisters of Mercy and the schools they founded, formed the basis of all Mercy schools and facilitated communication of the charism to new generations of young people.

The final research question examines the challenges and opportunities identified by the members of SLTs in Catholic schools today through the notion of mission integrity – the degree to which leaders are able to bridge the gap between the espoused goals of leadership and what is actually achieved.

5.5   Research Question Four:

What opportunities exist for senior leadership teams to enhance the mission integrity of Catholic schools in the Mercy tradition?

5.5.1   Introduction

This final research question examined the effectiveness of shared leadership as perceived by SLTs within Catholic schools, and particularly, the capacity of SLTs to maintain and nourish the key principles of Catholic education addressed in Research Question Three. Grace's work (2002b) has been fundamental in this area, with mission integrity articulated as the capacity to maintain fidelity in practice, and not just in rhetoric, to the distinctive and authentic principles of Catholic education. Interview participants were introduced to this definition and its meaning for the way that SLTs operate in Catholic schools. Participants were challenged to identify and explore issues related to mission integrity in their schools and the opportunities SLTs have to address these.

In responding to this research question, participants tended to identify and describe personal areas of interest rather than broader issues for their SLT or for the school as a whole. This may have been because these questions were generally the final ones posed in each of the interviews and time constraints prevented follow-up questions for clarification. Ironically, the answer that came closest to addressing the role of an SLT working together to address an issue of mission integrity is provided by the interviewee who had been a member of the school's SLT for the shortest time. This response examines how members of an SLT can constructively hold each other accountable for the work being undertaken:

> *I'm sure down the years there'll be times when I'll say, "I would've been happier if it had gone another way" but I think one of the things about shared leadership is that you don't have to agree with every decision, you have to carry the burden together but you don't always have to agree.*   (School B - SLT member B)

Notwithstanding the problems identified above, a number of issues were identified by several participants:

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- The challenge of leadership in contemporary Catholic schools
- The challenge of the Christian narrative in contemporary Catholic schools
- Achieving academic excellence
- Building the Leadership and Teaching Capacities in Catholic Schools

In addition to these challenges, the presence of Mercy hospitality in school communities is explored as an example by which the mission integrity of schools is already being enhanced.

5.5.2   The Challenge of Leadership in Contemporary Catholic Schools

The first two challenges explored in relation to maintaining the mission integrity of Catholic schools highlight the difficulties of leading Catholic schools in a society that in the 21st century is increasingly secular, busier and less communitarian.

The first of these, which examines the challenge of leadership in Catholic schools, was a particular concern for each of the principals interviewed. Their concerns were echoed by two other SLT members as reflected in the following comment of School A – Deputy Principal A:

> *I believe what we try to do within a Catholic school is to be counter-cultural in many ways and I think we do that with our students by trying to get them to challenge what is happening out there in society. As a community, we need to do that in terms of the way we approach leadership. The model that is presented here is very much one, in my understanding, of human dignity and the way we should treat people, and should come across in the way that we lead our school.*

From my interviews with School A's SLT, it is clear that the leadership model witnessed to by School A - Deputy Principal A, and advocated by the team itself, is based on the core Christian principles of justice, dignity, compassion and mercy.

In the following reflection, one Critical Friend argued that it will be increasingly difficult to attract and retain Catholic school leaders who are practising Catholics and who are capable of providing the leadership in faith and spirituality required in schools whose

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raison d'être is the Christian education of the whole person. This key challenge is described below:

> *The difficulty and challenge for leaders is to have access to staff who actually do have the background and the faith beliefs. It certainly was easier twenty-five years ago, I could look at applications for jobs and I would see that this person's involved in their parish….(At that stage), they may have been good teachers but they're not involved in parish, so I won't offer them a job. They may well have been going to mass but they weren't doing anything else in the parish. (Now), it's very hard to know whether people are practising, whether they've got any interest at all in the beliefs of the Catholic Church. It's getting harder and harder. They can all give you the answers. They know what to say.*

> (Critical Friend- Current Principal)

The challenge of ensuring the Catholic identity of Catholic schools is a fundamental one for members of the SLTs of Catholic schools. However, it is made more difficult by the challenge of engaging young people in school communities with the central truth of the Catholic tradition – the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

5.5.3   The Challenge of the Christian Narrative in Contemporary Catholic Schools
The same environment that has made ensuring the Catholic identity of Catholic schools an issue for the leadership of Catholic schools has made the promulgation of the central message of the Christian tradition even more difficult.

The challenge that this poses to the mission integrity of Catholic schools and, therefore, to the SLTs of these schools, was highlighted by two respondents who contrasted the openness of young people to the story of Catherine McAuley with their (lack of) connection to the Gospel accounts of Jesus Christ. The Christian narrative is difficult for many teachers, possibly more so for young people. Articulating the paschal mystery of Jesus, fully human yet fully divine, contrasts with the basic humanity evident in the story of the foundress of the Sisters of Mercy:

I think in some ways people can relate to a Catherine story more easily than they can to a Jesus story and there are lots of Catherine stories. Catherine could have been you or I. (School A - Deputy Principal C)

This finding initially came as a surprise but, on reflection, serves as a defining issue for the mission integrity of Catholic schools. Catholic schools cannot lose sight of the fact that their basis is in the Easter event - how it underlies the Christian understanding of Jesus of Nazareth and how it challenges humans to live their lives. This personal impact of this finding was reflected in the Research Journal entry below:

This notion of it (engaging the Catholic school community with Jesus of Nazareth) being a challenge or tension is an evocative one as it suggests that the problem is one that bubbles beneath the surface, always there but perhaps not acknowledged or named. But as a tension, it can reach a point beyond which limits of elasticity fail and the 'hidden' issue becomes a public scandal. (School A - Deputy Principal C's) words are like the biblical prophets calling us to prepare for the Messiah. They require Mercy schools to remember that they are Catholic schools in the Mercy tradition, Catholic and Christian before Mercy, and as such, Jesus Christ is the source and summit of their mission. Jesus must be the starting point for Christian educational leadership notwithstanding the challenges presented by that message in today's secularised world, challenges clearly identified in the exchange (above). (Research Journal: February 22, 2009)

Although mentioned by only two of nine interviewees as a challenge to mission integrity, the Christian narrative was one of the foci for the second set of discussions with the Critical Friends. Their responses reinforce that addressing the challenge requires careful consideration of what is already being undertaken within individual schools:

Having Jesus Christ as the archetypal witness to life for students, staff and families is certainly a profoundly challenging issue. It is good for educators to remember the words of Jesus, 'I am come that they may have life and have it to the full.' If our schools are places which encourage students to strive for and achieve fullness of life, they are responding to that challenge.

(Critical Friend - Current Principal)

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We need to be careful to remember that Catherine is only a small reflection of God when compared to Jesus....SLT members need to develop their own personal relationship with Jesus before they can lead others to do this. Every opportunity should be taken to lead staff and students to a greater knowledge of the Gospels as they show who Jesus is. (Critical Friend - Current Principal)

Given the importance of the task, members of SLTs must be unequivocal witnesses to Christ within their schools, challenging students and staff to recognise the fundamental importance of the Christian narrative to Catholic education. It is, perhaps, the key challenge to the mission integrity of the SLTs investigated in this research.

5.5.4 Achieving Academic Excellence

One challenge articulated passionately by a number of SLT members was that Catholic schools must continue to improve their credentials when it comes to the learning and teaching opportunities offered to students. Notwithstanding the importance of the spiritual, community and social justice dimensions of Catholic schools, a school fundamentally exists to promote effective student learning; as Melbourne Mercy Congregational leader, Sister Kath Tierney RSM highlighted, "Mercy schools must be, first and foremost, good schools" (2004).

Three specific issues were highlighted by respondents within this challenge:
1. The learning opportunities offered to students for whom traditional curriculum offerings are ineffective;
2. The opportunities offered to the academic 'high-flyers' amongst the student population; and
3. The broader issue of encouraging and rewarding teaching excellence amongst the staff in Catholic schools.

A total of six out of ten respondents discussed this issue, reflecting diverse opinions. Concerns in relation to the learning opportunities offered to students in the classroom

revealed a perceived over-emphasis on Pastoral Care which, although fundamental to the notion of Catholic schooling, was viewed as having precedence over excellence in learning and teaching. These concerns were reflected in the following comment from a Critical Friend:

> *I think that for too long, in Catholic schools, Pastoral Care has been seen as different from, and possibly more important than, excellence in teaching and learning. We need to recognize that one of the most important aspects of good pastoral care in schools is the provision of challenging and innovative educational experiences for students. The encouragement and recognition of good study habits and of academic success can change the educational climate of a school.* (Critical Friend - Former Principal)

The concerns were also seen clearly in the following comments about the deficiencies in the programs offered to academic high achievers in School B:

> *I don't think we do nearly a good enough job of looking after our high-flyers. Traditionally, over the years, we have put all our energies into rescuing the fallen and the weak and I think that's fantastic…but I think there is a short-change of justice, I really do.* (School B - SLT member B)

The complexity of this issue was evident in the concerns raised by School B - SLT member B whose passion for student learning is frustrated by the competing demands of providing opportunities for high flyers, for the broad middle band of students and for those for whom traditional classroom programs are inappropriate. However, this frustration was balanced by earlier comments from School B - SLT member B, which affirm holistic education as the fundamental means by which Catholic schools can address the effects of structural inequity and/or marginalisation on the lives of students and their families as this short dialogue indicates:

> *(School B - SLT member B) The Catholic schools that I've been in have been such an eclectic mix both academically and socially…that that embracing of the marginalized, that bringing in of the lonely is a cornerstone of any school I've taught in but it can only come from loving the kids and feeling free to feel that way.*
> *(Researcher) Is that a challenge for Catholic schools?*

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> *(School B - SLT member B) Look, I think it is. I think because you do embrace*
> *those students it places huge challenges in my area (that of teaching and*
> *learning) in terms of achievement and performance.*

This example highlights how educating for justice requires decisions that institutionalise equitable access to resources within Catholic schools. However, such decisions may in fact restrict the capacity of others within the system to access resources for extended or accelerated learning.

As mentioned earlier, responses to this theme differed, with three interviewees highlighting the importance of Catholic schools providing a holistic education and the challenges that this presents to all SLT members. School A - Deputy Principal A argued that excellence must be regarded as all students within a school community achieving their best, not necessarily a small number receiving very high marks:

> *We're an educational institution to start with, so leading in ways that will enable*
> *students to experience academic success, so wherever they are taking them to*
> *the best possible point they can be. I'm not saying that all our kids are going to*
> *be scholars but that needs to be our primary focus and the primary focus of the*
> *Principal and SLT.*

One of the strongest critiques of the single-minded pursuit of academic excellence was posited by School A - Deputy Principal B who argued that the key to student achievement must be an unconditional commitment by teachers to each student in their classes, ensuring each student becomes more fully human:

> *As a leader in a Catholic school, I have to clearly identify what I think teaching is*
> *all about and I think teaching is all about making students more fully human. So,*
> *to make a student more fully human, students must be engaged and excited about*
> *learning…You have to make them respond with wonderment and awe at what*
> *you're teaching…*

Teachers of the highest quality are required to ensure the full engagement of every student in class, the provision of learning opportunities that achieve this and, above all, the promotion of the whole person. The provision of an educational environment that

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supports these fundamental elements is the responsibility of a school's SLT. Therefore, regardless of whether or not academic achievement is in question in the selected schools, their SLTs must be unconditionally committed to ensuring that their school environment, professional learning programs and curricula enable such teaching to occur.

