

# **Understanding and Implementing the Marist Charism from the Middle: The Experience of Middle Leaders in a Marist School**

**Submitted by**

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## STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP AND SOURCES

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

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

This thesis has not been submitted for the award of any degree in any other tertiary institution.

All research procedures reported in this thesis received the approval of the relevant Ethics Committee (Appendix B).

Signed:

Date: 26 August, 2013

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "J. M. Elvery". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping 'J' and 'E'.

Jennifer Margaret Elvery

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## **ABSTRACT**

The decline in the number of Marist Brothers has led to lay staff assuming increased responsibility for continuing the work of the Brothers. In order for this transition to be authentic and effective, schools should continue to be led within Marist charismatic tradition. The Principal plays a critical role in this, but so do all leaders. Currently, little is known as to how middle leaders contribute to this process.

The purpose of this study is to explore how middle leaders/managers at Champagnat College understand and implement the Marist charism. The context of this research is a College in Queensland, Australia, owned and conducted by the Marist Brothers.

These research questions, arising from a review and synthesis of the literature, focused the conduct of the study:

1. How do Champagnat College middle leaders understand the Marist charism?
2. What understanding do Champagnat College middle leaders hold regarding how they implement the Marist charism?

Given the focus of this thesis, an interpretive approach was considered appropriate. Within a constructionist epistemology, symbolic interactionism has been employed as a lens to inform the interpretive theoretical perspective of the study. A case study methodology was adopted. Data were gathered from participants (Marist Brothers and middle leaders at Champagnat College) through focus groups and semi-structured interviews. A document analysis and researcher reflective journal contributed additional data.

Contributions to new knowledge highlight the way that middle leaders have embraced, and committed themselves to, the Marist charism and how Catholic and Marist identity may be defined. The Marist charism frames middle leader understandings of how they contribute to the College. This research identifies the “deep story” of the Marist charism

as a shared construction, which preferences the story of the founder but which may risk losing its gospel connection. The shared meaning is a powerful cultural integrator and creates cohesive links among the middle leaders. The meanings also create ethical reference points for individual middle leaders as they undertake their duties at the College and as they engage in non-work activities. The research proposes a new model of Catholic and Marist identity, which includes “post-critical belief” (Pollefeyt & Bouwens, 2010).

The contributions to practice relate to the vocation to spiritual leadership of middle leaders and the need for ongoing formation. Through the recognition of trust and sense-making characteristic of middle leaders, an effective foundation of distributed leadership may be further developed to build a culture where the Marist charism is understood, interpreted and implemented through effective leadership actions. This is assisted through the fostering of a culture of discernment and accountability.

## ACRONYMS

|       |  |
|-------|--|
| CCE   | Congregation for Catholic Education                          |
| CLT   | College Leadership Team                                      |
| SCEE  | The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education               |
| SCRSI | The Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes |

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

|                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| Middle leader              | Positions whose title includes either the word “Head” or “Coordinator” but which are not College Leadership Team positions (senior leadership). Middle leadership is a concept enshrined in industrial instruments that govern Catholic schools in Queensland, Australia. In this research study, the meaning extends to include both teaching and non-teaching positions. It is understood that the concept of leadership includes elements of management but, wherever possible, “middle leadership” is used rather than “middle management”. |
| Charism                    | Charism is a gift, exercised in specific historical contexts, for the good of the Church and all people (Paul VI, 1971).  |
| Charismic                  | The adjective relating to “charism” used in this thesis, rather than the alternative “charismatic”.   |
| Religious Institute        | A religious order such as Sisters of Charity or the Christian Brothers.   |
| Religious Institute school | Religious Institute schools are schools owned and governed by a Religious Institute or order, such as the Sisters of Charity or the Christian Brothers.   |
| Marist Brothers            | A Religious Institute founded by Marcellin Champagnat (1789-1840).  |

|               |   |
|---------------|---|
| Transmission  | Used to describe the process by which ethos, culture or charism finds continuity through time. Where it is used in relation to charism, the focus may be especially on the continuity from religious to lay.  |
| Deep story    | “Deep story” connects the experience of the founder with the experience of contemporary followers.  |
| Vocation      | Within the Catholic Church, ‘vocation’ may be understood as a calling to profession as a member of a religious institute. The Catholic Church, through the Vatican Council II (1961-1965) re-established the importance of the baptismal vocation of all members of the church. |
| Post-critical | Belief that is “characterised by faith in a transcendent God and in a religious interpretation of reality in which the transcendent is not considered literally present but is represented symbolically” (Pollefeyt & Bouwens, 2010, p. 197).                                   |

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# CHAPTER ONE

## THE RESEARCH IDENTIFIED

### 1.1 Introduction

Identification of the challenges for a Religious Institute in transmitting its charism to lay middle leaders in a school setting, led to this research study. The study addresses the question: How do Champagnat College middle leaders understand and implement the Marist charism? While attention has been given to the way that school principals have led their schools to reflect and buttress the charism (Degenhardt, 2006), scant attention has been paid to how middle leaders contribute to this through their educational leadership. Organisations conducted by Religious Institutes need to maintain their charismatic authenticity and Catholic identity in the midst of societal change and the transition from predominantly religious to predominantly lay leadership of schools. Diminution or loss of identity, risks interrupting the continuity of the spiritual tradition and ministry (Green, 1997a). Such a threat invites further exploration. Consequently, this thesis focuses on the exploration of middle leaders' understandings and practice of the Marist charism.

This chapter explains the impetus for the study, and identifies the research context, research design, significance of the research, and introduces the thesis.

#### 1.1.1 Impetus for This Study

I have been a middle leader and senior leader in a range of educational contexts. Little is known of the way that middle leaders contribute to the overall character of a school.

I am a member of the College Leadership Team at Champagnat College (not its real name). My position title is *Head of Staff Services* and my role is to provide leadership



in human resource management and ensure compliance with the relevant industrial instruments. Some would contest that this sits well within the religious dimension of a Catholic, Marist school.

The person in the role works closely with members of the College Leadership Team, but also with middle leaders. I see their challenge in the daily administration and leadership of their teams and in the situations that arise when communication among leaders is not effective. While the Headmaster is a strong culture bearer and builder of the Marist charism, I wanted to explore the contribution of middle leaders to the strength of the College's Marist charism.

### **1.1.2 Defining the Middle Leader**

Middle leaders in this study are defined as those whose role title includes either the word "Head" or "Coordinator" but who are not members of the College Leadership Team (senior leaders of the College). The different categories of middle leader are Boarding, Pastoral, Curriculum, Junior School, and Services. Each of these roles is managed by one of the members of the College Leadership Team (i.e. senior leaders).

Middle leaders are generally charged with implementing the vision of the organisation. The literature speaks of their "dual accountability" of being responsible to senior leaders and subordinates (Fitzgerald, 2009, p. 63). Middle leaders, by virtue of their position in the organisational structure, are "bridges", "brokers", "translators" or "interpreters", rather than originators of the organisational vision (Glover, Gleeson, Gough, & Johnson, 1998, pp. 281, 286). If the Marist charism is being incarnated in the everyday operation of the College, this should be identifiable in the ways that middle leaders undertake their roles.

Some College middle leaders have worked within the Marist charism for several years, either at Champagnat College or in a succession of Marist ministries. Some were

previously Marist Brothers. Some are not Catholic. Others are recent arrivals to the College and have no long-standing experience of the Marist charism.

## **1.2 Research Context**

The research took place in a large college, conducted by the Marist Brothers in Queensland: Champagnat College. The College caters for male students in Years 5-12. While most of the students are day students who live in the surrounding suburbs, approximately 220 students come from rural areas of Queensland and other Australian states. These students reside in the College boarding residences (covering Years 7-12).

The Marist Brothers is one of the twenty-three Catholic education employing authorities in Queensland, and one of the eighteen Religious Institute education employing authorities. Four Marist Brothers remain on the College staff and a retired Brothers community exists within the College property. All other staff are lay. Lay staff members carry the responsibility for maintenance and development of the Marist charism which is meant to inspire, nourish and define the Marist Religious Institute.

## **1.3 Research Design**

The focus of this thesis is the understandings and practice of College middle leaders in relation to the Marist charism. A synthesis of the literature generated the two research questions:

1. How do Champagnat College middle leaders understand the Marist charism?
2. What understanding do Champagnat College middle leaders hold regarding how they implement the Marist charism?

### **1.3.1 Epistemology**

This research is based on a constructionist epistemology. Constructionism explicates the way in which humans make meaning, which is by the human consciousness interacting with what is in the world. According to this epistemology, objects in the world cannot and should not be considered in isolation from experience of the world (Crotty, 1998). This epistemology is appropriate to the research study, as it allows for consideration of the complex perspectives that may be held by the participants in a specific social and historical location (Creswell, 2003). It also assumes a link between perception and reality, implicit in the research questions (Neuman, 2006).

### **1.3.2 Theoretical Perspective**

This study explores how Champagnat College middle leaders understand and implement the Marist charism. Interpretivism is a suitable theoretical perspective for this study as it focuses on individuals' everyday settings and the meanings held by them in those contexts. It relies on understanding that in the everyday interactions among individuals, meaning is negotiated and made (O'Donoghue, 2007). The focus of this study is on the meaning made by middle leaders as they work at a Marist college, meant to reflect the Marist style of education.

### **1.3.3 Symbolic Interactionism**

The theoretical perspective of interpretivism is informed through the lens of symbolic interactionism. Symbolic interactionism focuses on how individuals attribute meaning to experience. Within an interpretivist framework, meaning can be complex and dynamic (Dimmock & O'Donoghue, 1997). The use of this lens prioritises the language and actions of participants. How the middle leaders develop understandings and conduct themselves in their College roles is central to this study.

### **1.3.4 Research Methodology**

Research methodology is defined as “the strategy, plan of action, process or design lying behind the choice and use of particular methods and linking the choice and use of methods to the desired outcome” (Crotty, 1998, p. 3). The methodology is the means by which data are gathered. Case study is the methodology chosen for this study as it involves the development of a rich, textured description of the research site, enabling its nuances and complexity to emerge.

### **1.3.5 Case Study**

Case study methodology was adopted for this research because it aspires to an in-depth, holistic understandings of a particular case, taking the culture into account (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1994; Tellis, 1997). A case study “investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (Yin, 2009, p. 18).

The case study, therefore, provides the appropriate methodology for capturing the complex interactions that take place in a college on a daily basis. The application of case study methodology to the understanding and implementation of the Champagnat College middle leaders creates a basis for studies of other cases and thus illuminates further insights about middle leaders and their work in other contexts (Simons, 1996).

### **1.3.6 Participants**

Participant selection was non-probabilistic and purposeful. The participants were close at hand and selection was restricted to participants with characteristics determined by the researcher to support the case study (Creswell, 2008). The case study boundaries were the middle leaders at Champagnat College. These middle leaders worked in the areas of curriculum, boarding, pastoral care, junior school and in program areas. For clarity’s sake only those with “Head” or “Coordinator” in their position title were invited to participate.

### **1.3.7 Data Gathering Strategies**

Four strategies were chosen to gather data for this research study:

The focus group (n=33, two thirds of the potential participants);

The semi-structured interview (n=10);

A document study; and

A researcher reflective journal.

## **1.4 Significance of the Research**

The study has potential significance for three reasons:

First, currently little research exists on the way in which middle leaders in Catholic Religious Institute schools in Queensland mediate and negotiate the culture of the College. Charism and culture are related and this study explores how charisms can provide an “important sense of continuity and consistency in spirituality and mission that the vagaries of time and circumstance would otherwise make difficult to maintain” (Green, 2000, p. 12). The study also explores how middle leaders are supported by, and support, the ethos of the College.

Second, this study explores the challenge of how middle leaders give “authentic spiritual leadership to a charism” (Green, 2000, pp. 22-23). Some of the middle leaders have had a strong experience of the charism, some have been working at the College for several years but prior to that had not experienced the Marist charism, and others, more newly-arrived, have not been students or workers in Marist ministries prior to being appointed to the College. This study explores whether there are particular leadership characteristics of those who provide authentic charismatic leadership.

Third, the research promotes a deeper understanding of the middle leader role and identifies the issues to be addressed in assisting middle leaders fulfil their roles in a contemporary Religious Institute school.

## 1.5 The Outline of the Thesis

A brief outline of the thesis structure is provided below:

**Chapter One: The Research Identified** introduces the study of middle leaders in a Marist school and their understandings and practice of the Marist charism. The introductory chapter presents the study in terms of purpose, impetus for the study, significance and structure.

**Chapter Two: Defining the Research Problem** provides a context within which Champagnat College middle leaders can be understood to operate. This chapter provides a summary of the religious and geographical contextual influences that shape the Marist charism, middle leaders and the College.

**Chapter Three: Literature Review** presents the review and synthesis of the literature and research relevant to this topic. The review of the literature identified the field of the study and the salient and emerging themes that offer some understandings of the world and experience of Champagnat College middle leaders.

**Chapter Four: The Mission of the Catholic School** presents the Catholic school from the perspective of Church teaching and develops some understandings of its contemporary operation. The Kingdom of God is offered as a theological concept that includes and transcends the Catholic school, to become a Companionship of Empowerment for those who take on the transformative mission.

**Chapter Five: Design of the Research** presents the research design and methodology. This chapter details the data gathering methods and data analysis processes.

**Chapter Six: Presentation and Analysis of New Understandings** presents the understandings generated from the focus groups, semi-structured interviews,

document analysis and from researcher's reflective journal along with the issues emerging from these. These issues are used to sort and categorise participant responses.

**Chapter Seven: Discussion of the New Understandings** presents a discussion of the new understandings generated in Chapter Six

**Chapter Eight: Conclusions and Recommendations** reviews the understandings from the research questions. It presents conclusions and recommendations.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **DEFINING THE RESEARCH PROBLEM**

The purpose of this chapter is to articulate and justify the research problem which this study addresses.

#### **2.1 Conceptualising the Research Problem**

The conceptualisation of the research problem has been diagrammatically represented in Figure 2.1. The exploration of middle leader understanding and practice commences with an introduction to the Catholic and Marist contexts for the study, including the Australian and Queensland Marist contexts.

Adjacent to the outer circle are three dilemmas which may influence the middle leader's thinking and acting:

- The middle leader role;
- Tension between vocation and career;
- The challenge of applying charism in a contemporary educational context.

Each of these contexts and perspectives is explored, commencing with personal context.



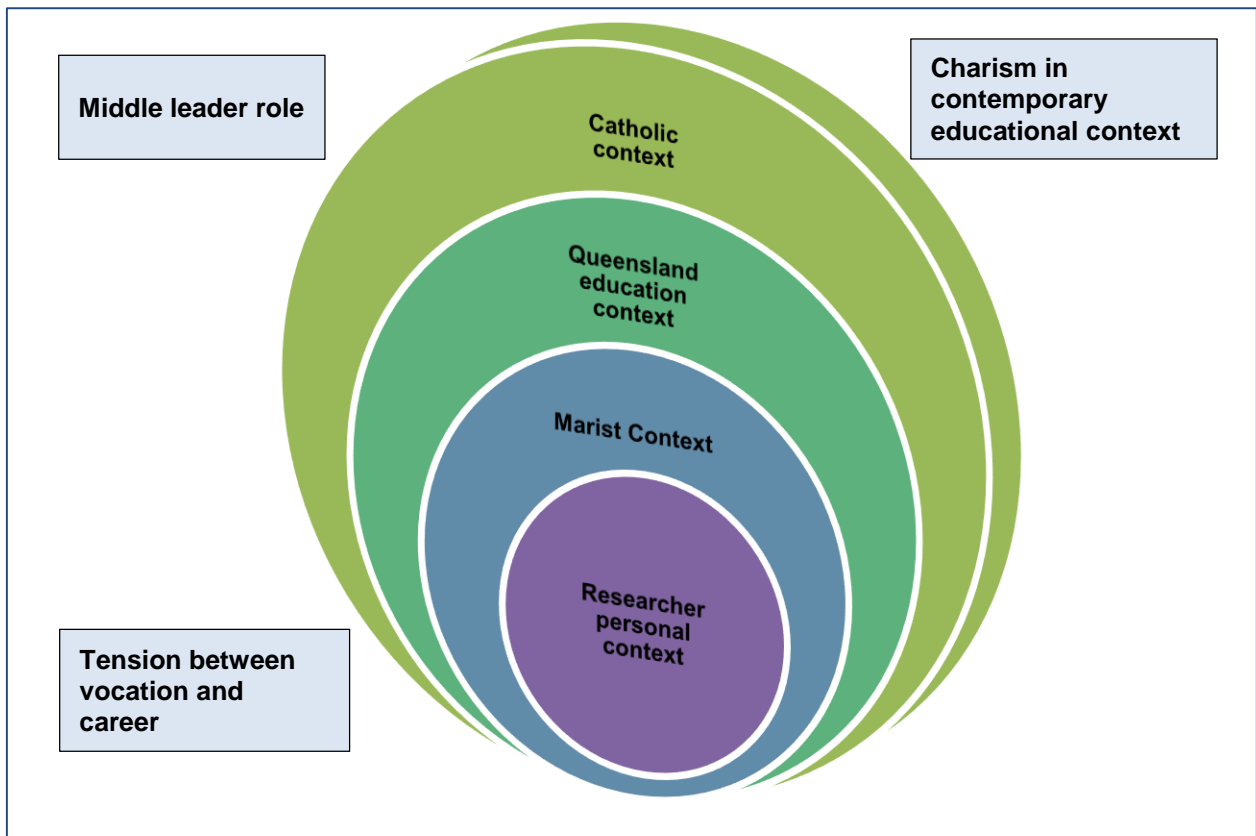


Figure 2.1. *Conceptualisation of the research problem.*

## 2.2 Personal Context

I am a member of the College Leadership Team at Champagnat College; my position title is Head of Staff Services and my role is to provide leadership in human resource management and ensure industrial relations compliance. This position was established in late 2004 and I am the first incumbent. I am involved in the implementation of the relevant industrial instruments applying to the College and am one of the representatives of Religious Institute schools in sector-wide industrial negotiations. The Sydney province of the Marist Brothers has been one of the first Religious Institutes to establish the position of “Staff Services” or “Personnel” in their school leadership teams. This initiative has been a cultural challenge for both the College and me, as I have developed in the role. At times, those opposing an action which I am taking as part of

my role, describe it as not being “Marist”. This prompts me to continue to explore the authentic expression of the Marist ethos and identifies a possible contestation of what is “Marist” in the contemporary educational context.

Before being engaged in this position, I was employed as a Project Officer with the Queensland Catholic Education Commission. I was involved in the coordination of enterprise bargaining among the (then) twenty-four (24) Catholic education employing authorities in Queensland. Prior to employment in Queensland, I held middle leadership positions in Northern Territory public and private secondary schools.

## **2.3 Catholic Context**

The Catholic Church, through the Vatican Council II (1961-1965) re-established the importance of the baptismal vocation of all members of the church. The Vatican Council document *Perfectae Caritatis* ("Perfect Charity," 1965) reinforced the teaching that all the baptised were involved in the mission of the Church. Likewise, the renewal of religious life<sup>1</sup> acknowledged that all baptised persons were invited to engage in the Church's mission.

Today, often as a result of new situations, many Institutes have come to the conclusion that their charism can be shared with the laity. The laity are therefore invited to share more intensely in the spirituality and mission of these Institutes. We may say that, in the light of certain historical experiences such as those of the Secular or Third Orders, a new chapter, rich in hope, has begun in the history of relations between consecrated persons and the laity (John Paul II, 1996).

The Second Vatican Council directed Religious Institutes to return to the charisms of the founders as a means of renewing the Institutes ("Perfect Charity," 1965, para. 2). The inclusion of the laity in the charism and mission of religious founders also invited

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<sup>1</sup> Marist Brothers have made religious vows and are included in the term “religious”.

them to a more energetic responsibility in the mission of the Church. This generated a cultural change for Religious Institutes. Previously, Priests, Brothers and Sisters believed the promotion of the Church's mission was their sole responsibility. In the years after the Council, members of Religious Institutes and lay people are called to collaboratively experience and share the charism. This, in turn, invites laity and religious to nurture the development of new ecclesial structures which better reflect the new, emergent reality (Green, 2009a; Marechal, 2000).

## **2.4 Queensland Catholic Education Context**

Since 2012, there are twenty-three (23) Catholic education employing authorities in Queensland. Five of these are the Diocesan authorities of Brisbane, Toowoomba, Rockhampton, Townsville and Cairns. The other eighteen (18) authorities are Religious Institute authorities. Of these, the Edmund Rice Education Australia<sup>2</sup> is the only authority which conducts more than one school in Queensland. Edmund Rice Education conducts 10 colleges and six flexible learning centres<sup>3</sup> in Queensland.

Each one of the eighteen Religious Institutes conducting colleges in Queensland derives its sense of identity and its culture, from its charism, “the cultural touchstone of the school” (McLaughlin, D., 2007, p. xvii). Champagnat College is one of these Religious Institute Colleges.

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<sup>2</sup> The Christian Brothers in Australia conduct over 40 schools. Since they no longer had the personnel to staff these schools, the governance was legally transferred to an independent corporation entitled “Edmund Rice Education Australia” (Edmund Rice Education Australia, 2010a)

<sup>3</sup> The Christian Brothers in Queensland recognised that a number of their students were not suited to the structure of a typical school. They established a flexible learning centre in a disadvantaged part of Brisbane in the late 1990s and a decade later, established learning centres in some regional centres of Queensland. In 2012, there were 12 Queensland centres. Flexible learning centres seek to respond to the needs to “disenfranchised and disengaged” young people and re-engage them in education (Edmund Rice Education Australia, 2010b)

## 2.5 Marist Context

### 2.5.1 History

The founder of the Marist Brothers was Marcellin Champagnat. He was a French priest, who responded to the needs of children in rural, post-revolutionary France by forming a community of lay Brothers to provide literacy, numeracy and religious knowledge to the young. The Brothers began first in La Valla, and then established in other rural regions in France (IMEC, 1998 p. 8).

Champagnat was passionate and persistent in his desire to establish resourced ministry. He displayed a simple trust in Mary, “our good mother” as he led his small band of young Brothers. His intuitions were counter-cultural, as he encouraged Brothers to be fraternal in their relationship with students rather than treating them in an authoritarian manner as was the social and educational custom (Green, 2012b). Marcellin Champagnat died at the age of 51 years, in 1840, but by 1872, the Institute had sufficient numbers to consider the establishment of schools in Australia and Oceania (Doyle, 1972).

Marcellin Champagnat was the leader of the Marist Brothers until his death. The Institute reveres him as the Founder but recognises the contribution of the first Brothers who modelled the audacity and hope valued in the Marist charism. The Brothers who worked directly with Marcellin Champagnat provided a diversity of gifts for the Brothers’ mission. The Brothers were not a personality cult but a group dedicated to the lives of rural young people in their locality. Marcellin Champagnat refused to accept adulation during his lifetime: “Don’t glorify me, he insisted, glorify those using me to do this work” (Farrelly, 1997, n.p.). Brother François, who succeeded Marcellin Champagnat as Superior of the Brothers, communicated his understanding of the centrality of the mission of Jesus Christ, in his four-part Circular. In it, he made no reference to Marcellin Champagnat and rare reference to Mary. “The spirituality in which François was formed

by Marcellin was one that was unambiguously centred on the person and abiding presence of the risen Christ” (Green, in press). While St Marcellin Champagnat, the founder of the Marist Brothers, is an important figure, the Marist Brothers Religious Institute is founded on the mission of Jesus Christ.

The prophetic character of the Marist charism is expressed in the contemporary world through the recognition of lay vocation and the incorporation of lay people in the decision-making gatherings of the Marist Brothers. Nine lay men and women were invited to the General Chapter of the Institute, convened in Rome in September 2009. They issued a communiqué to the Chapter which identified their sense of responsibility for their commitment to Marist mission, their own vocation and to other “Lay Marists”:

We recognise our place in the history of the development of our charism and the Institute and take with us the conversations and sentiments we have shared, unique to this time and this place. (“On Pilgrimage to A New Heart for a New World”, 2009, p. 1)

These Lay Marists recommended that there be “definitive recognition” granted to the “Lay Marist vocation”, that meetings between Brothers and Lay Marists be promoted and that structures promoting co-responsibility for the charism be created (“On Pilgrimage to a New Heart for a New World”, 2009, p. 3). The Marist Brothers are responding to this challenge by continuing on this “pilgrimage” to develop “a canonical structure and a charismatic family that are inclusive” (Green, 2011b, p. 44). This “pilgrimage” is being experienced in Australia.

### **2.5.2 Australian Marist Context**

The Marist Brothers came to Sydney in 1872 at the invitation of Archbishop Bede Polding (Doyle, 1972). The need for Brothers to staff schools arose because government aid to Catholic schools ceased through the NSW Public Schools Act of 1866. This Act mandated that the government would be responsible for an education

which would be free, secular and compulsory. In the light of this situation, the Sydney Archbishop requested assistance from the Marist Brothers to replace school masters whose salaries were previously paid for by the government. “It is clear that our denominational schools will disappear unless they are supported in entire or partial independence of Government... What the Archbishop would desire then is to have ... Brothers ...” (Doyle, 1972, p. 15). The network of Catholic schools would not have developed at the rate that it did, without the involvement of various religious orders, although relationships between the Institute and the church hierarchies were not always cordial (Doyle, 1972).

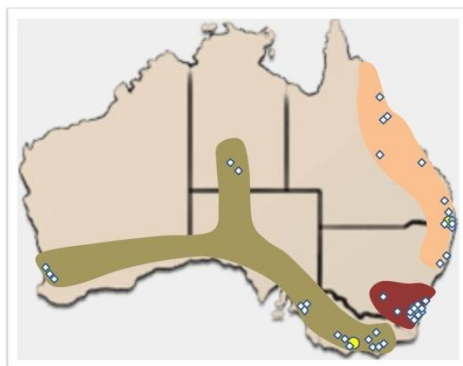
The personalities and the cultural backgrounds of the first two community leaders, Brothers Ludovic Laboureyras and John Dullea, contributed to the tensions within the Australian work. Brother Ludovic was French and extroverted, while Brother John was Irish and reserved. Br John wanted Brothers to be both competent school teachers and religiously motivated—“men of method”. In contrast, Brother Ludovic did not have a high view of what studies could contribute to the work of the Brothers (Braniff, 2006, p. 90). Dullea’s more rigorous approach to the formation of new Brothers equipped them to cope not only at the primary school level but with the increasing number of secondary schools with which they were involved. The work of the Brothers in establishing and conducting schools has grown rapidly since 1872. The number of Australian Brothers peaked in the period 1968-1972 with 630 Brothers<sup>4</sup>. In contrast, in 2012, the number of Australian Brothers in active ministry is 245 (McMahon, J., personal communication, December 24, 2012; Green, M., personal communication, January 15, 2013; Weekes, D., personal communication, February 5, 2013).

The contemporary inheritors of this Marist educational tradition are the schools within Marist Schools Australia, which is an association of fifty Australian schools which shape

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<sup>4</sup> The range of years is due to variable numbers in each of the (then) separate Melbourne and Sydney provinces of the Marist Brothers.

their identity and mission through the spirituality and educational approach that was introduced by St Marcellin Champagnat in the early nineteenth century, and which has continued to be developed by the Marist Brothers and Lay Marists ("About Us," 2012).



**Figure 2.2. Distribution of schools associated with Marist Schools Australia (2012).**

Contemporary Australian Marist educators are motivated by the Marist charism to work with young people, particularly those who are disadvantaged (IMEC, 1998). The title page of *In the Footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat* features an epigraph, viz:

*Disciples of Marcellin Champagnat,  
Brothers and Laypeople,  
together in mission, in the Church and in the world,  
among the young, especially the most neglected,  
we are sowers of the Good News,  
with a distinctive Marist style,  
in schools  
and  
in other pastoral and social ministries.*

*We face the future in with audacity and hope. (IMEC, 1998, p. 3)*

This epigraph offers an appropriate summary of a distinctive Marist Style. The “distinctive Marist style” is widely regarded as representing the Marist charism. The

features of this style are presence, simplicity, family spirit, love of work, and [in] the way of Mary. Their relevance to education is linked to the intuition of the first Marists (and then called a “principle”), that “to bring up children properly, we must love them and love them all equally”. From these principles, the characteristics of the Marist style are generated and it is “their sum and their interaction which gives our Marist style its Spirit-inspired originality” (IMEC, 1998).

The first characteristic of the Marist style is presence. Presence consists of being with students and accompanying them in their spiritual, educative journey. It is a commitment to putting oneself in the young person’s space, without dominating or possessing it. The aim of presence is for the generation of nurturing, hopeful relationships between young people and those who work with them (IMEC, 1998).

The second characteristic is simplicity. Simplicity is defined as honesty with self and with others. Simplicity is a lack of pretension. Educational practice is conducted on this basis, and is characterised by practicality and a minimum of bureaucratic impediments wherever possible (Green, 1997a). This reflects what is known of the Champagnat approach (IMEC, 1998).

The third characteristic of a Marist style of education is family spirit. Those working in Marist ministries are encouraged to reflect the family spirit which derives from being part of a religious community. Relationships with the young are characterised in familial ways: all relate as family members. In particular, adults are to relate to young people as “brother” or “sister”, being open to them by sharing life’s journey in a caring, supportive environment.

The fourth characteristic of a Marist style is love of work. Success did not come easily to Champagnat and the Marist way is to value persistence and commitment in work. Marist educators are urged to practise a “pedagogy of serious effort” (IMEC, 1998, p. 25) in order to equip young people with resilience and an appreciation about the



importance and dignity of work. A love of work involves adults and young people alike in “rolling up their sleeves” and getting the job done.

The fifth characteristic of a distinctive Marist style is living in the way of Mary. Marcellin Champagnat referred to Mary, mother of Jesus Christ, as “our Good Mother” and saw in her someone from whom he received strength and wisdom—our “Ordinary Resource”. Marists honour her willingness to affirm her destiny in God’s plan, becoming the “first disciple” (IMEC, 1998, p. 26). As both mother and disciple, she is a Marist model. Marist spirituality is patterned on the spirituality embedded in her song of praise, the *Magnificat*<sup>5</sup>, where she envisions a world where the marginalised are valued and those who abuse power are held accountable. Her solidarity with the marginalised and her obedience to her son Jesus, are consciously referenced by Marist educators and young people. This Marial dimension is crucial to Marist identity and is the means by which Jesus is brought to young people in a Marist context (IMEC, 1998; Hall, 2010). In honouring Mary, Marists are not to centre their faith on her, nor on Marcellin but on Jesus Christ (Green, 2012a). The Marist charism thus repudiates the excesses of some Marian devotions (Ryan, 1993).

These characteristics of the Marist style of education are a means by which many Australian Marist educators access the Marist ethos. There are dangers in taking these five characteristics associated with the Marist style of ministry, and then naming them as “charism”. This reductionist approach risks “charism” becoming detached from the spirituality which provides its context (Green, 2012b). The defining characteristics of a Marist style contribute to an understanding of the Marist charism as a spirituality which

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<sup>5</sup> The *Magnificat* is a song of praise by Mary, mother of Jesus. It can be found in the Bible in Luke 1: 46-55.

is “unambiguously mystical and affective” (Green, 2011a, p. 27), imbued with audacity and hope (Green, in press).

Charism concerns “giving renewed vitality and efficacy to the gospel of Jesus”. Further, charisms are “distinctive ways of incarnating ... the Christian faith ... in a particular person, a particular lifestyle, a particular ministry or a particular tradition ... (Green, 2000, p. 8). The fundamental criterion of authenticity is whether the activities of Marist educators contribute to the attainment of Marcellin’s vision of making “Jesus Christ known and loved” and whether young people in their care are enabled to be “good Christians and virtuous citizens” (IMEC, 1998, p. 18).

The unity of the Australian Marist mission is emphasised through the union of the former two Marist Provinces of Melbourne and Sydney into one Australian Province, 8 December 2012. In his homily on this occasion, Archbishop Mark Coleridge urged the congregation present to embrace “a new missionary audacity, the kind of boldness we hear in Champagnat’s words ...” (Coleridge, 2013, p. 13). He encouraged the Marist Brothers to be guided by Mary, mother of Jesus and Marcellin Champagnat’s “ordinary resource” in addition to the “earthy and haunting figure” of Marcellin Champagnat as the Institute moves forward in Australian mission (Coleridge, 2013, p. 13).

## **2.6 Champagnat College Context**

Champagnat College enrolls students from Year 5 to Year 12. Approximately 1200 of the 1500 students are secondary students. 220 students are boarding. The College employs approximately 300 staff as teachers and support staff.

The College is located in South-East Queensland and draws its students from city suburbs, as well as boarding students from rural and isolated areas of NSW, Queensland and the Northern Territory. A small number of international students from countries such as Hong Kong, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands are enrolled.

The College is owned and conducted by the Trustees of the Marist Brothers. When the College was first established in 1940, it was staffed by Marist Brothers, and employed few lay staff. The College is now primarily staffed by lay teachers and support staff. Four Marist Brothers are on staff. The first lay Headmaster commenced in 2009. The Marist Brothers consciously link their understanding of employment relations to Catholic social teaching: “Marist ministries operate in accord with this social teaching of the Church, bringing to this a particular Marist Way” (Marist Brothers Sydney Province, 2007).

The College Leadership Team comprises 10 people, including the Headmaster. There are currently over 40 middle leaders, most of whom are teachers. There are also some non-educator middle leaders in the services area. Middle leaders are responsible for Key Learning Areas and in Boarding, Pastoral, Cross-Curricular and Co-Curricular roles. In each of their role descriptions are specified the leadership aspects which are to be demonstrated, with “Spiritual Leadership” as the first leadership characteristic. Authentic lay spiritual leadership by middle leaders is required, to reflect the charism and support its implementation in daily College operations.

Some College middle leaders have worked within the Marist charism for several years, either at Champagnat College or in a succession of Marist ministries. A few were previously Marist Brothers. Others, who are recent arrivals to the College, are inexperienced in the Marist charism. The College conducts spirituality days for all teaching and support staff, usually at the commencement of each year, and there are other opportunities throughout the year for staff to access more specific opportunities for learning about, and nurturing, Marist spirituality.

## **2.7 Research Issue**

### **2.7.1 Charism and the Contemporary Education Context**

The charism of any Religious Institute is situated in its history and in the personal history of its founder. There is a significant question as to how lay people drawn to employment in a Religious Institute school gain an appreciation of, and demonstrate commitment to, the charism. This may be a “deep risk of the charism’s dilution and diffusion” (Braniff, 2006; Green, 2000, p. 22). For the Brothers, it was a foundational part of their formation to depth their calling and live in obedience to it. Contemporary Religious Institutes have the challenge of inculcating a sense of vocation in their lay staff through training courses.

These training courses attempt to offer a link between the foundational stories and the current experience of educators. The Marist Brothers conduct a number of programs in the spiritual formation of staff in Marist ministries. The pre-eminent program in the training of staff is *Sharing Our Call*, which focuses on the personal experience and vocation of the founder, the history of the Marist Brothers and the distinctive Marist style for mission. The challenge is to promote the continuation of formation into the Marist ethos and there are further training courses for identified staff. “The courses become ... little more than pleasant memories if graduates cannot continue to nurture their spirituality and integrate it with their daily work” (Green, 2000, p. 16).

The integration of the charism into the daily operation of the College and its enriching and informing leaders in the demanding context of twenty-first century education are strategic goals of Marist formation.

### **2.7.2 Tension Between Vocation and Career**

The two paradigms of vocation and career are referred to in *In the Footsteps of Marcellin Champagnat* (IMEC, 1998). A Religious Institute School in the twenty-first century considers lay staff as workers sharing Marist mission but also employees

whose work is to be remunerated fairly. This is one of the challenges in the context of authentic lay leadership (Braniff, 2005). There is a developing understanding of Marist lay vocations. Three concepts underpin this initiative: mission, spirituality and shared life (Turu, Estaun, Rota, & Da Rosa, 2009).

Catholic social teaching links vocation and employment through the notion of work. Each new employee being appointed to the College is provided with a copy of the *Statement of Principles for Employment in Catholic Schools* (Queensland Catholic Education Commission, n.d.), which is referenced as an explicit term of the employment contract. This document is prefaced by reference to Catholic social teaching, including a challenge in *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium* (para. 19): “We must remember that teachers and educators fulfil a specific Christian vocation ... (Queensland Catholic Education Commission, n.d.). The right of employees to a just wage, the right to join employee associations, the right to strike, the right to dignity in work and the right to rest are located in church documents and revisited in contemporary commentary (Australian Bishops' Conference Bishops' Committee for Industrial Affairs, 1993). While “love of work” is one characteristic of the distinctive Marist style (IMEC, 1998), it is not meant to promote “workaholism” or negate that employees be paid an award salary. A common concern and sharing of responsibilities harmonises with structures to support Marist mission. These structures “acknowledge subsidiarity, collegiality and loyalty” (Marist Brothers Sydney Province, 2007, p. 2).

