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# Perceptions Regarding the Identity and Culture of a Lasallian Catholic Secondary School in Australia

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The University of San Francisco

PERCEPTIONS REGARDING THE IDENTITY AND CULTURE OF A LASALLIAN  
CATHOLIC SECONDARY SCHOOL IN AUSTRALIA

A Dissertation Presented  
to  
The Faculty of the School of Education  
Leadership Studies Department  
Catholic Educational Leadership Program

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements of the Degree  
Doctor of Education

by  
Adrian Watson FSC  
San Francisco  
October 26, 2011

THE UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

Dissertation Abstract

Perceptions Regarding the Identity and Culture of a Lasallian Catholic Secondary  
School

This 2010 qualitative case study explored the perceptions of administrators and teachers regarding the Lasallian Catholic identity and culture of St. John's College (a pseudonym), a secondary school located in Australia. Data collection occurred over a 10-week period primarily from the researcher's interviews with three administrators and 12 teachers, and supplemented by his observations of school events and analysis of school documents.

Overall, the participants in the study identified numerous characteristics of a Lasallian Catholic school, and perceived St. John's College as reflecting many of them. The observed school and faculty activities and the analyzed school documents validated their perceptions. Primarily, the humanistic characteristics of Lasallian Catholic education were generally recognized by participants to be operative at St John's College, and these traits included respectful and positive teacher-student relationships, a comprehensive academic program, high standards, a well-run school, social justice outreach programs, a commendable pastoral care program, and an affinity with the poor. However, the faculty made no reference to the salvific mission and its evangelical role of Lasallian Catholic education, although the administrators alluded to them. In general, the participants perceived St. John's College as being more Lasallian than Catholic, as the former was viewed as more inclusive of both non-practicing Catholic faculty and non-Catholic teachers. The study concluded that there were numerous elements, emanating

from internal and external sources, which prevented the Lasallian Catholic identity and culture of St. John's College from being fully realized relative to the principles and practices outlined in Church documents concerning Catholic education, the writings of St. John Baptist de Salle, and contributions from experts in the field. These factors included teachers who did not have an adequate understanding of, preparation in, and appreciation for, what fully comprises the identity and culture of Lasallian Catholic education; an increase in Catholic school families and Catholic school educators who are not affiliated with the local church due to the marginalization of religion in general, and the Church in particular, in Australian society; and the increased divergence between the educational aspirations of parents and students at St. John's and the mission of Lasallian Catholic education.

This dissertation, written under the direction of the candidate's dissertation committee and approved by members of the committee, has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty of the School of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education. The content and research methodologies presented in this work represent the work of the candidate alone.

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October 26, 2011  
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The De La Salle Christian Brothers of the District of San Francisco have been welcoming and supportive, especially the community of Brothers, clergy, and Lasallian Volunteers at Sacred Heart Cathedral Preparatory among whom I have lived for the past two and a half years.

My doctoral dissertation committee comprising Dr. Doreen Jones (Chairperson), Dr. Gini Shimabukuro, and Dr. Dan McPherson, has provided quality guidance and advice throughout the dissertation process. Dr. Doreen Jones, in particular, has been indefatigable in her efforts, meticulous in her corrections, and always encouraging and insightful. It has indeed been a privilege to have had her as my chair, and I owe her a huge debt of gratitude for the great amount of time and her untiring efforts on my behalf.

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The Board of Directors, principal, administrators and faculty at “St. John’s” College have been co-operative and helpful in every way possible during the time I spent at the College. I would like to especially thank the administrators and teachers who agreed to be participants in the research and shared their perceptions of Lasallian Catholic identity and culture of the school with me.

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## CHAPTER I

### THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

#### Statement of the Problem

##### *Lasallian Catholic Schools*

The identity and culture of Lasallian Catholic schools are based on the writings of St. John Baptist de La Salle (1720/1996), the founder of the De La Salle Christian Brothers, and the works of others who developed and adapted his ideas (Alpago, Comte, Gil, Meister, & Rummery, 2006; Lasallian National Secretariate, 1997; Lombaerts, 1998; Mann, 1990; Sanderl, 2004; The International Council for Lasallian Studies, 2005; Tidd, 2001, 2009a, 2009b; Van Grieken, 1999). Lasallian Catholic schools share an identity and culture with all other Catholic schools that have been shaped by the traditions and teachings of the Church (Pope John Paul II, 1990; Pope Leo XIII, 1885, 1887; Pope Pius XI, 1929; Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977, 1982, 1988, 1997, 2002, 2007; Vatican II, 1965a). The concepts of identity and culture are foundational for every Lasallian Catholic school since through them the mission of each school is realized (Nuzzi, 2002; O'Donnell, 2001).

##### *Contextual Factors Influencing Lasallian Catholic Schools in Australia*

Lasallian Catholic schools in Australia have been affected by ecclesial changes brought on by the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), the decrease in the number of De La Salle Christian Brothers involved in Lasallian Catholic schools, and the increase of lay involvement in administrative and teaching positions in Lasallian Catholic schools (Coughlan, 2009; Croke, 2007; Laffan, 2004; Mellor, 2005). Also, teachers and administrators in Lasallian Catholic schools in Australia have been confronted with a

marked rise in secularism (Croke; Laffan; Mellor; Pascoe, 2007). There has been an increasing number of non-Catholics and non-practicing Catholic teachers and students involved in Lasallian Catholic schools (Croke; Mellor; Pascoe). Collectively, these factors present challenges to fostering the identity and culture of Lasallian Catholic schools in Australia.