The next issue extended this theme with respondents arguing that building the leadership and teaching capacity of Catholic schools is a key challenge of mission integrity for SLTs.

5.5.5   Building the Leadership and Teaching Capacities of Catholic Schools
The final challenge to mission integrity identified by a range of interviewees focused on issues surrounding staff in Catholic schools. Dealing with staff was an issue identified by SLT members as requiring significant time, energy and emotion. Yet, for the SLT members interviewed, simply removing under-performing staff from classrooms was not an option. Rather, the Catholic education principle of seeking to educate the whole human person applies to teachers and staff as well as to students. Notwithstanding frustrations with a teacher's pedagogical deficiencies or their inability to foster right relationships within their classrooms, SLT members need to assist teachers to become the best practitioners they can be. In so doing, SLT members enable staff to more closely witness to the mission of their schools.

This complex issue was explored in depth in the following extended excerpt from my interview with School A - Deputy Principal A through the use of a metaphor credited to Michael Fullan (2001). The excerpt shows how the school's value of mercy can be brought into play when dealing with a staff member's difficulties:

> *(Researcher) Mission integrity challenges educational leaders to address the possible gap between 'what is done' and 'what ought to be done'. Do you believe this is an issue for leaders of Catholic schools? Why?*
> *(School A - Deputy Principal A) I think the issue is looking at what we say we do and then how that translates in reality and that might link to your question about "Are there times where being Mercy is difficult?"*

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(Researcher) Why are the two questions linked?

(School A - Deputy Principal A) Because in our understanding of Mercy in the Catholic tradition, we know that we should respond in a particular way. Doing that can be to the detriment of the whole community when (you're simply responding to) an individual. (At School A), we're not very good at dealing with the challenges that presents in relation to staff. Where a member of staff really isn't capable of performing their position; yet, rather than taking action that will be better for our students, we put in interim measures to try and carry the problem....A more ruthless approach suggested by Fullan is that you need to get the right people in the bus in the right seats and you need to get rid of those that are at odds with what you are about.

(Researcher) What are the reasons why you're not able to get the right people on the bus or change the people that are on the bus to get the right people on the bus?

(School A - Deputy Principal A) It comes down to that pastorally-caring, that Mercy aspect of nurturing the individual trying to bring out their gifts and talents and sometimes we try to do it when there is very little evidence that those gifts and talents exist.

Another staffing issue identified by SLT members was the situation of some experienced staff who desired only to complete the minimum work required in schools. They have become unwilling to be involved in co-curricular activities, are resistant to major changes in the school and may be part-time which can exacerbate the other problems. This issue was highlighted in the following comment:

So that's passed them by (an unconditional commitment to teaching) and they think, "Well, it's now up to somebody else". These are people who are probably in their late forties or into their fifties; many of them have now gone to a part-time position here at the school....Over the next four to six years, (they) will be reaching retirement, they're sort of easing themselves into it. When you've got forty per cent of them (part-time and possibly in this category), where do the

young people see? Who do they turn to? Who are the examples of leaders?

(School A - Principal)

The need for individual staff members to take responsibility for their own professional development was identified. One response to this issue affirmed that responsibility for calling these underperforming staff to account rests with the school's Principal and SLT. A former principal and Critical Friend argued that the improvement must be directed by school leaders and facilitated through professional development:

> *The challenge for people in leadership is to generate among the staff as a whole an atmosphere of enthusiasm for change. Often it may be by bringing a speaker on the topic into the school or having staff members share their ideas and experiences of implementing the change and the benefits that have resulted in terms of student response. Professional conversation among staff members is one of the best catalysts for change.* (Critical Friend - Former Principal)

Alternatively, another Critical Friend suggested that each SLT member may need to discuss with individual staff whether the holistic pedagogy required in Catholic schools is too much for them to embrace:

> *I think an essential part of my role, and a part of the role that I've got to encourage other leaders to take on…(is) to say to people, "Look, this is what we are on about"….If this isn't what you're about, for your own sake, you should be going somewhere else because you'll never succeed here. You'll never get fulfilment here.* (Critical Friend – Current Principal)

In his challenge here, Critical Friend - Current Principal has gone to the heart of mission integrity, arguing that the issue of staff accountability and suitability to continue in a Catholic school can only be addressed, or at least, start to be addressed through a collective and concerted effort by all members of the school's SLT. Yet this principal also makes the important point that some of the longest serving teachers in Catholic schools are those who embody the mission of the school as they the best teachers, most outstanding leaders, and those most loved by the student population. Therefore, just as SLTs need to hold to account those not pulling their weight, SLTs must celebrate those teachers and staff whose influence is positive:

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We must balance the enthusiasm, energy, innovation and inexperience of the new with the conservative and tired old staff. We have to say it is okay to try something and make a mistake. We need to encourage people to work in teams so that the new ideas have a chance to surface. Not all will be picked up….Some will and that is positive. SLT members need to be out there individually and, as teams, addressing these issues and affirming those who are initiating new ideas and acknowledging the conservatives who do occasionally take up a new approach. (Critical Friend - Current Principal)

The final issue canvassed in this section on mission integrity celebrates an opportunity, rather than highlighting a challenge for SLT members. Both schools in this research were identified by a number of their leaders as being notable for the good humour, laughter and affirmation exhibited by members of their school communities. The presence of such a warm and life-giving culture suggests that the schools and their SLTs are effectively promoting a core Mercy value – hospitality.

5.5.6   *Nourishing a Culture of Hospitality*

This examination of the priorities that SLTs need to address to enhance mission integrity concludes by highlighting a fundamental aspect of school culture currently evident in both selected schools. The presence of authentic interpersonal relationships and a sense of hospitality suggest that although SLTs need to address particular challenges within Catholic schools, there are other dimensions that, if present, need to be affirmed by SLTs as they contribute significantly to the mission of the school.

In each of the interviews, there was clear evidence within the SLTs, and by implication, within the school communities, of a substantial reservoir of good humour and hospitality. Respondents named it in a variety of ways – laughter in the schoolyard, friendships within the SLT or formal displays within school staff meetings. Members of the SLTs believed that these two schools were imbued with what Catherine McAuley would have celebrated as the essence of Christian hospitality. Three comments illustrated the

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strength of this sense of well-being; the first spoke directly about the atmosphere within School B:

> *This is a very happy school. There's lots of laughter around the place….There's good humour. There's good acceptance….I do bus duty after school as does the Principal and I see the kids, they're walking along talking and laughing. They're not down, there's laughter, happiness….We are a staff who greet each other, we always say good morning to each other, and "Hello, how are you?"*

<div align="right">(School B - Deputy Principal)</div>

The second observation is offered by a relatively new member of the School B leadership team. The warmth, respect and generosity found there is identified as the SLT's defining feature:

> *The thing that I do enjoy here is we do have is we laugh a lot, we celebrate funny things in the Leadership Team and it takes the pressure off…we enjoy one another's company whilst we're at work and I suppose because we're new as a team, we've got a bit of an opportunity for a bit of light banter and find out a little bit about one another and we often do that during our reflection.*

<div align="right">(School B - SLT member A)</div>

A final comment was made by the Principal of School B who identified the formal affirmation of a staff member at each staff meeting as a unique accolade, one that spoke clearly of the sense of Christian communion found amongst the staff there:

> *One of the things that…is a standing item on the staff meeting agenda is called affirmation – (here) people acknowledge the work of others. It's not called leadership in the strictest meaning of that but it really opens up everyone at the staff meeting, teaching staff and non-teaching staff to the range of ways in which people are valued and the ways that people quietly go about their business.*

This final theme examined in Research Question Four suggests that not only can mission integrity be enhanced by SLTs addressing issues that may prevent schools from fulfilling their mission; additionally, SLTs can also nourish mission integrity through encouragement of those capacities, themes or programs that celebrate the positive aspects of Catholic schools.

The next section examines the key similarities and differences between the data collected from Schools' A and B in relation to the four Research Questions.

5.6   A Comparison between Schools A and B

As has been highlighted earlier in this chapter, a number of the themes across the four Research Questions were commented upon by all research participants with no differences discernable between the responses of the SLT members of School A and School B. The themes that were universally embraced included the importance of teams, teamwork and synergy to the effectiveness of the school's SLT; the need to build leadership capacity within the organisation; a commitment to educating the whole person within Catholic schools; and the importance of embracing the Mercy charism for their schools and their leadership.

Differences in tenure and composition of their SLTs provided an important counterpoint between the two schools investigated in this research. School A's SLT had been in place with the same membership for seven years at the time of this research while School B's SLT had only had its current composition for a few months, having had major changes in the SLT over the previous two years. The way in which participants described the concept of teamwork provided a lens for exploring the key difference between the SLTs of the two schools.

School A was notable for the respect held, and friendship expressed, within its SLT; relationships that reflected many years working together as teaching colleagues and educational leaders. The value that each School A SLT member assigned to these relationships was reflected in the following thoughts of School A - Principal on shared leadership:

> *I think we complemented each other quite well and we were quite different, really different, people in many ways…and we certainly didn't all think the same way….You know some people are good at the planning, some people are good*

with the creative thinking, others put it into shape, others come up with how will

that seem to others, how will we convey this?   (School A - Principal)

This response illustrates how teams can successfully bring together a diversity of opinions, skills and personalities. An alternative perspective is provided by School A – Deputy Principal A who uses the term 'like-mindedness' to describe their teamwork. Used to represent members of a team moving in the same direction, like-mindedness described concerted action by School A's SLT, given the lack of an SLT charter or alternate statement of mission. I was initially used to describe how the SLT responded to the pressures created by the development and implementation of a school-wide curriculum initiative:

> *We have a great shared sense of purpose, direction and vision that has allowed us*
> *to work very well together….There has to be something there, a 'like-*
> *mindedness',…in the terms of the way we click, when we come together and work*
> *together, the way we back each other up, tremendous support for one another.*
>
> (School A - Deputy Principal A)

Although not described as clearly as this by other members of School A's SLT, their descriptions of the operation of the team reinforce its perceived effectiveness.

In contrast to School A, when asked about their capacity to work as members of a team, responses from members of School B's SLT were more explicit with aspects of teamwork more clearly evident. The following comments from two of School B's SLT members illustrate these aspects, the first of which is knowledge of, and a commitment towards, a agreed direction:

> *Shared vision (is) knowing where you're heading as a group of people. Allowing*
> *people to, not always together but trusting people to go off and do something (and*
> *having) trust and faith in what they have found out and what they might suggest.*
> *So working together, but also independently and feeding that into a team.*
>
> (School B - SLT member A)

The second comment highlights the importance of robust discussions and diversity of opinions within a SLT, while reinforcing the need for the team to achieve consensus:

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Working together for a common result where each member's point of view is acknowledged and respected but at the end of the day, you need to make a decision and sometimes there has got to be compromise.