### **2.7.3 Role of Middle Leaders**

Middle leaders are charged with implementing the vision of the organisation (Fitzgerald, 2009; Glover, et al., 1998). If the Marist charism is being incarnated in the everyday operation of the College, this is likely to be evident in the ways that middle leaders undertake their roles.

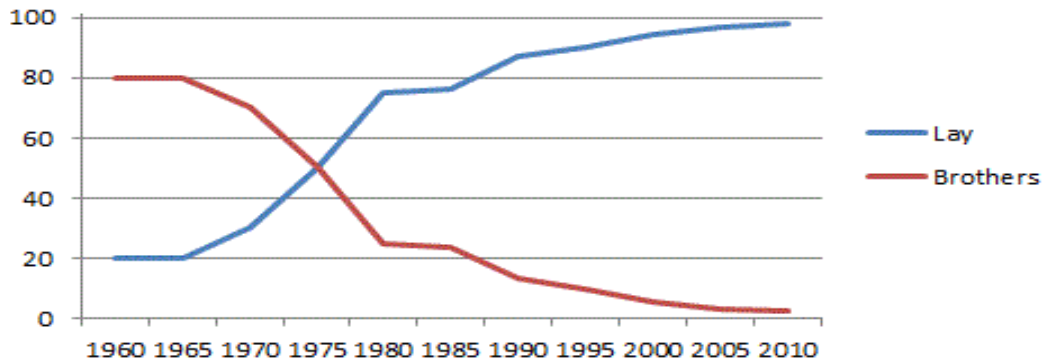
## 2.8 Research Problem

Until 1976, Champagnat College was staffed and led by Marist Brothers. Table 2.1 records the numbers of teachers — both Marist Brother and lay — from 1959 (when staff lists were first published in the Champagnat College year book) until 2010. The increase in the engagement of lay teachers compared with Marist Brother teachers is recorded and accelerates after 1979. Since 1976, the proportion of lay staff to Brothers has increased, stabilising in the years since 2000 between 97% and 99% of total staff (see Figure 2.3). The graph shows the percentage of lay staff under 21% for the eight years between 1959 and 1967, and then a gradual increase in the proportion of lay staff in the College from 1968 to 2010, where lay staff comprised almost all of workforce.

*Table 2.1. Number of Marist Brother and Lay Teachers 1959-2010*

| Year | Brothers | Lay | Year | Brothers | Lay | Year | Brothers | Lay |
|------|----------|-----|------|----------|-----|------|----------|-----|
| 1959 | 12       | 3   | 1977 | 22       | 23  | 1995 | 8        | 80  |
| 1960 | 12       | 3   | 1978 | 17       | 29  | 1996 | 7        | 85  |
| 1961 | 13       | 3   | 1979 | 14       | 38  | 1997 | 7        | 85  |
| 1962 | 12       | 3   | 1980 | 14       | 42  | 1998 | 7        | 94  |
| 1963 | 15       | 3   | 1981 | 18       | 48  | 1999 | 8        | 101 |
| 1964 | 15       | 4   | 1982 | 19       | 44  | 2000 | 6        | 103 |
| 1965 | 19       | 5   | 1983 | 18       | 46  | 2001 | 6        | 107 |
| 1966 | 20       | 5   | 1984 | 17       | 51  | 2002 | 3        | 112 |
| 1967 | 22       | 5   | 1985 | 16       | 51  | 2003 | 3        | 113 |
| 1968 | 22       | 7   | 1986 | 16       | 51  | 2004 | 1        | 117 |
| 1969 | 23       | 8   | 1987 | 14       | 59  | 2005 | 1        | 119 |
| 1970 | 21       | 9   | 1988 | 13       | 60  | 2006 | 1        | 121 |
| 1971 | 21       | 10  | 1989 | 8        | 61  | 2007 | 1        | 123 |
| 1972 | 21       | 13  | 1990 | 10       | 66  | 2008 | 1        | 124 |
| 1973 | 22       | 14  | 1991 | 10       | 68  | 2009 | 0        | 126 |
| 1974 | 21       | 17  | 1992 | 8        | 73  | 2010 | 0        | 136 |
| 1975 | 20       | 20  | 1993 | 7        | 74  |      |          |     |
| 1976 | 21       | 21  | 1994 | 8        | 80  |      |          |     |

Source: Teaching staff list in Champagnat College year books



*Figure 2.3. Religious and lay teaching staff 1960-2010.*

Since the College leadership structures predominantly comprise lay staff, there is a question as to the authenticity of this College’s charismatic leadership in the twenty-first century.

## **2.9 Research Purpose**

This study explores how middle leaders at Champagnat College understand and implement the Marist charism.

## **2.10 The Major Research Question**

How do Champagnat College middle leaders understand and implement the Marist charism?

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **3.1 Purpose of the Research**

The purpose of the research is to explore how Champagnat College middle leaders understand and implement the Marist charism.

#### **3.2 Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework informing the literature review is at Figure 3.1. The issues generated in the literature are covered in Chapters Three and Four and relate to Ethos, Charism, Culture and Leadership (Chapter 3) and Mission of the Catholic School (Chapter 4). In Figure 3.1, Ethos, Charism, Culture and Leadership surround the core of the diagram which is Mission of the Catholic School. Middle Leadership connects Ethos, Charism, Culture and Leadership to the Mission of the Catholic School. This is situated within the scope of the Mission of God and the Mission of Jesus, all contributing to the Kingdom of God. This is amplified in Chapters Three and Four.



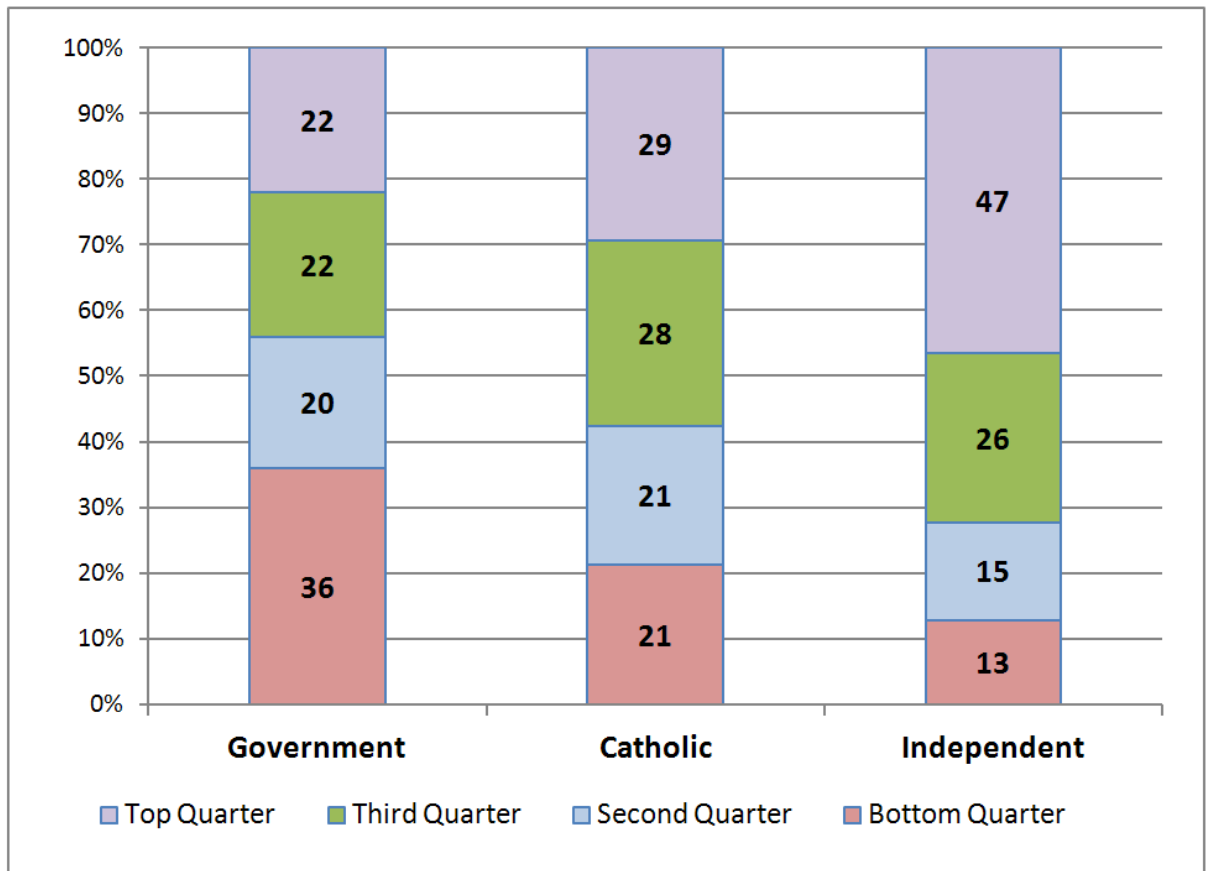


Figure 3.1 Conceptual framework of the Literature Review.

### **3.3 Ethos**

The concepts ethos and culture are difficult to differentiate (McLaughlin, T., 2005; Tuite, 2007). In this study, ethos refers to the “fundamental spiritual characteristics of our culture” (Duncan, 1998, p. 57). The primary spiritual characteristics that contribute to a Catholic ethos are compassion and justice as lived by Jesus. Beliefs and values are intrinsic to ethos and are actively engaged for the Catholic ethos to be experienced by students, parents and staff (McLaughlin, T., 2005). The Catholic ethos, based on these gospel values, generates a common mission which provides an agreed foundation for a Catholic school community.

Catholic school ethos is both counter-cultural and nurturing of the human person. These characteristics are interdependent and serve to inform and critique Catholic school mission (Groome, 1996). The ethos is not intended to be counter-cultural in the sense of being against [i.e. denying] culture but is more about being above culture, transforming the dominant culture (Chittister, 1986; McCann, 2003). Ideally, the Catholic school challenges the consumerism and materialism of Western society (Van Eyk, 2002). The challenge involves the cultivation of justice and compassion and rejection of the influence of prestige and power. This challenge is particularly difficult where there is a concentration of students from advantaged backgrounds in a Catholic school. Unfortunately, the reality is that socially and educationally disadvantaged students are likely to be enrolled in government schools rather than Catholic schools. While Catholic schools are able to accommodate a higher proportion of disadvantaged students than independent schools, Figure 3.2 illustrates the reduction of children from poor families enrolled in Catholic schools (Australian Government, 2011). This trend is an important challenge for leaders because Catholic school mission is ideally directed toward the attainment of a “true and authentic humanity” for all students and their families, especially the poor (Freund, 2001; McLaughlin, D., 2000, 2007). Yet, there are substantially fewer children from lower socio-economic backgrounds enrolling in Catholic schools.



Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

Source: ACARA dataset 2011

**Figure 3.2. Distribution of students among school types by socio-educational advantage.**

Source: Australian Government, 2011, p. 9

Ideally, the school's Catholic identity, while being clearly embedded within Catholic philosophy and social teaching, engages with the "cultural circumstances and concrete experience" of students, their families and staff to bring the Gospel to life in them (Gascoigne, 1995, p. 278). This activity is generated from the Church's understandings of its mission ("To the Nations," 1965). This mission is centred on the concept of "Reign of God" as lived by Jesus ("The Mission of the Redeemer," 1990). The Catholic school becomes a vehicle and exemplar of this mission in circumstances where an affirming and sympathetic culture has been nurtured ("Dialogue and proclamation: Reflection and orientations on interreligious dialogue

and the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ," 1991). In such a context, the partnership of school, home and parish is able to offer students relevant teaching and credible role models (Cullinane, 2007; Qullinan, 2002).

Competing with the development of a robust Catholic school ethos are a variety of influences including an adversarial industrial climate, the low expectations held by students and parents regarding the religious dimension of a Catholic school, and a market culture of academic and sporting success (Grace, 2003; Treston, 1997). Ironically, the market finds elements of the Catholic ethos attractive and this has the potential to distort the Catholic school ethos. This occurs when school fees become exorbitant so as to deter the entry of poorer students (Freund, 2001). "Market survival should not be at the expense of mission integrity" (Grace, p. 162).

Within the cultivation of a Catholic school ethos, the particular and unique ethos of schools associated with a Religious Institute school invites consideration (Degenhardt, 2006; Dunne, 2008). Such schools adopt the concept of "charism" to more appropriately explain their understanding of ethos. "Ethos" is used interchangeably with "charism". When a distinction is made, "ethos" relates to the Catholic character of a school (Degenhardt, 2006; Watson, 2007). In contrast, the concept of "charism" is complex. It incorporates the belief that individuals address particular crises with a gift of faith supported by Gospel insight. The crisis becomes the catalyst for the generation of a particular lens through which "individuals in community" believe they may authentically interpret and live the Gospel. This is particularly relevant for people who are affiliated in some way with a Religious Institute (Braniff, 2005; Green, 1997a).

Ethos in a Religious Institute school, therefore, relates to the way that the founder's charism is experienced in the contemporary school (Tuite, 2007). The school ethos is consciously linked to the founder's charism, and includes the ways that the founder's leadership influences the charism of the Religious Institute (Grace, 2002). Faithfulness to the founder's leadership is also essential for critiquing the authenticity of the Religious Institute (Flannery, 1996). The school ethos is both the aspirational values and beliefs espoused by school governing authorities and

leaders, and the lived reality of school community members. Authenticity relates to the congruency between aspiration and the lived reality of the charism. The authenticity of the school ethos is guaranteed—or not—by how leaders commit themselves to it (Braniff, 2007; Donnelly, 2000). Ideally, this commitment is aligned to the mission of the school and is influenced by, and strengthened through, formation in religious leadership (Coleridge, 2009; Gottemoeller, 1999; Thornber, 2009). Likewise, school staff are nurtured into ethos through specific and sustained staff formation experiences (Arbuckle, 2006; Glaser & Buck, 2004).

Traditionally, the presence of religious Brothers in a school has guaranteed the authentic nurturing and transmission of the ethos. However, as the number of religious Brothers decreases, school governance arrangements invite review. With the absence of religious presence on governing boards, corporate structures have replaced them. The danger with this novelty is that the development of a distinctly Catholic identity in the school may be surrendered to an entrepreneurial culture (Curran, 1997; Gascoigne, 1995). In contrast, where governing bodies invite the participation of those committed to religious values, it is more likely that an authentic ethos is cultivated (Arbuckle, 2006).

### **3.4 Charism**

It is appropriate to critique the particular aspect of ethos cultivated in Religious Institute schools: charism. Charism is “a Holy Spirit inspired insight, a “spirit quake” or “faith shock” that passionately ignites one of God’s people to bring forth God’s kingdom in a special way (Arbuckle, 1993, p. 147; McLaughlin, D., 2007, p. 213). “Charism is the sense of distinctive mission of a religious order that represents a fidelity to the inspiration of the founder or founders of the order” (Hayes, 2006, p. 30). It comes from the Holy Spirit and is distinguishable from human motivations and capacities. Charism is a gift, exercised in specific historical contexts, for the good of the Church and all people (Paul VI, 1971). Other descriptions are more domestic in tone, such as “family tradition” or “family flavour”, “corporate personality” or even a “feel” (Gibeau, 1995; Schneiders, 2001, p. 8). These terms relate to the way in which charism is instilled in individuals and communities.

The charism originates from the founder's story. This story is based on historical events where the founder's insights become the foundations of a Religious Institute's identity and mission (Dosen, 2005). Charism contributes to the ethos of a Religious Institute school and influences both the school ethos and culture. It is generated within an historical context (Braniff, 2006, 2007; Doyle, 1972; Green, 1997a; McLaughlin, D., 2007; Tuite, 2007). Charism offers a continuity of beliefs and values originating with the founding community to contemporary and future communities (Green, 2000). A charism is useful in identifying the distinctive character of a school, either by those within the school community describing the dynamic of the school, or by the school community establishing their ethos and culture around the life and vision of a particular person (Cook, 2010). Ideally, a charism's presence is observable in the school culture (Brien & Hack, 2005; Cook, 2010; Green, 1997a).

Historically, founders of Religious Institutes responded to particular needs and this response attracted followers. In contrast, in the contemporary world, individuals discern the community that resonates with their story, or they discover that the spirit of the founder has relevance in a contemporary context (Gibeau, 1995; Thompson, 1999). Charism is associated with the identification of new forms of ministry that address current needs. The Church discerns and approves each new ministry and the charism inspires and strengthens participants (Grass, 2006). In reality, many novel ministries have been regarded suspiciously by the Church, and religious founders considered subversive and radical (Arbuckle, 1993).

Nevertheless, the Second Vatican Council urged Religious Institutes to rediscover their original charism (Braniff, 2006; "Perfect Charity," 1965). Religious Institutes undertook this task, reflecting on their charism in the contemporary context and attempting to read the "signs of the times", in the context of a diminution in religious vocations. This process was destabilising for many religious whose sense of their religious identity and vision was challenged by both the renewed emphasis on the founder's charism and the changes necessary when lay people collaborated with them in Church ministry (Sammon, 2001).

Paradoxically, this change process threatened the Church's traditional control of the agenda because the renewed emphasis on charism contributed a new and possibly unpredictable element into religious life. The Church tried to reassert some historical elements of religious life as unchangeable but this was contested by the experience of religious community members who were discerning between the "timeless" and "time-bound" (Chittister, 1986; Congregation for Religious and for Secular Institutes, 1983). A "reculturing" of orthodox Church culture had commenced, and has been regarded as one of the movements which periodically reawaken the church, though potentially having the sense of crisis at the time (Arbuckle, 1993; Bartunek, 1984; Green, 2009a). The evangelising mission of the Church requires periodic "critical enculturation" that facilitates contemporary missionary activity in the world (Rymarz, n.d.)

These changes, connected with the rediscovery and repositioning of charism at the centre of religious life, create some definitional issues that have not been resolved, resulting in "charism" and "deep story" being used interchangeably. When a religious community lives according to their founder's vision and priorities, there is a sense that they have retrieved the original charism rather than it having been "reinvented" (McDonough, 1993; Schneider, 2006). This is a contestable assumption (Lee, 2004).

Lee (1989) referred to difficulties with recovering a charism in this way:

The "recovery of charism" may be one of the most unsupportable and unnecessary burdens a religious institution has ever been asked to bear, because it cannot be done. Charism is not a property. It is not a possession. It is not transferable, not transmittable and not controllable. Charism is a deeply historicised social phenomenon. It cannot be duplicated in any other time or place. Charism has never been a movable feast. (p. 124)

If charism is "deeply historicised", the metaphor of "deep story" may illuminate the contemporary experience of charism. A "deep story" connects members of a religious community and invites others to contribute their "narrative" (Green, 2009b; Lee, 1989; Schneider, 2006; Schneiders, 2001; Thompson, 1999). "Deep story" connects the experience of the founder with the experience of contemporary

followers. The founder's charism generates this story which models how to live a vocation and which offers meaning and identity to those who are called to share the charism (Buchanan, 2006; Green, 2009b). The story is the means by which the charismatic tradition is "historically extended and socially embodied" (Hilton, 1998, p. 66). It is the deep story which is "retrieved" through history and is able to re-awaken the vision and hope of the religious community (Gill, 2009). It is patterned on the charism, and is the way in which charism's contribution to a hopeful future is understood (Hilton, 1998). [In contrast, charism can be understood as the contemporary expression of a founder's spiritual insight, with "story" being the metaphor for its continuation. Charism is, in this usage, the "authentic, contemporary expression of the deep story" (Hall, 2010, p. 16).]

This story is affirmed as charism by those who experience grace in ministry as "charism ... names an effective connection between a deep story and a contemporary social situation" (Hilton, 1998; Lee, 2004, p. 12). This deep story contributes to the identity and strength of ministries (such as teaching and healthcare) by being present in the ministry's culture through staff formation (Braniff, 2006; Tuite, 2007; Watson, 2007; Xuereb, n.d.). These cultural characteristics are not to be confused with the charism itself (Green, 2009b; Lee, 2005). If the charism is to maintain its clarity and power, it is differentiated from good intentions and works of mercy (McCann, 2003; Wittberg, 2000).

Members of Religious Institutes companion others who sense a vocation — who "recognise the charism in themselves" (Brill, 2007, p. 2) — and this includes all, regardless of canonical status, gender, nationality or religion (Hilton, 1998). Charism binds religious communities together and assists community members to transcend their limitations and work cooperatively in order to implement the community's vision. The authentic transmission of the charism from the founder to members of the religious community and to lay people occurs more effectively through modelling rather than through programs of instruction (Green, 2000; Xuereb, n.d.). This may be described as "charismatic circularity", as sharing and encouragement in the religious community connects members to the charism and builds the faith community (Lydon, 2010, pp. 52–53). In contrast, it may be that explicit teaching



may be more effective, creating a “conscious, articulated reality” (Hilton, 1998, p. 162). The goal is a transformative experience of the charism and encourages individual and community formation (Marist Ministries Office, 2010).

Since the experience of community is a primary means of people growing in the charism, the relationships within a Catholic school govern the capacity of the charism to strongly influence the school’s identity (Cook & Simonds, 2011). If the charism is not discernible in the school culture, it may be that the school has adopted alternative cultural models. To be authentic, the charism reflects the story and values of the founder rather than other “stories” and practices that may be related to the history of the school or of similar schools, and that may be used to justify a range of practices not in harmony with the charism of the founder (Braniff, 2006; McLaughlin, D., 2007). A school community that identifies the charism as being relevant and lives by its values confirms the authenticity of the charism (Green, 1997b, 2000).

In order to minimise the generation of pseudo-charisms, Religious Institute schools have generated formation programs that induct lay people into the charism. This is particularly appropriate since there are few vowed religious teachers in Australian schools (Watson, 2007). Such professional experiences enable the continuity of charism-inspired ministry and broaden understandings of “vocation” to include lay people (Clifton & McEnroe, 1994; Gill, 2009; Glaser & Buck, 2004). Members of Religious Institutes are to continue as a prophetic voice and include lay people through adult education in governance structures (Desmarchelier, 1989). This can be a challenging but positive process. American Catholic universities, for example, have maintained authentic links to their ecclesial communities throughout the process of selecting committed and formed lay staff. They adopt the term, “secularisation” as a means of describing what it is to be human through the experience of studying in a Catholic university. They affirm the movement from working and studying within an exclusive Church environment to the public arena which does not observe a false sacred and secular dichotomy (Gallin, 2000; Ormerod, 2010). This environment holds challenges for lay and religious staff. Lay people are challenged to take on their vocation and use their gifts in service to the

mission of the Religious Institute. Religious are challenged to “surrender” their “control” of the deep story so that it may be fully appropriated by lay people (Lee, 2004, pp. 136,157).

The formation of lay people invites careful management. Lay people may not experience a complex understanding of vocation and formation unless there are opportunities for formal and informal formation experiences. Lay staff may experience their identification and affiliation with the charism as “feeling at home” (Hilton, 1998, p. 115) or “becoming themselves” (Green, 1997a, p. 105). Religious identity can be maintained through healthy inter-relationship between the Religious Institute and the school. This involves lay and religious staff working collaboratively across the functions of the school. When lay people are incorporated into ministries, religious become the activators of the charism in the laity. This enhances mission and clarifies religious identity. The increase in lay involvement does not diminish the religious dimension of a school, nor dilute it. Ideally, it places charism clearly at the centre of ministry (Brill, 2007; Ranson, 2008).

Formation, therefore, is a strategic priority for Religious Institute schools (Angus, 1988; Green, 1997a; Tuite, 2007; Watson, 2007) and an important goal for principals to address (Mathieson, 2000). Principals and other leaders are responsible for inculcating commitment to Catholic faith and mission and the charism of the Religious Institute in their school communities (Degenhardt, 2006; Dunne, 2008; Green, 1997a; Tuite, 2007; Watson, 2007). It is a challenge for school leaders to implement the charism in a contemporary context, even though they might be able to understand it in its historical context (Watson, 2007). To authentically implement a charism in their school, leaders need to reflect and understand their contemporary context in the light of the historical context and lead the school according to their understandings and insights. While charisms originate in a specific historical period, they have capacity to support contemporary “best practice” school organisation and pedagogy (Lee, 1989).

Commitment to the charism may enable staff to move outside their usual understandings and roles, working with colleagues to understand and successfully

implement educational change. A charism, for example, may guide whole school change processes if the staff members are committed to it informing their practice (Degenhardt, 2006; Dunne, 2008). For effective outcomes, the charism is linked to the proposed change in ways that confirm the commitment of the stakeholders (Degenhardt, 2006; Dunne, 2008).

The mission of the Church invites staff to actively live out their faith, engaging with the charism. A Religious Institute school is not able to fulfil its mission without a clear and unambiguous commitment to its Catholic faith and charism (Rymarz, 2010).

### **3.5 Culture**

Although the two concepts are generally associated, culture is distinct from “ethos”. Ideally, the culture of an organisation reflects its ethos (Tuite, 2007). Culture may simply be defined as “the way we do things around here” (Deal & Kennedy, 1982). School culture may be defined as “the integration of environmental, organisational and experiential features of school existence to offer a context for teaching and learning, and its subsequent improvement” (Glover & Coleman, 2005, p. 266). School ethos is discernible in a mission or vision statement, but the culture is experienced in the day to day life of the school. While “ethos” emphasises spiritual characteristics and values, culture is the collective of all the elements that give meaning to a particular group. Culture contextualises life. The beliefs, languages, rituals, knowledge, conventions, courtesies and artefacts ... the cultural baggage of any group are the resources from which the individual and social identity are constructed (Duncan, 1998). Culture includes history and tradition, and its elements provide meaning to organisational members (Sergiovanni, 2003). This is more complex when a number of sub-cultures exist, especially where they are in conflict with a positive and authentic culture (Hargreaves, A., 1994; Solvason, 2005). Staff, students and society beyond the school influence a school’s culture (Bell & Kent, 2010).

The stories within a school culture assist in the creation and maintenance of its cultural identity. Groups interactively create social reality by making sense of their

lives as members of the school community. Staff members describe, negotiate and create shared meaning, and this meaning becomes a mythic story or a collection of stories that characterise the school. This shared meaning embraces new community members who are attracted to it. The freedom of staff members to tell their “story” depends on the degree to which the ethos can be flexibly interpreted (Boyce, 1995).

Effective school leadership involves cultural leadership. Culture is influenced by the leader’s leadership style. School leadership is responsible for leading and managing the school culture. Possible school cultures include:

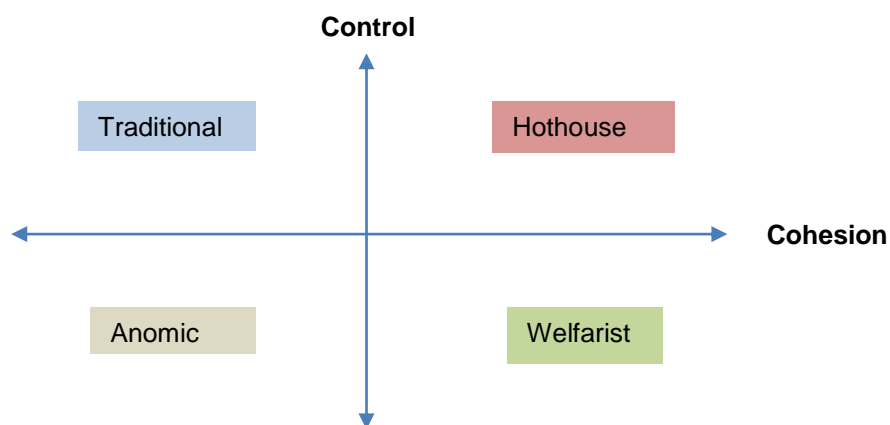
- a) a power culture—a dominant power figure superintending an array of micro-political groupings;
- b) a task culture—a matrix organisational structure where mostly *ad hoc* teams complete the work;
- c) a role culture—a role-driven structure, influenced by hierarchy; and
- d) a person culture—a “galaxy” of “individual stars” (Handy, as cited in Glover & Coleman, 2005, p. 263).

Another means of analysing school cultures is the Cultural Jigsaw model. This model consists of five interlocking pieces:

- a) the internal organisational culture of the school;
- b) school sub-cultures and the relationship that develops between the dominant sub-culture and cultures that diverge from it;
- c) the relationship between leadership, learning and culture;
- d) the external culture; and
- e) the impact of cultural change. (Bell & Kent, 2010, p. 13)

Effective schools have a balance of social control (rules and regulations exercised by the formal leaders) and cohesion (team spirit) in their cultures (Glover & Coleman, 2005). Ineffective schools may be characterised as having cultures with an imbalance in control and cohesion. “Traditional” school cultures are characterised by high social control and low cohesion between members of the culture. Where there is high social control and high cohesion, the school may be experienced as a “hothouse”. “Anomic” and “welfarist” school cultures are identified as having low

social control but low and high cohesion respectively (Glover & Coleman, 2005, p. 263). The description of these cultural characteristics implies the kind of interventions that might be applied to increase effectiveness. School leaders are challenged to discern and understand the culture and to manage it away from the extremities.



**Figure 3.3. Ineffective school cultures.**

Culture tends to be invisible to people working within it, but can become apparent if an aspect of the culture is challenged by a proposed change (Green, 1997b). Leaders with a change agenda are responsible for managing school culture so that the change is given the best opportunity of success (Hinde, 2004). Vision and communication between senior leaders and middle leaders is a critical factor for success (Valentino, 2004). Middle leaders are interpreters of change and creators of a new school culture. When Catholic schools undertake a change process, leaders are responsible for managing the change in order to sustain each school's Catholic and charismatic identity.

### **3.5.1 The Culture of a Catholic School**

Catholic school cultural identity is derived from the myths, symbols and rituals pertinent to the Catholic faith (Lee, 2004). This cultural identity is built on the values of the Catholic school, and these are reflected in artefacts, symbols and rituals which

are visible and familiar to the school community but which may not be easily comprehended by someone outside the culture (Duncan, 1998). A Religious Institute school ritualises the traditions of the Religious Institute which owns or sponsors it. Its charism is observable in the school culture and deepened through it (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988).

Catholic schools strive to reflect a Catholic school culture, characterised by collegiality, empowerment and community and not characteristics which are antithetical to a Catholic school culture: “autocratic hegemony”, “managerial focus” and “bureaucratic organisational culture” (Laffan, 2004, n.p.; Tuite, 2007; Watson, 2007). Practices of subsidiarity and co-responsibility preference human dignity over work efficiency and provide scope for each staff member to exercise their capabilities (Bryk, Lee, & Holland, 1993; Turu, et al., 2009).

A Catholic school culture identifies itself in relation to the contemporary culture outside the school and is in “dialogue” with that culture (Cullinane, 2007). The robustness of Catholic school culture is contingent on the quality of formation and commitment of its staff (White, 2011). Principals lead staff in the creation of a distinct Catholic school culture, while teachers are the ones most obviously passing on the culture to students through daily interaction in classrooms (Day, Harris, & Hadfield, 2001; Schein, 2004). Cultural transmission is explicit in some teaching areas and implicit in a range of school activities. Catholic teachers of each generation use their experience and qualifications to prioritise the elements of Catholic culture which they pass on to students (Duncan, 1998; Owen, 2005).

Ideally, in religious cultures, the ethos is adopted completely and not merely given lip service (Green, 1997a, 2000; Laffan, 2004). “A Catholic culture is an incarnational way of living in history” (Cullinane, 2007, p. 425). Hindrances to the authentic expression of the Catholic school culture arise where the charism is imposed on staff, or expounded in isolation from the gospel context. Busyness and blame may inhibit the full expression of authentic school culture (Dunne, 2008; Laffan, 2004; Laiken, 2003). Where the values of the school are compatible with the values of the student and their family, the student engages positively with all aspects

of the culture, including the academic program (Cullinane, 2007; Mok & Flynn, 1998). Staff leadership capability and formation are priorities if Catholic school culture is to be authentic (Abeles, 2008; Morey & Piderit, 2008):

Formation does not merely instil in us historical data and congregational ideas ... it forms how we experience the world, how we "feel" the world. It is the 'bias' out of which we experience, the perspective that makes experience possible. (Lee, 2004, p. 172)

Effective formation in a Religious Institute school enables staff to experience their world from the perspective of the founding charism, consolidating the school's culture around the ethos and charism of the Religious Institute. This process is personally and culturally transformative and the major responsibility for school leaders (Belmonte & Cranston, 2009).

### **3.6 Leadership in Catholic schools**

For Catholic school leaders to effectively fulfil their role as cultural leaders, they follow both career and formation pathways. They lead both educationally and spiritually. The formation path focuses them on deepening their characters through the offering of their gifts for ministry, becoming self-aware and more inclusive, and finding meaning and maturity in the midst of life and work (Winschel, 2008). Not only are they making meaning, they are developing the capacity to translate that meaning for, and with, others (Giganti, 2004). They build a Catholic school culture aligned with a Catholic ethos. In doing so, they aim to implement these core characteristics of effective educational leadership influenced by the school's ethos and charism:

- a) a clear personal vision of what they desire to achieve;
- b) working alongside colleagues;
- c) respect for teachers' autonomy and protecting them from extraneous demands;
- d) looking ahead, anticipating change and preparing their people;
- e) pragmatism; and

- f) communicating, with emotional intelligence, their moral purpose for the school. (Day, et al., 2001)

Catholic school leadership is informed by leadership styles that support the ethos and culture of the Catholic school and are characterised by subsidiarity and co-responsibility (Bryk, et al., 1993; Lee, 2004; Turu, et al., 2009). Contemporary understandings of leadership have moved away from the dyad of “leadership” and “followership” or “leader, follower, shared goals” to be more descriptive of the complex dynamics involved in leadership contexts (Drath et al., 2008, p. 640). This alternative understanding of leadership is based on leadership outcomes, and includes the concepts of direction, alignment and commitment (Drath, et al., 2008).

This model supports new theories of leadership such as Distributed, Shared or Parallel leadership, where leadership behaviour is complex due to the relationships involved. "Effective schools ... have tighter congruence between values, norms and behaviours of principals and teachers and ... this is more likely to result in positive school performance" (Rosenholz as cited in Harris, 2007, p. 319).

Ideally, in Catholic schools, this congruency is an alignment between the leader's personal values and the values of the school. This is the basis of their spiritual leadership, as they are responsible for leading the religious dimension of the school (Belmonte & Cranston, 2009). In Religious Institute schools this alignment includes the charisma (Green, 2011a; Hall, 2010).

Identification of Catholic school leaders is important for the mission of the Catholic school, as is their education and formation. If mission is to be sustained, effective leadership succession is a priority (Ranson, 2006). Leaders exercise power in sustaining the culture of the school (Bennett, 2003). They may use “power over”, “power with” or “power through” depending on their understanding of the micropolitics within the school. Catholic school leaders predominantly use the strategies of “power with” and “power through” (Smeed, Kimber, Millwater, & Ehrich, 2009). Leadership that empowers others is appropriate for Catholic schools. This kind of leadership is relevant for school communities that cohere around a particular



ethos. Authentic, sustainable and shared leadership is being explored and promoted in contemporary educational leadership scholarship with the expectation that it is more attuned to school contexts (Cannon, 2004; Harris, 2009).

### **3.6.1 Authentic Leadership**

Authentic leaders are ethical and people-centred (Bhindi & Duignan, 1997; Starratt, 2004). They “build, interpret and sustain strong organisational visions” (Duignan & Bhindi, 1998, p. 94). Authenticity is facilitated through responsibility and presence, is intrinsically communal, rather than self-indulgent and results in freedom for the leader, school staff and students (Starratt, 2004). The challenge for leaders is to recognise and embrace the inherent complexity of their role. “How can leaders be better prepared to make informed, wise and ethically responsible choices in complex, tension-filled situations” (Duignan, 2003, p. 22)? The complexity of the leadership role requires leaders who are orientated towards stewardship and service rather than domination and control, and who build trust by acting with integrity within the school community (Bhindi & Duignan, 1997). This kind of leadership is most appropriate to the Catholic school where the aim of the school is the development of an authentic humanity (McLaughlin, D., 2000).

Authentic leadership is a pre-requisite for authentic learning (Bhindi & Duignan; Duignan, 2004). “The authentic educational leader unceasingly cultivates an environment that promotes the work of authentic teaching and learning” (Starratt, 2004, p. 81). Authentic leadership regards teaching and learning as moral activities. Servant leadership and stewardship are part of what is now being called “Authentic Leadership”, as both forms of leadership are countercultural (Duignan, 1998). These kinds of leadership build trust and empowerment within school communities; they are essentially relational (Hall, 2010; Starratt, 2004).

Catholic school leaders value relational styles of leadership as relationships within the school community are intrinsic to the school’s authenticity (Groome, 1996; McLaughlin, D., 1998). Humility characterises authentic leaders and, combined with a strong professional will, supports Catholic school leaders in change processes (Collins, 2001; Degenhardt, 2006). This kind of leadership harnesses common

purpose and motivates staff and the whole school community to move towards their common purpose (Sergiovanni, 1990): “a power to be and a power to do” (Starratt, 1993, p. 69). The following models of leadership further explore ways to generate, sustain and share leadership.