*The Need for Qualitative Research in Australian Catholic Schools*

In Australia, research on the identity and culture of Catholic secondary schools has been undertaken mainly through large-scale quantitative studies (Flynn, 1975, 1985, 1993; Flynn & Mok, 2000). While Flynn's and Flynn and Mok's longitudinal surveys have been informative, they are incomplete because of their quantitative design, which provides a breadth of data on Catholic education, but not a depth of understanding concerning Catholic school identity and culture. Patton (2002) wrote that quantitative methods enable researchers "to measure the reactions of a great many people to a limited set of questions, thus facilitating comparison and statistical aggregation of the data" (p. 14). However, Patton noted that qualitative research permits a depth of understanding because the approach is not constrained by pre-determined categories of analysis, and because participants have the opportunity to be frank and detailed in their responses. Numerous educational leaders and researchers (Croke, 2007; Flynn, 1993; Grace, 2002; Pascoe, 2007) have recommended that qualitative studies be undertaken to address the limitation of the large-scale quantitative research studies of Flynn and Flynn and Mok. For example, Grace, the director of the Centre for Research in Catholic Education at the London University Institute of Education, and a leading researcher on Catholic schools internationally, argued that qualitative research methods are required relative to



Australian Catholic schools so that “concepts such as school culture and identity could be more fully appreciated” (p. 98).

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this case study was to explore qualitatively the perceptions of administrators and teachers relative to the identity and culture of St. John’s College, a Lasallian Catholic secondary school in Australia. This study investigated primarily through interviews, and secondarily through observations and the analyses of documents, how administrators and teachers characterized the identity and culture of Lasallian Catholic schools in general, and St. John’s College in particular. This study considered how administrators and teachers perceived their role regarding the promotion of the Lasallian and Catholic identity and culture of St. John’s College. Lastly, it probed the perceptions of administrators and teachers regarding what has enhanced and challenged the Lasallian and Catholic identity and culture of their school.

### Background and Need for the Study

#### *The Nature and Purpose of Catholic Education*

In 1929, Pope Pius XI synthesized the major themes that had emerged in previous documents on Catholic education in the encyclical *On Christian Education*. This encyclical emphasized that parents were the primary educators of their children, and the responsibility of school administrators and teachers was to assist them in that role. Pope Pius XI perceived education as consisting “essentially in preparing man for what he must be and for what he must do here below, in order to attain the sublime end for which he was created . . .” (§ 7). This salvific, holistic, and communal character of Christian

education was identified by Vatican II (1965a) in the *Declaration on Christian Education* as follows:

That those who have been baptized, as they are gradually introduced to a knowledge of the mystery of salvation, become daily more appreciative of the gift of faith which they have received. . . . Thus, they should truly develop as persons . . . and make their contribution to the growth of the Mystical Body. Moreover, conscious of their vocation they should learn to give witness to the hope that is in them . . . and to promote the Christian concept of the world whereby the natural values, assimilated into the full understanding of humanity redeemed by Christ, may contribute to the good of society as a whole. (¶ 2)

The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education (SCCE) (1977), in its document, *The Catholic School*, placed more emphasis on the school's role in facilitating faith formation within its cultural and social contexts:

The specific mission of the Catholic school . . . is a critical, systematic transmission of culture in the light of faith and the bringing forth of the power of Christian virtue by the integration of culture with faith and of faith with living. (¶ 49)

In 1988, the SCCE described this educational process as “a genuine Christian journey to perfection” (¶ 18), one guided by a Christian outlook. More recently, Huber (2009) noted that throughout the centuries, the Church in its teachings and practices has affirmed that Catholic education is holistic, and that spiritual and religious development of students are integral components of any Catholic school curriculum. It was this strong and continuing belief in the value of Catholic education that led bishops, priests, religious congregations, and laity in Australia to establish Catholic schools.

#### *A Historical Overview of Catholic Education in Australia*

The historical development of Catholic education in Australia unfolds in three major stages. The first relates to the establishment of schools in the Australian colonies in the 1820s and the progressive secularization of schools during the period from 1872

through to 1895. The second focuses on the establishment of a Federal government in 1900 and the great increase in student enrollment from the end of World War II until 1965. The third concerns the beginnings of government funding of Catholic schools in the late 1960s and the contemporary issues facing Catholic education.

*The First Stage: 1820 – 1899*

The first Catholic schools in Australia were established in the 1820s, and together with other denominational schools, received funding from the colonial governments. Lay teachers staffed many of the earliest schools (Fogarty, 1957b). However, between 1872 and 1895, each colony enacted legislation decreeing that schools were to be free, compulsory, and secular, and that government funding for denominational schools was to stop. The Catholic bishops of the colonies responded to this legislation by stating that Catholic parents were obliged to send their children to Catholic schools unless given an exemption by their parish priest. For example, prior to the secularization of education in the colony of New South Wales in 1880, the Archbishop and Bishops (1879/1969) of the colony declared,

Let parents send their children, when of fit age, exclusively to Catholic schools. Let them regard all other schools as no places for their children, who have to learn before everything else to save their souls; and who should be sedulously prepared, by breathing a Catholic atmosphere, by living amidst Catholic teachers and companions, and by an exclusively Catholic training, for encountering the perils of the world into which they will eventually be thrown. (p. 396)