(School B - SLT member C)

At one level, the responses of both schools to the role of teamwork within in their SLT are different. However, at a deeper level, the commitment of SLT members in both schools to the key principles of Catholic education is reflected in their identification of the importance of shared vision, respectful relationships and diversity of skills and opinions to effective SLT operation.

In conclusion, the similarities between the themes raised in the responses of the SLTs of Schools' A and B numerically outnumbered their differences. But, more importantly, the themes both SLTs agreed on reflected the core principles of Catholic education and therefore the principles by which the mission integrity of their schools could be enhanced. Differences in responses from the two SLTs reflected the specific length of tenure and composition of the teams.

5.7   Summary

In this chapter, the data collected through each of the four data collection techniques (semi-structured interviews with members of the SLTs of the selected schools and with two Critical Friends, analysis of foundational documents of the schools and systemic educational authorities and a Research Journal) was analysed. The data obtained was organised according to the four Research Questions framing the thesis.

In the first Research Question, the degree to which individual SLT members from the selected schools experienced shared or collaborative leadership was explored. The key issues confronting contemporary educational leaders emerging from the data including an increased workload and the challenge of providing faith or spiritual leadership in a Catholic school. All research participants expressed strong support for shared leadership

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and believed that, in the 21st century, leadership can no longer be the province of a single person.

In the second Research Question, the effectiveness of SLTs in the selected schools and the roles and responsibilities of the principal within this structure were examined. Universal support for teams and teamwork across the schools was reflected in the research, particularly at the leadership level. Participants endorsed the 'wisdom of the crowd' and highlighted the importance of open, robust and honest communication within teams. A need was identified for SLTs to be guided by a charter or statement of mission and for formal, periodic reviews of the team. The principal was described as being the person most responsible for direction setting for the school and for the SLT. Principals were also regarded as responsible for ensuring that SLT decisions were translated into policies and programs. An emerging area of responsibility for SLTs was identified as nurturing the next generation of leaders within their own schools.

The third Research Question sought to identify the principles underlying Catholic education and, therefore, the principles to which SLTs must witness, and seek to enhance within their schools. The key finding in this area was the commitment expressed by interviewees to Catholic education and its underlying principles, identified as:

- The education of the whole person;
- A need to be counter-cultural and to critique unquestioned contemporary values;
- A desire for the common good and social service; and
- An acknowledgement that commitment to these principles cannot be half-hearted; rather, they must be courageously witnessed in the lives of all teachers and leaders within Catholic schools.

Given the selected schools were both Catholic schools in the Mercy tradition, the research examined the ways in which being a Mercy school affected the mission and priorities of the schools and their SLTs. The data highlighted the responsibility that SLT members held for bringing the rich tradition of Catherine McAuley and the Sisters of

Mercy to this time and this place, as well as the particular contemporary challenge offered by the Mercy call to hospitality.

In the final Research Question, the opportunities that SLT members identified for their teams to enhance the mission integrity of their school were explored. Data analysis suggested the interviewees were more focused on individual school concerns than on issues concerning their SLT or the school more broadly. Nonetheless, a number of significant issues emerged for schools and systemic authorities. These included:

- The ongoing need to ensure that schools remained authentically Catholic;
- The challenge of engaging young people in Catholic schools with the Christian story;
- The question of what academic excellence should mean for a contemporary Catholic school; and
- The ongoing issue of retaining and attracting quality teachers.

These challenges were balanced by identification of a key strength of Catholic schools in the Mercy tradition: that their atmosphere is imbued by quality interpersonal relationships and a sense of hospitality, reflected in a rich and public sense of good humour, affirmation and laughter.

The chapter concluded with an examination of some similarities and differences in the responses and actions of the two SLTs. Similarities reflected the teams' commitments to fundamental principles such as the foundations of Catholic education, the opportunities offered by collaborative leadership and the importance of teams, teamwork and synergies. Differences reflected the composition and length of tenure of both SLTs.

In the final chapter, the findings identified above are more fully explored. The findings are organised according to the four Research Questions with the significance of the findings critiqued in light of the literature. A number of conclusions are drawn and suggestions are made for future investigation. Recommendations are made for schools and their SLTs, for the systemic authorities responsible for Catholic education and for the

Sisters of Mercy and their delegated authorities who bear specific responsibility for the schools investigated in this research.

Chapter 6

Conclusions, Recommendations and a Personal Note

6.1   Introduction

Given the paradigm shift towards shared or collaborative leadership that has occurred in schools over the last twenty-five years, an exploration of how this movement has been expressed in schools is timely and is of significant personal interest to me as a member of an SLT in a Catholic school in the Mercy tradition.

This research was designed to explore the capacity of senior leadership teams to enhance the mission integrity of selected Catholic schools in the Mercy tradition by:

- Examining the individual experience of shared leadership for members of these SLTs;
- Examining the degree to which SLTs contributed to effective leadership in the selected schools;
- Exploring the foundational principles underlying Catholic schools and Catholic education as articulated by SLT members;
- Identifying the degree to which SLTs maintained and nourished these foundational principles by enhancing the mission integrity within their Catholic schools.

This final chapter briefly re-states the research purpose and the process by which the research was conducted. The findings are discussed in light of the literature pertaining to the research focus and conclusions are drawn. Recommendations are suggested for schools and their SLTs, for systemic authorities responsible for Catholic education and for the Sisters of Mercy and their delegated authorities who have specific responsibility for the schools investigated in this research. Suggestions for possible further investigation are offered and the chapter concludes with some personal remarks.

6.2   The Design of the Research

This research reflects an epistemology of constructivism, with knowledge generated through a dialogue between the researcher and research participants. A choice was made to pursue 'thick descriptions' within the research through the use of semi-structured interviews and a Research Journal. Documents describing the foundational principles of the contexts being studied were also analysed.

The research focused on the SLTs of two Victorian Catholic schools in the Mercy tradition. The first of these is a single-sex school located in a large regional city. The second school is co-educational and is located in a smaller regional town. These contexts were appropriate for this research with their SLT members reflecting significant length and breadth of professional experience.

The research process included the use of four complementary research instruments. Table 12 (overleaf) details these four instruments and provides comments on the efficacy of each data collection method. The data collection methods selected proved to be appropriate for this investigation. In summary, the documents analysed provided succinct summaries of key school principles; the semi-structured interviews generated vivid, 'thick' descriptions that facilitated exploration of the Research Questions from SLT members and Critical Friends; and the reflective Research Journal was a powerful tool for the researcher to record insights, issues to be followed up and 'emotive moments'.

The data from the interviews was transcribed manually and, together with the document analysis and research journal, was analysed using the four Research Questions as guides. Data analysis occurred in three stages: data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing and verification. This process concluded with the writing of the data analysis chapter. The data analysis process used in this research was rigorous and appropriate. The manual transcription of interviews facilitated insights that were developed into themes and sub-themes during the data reduction and conclusion drawing stages. Use of the Research Journal (Table 12 - overleaf) and large posters complemented this theme

development with some themes omitted and others added as further analysis was carried out.

Research Aspect	Details	Comments
1. Document Analysis	Analysis of a number of foundational documents produced by the selected schools and the systemic authorities responsible for these schools.	• The foundational documents used were public documents and, therefore, well researched. As a result, documents provided succinct summaries of key school principles
2. Semi-structured Interviews	A series of semi-structured interviews with members of the SLTs of both schools.	• The process by which interview questions were developed was rigorous with draft questions piloted and trialled. • The final interview questions generally facilitated exploration of Research Questions. • Time constraints and the nature of semi-structured interviews resulted in some questions not be canvassed with some participants. • Semi-structured interviews facilitated the collection of vivid descriptions from participants into SLT operations and the principles of Catholic education. • Although time-consuming, the insights obtained through manual transcription of the interviews were invaluable.
3. Research Journal	A reflective Research Journal that was kept by the researcher throughout the processes of data collection and analysis.	• Extremely useful during the extended process of interview transcription and data analysis. The journal allowed insights to be recorded and follow-ups required to be noted.
4. Dialogue with Critical Friends	A series of semi-structured interviews with Critical Friends.	• The major benefit of these interviews was the capacity to access the wisdom and experience of this group of current and former principals. • It was useful to return to this group after initial data analysis to ask follow up questions. • An improvement in this aspect would have been to have a greater number of Critical Friends to consult with.
Table 12. *The Research Process and its Efficacy*		

The next four sections outline the conclusions drawn from the research findings and are organised under the four Research Questions.

6.3   Conclusions from Research Question One

6.3.1   Introduction

The first Research Question asked, "What is the experience of shared leadership for the individual members of SLTs in the selected schools?" Research participants indicated that educational leadership is a rewarding but increasingly challenging and complex task. Leaders are expected to work harder and take responsibility for a greater number and range of areas within their schools than has been the case in the past. In most respects, educational leadership was shared across the SLT, with effective leadership of schools in the 21st century requiring the breadth of opinions, experience and capabilities found across a leadership team. One key challenge in Catholic schools for those involved in collaborative models of leadership was providing direction in, and witnessing to, faith leadership of the school community.

6.3.2   The Challenge of Contemporary Educational Leadership

This research confirmed the argument posited in the literature that educational leadership is becoming more complex (Carlin, d'Arbon, Dorman, Duignan, & Neidhart, 2003). While acknowledging the need to take increased responsibility for a range of issues beyond the traditional classroom concerns (Flockton, 2001), leaders noted that the demands of government and systemic authorities are growing as more accountability measures are introduced (Grace, 2002a; Seddon & Marginson, 2001; Watson, 2009). This additional complexity and workload, coupled with a shortage of qualified teachers aspiring to educational leadership have driven a movement across all educational spheres to greater sharing, collaboration or distribution of leadership (Cannon, 2004; Carlin, d'Arbon, Dorman, Duignan, & Neidhart, 2003; d'Arbon, Duignan, Duncan, Dwyer, & Goodwin, 2001; Wallace, 2001). However, SLT members recognised that no individual possesses all the knowledge or possesses every skill necessary for effective leadership; rather, the richness inherent in shared or distributed leadership needs to be harnessed.

It was observed that some principals are using the members of a school's SLT to better inform their own decision-making and knowledge of what is occurring within a school.

As a result, the implementation of decisions was perceived to be more effective as more leaders were able to exert influence to achieve the directions set (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003b).

6.3.3   The Need for Passion in Leadership

In their exploration of shared leadership, participants identified a number of characteristics of effective leadership. Reinforcing the importance of the symbolic and cultural aspects of leadership (Sergiovanni, 1984), SLT members emphasised the need for leaders to exude passion - for their educational principles, for the vocation of teaching and through a commitment to bring each young person in their schools to full human personhood (Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977).

6.3.4   Faith and Spiritual Leadership

Within Catholic schools, an added dimension to the secular pressures driving schools and systemic authorities towards models of shared or collaborative leadership is the increasing need for leaders to exercise faith or spiritual leadership (Belmonte & Cranston, 2007; McEvoy, 2006). Although identified by the literature as an area of concern, this research indicated that faith leadership is an area with which these principals and SLT members feel very comfortable. Indeed, a number of respondents argued that this was the area of leadership that was most meaningful for them.