### **3.6.2 Sustainable Leadership**

Sustainable leadership is best adapted to contexts where community-based understandings, within an ecological framework, underpin educational understandings (Hargreaves, A., 2009). Positive change is sustainable if the moral, human and financial resources available to the school are sustainable (Fullan, 2002a, 2002b). Effective leaders are generative and leave behind leaders who can be more effective than they are (Dolan, n.d.). Leaders are responsible for enacting leadership development and succession planning in order for the organisation to “flourish” (Fullan, 2002b, p. 14). Given this characterisation of effective leadership, there is concern that Australian Catholic school leadership is unsustainable, due to the shortage of suitable applicants for school principal positions (Cannon, 2004; d'Arbon, 2003). Difficulty in identifying aspiring leaders and in effecting sustained change in schools has prompted a renewed exploration of shared leadership, including self-managing teams (Cannon, 2004; Cranston, Jeffery, Shilton, & Jeffery, 2005; Duignan, 1998; Wheatley, 1997).

There is a strong link between “sustainable” and “distributed” theories of leadership, as the discourse of sustainability and stewardship suggests shared leadership (McCallin, 2003; Mintzberg, 2009). Community building enhances trust among employees and creates collaborative structures that underpin sustainability.

### **3.6.3 Distributed Leadership**

The concept of Distributed Leadership is helpful in elucidating ways in which staff members other than the school principal may lead. Distributed leadership is a “form of shared leadership that is distributed to key stakeholders through the organisation” (Duignan & Bezzina, 2006, p. 3). While Authentic Leadership and Sustainable Leadership are discussed in terms of their moral character, Distributed Leadership

prioritises the structure of the leadership and its outcomes and informs leadership in a Catholic school (Spry & Duignan, 2003).

Distributed leadership builds direction, alignment and commitment toward the vision and mission of a Catholic school (Drath, et al., 2008; Martin & Ernst, 2005). It relies on a shared understanding and a supportive culture to achieve leadership outcomes. In contrast to conventional “leader-follower” concepts of leadership, distributed leadership has a network structure and is learning-focused (Hargreaves, D., 2006; Harris, 2008; Harris & Lambert, 2003). While this process is accountable, it also promotes a “no blame” culture with the opportunity to engage in unfamiliar tasks and undertake professional learning (Laiken, 2003; Murphy, Smylie, Mayrowetz, & Louis, 2009). This process is culturally transformative.

Distributed leadership is characterised by the development of diverse rather than homogenous learning communities. A diverse learning community debates and critically reflects on teaching and learning. In these school cultures, shared and transparent decision-making and the valuing of staff, activate the expertise of the teaching community, and motivate student engagement with the school. Student learning is the major beneficiary (Blase & Blase, 1999; Silins & Mulford, 2004). The positive relationship between distributed leadership and improved student outcomes is predicated on the quality of teachers whose priority is an authentic relationship with students and deep and sustainable improvement of student learning (Hargreaves, D., 2006; Harris, 2008; Mayrowetz, 2008).

Leadership distribution may operate in one of two patterns: “consultative” or “decisional” (Harris, 2008). Consultative distribution occurs where after broad-based consultation among school staff, the formal leaders make the final decision. Decisional distribution occurs where a team of teacher leaders has full responsibility for a task (Degenhardt, 2006; Dunne, 2008; Spillane & Diamond, 2007).

Principals and other leaders contribute to the effectiveness of distributed leadership by building relationships and collaboration, coordinating staff and providing workplace learning that equips all staff to fulfil a role (Cardno, 2005; Leithwood, Day,

Sammons, Harris, & Hopkins, 2007). “Organisational leadership is ... more of a process that occurs throughout the organisation rather than a position someone holds ... rooted in knowledge power over position power and inquiry over advocacy” (Martin & Ernst, 2005, p. 91). Leadership capability, therefore, receives priority over positional power, and collaboration and complementarity determine roles within the specific context.

Transparent and democratic decision-making structures optimise formal and informal leader complementarity. Leadership is shared within the framework of the school’s strategic plan and the operational plans under it. Designated leaders are responsible for ensuring that the school’s vision is clear and reinforced. The Principal undertakes monitoring coordination and coaching roles, working across the staff with the strategic plan goals in mind (Harris, 2007; Leithwood et al., 2007; Murphy, et al., 2009). The Principal may be leading in areas where other staff might not lead (for example, in school improvement planning), but, in general terms, the leadership is shared by all teachers and formal educational leaders at the school. Projects may take more time to complete and may require mentoring and professional development, but this can be managed by inviting teaching staff already showing some leadership qualities to participate (Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 2003). The advantage of this way of working is that the workload is shared and there is increased ownership of the outcome.

Effective distributed leadership in schools relies on the support of sound organisational processes and an appropriate relational dynamics. From an organisational perspective, open and transparent selection processes, provision of time and money and a stable senior leadership support the development of distributed leadership (Murphy, et al., 2009). At the interpersonal level, trust and sense-making are present and developed in the school culture (Seashore Louis, Mayrowetz, Smiley, & Murphy, 2009).

Trust is defined as the “expectation that another will not act opportunistically, will be honest, and will make a good faith effort in accordance with previous commitments” (Seashore Louis, et al., 2009, p. 159). Trust and sense-making processes actively

support distributed leadership in a school. "Sense-making is the process by which individuals and groups evolve shared understandings of their setting". It "determines the level and quality of participation" in the work of leadership, influences the effectiveness of change processes, and is a means of understanding the ongoing interpretive activity engaged in by groups of staff (Seashore Louis, et al., 2009, p. 161). It is a powerful, narrative process that establishes truths (Brown, A. D., 2000). Sense-making works powerfully in an environment of trust, enabling distributed leadership to operate effectively. It promotes productive outcomes (Seashore Louis, et al., 2009).

Practised effectively, distributed leadership empowers and activates others in the school, enabling the achievement of its common purpose (Harris, 2008). If staff perceive distributed leadership as delegation, it is likely to be resisted as it may be seen as "more work" so school leaders are challenged to establish staff expectation and build a supportive culture (Harris, p. 51). Formal leaders may not be involved in teams or committees. In some situations, the informal leaders may have the greatest expertise to contribute (Day et al., 2007; Leithwood, Day, et al., 2007; Mitchell & Sackney, 2001). From an accountability perspective, it may be that formal and informal leaders working together on projects is the most practical strategy as long as respective roles are clarified and the process well-managed. Role clarification and management are the responsibility of formal leaders (Dunne, 2008).

Distributed leadership and the establishment of teacher, student and school [learning] networks have a positive impact on school culture and create the conditions for school improvement (Caldwell, 2004; Harris, 2004). "To sustain strong, positive cultures, leadership must come from everyone" (Deal & Peterson, 1999, p. 138). Paradoxically, cooperation within a team and the resultant cohesion, role clarity and strategic focus influence the job satisfaction of formal school leaders (Hulpia & Devos, 2009).

Well-developed, coordinated, distributed leadership, integrated into the school, creates and shares knowledge with intra-school and inter-school networks (Harris, 2008). Through "planful alignment", the Principal gives forethought to how a change

can best be implemented and negotiates roles with formal and informal leaders (Leithwood, Day, et al., 2007; Leithwood, Mascall, et al., 2007, p. 40). Where teams or committees are used within an educational environment, middle leaders are usually the leaders of these teams though their capabilities for this kind of leadership may not be developed fully (Degenhardt, 2006).

Middle leaders are key stakeholders in shared leadership. Their perspectives and capabilities may be highly influential in the school and business settings.

### **3.7 Middle Leadership**

Phrases such as “piggy in the middle”, “muddle in the middle”, and “blaming the middle” characterise middle leader experience and self-perception (Balogun, 2003; Earley, 1990; Fitzgerald, 2009; Newell & Dopson, 1996). Middle leaders may experience pressure and opposition coming from the metaphorical “below” and “above” of the organisational structure. This may cause them to feel vulnerable and frustrated (Hellawell & Hancock, 2001; Sims, 2003). This may also be the case where middle leaders “boundary-span”, that is, when middle leaders move into the space of senior leaders in order to understand a decision or priority, and then meet with subordinates to deliver a deconstructed message (Timperley, 2005). Boundary spanning, either at the instigation of the middle leaders or the senior leaders, may heighten the likelihood of success in comparison with contexts where middle leaders are responsible for implementation of strategic initiatives but with little understanding and with meagre resources available to them (Holden & Roberts, 2004).

Middle leader capacity to connect the world of an organisation with stakeholder expectations enables successful outcomes (Davies, 2007; Martin & Ernst, 2005). The challenge for senior leaders is to build the capacity of middle leaders so that they can contribute to an organisation’s strategic improvement. Insights from the corporate world may be transferable to education. In the world of business, profit is the ultimate motive whereas in education, profit is not the driving force. Business perspectives provide a lens through which middle leadership in education may be perceived.

### 3.7.1 Middle Leadership in the Corporate World

Middle leaders play a strategic role in business, and with sufficient capacity-building they are able to increase organisational effectiveness (Balogun, 2003; Floyd & Wooldridge, 1996; Huy, 2001). Senior leaders have a role to play in assisting middle leaders' career planning and in helping them to be more than "a paralysed group" (Newell & Dopson, 1996, p. 14).

Informed and trained middle leaders are important change agents, as they encourage their team members to adopt new practices (Balogun, 2003; Mantere, 2008; Qi, 2005). Unless they are equipped with the relevant information, middle leaders may act as change resisters rather than change facilitators.

The problem seems to be that our top management team after some hard thinking about the firm's strategy does not realise that the rest of the organisation has not gone through the same process. They are therefore dumbfounded by the notion that the content of their ideas is not as self-evident to the rest of us as they think. (Mantere, 2008, p. 302)

Eight conditions that enable middle leaders to facilitate change are the following:

- a) narration (top managers link the current strategic direction to past experiences);
- b) contextualisation (top managers make an effort of linking strategy to relevant work contexts);
- c) resource allocation (middle managers receive explicit top management authorisation to make changes to everyday work, matched by resource allocation);
- d) respect (top managers recognising the value of implementation work relevant to strategy);
- e) trust (sharing of new ideas and open communication);
- f) responsiveness (top managers responding to feedback);
- g) inclusion (top managers invite and expect middle management participation in planning); and

- h) refereeing (top managers react to new ideas, refereeing between ideas).  
(Mantere, 2008, pp. 302-304)

One reason for middle leaders' capacity to effect change is that they work through networks as "consummate insiders". They may display organisational and interpersonal skills such as:

- a) comfort with change;
- b) clarity of direction;
- c) thoroughness;
- d) participative management style; and
- e) persuasiveness, persistence and discretion. (Kanter, p. 152)

Such qualities enable middle leaders to affiliate with the employee community. Their "intensity" protects the long-term interests of the company and their subordinates. Middle leaders in education also have the capacity to contribute strategically to their setting.

### **3.7.2 Middle Leadership in Education**

Middle leaders in education are influential and therefore able to facilitate the implementation of change where they are provided with the training and the organisational scope to do so (Adey, 2000; Brown, M., & Rutherford, 1999; Glover, et al., 1998). They are influential in the improvement of student learning outcomes (M. Brown, Rutherford, & Boyle, 2000). They are willing to plan in their own area of responsibility, in line with whole school priorities, but they may be reluctant to participate in whole-school decision-making (Adey, 2000; Turner, 2003). Heads of Department tend to work in a similar way to Principals with whom they have worked previously, and find school-based professional development more relevant and helpful than external professional development (Turner, 2000). Four patterns of concern by middle leadership are identified (Glover, et al., 1998, p. 285):

- a) concern for supporting people and achieving results;
- b) concern for acting according to the maturity of subordinates;



- c) concern for involving the staff in participatory activities according to the objective and the way in which this is to be achieved; and
- d) concern for shaping and sharing the vision.

The challenge for senior leaders is to manage these concerns effectively in the interests of the school.

Successful middle leaders demonstrate a balance between authoritarian and collegial behaviour, transformational and transactional styles of leadership, and much wisdom (Glover & Miller, 1999; Leithwood, Day, et al., 2007). Professional learning and reflection on experience assist their capacity. Middle leaders may be hindered by lack of time, role ambiguity, curriculum instability, access to targeted professional development, exclusion from major decision making, lack of communication, and alignment and connection with senior leadership (Brown, M. et al., 2000). They perceive that they do not have sufficient time for their work (Glover, et al., 1998).

Middle leaders may struggle in their move from being effective classroom practitioners only to being leaders, and may feel inadequate in the areas of general managerial skills, school budget and finance, and planning skills (Glover, et al., 1998). This may demonstrate senior leader neglect of middle leaders although this may also serve as a “get out clause” for middle leaders who may wish to avoid challenging tasks in their role description such as monitoring teacher performance (Wise, 2001, p. 339).

Middle leaders have the capacity to delegate effectively amidst a change context (Glover & Miller, 1999; Wise & Bush, 1999) but they are unable to work effectively if the vision of the school is unclear (M. Brown, et al., 2000; Chetty, 2007). Effective change is problematic if middle leaders are resistant or passive. Effective change is facilitated and enhanced when middle leaders understand the proposed change. Senior leaders who overlook the role of middle leaders rather than inform, develop and share leadership with them, impede the implementation of change and the effective conduct of every day transactions (Blumentritt & Hardie, 2000).

Unless Principals effectively manage and build the capability of middle leaders, middle leader power may focus on resistance to school change initiatives (Bennett, 1999; Briggs, 2005; M. Brown, Boyle, & Boyle, 1999). Middle leaders are “mediators” (Abolghasemi, McCormick, & Conners, 1999), “intermediaries of change” (Balogun, 2003), “translators”, “sense-givers” (Rouleau, 2005), “gatekeepers” and “gateways” (Harris & Lambert, 2003; Jones, 2006). These descriptors point to the critical agency of middle leaders in the implementation of change initiatives, and their power to resist change if senior leaders do not manage them effectively. Where leadership is distributed, the middle leader may operate as facilitator or “knowledge agent”, that is, primarily as an intermediary between different groups rather than a conduit of information from senior leaders (Blumentritt & Hardie, 2000).

The effective implementation of change requires alignment between the organisational structure of the school and the kinds of policy implementations being undertaken. This may create tensions for middle leaders who generally direct their work focus toward their subject department or specific groups of students (Hannay, Smeltzer Erb, & Ross, 2001). The middle leader may be perceived as “corporate agent”, “implementer”, “staff manager”, “liaison” or “leader” (Briggs, 2005, p. 31). In each of these roles, there is a tension between a generic role in supporting whole-College consistency and the need to focus on the specific area of responsibility (Feist, 2007). There is value in inviting middle leaders to consider and challenge the school’s existing structures, and foster their engagement in whole school decision-making. Such a process may re-culturate the school and support ongoing changes (Hannay & Ross, 1999).

Where a middle leader coordinates and networks in this way, they work to earn the trust of the groups being coordinated. They are familiar with the context and culture of each group, and they are able to identify the knowledge needs of the groups, flexibly filling the gaps in each context (Blumentritt & Hardie, 2000). An environment of high trust optimises the sense-making strengths of the middle leader. On the basis of the past, they improvise in the present, with a view to moving the organisation forward (Seashore Louis, et al., 2009; Weick, 1998).

Senior leadership commitment to strengthening of leadership “in the middle” is required if middle leaders are to move beyond consideration of day to day issues and develop professional learning communities that value and foster dialogue, debate and professional development (Crawford, 2003). Strategic thinking and planning, and the gathering and analysis of data, are activities that promote this shift (Visscher & Witziers, 2004). These contexts are likely to be found where leadership is consciously distributed.

### **3.8 The Research Questions**

The purpose of this research is to explore how middle leaders at Champagnat College understand and implement the Marist charism. The major stakeholders selected for the purposes of this research are middle leaders at Champagnat College. Their position titles include the word “Head” or “Coordinator”. Middle leaders are distinguished from the College senior leaders, who are part of the College Leadership Team.

The literature review is organised around the four concepts of ethos, charism, culture and leadership which operate within the Mission of God, Mission of Jesus and the Kingdom of God. At the centre of these four concepts is the mission of the Catholic school. Middle leadership is identified as an element which brings coherence to ethos, culture and leadership. This is further amplified in Chapter Four.

#### **3.8.1 Understanding the Marist Charism**

The literature stresses the importance of ongoing formation for leaders in Catholic schools, and for those in Religious Institute schools. Formation assists leaders to move beyond a superficial understanding to “feel at home” with the spiritual tradition. Understanding the charism involves cognitive and affective responses to formal programs, reading, and schooling in the spiritual tradition (Green, 2009b; The Sacred Congregation for Religious and for Secular Institutes (SCRI), 1977). On appointment, lay staff are invited to affirm the ethos and charism of the school and participate in the mission of the school, throughout their employment (Green, 1997a, 2009b; Lee, 1989; Thompson, 1999).

Middle leaders are crucial interpreters and communicators of the school culture. Their way of understanding the charism and their sense-making invite investigation. Further, it is relevant to explore how middle leaders experience vocation in the context of a Marist school in the twenty-first century and how that influences their understanding of their role as contemporary educational leaders.

The first research question is:

***How do Champagnat College middle leaders understand the Marist charism?***

### **3.8.2 Implementing the Marist Charism**

Ideally, leadership actions in a Marist school are consciously focused on the “critical, systematic transmission of culture ...” (SCRI, 1977 para. 49 ). The charismatic culture of a Marist school enables the transmission of faith by staff (Green, 1997a). As middle leaders have the potential to be critical agents of change, it is appropriate to consider how middle leaders at Champagnat College understand their implementation of the charism in the context of a changing social and curriculum environment.

Conditions that encourage or hinder middle leaders’ implementation of the charism are also of interest. The challenge for all school leaders – those at senior and middle levels—is to understand how middle and senior leadership within one school may work together towards the fulfilment of the school’s mission.

From the time of the founder to the current period, the charism has been celebrated in stories of the tradition and has found expression in communities from time to time (Lee, 1989). This has been the way in which the charism has been transmitted. There are times of grace and congruency when the charism is being authentically lived out through a community’s culture. Where this takes place in a Catholic school, it is the guarantor of the Catholic school’s authentic identity as it is this culture that forms students, families and staff.

The second research question is:

***What understanding do Champagnat College middle leaders hold regarding how they implement the Marist charism?***

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **THE MISSION OF THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL**

The purpose of this chapter is to define and contextualise the mission of the Catholic school. The mission of the Catholic school incorporates both its identity and purpose. The mission of the Catholic school relates to the mission of the Church<sup>6</sup> and the mission of Jesus. All of this finds fulfilment in, and is encompassed by, the Kingdom of God. There is a distinction between what has been intended by the Church through the twentieth century and the emerging experience of the Catholic school in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

#### **4.1 Church Teaching About the Catholic school**

At the time of the Second Vatican Council (1962-65), Church ministries were staffed mostly by religious. Soon after, however, a range of factors led to a diminution in the number of religious staff and the growth of lay participation in Church ministry (Sammon, 2001). Church pronouncements have reflected this changing landscape and have sought to explicate how increased lay participation contributes to this ministry.

According to Church teaching, the primary responsibility for the education of children and young people is, ideally, carried by parents (Congregation for Catholic Education (CCE), 2007, para. 48). The Catholic school supports parents. As partners to parents, teachers bring skills and qualifications to the education of each child. It is, therefore, incumbent on teachers to be educated and formed in both secular and religious dimensions so that they are trained to be effective instructors and moral guides to their students (Paul VI, 1965; The Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes (SCRSI), 1977).

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<sup>6</sup> Where “Church” is employed as a proper noun, it relates to the Roman Catholic Church.

The school is the agent of the Church as it has an overarching role of “achieving and promoting the value of the human person” (SCRSI, 1977, para. 8). It is a school “for the person and of persons” (CCE 2007, para. 13; SCRSI 1977, para. 21). The Catholic school’s instructional program and practices are intended to be framed by the Church’s understanding of the gospel and underpinned by the relationships within the school community. Ideally, what is taught, how it is taught, and the values and relational context of the school all speak of the Catholic ethos. The principles of the Gospel become educational norms embedded in the Catholic school. These norms are perceived as being derived from Christ who is the foundation of the Catholic school (SCRSI, 1977, paras 33, 34). The goal of student formation is the development of unselfish students who are committed to serve their local community and society (SCSRI, para. 36).

The proposed mission of the school is “a critical, systematic transmission of culture ...” with the goal of all persons becoming more human. The school’s culture and the dedicated lives of teachers are influential catalysts for the attainment of this goal (CCE, 1988, para. 108).

In order to “work for the sanctification of the world from within” (CCE, 1982, para. 5), lay Catholics contribute to Catholic school mission by bringing their connection with the world to the school. Since the Second Vatican Council, there has been active lay participation in schools as part of the mission of the Church:

Every Christian, and therefore also every lay person, has been made a sharer in "the priestly, prophetic, and kingly functions of Christ", and their apostolate "is a participation in the saving mission of the Church itself ... All are commissioned to that apostolate by the Lord Himself ". (CCE, 1982, para. 6)

The missional role of the laity derives from their baptism and is, therefore, not inferior to the missional role of religious ("The Mission of the Redeemer," 1990). Both religious and lay have particular roles to play.

Ideally, lay and religious teachers work together in schools as this provides students with "a vivid image of the Church and makes recognition of its riches easier" (CCE,

1997, para. 13). Although lay people do not participate in vowed religious life, they are involved—together with religious—in the mission of Christ and the Church. Catholic education is not separated from the Church’s mission and so teaching is understood as a vocation rather than—solely—a profession (SCCE, 1982, paras 24 & 37). Student formation is the goal of the school community, and this is optimised through the unique combination of quality relationships and “celebration of Christian values in Word and Sacrament” (CCE, 1988, para. 26).

Teachers have a vocation to “form the human person” through pedagogies which emphasise “direct and personal contact with students” (CCE, 1997; SCCE, para. 21). Teachers in Catholic schools are expected to demonstrate holistic caring for children in addition to their instructional responsibilities. Following the example of Jesus (Borg, 2006) committed teachers who demonstrate altruistic, responsible Christian service are more likely to influence children’s potential to serve, than teachers who rely on formal learning experiences. Teachers’ experience of the world supports and enhances their contribution to student learning (CCE, 2007, para. 31).

The concept of charism is particularly relevant in examining the role of the Religious Institute school in Catholic education. Where the Catholic school is under the direction of a Religious Institute, the “original charism” enriches the programs and inspires the relationships between teachers and students (SCCE, 1988, para. 35). Religious Institutes believe that the charism of the Institute has a strong influence and it is the responsibility of the lay Catholic to

... try to understand the special characteristics of the school they are working in, and the reasons that have inspired them. They should try to so identify themselves with these characteristics that their own work will help toward realising the specific nature of the school. (SCCE, 1982, para. 39)

Ongoing formation in the charism, including “regular courses of study, prayerful reflection on the founder, the charism and the constitutions are particularly beneficial” in supporting teachers in their vocation (CCE, 2007, para. 27). The charism enables



service for the Kingdom of God and energises vision and activity into the future (O'Murchu, 2006).

The culture of the Catholic school is maintained through teachers' participation in ongoing formation. This includes preparation for the role, as well as growth through learning and relationship while engaged at the school. Just as religious receive a vocation, so lay Catholics are challenged to recognise their spiritual calling for work in the Catholic school.

What is being asked of lay Catholics who work in schools is precisely an awareness that what they are doing is exercising a vocation. To what extent they actually do have such an awareness is something that these lay people should be asking themselves. (SCCE, 1982, para. 61)

Within the community of the school, all members are tutored in the “communitarian dimension of the human person” (SCCE, 1982, para. 22). The communitarian dimension expresses a hope that the Catholic school becomes an authentic faith community, bound together through a shared Christian commitment that links all sections of the school: parents, teachers, students. The school community comprises various people who are capable and willing to nurture the faith of others (SCCE, 1982, para. 41).

Students require ongoing nurture and spiritual renewal in order to prepare them to take their place in the contemporary world. These requirements are not contradictory. Paradoxically, this challenge calls for a strengthening of the “ecclesial identity of the Catholic school” (CCE, 1997, para. 11). The synthesis of faith, culture and life is the critical outcome of the school—a process framed by the Church and founded on Christ (CCE, 2007, para. 3).

## **4.2 The Mission of the Church, Jesus and the Kingdom of God**

The mission of the Catholic school is specifically linked to the mission of the Church (CCE, 1997, para. 19). The vocation of a Catholic educator is summarised as “to

seek the Kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and directing them according to God's will" (CCE, 2007, para. 30).

The Church emerged from the Second Vatican Council with a renewed sense of its identity as a missional church, and with this, the importance of evangelisation (Bevans, n.d.). Mission is the core of God's identity, and the Church's mission emanates from this. In summary, as God and the Church are missional, all the baptised (including those called to a specifically religious vocation) are—ideally—involved in evangelisation so that people are enabled to accept and experience the reign of God (Bevans, 2010; Fuellenbach, 1995; "The Mission of the Redeemer," 1990).

The Church urges its members to undertake a "new evangelisation" so that the values of the Kingdom might prevail against [particularly Western] secularism (1996; Rymarz, n.d.). The whole Church is to be engaged in mission, with religious and lay contributing equally towards bringing in the Kingdom of God ("The Mission of the Redeemer," 1990). This mission is not the Church working for its own aggrandisement. Rather than increase its scope, power and honour, the Church's may abolish itself.

The prophet announced that the time had come (Mark 1:15), that the beginning of the end of religion was at hand. Since then, the church has wrestled with the challenge of putting herself out of business the way Jesus himself did: in the name of God's incarnation. (Sheehan, 2000)

This characterisation of the Kingdom transcends the Church and religion itself and links God to creation, enabling not only a transformed humanity but also a transformed creation (Bevans, 2010).

Jesus' mission proclaimed that the Kingdom of God was "at hand" or "near" (Matthew 4: 17) and was the means by which people experienced God's presence. The Kingdom of God is a political and religious metaphor that focuses on the liberation of the human person and the transformation of the world. It is enacted on earth rather than a celestial beyond (Borg, 2006). The relationship between human

beings and God is transformed with this Kingdom, thus freeing the human person (Fuellenbach, 1995). Christians are invited to bring the Kingdom's signs of mercy and hope into the world (Pagola, 2011). The political dimension of the Kingdom directs Jesus' followers towards the poor and marginalised, to contribute to building a culture of love and mercy, and to oppose the prevailing cultures of power. This approach contrasts with the scrupulous religious observance, which took priority for the religious hierarchy of Jesus' day. In commissioning his followers to continue his mission, Jesus did "not send them to organise a new religion, but to proclaim and promote the reign of God" (Pagola, 2011, p. 447).

This might lead to an over-politicised Jesus just as we might have over-spiritualised him in the past. He is best understood as a "prophetic deconstructionist" who is against the dominance of prevailing powers in the world (O'Murchu, 2011, p. 7). This offers a subversive interpretation concerning Jesus' ministry and positions his mission against the abusive exercise of power, particularly patriarchal power. Jesus announced a "companionship of empowerment" (Crossan, 1999, p. 337) which contrasted with the disempowerment effected by the Roman Empire and intensified by the corrupt collaboration between the Roman and Jewish authorities (O'Murchu, 2011). The "companionship of empowerment" is an egalitarian and utopian concept. In this state, there exist no barriers or distinctions, which is the culmination of Jesus' ministry. It expresses a "radical inclusiveness" and a "deeper relationality" that are facilitated through Jesus life, not his death (O'Murchu, 2011, pp. 55, 62). This perspective questions the Church's stewardship of the Kingdom of God and acts as a subversive dynamic to recover the truth of Jesus and liberate its power in the contemporary world (O'Murchu, 2011).



*Figure 4.1. The Kingdom of God and Catholic school mission.*

Mission is intrinsic to God. Beginning with God, mission may be characterised as a dance, governed by a “prophetic humanism” (Rymarz, n.d., p. 3), which begins with God but draws all of creation into the Kingdom of God (Bevans, 2010).

### **4.3 Identity of the Catholic school**

Fulfilling these ideals in a pluralist world that is subject to periods of rapid change is challenging. In a “post-Christian”, “post-modern” and “post-Conciliar” context (Coughlan, 2009, pp.39, 47), maintaining the identity, mission and community

necessary for the Catholic school becomes the responsibility of Catholic school leaders (Belmonte & Cranston, 2009). They do this through the formation of staff and students and the development of a supportive culture that reflects the values of the Kingdom of God and the Catholic Church. School culture enables its Catholic identity to find expression. Formation aligns staff and students with the mission of the Catholic school.

In the period following the Second Vatican Council, social changes such as increased secularism, contributed to a reduced connection between the local parish and parents, teachers, and students (Mellor, 2005; Tinsey, 1998). This prompted the Catholic Church to re-focus its mission Council (Denig & Dosen, 2009) Contemporary Catholic schools face the challenge of allowing sufficient flexibility for degree of connection between the church and the world (Sullivan, 2001; Tinsey, 1998). In order to orientate the school ethos towards a Catholic identity, Catholic school principals are challenged to draw on their personal Catholic heritage, and incorporate the values and beliefs of the Church (Belmonte & Cranston, 2009). These values and beliefs include:

1. the positive potential of the human person;
2. a sacramental view of the world that affirms life and the world;
3. a priority on human relationships;
4. a pursuit of wisdom and truth, through means that affirm the affective and experiential;
5. historical perspectives;
6. justice; “preferential option for the poor”;
7. faith in God and human agency; and
8. respect for difference. (Groome, 2011, p. 239)

Catholic school identity is understood in terms of its connection with the teaching of the Catholic Church. It should also be able to be understood in terms of adherence to the gospel, the fostering of relationships and the primacy of the human person (Coughlan, 2009). In particular, the Catholic school aims at the growth and formation of the human person: "the best of everything for everyone, all the time, and the

integrity of God's creation" (Groome, 2009, 2011, p. 23). This relates to teaching about, and fostering a sense of the Kingdom of God.

Further, Catholic school principals acknowledge the communitarian nature of the Catholic school by building communal cultures that have a family-like character (Belmonte & Cranston, 2009). There is a shared responsibility for what takes place in and through the school, inspired by the vision of the Kingdom of God that "calls for the empowerment of people, the freedom to maximise responsibility and the generation of relationship". Leadership facilitates this process (Sultmann, 2011, p. 129).

In the synthesis between culture and faith, there emerges this specific culture of the school that is distinguished from its identity: culture is contemporary and dynamic whereas identity expresses a particular worldview that is consistent and passed on to future generations (Sultmann, 2011). Identity is a static concept that is in tension with the dynamic, contemporary culture. Identity links with the values and beliefs of Catholicism through the ages (Pollefeyt & Bouwens, 2010). The development of a culture which supports the Kingdom of God enables Catholic identity to be perceived through the lens of the contemporary world, embracing all kinds of knowledge:

... schooling involves more than conveying the acquired knowledge of civilisation to students and developing in them the intellectual skills they need to create new knowledge. Education also entails forming the basic disposition for citizenship in a democratic and pluralistic society. A commitment to the pursuit of truth, human compassion, and social justice makes serious demands on schools. (Bryk, et al., 1993, p. 289)

Leadership assists individuals to work with or for each other rather than against each other. The ongoing formation of staff is effected through the introduction of newcomers whose questions prompt awareness of important cultural knowledge, teaching the existing staff how to act "heedfully" (Weick & Roberts, 1993, p. 362). This process consolidates group identity and maintains the active engagement of group members (Weick & Roberts, 1993). Newcomers and those of different cultural

or religious identities create a diversity which promotes a “full flourishing” of Catholic school identity (Pollefeyt & Bouwens, 2010, p. 207).

The priority of the transformation of the human person is inspired by the example of Jesus Christ and underpinned by the theology of the image of God. This contextualises the values base of the school (McDermott, 1997). Through common commitment to rationality and to the understanding of the human person, sacramentality, community, and the gospel and tradition of the Church, the school’s identity aligns with the identity of the Catholic Church. This alignment informs the formation of students and staff (Sultmann, 2011).

Whether teachers acknowledge and affirm their vocation or not, their formation is important (Belmonte & Cranston, 2009; Mulligan, 1994).

The experience of Formation within the Catholic School is essentially that of providing experiences in which the work of the spirit can operate within the Tradition and the culture of the school. Key to these experiences is how the Gospel might engage the signs of the times within the lived reality of identity and mission ... this is the process of integrating the strategic pillars of identity: Faith, Learning, Community, Leadership and Formation, with the fullness of life and a response of the “head, heart and hand”. (Sultmann, 2011, p. 126)

Ideally, Catholic school staff members take on the commitment to go beyond their solely professional responsibilities. They accept a spiritual quest that is intended to align their personal spirituality and the mission of the school (Sultmann, 2011). It is crucial that professional development activities and regular reminders raise the consciousness of each teacher toward this vocation (Benson & Guerra, 1985; McDermott, 1997).

The moment a teacher grasps awareness of the vocation dimension, the formation experience also begins, and it will continue to take place as long as the teacher sincerely attends to it. Attending to the vocation is the ‘something more’ required of the Catholic educator. (Mulligan, 1994, p. 124)

This vocation of the Catholic educator is connected to the call to evangelisation. Where teachers do not strongly grasp their vocation, effective evangelisation may not be taking place. Vocation is not owned by any individual but is mediated “to the world”. It connects the Church with the world and creation (Sullivan, 2001). The calling is not ecclesial but divine and would be still-born if it did not go beyond evangelisation to cultural change and the renewing of creation. This vocation underpins teaching and learning in a Catholic school.

We are called, with the help of God’s grace working in our soul, to mediate a spiritual vocation to the body and, on the broader canvas of life, to mediate a divine vocation to the world as a whole. This double-sided calling or vocation, which it is our task to carry out, comes to us in two ways: firstly, externally, as it were, mediated by the living tradition of the Church; secondly it emerges internally, from within us and from our encounter with the world. In our response to these forms of God’s communication, there follows a third type of calling, which comes through us and is directed towards creation. We are familiar with the first; it focuses particularly on the preaching of the Gospel, sacramental celebration and the reception of the Church’s teaching and life. We are less familiar with the second source, not so much in the experiencing of it but in the recognition of it as coming from God. It is often experienced as a lack, a hunger or a desire, a never-ending drive or search or restlessness, a permanent dissatisfaction with the things of this world ... As for the third type of call, that which is given out from us to the world, we have scarcely begun to acknowledge it .. we can be sure that it starts from exactly where we are now ... (Sullivan, 2001, pp. 121-122)

Formation of staff is a pre-requisite for the formation and transformation of students (Groome, 2011). This supports the identity of the Catholic school, which is characterised by:

- a) Formation of the human person, where
- b) Christ is the foundation, where
- c) there is a synthesis of culture and faith, and where



- d) subjects are taught in ways appropriate to the subject and with a religious critique. (Sullivan, 2001, p. 80)

The Catholic school has both catechetical and evangelising roles, and the religious dimension of leadership in a Catholic school is central (Belmonte & Cranston, 2009; McNamara, 2002). Intellectual development is an integral part of the transformation of the human person and religious faith is included in the ways that students might apprehend the world (Porath, 2000). The school is a “religious community within an academic community”, although membership of this community may not be perceived as being as voluntary as membership of a more traditional religious community (McDermott, 1997; Tinsey, 1998). In exercising catechetical and evangelising ministries with students, the role of the school aligns with parental responsibility to bring up their children in the Catholic faith. The Catholic school aims to affirm students’ goodness and to teach them to make a positive contribution to the world, or at least to have a repertoire of counter-cultural ways of perceiving and interpreting the world (Conroy, 2001; Denig & Dosen, 2009). A focus on social justice in this context, prepares students to make a contribution toward a more just world (Porath, 2000).

This transformational mission has been powerful for teachers working with marginalised immigrant communities. The mission challenges Catholic schools to engage students within reach of the local Catholic school, who are at the edge of mainstream society (O’Keefe, 1996).

#### **4.4 Issues Arising**

At any given time, the lived reality of a Catholic school might be different from the vision outlined in Church documents (Mulligan, 1994). Nonetheless, Catholic education pursues “an open and realistic traditionalism that in full awareness of the gap between ideal and reality strives for perfection in the historical condition of enlightened modernity” (Cuypers, 2004, p. 443). Tensions regarding Catholic identity arise in the areas staff and student religious affiliation and faith commitment.

While it is desirable that all teachers be Catholic in order to support the Catholic identity of the school, in reality, there is a broad range of religious affiliations represented among lay teachers. Staff and student formation proceeds smoothly, where their belief is “post-critical”. A “post-critical belief” is “characterised by faith in a transcendent God and in a religious interpretation of reality in which the transcendent is not considered literally present but is represented symbolically” (Pollefeyt & Bouwens, 2010, p. 197). Such a faith attitude promotes the Catholicity of the school that, in turn, embraces those who affirm the school’s Catholic identity. Despite differences in emphasis, experience and understanding of Church teaching, Catholic and non-Catholic teachers may, therefore, be conscious of the religious dimension of the school and promote it (Benson & Guerra, 1985). A teacher not practising their faith, however, may be at a disadvantage in contributing positively to the Catholic identity of the school. Regardless, the teacher is responsible for sharing faith with students through their work.

The proportion of non-Catholic student enrolments causes concern about maintenance of Catholic school identity. “In order to not dilute the Catholicity of schools, the enrolment of non-Catholic enrolees [should] be limited to 10%” (Australian Catholic Bishops’ Conference, 1998, para. 60). In all Australian jurisdictions, the contemporary trend is beyond 10% (Table 4.1.).