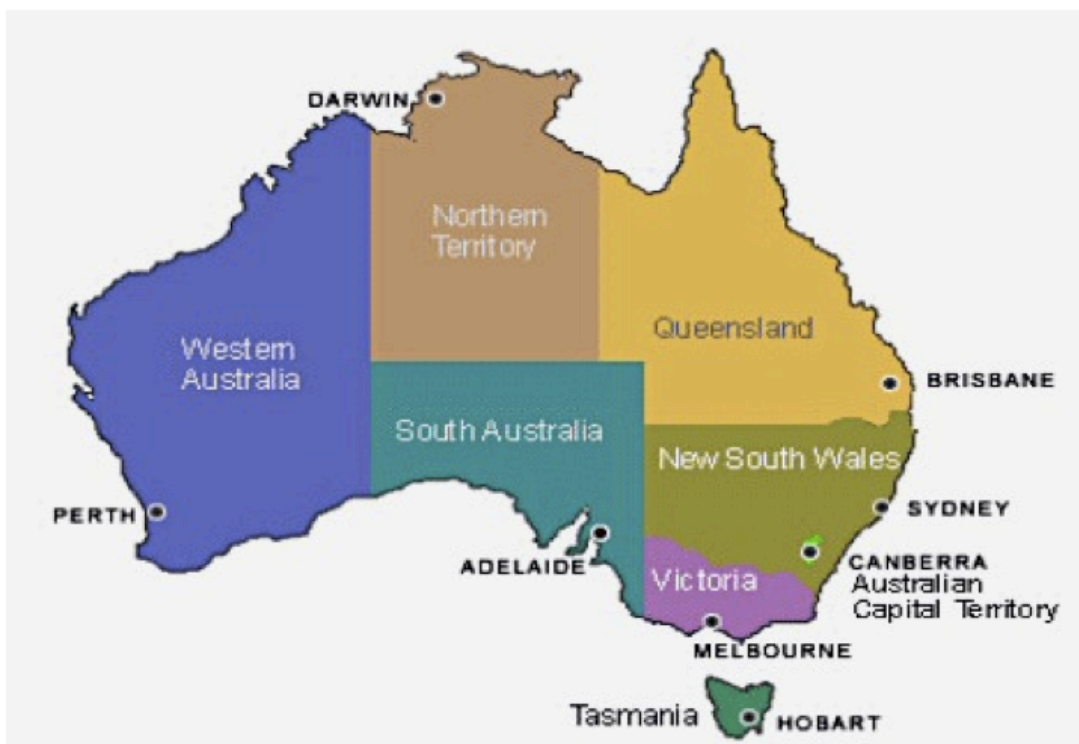
Flynn (1993) argued that the decision of the Catholic bishops of Australia to fund their own school system in the 1870s was based on the assumption that “the schools would make a difference, and that they would have a religious and educational influence on students over and above that of their families” (p. xii).

Religious congregations, primarily originating from Ireland and England, responded to the invitations of bishops to establish Catholic schools in Australia's developing colonies (Fogarty, 1957a). Lay teachers staffed the first Catholic schools established in Australia in 1820. The first religious congregation to establish schools in Australia were the Sisters of Charity in 1838, followed by the Sisters of Mercy in 1846, the Sisters of the Good Samaritan in 1861, the Sisters of the Presentation in 1866, and the Dominican Sisters in 1867. In the 1870s, when the Catholic bishops of Australia decided to operate Catholic schools without government funding, they appealed to the superiors of religious teaching congregations already present in Australia, as well as those abroad, such as the Sisters of Loreto and the Ursuline Sisters, to provide personnel to staff primary schools and girls' secondary schools. The Australian congregation, the Sisters of St. Joseph of the Sacred Heart (the Josephites), provided teachers for Catholic primary schools located in remote settlements, while religious congregations of men, such as the Jesuits, the Congregation of Christian Brothers, the Marist Brothers, and the Patrician Brothers, took on the responsibility of staffing boys' secondary schools and sometimes taught the older boys in primary schools.

*The Second Stage: 1900 – 1965*

In 1901, six colonies (New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania, Victoria, and Western Australia) formed the Commonwealth of Australia, and became known as states in the new Constitution. The Northern Territory was sparsely populated and its administration became a responsibility of the Federal government. A second territory, the Australian Capital Territory, was designated to be the location of the capital city of Australia, Canberra, in much the same way that Washington was located in the

District of Columbia. A map of the six States and two territories in Australia is shown in Figure 1. Under the 1901 Australian Constitution, education remained a state responsibility. Catholic schools continued to receive no funding from either Federal or state governments, despite calls from the bishops for some government assistance.



*Figure 1.* Map of Australia

Source: Department of Immigration and Citizenship, Australia

After World War II, Australian dioceses, parishes, and religious congregations struggled to provide financial resources and personnel for their schools. The post-World War II period was marked by a large increase in student enrollment due to massive immigration programs, the onset of the “baby boom,” and students remaining for additional years of schooling. During this period, lay teachers were employed in Catholic schools because there were insufficient members of religious congregations to administer

and staff the schools. In addition, school facilities became overcrowded and inadequate, especially during the 1950s (English, 2009). Luttrell (2009) observed that by the late 1950s, “Catholic schools were in crisis” (p. 9) because the Church could not meet the financial, personnel, or building requirements of a burgeoning Catholic school population. Luttrell exemplified this precarious state of Catholic education in the 1950s through reference to a 1957 report that stated, “482 classes in the Archdiocese [of Sydney] had more than 50 pupils (the state school limit); [and] there were 30 classes with more than 100 pupils” (p. 9).