The capacity of SLTs to enhance mission integrity (Grace, 2002b) was affirmed by principals and SLT members who expressed their commitment to faith leadership and acknowledged their shared responsibility for developing this leadership dimension in aspirant leaders within their schools. The role of the Religious Education Coordinator (REC) or Deputy Principal – Mission was regarded as being particularly important in assisting the leadership team to meet this challenge (Catholic Education Office - Melbourne, 2005). There is some evidence that systemic authorities recognise the urgency in supporting educational leaders in this aspect (Catholic Education Office - Melbourne, 2009).

6.3.5   Summary

Analysis of the material received in response to Research Question One generated a number of findings from the SLT members of the selected schools. These included acknowledgement that in both schools, leadership was shared; that collaboration facilitated the bringing together of a diversity of skills and talents; the importance of passion for, and witness to, the vocation of teaching by leaders in Catholic schools; and, the opportunities that SLT members within Catholic schools present to provide faith and spiritual leadership individually and as a team.

It is clear from the research findings that SLT members in the selected schools valued the opportunities offered by shared or collaborative leadership. The support for shared and collaborative leadership offered by principals indicated that SLTs assisted them significantly in their role. There were no discernable differences between the two schools in relation to this question.

The next section examines the findings concerning the effectiveness of shared or collaborative leadership in the selected schools.

6.4   Conclusions from Research Question Two

6.4.1   Introduction

The second Research Question, "How does shared leadership contribute to the effective leadership of the selected schools" explored the contributions of shared or collaborative leadership in the two schools under investigation. The specific constitution of SLTs in the schools was examined and, in particular, the degree to which teamwork and the synergies that result contributed to more effective school leadership. Within the broader themes of teams and teamwork, the opportunities offered by engaging a diversity of talents and skills were examined. The processes SLTs had in place for reviewing their effectiveness were investigated and the existence of a mission or charter to inform SLT decision-making was ascertained.

A number of questions in the semi-structured interviews investigated the role and responsibilities of the principal within the SLT. Examination of the second Research Question concluded with discussion of an issue confronting SLTs in the 21st century: the nurturing of leadership potential and succession planning in their schools.

Although some overlap was observed with respect to the findings and conclusions of Research Questions 1 and 2, the questions have been dealt with separately. The key aspect of the first question remained the individual's experience of shared leadership within the SLT while the second question examined the operation and effectiveness of the SLT as a team.

6.4.2   The Composition of Leadership Teams

The paradigm shift which has occurred in educational leadership over the last thirty years has been marked by a movement from single, 'lone-ranger' models of leadership (Rost, 1997) where the role and responsibilities of the school principal were paramount, to approaches to collaborative leadership exemplified by the development of SLTs in many schools (Duignan & Bezzina, 2006b; Wallace, 2001).

In this research, principals who were interviewed strongly supported leadership teams that were composed of a number of deputy principals and other leaders within the school. Although the sample size was small (two schools), there was little support for any particular form or make-up of leadership team; this confirms the suggestion of Wallace (2001) that a context-specific constitution facilitates leadership approaches best suited for specific schools and educational environments.

Only three participants nominated distributed leadership as a form of shared or collaborative leadership with which they were familiar. Respondents ascribed attributes to distributed leadership such as the efficacy of concertive action (Gronn, 2002b) and the nomination of circumstances where leadership practice is exercised by those best placed to do so (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2004).

More generally, shared or collaborative leadership was described by participants in terms of Christian principles such as respect, right relationship, trust, communion and affirmation, thus supporting the findings of Bezzina (2008).

There was universal recognition amongst the research participants that in contemporary schools, principals cannot be expected to 'do it all'. This conclusion is in accord with the work of Gurr (2008) as effective shared or collaborative leadership enables SLTs to access and utilise a richness of knowledge and skills possessed within the team (Gronn, 2002a; Hall, 2002).

6.4.3   Teams, Teamwork and Synergies

This research highlighted the value of a range of features within teamwork and observed synergies including:

- Surowiecki's (2005) thesis that bringing together of diverse skill sets and educational visions utilises 'the wisdom of the crowd'.
- The capacity for robust, open and honest exchange of ideas within an SLT to encourage constructive dialogue rather than conformity.

- The recognition that no one person, including the principal, has all the answers.

- The belief that SLT members need to be encouraged and empowered to lead knowing that that fellow SLT members will support programs initiated or decisions made.

- The need to ensure an SLT remains united and, therefore, is clear in its direction setting, with team members occasionally needing to compromise and heed the wisdom of the rest of the SLT.

Diversity of opinions, complementarity of skills and a team atmosphere that encourages healthy, constructive and respectful debate were identified as the hallmarks of an effective team and the evidence with which the presence of a successful SLT is affirmed in a school.

Concerns were expressed that the ideal of shared or collaborative leadership espoused by SLTs can be undermined by the presence of de facto hierarchies (Glenn, 2009) within the leadership team. While only one SLT member mentioned this concern, the pressure or absence of hierarchy within the SLT provides an important yardstick for examining the degree to which leadership within the school is shared or distributed.

6.4.4   Senior Leadership Team Charters

Neither of the two schools investigated in the research possessed any formal documentation detailing the mission or charter of the SLTs within the two schools. This was surprising given the value of such a document as outlined by Cole (2006) and affirmed by both Critical Friends. The findings, however, showed that SLTs simply argued the need for a common direction or purpose. Although formalised statements of mission or charter were not present, SLT members nominated other documents such as Annual Operational Plans and the school's Strategic Plan as important tools for their direction setting.

Despite the lack of a formal charter or statement of mission, School A's SLT was notable for its stability and longevity (having had the same membership for seven years).

Reflecting on this, two School AN SLT members highlighted the strong personal relationships that defined the team, its decision-making and actions. Supporting the work of Duignan and Bezzina (2006a) and Fullan (2001) these relationships underpinned the 'like-mindedness' or shared sense of purpose and direction of the team despite the lack of formal charter or statement of mission.

6.4.5   *Reviewing Senior Leadership Teams*

Neither of the SLTs had a formal process for reviewing their effectiveness, although School B had undertaken a significant externally facilitated review of its SLT in the year prior to the research period. SLT members nominated annual review meetings and MSEI's Deputy Principal appraisal process as means by which they reflected on their own contributions to the SLT. Given the responsibility that SLTs have for enhancing the mission integrity of their schools, the lack of formal review processes brings into question the capacity of the SLTs to judge their effectiveness at achieving this responsibility (Cranston & Ehrich, 2005; Grace, 2002b).

6.4.6   *The Role and Responsibilities of the Principal within the SLT*

Participants were passionate, articulate and fulsome in their exploration of the roles and responsibilities of the principal within the SLT. Three responsibilities were identified:

1. The principal must clearly articulate a direction for the school and, when necessary, the school's SLT. Given both schools under investigation were Catholic schools, this direction needs to emphasise the school's spiritual dimensions and, particularly, its responsibility for nourishing full human personhood (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1998).

2. The principal had an important role within the SLT and, across the school, to exert influence in order to achieve these goals.

3. The principal must reinforce the need for the SLT not to become 'bogged down' in short-term administrative tasks; rather, the team needed to constantly engage in strategic thinking and facilitate the transformation of such thinking into policies and programs (Duignan & Bezzina, 2006a; Spillane, Diamond, Sherer, & Coldren, 2005).

Underlying each of these priorities was a clear statement by respondents that, on occasions, the principal needs to carry a debate within the SLT and, more broadly, across the school. As Principal C memorably said, "You need to win the big ones!"

6.4.7 Building Leadership Capacity

The degree to which respondents acknowledged the importance of nurturing the next generation of school leaders with a view to building leadership capacity within the organisation was validated by the work of Brent Davies (2009), Hargreaves (2005) and Slater (2008). Members of each SLT nominated a commitment to succession planning and leadership development as a key concern for the team. But the unanimity with which it was articulated indicated more than simply a desire to ensure there were people to 'take over'; rather, it testified to a commitment by each team to the nourishment of full human personhood in students and staff across their school communities .

6.4.8 Leadership Frameworks

Systemic authorities have developed leadership frameworks (Catholic Education Commission of Victoria, 2005; Spry, Duignan, & Skelly, 2004) which describe a number of the aspects of leadership regarded as necessary in contemporary schools. The frameworks are designed to provide a basis for implementing leadership development programs in schools and to build leadership capacity within organisations. This role was reflected in School A where the framework produced by the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria (2005) was used to inform the formation of new and existing leaders.

The frameworks developed for use in the Catholic education system need to ensure that the spiritual and religious dimensions of leadership are emphasised alongside traditional dimensions such as pedagogical, interpersonal and organisational leadership. While not specifically investigated in this research, the capacity of these documents to provide a comprehensive framework for building leadership capacity in contemporary Catholic schools remains an issue for systemic authorities. Further development may be necessary

to ensure the frameworks remain relevant and efficacious from a team perspective, given the increasing importance of shared and collaborative leadership in schools.

6.4.9   Summary

Data received in response to Research Question Two generated a range of findings. Interviewees endorsed the capacity of teams to harness a variety of skills and talents through teamwork and synergies. The composition of SLTs was examined and the need for charters of operation and periodic reviews highlighted. An exploration of the role and responsibilities of the principal within SLTs identified the importance of setting direction and exerting influence for the leadership team and the school at large. The section concluded with respondents confirming the need for SLTs to nurture the next generation of leaders with a view to building leadership capacity within the organisation. The role that leadership frameworks can play in building leadership capacity within schools was explored and suggestions were made regarding possible developments within the framework documents to reflect the movement towards SLTs.

The next section considers the findings related to the values and principles by which leaders of Catholic schools in the Mercy tradition believe they operate.

6.5   Conclusions from Research Question Three

6.5.1   Introduction

This section explores the findings generated by the third Research Question. The aspects underlying the Catholic identity of Catholic schools were identified, with particular emphasis given to the importance of educating the whole person. The capacity for teachers and leaders to offer Christian witness in Catholic schools is highlighted through the metaphor of students and staff journeying together.

Duignan's (2008) Framework for Leadership in Catholic schools provided a useful means by which the principles underlying Catholic education can be articulated. The dimensions within this framework were:

- Community
- The Common Good
- Subsidiarity
- Leadership as Service
- Love-Driven Leadership.

The final theme examined in this research question was the distinctive nature of a Mercy school and the specific responsibilities for SLT members suggested by this nature relative to other diocesan or congregational-owned Catholic schools.

6.5.2   The Catholic Identity of a Catholic School

The respondents identified the following elements shaping the Catholic identity of a Catholic school:

- That Catholic schools are profoundly counter-cultural (Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977), advocating values antithetical to those promoted and celebrated by contemporary media and society.
- That the Vatican's call for Catholic schools to synthesise culture and faith, and faith and life, (Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977) remains challenging and relevant thirty years after its promulgation.

- Given young people are impressionable and open to influence, leadership within Catholic schools must promote education directed to the formation of fully human persons (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1998).