**Table 4.1. Catholic and Non-Catholic Enrolment, States and Territories, 2011**

|                           | Catholic Students |               | Non-Catholic Students |               |
|---------------------------|-------------------|---------------|-----------------------|---------------|
|                           | No.               | % of Students | No.                   | % of Students |
| <b>ACT</b>                | 12,203            | 71%           | 5,004                 | 29%           |
| <b>New South Wales</b>    | 187,441           | 77%           | 56,323                | 23%           |
| <b>Northern Territory</b> | 2,544             | 55%           | 2,105                 | 45%           |
| <b>Queensland</b>         | 87,022            | 64%           | 47,997                | 36%           |
| <b>South Australia</b>    | 28,295            | 58%           | 20,722                | 42%           |
| <b>Tasmania</b>           | 7,471             | 52%           | 7,004                 | 48%           |
| <b>Victoria</b>           | 145,098           | 75%           | 48,401                | 25%           |
| <b>Western Australia</b>  | 50,877            | 76%           | 15,722                | 24%           |
| <b>Australia</b>          | <b>520,951</b>    | <b>72%</b>    | <b>203,279</b>        | <b>28%</b>    |

Source: Table 35 in *Australian Catholic Schools*, National Catholic Education Commission, 2011, p. 32

There are tensions between whether it is desirable for a school to be tightly identified as “Catholic” in an institutional sense, or whether it is free to live out the universality of the word “catholic” by embracing students and families who belong to other religious faiths (Engebretson, 2008; Paul VI, 1964). This latter approach is consistent with the teaching of the Catholic Church (“Dialogue and proclamation: Reflection and orientations on interreligious dialogue and the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ,” 1991) and eschews the model of a Catholic “fortress” in favour of an open and affirming faith community. Despite perceptions that inter-faith dialogue is inimical to Catholic practice, it is actually intrinsically Catholic (Barnes, 1996; Engebretson, 2008). Catholics engage with the other faith perspectives and the world in general, using their discernment and maintaining their Catholic principles as compass points amidst the plurality and ambiguity that challenges evangelisation (Bryk, et al., 1993; Mulligan, 1994). Catholics also accept that their understandings may be shaped by their experience. This is supported by Catholic values and beliefs, especially a positive anthropology of the human person (Groome, 2011). Catholic identity is thus enhanced rather than imperilled by engagement with

the world. The charismatic, “living tradition” supports an openness to new perspectives and permits affirmation of elements that Catholicism has in common with other religious traditions (Sullivan, 2001, p. 35).

The pressure of maintaining the relevance of faith, the Church and the Catholic school for contemporary young people has always been high. The choice of some students not to practise their faith has increased this pressure. This has prompted renewed emphasis on evangelisation (Conroy, 2001; Rymarz, n.d.). As students engage with teachers who credibly manifest a connection between life and faith, they have additional incentive to affirm and appropriate the Catholic worldview (Sullivan, 2000). The challenge of maintaining the relevance of the Catholic faith is an opportunity for the Church to experience conversion itself. For example, institutional power structures transform to a community of shared power, charisms are refreshed and distributed more widely through the Church, and in this way, the Church is aided in its mission of the fulfilment of God’s Kingdom (Crossan, 2007; Mulligan, 1994).

#### **4.5 Summary**

For the Catholic identity of the Catholic school to be reliably represented, school leadership needs to propound, and staff members need to understand and interpret, the ways of being Catholic. This process of sense-giving and sense-making promotes consistent expressions of the school’s Catholic identity and contributes towards the development of a “group mind” (Weick & Roberts, 1993, p. 358) whereby individuals act as members of a larger collective (Corley & Gioia, 2004). This dialogical process acknowledges the presence of the “other” and incorporates strong affirmation of the world and Catholic identity (Pollefeyt & Bouwens, 2010).

There are group actions that are possible only when each participant has a representation that includes the actions of others and their relations. The respective actions converge relevantly, assist and supplement each other only when the joint situation is represented in each and when the representations are structurally similar. Only when these conditions are given can individuals subordinate themselves to the requirements of joint action ...

individuals can work with, for, or against each other. (Weick & Roberts, pp. 363-364)

Based on Church teaching that is consistent with Jesus, the gospels and the Kingdom of God, the Catholic school has a critical place in the transformation of the human person. As the numbers of teaching religious has diminished, the imperative for lay teachers to take on the Catholic teaching mantle has increased.

To fully realise the vision of Catholic education through the creation of a Catholic school culture that supports the values and beliefs of the Church and the Kingdom of God, lay teachers require a vocation and ongoing formation. Vocation and formation enable them to participate in the interaction of the Church with the world, through dialogue that includes rather than excludes those of a different tradition (Sullivan, 2001). The critical perspectives applied to the subjects taught and the strong personal examples of teachers enable students to be informed, formed and transformed (Groome, 2011).

# **CHAPTER FIVE**

## **DESIGN OF THE RESEARCH**

### **5.1 Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to explain and justify the research design. The research design serves the research purpose, as articulated in the research questions. The purpose of the research is to explore how middle leaders at Champagnat College understand and implement the Marist charism. The research examines this question from the perspectives of middle leaders in one Marist school. The research questions which focus the study are:

1. How do Champagnat College middle leaders understand the Marist charism?
2. What understanding do Champagnat College middle leaders hold regarding how they implement the Marist charism?

### **5.2 Theoretical Framework**

A theoretical framework explains the research design. It includes the values, beliefs and methodologies shared by those in a particular scientific school or community and frames the way in which the research is approached and conducted (O'Donoghue, 2007). Components of the framework are the researcher's epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology and methods for gathering data. The researcher's choices within these components should be logically linked and referenced with the research purpose and questions (Crotty, 1998). Epistemology is a theory of knowledge which is embedded in the theoretical perspective and consequentially in the methodology (Crotty, 1998). The epistemological framework of constructionism is adopted for this study as the individual and shared realities of the College middle leaders underpin the study.

Theoretical perspective is "the philosophical stance informing the methodology", which provides the context and grounds the methodology's logic and criteria (Crotty, 1998, p. 3) The theoretical perspective chosen for this study is interpretivism;

symbolic interactionism is a particularly appropriate lens of interpretivism in this research, as it provides the philosophical basis for the multiple, shared realities of the participants to be understood within the culture of the College (Neuman, 2006).

A case study methodology is chosen for this study as it explores a single, contemporary phenomenon within its bounded context (Merriam, 1998). The bounded context is Champagnat College and the middle leaders groups within it.

Table 5.1 illustrates a summary of the elements which comprise the research design:

**Table 5.1. Theoretical Framework of the Research Design**

|                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <b>Epistemology</b>              | Constructionism  |
| <b>Theoretical Perspective</b>   | Interpretivism<br>Symbolic interactionism  |
| <b>Methodology</b>               | Case study   |
| <b>Data gathering strategies</b> | Focus Groups<br>Semi-structured interviews<br>Document analysis<br>Researcher reflective journal |

This understanding of the theoretical framework invites amplification.

### **5.2.1 Epistemology**

An epistemology is a theory of knowledge which underpins the research. It sets the parameters for what kind of knowledge is valid and theorises as to how knowledge is created. The epistemology linked to the research purpose is constructionism: “We do not create meaning, we construct it” (Crotty, 1998 p. 44). Constructionism explicates the way in which humans make meaning, which is by the human consciousness interacting with what is in the world. According to this epistemology, objects in the world cannot and should not be considered in isolation from

experience of the world. This is could vary from person to person, so while constructionism acknowledges and confirms the reality of objects, it is relativistic. Thus, meaning is neither simply subjective nor objective but is created through intent focus by the consciousness as it observes and experiences the objects in the world (Crotty, 1998).

Constructionism may be summarised in this way:

- a) There is no objective reality; the physical world exists but is not accessible to human endeavour;
- b) There are no absolute truths;
- c) Knowledge does not come through the senses alone;
- d) Research focuses on the construction of meanings;
- e) Meanings are not fixed but emerge out of people's interaction with the world;
- f) Meanings do not exist before a mind engages them;
- g) The world is constructed by the people who live in it. (Sarantakos, 2005, p. 37)

A constructionist epistemology is appropriate for this thesis, as the study acknowledges the possible complexity of participant perspectives in a specific social and historical context (Creswell, 2003). The research explores the participants' "shared stories" as a means of understanding the shared meanings (De Koster, Devise, Flament, & Loots, 2004). This links with the concept of the Marist charism being a "deep story" (Thompson, 1999) for members of the College community. Constructionism enables understanding of how the story is constructed and who contributes to the meaning-making and meaning sharing.

Middle leaders perceive a socially-constructed reality, and the research attempts to identify this "taken-for-grantedness" of the connection between perception of reality, and action (Neuman, 2006). A constructionist epistemology supports the exploration of how one individual's meaning of their experience relates to the meanings held by other individual middle leaders (Creswell, 2003). It also supports an understanding of the way in which the individual and the community influence each other in both communal and individual endeavours to make the Marist charism relevant



(Darlaston-Jones, 2007). The study's theoretical perspective further refines the way in which the meanings of the participants are understood.

### **5.2.2 Theoretical Perspective**

A theoretical perspective is the philosophical stance which frames the context of the research process and which lies behind the methodology (Crotty, 1998). It may also be conceptualised as a "point of view" which guides the researcher. A complementary definition is that it is an interrelated set of words which orders physical reality (Charon, 2001). "Perspectives are not perceptions but guides to our perceptions; they influence what we see and how we interpret what we see (Charon, 2001, p. 8)." The theoretical perspective, within a constructionist epistemology chosen for this study, is the perspective of interpretivism.

An interpretivist perspective focuses on individuals' everyday settings and the meanings held by them in those contexts. Individuals have autonomy and freedom, and in everyday interaction with others, meaning is negotiated (O'Donoghue, 2007). The objective of interpretivist research is to gain "a deeper, more extensive and more systematic representation of events from the point of view of the actors involved" (Candy, 1989, p. 5). The researcher uses the aperture of the "individual actors" and the meaning which they are subjectively making, in order to understand the participants' social world (Candy, 1989, p. 5). Within this perspective, there are multiple interacting factors influencing the ways in which people think and act. Humans act on the basis of their perceptions and so it is the rationale for these actions which leads researchers to understand the perspectives of the actors. These perspectives create interactions among the actors and are, in turn, created by them through actors' meaning making (Candy, 1989; O'Donoghue, 2007; Schwandt, 2000).

In this study, the understandings and actions of middle leaders are explored. Their understanding and implementation of the Marist charism is the focus of the research. They work in a College which aspires to align action to the charism: the ways in which the Marist charism is understood and practised is explored through

engagement with the individuals themselves. Interpretivism is sensitive to “culturally-derived and historically-situated interpretations of the social life world” (Crotty, 1998, p. 67). Middle leaders have a role in interpreting the everyday activities of the school. Meaning making is one of their functions within the school community (Seashore Louis, et al., 2009). Through adoption of an interpretivist approach, the research examines the perspectives of the middle leaders and how (and with whom) they negotiate the meaning of their work in the College.

Within the theoretical perspective of interpretivism, is the lens of symbolic interactionism, which invites the researcher to engage explicitly with meaning making (Charon, 2001). Symbolic interactionism is a perspective which focuses on how individuals ascribe meaning to experience. In an interpretivist paradigm, meaning can be complex, undefined and fluid (Dimmock & O'Donoghue, 1997). There are three aspects of symbolic interactionism which demonstrate its appropriateness to this study:

- a) Human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that these things have for them;
- b) The meanings arise out of the social interaction; and
- c) Meanings are negotiated through an interpretive process. (O'Donoghue, 2007, pp. 18-19)

This is a dynamic, constantly-adjusting process which clarifies the “self”: “the concept of the self relates directly to the way people attach meaning to, and act towards, particular objects and phenomena” (O'Donoghue, 2007, p. 18). The self is formed by the interpretation of the external and internal influences (Dimmock & O'Donoghue, 1997). The symbolic interactionist perspective attempts to offer an understanding of the individuals and their interaction with each other, with a focus on language and action. Language—a symbolic means of communication—represents and interprets reality (Charon, 2001). Through conversation, interview and document analysis the relationships between the language and actions of the middle leaders is better understood.

According to symbolic interactionism, three kinds of actions may be undertaken by individuals:

- a) self-communication—talking to oneself
- b) self-perception—seeing oneself in situations
- c) self-control—use of self as object to control one's actions. (Charon, 2001, p. 80)

Self-communication concerns the understandings held and developed by the individual as they act and then reflect on their actions. Self-perception is the dynamic process whereby meaning is derived from the responses received from the individual's social world; this develops the sense of identity held by the individual. Self-control refers to the ways that the self manages the individual to modify actions in response to the meanings made. These concepts are relevant to the study, which relates to the understandings and actions of middle leaders at the College. Middle leaders communicate with themselves about their role in Champagnat College. They reflect about themselves in context with their immediate work colleagues and in relation to directions negotiated with them by the College senior leaders. At any given time, they exercise their capacity to control their actions in light of the way in which they are making meaning of their College leadership experience.

The study explores overt and covert action—the balance between self-communication and communication with others—which describes the ways in which middle leaders are forming and being formed by being both actors and social objects (Charon, 2001). Studying middle leaders' understandings and operations through the lens of symbolic interactionism enables the researcher to detect and describe how middle leaders understand and implement the Marist charism. Within a symbolic interactionist perspective, "mind actions" control overt behaviour and typically take place when a barrier is encountered; at this point, rich processing of the situation and consideration of possible future actions occurs. In these moments of mind action, the individual needs to understand the perspective of the world in which they operate, internalise it and act accordingly (Charon, 2001, p. 109). In exploring the influence of the Marist charism on the actions of Champagnat College middle leaders, instances of mind action may be significant in consolidating

understandings and leadership action. In a symbolic interactionist perspective, the participants' sense of identity is necessarily connected with the meaning systems of others. This is conceptualised as "role-taking". As individuals see others acting, they take on their perspective and see the meaning which those acts have for them. They are then able to understand meaning for themselves (Charon, 2001).

A symbolic interactionist perspective allows for the subjectivity of the participants to be acknowledged and examined, and invites the participants' reality to be manifest, within their social world. "Human beings ... negotiate the meanings of their lives in social situations with others who are doing the same thing" (Sly, 2008, p. 63). The research explores how middle leaders understand their middle leadership role and also how they understand that role within the Champagnat College context. These elements of meaning making and identity formation, so relevant to the context, are effectively linked through a symbolic interactionist theoretical perspective (Sly, 2008).

Role-taking is important in the following ways:

- a) Taking the role of the other is important to emergence of the self.
- b) Taking the role of the other is important for action we take toward the self in all situations.
- c) Taking the role of the other is important for learning our perspectives on all things.
- d) Taking the role of the other is necessary for working through all social situations.
- e) Taking the role of the other helps the individual control the interaction situation through knowing how to manipulate, direct, or control others.
- f) Taking the role of the other is necessary for love.
- g) Taking the role of the other is basic to human cooperation
- h) Taking the role of the other is the basis for human symbolic communication.
- i) Taking the role of the other allows us to see the present both from our own past and from future perspectives. (Charon, 2001, p. 115)

Individuals appropriate meaning through role-taking. It is, therefore, appropriate to apply this understanding to the research, in order to understand how the Marist charism is appropriated into understanding and action by middle leaders. In addition to “actors” perspectives being modified through mind action and role-taking, reference groups also shape the individual perspective through “lending” perspectives. “A reference group is the society whose perspective the individual uses” (Charon, 2001, p. 35). Reference groups within or outside the College such as the local parish “lend” their perspectives to the middle leaders in order to shape their meanings of the social world. This may assist or hinder formation in the Marist charism.

The theoretical perspective of interpretivism and the lens of symbolic interactionism provide the context for the conduct of the research. It is “idiographic”—intensely focused on individuals and small groups, producing a rich, thick description of the multi-faceted world of the participants (“actors”) (Gibbons & Sanderson, 2002, p. 9). Interpretivism and symbolic interactionism underly the choice of methodology.

### **5.3 Research Methodology**

Research methodology is defined as “the strategy, plan of action, process or design lying behind the choice and use of particular methods and linking the choice and use of methods to the desired outcome” (Crotty, 1998, p. 3). The methodology enables the researcher to gather data about the understandings and practices of middle leaders at Champagnat College. Case study methodology is particularly helpful in this context as it can offer a textured description of one site and take its complexity into account. Case study methodology aligns with constructionist epistemology and the theoretical perspectives of interpretivism and symbolic interactionism (Crotty, 1998).

#### **5.3.1 Case Study**

Case study can be defined in terms of its operation, its outcome and its scope. “A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between

phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (Yin, 2009 p. 18). It strives towards “a holistic understanding of cultural systems of action” (Tellis, 1997). The case study reveals an in-depth understanding of the case (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1994) and in studying a specific case, case study researchers create the foundation for an understanding about cases beyond the one studied (Simons, 1996). “The task of a case study is to produce ordered reports of experience which invite judgment and offer evidence to which judgment can appeal” (Stenhouse, 1988 p. 49). The understandings and actions of each middle leader are important within the theoretical perspective of the study, and the outcome of the case study is textured description of how middle leaders at the College understand and implement the Marist charism. As this covers the “how” and “why” as well as the “what”, a case study methodology is relevant (Merriam, 1998).

This methodology is particularly suited to studies where the contextual conditions are likely to be pertinent to the issues being explored (Yin, 2009). It is the context which clarifies the study; the uniqueness of the single context focuses the learning which can emerge for the researcher and the reader (Flyvberg, 2006). Of relevance to the current study is the emphasis on context and also the “holistic understanding of cultural systems of action” (Tellis, 1997). The phenomena explored in this study are the understandings and actions of middle leaders as they encounter and negotiate the Marist spiritual tradition. These are explored through the two research questions, using a selection of data-gathering strategies to provide rich description for analysis. Case study methodology enables an exploration of this real-world context with a view to illuminating the research questions. This has heuristic characteristics as the case study evaluates, summarises and concludes the success of the formation process for middle leaders at Champagnat College (Merriam, 1998).

Case studies are criticised because of a perceived lack of generalisability of case study data to other situations. There is a tension between the usefulness of describing a unique situation determined by context, and then considering how the learnings from the study might be applied to other cases. This may be a problem if the uniqueness of the case is over-emphasised at the expense of its capacity to generate learnings which might be able to be applied to other cases, using tutored

judgment (Guba, 1989; Pring, 2004; Stake, 1994; Wellington, 2000). The researcher's primary responsibility is to report the case in optimal, relevant detail such that the reader is able to generalise the learnings to other cases known to them. "The purpose of case study is not to represent the world, but to represent the case" as it is "cases and not variables" which are of interest in the interpretivist approach (Neuman, 2006, p. 158; Stake, 1994, p. 245). The reader exercises judgment based on his/her own experience and knowledge; the researcher takes responsibility for being honest about her own preconceived notions so that the understandings are as transparent as possible (Flyvberg, 2006). A transparent case study process promotes clarity about the transferability of learning from one case to another.

Understandings from this case study generate learning primarily about the processes of Champagnat College. A deep understanding of the factors involved in College middle leaders' understandings and actions may illuminate ways in which spiritual formation at the College may be improved. As there are a number of charism-based educational institutions in Australia, there may be insights gained through this study which guide research into similar educational settings.

## **5.4 Participants**

Since the focus of this study is on the middle leaders working at one Marist college in Australia, it is therefore appropriate that the middle leaders at this College comprise the "non-probabilistic" sample as they are "available, convenient and represent some characteristic the investigator seeks to study" (Creswell, 2008, p. 155). Purposeful selection of participants has been employed because it restricts the sample to middle leadership within the College, including registered teachers and non-teachers (Creswell, 2008). A component of the participants is a group of Marist Brothers, to be selected by the Marist Community Leader, on the basis of their recent experience of working in Marist schools.

The Marist Brother group has been included because the transition from religious to lay leadership is of particular concern to this study. The research purpose of this study focuses on Champagnat College middle leaders' understandings and actions in relation to the Marist charism. It is logical to regard these middle leaders and

these Marist Brothers as the participants in the study, given the study's interpretivist theoretical perspective. Middle leaders were invited to volunteer their participation in the research. This is purposeful sampling. It is "purposeful" because the participants involve those from whom the information is likely to be particularly relevant, given the context (Creswell, 2008; Merriam, 1998). Using the detective metaphor (Patton, 2002; Yin, 2009), participants are the informants for the researcher who "interrogates" the participants in develop the case description.

Middle leaders are located in Boarding, Curriculum, Pastoral, Junior School, and non-teaching areas – which, with the Marist Brother group, comprise six bounded sub-units within the one case study where the bounded unit is the College. Each of these sub-units has a different function within the College and is managed by one of the ten members of the College Leadership Team, who are not participants in this study. The participants are the number of middle leader volunteers in each of the identified groups.

The boarding middle leaders coordinate the boarding supervisors and students within a boarding residence where students are arranged by College year grouping. They comprise those who are also teachers at the College although sometimes suitable applicants who are not teachers are employed. There are five people in this group, which is led by the Head of Boarding.

Curriculum middle leaders are Heads of Key Learning Areas or Subject Coordinators within a Key Learning Area. Their principal responsibility is to ensure that teaching and learning is undertaken effectively, according to the relevant curriculum documents. Also included in this group are some cross-curricular positions: Head of Learning Enrichment, Head of Professional Learning, and Head of Information Services. There are 17 people in this group, which is led by the Head of Teaching and Learning.

The pastoral middle leaders are titled "Heads of House", of which there are eight at the College. Their role includes student welfare and the management of the subject selection process in the secondary school. They are led by the Deputy Headmaster.



The junior school middle leaders include the Junior School Curriculum Coordinator, Head of Sport (Junior School) and the Coordinator Mission, Pastoral and Administration. They focus the areas of Curriculum, Sport, Mission, Pastoral and Administration for teachers and students in the junior school section of the College and are led by the Head of Junior School.

The non-teaching (Services) middle leaders are not members of the one designated group but lead teams of employees responsible for information technology, facilities, grounds, boarding, kitchens and cleaning. There are five people in this group; the leaders report to the College Business Manager.

Leaders who do not fit neatly into one of these categories have been categories as “Other”. These include leaders overseeing the health centre, outdoor education, sport, technical production and instrumental music.

Table 5.2 illustrates the participants who are involved in the study, by category.

**Table 5.2. Participants by Category**

| <b>Middle Leader Category</b>                          | <b>Invited</b> | <b>Focus Group Participants</b> | <b>Interview Participants</b> |
|--|----------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Boarding Coordinators (B)                              | 5              | 2                               | 0                             |
| Heads of KLA <sup>7</sup> and Subject Coordinators (C) | 17             | 13                              | 4                             |
| Heads of House (P)                                     | 8              | 4                               | 1                             |
| Junior School middle leaders (J)                       | 3              | 3                               | 1                             |
| Services leaders (S)                                   | 5              | 2                               | 2                             |
| Other leaders (O)                                      | 5              | 5                               | 2                             |
| Marist Brothers (MB)                                   | 6              | 4                               | nil                           |

---

<sup>7</sup> “KLA” is an acronym for “Key Learning Area”. There are eight Key Learning Areas within the Champagnat College curriculum.

## **5.5 Data Gathering Strategies**

The data gathering strategies are focus groups, semi-structured interviews, document analysis and researcher reflective journal. Their choice is consistent with the research framework: the case study methodology orchestrates the data gathering process. Focus groups, semi-structured interviews, document analysis and the researcher reflective journal are suitable strategies when working within an interpretivist framework (Crotty, 1998). While the researcher is always present in case study research, they strive for “detached honesty” which recognises that the researcher is in the picture but is trying to describe what is in the context (Gilham, 2000). This means looking for discrepant data, exercising a detective like approach (Gilham, 2000; Yin, 2009). The research detects patterns of knowing and doing across the groups and within them, in order to develop an understanding of the whole stratum of leadership at the College (Sturman, 1997). The data were gathered (or made (Morse & Richards, 2002)) by deploying focus groups, semi-structured interviews, document analysis and researcher reflective journal.

### **5.5.1 Stage 1—Exploratory Phase**

#### **5.5.1.1 *Focus groups***

A focus group is an “organised discussion”, involving six to twelve participants, with a duration of approximately one hour (Lichtman, 2010, p. 153). The discussion is organised by the researcher so that perceptions of participants about a specific area of interest can be gathered (Patton, 2002).

Benefits of this data-gathering strategy are that it is cost-effective, interactions among participants provides texture, the spectrum of views can be gauged and it is usually a non-threatening environment. Limitations of this method are:

- a) a reduced number of questions can be covered;
- b) response time for individuals is restricted;
- c) the facilitator needs to have skills in managing the session;

- d) minority perspectives can be silenced;
- e) when focus group participants are known to each other they might feel constrained;
- f) confidentiality cannot be guaranteed;
- g) it doesn't assist in micro-analysis;
- h) it usually takes place out of the participants' normal social context. (Patton, 2002, pp. 386-388)

The factors above are minimised in the data gathering process where possible. Other data gathering strategies triangulate with the focus group strategy such that data gathered through focus groups are not the only data analysed in the study. Some of the potential limitations of focus groups are also advantages, such as the group members knowing one another. The focus groups take place within the participants' work context and for the Marist Brothers, it is their domestic context because they live on the College site. With reference to (c) above, it is recommended that there be two people conducting each focus group: one to facilitate and one to record (Patton, 2002). In this study, it is not practicable for two people to facilitate the focus groups, but the group members know each other and the researcher well and so are likely to operate more like "self-managing" groups than groups where this might be problematic (Lichtman, 2010, p. 153).

Table 5.3 is a diagrammatic illustration of the number of focus group participants as well as leadership areas. They are identified as Boarding (B), Curriculum (C), Pastoral (P), Junior School (J), Services (S), Other (O) or Marist Brother (MB). Seven focus groups were conducted.

**Table 5.3. Profiles for Focus Groups**

| <b>Focus Groups</b> | <b>B</b> | <b>C</b>  | <b>P</b> | <b>J</b> | <b>S</b> | <b>O</b> | <b>MB</b> | <b>TOTAL</b> |
|---------------------|----------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|--------------|
| 1901                |          |           |          |          |          |          | 4         | 4            |
| 0202                |          | 4         |          | 1        |          |          |           | 5            |
| 0902                |          | 5         | 2        | 1        |          | 1        |           | 9            |
| 1602                | 1        | 3         | 1        | 1        | 2        | 1        |           | 9            |
| 2302                |          | 1         |          |          | 1        | 2        |           | 4            |
| 0203L               | 1        |           | 1        |          |          |          |           | 2            |
| 0203A               | 1        |           |          |          |          | 1        |           | 2            |
| <b>TOTAL</b>        | <b>2</b> | <b>13</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>5</b> | <b>4</b>  | <b>33</b>    |

The purpose of the focus groups is to explore the range of understandings and approaches which middle leaders in Marist schools employ in their daily work. The social and relaxed atmosphere of a group enables the socially-influenced beliefs of the leaders to become evident (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Below is an example of the way that individuals within a focus group were able to share their individual perspectives in a relaxed atmosphere. The participants are identified by their participant code (explained more fully in Chapter 6 at 6.3. The letters “FG” after the participant code indicate that the interaction took place in a focus group. The researcher is identified as “I”.

**Example from Focus Group 0902—Sharing perspectives in a relaxed atmosphere**

|           |  |
|-----------|--|
| 09022P-FG | I think that my satisfaction as a middle leader comes from the fact that I belong to a religious community in the teaching area and that gives me my foundation, my support that I don't find in my parish, and consequently I find that I get the strength from that to help the boys in their journey of life in their faith journey when they struggle with their faith. So that sense of belonging to a religious family. I get a lot of personal satisfaction from that, which hopefully comes through. |
|-----------|--|

|           |   |
|-----------|---|
| 09024O-FG | I think it's also satisfying in looking back over last year and the beginning of this year with the circumstances that have occurred, that the boys, although they can be a complete "pain in the butt" at times, they do know how to respond, and I think that comes from them being exposed to so many different things through the mission activities, through liturgical activities, RE and things like that. It adds – because society itself is so sparse from anything – oh well, from what it used to be, moral grounds, whereas now the boys, although they don't seem to have at times those type of morals, they do obviously have them underneath and know when it is appropriate to— and how to react in those situations. And I think that type of thing is—obviously difficult circumstances, but I think it is satisfying that it was, it happened in a place like this where there as the support structure already there. |
| I         | OK.   |
| 09029C-FG | From a management point of view, middle management positions are generally quite difficult, you know they're the conduit between up – you know the two sides of the fence – um, so one thing I really like about this place is the people that I work with um and manage or lead, they're very support – they don't always agree with what I say but they do, they still do it. And the same point at the other end, I've found the um the CLT responsive to any of my ideas and thoughts. They don't always give me what I want but for the most part I do all right so um, I feel very valued as a middle manager here and not all – middle management can be a terrible layer of management to find yourself locked into in many organisations.  |

No notice of the focus group questions was provided prior to the focus group. The duration of each group was one hour. Where possible, each group's participants were chosen across the different leadership categories. Focus group sessions were recorded and transcribed soon afterwards. Table 5.4 documents the focus group question schedule. These were probe questions and the direction of the discussion was determined by participant responses to the initial questions.

**Table 5.4. Focus Group Question Schedule**

|   |
|---|
| <p><b>Research Question 1</b></p> <p><b>How do Champagnat College middle leaders understand the Marist charism?</b></p>   |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Have you been satisfied in your work as a middle leader at the College/Marist Brother? In what ways?</li><li>2. What are some of the challenges of being a middle leader at the College/Marist Brother?</li><li>3. How Is the Marist charism relevant to you?</li><li>4. What kinds of knowledge and understandings of the Marist charism do you need to have to operate effectively as a middle leader? How did you gain these?</li></ol> |
| <p><b>Research Question 2</b></p> <p><b>What understanding do Champagnat College middle leaders hold regarding how they implement the Marist charism?</b></p>   |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>5. How do you implement the Marist charism?</li><li>6. Identify behaviours, structures or activities in the College that appear inconsistent with the Marist charism</li><li>7. Reflect on your experience at other schools in which you have worked. Can you provide examples of how the Marist charism has made differences in your professional behaviour?</li></ol>   |

## **5.5.2 Stage 2—Clarification Phase**

### **5.5.2.1 Interviews**

In this study, 10 middle leaders were invited to participate in individual, semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews were used because the context is well-known to the researcher and, therefore, questions or probes can be developed

in advance. The responses were not able to be anticipated but were developed through an informed probing (Gilham, 2000; Morse & Richards, 2002; Patton, 2002). Interview probes were developed from the analysis of the focus group data and were employed to keep the interview on track and enable consistency between the individual, semi-structured interviews. Interviews were conducted over a three month period, with participants being interviewed and then engaged in any required clarification before confirming an accurate transcription.

In conducting the interviews, the researcher acknowledged the benefits and limitations involved with using this method, most of which are related to the researcher as data gatherer and data analyser (Sarantakos, 2005). The collaboration between researcher and researched in the “making” of data places an appropriate focus on the relationship between researcher and participants (Morse & Richards, 2002). The researcher “consciously choose[s], negotiate[s], and maintain[s] the relationship” with study participants with a view to being close to the rich data available but is to distinguish between the data and their experience (Morse & Richards, 2002, p. 105). When middle leaders were invited to participate in the study, a co-researcher was available should some potential participants be reluctant to engage with the researcher. This was to acknowledge that the researcher holds positional power in relation to participants. No participants requested that they be interviewed by the co-researcher.

Table 5.5 is a diagrammatic illustration of the number of interview participants as well as their areas of leadership. They are identified as Boarding (B), Curriculum (C), Pastoral (P), Junior School (J), Services (S), Other (O) or Marist Brother (MB). Ten individual, semi-structured interviews were conducted.

**Table 5.5. Profile of Interviewees**

| <b>Interview</b> | <b>B</b> | <b>C</b> | <b>P</b> | <b>J</b> | <b>S</b> | <b>O</b> | <b>MB</b> | <b>TOTAL</b> |
|------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|--------------|
| a)               |          | 1        |          |          |          |          |           | 1            |
| b)               |          | 1        |          |          |          |          |           | 1            |
| c)               |          |          |          | 1        |          |          |           | 1            |
| d)               |          | 1        |          |          |          |          |           | 1            |
| e)               |          |          | 1        |          |          |          |           | 1            |
| f)               |          | 1        |          |          |          |          |           | 1            |
| g)               |          |          |          |          |          | 1        |           | 1            |
| h)               |          |          |          |          | 1        |          |           | 1            |
| i)               |          |          |          |          | 1        |          |           | 1            |
| j)               |          |          |          |          |          | 1        |           | 1            |
| <b>TOTAL</b>     | <b>0</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>1</b> | <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>0</b>  | <b>10</b>    |

The tone and practice of these interviews were conversational (Marshall & Rossman, 1994), with a view to eliciting as much breadth of information about the elements of the participants’ understanding and practice of Marist charism. An example of how interviews elicited information is below. The participants are identified by their participant code (explained more fully in Chapter 6 at 6.3. The letter “I” after the participant code indicates that the interaction took place in an interview. The researcher is identified as “I”.

***Example—Interview with 2025C, eliciting breadth of information***

|   |   |
|---|---|
| I | OK, that’s all good. There’s probably more accountability internally and externally for the College and its middle leaders now, compared with a decade or so ago. How does your understanding of the Marist charism support you in adjusting to this new environment? |
|---|---|



|          |  |
|----------|--|
| 02025C-I | <p>Um, you hear stories of old, you know, the administration being a little more understanding of things going on, and from where I've come from you know it was all hard and fast. The rules – there was no grey: it was all black and white. So when I came to this school, I found it to be very warm and friendly and understanding. I know things have tightened up a lot over the past few years, ah but to me, I'm kind of used to that in a way, and it hasn't really affected me so much um, however in my situation, I think that I've had a lot of, I guess, understanding. While I'm here to do my job, and I really don't think that, I hope that the past year or so hasn't changed what I do. If anything, I'm here more often! And doing more work, which is often not all that healthy all the time. But I still think that there's a large degree of compassion and understanding from the top end about people's situations and how (you know) how to deal with them, and you know I still see a lot of understanding which I would put down to the Marist charism.</p> |
|----------|--|

Interview questions were developed from issues arising from the focus groups and relevant to the research questions. The generation of the interview questions from an analysis of focus group data is explained in Table 6.1.

Interviews were recorded using a voice recorder and either transcribed or summarised soon after the interview was conducted. Table 5.6 documents the interview schedule, which was provided to participants prior to the interviews.

**Table 5.6. Interview Schedule**

| <b>Interview Questions</b>   |
|--|
| <p>These questions flow from an initial analysis of focus group data. The aim of the interview is to further explore these threads to create a rich source of data for this research.</p>  |
| <p><b>How do Champagnat College middle leaders understand the Marist charism?</b></p>  |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What do you see is the distinction between “job”, “work”, and “vocation”?</li> <li>2. As a middle leader, how do you understand the aspects of your role description?</li> <li>3. Is there any kind of professional learning or support you find helpful to keep focused on the Marist charism?</li> <li>4. How might your perspective be different as a middle leader, compared with before you were at this level of leadership?</li> <li>5. There is probably more accountability for the College and its middle leaders than previously. How might your understanding of the Marist charism support you in adjusting to this new environment?</li> </ol>     |
| <p><b>What understanding do Champagnat College middle leaders hold regarding how they implement the Marist charism?</b></p>  |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. As a middle leader, how do you prioritise time spent on/with students, staff and other duties?</li> <li>2. Re Question 2 above, how would you honestly characterise your approach to your middle leader role at the College in these terms?</li> <li>3. How do you model the Marist charism to staff and students?</li> <li>4. How is your work related to what is best for the boys?</li> <li>5. Are you aware of times when you are consciously passing on something of the charism to staff and/or students?</li> <li>6. What does the trust placed in you make it possible for you to do?</li> <li>7. How do you demonstrate trust in your staff?</li> </ol> |

**5.5.2.2 Document analysis**

Document analysis is the critical analysis of institutional and personal documents as a means of elucidating a study (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). It is a means of understanding others’ social worlds (Patton, 2002); it is a relatively “unobtrusive” means of accessing institutional or personal perspectives, even from those not immediately involved in the study (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Researchers need to be aware that the advantages of document analysis can be undermined by potential disadvantages such as the biased and interpretative nature of some documents and that a documentary record might be incomplete (Cohen, et al., 2007).

College documents such as the Mission Statement, Strategic Plan, and other policy documents regarding employees’ responsibility to work within a Marist and/or Catholic context were included in this study, so that a comprehensive document record could be assembled and analysed. An example of the document analysis is below.