#### *The Third Stage: 1966 – 2010*

Although education was a state government responsibility, it was the Australian Federal government that, from the 1940s, collected income tax and allocated it to the States for its various responsibilities, including education (Luttrell, 2009). The Federal government could also make direct grants to schools, and it was the Federal government that began giving grants to schools for science laboratories and libraries in the 1960s. The allocation of these grants followed a decision to close all six Catholic schools for six weeks in the New South Wales town of Goulburn, and to have all the students present themselves for enrollment at the local government schools. The government schools were in no position to accept all the students from Catholic schools, and the “strike” was called off a few days later. Changes in the policies of the major political parties regarding state aid were also possible due to a decrease in sectarian hostility following World War II, and the political agitation of Catholic lay people for funding for their schools.

An increase in funding from both the Federal and State governments in later decades has ensured, not only the survival, but also the growth and development of

Catholic schools throughout Australia. The funding received by New South Wales Catholic systemic schools (schools administered by diocesan Catholic Education Offices) provided an illustration of the extent of funding received by Catholic schools from Federal and State government sources. In New South Wales in 2009, approximately 72% of government funding came from the Federal government and 28% from the New South Wales state government (J. Kitney, personal communication, May 9, 2010).

The percentage of funding received from Federal and State government sources varies by State according to their respective policies. Table 1 provides an example of the increase in per capita funding received from Federal and State sources over the past 60 years.

Table 1

*Combined Federal and State Annual Funding per Student in Catholic Systemic Schools in New South Wales, 1959-2009 (in Australian Dollars)*

Year	K-6 Per Student	7-12 Per Student
1959	\$ 0	\$ 0
1969	\$ 27	\$ 36
1979	\$ 479	\$ 745
1989	\$1,568	\$2,390
1999	\$3,358	\$4,631
2009 (est)	\$6,719 (USD 6000)	\$8,595 (USD 7676)

Sources: Luttrell (2009) p. 25; J. Kitney (personal communication, May 10, 2010)

Note: The Australian currency has fluctuated considerably against the US dollar in the past 60 years, and comparable USD amounts are not available for years other than 2009.

In addition, grants totalling \$55 million (USD 49 million) were provided for capital works, targeted programs, and the provision of technology in schools. New South Wales Catholic systemic schools received an additional \$1 billion (USD 890 million) in grants

towards the construction of new school buildings and upgrading existing buildings in 2009 as their share of the Federal government's economic stimulus plan, "Building the Education Revolution."

The National Catholic Education Commission (NCEC) annual report for 2008 noted that Catholic schools educated over 696,000 students, an increase of more than 121,000 students since 1985. However, despite the growth in student numbers, the percentage of students in Australia taught in Catholic schools has remained relatively stable at about 20% of the total Australian student population for the past 40 years.

Pascoe (2007) described modern Catholic education in Australia as being

A system of schools with common values and principles, agreed distribution of funding within the system on the basis of need, geographic coverage across the continent, socio-economic coverage across income groups, and cultural coverage across most ethnic groups. (p. 792)

According to Pell (2007), three new factors have changed the nature of contemporary Australian Catholic schools. The first is the increasing number of non-Catholic students attending Catholic schools. The second is the increasing number of Catholic students attending non-Catholic private schools that Pell attributed to the desire for better academic standards and access to the "old boys" networks found in these schools. The third is a concern that Catholic schools are not catering to students from lower socio-economic groups. He reported that only 20% of Catholic students from families with the lowest third of family income (below USD 420 per week) are attending Catholic schools. Pell observed that Catholic schools "now cater for the huge Australian middle class, which they helped to create" (p. 843).

Australian Catholic educational authorities are concerned that Catholic schools are no longer serving the poor. This concern prompted Catholic authorities (Catholic



Education Commission of Victoria, 2004; Queensland Catholic Education Commission, 2009) to commission research to discover the reasons why poorer Catholic students were not attending Catholic schools and to seek suggestions on how to reverse the trend. The study completed for Victoria (Catholic Education Commission of Victoria, 2004) revealed that school fees were an obstacle to the enrollment of students from lower socio-economic groups, together with a reluctance of parents of poorer students to approach school authorities for a waiver or reduction of fees.

### *The Need for the Study*

Numerous researchers (Croke, 2007; Dwyer, 1998; Flynn, 1993; Grace & O'Keefe, 2007; Pascoe, 2007) have confirmed the need for further qualitative exploration regarding Catholic education in Australia. Croke, the Executive Director of the New South Wales Catholic Education Commission, noted that Australian Catholic schools are in a transition from “a lengthy preoccupation with seeking financial security from [State and Federal] governments . . . to a focus on quality and Catholicity” (p. 812). He observed that while Catholic schools in Australia were increasingly the site for research in areas such as literacy, mathematics, and vocational education by a wide range of organizations and individuals (Catholic Education Office Melbourne, 2010), “not a lot of this research is related to the fundamental purposes, character and operation of the Catholic school itself” (p. 830). In addition, Pascoe, the former Director of the Melbourne Catholic Education Office that administers Australia’s largest diocesan school system, identified Catholic identity as a priority for Catholic school systems and congregations. Her work suggested that there is a need to examine the value of documents and programs that express the identity and culture of a Catholic secondary

school, and how the expectations of administrators and teachers in relation to Catholic identity and culture are conveyed to teachers. Moreover, the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria (2009) has recently commissioned researchers from the Catholic University in Leuven, Belgium, to undertake a large-scale quantitative research project examining issues of identity in Catholic schools. The aim of the Leuven project is twofold: to assist schools in understanding how their Catholic identity is expressed in work and practice, and to support administrators and teachers in their future development of their schools' Catholic identity.