6.5.3 *Education for Full Human Personhood*

The clearest finding within this research was the fundamental importance all participants ascribed to educating for full human personhood (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1982b). Current Mission Statements and supporting documents from the two schools and from MSEI and the CEOM highlighted the fundamental value of the dignity of the human person through themes such as Spirituality, Community, Learning and Justice.

6.5.4 *The Witness offered by Teachers and Leaders in Catholic Schools*

The prime responsibility for developing the unique environment of a Catholic school lies with the teachers and leaders of the school through their daily witness within and beyond the classroom (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1998). The importance of witness was reflected in the notion of 'journeying together' that came strongly through the data where the goal of education of the whole person is achieved jointly, students and staff members walking the road towards full human personhood together. The research's conclusion that SLT members witness to, not just espouse, the principles of Catholic education (Putney, 2008) has supported the assertion of Simmonds (2008) that Catholic schools have to act as counter-cultural bulwarks against the secularism and moral relativism prevalent in today's society.

6.5.5 *Exploring Duignan's Framework for Shared Leadership in Catholic Schools*

Duignan's (2008) framework facilitated a deep and comprehensive examination of the leadership principles held by the SLT members, individually and as a team. Their engagement with the framework's five aspects illustrated one of the most important findings of the research - the commitment of all respondents to fulfilling the principles of Catholic education through their ministries as Catholic school leaders.

The utility of each dimension within the framework is examined below:

- Community – The SLT members within this research project reinforced the importance of community, as promoted and nourished within their schools, as deeply relational (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1998) and Eucharistic (Putney, 2008) exemplifying the Body of Christ. Given their commitment to this profoundly Christian understanding of community as communion (Pope John Paul II, 2001a), this conclusion suggests that SLT members are ideally placed to develop greater understanding of this principles amongst their staff.

- The Common Good – Respondents and foundational documents examined within this research supported the premise that promotion of the common good is core to the mission of Catholic schools (Flannery, 1996) particularly to those in the Mercy tradition (Mercy Secondary Education Incorporated, 1998).

- Subsidiarity – This principle (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1994) was affirmed by respondents who highlighted their commitment to ensuring decision-making is delegated to, and carried out by, those closest to the decision under consideration.

- Leadership as Service – Well known in secular literature (Greenleaf, 1977; Sergiovanni, 2007), servant leadership was celebrated by SLT members as reflecting much more than a style of leadership; rather, it was part of their ministry of witnessing the essential message of Jesus Christ to the school community - to love one another (Jn 15: 12).

- Love-Driven Leadership – This research has validated the work of Lowney (2003) as respondents enthusiastically embraced love-driven leadership as a model that exemplifies the call to human personhood through the opportunities it offers for aspirant educational leaders. As a concept new to the literature of Catholic school leadership, SLT members explored three critical yet distinct challenges through its lens: attracting staff to Catholic schools who espouse a real vocation for Catholic education (Pell, 2007);

building leadership capacity within Catholic schools; and promoting the exemplar model of leadership-as-love offered by Jesus Christ.

6.5.6   *Educating in the Mercy Tradition*

As educators in Catholic schools in the Mercy tradition, SLT members acknowledged the contemporary relevance of the Mercy story and their responsibility to bring this story 'to this time and this place' (Tierney, 2004). This research has concluded that SLT members in the selected Mercy schools are embracing the challenge to be 'torch-bearers' (O'Donoghue, 2004) of the Mercy tradition. Respondents recognised the depth and humanity inherent in the narratives of women such as Catherine McAuley, Ursula Frayne and other Sisters of Mercy. However, the research has also validated the challenge of Miller (2006) that Mercy schools are, first and foremost, Catholic schools with the Mercy charism offering a powerful lens with which to examine the narrative of Jesus of Nazareth (Mercy Secondary Education Incorporated, 2009a).

6.5.7   *Summary*

Data received in response to Research Question Three identified a number of principles underlying Catholic education with respondents expressing full support for these principles, particularly for the responsibility Catholic schools have to educate students to full human personhood. The Catholic identity of Catholic schools reflected their counter-cultural perspective and world-view, the witness of teachers and leaders to the principles the schools espoused and a commitment to critique a range of values that often go unquestioned in today's society. SLT members affirmed the relevance of Duignan's framework for building leadership capacity, suggesting that it has broad utility for the exploration of leadership in Catholic schools. The special character of being a Catholic school in the Mercy tradition was also examined with SLT members acknowledging their responsibility to bring the Mercy story to this time and to this place. System authorities would be heartened by the findings which show that, despite the major challenges schools face in being true to their mission and purpose as Catholic schools, the principles of Catholic education do underpin the operations of both schools in this study.

The next section considers the findings related to issues that SLT members identified as enhancing or challenging the mission integrity of their schools.

6.6   Conclusions from Research Question Four

6.6.1   Introduction

The fourth Research Question asked, "What opportunities exist for senior leadership teams to enhance the mission integrity of Catholic schools in the Mercy tradition?" The research was unable to explore this question in depth as respondents tended to focus on individual issues rather than those affecting the SLT. Nonetheless, some conclusions are drawn regarding the mission integrity of the SLTs of the selected schools. Five challenges to the mission integrity of Catholic schools in the 21st century were nominated by several respondents in each case. They are:

1.   The challenge of leadership in contemporary Catholic schools;

2.   The challenge of the Christian narrative for contemporary Catholic schools;

3.   Achieving Academic Excellence

4.   Building Leadership and Teaching Capacities in Catholic Schools

The final issue describes a challenge of a different nature, that is, the opportunities offered by the presence of Mercy hospitality in each of the schools investigated.

6.6.2   Enhancing Mission Integrity

Although SLT members in the selected schools did not explicitly highlight any specific means by which the mission integrity of their schools was enhanced, from my perspective as researcher, the findings taken as a whole indicate otherwise. In both Schools A and B, the SLT operates as an effective team bringing together diverse sets of skills (Surowiecki, 2005) and leadership responsibilities with the mission of facilitating school improvement (Hallinger & Heck, 1996).

The research supported the work of Duignan and Bhindi (1997) with SLT members nominating the presence of respectful relationships and shared beliefs about their mission as key dimensions of effective teamwork. The research is also in accord with the work of Fullan (2001) with SLT members highlighting the importance of authentic relationship as a means of moving a school from 'what is' to 'what ought to be' (Schneider, 2004) with respect to the school's mission.

This research validates the writing of Bezzina (2008) as it is clear that all SLT members harbour an enormous passion for Catholic education and for the particular lens brought by the Mercy charism. The SLT members are committed to making a genuine difference to the lives of their students by ensuring that their schools demonstrate fidelity in action as well as in rhetoric to the fundamental mission of Catholic schools. Although individual SLT members did not use the language of mission integrity in their responses to Research Question 4, their descriptions of the principles, values and actions of the team highlight the effectiveness of these SLTs in fulfilling the vision and mission of these schools.

6.6.3   The Challenge of Leadership in Contemporary Catholic Schools

This research highlighted the importance that SLT members place on maintaining the Catholic identity of their school. However, respondents also validated the work of McEvoy (2006) and Miller (2007b), reinforcing the challenge this presents to Catholic school leaders given Catholic school communities are situated in an increasingly secularised, more selfish and less communitarian world (Brugues, 2009). However, respondents highlighted this underlying Catholic identity as a key foundation to their educational leadership. Profoundly counter-cultural (Pell, 2007), the principle most clearly articulated was the schools' commitment to the pursuit of full human personhood.

Most participants acknowledged the increasing difficulty of attracting young faith-filled teachers and leaders into Catholic schools. But the passion for Catholic education displayed by SLT members provides hope in this search for the next generation of young Catholic school teachers and leaders thus echoing the call of contemporary writers such as Miller (2007a), Putney (2008) and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Committee on Education (2006).

6.6.4   The Challenge of the Christian Narrative for Contemporary Catholic Schools

As articulated by several participants, engaging young people – students, staff and families – effectively with the essential Christian narrative poses a significant challenge for SLTs in contemporary Catholic schools. The challenge presented by engagement

with Jesus Christ is contrasted with the enthusiasm with which social justice issues and opportunities for service are embraced in the selected schools.

Respondents identified that young people often viewed the lives of congregation founders such as Catherine McAuley as having greater meaning for their lives today than the life of Jesus of Nazareth. Reinforcing the call of the Congregation for Catholic Education (1988), respondents recognised the need to ensure that the message of Jesus revealed through the Gospel underpinned the mission of the school. The two Critical Friends highlighted that to be effective bearers of the Church's educational tradition, leaders of Catholic schools need to nourish their own faith lives and personal relationship with Jesus (Miller, 2007b) as an essential first step in engaging students and young staff with the gospel stories.

6.6.5   Achieving Academic Excellence

A number of research participants expressed a belief that the pursuit of academic excellence (for high achievers, in particular) was given less emphasis in Catholic schools than the provision of satisfactory learning opportunities for the majority of students (Pell, 2007). In contrast, programs directed at nourishing student well-being, pastoral care and education for justice and service were well-regarded. This research also revealed a view strongly opposed to the former, with a number of principals contending that the pursuit of academic excellence in Catholic schools could only be achieved within the broader quest for authentic and outstanding education of the whole person (Groome, 1996; Miller, 2006; Rittner, 1999).

6.6.6   Building Leadership and Teaching Capacities in Catholic Schools

The challenge of retaining current staff and, attracting quality applicants in the future identified by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Committee on Education (2006) was also identified by each respondent as a key issue influencing mission integrity in the selected schools. Although identified by respondents as a separate issue, the challenges inherent in ensuring the best staff possible continue to be employed in Catholic schools reflect the same issues schools and systemic authorities are addressing

through initiatives designed to build leadership capacity (Catholic Education Commission of Victoria, 2005; Duignan, 2008; Slater, 2008). Responsibility for building both the leadership capacity of a school and, to a lesser degree, the pedagogical capabilities of individual teachers resides with SLT members. However, teachers also have a personal responsibility to ensure their own professional development through contemporary and relevant professional learning.

This research concluded that the issue of underperforming staff remains particularly challenging for Catholic schools as each member of the school community remains valued as being unique and of worth, created in the image and likeness of God. Therefore, it remains for SLT members to balance their responsibilities to nourish these staff while ensuring the best learning outcomes for students.

6.6.7   *Nourishing a Culture of Hospitality*

A finding in this research was the degree to which respondents highlighted the life-giving nature of relationships within their schools. In particular, characteristics such as laughter, good humour and affirmation were identified as animating the school and, more particularly, the SLTs in each school. This finding suggests that characteristics such as these represent a key enabling condition for SLTs wishing to enhance the mission integrity (Grace, 2002b) of their school. Together, these characteristics exemplify the Mercy value of hospitality advocated by Rittner (1999) and Schneider (2004) as key to offering openness, warmth and friendship to all members in the school communities.

This research extends the notion of mission integrity advocated by Grace (2002b) by highlighting that in addition to addressing challenges and gaps in the degree to which their school fulfils its mission, school leaders and SLTs need pursue enabling-factors that nourish and enhance mission integrity. Identifying, nourishing and enhancing such enabling-factors, such as creating a school environment that is life-giving, where there is an openness to new ideas and which is authentically hospitable should be key priorities for SLTs.