*Example—Analysis of middle leader minutes in relation to Research Question 1*

| <b>Research Question 1</b>  |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <b><i>How do Champagnat College middle leaders understand the Marist charism?</i></b>   |   |   |
| Middle Leader Minutes   |   |   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mass</li> <li>• Remembrance Day preparation</li> <li>• Champagnat Day preparation</li> <li>• Culture of the College: sport houses</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Courage</li> <li>• Presence of leaders with staff team</li> <li>• “agents of goodness”</li> <li>• New mission statement</li> <li>• Family</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community</li> <li>• Change</li> <li>• Teacher professional responsibility</li> <li>• In context of Church teaching</li> </ul> |

Each of the Boarding, Curriculum, Pastoral, Junior School and Services middle leaders groups meets and produces minutes of the meeting. The non-teaching leaders' meeting also includes some of the work supervisors but this is not seen as precluding these documents from the document analysis. The minutes of each meeting over a one year period were collected and analysed.

### **5.5.2.3      *Researcher reflective journal***

While the researcher was not observing the leaders in an intentional, methodical manner, there were opportunities for researcher reflection as the researcher works on the same site as the participants. Recognising these opportunities, the researcher made notes and wrote journal entries which became data for inclusion in the study (Morse & Richards, 2002). An example of this process is below.

#### ***Example—Research reflective journal entry***

##### **Sunday 1 May 2011**

One of our middle leaders, new to the College and new to middle leadership, has been struggling with a teacher performance issue. I and other College Leaders have been trying to coach her through the process but also assist her ... She had phoned me a few times through the recent College break about the issue and confessed to not sleeping well because of it. In the to-ing and fro-ing about this during this week, she announced to me that she had had an epiphany on the previous evening. Her epiphany consisted of the insight that she was perturbed about the issue because if the classes were taught by her rather than the teacher in question, there would be a problem.

I reflected on this and her realisation, and then was able to suggest to her that there is a paradox in leadership: on the one hand, one gains more power when one becomes a leader, but power is also lost. She now has to rely on someone whom she is struggling to trust and whose capability is under question whereas, as a classroom teacher, she was responsible only for her teaching. When I shared this with her, she indicated that it was close to the mark.

This process was not without its perils, given that the researcher is an organisational insider.

Some advantages, challenges and solutions of insider research (adapted from Degenhardt, 2006) related to this study are tabulated in Table 5.7:

**Table 5.7. Issues Related to Insider Research**

| Advantages  | Challenges  | Solutions   |
|---|---|---|
| The researcher knows the people and the politics in the organisation and can interpret more easily what is happening and why.                                 | The researcher is not politically neutral in the organisation. This will enable access to information from some sources and prohibit access from others.                | Data were collected from a wide range of participants in order to minimise the risk of skewed data. |
| The data is broader, based on the researcher's immersion in the organisation, rather than on one or more field visits.  | The researcher may know too much about the organisation and so may find it difficult to separate out issues or to conduct research without preconception.               | Use of a co-researcher (not from a Marist college) who will also be critical friend to the study.   |
| An insider may have more credibility in the eyes of participants and be trusted more than someone external to the organisation, who may not know its culture. | Participants may feel more comfortable in divulging information to a stranger with whom there may be less fear of potential political consequences, than to an insider. | Participants had the option of being interviewed by the co-researcher.                              |

| Advantages  | Challenges  | Solutions  |
|---|---|--|
| Loyalty to the organisation may lead to participants' being prepared to divulge information to an insider that they might not share with an outsider.                         | Participants may not wish to give offence and so may withhold negative views. Conversely, participants may wish to cause hurt or gain political advantage through their contribution to the research. This could impact negatively on members of the community, including the researcher. | The researcher acknowledges whatever preconceptions she knows herself to have. The researcher is not a line manager and is not a designated mission leader and so the negative effects should be minimised.      |
| An insider researcher is more likely to be able to link research understandings to practice in the organisation.  | The research understandings may lack credibility within the organisation and/or in the external world of research.  | Triangulation of data sources and collection methods are used to balance the researcher's perspective.   |
| Data analysis is more nuanced because the insider-researcher has more access to the organisational history and idiom which can be used to interpret the data (Edwards, 1999). | The insider-researcher may overlook the familiar or may intrude into participants' stories in ways which compromise the research (Edwards, 1999)  | Researcher is clear in communicating her ethical responsibilities to participants, as part of a text which is provided to all. Research is shared with critical friends who provide perspective on the research. |

An insider-researcher needs to be clear about the possible threats to the research with regard to data gathering, data analysis and legitimacy of the research. While the researcher in this study is an insider, the power of the researcher is not that of a Principal or mission leader. This mitigates some of the potential challenges as while the researcher holds some formal power in the College, it is not comparable with that of a Principal (Degenhardt, 2006). There is a clear, audit trail supporting the transparency of the research and no reality or perception of coercion (Smyth & Holian, 1999). "Distance [of the researcher from the researched] does not guarantee objectivity; it merely guarantees distance" (Patton, 2002, p. 575).

Notwithstanding the instigation of checks and balances, the insider-researcher builds trust and establishes a *persona* within the community which enables the research to take place (Edwards, 1999, n.p.). The indicators of effective insider research are the development of links between theory and practice, understanding the meaning and significance of constructions of meaning, and distributing the knowledge gained in ways which are self-evidently practical and useful (Edwards, 1999; Smyth & Holian, 1999). These issues are not only relevant to data gathering but also the analysis of the data, as has been stated above.

## **5.6 Analysis of Data**

Data analysis is the process by which the gathered data (codes) are woven into threads (themes) which then become a textured story. Another way of conceptualising the process is that it is about identifying “internal convergence and external divergence” (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 159). Data analysis connects with research purpose and is consistent with the theoretical perspectives of the study (Patton, 2002). "Data analysis involves organising what you have seen, heard and read so that you can make sense of what you have learned" (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p. 127). The data are analysed using Constant Comparative Analysis (Merriam, 1998), which is an iterative and simultaneous analysis of the data while it is being gathered (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). As the data gathering continues through time, the ongoing analysis frames the process and alerts the researcher to additional areas to explore (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). A summary of the data gathering and analysis process is in Table 5.8.

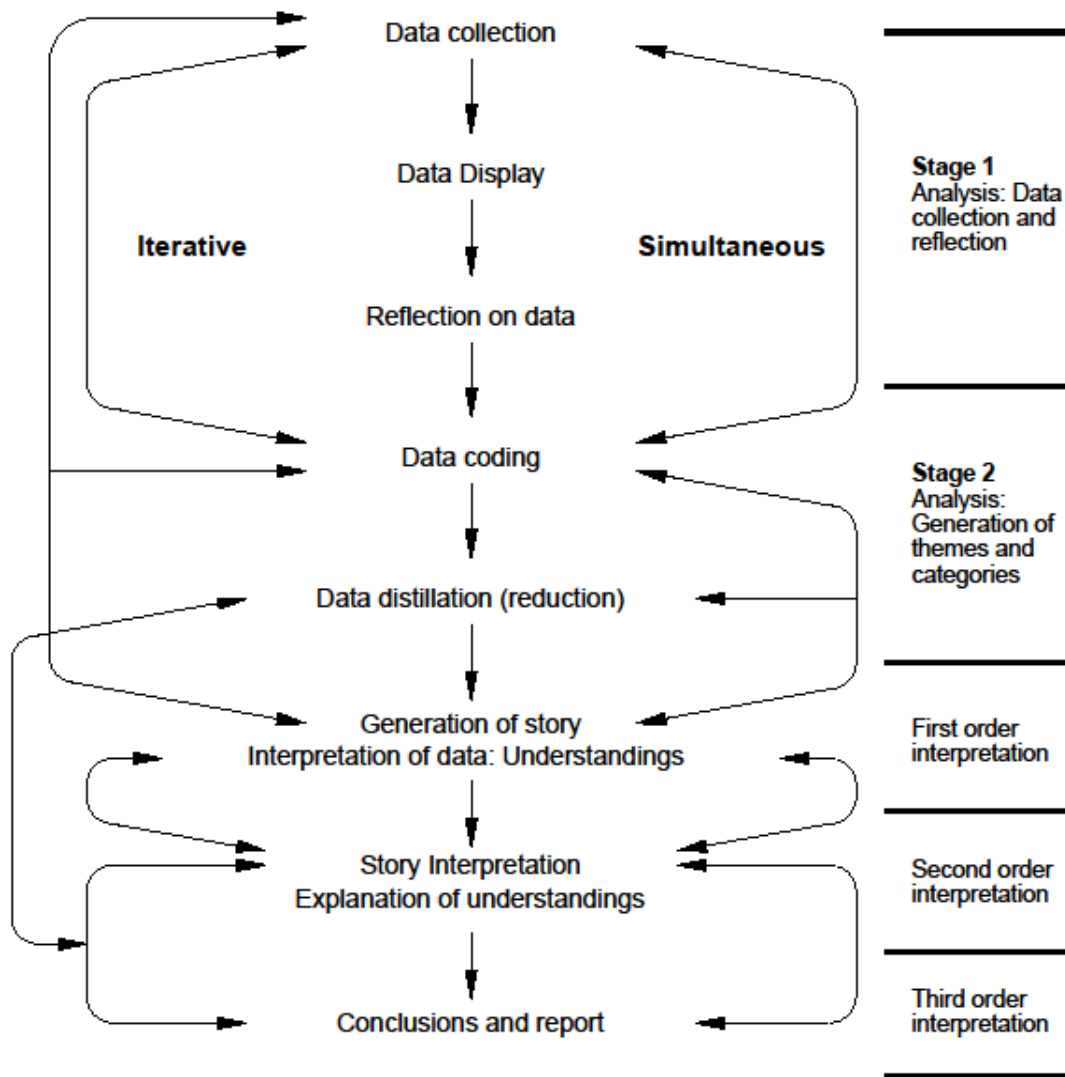
**Table 5.8. Data Collection and Analysis**

| Data Gathering Techniques  | Stages for Data Gathering and Analysis                   |  |
|--|--|--|
| <p><b><i>Exploratory Phase</i></b></p> <p>Focus Groups (7)</p>   | <p>Step 1</p> <p>Step 2</p> <p>Step 3</p>                | <p>Data collection and reflection</p> <p>Focus group interviews conducted</p> <p>Analyse responses for trends and patterns</p> <p>Select participants from Step 1 for semi-structured interviews</p>   |
| <p><b><i>Clarification Phase</i></b></p> <p>Individual, in-depth, semi-structured interview</p> <p>Documents and artefacts; researcher reflective journal</p>                              | <p>Step 4</p> <p>Step 5</p> <p>Step 6</p>                | <p>Interview selected participants</p> <p>Analyse data collected in Step 4.</p> <p>Documents and artefacts from College and participants gathered to assist clarification; researcher reflective journal used to contextualise and clarify.</p>        |
| <p><b><i>Story writing phase</i></b></p> <p><i>First order interpretation</i></p> <p><i>Second order interpretation</i></p> <p>Report writing</p> <p><i>Third order interpretation</i></p> | <p>Step 7</p> <p>Step 8</p> <p>Step 9</p> <p>Step 10</p> | <p>Write up analysis/discussion (analytical interpretation)</p> <p>Give participants analysis to check their responses</p> <p>Write up “story”</p> <p>Give “story” to participants and analyse their responses and revise the story on this basis.</p> |



The collection and analysis of data take place synchronously and one informs the other, resulting in new insights and corresponding adjustment of coding as required (Hollway & Jefferson, 2002; Merriam, 1998). There are three major types of coding: open coding, axial coding and selective coding (O'Donoghue, 2007). Open coding is the process whereby data is broken down into initial categories, opening up the text to find meaning (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Each of the focus group interviews, semi-structured interviews and documents were openly coded in order to identify the range of categories in the data.

Axial coding is the next level of coding: through axial coding, connections between categories and sub-categories of data are made. Sub-categories may include context, strategies or consequences (O'Donoghue, 2007, p. 94). Through axial coding, data which was fragmented in the open coding process are synthesised into explanatory units (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Selective coding supports the next level of analysis. Selective coding is the process of developing categories of analysis developed through open and axial coding, into a theory (O'Donoghue, 2007; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). At this stage, the data analysis is at its most refined level. At this stage, a rich story of the Champagnat College middle leader experience emerges. In this way, analysis is thematic, as it looks to the themes emerging from the data through the stages of open, axial and selective coding. Content analysis, by contrast, is applied using pre-existing categories of analysis and often without the researcher being on a research site (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). As such it is more of a deductive approach rather than the inductive thematic analysis, although some would hold to a closer convergence between content and thematic analysis (Patton, 2002).



**Figure 5.1. Representation of Constant Comparative Analysis.**


Through this iterative process, the validity and potential generalisability of the data is checked by assessing the consistency of data (Bassey, 1999; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). The researcher becomes immersed in the data and this heightens the sensitivity of the researcher to the data, enabling a “ventriloquial” story to emerge, where the researcher is the storyteller who incorporates the stories of the researched from the analysed data (Coombe, 1995; Nicotera, 1999).

In Stage 1 of the analysis (Exploratory Phase), the focus group data were collected and analysed. Seven focus groups were conducted: six groups of middle leaders

and one group of Marist Brothers. These focus group interviews were recorded and transcribed. Data analysis began as data were being gathered and emerging themes were noted and reflected on in the researcher reflective journal. Table 6.1 presents the codes and themes emerging from Stage 1 of the data gathering process and the interview probe questions generated.

In Stage 2 (Clarification Phase), open coding of data and comparison and contrast with the emerging themes from the data gathered from the semi-structured interviews and then the document analysis continued. The data were reduced such that an interpretive story could be generated. The categories provided a focus for continued data analysis.

**Example—interpreting data**

| Codes  |  | Themes   |          |
|--|--|--|----------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaching as vocation</li> <li>• Way of life</li> <li>• Lay vocation</li> <li>• Identity, gifts</li> <li>• Core values</li> <li>• Commitment to mission</li> <li>• Marist values and traditions</li> <li>• Shared mission; individual response</li> <li>• Specific Christian mission</li> <li>• Love of doing</li> <li>• Beyond boundaries</li> <li>• Teacher of young people</li> <li>• Notion of service</li> <li>• Working with kids</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Smoothing waters for boys</li> <li>• Work with students</li> <li>• Beyond remuneration</li> <li>• Student into adulthood</li> <li>• Lifestyle, higher purpose</li> <li>• Affirms College code/ethos</li> <li>• Beyond line management</li> <li>• Feel at home—belonging</li> <li>• Staff “fit”</li> </ul> |  | Vocation |

In the second order interpretation, axial coding was applied and links were made between the understandings, the literature and the theoretical perspective for the study.

The third order interpretation applied selective coding to integrate the story based on the theoretical perspective (Merriam, 1998; O'Donoghue, 2007). This process progressively moved from the concreteness of the data elements gathered to greater abstraction, based on the literature and the theoretical perspective of the study. Consult Table 6.2 for a presentation of the themes generated from the selective coding process.

## **5.7 Verifications**

While case study methodology is sometimes believed to be less trustworthy than other methodologies, it has strengths in verification of the research. Most particularly, case studies contain “a greater bias toward falsification of preconceived notions than toward verification” (Flyvberg, 2006). Case study promotes verification by exposing the details of the case to the reader so that researcher and reader have access to the same knowledge base; this enables judgements by either to be tested against the data. This is done by the researcher challenging her own conclusions, including analysis of negative cases, and employing triangulation (Patton, 2002).

Triangulation is a means by which the integrity of the data, and therefore the judgements which are made on the basis of it, can be trusted. “Data triangulation” is one of four kinds of triangulation identified: others are theory triangulation, investigator triangulation and methodological triangulation (Hughes & Hitchcock, 1995). Data triangulation refers to the confirmation which takes place when data is collected from over a period of time, and/or from more than one location and/or from or about more than one person. Theory triangulation uses more than one approach to analyse the evidence. Investigator triangulation uses more than one observer for the one case and methodological triangulation uses more than one method for gaining evidence.

In this study, there are two kinds of triangulation: methodological triangulation and data triangulation. Methodological triangulation is employed by means of the different methods used: focus group, semi-structured interview, document analysis and researcher reflective journal. Data triangulation takes place within the case as there is a time period of six months over which the data is collected, and there are seven categories of participants within the study which provide the data. Multiple sources of data gathered over a “prolonged” time period underpin the credibility of the study (Guba, 1989). While the strengths of the methodology are that case study offers “a means of investigating complex social units consisting of multiple variables of potential importance” and “results in a rich and holistic account” of a phenomenon, issues of reliability, generalisability and validity need to be addressed in the design (Merriam, 1998, pp. 41-42). The reader of the case study is invited to decide whether the understandings are applicable to other cases which are known to them, on the basis of the rich description created by the researcher (Gomm, 2000).

Participants were asked to check the transcript or summary of their interview; this process is called “member checking”. In this way, the data is validated at this point by the participant rather than the researcher (Guba, 1989). This triangulation is supported by the researcher clarifying her biases at the outset of the study (Hughes & Hitchcock, 1995; Merriam, 1998). Through the researcher understanding and declaring these values and beliefs, the trustworthiness of the research is further underwritten (Nicotera, 1999). See Appendix D for a discussion of the validity issues.

A case study record provides an audit trail for the research so that the integrity or “authenticity” of the evidence analysis can be checked (Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Patton, 2002; Stenhouse, 1980). These can include field notes, interview transcripts, reflective journal entries, and the documents used for document analysis. A case record consists of the data reshaped to be linked and accessible for a public audience and it is this which allows verification to be confirmed (Merriam, 1998; Wellington, 2000). The researcher discussed the data gathering, the analysis and the final case study report with critical friends who assisted in checking that the links were evident and clearly made, and that any changes to the design were identified and justified (Bassegy, 1999; Guba, 1989; Yin, 2009).

## 5.8 Ethical Issues

Ethical issues include the need for protocols for the clearing of material with informants, prior to inclusion in the study and the degree of anonymity accorded to the case study site and individuals who inform the study. Ethical considerations can be discussed under the following headings:

- a) Respect for democracy;
- b) Respect for truth;
- c) Respect for persons. (Bassey, 1999)

Respect for democracy concerns the researcher's ability to initiate and control engagement with participants, seeking participants' stories and being free to publish these. Respect for truth places a responsibility on the researcher to be open and transparent in the collection and analysis of the data, operating with integrity. This is especially important for insider-researchers who need to maintain two identities with their colleagues during the conduct of the research. These identities need to be balanced honourably or duplicity can result.

Respect for persons involves the researcher in informing the potential participants of the research and seeking their informed consent, allowing them to withdraw at any time for any reason. Respect for persons also encompasses the appropriate seeking of permission from the employing authority to undertake research at the site. The confidentiality of the data and the anonymity of the participants and the site of the study are critical for each person and also the integrity of the research.

These considerations were included in the process of meeting the requirements of ethics clearance from Australian Catholic University (ACU) Research Projects Ethics Committee, and also from the College Headmaster. Throughout the data gathering stage of the research, the researcher generated memos which assisted in monitoring the authenticity of the research through surfacing issues as they arose (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The data were kept secure during the collection and analysis process and are archived in a locked filing cabinet, in the office of the principal supervisor, at the conclusion of the study. The components of the material may be best conceptualised as archive, case record and case report (Bassey, 1999). The archive is the total of the rough notes and jottings, draft transcripts and tapes, plus the case record (the approved documents for public access from which the case report is written). It is only the case report which becomes public. All except the case report are filed securely according to ACU protocols.

## 5.9 Overview of Research Design

*Table 5.9. Overview of the Research Design*

| Timeline                        | Interpretive process  | Data collection  | Data analysis  |
|---------------------------------|---|--|--|
| January 2009-<br>June 2010      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify purpose of research and research questions</li> <li>Literature review</li> <li>Research design</li> </ul> |  |  |
| July 2010                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ethical clearance</li> <li>Application submitted and approved</li> </ul>   |  |  |
| February<br>2010-August<br>2010 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Boundaries of the case established</li> </ul>  | Invitations are sent to potential participants.  |  |
| October 2010                    |   | Local community leader of the Marist Brothers asked to identify six brothers for focus group; invitations issued | Focus groups (n=7) conducted with middle leaders and Marist Brothers |

| Timeline                   | Interpretive process   | Data collection   | Data analysis  |
|----------------------------|--|---|--|
| November 2010 – March 2011 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Validation of themes in light of research questions</li> <li>• Follow up interview where participants verified the initial themes.</li> </ul> | <p>Interview prompts developed</p> <p>Semi-structured interviews with selected (10) middle leaders commence. These are audio-taped and transcribed.</p> <p>Reflective journal maintained.</p> | <p>Data from focus groups analysed and developed into prompts for the in-depth interviews with 10 middle leaders</p> <p>Tentative themes emerge and are provided to participants inviting confirmation or amendment.</p> |
| March 2011                 |  | Collection of documents and artefacts from College and participants to support and refine interview data  | Tentative themes emerge and compared with themes emerging from interview process   |
| March 2011- June 2011      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of the case study</li> </ul>  | Data verified by participants for inclusion in thesis.  | Themes compared  |
| June 2011- December 2011   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Validation of data</li> <li>• Return to literature for links with data themes</li> </ul>  |   | Data analysis and synthesis  |
| January 2012- June 2012    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Report key themes in draft Understandings chapter and then develop Discussion, based on literature and understandings.</li> </ul>             |   |  |



# **CHAPTER SIX**

## **PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF NEW UNDERSTANDINGS**

### **6.1 Introduction**

The research conducted in this study is interpretative. The research product is construed by the researcher's engagement with participant perspectives and is not "found" as such. In this chapter, the researcher reports the researcher's justified understanding of participants' understandings of the research problem, described as "double hermeneutics" (Norreklit, 2006, p. 4) and not "findings". The title, "Research Understandings" is, therefore, inadequate. This argument offers a rationale for the use of the term "Presentation and Analysis of New Understandings" as the appropriate title for this chapter.

The purpose of this chapter is to present the understandings generated from research exploring how middle leaders at a Marist school understand and implement the Marist charism. Data were collected using focus group interviews, individual in-depth interviews, a document analysis and the researcher reflective journal.

The research questions provide a framework for the presentation of the new understandings:

1. How do Champagnat College middle leaders understand the Marist charism?
2. What understanding do Champagnat College middle leaders hold regarding how they implement the Marist charism?

### **6.2 Key Themes from Data Analysis**

Table 6.1 presents the codes and themes which were generated from an analysis of the focus group data. In addition, the table indicates how interview probe questions were generated from the themes. Table 6.2 presents the codes and

themes which were generated from all data and the characteristic of the Marist charism referenced to the relevant chapter sections.

**Table 6.1. Codes and Themes Generated From an Analysis of Focus Group Data**

| <b>Research Question 1: How do Champagnat College middle leaders understand the Marist charism?</b>  |                   |  |
|--|-------------------|--|
| <b>Codes</b>   | <b>Themes</b>     | <b>Interview Question</b>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vocation</li> <li>• Formation</li> <li>• Identification with charism</li> <li>• Example</li> <li>• Commitment of Brothers</li> </ul>  | Vocation and work | 1. What do you see is the distinction between “job”, “work”, and “vocation”?                                     |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formation</li> <li>• Continuity of charism</li> <li>• Pressure</li> <li>• Locked into the middle</li> <li>• Autonomy</li> </ul>   | Leadership        | 2. As a middle leader, how do you understand the aspects of your role description?                               |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Induction</li> <li>• Openness</li> <li>• Experience/living it</li> <li>• Professional learning necessary</li> <li>• Connectedness</li> <li>• Can’t be taught</li> <li>• Immersion</li> <li>• Story</li> </ul> | Learning          | 3. Is there any kind of professional learning or support you find helpful to keep focused on the Marist charism? |

| <b>Research Question 1: How do Champagnat College middle leaders understand the Marist charism?</b>  |                    |   |
|--|--------------------|---|
| <b>Codes</b>   | <b>Themes</b>      | <b>Interview Question</b>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time with boys</li> <li>• Pressure</li> <li>• Resistance to change</li> <li>• Communication; consultation</li> <li>• “stuck in the middle”</li> <li>• Management of staff</li> </ul>  | Tension and change | 4. How might your perspective be different as a middle leader, compared with before you were at this level of leadership?   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resistance to change</li> <li>• Pressure: challenge; applying it</li> <li>• Range of expectations</li> <li>• Management of staff</li> <li>• Legal issues</li> <li>• Business/charism tension</li> <li>• Accountability</li> </ul> |                    | 5. There is probably more accountability for the College and its middle leaders than previously. How might your understanding of the Marist charism support you in adjusting to this new environment? |

| <b>Research Question 2: What understanding do Champagnat College middle leaders hold regarding how they implement the Marist charism?</b>   |                              |  |
|---|------------------------------|--|
| <b>Codes</b>  | <b>Themes</b>                | <b>Interview Question</b>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time with boys</li> <li>• For the boys</li> <li>• Love of work</li> <li>• Feedback from students, parents and leaders</li> </ul>   | Student-focused perspectives | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. As a middle leader, how do you prioritise time spent on/with students, staff and other duties?</li> <li>2. Re Question 2 above, how would you honestly characterise your approach to your middle leader role at the College in these terms?</li> </ol> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Example</li> <li>• Staff formation</li> <li>• Commitment of the Brothers</li> <li>• Influence</li> <li>• Practical action</li> <li>• “honest authenticity”</li> <li>• Modelling</li> </ul> | Example                      | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. How do you model the Marist charism to staff and students?</li> </ol>  |

**Research Question 2: What understanding do Champagnat College middle leaders hold regarding how they implement the Marist charism?**

| Codes   | Themes                        | Interview Question  |
|---|-------------------------------|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Priority of the boys</li> <li>• Time for the boys</li> <li>• Using “for the boys” as a catchphrase</li> <li>• Relationship</li> <li>• Boys’ benefit</li> <li>• Boys first</li> </ul>             | <p>Student-focused action</p> | <p>4. How is your work related to what is best for the boys?</p>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formation→transmission</li> <li>• Charism touching beyond</li> <li>• Belonging</li> <li>• Relationship</li> <li>• Observation, modelling</li> <li>• Desire to be authentic to charism</li> </ul> | <p>Charism’s influence</p>    | <p>5. Are you aware of times when you are consciously passing on something of the charism to staff and/or students?</p>           |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trust</li> <li>• Internal mechanisms for quality</li> <li>• Vulnerability</li> <li>• Sufficient support from senior leaders</li> <li>• Feedback from students, parents and leaders</li> </ul>    | <p>Trust</p>                  | <p>6. What does the trust placed in you make it possible for you to do?</p> <p>7. How do you demonstrate trust in your staff?</p> |

**Table 6.2. Themes Identified Through the Selective Coding of Data.** (References beside each item refer to the relevant chapter sections.)

| <b>Research Question One: How do Champagnat College middle leaders understand the Marist charism?</b>  |  |                                  |
|--|--|----------------------------------|
| <b>Codes</b>   | <b>Themes</b>  | <b>Characteristics</b>           |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Story: personal, different emphases over time. spirituality and tradition. Marcellin, learning story, formation</li> <li>• Marist Brothers: formation, connection to Brothers, Brothers' example</li> <li>• Example: Mentoring, support, induction, model of Marcellin, charism "caught", Brothers role models</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Five characteristics of the Marist style</li> <li>• Formation</li> <li>• Connection with the Brothers</li> <li>• Example</li> <li>• Liturgies</li> <li>• Service program</li> </ul>                 | The Marcellin Story (6.4.1)      |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Catholic: Church teaching, respect, gospel, vocation</li> <li>• Community: Students, parents, staff, trust</li> <li>• Students: stand with young, priority, educating for life, presence, "best for boys, relationship</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relationships paramount</li> <li>• Students prioritised</li> <li>• Belonging</li> <li>• Vocation</li> <li>• Congruence between school and life</li> <li>• Tensions in response to change</li> </ul> | Catholic faith community (6.4.2) |

**Research Question Two: What understanding do Champagnat College middle leaders hold regarding how they implement the Marist charism?**

| Codes   | Themes  | Characteristics               |
|---|---|-------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shared mission: love of work, notion of service, mentoring, constant modelling</li> <li>• Pastoral care: Forgiveness, enabling, safety, student management, full potential</li> <li>• Love of work: Marcellin’ work ethic, referencing the charism, no limits</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service</li> <li>• Hard work</li> <li>• Pastoral care</li> <li>• Being an example to others</li> <li>• Passing on the charism</li> </ul> | Spiritual Leadership (6.5.1)  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students: meeting needs, leadership, care, confidentiality, school spirit, formation</li> <li>• Change: innovation, flexibility, contemporary, continuity, resistance, challenge, pressures, strategic planning, complexity, inevitable, communication</li> <li>• Trust: Delegate, co-responsible, possibility, innovation</li> <li>• Inconsistencies: Size of school vs charism, political resistance; bully culture, “for the boys, exclusion; harsh punishment, lack of courage, hypocrisy</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student-focused</li> <li>• Dealing with time pressures</li> <li>• Managing “being in the middle</li> </ul>                               | Relational Leadership (6.5.2) |



### 6.3 The Participants' Pseudonyms

Each participant was allotted an alphanumeric code. The numeric code identified the first date of contact with the participant and that participant's sequence among participants first contacted on that date, and an alphabetical letter was added as follows:

*Table 6.3. Participant Codes*

| Letter       | Middle Leader Category |
|--------------|------------------------|
| C            | Curriculum             |
| B            | Boarding               |
| J            | Junior School          |
| P            | Pastoral               |
| S            | Services               |
| O            | Other                  |
| [no date] MB | Marist Brother         |

Thus, "09029C" was first contacted 9 February and the ninth participant in the sequence of participants encountered on that date. This participant is a curriculum middle leader.

Data gathered from focus groups, semi-structured interviews, documents or the researcher journal, are identified according to the following codes or combination of these codes.

*Table 6.4. Source Codes*

| Source                             | Code |
|------------------------------------|------|
| Focus Group                        | FG   |
| Semi-structured interview          | I    |
| <i>Working Together in Mission</i> | WTM  |

|  |                                  |
|--|----------------------------------|
| <i>Champagnat College Strategic Plan</i>       | SP                               |
| Minutes from Head of House meeting             | HoH (date expressed as DD MM YY) |
| Minutes from Head of Key Learning Area meeting | KLA (date expressed as DD MM YY) |
| Minutes from Boarding Coordinators meeting     | B (date expressed as DD MM YY)   |
| Minutes of Services meeting                    | S (date expressed as DD MM YY)   |
| Researcher Reflective Journal                  | RJ                               |

## 6.4 Research Question One

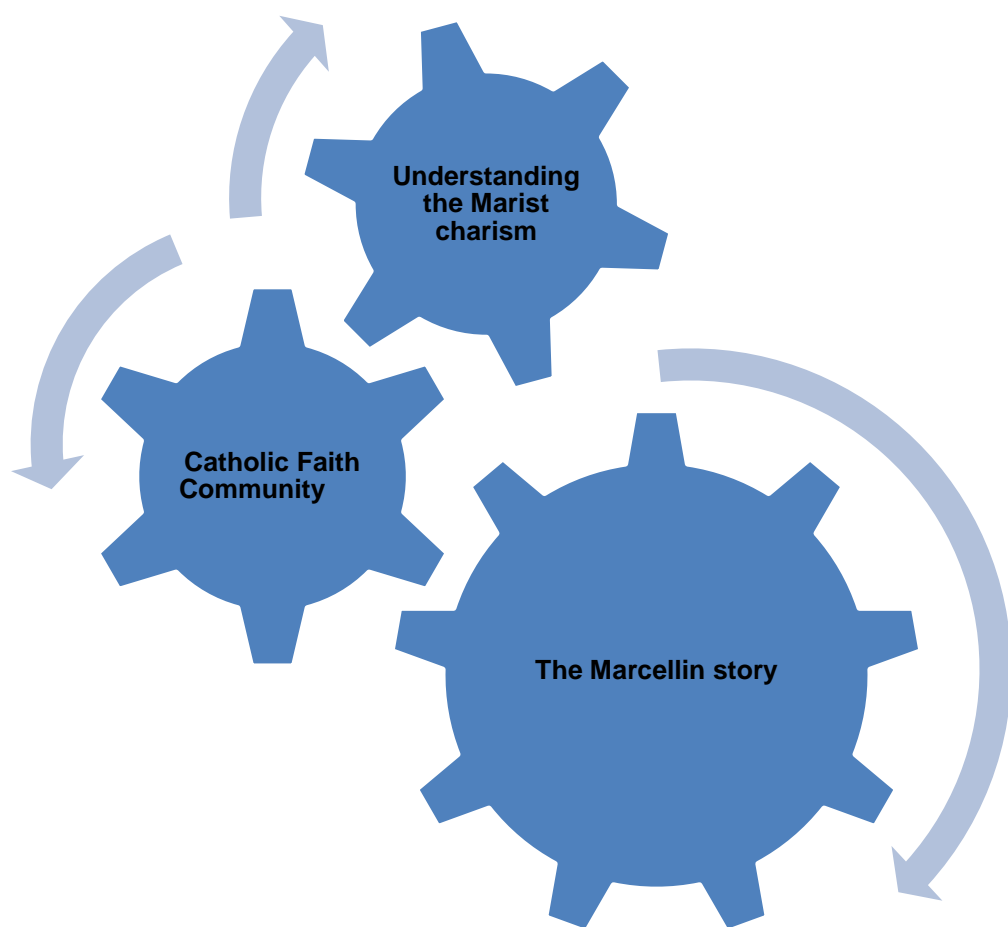
The first research question that focuses the conduct of this research is: *How do Champagnat College middle leaders understand the Marist charism?* This research question explores the understandings held by middle leaders about the Marist charism.

The themes emerging from the data with regard to the understanding of the Marist charism relate primarily to the *Ethos* aspect of the conceptual framework from the literature search. They are summarised in Table 6.5.

**Table 6.5. Themes Emerging From Research Question One**

| <b>Themes</b>            | <b>Inclusions</b>   |
|--------------------------|---|
| The Marcellin story      | Five characteristics of the Marist style; formation; connection with the Brothers; example; liturgies; service program                  |
| Catholic faith community | Relationships paramount; students prioritised; belonging; vocation; tensions in response to change; congruence between school and life. |

These are further expressed in Figure 6.1, where the relationship between these two ways of understanding the charism is appropriately understood as dynamic, with the Marcellin story energising how the Catholic faith community is understood. The understanding is itself capable of providing examples to implement charism, which is the focus of the second research question relates. Each of these understandings is discussed.



*Figure 6.1. Themes emerging from Research Question One.*

#### **6.4.1 The Marcellin Story**

The first theme for understanding the Marist charism is “The Marcellin Story”. Reference to the story of the life and ministry of Marcellin Champagnat was frequently made by participants. Included in a consideration of this story, are the five

identified characteristics of *simplicity, presence, love of work, family spirit, and in the way of Mary* (IMEC, 1998), the necessity of staff and student formation, ongoing connection with the Marist Brothers, the power of example, and the liturgies and service program which connect to the Marcellin story.

Participants had experienced the Marcellin story in varied ways. Some had attended Marist schools, sometimes also having familial contact with the Brothers. Some had taught in a number of Marist schools, but there were also participants who were introduced to the Marcellin story at Champagnat College. The Marcellin story was characterised by the following:

- a) That children should be loved and loved equally
- b) Marcellin's capacity to be firm as well as kind
- c) Marcellin's commitment to young people on the margins
- d) Marcellin's love of work, and an associated vision of him with "sleeves rolled up" (physically and metaphorically)
- e) Marcellin's persistence in trying to realise his vision.

There was an appreciation of Marcellin Champagnat as a practical man whose struggles energised him to persevere in pursuit of his vision. His legacy was a way of working with the young which most participants believed to be distinctive and life-giving. One of the participants referred to the image of Marcellin portrayed before he was made a saint. He is able to relate to the Marcellin story currently because it is not necessary for Marcellin Champagnat's character to be sanitized in order to be presented as saintly.

I think the current theology around Marist is much more practical than it was when I went to school ... He was very much this man they wanted to make a saint. And now that he is a saint, they're looking more at what he was really like. What were the characteristics that he brought to his community and the strengths ... Although you know I can still remember being told as a kid how he and his Brothers made their own nails. I still have visuals of these guys making nails, thinking, "God, how do you make a nail? I thought a machine

did that.” So, you know, obviously something along those lines got through to me as a kid. (16026O-I)

Participants’ understanding of the Marcellin story through experience of Marist schools and professional development, prompted them to recognise a distinctive approach to the young. The Marist charism was predicated on a robust and practical love of young people, especially those who seemed to be “on the edge”.

Lots of kids hang in groups and they look OK. But you see the kids who struggle at times and sometimes they get sent to me because they are naughty in class but there are reasons to show that kid that you care about them, as Marcellin would, I think that that’s a special thing. I think that’s the relevance for me. (02024J-FG)

Marcellin’s approach to the young provided participants with a context for understanding vocation, describing the love of all children as the essence and purpose:

... well the Marist charism, particularly the Champagnat “we love all children, we love them”. Sometimes we love them and we grind our teeth when we say that, but if you didn’t love them, then you wouldn’t be in this vocation, you know, because that is the essence of why we are in this ... (09022P-I)

When negotiating discipline issues, the Marcellin story was accessed by middle leaders who wished to respond in an appropriate way.