The Catholic identity of many Australian schools was influenced by the charism of the schools' founding religious congregation. When members of religious congregations were present in administrative or teaching roles in a school, they promoted the charism of their founder(s). However, there are now many Catholic schools in Australia where there are no members of a religious congregation present as administrators or teachers. In schools owned by a religious congregation, such as St. John's College, the site for this study, there is generally a requirement that the lay administrators and teachers in the school will foster the charism of the congregation. Hence, this case study sought to explore the perceptions of the administrators and teachers of St. John's College regarding the issues of Lasallian Catholic identity and culture within a secondary school.

## Conceptual Framework

### *Introduction*

The concepts of identity and culture, explored through the lens of organizational research in general, and through Lasallian Catholic education in particular, formed the

conceptual framework for this study. The terms, “identity” and “culture,” are often used interchangeably, and sometimes other terms such as “climate,” “ethos,” “character,” “image,” and “charism” are used in organizational, educational, and religious literature for the concepts of identity and culture (Albert & Whetten, 1985/2004; Denison, 1996; Glover & Coleman, 2005; Hatch & Schultz, 1997, 2000; Hoy, 1990; Schoen & Teddlie, 2008; Van Houtte, 2005). Their meanings relative to this study are operationalized in the following sections.

### *Identity*

Identity is addressed from its broadest meanings to its particular application relative to this study. This exploration of identity considers organizational identity, school identity, Catholic school identity, and Lasallian Catholic school identity.

#### *Organizational Identity*

The concept of identity in this study is based on the collective research of Albert and Whetten (1985/2004), Hatch and Schultz (1997, 2000, 2002, 2004), and Ashforth and Mael (2004). According to Albert and Whetten, organizational identity refers to the central, distinctive, and enduring features of an organization. It answers the question “Who are we?” Hatch and Schultz (2002) added that organizational identity involves self-examination. Members of an organization develop their identity in relation to what others say about them, but also in relation to their own perception. Ashforth and Mael posited that membership of an organization could provide an individual with a social identity in answer to the question “Who am I?”

### *School Identity*

Schools are organizations with unique identities. The identity of a school is expressed in multiple ways: its mission and vision statements, its curriculum, its uniform codes, its rules, and its buildings. In the literature relating to school identity, the terms “ethos” and “character” are more likely to be used rather than “identity” (Brick, 1999; T. McLaughlin, 1996, 1999, 2005). Donnelly (2000) observed that the ethos of a school may be prescribed by an external authority, such as a school board or district office, but that its expression may well be different from what is presented in official documents. He noted that the discontinuity between “who we say we are” and “who we really are” might lead to tensions and contradictions in the identity of the school.

### *Catholic School Identity*

There are complementary ways of viewing Catholic school identity. The Catholic school can gain its identity from its role in the evangelizing mission of the Church, or from its recognition as a legal entity within the Church. The SCCE (1997) document, *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium*, emphasized the role of the Catholic school as an instrument of the Church in its evangelizing mission:

The complexity of the modern world makes it all the more necessary to increase awareness of the ecclesial identity of the Catholic school. It is from its Catholic identity that the school derives its original characteristics and its "structure" as a genuine instrument of the Church, a place of real and specific pastoral ministry. The Catholic school participates in the evangelizing mission of the Church and is the privileged environment in which Christian education is carried out. In this way "Catholic schools are at once places of evangelization, of complete formation, of inculturation, of apprenticeship in a lively dialogue between young people of different religions and social backgrounds" (John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, n. 102). The ecclesial nature of the Catholic school, therefore, is written in the very heart of its identity as a teaching institution. (¶ 11)

Canonically, a school derives its Catholic identity from the local bishop's recognition of it as Catholic. This is outlined in the Code of Canon Law (1984):

A Catholic school is understood as one which a competent ecclesiastical authority or a public ecclesiastical juridic person directs or which ecclesiastical authority recognizes as such through a written document (Canon 803, §1). . . .

Even if it is in fact Catholic, no school is to bear the name Catholic school without the consent of competent ecclesiastical authority (Canon 803, §3).

### *Lasallian Catholic School Identity*

St. John Baptist de La Salle founded the De La Salle Christian Brothers “because he became aware, by God’s grace, of the human and spiritual distress of the children of the artisans and the poor” (Brothers of the Christian Schools, 2002, p. 23). A focus on the educational needs of the poor is at the heart of any Lasallian school. The Rule of the De La Salle Christian Brothers (2002) stated that

By virtue of their mission, the Brothers establish schools and cooperate in creating educational communities inspired by the vision of St. John Baptist de La Salle.

The educational policies of Lasallian institutions are centred on the young, adapted to the times in which they live, and designed to prepare them to take their place in society. These institutions are characterised by the determination to make the means of salvation available to young people through a quality education and by an explicit proclamation of Jesus Christ. (¶ 13)

Prior to Vatican II, a Lasallian Catholic school was clearly one that had administrators and teachers who were members of the De La Salle Christian Brothers religious congregation, and who modelled the charism of St. John Baptist de La Salle in words and action. However, since Vatican II (1962-1965), lay teachers have replaced De La Salle Christian Brothers in most administrative and teaching positions in Lasallian Catholic secondary schools. This shift is due to the decrease in the number of De La Salle Christian Brothers available for administration and teaching positions in Catholic

schools, as well as a philosophical change by the Church and the De La Salle Christian Brothers on the role of the laity in the Church and its schools.

Price (2003) posited that prior to Vatican II, the laity were viewed as subjects of the Church's ministration, rather than full sharers in its mission and life. Vatican II (1965b), in its *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity*, signalled a philosophical change regarding the role of the laity when it recognized that "modern conditions demand that the [laity's] apostolate be broadened and intensified" (§ 1). The important role of the laity is acknowledged and encouraged by the SCCE in its 1982 document, *Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith* and its 2007 document, *Educating Together in Catholic Schools: A Shared Mission Between Consecrated Persons and the Lay Faithful*.