6.6.8   Summary

Data received in response to Research Question Four identified a number of issues related to mission integrity for the SLTs in the schools under investigation. These included the effects of an increasing secularism in society on the Catholic identity of schools and the capacity of these schools to attract quality, faith-filled, young staff; the challenge of engaging young people with the Christian narrative underlying Catholic education; and the challenge of pursuing academic excellence within the broader goal of holistic education. This section concluded by highlighting one enabling-factor for mission integrity, one which respondents universally celebrated: the capacity of the selected schools and their SLTs for nurturing right relationships and Mercy hospitality.

6.7   The Key Conclusions of this Research

After reviewing the conclusions of the four Research Questions, it is important to review the findings of this research in relation to the Research Problem.

The research highlighted the value of shared or collaborative leadership with SLT members reinforcing the benefits offered through the utilisation of diversity of talents and opinions within the team.

The commitment all SLT members expressed to the fundamental principles of Catholic education was a key conclusion of this research. Amongst the principles identified by respondents, the importance of Catholic schools educating towards the whole person was universally acknowledged.

Duignan's (2008) Framework for Shared Leadership in Catholic Schools was affirmed as an excellent means for articulating these key principles of Catholic education for current and aspirant leaders.

This research has demonstrated that through a shared commitment to the principles underlying Catholic education and to the charism offered by the Mercy tradition, SLT members consistently act in concert to enhance the mission integrity of their schools.

The next section of this chapter identifies a number of recommendations arising for schools and their leadership teams, the systemic authorities responsible for Catholic education and for those responsible for Mercy Education. Recommendations for further research are also presented.

6.8   Recommendations and Areas for Further Investigation

6.8.1   Recommendations for Schools and their Senior Leadership Teams

Schools and their SLTs are profoundly interrelated, therefore, the following recommendations require the concerted action of both the leadership team and the school for the recommendation to be realised.

It is recommended that:

1.   SLTs investigate the development of a charter or statement of mission based on the Mission or Vision Statement of their school. It is suggested that Cole's framework (2006) may be a useful guide for SLTs undertaking this development process. This development would enable SLTs to review their effectiveness and operation against a set of agreed principles.

2.   Formal reviews of a school's SLT be scheduled, at least, annually. It may be advantageous for the review to take place off-site to facilitate reflection and aid socialisation within the team. This formal review would enable the SLT to critique its performance in an environment free from the distractions of everyday school administration. For similar reasons, it may be beneficial for this review to be facilitated by an external person. Utilising an external facilitator would allow the benefit of an objective voice within the discussion and direct the review towards outcomes agreed in advance.

3.   At the start of each school year, goals be articulated by SLTs to identify priorities for the team. Identification of these goals will enable the SLT to

ensure their decision-making and actions are addressing areas of need within the school.

4. SLTs investigate professional learning programs that foster the development of skills in teamwork and effective decision-making. This will enable the SLT to best utilise the capabilities available within their membership.

5. The allocation of resources directed towards building leadership capacity becomes a recurrent budget item for schools. Implementation of suitable programs will enable SLTs to initiate and support programs designed to nourish the leadership development of aspirant leaders within schools.

6. SLTs investigate the development of effective means whereby the team can enhance their efficacy in leadership capacity building. In doing this, SLTs can develop the talent already present in their organisations therefore assisting with future succession planning.

7. SLTs explore means by which teamwork skills can be fostered in teachers and staff within their schools. This will assist staff in their professional responsibilities while nurturing the teamwork skills of individuals in preparation for possible future leadership responsibilities.

6.8.2   *Recommendations for Systemic Authorities*

It is recommended that:

8. Existing professional learning programs sponsored by systemic authorities be critiqued to ensure that sufficient emphasis is given to the nourishment of faith and spiritual leadership within SLT members in Catholic schools. This will enable current and aspirant leaders to respond authentically to the challenge of leading the Catholic school as a faith community.

9. System sponsored professional learning programs currently offered to experienced and aspirant principals be examined to ensure that skills and capabilities relevant to the development of effective leadership teams are included and affirmed. This will enable principals to utilise most effectively the benefits available from shared or collaborative leadership as reflected in SLTs.

10. System sponsored professional learning programs be critiqued to ensure that their content facilitates an understanding of the importance of educating for whole human personhood in Catholic schools. This will enable teachers and leaders to recognise the centrality of this Christian principle to all aspects of Catholic education.

11. Consideration be given by system authorities to providing additional resources for the development of templates and the provision of professional support to assist schools in the formulation and implementation of SLT charters or statements of mission. This will enable SLTs within schools to access current and 'best practice' resources to inform the development of their charter or statement of mission.

12. Existing leadership development frameworks used by systemic authorities be examined to ensure they cater for the range of ways in which leadership is currently exercised within schools. This will enable the frameworks to be more effectively used to inform and enhance shared or collaborative leadership as exercised by SLTs and other teams within schools

6.8.3   Recommendations for those responsible for Mercy Education in Victoria
It is recommended that:

13. Additional professional learning programs be developed by MSEI to facilitate the embedding of Gospel values and core Mercy values in the leadership practice of SLTs and their membership. This will assist SLTs

and their members with their responsibilities to maintain the contemporary and local relevance of the Mercy tradition to their schools, in the context of the Gospel values underpinning Catholic education.

14. The existing self-reflection tool used by Deputy Principals as part of their formative and summative appraisals for MSEI is expanded to include a section related to the requirements of SLT membership. Introduction of this additional section to the self-reflection tool emphasises the role Deputy Principals have within the school SLT in addition to their individual educational leadership responsibilities.

15. The existing self-reflection tool used by Principals as part of their formative and summative appraisals for MSEI is expanded to include a section related to SLT membership. Introduction of this additional section to the self-reflection tool highlights the important role principals have as members of the SLT and in facilitating the operation and actions of the SLT within the school.

16. The concept of mission integrity is further explored by MSEI and the SLTs of selected member schools to identify additional enabling-factors that could further enhance the mission integrity of Mercy schools. This would facilitate the development of resources for this purpose.

6.8.4 *Suggestions for Further Research*

It is suggested that further investigation be undertaken to examine:

1. The utility of Duignan's (2008) Leadership Framework as a means by which the core principles of Catholic education can be articulated for the SLTs of Catholic schools beyond those participating in this research.

2. The utility of Duignan's (2008) Leadership Framework as an alternative means by which shared or collaborative leadership can be explored by the SLTs of Catholic schools beyond those participating in this research.

3. The degree to which existing leadership frameworks are effective for leadership teams as a means of examining shared or collaborative leadership within Australian schools.

4. The identification of additional enabling-factors by which the mission integrity of schools could be enhanced from the perspective of SLTs.

6.9   A Personal Note

When this doctoral journey began in late 2003, I started with several goals in mind: to renew my love of professional learning; to investigate the role of leadership teams in schools, particularly in Catholic schools; and to continue my own development as an educational leader. I believe these goals have been achieved. Yet, as the doctoral journey concludes, it is the profound and personal learnings beyond these that will nourish me in the future: the depth and beauty of Catholic education as articulated in the literature; the joy I have gained from writing and journalling; and the sacrifices required for such an undertaking to be achieved.

This research process, especially the semi-structured interviews, was memorable for the images produced when participants described the young people in their care, the staff with whom they worked and the desire of these participants to lead Catholic schools committed to justice, service and mercy. Vivid metaphors have led to new insights such as the shared leadership exemplified by Jesus at table with his disciples, students in Catholic schools **not** being simply inanimate cardboard boxes to be filled with facts and figures, the challenge of ensuring the best teachers filled the right seats on the bus of authentic learning and Kvale's (1996) striking image of the vase representing interviews as inter views.

In this research, I have explored the composition and operation of the SLTs of two Catholic schools in the Mercy tradition and identified both the aspects of teamwork to which they ascribe and the principles by which they operate. The commitment of SLT members to the foundational principles underlying Catholic education has been highlighted, as has the emphasis many Catholic school leaders placed on educating students (and staff) towards full human personhood. Yet in the 21st century, Catholic education is difficult. In this research, a number of specific challenges to the mission integrity of Catholic schools were identified.

The research underlined several key strengths that will buttress SLTs, assisting them to address these challenges: SLT members are committed to shared and collaborative leadership and can articulate the advantages brought by teamwork and synergy; each SLT has already put in place initiatives to promote leadership amongst their young staff with a view to building leadership capacity; and each research participant displayed a resounding passion for what Catholic education offers to young people academically, socially, psychologically and spiritually.

However, it was with the title of this thesis that I began this journey and with which I will conclude. "Writing on the Spirit" is both a celebration and a challenge. It calls on Catholic educators to fully embrace the vocation of teaching, to leave an authentic imprint on each young person in their care. To write on the spirit of a young person, teachers must acknowledge that their actions are guided by the Spirit and informed by the witness of Jesus Christ; genuine teaching and leading in a Catholic school has the opportunity to nourish that most precious of Christian goals – full human personhood.

Pope Benedict XVI's words at the culmination of World Youth Day (2008) illustrate this unique opportunity. They challenge not only the students in Catholic schools but also the teachers and leaders responsible for them:

> Dear young people, let me now ask you a question. What will you leave to the
> next generation? Are you building your lives on firm foundations, building
> something that will endure? Are you living your lives in a way that opens up

space for the Spirit in the midst of a world that wants to forget God, or even rejects him in the name of a falsely-conceived freedom? How are you using the gifts you have been given, the "power" which the Holy Spirit is even now prepared to release within you? What legacy will you leave to young people yet to come? What difference will you make?

It is my wish that this research reminds those of us privileged to be leaders in Catholic education of our sacred responsibility to make a difference, to embrace the power of the Holy Spirit and, to bring this spirit to the lives of those young people to whom we are called. I believe that findings of this research affirm the importance of this responsibility and give us direction in our efforts to do this as individuals and as members of school leadership teams, energised by the mission and vision of the Gospel, lived in the Mercy tradition.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Schools established and/or managed by the Sisters of Mercy in Victoria and Tasmania

School	Location	Date of Foundation	Comments
Academy of Mary Immaculate	Fitzroy	1857	Colleges are owned by the Melbourne Congregations and managed by Mercy Secondary Education Incorporated.
Sacred Heart College	Newtown	1860	
St Aloysius College	North Melbourne	1886	
Sacred Heart College	Kyneton	1889	
Mount Lilydale Mercy College	Lilydale	1896	
St Joseph's College	Mildura	1906	
Our Lady of Mercy College	Heidelberg	1910	
Emmanuel College	Warrnambool	1872	College governed in partnership with the Parish and other Religious Congregations (now described as Co-Sponsored schools)
Catholic College	Bendigo	1876	
Mercy College	Coburg		Colleges formerly managed by the Sisters of Mercy Melbourne Congregation (now described as MSEI affiliated schools).
Notre Dame College	Shepparton		
Mercy Regional College	Camperdown		
Damascus College	Ballarat (Sisters of Mercy Ballarat East Congregation)		
Trinity College	Colac		
Catholic College	Wodonga		
Padua College	Mornington		
Marist Regional College	Burnie, Tasmania		
St Mary's College	Seymour		
Sacred Heart College	Yarrawonga		
The Sisters of Mercy also established and ran a number of other schools (at both primary and secondary school levels) in towns including Mansfield, Castlemaine, Casterton, Cobram, Tatura, Euroa, Deloraine and Terang.			