[reflecting on some recent professional development ... ] Just to re-touch the things that Marcellin did or Champagnat did; we should be doing those same things, particularly when you might be dealing with kids who are “pushing your buttons”, you know. ... I think with the Marist charism type thing, you can say, “This is what he was on about; this is how we can change what we are doing.” (02024J-I)

Participants explained that Marcellin’s love of children was not a reason to tolerate inappropriate behaviour. Those who had taught at other schools indicated that a

Marist approach was not “gently, gently” but included an expectation of compliance with the standards.

And when I see Marcellin, some people are confused with strictness and caring, whereas I’m pretty clear on it that strictness **is** part of the caring. ... and also dealing with staff, I sort of bring those things up. I say, “Look, this is what it’s about. It’s about getting the job done” ... There aren’t a lot, but there are stories of him saying, “OK, you’ve got to toe the line.” (02023C-FG)

The Marcellin story was described as a “mantra”:

... we’ve got that mantra that I have found very solidly put to us even when I first started as a layperson, and it continues to be revisited and re-touched on and re-set. (09028P-FG)

The most identified connection with the Marcellin Champagnat story was its call to persistence and hard work. Oft-repeated aspects of the Marcellin story within the College and through the *Sharing Our Call*<sup>8</sup> program, were Marcellin Champagnat’s building of *L’Hermitage*<sup>9</sup> in France, with his own hands, and his persistence in founding and leading his order of Brothers. These characteristics influenced participants.

Sometimes it’s just overwhelming, the pressure ... And he did have challenges in his life and then at the end, he created something, you know, I suspect he was proud of, that the building at La Valla from just two Brothers to pilgrimage centre and so many schools, so this is how I relate – that it was not easy for him so why should it be easier for me all the time? (16025C-FG)

And,

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<sup>8</sup> *Sharing our Call* is a formation program conducted by the Marist Brothers Sydney Province, which provides opportunity for Marist educators to deepen their understanding and appreciation of the Marist charism.

<sup>9</sup> L’Hermitage is the where Marcellin Champagnat established a novitiate for the Brothers. It is a place of pilgrimage. It is located in La Valla-en-Gier in southern France.

Marcellin or the Marist charism is ... he was seen to be—he wasn't ah from stories I've heard, the most intelligent person, but it was, "No, this is what I want to do. This is where I really want to go here. I'll just keep working on this. I'll try this tack." His results seemed to be more physical work, physical labour pushing that way, but obviously there's a change in the whole social society as it is now so that physical labour isn't as much but it's a different type work ... there are changes but I have to keep moving with them. And if you have a vision, if you have something you want to be going through with, I can relate it back and think well, he was doing the same things. It's a different background or scenario now, but it's a similar idea. (09024O-I)

There was an identification between individual participants and the Marcellin story:

... I have more of a chance to live out the leadership role side of it because Marcellin was the leader of the community and it's a "hands-on, roll up your sleeves, get in and do it" attitude he had and that's how I work. (16026O-I)

Particularly at times of excessive work pressure, participants found encouragement from Marcellin's practical, persistent approach to life and his mission.

#### **6.4.1.1      *Characteristics of a Marist style***

The first way of comprehending the Marcellin story is through the five characteristics of the Marist style, referred to within Champagnat College as "the five pillars". These characteristics—*simplicity, presence, love of work, family spirit* and *in the way of Mary*—are perceived to have been present in Marcellin's life and mission and are characteristics with which participants resonated. These characteristics make aspects of the Marcellin story explicit and facilitate their connection. Participants frequently referred to *simplicity, presence, love of work* and *family spirit*, but rarely to *in the way of Mary*.

These characteristics were understood in the context of life and helped participants to discern the meaning of the charism.

... the most central thing to me of what is the Marist charism, is when they talk about “family spirit” and “presence”. Now to me, *family spirit* is about relationships; it’s not necessarily about having a family. The *family spirit* is generated by the closeness of the relationships and I think that is one vital aspect to any ... dimension of this College: these relationships between staff and staffs, students and students. And you’re right: a lot of this is generic charism stuff in any schools, but I think the emphasis is constantly put on that in a Marist school. ... And I think you can only develop the type of relationships that are characteristic of a Marist school through *presence*. And a big part of that as a middle leader – or as any leader – is being present in your role. (16028B-FG)

*Simplicity* was understood as unpretentiousness. As a result, participants experienced trust from senior leaders and were able to undertake their responsibilities with a minimum of bureaucratic constraints. *Love of work* was a discernible thread in participants’ connection with the Marcellin story and in their experience of working in a Marist school. Whether a Marist Brother or a recently-arrived middle leader in the Services area, *love of work* was an aspect of the charism which was readily recognised by participants.

... he [Fr Champagnat] really got inside of the hearts of his Brothers and with him they worked and the whole thing flourished. (MB4-FG)

You look at those Marist charisms [sic] and it’s all about, you know, giving of your best and just being a good person and a good worker. (16029S-I)

#### **6.4.1.2      *Learning and supporting the Marcellin Story***

A further component of this theme is the focus on learning the Marcellin story. Understanding of the charism is introduced and reinforced in many ways. Participants identified the following:

- a) College Staff Induction
- b) Attendance at presentations sponsored by the College, usually on the Staff Days at the commencement of the year
- c) Attendance at *Sharing Our Call*



- d) Participation in other centrally-coordinated Marist programs, including the Marist induction program.

They also learnt informally about the Marist charism by being influenced by others whose example expressed the Marist charism. One participant and his family had visited *L'Hermitage* in France where Brothers shared with them.

Participants valued participating in formal programs on the Marist charism, particularly *Sharing Our Call*:

Oh, I loved the *Sharing Our Call*. Ah, I don't think there was a time ever that I've felt as closely aligned to—just revisiting the whole Marist journey, ah Marcellin Champagnat, and just learning about his journey and just getting closer to those things ... [I'm constantly reminded about it through other things that happen at the College but] the *Sharing Our Call* and also ... the Succession Planning—that's always good too. (02025C-I)

Another participant spoke about the benefits of being “immersed” in the Marcellin story through attendance at the professional development program called *Sharing Our Call*:

I've never really got as much out of those [days run at the College] as I have from *Sharing Our Call*. I think it was just a different approach ... [Staff day professional learning] doesn't seem to connect as well as being immersed in it a little bit more is probably the point I'm trying to make. (09024O-I)

While participants varied in their sense of need for formal learning about the Marist charism, there was endorsement of the quality of all formal formation experiences. While these programs assisted participants to understand the Marcellin story, they also helped to create connections with the Marist Brothers' vision.

Before then [attending *Sharing Our Call*], I thought the Brothers—you know, I always had this image of—there was this separation between a priest or a Brother and lay people ... but that ... broke down the barrier in a way, and

so, well, they're people too! They make mistakes, they make good and bad decisions as well—nobody's perfect, but we're all trying. (090240-I)

The motif of “immersion” was relevant to the experience of middle leaders who spoke of what they had learnt about the Marist charism in informal ways. “[at the Hermitage at La Valla] we were just immersed in the Marcellin story” (160260-I).

The Marist charism is learnt by being surrounded by those who live it. While attendance at formal programs was beneficial, the daily experience of observing colleagues working in ways consistent with the ethos reinforces those understandings and contextualises them.

I find that working here is like a professional development in itself, because I call Champagnat College my spiritual home. ... [I]n your daily dealings with so many different people, you see how they may react or think, and you get another person's perspective. And you think, “Oh yeah, that's good, that's lovely,” and so that whole ethos or charism is just carried through different people's dealings and that becomes—if you're aware of how and what they do—that's a professional development in its own way too. (09022P-I)

The example of others was identified as a practical expression of the Marist charism. The examples of a deceased staff member and the current Headmaster were referred to as illustrating aspects of the Marist charism. Participants also believed that it was important to stay closely connected with the on-site community of Marist Brothers. The importance of example, with daily faith practice, in sustaining the Marist charism was emphasised by Marist Brother participants: “It was just handed down to us” (MB4-FG); “I just absorbed it somehow” (MB2-FG); “You learnt it by living” (MB3-FG).

Encounters with students reminded middle leaders of the Marist charism:

I think I stay focused on that just by the by the nature of the area that I work in and the boys that I ... prefer to work with ... and that keeps me well and truly ... locked into the Marist ethos. (09029C-I)

In addition, masses and liturgies for staff and students, and the College service program provide opportunities for celebrating the Marcellin story and providing an opportunity to more fully commit to it. Liturgical celebrations of the Marcellin story are well-planned and executed, and considered to be intrinsic to College life (HoH 02 06 11). Similarly, the involvement of students and staff in the College service program<sup>10</sup> is regarded as highly desirable and a means of connecting with the Marcellin story by doing something with other members of the faith community (09022P-I).

#### **6.4.2 A Catholic faith community**

The second theme for understanding the Marist charism is as a Catholic faith community. This is a community where relationships with staff and students are valued, and where middle leaders experience belonging. The community energetically engages their spirituality, so that it becomes transformative, influencing beyond participants' work lives. The dominant values of this community are respect, humility, and dignity, nurtured in self-reflection.

And I think that's what the Marist thing does very well, because you know the whole relational side of things and the respect and dignity ... are big components. And I think that's ... critical. Respect and humility – it's always easy to "shoot your mouth off" ... [but I've learnt the value of] taking the moment and being humble ... (16028B-FG)

Participants valued the Marist charism and wanted to support it as part of a community.

Things have changed, changed with the shift from the Brothers to the lay staff. I think it's important because you don't have those guys who were trained in the charism and the traditions of the Marists. In the staff, you've got a lot of

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<sup>10</sup> The College service program is titled "MATES": "Marists are taking everyone seriously". Students engage in regular ministry activities, facilitated by College staff. This includes feeding homeless people, mentoring younger students, and supporting disabled or elderly members of the community.

people coming in, like yourselves who haven't experienced it, so you've got to have something to disseminate that information or that feeling. And I think – well, it appears to be working. (16026O-FG)

These aspects of the Catholic faith community are further amplified below.

#### **6.4.2.1 Relationships paramount**

One fundamental aspect of the Marist Catholic community is that it is a place where relationships are especially honoured. The Marist charism was described as intrinsically relational, with the charism sustaining and defining the relationships. “I guess it's a Marist relational [sic] as underlying the relationships is the charism that we all know and understand as 'Marist'.” (09021C-FG)

The faith community incorporates relationships with the students, and also the parents. Middle leaders are able to support and encourage others in the Champagnat College community because they experience connection with community members. While it is a Catholic community by virtue of the governance and culture of the College, Catholicity was not an explicit element of participants' experience, although Catholicity and the Marist charism were clearly evident in the prayer life of the College, in its mission statement and strategic plan (HoH 26 08 10, RJ 05 05 11, SP, MS). Participants expressed a preference for the spirituality which they found through the College as distinct from that of the local parish.

... what it means for me is that a home is, is a place where you're nurtured and therefore I find that I don't get nurtured spiritually at my local parish at all (09022P-I).

Middle leaders were conscious of their responsibility to demonstrate the values of the community: “... if the leadership have it, it's going to flow down ... the ways and dealings that come from above, permeate all the way through (09024O-I).” Relationship with other staff and observing others' example was identified as an important dynamic.

... but I also think it's interaction with each other as a staff too. It's when we come together. The boys sit over there—when you actually see people trying to live it out ... the whole community is strengthened by that. (16024J-FG)

... you hang around certain people, you will start to do what they do. So, it may not be uniquely Marist but that is what is here ... (16021C-FG)

The Champagnat College faith community includes students, though there is recognition of their different role within it. Participants identified that students shared in the understanding of the charism. Relationships with the students energised staff: "The responses from the students—they energise you" (MB4-FG). "How do they get it? You know, the way the boys are here, I know it makes me feel good. I'm just thinking ... it must make them feel good" (09027C-FG).

Participants identified the distinctive way in which students related to staff.

... this is the first school where I found that the boys would truly thank you: "Thank-you Miss for that class; how are you today, Miss?" And that is so special ... the boys are living this – they're taking it on. And it's so natural: they're not even thinking about it! It's their normal behaviour. (09025C-FG)

... I know in my first couple of weeks when I finished the lesson and the boys stood up and said, "Thanks Sir," and walked out, I thought, "Are you taking the piss?" Seriously. Because normally, I would say to my kids, "Thank you" and they would just walk out. But there's a genuineness there. (16022C-FG)

Students who do not wish to work within the ethos and culture of the College, perceive that they do not share the values which other students honour. A loss of respect or trust from other members of the community is itself a sanction. "If they know that they've lost the respect or the trust of a teacher, that's a big negative consequence for a student here (09029C-FG)." Students and staff are encouraged to commit to the College community.

You're not part of team if you're not worth anything so you just don't come in here and sit back and let other people do the work. You know – essentially "steal oxygen". You actually come in and the more that you contribute to the

place it seems—I would have said—it seems amazing how much more value you feel you are to the team, and then all of a sudden, you start to take pride in the team. (23023B-FG)

Students' pride at being part of the Champagnat College community is observable to those outside the College community. This pride is experienced by staff who recognise that the Marist community is being valued. The College's uniform and symbols are recognised and appreciated.

She said, "Oh, my boyfriend was at Marist. He got a badge like that; he was so proud when he got it." And it just made me think that the boys appreciate that belonging there must be something important. You, you've carried that with you, haven't you? It's something that you're instilling in them somehow. (02022C-FG)

Staff contribute to the valuing of the community through supportive relationships:

I think from a staff perspective, it's also very important to treat others in a Marist way as well as we all ... I guess we are part of a team and we look after each other, because we do have a big role in caring for the boys and caring for each other. (02021C-FG)

Participants perceived their role as contributing towards the welfare of the community, and the priority of the students was demonstrable in what took place.

Personal agendas that don't necessarily reflect Marist values ... People have the right to have their own personal opinions on things but the question they should always ask is, "Who is going to be impacted?" and "What benefit is this going to have for the boys?" (16028B-FG)

#### **6.4.2.2      *Vocation***

The character and quality of relationships sensitise participants to the values which are to underpin their work at Champagnat College. While some recognised their work as "vocation", others, labelled it as a sense of belonging, a feeling of comfort, or fit, or an experience of being "home".

I came in here and I felt comfortable immediately in the charism, in the way that we deal with boys, in the way that staff and admin deal with you, in the way that [the Campus Minister and the College Chaplain] interact with and deal with the boys ... That to me, felt like I fit. ... [T]hat says a lot to me and I immediately went, “Right, I can see myself being here long-term.” (16028B- FG)

Either way, staff made a commitment to the community, reflecting a “whole of life” commitment.

... I’ve never really thought of working here at [Champagnat College] as a job; it’s always been a way of life. That’s my way of describing it. I couldn’t have survived at it this long if I hadn’t had this philosophy for 35 years, I think. (16026O-I)

When asked specifically as to what they would identify as “vocation”, participants believed that their role and relationship with students was their vocation. Their leadership role was regarded as incidental to vocation, although it was recognised as providing them with opportunities to enhance their student-related work.

Well I see “vocation” is me as a teacher ... of course my vocation has changed in the fact that I’ve become a pastoral leader ... working with young people particularly secondary teenagers. ... My vocation is that of a teacher working with young people. (09022P-I)

... in my area, a boy who is started on an instrument and then in ten years—even as adults they’re still playing, that’s an accomplishment. And you think, “Wow, that’s great.” And they enjoy that: they might be doing medicine or something like that but they can still relate back to that. So, you see that you’ve had an impact on other people, and other people’s lives, ... so that’s the vocational side of it, I think. (09024O-I)

... it is a vocation in that I actually believe in what this place does and it has a certain ethos—a code if you like—and I like that code, so that’s why I remain here. (09029C-I)

Change is inevitable and is supported by the charism.

We have to keep moving forward, we have to keep pushing to see what something else we could do, because it could be a thousand times better than what we've got. So let's not just wipe it and say, "This has been working for thirty years." (09024O-FG)

#### **6.4.2.3      *Change***

Change is also included in the understanding of the Catholic faith community. There was a sense of acceptance that statutory and corporate compliance requirements do not hinder the expression of Marist charism. "My approach is, 'that's the world we live in', so it's really just a case of pushing your sleeves up and getting the work done, and that, to me, would be a Marist approach (02021C-I)." Meeting the compliance requirements of Church and State bodies was not seen as inimical to the identity of a College faith community but as crucial to its integrity (SoP, WTM).

Because of the introduction of Year 7 into Queensland secondary schools from 2015, there is a projected increase in the College student population. Amidst anxiety that the increase in student population might frustrate the effectiveness of relationships, there were no major concerns about responding to external and internal accountability regimes. Similarly, the College itself was not perceived to be in danger of losing its ethos and culture. While there was reference to a staff perception that the College had adopted a corporate model of operation, there was a corresponding recognition that the changes referred to were not undermining the College's values. There was, however, a sense of how easily such a shift might happen should the charism's influence be diminished or extinguished.

[T]his school is not a business as such that I've seen, and I've been through six or seven in the last 15 years. And that, I think, is the crunch. That is what it comes down to. And that is all stemming from the charism there and I think the sooner – if that ever leaves, that will lead into it being a business. (16021C-FG)



Being part of the Champagnat College faith community is not restricted to leaders' work lives only. While some enthusiastically emphasised that they were not "24/7 sold my soul to the place," others reflected that the moral and ethical dimensions of their work at the College impacted on other parts of their lives.

I see it as a way to be. It's not on and off. ... Work hard. Try and find solutions to problems. Try and be reasonable. Not be unreasonable ... at home as well, with my family—as a husband, father and with friends, for instance treating others with respect. (09024O-I)

Champagnat College middle leaders are part of a Catholic faith community and experience through this, a sense of purpose and belonging which strengthens and transforms them. This community also includes the students whose needs are a priority.

#### **6.4.3 Summary About Understanding the Charism**

Champagnat College middle leaders understand the Marist charism through the Marcellin story and as a Catholic faith community. Understanding is deeply rooted in the story of a man whose vision and concern for marginalised youth caused him to establish an order of Brothers. This story nurtures a Catholic faith community where love, respect and dignity are apparent. Community members experience meaning and purpose. The understanding of the charism energises individuals and the community, providing them with identity: "we're not just Marist, we don't show the charism only in what we do but it's in who we are. Because that's what separates us from any other Catholic school in the valley" (09021C-FG).

The actions accompanying such understandings are explored in Research Question 2: *What understanding do Champagnat College middle leaders hold regarding how they implement the Marist charism?*

One of the things I've noticed here, having worked in church schools before, is that "yes" it's very obvious and they talk about Marcellin and what the Marists stand for all the time, it's very much out there in the open, but the

school “walks the walk” as well though. It’s not just rhetoric; people do it.  
(16022C-FG)

## 6.5 Research Question Two

The second question which focuses the research is: *What understanding do Champagnat College middle leaders hold regarding how they implement the Marist charism?*

This question explores the ways in which middle leaders implement their understandings of the Marist charism in their daily work.

There are two major themes apparent in response to Research Question 2: Spiritual Leadership and Relational Leadership. Each of these is a particular expression of how the Marist charism has shaped the kinds of leadership which are particularly relevant to it. Spiritual leadership incorporates service, hard work, pastoral care, being an example to others and passing on the charism. Relational Leadership includes being student-focused, dealing with time pressures and managing being “in the middle”. This is outlined in Table 6.6.

**Table 6.6. Themes Emerging in Response to Research Question Two**

| <b>Leadership</b>     | <b>Inclusions</b>  |
|-----------------------|--|
| Spiritual Leadership  | Service, hard work, pastoral care<br>being an example to others, passing<br>on the charism |
| Relational Leadership | Student-focused, dealing with time<br>pressures, managing “being in the<br>middle”         |

Each of these themes is now explained.

### **6.5.1 Spiritual Leadership**

The first theme is Spiritual Leadership. Spiritual Leadership is practised by middle leaders who value what they understand of the Marist charism and who seek to exemplify and nourish it. While understandings of the Marist charism are articulated in the context of daily work, the charism is mostly active through the leader's example, identified in their approach to issues and their commitment to hard work, undertaken in a spirit of service.

#### **6.5.1.1 Example**

The first element of Spiritual Leadership is the importance of example. Participants were motivated to live an exemplary life, often inspired by the Marcellin story. They were also inspired and encouraged by observing others who demonstrated Marist values. Leaders were committed to live in harmony with the charism.

Trust your own model to be the best person that you can be and hope that they recognise that, see it and may be model it too, or copy it. (02025C-I)

Being an example is not about being a "plaster saint" but being human, with humility and honesty. Participants were honest with their students, and linked their own capacity for honesty and courage to the College motto which enjoins students to do likewise.

And I often say to the boys, the College motto is "Act Courageously" and sometimes you have to admit where you may have done wrong and so, to apologise. You know, if I've done wrong, I apologise. (09022P-I)

... not only do you need to know a bit about it and be able to impart it, you should be modelling it as such and I lay no claims to flawless modelling of ... charism, but it should underpin everything that I do within this College, I would have said. Otherwise, I should go somewhere else I think. (23023B-FG)

Not all participants were confident to call themselves "spiritual" but related their commitment to pass on the Marist charism to their conviction about the moral value of leading a life consistent with the charism. They self-referenced to Marist values

and this assisted them in maintaining the strong example which they sought to portray to students and staff.

... when I'm at this point, I'm interacting with this other person, I'm imparting some of the Marist charism and this is the way that Marcellin would have done it ... I'm just thinking ... Am I being respectful? Am I being reasonable? Is it working here? Am I being a lunatic, jumping up and down? Well, that's not what I would like to be. And so, I guess, that's probably more of the approach: just trying to be—work through it calm ... go that way ... I don't really see myself as being really spiritual—perhaps more in a practical sense. It's probably the spirituality that I have. (09024O-I)

Being an example was actualised through mentoring. Mentoring of staff was intrinsic to the middle leadership role and was a preferred mode for middle leaders' approach to their staff. The way ahead was modelled and then staff were coached (and sometimes “protected” – 09029C-I) through matters as they arose. In some cases this was the mentoring of staff only, although pastoral leaders mentored students and their parents as they addressed challenging issues.

I don't want to be directive all the time. And there are times when I have to say, “This is what's going to happen,” and that's it. That's being part of being a leader: you have to make the hard calls. Um but I try to mentor that. But I'm also trying to be very inclusive of them ... (09022P-I)

Mentoring is one means of linking the importance of being an example with the pastoral care appropriate to the Marist charism.

### **6.5.1.2      *Pastoral care***

Pastoral care is an element of Spiritual Leadership. Participants expressed a deep responsibility for students' physical, moral and spiritual care and sought to exercise this responsibility in ways which referenced the Marist charism either explicitly or implicitly. When speaking to the boys, the Marist charism gave middle leaders a way of focusing the message.

When I'm, say, disciplining a boy or speaking to a boy, ... I'm able to wrap up the College brand and not in a negative way but to give them a focus while they're here, ... so that when I speak about things to them about why we do and don't do certain things at this College or do them in particular ways, we talk about what (without belting them over the head about what Marist is with Champagnat and that sort of thing) but we bring in those values and principles that we're meant to be espousing and modelling. (23023B-FB)

Students responded positively to the Marcellin story and its sense of purpose. References to the Marist charism were a natural part of the pastoral care conversation.

I met with the student today, who's a very angry teenager, ... and in talking to him and in talking about the Marist way, what Champagnat is truly about, what was his guidelines, how is he fulfilling that, because at school he's doing well. At home is another issue. So we went through using that and he could really relate to it. And so he, by the end, you know, by the end of the hour with dialogue and backwards and forwards, he'd started to shift his frame of reference a little bit ... (09028P-FG)

Participants sensed their role as accompanying both students and their parents as the students traversed their spiritual journey towards adulthood. Because of a number of children from the one family possibly attending the College over a period of time, there is the opportunity to know the family well. There is a partnership between the College and the families through the pastoral middle leaders in particular.

... you've got five years with them and building up a family relationship there which, when the brothers come through, it becomes an ongoing thing. And the you've seen that, you've seen that student develop, you know, and going through the rough patches and sort of being there with the parents and saying, "It's OK, he's going to come through the other side of this. (23022P-FG)

... consequently I find that I get the strength from that [being part of the Champagnat College community] to help the boys in their journey of life in their faith journey when they struggle with their faith. (09022P-FG)

Where student behavior is incompatible with College values, staff members liaise with other schools to enrol the student. This is a student pastoral care issue.

And even when we do move boys on, we don't sort of say, "There's the door, go. Bye," we actually say, "We've got you into this place. So let us try to get you into this place or .." We try to set them up for another space ... (23022P- FG)

Participants were conscious of the Brothers' legacy to the College and were eager yet humble about being the inheritors of that legacy. "How do we ensure that this carries and stays alive in the school once the Brothers have stepped aside? We have to take up that challenge (09021C-FG)." In doing so, they were aware of their responsibility to pass on the Marist charism to others, particularly the students of the College.

It is about, ... educating boys in that Marist thing, and if we get the accolades – the academic ones, the sporting ones, the cultural ones or whatever, that's great, but to me, that's not the primary focus of what we're here for. It is the education of the boys in the Marist charism. That's what we're here for first and foremost ... Even Rugby is second! (16022C-FG)

The challenge of communicating the charism to students influenced participant self-perspective of their role priorities.

... in any Catholic school, there is [sic] instances where you come to know and love Jesus and ours is in a particular Marist way. ... the school has certain events each week which draw the boys to that so as a middle leader ... you probably have an opportunity to articulate that to the boys, using examples of their daily life. And I see that as quite—that's the way that I put it into practice or roll out the Marist charism ... particular moments present themselves to do that. (16028B-FG)

The boarding community acknowledges the additional responsibilities and opportunities for sharing the charism because of their extended contact with resident students. Boarding supervisor training responded to this by reflecting elements of the Marist charism in the formal staff training program. The weekly masses for the boarding community supplemented the explicit reference to the gospel and the Marcellin story (B 07 06 11). As the students are considered members of the faith community, it is expected that they implement their understandings of the Marist charism because “it should also underpin the way that they operate in the school ... (16028B-FG).”

The articulation and modelling of the Marist charism in the pastoral care context resulted in mutually-respectful understandings between staff and students.

I’m really thankful that I can be yelling at someone, and to get a message through that doesn’t get through any other way – and then another boy will come up and say, “Excuse me, Sir. Do you mind if I ...”, and they know that they’re not going to get—hopefully they trust that they’re not going to get—the same response. “What do YOU want?” Like they understand the message isn’t getting through to one of them. (23023B-FG)

Discipline situations de-escalated rather than intensified due to the discourses reflecting understandings of the Marist charism.

I just say to them, “What’s the problem?” and they’ll tell me what the problem is, or what’s the solution. And you’ll get to the solution within two sentences, and they know exactly what they’re supposed to do. It’s never a yelling match ... it’s something they understand; they understand their obligations and their responsibilities from a Marist viewpoint. (09027C-FG)

A further component of Spiritual Leadership is the hard work which participants undertake. There is a deep sense of service and responsibility for completing work to a high standard.

... you can’t just walk away and say, “I’ve finished my hours” ... you’ve got to bring it to conclusion, or get it to a state where it’s able to be passed on to

someone ... you just can't wash your hands of it. You have to own it; you have to own it. (16026O-I)

For some, this hard work was a consequence of their availability and professionalism.

I believe that ideally ... you just get asked for things and you just ... take it on board and do what you can. And across the board, you try and make yourself available and as professional ... with ... understanding. (02025C-I)

For others, it was apparent that the hard work resulted from a commitment to develop a service culture, with a strong sense of purpose, within an area of responsibility.

So, we've really tried ... to create – no matter who comes up – no matter what request is given – boys, parents, teachers – it is something that we will try to do ... we're a service industry – we're here for the boys; we're here for the parents; we're here for the teachers and we're here so we have to provide, we will provide, we want to provide. (09027C-FG)

Participants were motivated to excel and trusted that they worked in a “no blame” environment. It was not only the perceptions of superiors and peers but also of the students which were influential.

Just 100% and have a go. ... [I]f you've put everything in, and it just hasn't worked out, no one's going to blame you for not getting the job done properly. But as long as the boys have ... seen that you've put in the effort, I think that that's [OK]... and the boys are appreciative. (16029S-FG)

### **6.5.2 Relational Leadership**

The second theme in response to Research Question 2 is Relational Leadership. Relational Leadership is student-focused, deals with time pressures, and manages the challenges of “being in the middle”. Participants experienced a complex world of relationships as middle leaders. Amid the frustrations of time pressures and



competing priorities, this role is ultimately satisfying for its relational richness and capacity to influence.

### **6.5.2.1 “Best for the boys”**

The first element of Relational Leadership is the focus on what is “best for the boys”. The needs of students are prioritised in a Marist school. This is demonstrated in openness to the students.

I reckon you’d find the boys will always show you something new; you’ve just got to go, “Oh, you’re too good for me this time! It won’t happen again!” But [in] all that interaction ... it just refreshes and revitalises you getting to know people. Especially the Marist family ... (23023B-FG)

One of the tensions experienced by middle leaders was that they spent less time with students than classroom teachers did. Their roles typically involved responsibility for programs and staff, with some time release from teaching duties in recognition of these different responsibilities. Leaders to whose role resulted in diminishing contact with the students believed that their capacity to implement the charism was diminished : “... I think that is a really important part of the Marist thing – being with the kids” (02023C-FG).

There was widespread commitment to the priority of students at Champagnat College. The touchstone of “what is best for the boys” guided middle leader practice, assisting individual and collective decision-making. “Best for the boys” was also perceived to be used inauthentically to justify particular courses of action. The challenge of maintaining student priority in the busyness of each day, amidst the range of tasks to be achieved, required clarity and nimbleness.

If there’s a boy [for] which there’s something completely going wrong, pear-shaped right there and then, you have to [deal with it]; that’s the priority. So it’s always fluctuating and shifting. And you have these things on the back-burner all the time ... I think that’s the way that I try to look at it. “Well which— where are we at this point? I’m wanting to get this happening, but right now, this boy, or this group of boys, they need it now. “ So you need to leave that

and move on to the other. But this, it's always changing. Every day, every hour, it's going to be changing .... (09024O-FG)

Participants believed that their efforts were directed not only towards students' academic achievement but to "the whole package (09028P-FG)" of sporting and academic achievement, personal development and formation in the Marist charism. The mature relationships between the participants and the students meant that issues could be negotiated with students through conversation rather than through directives.

... it's how I can do best for the boys ... is to give them opportunities; give them options; give them suggestions rather than directives. We're saying, "This is what you could do; you could do this"—at times, they obviously need direction because they're boys, they're not ad—even adults need direction—but I think that's what I would like to try to give to them and to have them feel as though they can come and talk to me about different things. (09024O-I)

In most cases, the priority of the students was regarded as being authentic and participants freely celebrated their own and others' successes at implementing programs which benefited the boys.

Characteristics of presence and simplicity were identified when speaking about what was "best for the boys". When students were being disciplined, the simplicity of the system was notable:

[T]he first time I did Friday afternoon detention, I went to [name] and I said "I've got all these boys here, what do I do?" "What happens if they don't turn up? What do we do then?" He just looked at me and said, "Well if they don't turn up three times, we give them a Saturday. We don't get upset by all this." I thought, "Good". And the boys accept this too. "You've spat at someone in the yard – you've got a Friday." "Oh, OK." And so therefore, within [my teaching area] I try to keep to a fairly simple, "this is what we are doing, this is why ... (16022C-FG)

Staff motivation for program success was related to student outcomes rather than self-aggrandisement.

They've got guest speakers, partnership with industry, and nobody even knows about it, you know, because they don't stand up and say, "I've organised this." They're not blowing ... [their] trumpet; they're doing it for the boys. And I work in some other organisations and basically, they mentioned it everywhere, and basically, ... it was a way of building up your profile to get the job. It's just ... simplicity and doing it for the boys. (16025C-FG)

Participants did not believe that they could achieve much at their desks and preferred to be in student-rich contexts, engaging with students in a supportive and personal way.

[T]hat's (partly) how I see my role is fitting in with the charism—of being around—taking in interest in what the boys are doing and supporting them in that and also having expectations. "I'm here to support you but why aren't you wearing shoes? Get them on. We have standards ... " and explaining it to them. ... and also with staff as well like, ... I personally believe—and strongly—that we model what we want the boys to do. (23021O-FG)

There was a clear concern that the priority of the boys should be for "all boys", especially those who might be regarded as more challenging, conscious that Marcellin worked on a similar basis (WTM; 02023C-FG). "[W]e believe we put in practice the charism of what he's on about by looking after some of the more challenging students (09029C-FG)." This "looking after" did not fall into a false dichotomy of firm or soft discipline but was related to Marcellin's strong, fair and challenging way of dealing with the young. "[T]he one that I think is important is maintaining the "strong/fair" line – not necessarily being authoritarian and disciplinarian but maintaining the standard because that's very important to the Marists" (16028B-FG).

While leaders might not have been confident to negotiate with students, they applied the values of the Marcellin story to resolve challenges:

... in the back of your mind that whenever you make a decision or are dealing with a student you are saying, “What would Champagnat have done? What would Marcellin have done?” ... in the situation. (23022P-FG)

Participants identified two principal areas where they believed that the implementation of the charism might be inconsistent in relation to the boys. There were times when College staff or parents would support their position by appealing to the priority of the students. Participants expressed irritation that this occurred, and frustration that the College culture did not challenge or hold people to account. They characterised the dilemma as to whether it was the welfare of all boys being nurtured or only some boys. A second major perceived inconsistency related to the implementation of the College policy on students and drugs. This policy was promulgated as a “zero-tolerance” policy and it was perceived by some to be inconsistent with the Marist charism of the College. Other areas noted as inconsistencies were the following:

- a) middle leaders believing that their work was not valued (23026O-FG);
- b) non-inclusion of some staff in College events (16027S-FG);
- c) perceived insufficient support of students with learning differences (23024C-FG); and
- d) the implementation of industrial action from time to time (MB1-FG).

Participants were conscious that, while “the boys” were to be prioritised, the College, and they as middle leaders, also had a responsibility to look after staff, as it was through staff endeavour that the boys could be educated in a Marist way.

“It’s all about the boy”: it’s a major part of it but for it to be effective it also has to be about the staff as well. So if the staff aren’t looked after and supported, then you can’t expect them to—they’re not martyrs, they get paid to do a job. (09029C-I)

### **6.5.2.2      *In the middle***

Being “in the middle” is a positional element of Relational Leadership. Participants worked in the midst of a complex network of relationships Middle leadership

provided participants with encouragement that they could influence people and situations, even although they did not, generally, experience a shift in their perspective since being in leadership.

... it has changed slightly, because there were certainly some things before, through the leadership structure when I wasn't in a middle leadership role, that I was thinking, "Well why don't we just do this? Let's push it: let's go let's go!" ... so there's a greater understanding now—perhaps probably a better way to put it—a wider understanding of how everything works and the enormity of it all. (09024O-FG)

But I think personally, the biggest challenge for me is having come from being just a classroom teacher - not **just** a classroom teacher – and then being in this role where you have to ask staff members for things and you expect it and there's a bit of that different "hat wearing" I guess where, you know, two years ago you probably would have sat there and thought, "Oh yeah, I'll get to that later," and not really bother about it, now you sort of put the pressure on to get it handed in and get it done. And the response of, "Oh yeah, whenever ... you'll be right", knowing that, because we're all friends ... knowing that friendship line and that professional line too – that's been the biggest challenge. (02024J-FG)

The pressure of time and competing priorities was identified as a dominant experience and they were anxious that their performance might suffer as a result. There was a deeply-felt responsibility to maintain and further develop as a teacher (where relevant) while engaging with areas of leadership responsibility, including the priority of relationships.

You know, I'm still trying to find the challenge to be progressive in my teaching structure: the time to give to the boys, the relationships, to give to my curriculum, to be accountable – all of that I'm finding ... you know, am I doing a good enough job? I just find it's a time to try to take on everything that we want to do and sometimes I just wonder whether we're doing it well enough. (09022P-FG)

Metaphors characterising the experience of those “in the middle” were “locked” (09029C-FG), “squashed” (16025C-FG), “pulled” (09024O-FG), and “sandwiched” (09027C-FG). Each metaphor has the idea of being uncomfortable and trapped, without the means of extrication. The sense of being “locked” might also be a statement about the difficulty of gaining promotion beyond middle leadership.

Well one of the dilemmas of being in middle management in this. In education, ... it's very hard to go past middle management. ... so you're locked into the same thing in many cases for a very long time. Whereas in much larger organisations, you can move in and out and do all different things but not as a teacher: you're locked into basically, three layers. (09029C-FG)

While some of the pressures experienced by middle leaders were existential (such as time) it was the relationships surrounding the leader which created this experience of being caught in the middle. It was experienced in conflict situations or where leaders were attempting to meet competing expectations.

There comes a point where you say, “Well, I'm in the middle here. You can't ... “ I've got to work with both of those people. You know, both of them. You can't get off-side with both without keeping/having a working relationship. (16029S-FG)

Middle leaders consider contrasting viewpoints and find a way forward. Where they might have believed that they were gaining the capacity to influence people and events, they—paradoxically—could experience less power, because of the increased complexity of their professional worlds. This paradox frustrated some, particularly those new to middle leadership (RJ 01 05 11). “I might have staff members who say, ‘that's not how we do things’. So sometimes, it just feels like [I'm] ‘squashed in the sandwich’ ...” (16025C-FG).