After the 1966 General Chapter, the De La Salle Christian Brothers changed the role of the laity in their schools. Prior to the 1966 General Chapter, lay teachers seldom held administrative positions in Lasallian schools and were generally excluded from decision-making. The 1956 General Chapter had recognized lay teachers as "associates," a move that Tidd (2001) described "was, in retrospect, a mere inkling of what would become an epochal shift in the Institute's thinking about association just over 40 years in the future" (p. 27). The participants of the 1993 General Chapter (Brothers of the Christian Schools, 1993) proposed that "the modest subtitle 'A Shared Mission' in article 17 of the Rule is now seen as the bold title of a new chapter in the history of the Institute [such] that a way of looking upon ourselves as the only authorised agents of the Institute's mission is obsolete" (p. 8).

In 2010, Lasallian Catholic schools can be found in over 80 countries. The unique identity of each school is shaped by the widely varying educational, ecclesiastical,

cultural, and social contexts in which it operates. In Australia, there is a common preamble to the constitutions of each of the four schools owned and administered by the De La Salle Christian Brothers. The preamble (De La Salle Provincial Office, 2004) states that the school is a Catholic school committed to a Lasallian vision of education which is characterized by

- an ethos which takes its inspiration from the person of Jesus Christ and the values of the gospel as expressed in the traditions and teachings of the Catholic Church;
- a recognition of God's presence in the school and in all those associated with it;
- a curriculum which is overtly religious, emphasises excellence in all its dimensions, and is inclusive, student centred, planned, practical and contemporary, with a special concern for the poor and the marginalized;
- structures and relationships which reflect the understanding that faculty are as *brothers and sisters to one another*, and *older brothers and sisters* to their students, while their students are *brothers and sisters* to each other;
- a continuing effort to build a spirit of community among all those associated with the school;
- systems and structures to ensure outcomes of the highest professional standards;
- [faculty] who demonstrate a high level of commitment to the Lasallian educational philosophy and spirituality;
- a demonstrated fidelity to the story, educational philosophy and spirituality of St. John Baptist de La Salle. (p. 5)

### *Culture*

Culture is addressed from its broadest meanings to its particular application relative to this study. This exploration of culture considers organizational culture, school culture, Catholic school culture, and Lasallian Catholic secondary school culture.

#### *Organizational Culture*

The concept of organizational culture utilized in this study is based on the seminal ideas of Schein (1983, 1984, 1985, 1992, 1993, 2004). Deal (1993), and Deal and Peterson (1990, 1993, 1999), mutually and systematically applied Schein's theories to

school culture. While there are many different conceptions of culture, Schein's (2004) operational definition of culture served as the operational definition for this study.

According to Schein, culture is

a pattern of shared basic assumptions that was learned as a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems. (p. 17)

Schein argued that culture did not exist unless there was a specific group that "owned" it. The group had to have been together long enough to have shared significant problems, to have solved those problems and observed the effects of their solutions, and to have taken in new members. Schein postulated that the strength of the culture depended on the homogeneity and stability of the group, and the length and intensity of its shared experience. Schein (1984) suggested that there were four approaches that should be used in gathering data to decipher this cultural paradigm. They are:

1. analyzing the process and content of the socialization of new members
2. analyzing responses to critical incidents in the organization's history
3. analyzing the beliefs, values, and assumptions of 'culture creators or carriers' [and]
4. jointly exploring and analysing with insiders the anomalies or puzzling features observed or uncovered in interviews. (p. 13)

Schein also noted that the founders of any organization are very important in the formation of an organization's culture. He maintained that the underlying assumptions of the culture from which the founders of an organization come will determine to a large extent the core mission, goals, means, criteria, and strategies of the group, but that these features may be modified over time.



### *School Culture*

Deal (1993), and Deal and Peterson (1990, 1999, 2009), applied the concepts of organizational culture to schools. Deal and Peterson (2009) defined school culture as consisting of “the stable, underlying social meanings that shape beliefs and behavior over time” (p. 6). They argued that the culture of a school was expressed through its artifacts, architecture, routines, history, myths, vision, values, stories, rituals, and traditions.

Sergiovanni (1993) recognized that a school’s culture emerged from its identity which he called its institutional character. He wrote:

Institutional character [identity] is reflected in the institution’s culture. Schools with character have unique cultures. They know who they are and have developed a common understanding of their purposes. They celebrate their uniqueness as a powerful way to achieve their goals. Keys to their success are having control over their own destinies and having distinct norms and approaches for realizing their goals. (p. viii)

Sergiovanni maintained that culture provides teachers and students with a sense of personal and collective identity.

Owens (1991) observed that culture enables teachers “to accept the ideals of the organization as their own personal values and, therefore, to work energetically to achieve the espoused goals of the organization” (p. 29). O’Donnell (2001) maintained that school culture enables teachers and students to find their places within the school and to perceive what is expected of them, and in return, they are able to recognize what the school offers them. Moreover, a positive school climate can promote the commitment of teachers to a school.