Appendix B: Development of Senior Leadership Team interview questions

General research question: To explore the capacity of senior leadership teams to enhance the mission integrity of selected Catholic schools in the Mercy tradition.		
Interview Section	**Research Questions**	**Interview Questions**
Section A	Background information	- For how long have you been at this school? - What position do you hold? - For how long have you held this position? - What specific responsibilities and tasks does your role within the leadership of the school entail?
Section B	What is the experience of shared leadership for the individual members of senior leadership teams in the selected schools?	- Can you describe the make up of your school's leadership team? - Has your leadership team always had this make up? - If not, can you describe for me the variations over time? - Why were these changes made? - How often do you meet as a leadership team? - For what length of time? - Do you have a set agenda for your meetings? - How do you balance your time between administrative matters, staff/pastoral care, and matters of mission and vision? - What does the term shared leadership mean to you? - Do you believe leadership within your school is shared? Why/how? - Do you believe leadership within your leadership team is shared? Why/why not

Interview Section	Research Questions	Interview Questions
Section B (cont.)	*I would now like to examine more closely the notion of shred leadership particularly in the context of a Catholic school. Patrick Duignan, a leading Australian researcher in the area of Catholic educational leadership has been critical of recent suggestions to foster distributed leadership where leadership is devolved across a range of staff and positions in school. Rather he suggests a number of Catholic principles as the basis of a framework for the promotion of shared leadership in Catholic schools in the future. I have typed out a summary of each.*	To what extent do you believe you think each of these is central to shared leadership at (name of school)? • Catholic schools are community – the people of God (according to Vatican documents) with the talents of all members of the community valued; • The common good where all human persons are allowed to become most fully human; • Positive subsidiarity – central authorities need to delegate decisions that can be made more effectively at a lower level; • Leadership as service based on respect for the dignity of each human person; • Love-driven leadership – a Jesuit call for all leaders to have their eyes open to the talent and potential in their organisation. • Is there anything else?
Section C	How does shared leadership contribute to the effective leadership of the selected schools? (See note below)	• Is there a charter or formal statement that identifies the role and responsibilities of the SLT? • If yes, what sort of principles does it include? If not, should one by developed? Why/Why not?
		• Within the educational context, what do you understand teamwork to mean?
		Teamwork is often nominated as one of the reasons why leadership needs to be exercised by a group rather than an individual: • Can you describe an instance where working as a team has assisted with a difficult decision? • Can you describe an instance where decision-making was hampered by the team environment? • What features of teams did you observe in each of these instances?

Section C (cont.)		• What do you understand to be the role and responsibilities of the principal within your team? • Do difficulties ever arise in the relationship between the principal and the senior leadership team? If yes, can you describe why? • Can you suggest any ways these difficulties can be minimised?
		• What means does your team have for reviewing its effective performance? • Do you believe this review mechanism is appropriate?
Section D	What do the members of senior leadership teams identify as the principles underlying their leadership of Catholic schools in the Mercy tradition?	• What would you name as the key values or principles underlying your approach of educational leadership?
		• As an educational leader in Catholic schools, what would you say are the most important principles underlying Catholic education?
		One of the key Vatican documents, *The Catholic School* describes Catholic education as being "a synthesis of culture and faith, and faith and life": • What does this definition mean for your school? • What does this definition mean for your role as an educational leader?
		(School name) is a Catholic school in the Mercy tradition: • What does the fact that (School name) is a Mercy school mean for the way you exercise leadership at your school? • What does the fact that (School name) is a Mercy school mean for the way in which the SLT exercises leadership at your school? • Do any elements of the Mercy tradition challenge your leadership in any way? Which/how?

Interview Section	Research Questions	Interview Questions
Section E	What opportunities exist for senior leadership teams to enhance the mission integrity of Catholic schools in the Mercy tradition?	Mission integrity challenges educational leaders to address the possible gap between 'what is done' and 'what ought to be done'. • Do you believe this is an issue for leaders of Catholic schools? Why? • What are the main issues for your school? • In what ways have you acted to address these issues? • In what ways has the SLT acted to address these issues? • To what degree were these actions successful?
		• Do you celebrate the achievements of the leadership team in a regular way? If so, how?

Appendix C: Development of Critical Friend interview questions

	General research question: To explore the capacity of senior leadership teams to enhance the mission integrity of selected Catholic schools in the Mercy tradition.	
Interview Section	**Research Questions**	**Interview Questions**
Section A	Background information	• Can you describe your background in Catholic Education?
Section B	What is the experience of shared leadership for the individual members of senior leadership teams in the selected schools?	• Do you believe that shared leadership has a role to play in the leadership of Catholic schools in the future? Why/Why not?
	I would now like to examine more closely the notion of shred leadership particularly in the context of a Catholic school. Patrick Duignan, a leading Australian researcher in the area of Catholic educational leadership has been critical of recent suggestions to foster distributed leadership where leadership is devolved across a range of staff and positions in school. Rather he suggests a number of Catholic principles as the basis of a framework for the promotion of shared leadership in Catholic schools in the future. I have typed out a summary of each.	To what extent do you believe you think each of these is central to shared leadership at (name of school)? • Catholic schools are community – the people of God (according to Vatican documents) with the talents of all members of the community valued; • The common good where all human persons are allowed to become most fully human; • Positive subsidiarity – central authorities need to delegate decisions that can be made more effectively at a lower level; • Leadership as service based on respect for the dignity of each human person; • Love-driven leadership – a Jesuit call for all leaders to have their eyes open to the talent and potential in their organisation. • Is there anything else?

Appendix C (Cont.): Development of Critical Friend interview questions

Interview Section	Research Questions	Interview Questions
Section C	How does shared leadership contribute to the effective leadership of the selected schools?	• How do you think teams can contribute to the leadership of a school? does it include? If not, should one by developed? Why/Why not?
		• What do you understand to be the role and responsibilities of the principal within a senior leadership team?
		• What challenges can you see for members of an SLT in a Catholic school?
		• What means does your team have for reviewing its effective performance? • Do you believe this review mechanism is appropriate?
Section D	What do the members of senior leadership teams identify as the principles underlying their leadership of Catholic schools in the Mercy tradition?	• Are there specific principles that should underlie the leadership of a Catholic school?
		• What would say is particular to leadership of a Catholic school in the Mercy tradition?
Section E	What opportunities exist for senior leadership teams to enhance the mission integrity of Catholic schools in the Mercy tradition?	Mission integrity challenges educational leaders to address the possible gap between 'what is done' and 'what ought to be done'. • Do you believe this is an issue for leaders of Catholic schools? Why? • In what ways can schools act to address these issues? • In what ways can SLTs act to address these issues?

Appendix D: Supplementary Critical Friend Questions

Research Question 1
What is the experience of shared leadership for the individual members of senior leadership teams in the selected schools?
    (No follow up questions)

Research Question 2
How does shared leadership contribute to the effective leadership of the selected schools?

1. *Would you see it as an advantage for Senior Leadership Teams (SLT) in Catholic schools to have a Charter or Role Description for the SLT that articulates issues such as team purpose, values, membership, processes, review mechanisms, etc? Why/Why not?*
2. *What means do you see as appropriate for SLTs to review their operation annually?*

Research Question 3
What do the members of senior leadership teams identify as the principles underlying their leadership of Catholic schools in the Mercy tradition?

1. *Catholic schools are increasingly being viewed as ecclesial entities by parents, Catholic school leaders and even Church authorities. What challenges exist for members of SLTs in responding to this reality?*
2. *Many principals or aspiring principals nominate the need to demonstrate 'faith leadership' as the most difficult aspect of leading a Catholic school. In your opinion has the increased role of SLTs in Catholic schools assisted with this pressure on principals? Why/Why not?*

Research Question 4
What opportunities exist for senior leadership teams to enhance the mission integrity of Catholic schools in the Mercy tradition?

The following issues have been nominated by a number of SLT members as issues of mission integrity either for their school or for Catholic schools more generally. I invite you to comment on whether you see them as issues for Catholic schools and, if necessary, what opportunities exist for SLTs to address them.

1. *The number of staff (teachers, in particular) in many Catholic schools who have been teaching for 15+ years and are unwilling to embrace change – regardless of whether it is directed at School Improvement, Curriculum Development, Pastoral Care, etc. Many have moved to part-time and are looking to retirement (which still may be a number of years away).*
2. *The challenge of promoting academic excellence. Catholic schools have traditionally held the reputation of being outstanding in the area of student well-being but are under-represented amongst schools that have students achieving study scores of 40+ at Year 12.*
3. *Having Jesus Christ as the archetypal witness to life for our students, staff and families.*

4.   *Catholic schools promoting a mission that is profoundly counter-cultural in a secularised world.*
5.   *The challenge of equitable access to Catholic primary and secondary schools: do parents not enrol, or not consider enrolling, their children into Catholic schools because of its financial cost?*

Appendix E: Summary of Duignan's Framework for Interviews

To what extent do you believe you think each of these is central to shared leadership at (name of College)?

1. Catholic schools are community – the people of God (according to the Declaration on Christian Education). Leadership of such a community requires the talents of all members of the community to be valued.

2. The common good where all people are allowed to become most fully human.

3. Positive subsidiarity: A key social justice tenet of *Rerum Novarum* where central authorities need to delegate decisions that can be made more effectively at a lower level.

4. Leadership as service based on respect for the dignity of each human person with such leadership exemplified in Jesus who washes the feet of his disciples as an abject lesson on how we should treat each other.

5. Love-driven leadership – a Jesuit call for all leaders to have their eyes open to the talent and potential in their organisation. It changed not only the way Jesuits looked at others but *what they saw*.

6. Other elements?

Researcher: Can you describe an instance where decision-making was hampered by having the four?

School A – Deputy Principal A: Hampered by having the four?

Researcher: Yeah.

School A – Deputy Principal A: No, I can't because (School A – Principal) just gave me great latitude to do things. With (School A's other Deputy Principals) and I even if we don't necessarily agree on things, and it's often School A – Deputy Principal C and I because curriculum and pastoral care are together pretty much; even if we didn't necessarily agree, we would work through and work on things and work that out. So it hasn't hampered anything. No, we haven't ever come to an impasse because there's four of us and said, "No, no, we can't do that".

Researcher: So, you've sort of gone to this, notwithstanding the fact that you can't come up with an example for it, that doesn't matter that much. What does that say about the way that you operate as a team?

School A – Deputy Principal A: That we're very focused on our own areas and we obviously know what is the priority in our own areas. I reckon it says that we don't necessarily operate well as a team, I don't actually think we do operate well as a team.

Researcher: Which is interesting.

School A – Deputy Principal A: Why?

Researcher: Your perspective is different to that of the other (School A) DP's.

School A – Deputy Principal A: I work well with both (of the other Deputy Principals).

Researcher: Yes, they say that.

School A – Deputy Principal A: But as a team, the four of us, you're talking about. Not the three of us?

Researcher: Yes, it has to be the four of you in this context because teamwork is not three or two.

School A – Deputy Principal A: Then they lied to you, Darren.