The demands of their position required them to make difficult decisions, and this potentially distanced them from the team members whose relationships with them were crucial. In such cases, the Marcellin story was accessed as a means of finding some way through the difficulty, though not guaranteeing successful outcomes.

That's where it comes to and we all go through those situations where you have a successful working environment and in middle management, you need to get on and have respect for each other and you want to feel that "being liked" and it's quite distressing because that's why you are a teacher – you like being liked! And all of a sudden, you are in this position where you're having to hassle people but ... I sort of go with that Marcellin sort of thing ... "Well this is the way it is. I am going to put you under a bit of pressure, this deadline ... (02023C-FG)

### **6.5.2.3      *Trust***

Trust is a further element within Relational Leadership. Middle leaders were encouraged by others' trust in them. Participants believed that others did trust them in their work, and they were encouraged that their work was valued. "You know, you are sandwiched in the middle but one of the most satisfying things that I get by working here (I haven't had it in other places) is the trust that you get here" (09027C- FG).

Trust from, and in, others liberated leaders to achieve. Middle leaders reported that they experienced trust by College senior leaders, members of their team and students. "It certainly makes it easier if there's a trust there between two people" (02021C-I).

Trust between staff and students was evident at the College. Participants identified the trust between them and students as being related to the Marist charism and derived from the College culture.

... I think the trust [shown in middle leaders by others] allows us to trust the boys, and give the boys that extra little width and breadth and length to actually operate in. And most of them, I know they're rewarded for it ... Occasionally it doesn't work – it backfires, but most of the time the trust is there. And you feel the trust so that you can operate within that trusting environment and allow the boys to operate within that environment. (09027C- FG)

This, in turn, contributed to the trust within the College community. Middle leaders reflected that trust shown in them, enabled them to engage effectively with the students and innovate (02023C-FG). Relationships with students offered participants the opportunity to take professional risks and gain different perspectives.

... you're trusted here at the College because you are in that position, therefore you will be, you will be heard ... It doesn't necessarily mean that they'll agree with you. And by being part of a team ... you do hear everybody else's perspective which can allow you to think differently too. So with regard to the trust ... you're in many cases, you're the first port of call in the leadership avenues going up, to the College. ... and the College Leadership Team want your impressions of something, and they trust, they value the words of wisdom that we may or may not come up with. So it makes it possible to make changes in people's lives, you know whether directly or wholly in the College. (09022P-I)

The trust that that will all be done ... Also the pastoral side of it. The trust that I'm constantly working on that and not throwing hands up and saying, "Well, it can't be done. (02024J-I)

Participants experienced trust from senior leaders, parents and the students, though when middle leaders were not affirmed, particularly by senior leaders, it was perceived as an unhelpful inconsistency (230260-FG). Middle leaders demonstrated trust in their staff through delegation without interference. The trust which helped participants feel heard, empowered them to effectively implement the changes appropriate to a Marist school. Guidance and support were required but space to succeed in the designated tasks was also important: "... of giving them responsibility and restructuring my approach so it doesn't look as like I'm standing up on top of them. I think that's very important in the Marist charism" (16028B-FG).

Delegation was considered an important middle leader capability and function. Where this was not a natural capacity it was developed through recognition of the impossibility of achieving all of the workload and through a conscious engagement



with the Marcellin story. There developed a trustful, “living out the charism” through professional dialogue with staff, as the foundation of delegation (09029C-I). This also prompted deepened relationships and creativity.

I just give them responsibilities and ... that’s probably the best way to demonstrate it. Give them jobs and not interfere; I do interfere and they get irritated by my pedantic nature, but I give them the freedom to design and come up with ideas and I encourage that. (16026O-I)

This enabled communication to be moving “up and down” the levels of responsibility, moving beyond directive to understand the work contexts of all involved.

... that just shows that they have faith in me that I do the role that you wanted me to do so, you know. And obviously, it’s wise to reverse as well. When I have problems, I know I can come “up the tree” as well and ask for support. (16027S-I)

The daily challenge of implementing the charism was nuanced through the network of trusting relationships of which the middle leaders were part. This created an environment which enabled leaders to accept and affirm the necessity of change with their teams.

#### **6.5.2.4      *Implementing change***

The next element of Relational Leadership is implementing change. Relational Leadership does not prevent the use of an authoritative, decisive approach when required. There was acceptance of the need to persuade their teams to recognise and implement changes required by external or internal stakeholders: “[w]e need to be fluid with changes in society, and therefore we can’t be stuck in the old ways necessarily” (09022P-I).

While the Marist charism was not perceived as affirming or opposing organisational or pedagogical changes, the charism was perceived as supporting a moral approach to implementation.

People can see changes as more roadblocks. ... I prefer to think of them as challenges if I can. Some of them are larger than others. ... I think that the foundations of the Marist charism, they're quite solid foundations as to almost an instruction manual as to how to be a good person. That's the way I see it in a more practical kind of way, so I think that if you've got that already, it gives you some support for other things which are moving all of the time. (09024O-I)

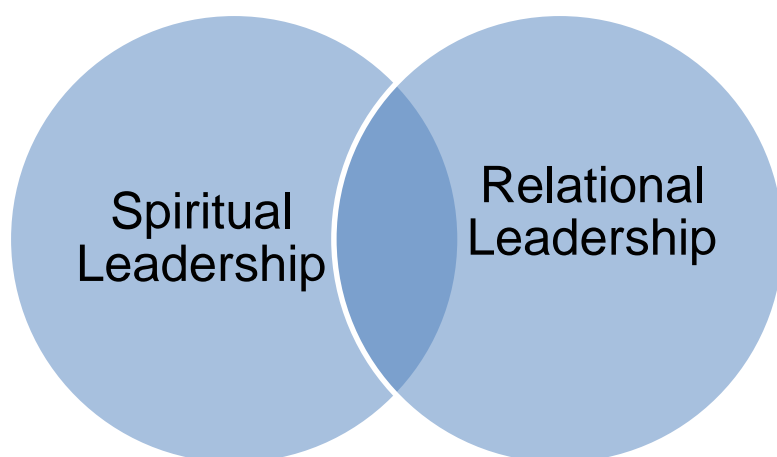
Where change was required in response to College-initiated decisions, middle leaders were consulted about the changes and encouraged to contribute to the suggested implementation plans (B 23 08 10; KLA 01 02 11; KLA 07 09 10; KLA 15 02 11). Middle leaders contributed to the implementation of change such as new timetable and curriculum regimes and implementation of boarding review recommendations through their queries and insights into implementation challenges. Issues raised in middle leader meetings were often referred back to College senior leaders for reconsideration.

Participants expressed willingness to modulate their leadership style, in order to fulfil their legislated and organisational responsibilities. Some were more confident to do this dependent on their personality style and their experience of the College culture (02023C-FG).

... at times there has to be, "No, this is what it is," and they need to understand that, but I think that's an important part as well. If you're always too *laissez-faire*, no one feels that you're actually leading, so it's the balance again. (09024O-I)

### **6.5.3 Summary About Implementation**

There were two major themes emerging from the data in response to Research Question 2. This is outlined in Figure 6.2. These styles of leadership were not mutually exclusive but operated together, with different emphases.



*Figure 6.2. Leadership styles emerging in response to Research Question Two.*

Spiritual Leadership provides a sense of direction for the present and the future, based on the legacy of the Marist Brothers. It is demonstrated in an emphasis on and priority for the students, and preferred being a good example as an operating behaviour. It is in hard work that this style of leadership is established and maintained.

Relational Leadership consists in middle leaders recognising their context in the structure of the College and how that influences their communication and responsibilities. Their Relational Leadership is characterised by openness and trust predicated on the Marist characteristics of simplicity, presence and family spirit.

## **6.6 Summary of Understandings**

This chapter identifies the new understandings related to the research questions. These are conceptually summarized in Figure 6.3. In this diagram, the new understandings are highlighted in relation to Culture, Charism, Ethos and Leadership. The Marcellin story and the Catholic faith community relate to the College culture and ethos. Spiritual Leadership and Relational Leadership relate to the College's leadership dimension.

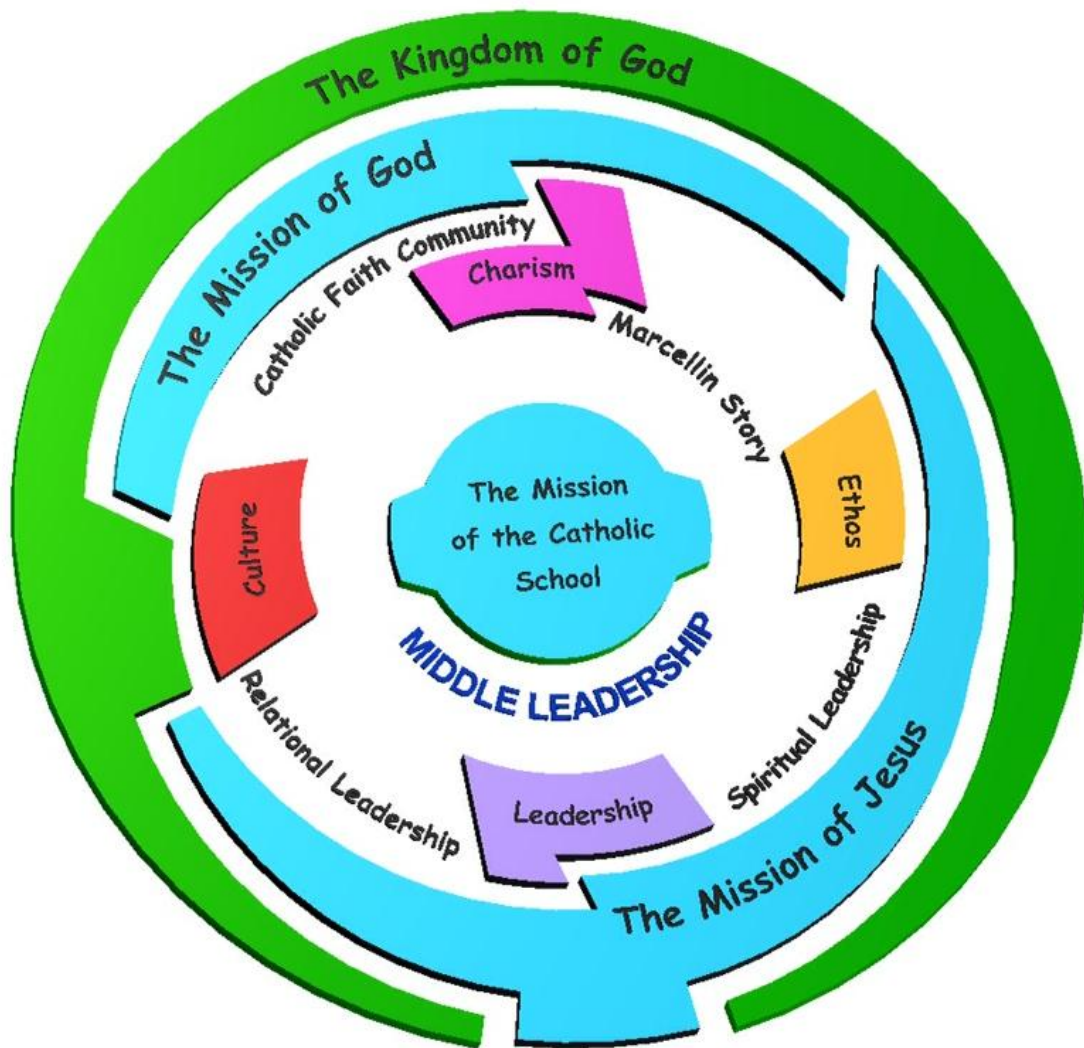


Figure 6.3. Concept map of themes from data analysis.

These understandings invite further discussion: in order to facilitate this, the understandings have been re-conceptualised into issues to facilitate discussion and synthesis.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **DISCUSSION OF THE NEW UNDERSTANDINGS**

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss selected new understandings outlined in the previous chapter and to synthesise these in order to generate some commentary as to how Champagnat College middle leaders understand and implement the Marist charism.

Table 7.1 outlines a framework developed from Chapter 6, which is generated and justified to structure the discussion of the understandings.

**Table 7.1. Summary of Issues to Be Discussed**

| Codes  | Themes and Origins  | Issue  |
|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Story: personal, different emphases over time. spirituality and tradition. Marcellin, learning story, formation</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Five characteristics of the Marist style (6.4.1)</li> <li>• Learning and supporting the Marcellin story (6.4.1)</li> </ul> | <p><b>Deep story (7.1)</b></p>                 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Catholic: Church teaching, respect, gospel, vocation</li> <li>• Students: stand with young, priority, educating for life, presence, "best for boys", relationship</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vocation (6.4.2)</li> <li>• Tensions in response to change (6.4.2)</li> </ul>  | <p><b>Identity: Catholic, Marist (7.2)</b></p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shared mission: love of work, notion of service, mentoring, constant modelling</li> <li>• Pastoral care: forgiveness, enabling, safety, student management, full potential</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pastoral care (6.5.1)</li> <li>• Passing on the charism (6.5.1)</li> </ul>   | <p><b>Authentic leadership (7.3)</b></p>       |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change: innovation, flexibility, contemporary, continuity, resistance, challenge, pressures, strategic planning, complexity, inevitable, communication</li> <li>• Trust: delegate, co-responsible, possibility, innovation</li> <li>• Inconsistencies: size of school vs charism, political resistance; bully culture, "for the boys", exclusion; harsh punishment, lack of courage, hypocrisy</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student-focused (6.5.2)</li> <li>• Managing "being in the middle" (6.5.2)</li> </ul>                                       | <p><b>Trust and sense-making (7.4)</b></p>     |

## 7.1 Deep Story

The first issue to be discussed is *deep story*, which is a metaphor for understanding the contemporary experience of a charism. In the context of the new understandings, the *deep story* is narrated as being a story about Marcellin Champagnat, the founder of the Marist Brothers. Champagnat College middle leaders understand the Marist charism in terms of the Marcellin story, which has continuity and relevance since the early nineteenth century. Some aspects are preferred over others and claims are made which invite further discussion.

### 7.1.1 Discourse of Distinctiveness

Middle leaders perceive that the way in which the Marcellin story was believed and lived out confers an exceptional quality on the College community:

... we're not just Marist, we don't show the charism only in what we do but it's in who we are. Because that's what separates us from any other Catholic school in the valley. (09021C-FG).

for me, it's a distinct thing, it's a Marist thing and I think it's important that that is carried through in a Marist school. (02023C-FG)

These perceptions of distinctiveness align with the literature which identifies charism as a “special character” or “brand” which confers a distinctive identity on a school (Cook, 2010, pp. 3, 6). Those who had been teaching at Champagnat College for ten years or more, or who had not taught at another Catholic school expressed the conviction that Champagnat College was a school like no other in its practice of positive values.

In contrast, more recently employed teachers communicated that they did not believe that the Marist charism was distinctive as they had experienced the benefits of a coherent school ethos at other schools. Values such as respect and patience,

particularly the former, were identified as being a hallmark of Champagnat College and other faith-based schools. This enabled teachers to feel comfortable about their fit within a range of schools.

I have my own personal beliefs around how you display your personal values and spirituality to other people and I, in my opinion, irrespective of whether we're in a Marist school or a St Joseph's school, or whether we're across the road at St X, I think that they all fit in very similarly ... I always try very hard to display the values that I think are important to the children and to the people that I work with. Now incidentally, I think that fits in with most of the things in any school that I've been in. If you look at them all, they might be – “marketed” is a crude word but put under the different things: Marist is these values and , you know, the Sisters of Mercy are these values and the Sisters of Charity are these [*sic*] version but a lot of the things are quite similar in their values and that's how I see ... it ... (23021O-FG)

In discussing the distinctiveness of the Marist charism, it was noted that the College's practice of corporal punishment some years earlier, had been antithetical to the current presentation of the Marist charism:

... when I left [name of Christian Brothers school], we had banned corporal punishment for four or five years before I came here but when I came here, they were still dealing it out in the classroom. I was in a state of shock. (23022P-FG)

Those who perceived the Marist charism as being distinctive, portrayed themselves as moral people who found in the ethos and culture of the College supported their ethical stance: “...a lot of the charism of Marist is being present. And that just fits naturally with me (23021O-FG).” This, in turn, created a sense of comfort in the physical and professional environment (Green, 1997a; Hilton, 1998). Comfort on its own might not be a guarantee of authenticity. The story of Marcellin Champagnat's life is only part of the primary myth within the deep story of the charism. There are dangers of separating widely-held moral values or the sense of comfort experienced



by those working within a charismatic culture, from the deep story of the charism such that the deep story would lose its authentic link with the charism.

The disparity of perspective regarding distinctiveness is the first indicator of the subjectivity around the deep story. This subjectivity is not the sole preserve of lay Marists:

I went to one school, and there was a nice Marist feel in the school. And I said to one of the lay ... an assistant teacher to one of the teachers, I said, Did Brother *So and So* talk much about Marcellin Champagnat?" And he didn't have to – he walked like him. They just saw in that Brother ... that there was a Champagnat feel about him ... "he walked like him". (MB3-FG)

Another indicator of the constructedness of the deep story is the way in which an aspect of the *story* can be omitted or glossed over.

### **7.1.2 In the Way of Mary**

The five characteristics of a Marist style—simplicity, presence, family spirit, love of work, and in the way of Mary—are generally understood to be descriptors of the charism at Champagnat College (IMEC, 1998). The understandings indicate a consciousness of all of these, though “in the way of Mary” was referred to only once. Participants readily identified with simplicity, presence, family spirit and love of work, but “in the way of Mary” was not referred to as much as the other characteristics were. Marcellin Champagnat’s devotion to Mary is clear, naming Mary as “Good Mother” and “Ordinary Resource”, the latter term reflecting his confidence that Mary, could be petitioned for necessities and that she would provide (IMEC, 1998, p. 26). Middle leaders did not demonstrate this kind of devotion and recourse to Mary. They did not directly reference Mary or Jesus.

Reference to Mary was by way of the word, “Marial”, used to describe an appropriate submission or resignation to a change initiated by senior leaders: “And then you’ve got to defend the decisions down through layers and you think, ‘I’m not a 100% behind this but we’ve got to do the Marial thing and be supportive’ – that’s a

challenge” (09028P-FG). This is an instance where Mary was a model for a middle leader’s response to change. Apart from this reference, however, it was not apparent that recognition of, and devotion to, Mary was influencing either the understandings or actions of middle leaders.

The reason for this was not clear but there may be a difference in geographical and cultural contexts such that being an employee in an Australian Catholic school in the early twenty-first century is far removed from being a priest in the particularly Marian region around Lyon, France in the nineteenth century. Further, it may be that reference to Mary should be rare compared with a focus on Christ and the gospel (Green, 2012a).

There was also no explicit reference to the gospel, the holy family, nor the Catholic Church. This was also observed by Green (1997a) and will be elaborated further in the discussion of Catholic identity following. Marian devotion has been a durable mode of Catholic piety. Most reported visions of Mary, mother of Jesus, have been in Europe and the insights gained from those who have witnessed these have related to world and church issues of that time (Ryan, 1993; Shinnors, 1989). While the emphasis on the Marian way provides feminine nuances to the foundation story, contemporary recourse to this tradition may not be natural for Champagnat College middle leaders.

A contemporary Champagnat story with scant explicit reference to Mary is a story with a male tenor, without the feminine influence that an incorporation of the Marian influences might bring. While teachers celebrate that the boys in their care are developing “strong minds and gentle hearts” (McMahon, 1988), Mary, the traditional influencer of this, is not being overtly referenced by middle leaders. Honouring of Marian tradition is nurtured through statues of Mary and is included in the College Strategic Plan, and ceremonial events such as masses and assemblies. Marian devotion is not as evident in middle leader operational discourse, although does occur in prayer at the commencement of a meeting (SP; HoH-all).

While the Marian influence was identified and experienced powerfully by the founder and the first group of Brothers, how this is practically nurtured by contemporary Marists lacks substantiation. "To live Marist spirituality ... is to revive our first love, to renew our commitment to Jesus in the style of Mary" (Turu, et al., 2009, p. 72). The honouring of Mary within the College through liturgies and prayers may allow capacity for leaders to effectively carry out their role in the context of the Marist charism (Byrne, 1999), although it is preferable for a Marian approach to ministry to be practised and evident (Hall, 2010). In the absence of an explicitly Marian discourse and approach, it can be argued that Marist educator practice might not be authentically "Marist" and may be limiting the affirmation of the human person (Johnson, 2008). "When Mary takes her place in the symbolic ordering of reality, we too may take ours. Whether we are women or men" (Byrne, 1999, p. 122).

### **7.1.3 Authenticity of the Deep Story**

Notwithstanding that the middle leaders strongly preferenced the Marcellin story within the deep story of the charism, their understandings of the life of Marcellin inspire them to undertake the missional work of the Catholic school.

In the time between Marcellin's death and the early twenty-first century, the Marist project, inspired by Marcellin Champagnat, has continued through vowed Marist Brothers and increasing numbers of lay people. The transmission of the charism, and the formation of Brothers and lay persons in the charism, requires resort to a deep story which is framed by the contemporary world. Unless the deep story makes an effective connection with the contemporary context, it may be perceived as irrelevant and risks extinction (Eke, 2006). The continuity and efficacy of the charism is also at risk if the charismatic story is only partially comprehended and retold. Lay staff make connection to the Marcellin story through the elements which connect with their experience. To this extent, they may "catch" the charism, even though the story might be fragmented or distorted (Green, 2000). Effective, continuing formation, integrated into daily life, is the means of preventing this fragmentation and contributes to the renewal of the Church (Green, 2000; Marist Ministries Office, 2010).

Champagnat College middle leaders' work ethic, simple piety and commitment to the young are touchstones of charismatic authenticity. Marcellin Champagnat's industriousness and resourcefulness are mirrored in the leaders' attitudes and actions.

... I just see a job, and I see something that needs doing, and I do it. So it's done, or done to the best that I can do it. ... and that way, I suppose, it's—everything I do is open-ended, which puts enormous strain on the system, on me sometimes but you know, if it's worth doing at all, it's worth doing properly and—so I don't put boundaries on things. (16026O-I)

Just as Champagnat's faith impelled him to move forward with his vision, Champagnat College middle leaders' optimism equips them to move people beyond their current position.

People can see changes as more roadblocks. ... I prefer to think of them as challenges if I can. Some of them are larger than others. ... but I think that the foundations of the Marist charism ... [are quite solid]. (09024O-I)

Leaders' lack of pretension reflects the Marist charism's simplicity. They do not wish to have delusions about their own merit and lead others with a humble spirituality which fosters relationships.

... reflect on how I operate ... ask yourself the question, "Am I being a good Marist person in the way that I approach things?" There's more paperwork involved but it doesn't change the way we interact with each other or interact with our students. (02021C-I)

The focus on the needs of the young is a present, daily reality at Champagnat College. It has deep roots in the College culture. Middle leaders, whether educators or focused on supporting the College in non-educational areas, accept that the students are the key focus of operation and their welfare and formation is the College's objective: "the whole idea of Presence, you know, staff being there for the boys and whatever, has struck me (16022C-FG)".

... “let’s try the new things,” because this is what the founder of the school really wanted. So for me, this is how I relate. This is my responsibility to try for the boys, to introduce innovation. (16025C-FG)

The authenticity of the deep story protects it from being overwritten by a narrative of privilege and heritage which may be associated with schools (Braniff, 2006) although the areas of identified inconsistency in the College reinforce the possibility of adopting a different dominant narrative.

#### **7.1.4 Formation**

The formation of lay staff and of leaders in particular, is critical in the transition from Religious to lay leadership in Catholic schools (Green, 2000). The importance of example is clear, and middle leaders seek opportunities to learn with others. Preferred learning styles vary but the “caught” (learning from others’ example) and “taught” (attending a seminar or program) aspects are equally valued (Green, 2000). The challenge of maintaining the authenticity of the charism warrants specific and sustained formation (Arbuckle, 2006) and middle leaders approve a range of learning modes (09024O-I; 16026O-I; 02025C-I). Middle leaders’ capacity to reference the deep story reflects the effectiveness of the teaching about the Marist charism and their moral perspectives and behaviours are influenced by both example and their understandings of the charism.

Marist Schools Australia now includes formation seminars for leaders in their suite of programs. Formation for leaders, as distinct from teachers and administrative staff, is necessary for supporting them to exemplify and articulate the story in ways which consolidate the College formation process (Duignan, 2002). As the middle leaders did not identify a connection with Mary as integral to their understanding of the Marist charism, it may be that this is an area for particular focus, but within a critique of where Marian devotion may relevantly connect with the life of a Marist educator in the twenty-first century. Middle leaders are engaging with the contemporary world and the culture of the school is to assist them in doing this credibly (Cullinane, 2007). Unless the deep story is connected with the foundational story and the founder’s intuitions, it may be only a construct of the hearers, utilised to justify actions and

“brand” the organisation, but without its power to connect people to the charism (Cook, 2010). This can be achieved through “formation of the heart” which is a necessary element for development of Catholic schools (Congregation for Catholic Education, 2007).

The second issue for discussion is the Catholic identity of staff and school.

## **7.2 Identity: Catholic, Marist**

### **7.2.1 Definition of Catholic, Marist identity**

Champagnat College middle leaders identify as “Marist” though not explicitly as “Catholic”. While the Marist Brothers are “Catholic” by definition, the Catholic identity of middle leaders is not indicated. References were made to the story of the founder and the values such as respect (16021C-FG), humility (16029S-I) and community (09022P-I) but there was little reference to the Catholic Church apart from one participant’s comment that the College, rather than her parish, is her spiritual home (09022P-I). The vision of the Catholic school is reliant on committed Catholics exercising their vocation to form students into the Catholic faith (CCE 1988; CCE 1997; CCE, 2007; Rymarz, 2010).

Catholic schools depend on their staff to express commitment to their faith, conscious and active in the mission of the Catholic school (Rymarz, 2010). All who are baptised are expected to be part of the Church’s mission and the laity is well-positioned to engage with others in the contemporary age, being conscious of the “signs of the times” (Congregation for Catholic Education, 2007; Rymarz, n.d.). In the past, the work of mission might have been considered to be the preserve of religious but Church documents affirm that mission is to embrace all the baptised. Lay staff members have the opportunity of finding their vocation in the mission of the God (Bevans, 2010).

The participants in this study consisted of baptised Catholics, those baptised into other faiths and possibly those not baptised and/or identified with a particular religion. Leaders who were not baptised Catholics did not demonstrate understanding of,

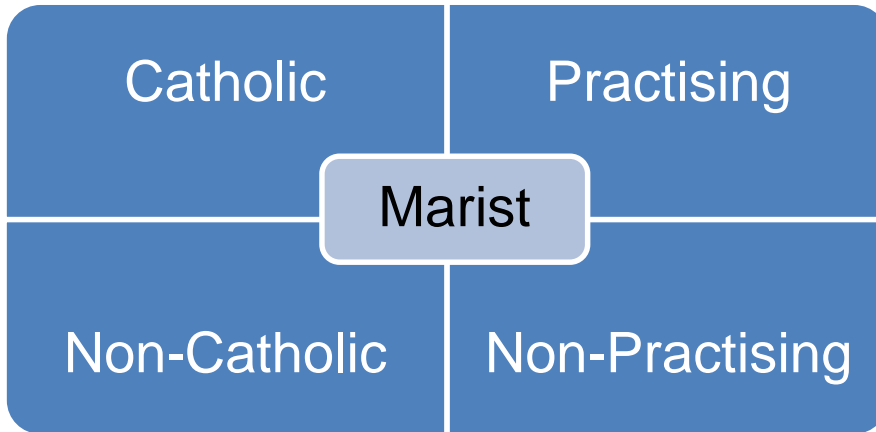
and commitment to the Marist charism in a way different from the Catholic leaders. In this way, charismatic identity obviates Catholic or Christian identity (Hilton, 1998). If the expectation is that Catholic school staff's religious commitment shapes their lives, it is probable that the Catholic identity of a school could be more effectively underwritten by people of active faith (even non-Catholic faith) rather than Catholic staff who give either passive assent to Catholicism or are apathetic (Rymarz, 2010). This is contrary to the position that only Catholics are able to authentically work within a charism (Braniff, 2007). Middle leaders who practise their faith are able to effectively express and animate the charism. This is the case whether they profess a Catholic faith or another faith, as the mission of the Catholic school is related to the mission of Jesus, which finds its fulfilment in the Kingdom of God (Bevans, 2010).

This re-positions the definition of Catholic identity toward a focus on practice rather than understanding (or more specifically belief and sacramental status). While, from the Church's perspective it is optimal for middle leaders in Catholic schools to be practising Catholics, it is the practice of faith which should be prioritised over an inactive and unintegrated faith. Formation in and of itself cannot produce active Marists (Braniff, 2007; Rymarz, 2010). Productive formation depends on a practice of faith.

From this paradoxical redefinition of Catholic identity flows a possible redefinition of Marist identity, represented in the Figures 7.1, 7.2 and 7.3. It is accepted that there will be a combination of Catholics and non-Catholics working at Champagnat College. Within each category, some will be practising their faith and some may not. "Maristness", however, is not seen to be dependent on any of these states. This is in contradiction to the orthodox position whereby it is only Catholics who are able to fully exemplify the Marist charism. This study proposes that the practice of Christian faith be the ground within which the deep story of the Marist charism is expounded and develops.

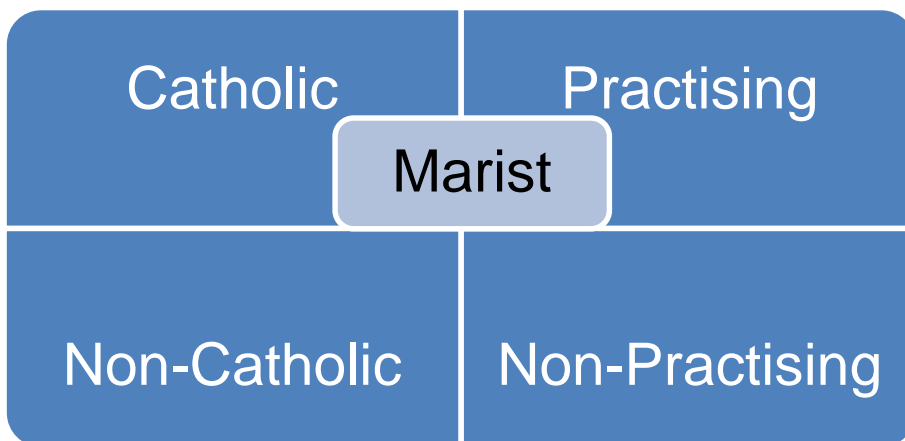
In Figure 7.1, Marist identity sits over and above whether middle leaders are Catholic or practising a Christian faith. The new understandings reflect the transcendence of charism over Catholicity (Hilton, 1998) and identify that middle

leaders do understand the Marist deep story, principally in terms of the life of Marcellin Champagnat.



*Figure 7.1. Lived experience.*

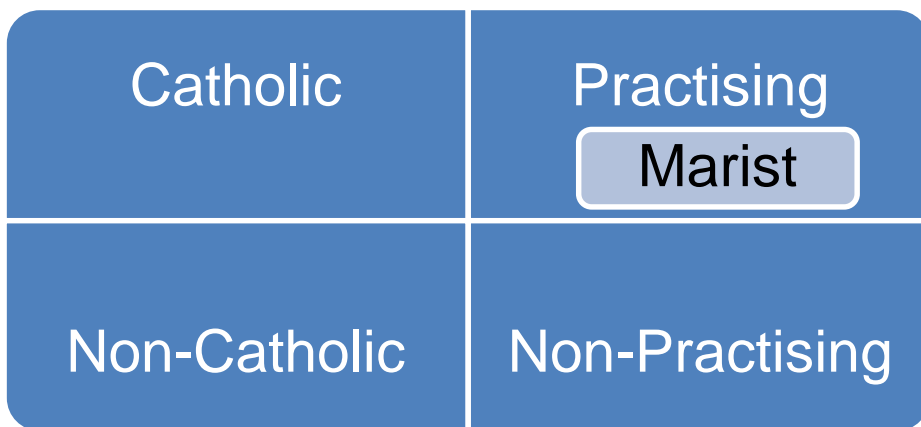
Figure 7.2 presents an orthodox view of Marist identity which is reliant on a Catholic faith, active in belief and service. “I would venture to suggest that no matter how many coats of Marist ... varnish are applied to non-Catholic or non-practising Catholic staff, they will not thereby be transformed into vibrantly Marist or Catholic role models for their students (Braniff, 2007, p. 34).



*Figure 7.2. Orthodox view of Marist identity.*

Figure 7.3 proposes a view of Marist identity which is located in practising Christian faith. “The Marist is someone who is centred on Christ” (Green, 2012a).





*Figure 7.3. Proposed view of Marist identity.*

While the proposed model might be regarded as paradoxical and heterodox, it may be comparable to the shift in thinking which took place in and after the Second Vatican Council regarding the involvement of lay people in the mission of the Church. While the doctrines underpinning of the role of the lay baptised were expounded in Church doctrinal documents, it was when the numbers of religious vocations diminished that this perspective was foregrounded (Bevans, n.d.; Rymarz, n.d.). The need for religious schools to demonstrate difference for reasons of Church and State may provide the context for the development of a theory of Catholic identity which includes those who are not baptised Catholics but whose faith might be characterised as “post-critical” (Pollefeyt & Bouwens, 2010; Rymarz, 2010). This would redefine the “locus of charism”, characterising it as the “means of accomplishing mission” irrespective of the sacramental status of the missionaries (Ranson, 2008).

The model above is also consistent with understandings of the Kingdom of God which transcends school and Church, relying on empowering relationships to bring about personal and collective transformation (O'Murchu, 2011).

### **7.2.2 New Tent**

A further aspect of this issue is the structure for mission and ministry. In developing structures to best meet the challenges of mission in the contemporary world, the mission of God, the Church and the Marist Institutes should be taken into account

(Bevans, 2010; Green, 2011b; Turu, et al., 2009; 09028P-FG). The vision is inclusive of persons and roles within a canonical structure and charismatic family, where all feel “at home” in their spiritual tent (Green, p. 44). This is a challenging project, given that the affirmation of lay ministry within the Church is relatively recent and may struggle to establish value in its own right rather than presenting as a strategy to overcome a shortage of religious vocations. The new understandings support the hope that lay people are seeing themselves as an intrinsic part of the Marist school. Middle leaders strongly identified with the Marist charism: “I’m Marist”, and we’ve got a real name for it (09028P-FG). Participants experienced affirmation when members of the general community identified them as “Marist” (02022C-FG, 09029C-FG; 09028P-FG). “Connectedness to other staff and to the boys, cemented by participation in mission activities, [which] enfranchise[d] all staff and students into participation in the Marist project” (RJ 09 03 11). This “charismatic circularity” (Lydon, 2010) consolidates the belonging of all those working in a Marist school.

Such structures take into account the true differences of formal commitment to the Religious Institute between those who may covenant for life, compared with those whose commitment is intentional due to an employment contract, which might be terminated at any time by the Institute or the employee (Schneiders, 2010). They should also include provision for continuing formation in the Catholic and Marist traditions so that the mission of the Institute remains clear and authentic to the life and vision of the founder. Middle leaders were energised by their contact with their young students and it is this Marist mission rather than formal membership or vows which attract and retain them in the Marist world. “People who embrace the particular strand of Marist spirituality that was introduced into the life of the Church by Marcellin and the first Brothers need to connect themselves either directly or vicariously, to this [Marist] mission” (Green, 2011b, p. 38).

### **7.2.3 Vocation and Evangelisation**

The embrace of all who “feel at home” and want to “feel at home” (Green, 2009a; Hilton, 1998) within the ministries of the Marist Brothers, is predicated on the hope that all will continue to be called to mission and evangelisation. This call to mission

is fundamental to the identity of the Church; furthermore, effective leadership is critical to the effective operation of this (Bevans, 2010; Duignan, 2003; "The Mission of the Redeemer," 1990). This vocation is distinct from a career and is necessary for the evangelisation of the young (IMEC, 1998).

Champagnat College middle leaders did reference vocation as a teacher, but with a particular orientation ("working with young people" 09022P-I). In referencing vocation as a teacher, they were giving additional commitment in a particular place: "It's something that you've been chosen for almost ... the vocation part of it is where the boys come in, the kids" (02024J-I). Vocation related to the work and fulfilment beyond what (only) a job could provide and it was centred on engagement with students. They rarely spoke of a vocation as a leader.

For some, the notion of vocation was foreign. This might not be crucial, but it does point to the absence of overt awareness and articulation of the mission and vision of the Catholic school (CCE, 1997). New structures of ministry are not sustainable if middle leaders do not sense a vocation to leadership (Gill, 2009). The vision of co-existence within appropriately designed juridic structures (Green, 2011) relies on both religious and lay sensing a vocation to lead in Marist mission.

A minority of participants reflected that their vocation had become attached to their leadership role now that they were in such a position—"my vocation has changed in the fact that I've become a pastoral leader" (09029P-I). Most did not project their awareness of leadership in the discussion about vocation. This suggests that the concepts of "vocation" and "evangelisation" need to be continually reframed within the Marist discourse.