### *Catholic School Culture*

Flynn (1993) drew on the work of Deal (1993) when he posited that:

The culture of a Catholic school expresses the core beliefs, values, traditions, symbols and patterns of behaviour which provide meaning to the school community and which help to shape the lives of students, teachers and parents. In short, culture [is] “the way we do things around here”. (p. 39)

Cook (2001) noted that the community dimension of the Catholic school is its distinguishing feature from secular or other schools. He posited that an essential aspect of the community is its “culture of relationships” (p. 3). The relationship established in the school is with God, self, others, and with the local and world community. Drawing on Church documents on education, Cook maintained that there is also a relationship between faith and culture, faith and reason, and faith and life. Cook expanded and revised Flynn’s definition to imply intentionality on the part of administrators and teachers to introduce newcomers into the culture of the school. Cook defined Catholic school culture as

A “way of life” rooted in Christ, a Gospel-based creed and a code, and a Catholic vision that provides inspiration and identity, is shaped over time, and is passed from one generation to the next through devices that capture and stimulate the Catholic imagination such as symbols and traditions. (p. 16)

Cook further stated that the primary duty of administrators and teachers is to connect the Catholic school’s core values and beliefs to Christ and the Gospel “intentionally, deliberately, and continually” (p. 20).

#### *Lasallian Catholic School Culture*

Lasallian Catholic school culture can be understood from two perspectives. The first is a particular expression of the culture of Catholic schools according to the connection to the life and vision of Saint John Baptist de La Salle. As Sanderl (2004) observed:

The term “Lasallian” grows out of three integral perspectives: (a) the life and story of Saint John Baptist de La Salle, (b) the educational values and mission of

Saint John Baptist de La Salle, and (c) the manner in which that vision and mission are lived and expressed today as well as with whom and for whom it is shared. Lasallian culture, therefore, includes considerations about who is being served and educated by this education. Further, it articulates who is sharing in this mission and responsible for the education of these young people. Finally, it communicates the life of Saint John Baptist de La Salle, the early Institute, and the principles of Lasallian education. (p. 118)

A second perspective on Lasallian Catholic school culture arises from the spirituality promoted by Saint John Baptist de La Salle. St. John Baptist de La Salle's (1730/1994) *Meditations for the Time of Retreat* provides the central themes of the Lasallian charism. De La Salle was strongly influenced by scripture, especially by St. Paul's writings. This Pauline influence is reflected in De La Salle's expectation that administrators and teachers are to be "ambassadors and ministers of Christ . . . [and to] act as representing Jesus Christ himself" (§ 3.2). Drawing on the themes found in the *Meditations*, Van Grieken (1999) argued that for Lasallian administrators and teachers, the Lasallian Catholic school is the privileged place where God is to be encountered. The relationship among administrators, teachers, and students is the center of their religious experience. The professional journey and the spiritual journey of the administrator and teacher cannot be separated.

### *Summary*

The concepts of identity and culture apply to Lasallian Catholic schools. Numerous Catholic Church documents in general, and De La Salle Christian Brothers documents in particular, have sought to articulate the identity and culture of this unique educational tradition. In addition, these documents influence the school culture by outlining what is required of teachers and administrators, by providing a blueprint for induction and formation programs for administrators and teachers, and by emphasizing

particular aspects of education, such as the positive relationships between teachers and students, awareness of the presence of God, and concern for the poor and the marginalized, which are central to a Lasallian Catholic school.

### Research Questions

This case study explored the perceptions of administrators and teachers regarding the identity and culture of St. John's College, a Lasallian Catholic secondary school in Australia. This exploration probed the following five questions:

1. How do administrators and teachers of St. John's College characterize the identity and culture of a Lasallian Catholic secondary school?
2. In what ways do administrators and teachers perceive St. John's College as reflecting the identity and culture of a Lasallian Catholic secondary school?
3. How do administrators and teachers perceive their role in the promotion of the Lasallian Catholic identity and culture of St. John's College?
4. What has enhanced the Lasallian Catholic identity and culture at St. John's College?
5. What challenges are there to the Lasallian Catholic identity and culture at St. John's College?

### Delimitations

Delimitations are the criteria that were used to narrow the scope and purpose of this study. There are 16 Lasallian Catholic secondary schools in Australia, of which four schools (including St. John's College, the site for this study) are owned by the De La Salle Christian Brothers and governed by school boards comprised of Brothers and parents. At St. John's College and the other three secondary schools owned by the De La Salle Christian Brothers, the Brothers and the Board of Directors are committed to these four schools being Lasallian Catholic schools. The other 12 Lasallian Catholic secondary schools are owned by dioceses and are governed by the diocesan Catholic Education

Office or a school board. Seven of these Catholic secondary schools promote the Lasallian tradition exclusively, while another five Catholic secondary schools combine their Lasallian tradition together with the tradition of another religious congregation because of school mergers or because the school was initially staffed by more than one congregation. It is not possible to state that St. John's College is representative of some or all Lasallian Catholic schools in Australia, nor that its personnel, practices, and policies exemplify a Lasallian Catholic secondary school.

In terms of time and resources available, it was not feasible for the researcher of this study to interview all 99 administrators and teachers based on the senior campus at St. John's College. In order to obtain a diverse range of participants, the teachers were grouped (stratified sampling) so that those interviewed reflected the gender and experience that was present on the campus.

#### Limitations

This study was limited to a time-bound qualitative case study of the identity and culture of one Lasallian Catholic secondary school. It is not possible to generalize the findings of this study to the perceptions of administrators and teachers of the identity and culture of other Lasallian Catholic secondary schools due to differing demographics of students, faculty, and administrators; varying governance structures; unique school histories; and diverse State curriculum and legislative requirements.

A case study by its nature is limited to one situation, and may not be representative of Lasallian Catholic secondary schools in Australia or elsewhere. Similarly, the participants selected to represent a range of gender and experience may not have represented the knowledge, understanding, and attitudes of others in the same

grouping. The participants may have left out important details, and their recollections of past events, people and programs were subject to problems inherent in memory. The case study of the school took place in an uncontrolled environment, so it was not possible to ascribe cause and effect for the concepts.