Researcher: No, they answered it a different way.

School A – Deputy Principal A: Oh, okay.

Researcher: You see you can answer it in a different way, you can interpret that question and say, "We work very well together, we respect the job the other people do". But you've identified that the heart of this question is the capacity of the four of you to work together.

School A – Deputy Principal A: Oh, okay.

Researcher: Do you see what I mean? And it's not for me to say that people are missing the point. That's not my job. What do you see as the role and responsibility of the Principal within your team?

School A – Deputy Principal A: I understand the role and responsibilities of the Principal within the team – in the ideal world or as it was…

Researcher: Could we do both?

School A – Deputy Principal A: Okay in the ideal world.

Researcher: Actually it's important that we do both.

School A – Deputy Principal A: The role and responsibilities of the Principal within the team was to exercise really strong leadership in terms of all the areas that DP's have to deal with. Be actually out there and involved in those things. To be visible, to be here, to be in classrooms, to be a very strong vocal support for initiatives, to be supportive and acknowledging of effort and to be very much available. Okay, so that's in the ideal world. What was my question again?

Researcher: What was the role and responsibilities of the Principal?

School A – Deputy Principal A: And there's all that paperwork and all that stuff. And there's all the extra face of the school stuff and that really irritates me. It's one of the reasons I don't know if I'll ever apply to be a Principal.

Researcher: The public face stuff?

School A – Deputy Principal A: I don't think that's the core role of a Principal. Last year, it was (School A – Principal)'s strong point, he was very good at it and so that's fine and I let him do all that. But a lot of it is garbage. This is supposed to be a Catholic school and we don't sell chocolates any more but (I'm diverging here).

Researcher: I'm sure there's a point.

School A – Deputy Principal A: We give out entertainment books and get the kids to sell them. Why would we do something that promotes consumerism? You know you're losing the heart of what the real Catholic school is about. I know we have this huge social justice program but what's the point of that if we're giving out entertainment books? Anyway, that's beside the point.

Researcher: The public face of the school was more important than the core business of the school?

School A – Deputy Principal A: Yeah - the public face of the school. Whereas I think if you get the core business of the school right, you don't have to worry so much about the events. The events, we do so many things like that and we just wear people out but anyway, I still want to go back to the question. The responsibility and role of the Principal was that PR stuff and that's fine, I'm sure that because we don't have the sisters anymore who were so good at getting donations and things so we need development officers….

Appendix G: Foundational Documents examined during Data Analysis

Title of Document	Author	Details
Strategic Plan 2008 – 2018	Mercy Secondary Education Inc. (2008)	
Prospectus	School A	Published in 2007
Strategic Plan – "Strategy 2010"	School A	Developed in 2006 and covers the period 2006 – 2010.
Melbourne Mercy Congregation website	www.melbmercy.org.au	The section analysed explored the Mercy ministry of education.
Annual Report 2007	School A	Published on School A's website.
School B website		The following sections were analysed: - Principal's message - Vision Statement - Mission Statement - Our Beliefs - Our Vision
Mercy Secondary Education Inc. website	MSEI	The following sections were analysed: - What is MSEI? - Vision for Mercy Secondary Education - Governance Structure

Appendix H – Development of Themes during Data Analysis Process

Research Question	Initial Themes Identified	Initial Sub-themes	Final Themes	Final Sub-themes
	• These themes and sub-themes were generated after Data Read III before the writing of Chapter 5 commenced		• These themes and sub-themes were confirmed before the thesis defence.	
Research Question One: What is the experience of shared leadership for the individual members of senior leadership teams in the selected schools?	Shared leadership and individuals	• Role descriptions for individual SLT members • Definitions of shared leadership • Composition of SLTs • Examples of where shared leadership observed	The Complexity of Educational Leadership in the 21st Century	
	Duignan's Framework for Shared Leadership In Catholic Schools	• Common good • Kingdom of God • Subsidiarity • Leadership as Service • Love-driven leadership • Building Leadership Capacity	The Challenge of Faith Leadership	
	Leadership capabilities	• Diversity and heterogeneity • Harnessing diversity of gifts and talents • Relationship • Honesty and openness • Creativity • Discernment • Witness/vocation • Humour/laughter	Shared Leadership	
Research Question Two: How does shared leadership contribute to the effective leadership of the selected schools?	SLTs and charters of mission	• Lack of these • The place of reviews	The Expression of Shared Leadership in Senior Leadership Teams.	
	Teamwork	• Definitions of teamwork • Positive and negative examples of SLT action	Teams, Teamwork and Synergy	
	The role and responsibilities of the Principal within the SLT	• Leadership style • Complexity of contemporary educational leadership • Challenges of faith leadership	The Role and Responsibilities of the Principal in Senior Leadership Teams	
			Building Leadership Capacity	

Research Question	Initial Themes Identified	Initial Sub-themes	Final Themes	Final Sub-themes
Research Question Three: What do the members of senior leadership teams identify as the principles underlying the leadership of Catholic schools in the Mercy tradition?	Principles of Catholic education	• Unanimity of support for these • Vividness of examples offered in support of these • Synthesising 'culture and faith and faith and life'	Exploring the Catholic Identity of Catholic Schools	
	Mercy charism and the Mercy tradition in education	• 'Standing on the shoulders of giants' • Gifts of the Spirit	Educating the Whole Person – The Foundation of Catholic schooling	
Research Question Four: What opportunities exist for senior leadership teams to enhance the mission integrity of Catholic schools in the Mercy tradition?	Staff accountability		Witnesses to Faith – Walking the Talk	
	Academic excellence	• Catering to the 'high-flyers' • Providing support to those who struggle	An Exploration of Duignan's Framework of Leadership in Catholic Schools:	• Community • The Common Good • Subsidiarity • Leadership as Service • Love-Driven Leadership
	Challenge of witnessing to Jesus Christ		Being a Catholic School in the Mercy Tradition	
	Building leadership capacity	• Leadership succession • Women in leadership		

Appendix I: ACU Human Research Ethics Committee Approval Form
Human Research Ethics Committee

<u>Committee Approval Form</u>

Principal Investigator/Supervisor: Dr Annette Schneider   Ballarat Campus

Co-Investigators: Melbourne Campus

Student Researcher: Darren Egberts   Melbourne Campus

Ethics approval has been granted for the following project:
An exploration of the role of senior leadership teams in enhancing the mission integrity of Catholic schools in the Mercy tradition: A case study of two secondary schools

for the period: 15th November 2007 - 30th April 2008

Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) Register Number: V200607 90

The following <u>standard</u> conditions as stipulated in the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans* (1999) apply:

(i)   that Principal Investigators / Supervisors provide, on the form supplied by the Human Research Ethics Committee, annual reports on matters such as:
- security of records
- compliance with approved consent procedures and documentation
- compliance with special conditions, and

(ii)   that researchers report to the HREC immediately any matter that might affect the ethical acceptability of the protocol, such as:
- proposed changes to the protocol
- unforeseen circumstances or events
- adverse effects on participan

The HREC will conduct an audit each year of all projects deemed to be of more than low risk. There will also be random audits of a sample of projects considered to be of negligible risk and low risk on all campuses each year.

Within one month of the conclusion of the project, researchers are required to complete a *Final Report Form* and submit it to the local Research Services Officer.

If the project continues for more than one year, researchers are required to complete an *Annual Progress Report Form* and submit it to the local Research Services Officer within one month of the anniversary date of the ethics approval.

Signed: ....   Date: ....

               (Research Services Officer, Melbourne Campus)

Date

Australian Catholic University
Brisbane Sydney Canberra Ballarat Melbourne

INFORMATION LETTER TO

PARTICIPANTS

ACUNational

TITLE OF PROJECT: AN EXPLORATION OF THE ROLE OF SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAMS IN ENHANCING THE MISSION INTEGRITY OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS IN THE MERCY TRADITION: A CASE STUDY OF TWO SECONDARY SCHOOLS.

NAME OF PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR: DR. ANNETTE SCHNEIDER

NAME OF STUDENT RESEARCHER: DARREN EGBERTS

NAME OF PROGRAMME IN WHICH ENROLLED: DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

Dear Participant,

I am writing to invite you to participate in a semi-structured interview as part of a doctoral research project that I am undertaking through Australian Catholic University – St. Patrick's Campus. As a member of a Senior Leadership Team (SLT) in a large co-educational Mercy secondary college in Melbourne, I am interested in the role these teams play in the leadership of their schools. In particular, I want to investigate the role that SLTs play in the mission of Catholic schools in the Mercy tradition. My research involves the following data collection processes:

- A series of semi-structured interviews with individual members of the SLTs of two Victorian Mercy schools;
- Document analysis; and
- Use of a focus group to review the research as it proceeds.

The interviews will be approximately one hour in length and will explore your role as an educational leader, your work within the leadership team and the principles on which the team operates. Interviews will be conducted at your school at a time convenient for you and with your permission will be tape-recorded. As a participant, interview transcripts will be returned to you for review before data analysis. A summary of the research results will also be available on request upon completion of the research.

This research study is of negligible physical and emotional risk. Every effort will be made to ensure confidentiality as your name and that of your school will not be disclosed. In the final document, data will be reported in an aggregated form and pseudonyms will be used in any narrative quotes that are used. However, anonymity will be difficult to guarantee as the identity of the schools involved and those SLT members participating may be evident given the small number of Mercy schools in Victoria. If you feel distressed, embarrassed or are in discomfort during the interview process, you are free to suspend and/or discontinue the interview at any stage. Once collected, primary data will be stored securely according to the Australian Catholic

University's guidelines and will be destroyed five years after the research has been published.

Given the increasing demands on educational leaders, particularly in the Catholic sector, members of leadership teams play an increasingly important role in influencing the mission and operation of the school. Your participation in this research project will assist in exploring the efficacy of your role, and that of SLTs in general. In addition, participation will provide you with the opportunity to reflect on your leadership role and the educational principles underlying your school's approach to leadership, and those of Catholic education more generally.

Any questions regarding this project should be directed to the Principal Supervisor,

Dr. Annette Schneider rsm,

School of Educational Leadership

Australian Catholic University,

Aquinas Campus,

1200 Mair Street,

BALLARAT, VIC, 3350

Tel: 03 5336 5349

This study has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at Australian Catholic University. Approval is pending from the Catholic Education Office, Melbourne according to CEOM Policy 2.8 and from the Melbourne Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy.

In the event that you have any complaint or concern about the way you have been treated during the study, or if you have any query that the Supervisor and Student Researcher have not been able to satisfy, you may choose to write to the Chair of the Human Research Ethics Committee at the following address,

Chair, HREC

C/o Research Services

Australian Catholic University

Melbourne Campus

Locked Bag 4115

FITZROY VIC 3065

Tel: 03 9953 3158

Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. The participant will be informed of the outcome.

If you agree to participate in this project, you need to sign both copies of the Consent Form, retain one copy for your records and return the other copy to me as the Student Researcher. My contact details are as follows:

Darren Egberts

████████████████

████████████████

Phone – ████████(Home) ████████(Mob)

Dr. Annette Schneider   Mr. Darren Egberts

Principal Supervisor   Student Researcher