If all educators are to understand their vocation to evangelisation, authentic leadership involving a cultural critique is required (Duignan, 2002; IMEC, 1998). At times, middle leader perceptions were open to being interpreted as devaluing leadership, due to the inevitable reduction in time with students.

"No, you're middle management—you shouldn't be doing that—you're too busy." For me it's important, because I want to get to know other kids beside

the kids that I'm ... But as I say, I don't know what the solution is but getting bigger in Admin, and there's more and more positions in the school that aren't teaching ... you know, I feel that's a bit un-Marist. I think that spending time with ... kids, like I say we've been having the same amount of kids here for the past twenty years but we've got a lot more people in roles that aren't actively involved with the kids. (02023C-FG)

While middle leaders did not identify leadership as their main focus, their behaviour modelled a commitment to College life, prioritising time with students. The focus on students is consistent with the call to evangelisation, however both effective leadership and good teaching contribute to evangelisation. Leadership of the College community involves a complex understanding of how students may be transformed and unequivocal commitment to the goal (Duignan, 2003).

### **7.3 Authentic Spiritual Leadership**

The third issue emerging from the new understandings is the need for Marist middle leaders to be capable of authentic and confident spiritual leadership. This involves connection with the gospel in addition to the charismatic deep story, and competent, capable leadership of staff and students.

The first of these elements is connection and sustenance from gospel, as well as Champagnat's life and ministry.

#### **7.3.1 Gospel Connection and Sustenance**

Middle leaders drew on the story of Champagnat to bring home a point or as a basis of reflection.

I met with the student today, who's a very angry teenager, ... and in talking to him and in talking about the Marist way, what Champagnat is truly about ... (09028P-FG)

Others acknowledged that they were implicitly reflecting on Champagnat but more explicitly using other means to evaluate the behaviours of others and themselves (09024O-I; 09029C-FG).

Just as there was little reference to the Marian tradition, there was also negligible reference to God, Jesus or other elements of the Christian tradition, when middle leaders commented on their understandings and approach to leadership (Green, 1997a). This may be due to a decontextualised understanding of Champagnat and the Marist Brothers. The early Brothers were focused on the gospel and Jesus, with references to Marcellin and Mary being emphasised less (Green, 2012a, *in press*). The reference to Marcellin Champagnat alone as a touchstone for spiritual leadership threatens to undermine Marist authenticity.

The section of Champagnat College middle leader role descriptions relating to spiritual leadership outlines appropriate responsibilities as follows:

- 3.1.1 Encouraging and supporting the Catholic and Marist culture of the College
- 3.1.2 Giving personal witness to Catholic and Marist values
- 3.1.3 Encouraging, facilitating and participating in the liturgical and celebratory life of the College
- 3.1.4 Supporting the Mission of the College
- 3.1.5 Modelling Gospel values of justice, reconciliation and hope
- 3.1.6 Ensuring that College policy and practice nurtures respect for difference in all its forms. (Head of Key Learning Area role description, revised 11 January 2012)

The interpretation of “Catholic and Marist culture” is critical to the understanding and application of these behaviours and it involves middle leaders taking a leading role in liturgical celebrations, and in living Gospel values.

Leaders reflected an understanding and practice of moral life, including presence and responsibility, which is indicative of leadership authenticity (Duignan, 2007),

though they did not express confidence in using the language of spiritual leadership. There was a preference for a pragmatic approach, possibly connected with the practical aspects of the Marcellin story.

I'm not a "24/7 sold my soul to the place". If another opportunity came along that interested me, I would pursue it, so it's not a vocation in the sense that I'm a Brother or a Nun or something like that, ... but it is a vocation in that I actually believe in what this place does ... (09029C-I)

If, however, Marist spirituality is "unambiguously mystical and affective" (Green, 2011a, p. 27), there is little evidence of the mystical in middle leader discourse, though the affective finds its place in the relationships with students and an emotional connection to the College. Leadership in a Catholic school may be characterised as "releasing the Spirit in organisational life" (Sultmann, 2011, p. 147). It is this process which enables the development of the Kingdom of God (Sultmann, 2011).

Formation of authentic and spiritual leaders may warrant improvement, but this is likely to be of limited value unless middle leaders hold and nurture a contemporary Christian faith (Braniff, 2007). It is a transformative faith in Christ, experienced by a critical mass of leaders, whose religious commitment shapes their lives, which has the capacity to preference the primary myths of gospel and the Kingdom of God, (Green, 2000; Rymarz, 2010). This is required for the Catholic and authentic Marist identity of the College to be maintained, regardless of other leadership functions being undertaken.

### **7.3.2 Leadership Identity and Capability**

Educational middle leaders, expressed a tension between what they perceived as their primary role compared with their leadership role. To the extent that they identified a vocation, it was most usually about engagement with students in the profession of teaching. They lamented the way that leadership distracted their focus on teaching and presence with students

... it's that relationship with people—the boys, the students—and also the relationships with them post-school ... in a middle management role and in a big school that's becoming more and more of a challenge for me. (02023C- FG)

A focus on the young, especially those who are marginalised is a key element of the Marist charism (IMEC, 1998). A commitment to, and desire to be with, young people is an imperative for effective Marist ministry and it appears that the kinds of staff drawn to work in this way may not aspire to leadership, given the consequential structural separation from students and other staff. While this may be reflective of an appropriate humility, it could also be a product of an inadequate understanding of Catholic educational leadership. This may result in leaders who are not formed as leaders *per se*, as intentionality of both employer and employee is desirable (Duignan, 2003).

The Marist Brothers conduct formation programs for potential and incumbent leaders. These programs are centred on the topic of spiritual leadership. Capability-building for other aspects of leadership may be required to ensure that capable, confident leadership nurtured and that it is perceived by middle leaders, and by the College community, as being connected to the Marist passion for ministering to the young.

Effective distributed leadership is promoted within a “no blame” culture, and the Marist ethos, including a focus on forgiveness, is a nurturing environment wherein this culture develops (Laiken, 2003; Marist Brothers Sydney Province, 2007; Murphy, et al., 2009). This extends to not blaming oneself.

I walk in my own shoes and (you know) that's all you can do. (02025C-I)

... sometimes you have to admit where you may have done wrong. (09022P)

The “no blame” culture enables experimentation and innovation (Laiken, 2003), with the charism providing consistency and a future focus (Degenhardt, 2006; Dunne, 2008).

## **7.4 Trust and Sense-making**

This study portrays Champagnat College middle leaders as student-focused, and dealing with the pressures bedeviling middle leaders: pressures of time, role ambiguity and positioning. One of the particular areas of interest is the ethos of doing what is “best for the boys”.

### **7.4.1 Best for the Boys**

There are effective relationships between adults, students and adults and students at Champagnat College. Within College staff discourse is the principle that one should be doing what is “best for the boys”—that is, the students. This phrase links with the concept of the “best of everything for everyone ... ” which characterises the Kingdom of God (Groome, 2011). As such, it is affirming of the mission of the Catholic school and an appropriate element of the middle leader discourse.

The promotion of the students’ welfare is supported through the sense-making and trust (Seashore Louis, Mayrowetz, Smiley, & Murphy, 2009) exercised by middle leaders. Their sense-making, in an environment of trust, enables them to contribute to leadership within the College culture through interpreting the Marist charism in addition to leadership directions from senior leadership. The shared understandings which have evolved in the College culture are given effect through middle leader agency. Their “heedful action” (Weick & Roberts, 1993) is directed toward implementation their middle leader roles in a Marist school.

Although “best for the boys” was used helpfully in most contexts, it was perceived that this rationale was sometimes used inauthentically in order to justify decisions. In these instances, trust was put at risk. Some middle leaders expressed perplexity and frustration that those who had misused the concept were not held to account by the College.



and you're talking about ten – which boys are you talking about, you know? Like the whole issue of the fund-raising stuff, that was a perfect example: “we're doing it for the boys”. “No, you're doing it for ten boys who are all your sons.” (23021O-FG)

People not being held to account or a decision not being made necessarily in the best interests – or what would have been – in the best interest of the boys and rather, it was made because of a staff [member] that has created a deal of noise. (16028B-FG)

In the creation of a loving Marist community, discernment and accountability are important elements which should co-exist with trust and sense-making. It may be that those drawn to a mystical and affective charism (Green, 2011a) might not be confident in exercising a robust critique, based on ethical understandings grounded in the charism. The experience of these middle leaders is a reminder of the need for the integrity of the relational community to be maintained through judicious questioning and a patient discernment (Hall, 2010).

This issue also reveals the frustration of those who are “in the middle”. Middle leaders are often operationalising the decisions of others above. Impatience about some not being held to account is directed at College senior leadership, with the clear implication that by handling some situations in ways which are seen to perpetuate inauthenticity, the College senior leadership has not promoted “what is best for all—or at least most of—the boys” (23021O-FG). This may be an issue pointing to the possibility that College culture may be counteracting its ethos.

#### **7.4.2 Managing in the Middle**

The experience of Champagnat College middle leaders confirms that time pressures and the “middle” nature of the role are problematic (Brown, M. et al, 2000). As middle leadership capability and identity develop further, coordination—“planful alignment” (Leithwood, Day, et al., 2007)—the influence and strategic engagement of middle

leaders may mitigate these frustrations. Planful alignment may be referenced to strategic leadership tasks within the College but may also be considered as including alignment with the Marist charism. Middle leaders' alignment with the Marist charism, including the forgiveness indicative of a "no blame" culture, leverages the leadership function of Champagant College middle leadership. The coordination challenge is shared between middle leaders and senior leaders (CLT).

Middle leaders sense a high degree of trust placed in them by College senior leaders and this allows them some autonomy.

it's the trust that they have, that they've picked the right people for the job, and they don't need – like in other schools, where you have to go through all this protocol for them to OK everything, they have that trust because they possibly have seen the charism ... (16021C-FG)

They also experience trust from their staff:

The people who I work with the closest, the teaching staff, to get them onside and to build up trust, so that they think I know what I'm doing ... it actually worked out quite well, which was good. (16022C-FG)

Middle leaders were sense-making in this trusting environment, supported by the Marist charism, although some middle leaders felt the awkwardness of their position in relation to staff (0204J-FG). Not only do they "sense-make" for themselves, they sense-make for others.

Some leaders expected that they would have the power to implement innovation once they were in the leadership role. While this was the experience of some, others encountered the paradox of having less direct power by virtue of needing to work through others. This meant a realisation of "power with" and power "through" rather than "power over" (Smeed, Kimber, Millwater, & Ehrich, 2009) For some leaders, experience of their own success being contingent on others, was a challenging paradox (Dunlap & Goldman, 1991; Holden & Roberts, 2004) and required some

extended discussion and reflection to understand and intervene in situations where this was relevant (RJ 01 05 11).

While change processes may stretch the capacity of power and trust, middle leaders accepted that change was a normal part of their experience in a contemporary educational environment. In these contexts, autonomy served accountability but placed additional pressure on communication between senior leaders and middle leaders and middle leaders and their staff.

## **7.5 Summary**

There are four issues emerging from the new understandings of this study:

The deep story is the first issue. Some perceptions of the deep story are that it is distinctive but others see the values of the Marist charism as being those of other charismatic stories. The story of Marcellin Champagnat's life is the way in which middle leaders understand the Marist charism. This perception of the Marist charism excludes a focus Mary and does not connect explicitly with the gospel. A Marcellin story without reference to Mary, Jesus or the gospel risks inauthenticity. Formation, in diverse forms, may enable middle leaders to be reconnect with the foundational story, including Marcellin Champagnat's intuitions of Mary, Jesus and the gospel.

The second issue is Catholic, Marist identity. Champagnat College middle leaders saw themselves as "Marist" but rarely referenced the Catholic Church. Their behaviour was consistent with Catholic and Marist values but they identified most strongly as "Marist". A new model of Marist identity is proposed which identifies Marist identity with those who practising Christian faith. As new canonical structures are developed, the Marist identity of both religious and lay Marists is important in order that the membership is suitably inclusive while not diluting the integrity of the charism. Middle leaders who sense their vocation to leadership support the evangelisation of students.

Authentic spiritual leadership is the third issue. Champagnat College middle leaders are challenged to exercise spiritual leadership which will enable the passing on of the Marist charism. Spiritual leadership which is authentic and confident derives from a transformative Christian faith. Middle leaders are required to exercise spiritual leadership as part of their leadership role. Leader self-identity and capability, including the spiritual dimension, is crucial for the effective Marist mission.

Trust and sense-making is the fourth issue. Champagnat College middle leaders are critical interpreters of the Marist charism. They work together to translate the ethos of the College into daily actions. Notwithstanding the frustrations which they experience as part of being in middle leadership, they experience autonomy as leaders and exercise power in solidarity with their teams. They detect the inauthentic reference to the charism, which potentially breaches trust, and advocate for accountability.

This chapter discussed selected new understandings which were presented in Chapter Six. Figure 7.4 provides a conceptual view of this synthesis of understandings and commentary. These will be further considered in the next chapter and recommendations made.

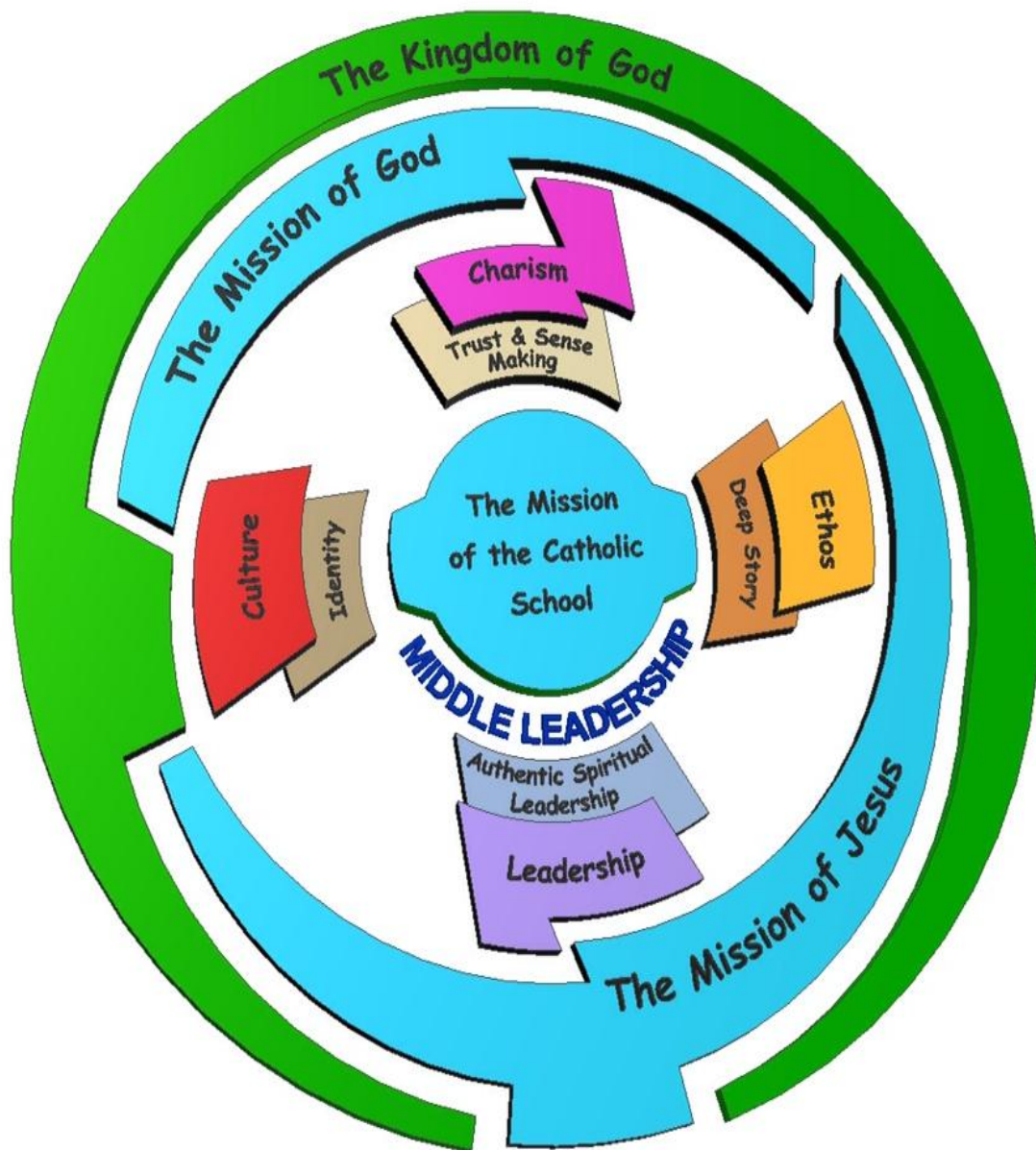


Figure 7.4. Conceptual view of the new understandings.

# **CHAPTER EIGHT**

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The purpose of this chapter is to present the conclusions and recommendations of the study.

### **8.1 Purpose of the Study**

This study explores the understandings and behaviours of middle leaders in a Marist College. In particular, it examines the ways in which the middle leaders understand the Marist charism and implement it in their daily work. The study focuses on the Marist identity of these leaders and the authenticity of the charism which they purport to reflect.

A review of the literature highlights the ethos and culture of a Marist school, and how the Marist charism is transmitted from the Marist Brothers to lay leaders working in a Marist college. The literature also outlines recent scholarship concerning shared or distributed leadership.

The research data confirm that the ethos and the culture of the College are influenced by the Marist charism through middle leaders. The research reveals that this is taking place in ways which might challenge Catholic and Marist orthodoxies but which point to the Kingdom of God.

### **8.2 Research Design**

The research design was focused by the following research questions:

1. How do Champagnat College middle leaders understand the Marist charism?
2. What understanding do Champagnat College middle leaders hold regarding how they implement the Marist charism?

An interpretive approach was used. A constructionist epistemology was employed as the study acknowledges the possible complexity of participant perspectives in a

specific social and historical context (Creswell, 2003). As this study focuses on the ways that individuals ascribe meaning to experience within their daily work setting, the lens of symbolic interactionism was used to underpin the interpretivist theoretical perspective. The symbolic interactionist perspective enables analysis of the individuals and their interaction with each other, with a focus on language and action. Language—a symbolic means of communication—represents and interprets reality (Charon, 2001).

As this is a study where the contextual conditions are likely to be relevant to the issues being explored, a case study methodology was appropriate (Yin, 2009). This methodology enables an in-depth exploration of the Champagnat College real world context, with a view to illuminating the research questions. Different kinds of middle leaders within the College site participated.

Participant selection was purposeful and the sample was non-probabilistic. Members of the Marist Brothers community and lay middle leaders whose position title includes the words “Head” or “Coordinator” were invited to participate. Middle leader participants were from different areas of the College such as boarding, curriculum, pastoral, junior school, services or other program areas.

Data-gathering strategies were:

- a) Focus groups;
- b) Semi-structured interviews;
- c) Document analysis; and
- d) Researcher reflective journal.

### **8.3 Limitations of the Research**

The research took place in a single school site among the middle leaders and some Marist Brothers located at the site and concerns the understandings and practice of middle leaders at the College. The aim of the case study is to illumine the experience of middle leaders in relation to the Marist charism and to understand how they engage with the charism as Marist educational leaders.

One perceived limitation of the study might be the case study methodology employed. While the case study methodology of the research study is open to doubts about generalisability (Yin, 2003), it does create a “thick description” of a context, allowing insights to be gained in a specific context. It is the researcher’s responsibility to report the case within the interpretivist theoretical perspective of the study (Neuman, 2006; Stake, 1994).

Case study methodology does not preclude nuanced application of the insights gained to other contexts (Guba, 1989; Pring, 2004; Stake, 1994; Wellington, 2000). Leaders in Marist schools—or of other schools—may decide that the findings and recommendations of this study are potentially relevant to their context, but that will be their decision rather than this researcher’s decision. Because the researcher and reader have access to the same knowledge base, there can be verification in the study through this transparency (Patton, 2002).

A further limitation of the study might be the relationship of the researcher to the study participants. The researcher is a member of the College leadership team but is not a direct manager of any of the participants. A co-researcher was available to potential participants if they had been more comfortable to interact with him in the data-gathering phase but no participant made a request. The researcher is responsible as a College employee and under the ethical considerations of the study to gather and analyse the data with integrity and with minimal bias. This responsibility and the different data gathering strategies mitigate researcher bias (Merriam, 1998)

## **8.4 Research questions Addressed**

This section addresses each of the research questions which focus the conduct of the research study.

### **8.4.1 Research Question One**

The first research question is:



## **How do Champagnat College middle leaders understand the Marist charism?**

Champagnat College middle leaders understood the Marist charism in terms of two main themes:

1. The Marcellin story
2. A Catholic faith community.

Each of these themes is addressed below.

The first theme is the story of Marcellin Champagnat. The story of St Marcellin's life, including his persistence, love for young people on the margins of society, his firmness and kindness and his love of work, particularly manual work, was an inspiration and model for middle leaders. Presence, family spirit, love of work and simplicity were identified by participants as being integral to the Marcellin story, but not the aspect of a Marist style of education related to Mary.

The second theme is a Catholic faith community. Champagnat College middle leaders see themselves as being in warm, supportive relationships with their colleagues and the students. The Marist charism is a shared spirit which unites colleagues in a spiritual family. This influences relationships with staff and students, providing a sense of belonging which assists middle leaders to transcend boundaries of time and role.

### **8.4.2 Research Question Two**

The second research question is:

**What understanding do Champagnat College middle leaders hold regarding how they implement the Marist charism?**

There are two leadership modes which characterise the ways in which Champagnat College Heads and Coordinators implement the Marist charism: Spiritual Leadership and Relational Leadership.

The first leadership mode is Spiritual Leadership. This style of leadership encompasses service to others, hard work, pastoral care of staff and students, being an example, and transmission of the charism. While some leaders do not use specifically religious or spiritual language when referring to their practices in this mode, the behaviours are driven by religious values and ethics, and are capable of being referenced to the Marist charism.

The second leadership mode is Relational Leadership. This involves specific prioritising of the students' welfare, operating as middle leaders, giving and receiving trust and implementing change. Within the College community, middle leaders act within the relationship matrix to discern and preference what is best for the students. They do this in recognition of their challenges "in the middle", seeking to build trust with those whom they lead and College senior leaders so that all can move forward together.

## **8.5 Conclusions of the Study**

### **8.5.1 Contributions to New Knowledge**

There are three conclusions from this study which contribute to new knowledge.

#### **8.5.1.1 *Charism embraced and fostered by "lay Marists"***

The first conclusion that contributes to new knowledge is that middle leaders have committed themselves to the deep story of the Marist charism. "Deep story" is a metaphor to describe the way in which a charism finds continuity throughout history, and how it binds members of a community together (Green, 2009b, Thompson, 1999). Given this, the "deep story" and "charism" are often used interchangeably. The shared deep story provides middle leaders with shared values in the College culture (Hilton, 1998). The Marist deep story is known and understood. It frames middle leader understandings of how they contribute to the College.

This research amplifies understandings of "deep story" by identifying its constructedness and content. It is a shared construction in its daily iterations by

Marist middle leaders. It preferences the Marcellin story and rarely mentions Mary or Jesus Christ. It is understood conceptually in terms of the five distinctive characteristics of a Marist style of education (IMEC, 1998). Middle leaders do not explicitly reference the Marist charism within the Catholic, or gospel, contexts. The charism exists, and is animated within, the middle leaders by virtue of the understandings shared in formal and informal interactions (Charon, 2001).

The presumed distinctiveness of the Marist charism is subject to the variety of perspectives among middle leaders and derives from this constructedness. The shared meaning is a powerful cultural integrator and creates cohesive links among the group. The meanings also create ethical reference points for individual middle leaders as they undertake their duties at the College and as they engage in non-work activities.

In the transition from a predominantly Marist Brother staffed and led College to a predominantly lay staffed and led College, it is apparent that the Marist charism is being understood, articulated and implemented on a daily basis. Middle leaders who are interpreters and brokers of College ethos and culture see themselves as being an integral part of this faith community, notwithstanding that they are not vowed religious. They are conscious of their opportunity to experience and nurture the charism in practical ways.

#### **8.5.1.2      *Catholic, Marist identity and the Kingdom of God***

The second conclusion which generates new knowledge is that middle leaders are capable of identifying with the Marist charism irrespective of their connection with the Catholic Church or belief in Jesus. This conclusion contributes to the research of Catholic identity and extends it to propose a new model of Catholic and Marist identity, based on the idea of “post-critical belief” (Pollefeyt & Bouwens, 2010). “Post-critical belief” includes recognition of a transcendent God and religious interpretation which is symbolic rather than literal. This characterisation transcends formal religious boundaries, allowing a redefinition of “Catholic” and Marist”.

This conclusion supports the assertion that “the mission has a Church” (Bevans, 2010). Through baptism, all Christians are caught up in the mission of God, which subsumes the mission of the Catholic school. Middle leaders did not perceive that the Church was an explicit mediator of their actions, and belief in Jesus was assumed. The charism motivated middle leaders to serve the Kingdom of God (O’Murchu, 2006), in a “companionship of empowerment” (Crossan, 1999). This changes the theological understandings of the relationship between the Catholic Church and the Catholic school and characterises charism as transcending institutional structures, and relating directly to the Divine.

## **8.5.2 Contributions to practice**

### **8.5.2.1 *Authentic spiritual leadership***

The first conclusion contributing to practice is that middle leaders lack confidence in exercising spiritual leadership of the Marist charism. While several sense a vocation with young people, they do not link their work as leaders with a vocation to leadership. Their leadership of the religious dimension of the College is largely influenced by their knowledge of the Marcellin story and their experience of being in Marist schools, and this may create distortions.

Formation specifically for middle leaders should be conducted on a regular basis to support authenticity of the Marist charism within the College (Duignan, 2003). This is relevant as leadership of Marist schools continues to be transferred to lay leaders (Abeles, 2008).

### **8.5.2.2 *Trust and sense-making***

The second conclusion from this study contributing to practice is middle leader trust and sense-making generates effective distributed leadership within the College. Their sense-making enables them to discern the ways in which the Marist charism applies in a variety of contexts and informs and actualises their leadership of staff. In interpreting the College ethos, they sense strongly the inconsistencies which arise when those who act counter to the charism are not held to account. There are times when justification of action implemented—or about to be implemented—are justified

as emanating from the Marist charism, when that is contestable. This is a cultural issue which may be addressed by fuller communication with middle leaders regarding College decisions and incorporation of middle leaders in both consultative and decisional distributed leadership (Harris, 2008). If the charism is important, then senior and middle leaders have a responsibility to ensure that the College reflects it authentically and transparently.

## **8.6 Recommendations**

The conclusions of this study suggest issues regarding challenges for middle leaders in Marist schools. The following recommendations address these issues and are directed towards the development of Marist middle leaders.

In terms of the embracing and fostering of the Marist charism (Sections 7.1 and 7.3), the research recommends the following:

1. That formation opportunities continue to be offered to middle leaders with a view to helping them engage with a Marist spirituality which may be adopted by them, and which may further support their commitment to the Marist charism (Sections 7.1.4 and 7.3).
2. That as new structures for Marist mission and ministry are established, Marist school middle leaders be actively encouraged to exercise full membership of these new structures (Sections 7.2.1, 7.2.2 and 7.2.3).

In terms of the deep story (Section 7.1), the research recommends the following:

3. That Marist Schools Australia review and reframe the relevance of Mary within the Marist charism and that this include a contextualisation of the Marcellin story with the story of the first Brothers community, the Jesus story and the Kingdom of God (Sections 7.1.1, 7.1.2, 7.1.3).

In terms of the relationship of the Catholic, Marist identity with the Kingdom of God (Section 7.2), the research recommends the following:

4. That senior staff of Marist schools develop a culture of post-critical Christian belief (Pollefeyt & Bouwens, 2010) to consolidate the Catholic and Marist identity of the school and that this culture be inclusive of all those who practise this belief, whether they are baptised Catholics or not (Sections 7.2.1 and 7.2.2).
5. That Marist Schools Australia conduct regular reviews of all leaders and schools from a mission perspective and including explicit reference to the vocation and responsibilities of school leaders (Sections 7.2.3 7.3.1, and 7.3.2).

In terms of authentic spiritual leadership (Section 7.3), the research recommends the following:

6. That the Marcellin story be interpreted utilising insights from the contemporary educational leadership scholarship, especially distributed leadership. This would build understandings and capability of middle leaders across the range of their responsibilities, but particularly in relation to their contribution to the religious dimension of the school (Sections 7.3.1 and 7.3.2).
7. That Marist Schools Australia provide (or sponsor through a tertiary educational institution) formal training in leadership for aspiring and current Marist educational leaders with the aim of increasing capability in all aspects of leadership, especially spiritual leadership. Such training would have an initial and ongoing component and aspects of it regarded as a desirable pre-requisite for applicants to vacant middle leadership positions (Sections 7.3.1, 7.3.2 and 7.4.2).

In terms of the need for trust and sense-making to develop a culture of discerning and accountable relationships (Section 7.4), the research recommends the following:

8. That Marist schools develop codes of conduct (and revise them where they currently exist) which reflect contemporary ethical understandings and which reference to relevant Marist publications (Section 7.4.1).

9. That there be initial and ongoing staff training in codes of conduct and that senior school leaders consciously reference them in their decisions and consultation with staff (Sections 7.4.1 and 7.4.2).

This research identifies characteristics of middle leader understanding and implementation of the Marist charism and offers some insights into middle leader contribution to Marist schools. In particular, it illustrates the understandings and commitment of lay staff to the charism and the positive way that they fulfil the trust placed in them to be “Marist”. Marist middle leader contribution is affirmed and the importance of distributed leadership highlighted in supporting authentic expression of the Marist charism in a contemporary educational context.

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# APPENDICES

## Appendix A: Focus Groups Questions

The following are anticipated probe questions. The direction of the focus group discussion will be determined by the respondents and their responses to the initial questions. The questions for the individual, in-depth interviews will be determined after the focus group interviews have taken place.

### Research Question 1

#### **How do Champagnat College middle leaders understand the Marist charism?**

1. Have you been satisfied in your work as a middle leader at the College/Marist Brother? In what ways?
2. What are some of the challenges of being a middle leader at the College/Marist Brother?
3. How is the Marist charism relevant to you?
4. What kinds of knowledge and understandings of the Marist charism do you need to have to operate effectively as a middle leader? How did you gain these?

### Research Question 2:

#### **What understanding do Champagnat College middle leaders hold regarding how they implement the Marist charism?**

5. How do you implement the Marist charism?
6. Identify behaviours, structures or activities in the College that appear inconsistent with the Marist charism
7. Reflect on your experience at other schools in which you have worked. Can you provide examples of how the Marist charism has made differences in your professional behaviour?

# Appendix B: Human Research Ethics Committee Approval



## Human Research Ethics Committee

### Committee Approval Form

**Principal Investigator/Supervisor:** Associate Professor Denis McLaughlin Brisbane Campus  
**Co-Investigators:**  
**Student Researcher:** Ms Jennifer Elvery Brisbane Campus

**Ethics approval has been granted for the following project:**  
Understanding and Implementing the Marist charism from the middle: the experience of middle leaders/managers in a Marist school. (Middle Leaders and Marist Charism)  
**for the period:** 11 November 2010 to 31 December 2011  
**Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) Register Number:** Q2010 53

The following standard conditions as stipulated in the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans* (2007) 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 participants

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: 11.11.2010  
(Research Services Officer, McAuley Campus)

## Appendix C: Information Letter to Participants

Australian Catholic University  
Brisbane Sydney Canberra Ballarat Melbourne



### INFORMATION LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS

**Title of Project**

Middle Leaders and Marist Charism

**Student Researcher**

Jennifer Elvery

**Principal Supervisor**

Assoc. Professor Denis McLaughlin

**Program**

Doctor of Education

Australian Catholic University Limited

ABN 15 050 192 660

Strathfield Campus (Mount Saint Mary)

25a Barker Road Strathfield

New South Wales 2135 Australia

Locked Bag 2002 Strathfield

New South Wales 2135 Australia

Telephone 02 9701 4000

Facsimile 02 9701 4292.

[www.acu.edu.au](http://www.acu.edu.au)

Dear Participant

You are invited to participate in a study of middle leaders/managers at this College. The purpose of the study is to explore how middle leaders/managers' at this College understand and implement the Marist charism. In order to do this, I (and a co-researcher, as appropriate) will be conducting some focus groups and interviews. In addition to these activities, I will be analyzing relevant College documents and using a reflective journal to capture my understanding of contexts and events during the data gathering period (likely to be Semester 1 2011).

The research aims to explore the ways in which middle leaders/managers at a Religious Institute School understand and implement the charism. I hope that the research findings will contribute to a deeper understanding of how middle leaders contribute to the ethos and culture of a school, especially through their spiritual leadership. New and more nuanced understandings of middle leader/manager work may influence the roles ascribed to middle leaders/managers and also impact on negotiations for salaries and conditions. I plan to present the findings of the research at an education conference, and also publish in some journals. For you personally, it is likely that the research will allow you to reflect and grow in understanding of how your daily practice is influenced by the Marist charism. College middle leaders may be able to use these insights to more effectively lead and manage within the Marist charism.

There are some risks for participants: these involve your vulnerability in sharing your perspectives with me, and your trust in my capacity to keep your responses confidential. In order to mitigate these risks, I have done the following:

- I have asked Conor Finn, Dean of Identity at St Joseph's College Gregory Terrace to be a Co-researcher if you would feel more comfortable working with him rather than me.
- Each focus group participant will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement so that perspectives shared in focus groups will not be aired around the College
- Each participant will be allocated a coded identity so that no data will be associated with real names
- Whenever I am relating to participants in the study as "researcher", I will always be explicit about this while the research project is continuing.

CRICOS registered provider:  
00004G, 00112C, 00873F, 00885B

Your involvement is entirely voluntary. If you do not wish to participate or withdraw participation, this will not disadvantage you in any way in relation to your employment at Marist College (if applicable) or with me (either as a Student Researcher or colleague). If you agree to participate, I would liaise with regarding time allocation for the focus group or interview. It is possible that you might not feel comfortable sharing your thoughts and feelings with me. In this case, a co-researcher, Conor Finn (Dean of Identity at St Joseph's College Gregory Terrace), has agreed to assist me, and you would be at liberty to request that he undertake the research pertaining to you.

There will be up to seven focus groups conducted. These focus groups will take place in the Religious Education Room adjacent to the Brothers' residences and also accessible to College staff. All focus groups will take place between 3.45pm and 4.45pm on Wednesdays during the first seven weeks of Term 1, 2011.

Ten interviewees will be selected from focus group participants; each interview will take up to 1 hour to conduct and interviewees will be able to check the resulting transcript. These interviews will be conducted in Weeks 8-11 plus the two vacation weeks, from 3.45pm-4.45pm on Mondays and Wednesdays in the Religious Education Room.

All data generated in focus groups and interviews will be reported in coded form and participants' identities will be protected. The gathered data will be stored securely by me and archived regularly during the data gathering process with my supervisor. Your information will be treated with absolute confidentiality.

Any questions regarding this project should be directed to me (ext 643; [elveryj@marash.qld.edu.au](mailto:elveryj@marash.qld.edu.au)), or my Supervisor:

Associate Professor Denis McLaughlin,  
phone 3623 7154  
School of Educational Leadership  
Australian Catholic University  
PO Box 456  
Virginia Queensland 4014

I am looking forward to sharing the results of this study with you at the conclusion of the research. I would like to make the results of this study available to any interested participant. In order to facilitate this, I will be preparing an Executive Summary for this purpose and will make it available to any participant if they wish to contact me by request to [jmelvery@gmail.com](mailto:jmelvery@gmail.com).

This research study has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at Australian Catholic University.

In the event that you have any complaint or concern, or if you have any query that I have not been able to satisfy, you may write to the Chair of the Human Research Ethics Committee care of the nearest branch of the Research Services Office.

Chair, HREC  
C/- Research Services  
Australian Catholic University  
Brisbane Campus  
PO Box 456  
Virginia QLD 4014  
Tel: 07 3623 7429 Fax: 07 3623 7328

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 should sign both copies of the Consent Form, retain one copy for your records and return the other copy to me or my Supervisor, Assoc Professor Denis McLaughlin (address above).



.....  
Supervisor



.....  
Student Researcher

## **Appendix D: Discussion of Validity Issues**

There was a strong, positive response in relation to most of the issues in this research study. It is acknowledged that this may be perceived as being over-optimistic. Critical friends alerted the researcher to this and the new understandings were provided to participants, who agreed with the general points being made.

The positive response from participants may be explained in the light of the research context. Staff at Champagnat College typically work there for several decades. It is not unusual for staff to be awarded service certificates for twenty years' service. Staff have received awards for forty years' service. Staff do not remain in a school if they are not content.

If Catholic schools are genuinely trying to embrace the gospel and there is some consistency between the gospel, policy and behaviours, there is likely to be relative happiness. The positive response by participants is, therefore, not unexpected.