There is the possibility that some administrators and teachers may have erroneously interpreted the collection of data for the study as being an evaluation of themselves or the school and provided responses that only reflected them or the school positively. Administrators and teachers may have informally discussed their responses with other administrators and teachers, and these discussions may have led to prepared answers rather than spontaneous responses during interviews scheduled for later in the study. Participants were requested at the end of their interview to keep the nature of the interview confidential, but the researcher was not able to assume and control that this happened.

The timing of the research at the school was a limitation because many events that contributed to the identity and culture of the school were held outside the research period. These events included induction and mentoring programs, the aims set for the school at the start of the academic year, the parent information evenings at which the school's philosophy and emphasis were outlined, and student recruitment and enrollment processes that were undertaken progressively during the school year. The timing prevented the researcher from observing these events and using his observations as a source of questions in interviews.

The researcher is a member of the De La Salle Christian Brothers, and this could be a limitation to the study because it may have influenced his objectivity in the analysis,

interpretation, and reporting of the findings of the study. His status as a De La Salle Christian Brother may have influenced interviewees to provide responses that reflected expectations of what should be occurring rather than the reality of the situation.

#### Educational Significance

This study has contributed to the body of literature on Catholic secondary schools in Australia by meeting the need for qualitative research identified by Flynn (1993), Grace (2002), and Croke (2007) relative to the identity and culture of such Australian Catholic schools. It has relevance for the Board of Directors and the administrators of St. John's College when policies and decisions are made in areas that influence school identity and culture, such as school promotion, the selection and appointment of new administrators and faculty, the provision of professional development programs, the enrollment of students, the general and religious curricula, and the preparation of the school budget and annual calendar. While no other Catholic secondary school in Australia has exactly the same identity and culture as St. John's College, all Catholic secondary schools share a number of philosophical, governance, funding, personnel, and curricular characteristics. These common characteristics may make the data and findings of the study applicable to their own institutions.

#### Definition of Terms

##### Chapter

This term refers to a legislative body of the De La Salle Christian Brothers. A General Chapter is held every seven years, and is composed of Brothers and Partners from all areas of the world where the Brothers live and work. A District Chapter is held every four years, and is composed of Brothers and Partners from the particular District.

Charism	This term refers to a gift of grace (Rom 12:6) whose source is the Holy Spirit. It is a spiritual endowment given for the purpose of service or ministry to build up the Church, the body of Christ (Eph 4:8).
College	A term commonly used in Australia to describe a secondary school or a secondary school with an attached primary section.
De La Salle Christian Brothers	The term is used to refer to the religious congregation officially known as the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. In the United States, the Brothers are usually known as Christian Brothers or De La Salle Christian Brothers, while in Australia and most other English-speaking countries, the Brothers are known as De La Salle Brothers.
Deputy Principal	The term used in Australia for the administrative position in a secondary school that corresponds to the position of Assistant Principal in the United States.
District	An administrative unit of the De La Salle Christian Brothers that covers a defined geographical area. It is lead by a Brother Visitor. Other religious congregations typically use the term “Province” to designate this administrative unit.
Partner	A term used by the De La Salle Christian Brothers since the General Chapter in 1993 to indicate the close mutual relationship between the Brothers and those who work in ministries with them.
Religious Congregation	This term is used to describe organizations of vowed men and women who are designated by the Church as “religious”. It will be used even though the use of “Religious Institute” or “Religious Order” may be more technically correct in some contexts.
Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education (SCCE)	This term is used to designate the source of documents issued by both the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education from 1967 to 1983 and the Congregation for Catholic Education from 1984 onwards. The SCCE, a Vatican congregation or department, was renamed in 1984.



Vatican II	A Council of Catholic bishops from throughout the world, held at the Vatican over four sessions from 1962 to 1965. The Council introduced many wide-ranging reforms, particularly regarding the liturgy and an increased role for the laity in the Catholic Church.
Visitor	The term used to designate the Brother who is the leader of the De La Salle Christian Brothers in a District. In some other congregations, the equivalent terms may be “Provincial” or “Provincial Leader.” The responsibilities of the Visitor based in Sydney include oversight of the Lasallian schools and other ministries of the De La Salle Christian Brothers in Australia, New Zealand, and Papua New Guinea.
Year	The term is the equivalent of “Grade” in the United States. Thus “Year 10” in Australia designates students who would be in “Grade 10” in the United States.

Chapter I of this study identified the key components and issues related to this case study, and the review of literature that follows addresses these components and issues. Namely, it examines Church documents from papal, Roman, and Australian sources relative to the concepts of identity and culture, supplemented by works of leading experts on Catholic education. It reports literature related to the identity and culture of Lasallian Catholic schools. It reviews research undertaken regarding Catholic secondary schools in Australia, their administrators, and their teachers. Finally it considers literature related to school identity and culture by practitioners in the field.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### Restatement of the Problem

Lasallian Catholic schools in Australia have a foundational identity and culture that set them apart from other government, independent, and religious schools. In addition, every Lasallian Catholic school has a unique identity and culture that enables it to fulfill its mission. However, contemporary issues, such as the progressive secularization of society, the decreasing presence of De La Salle Christian Brothers within Lasallian Catholic schools, and the increasing presence of non-Catholic and non-practicing Catholic teachers and students within these schools, present challenges to the identity and culture of Lasallian Catholic schools in Australia. While there have been large-scale quantitative studies of Australian Catholic schools in general, there has been limited qualitative research regarding their identity and culture. Hence, this study explored the perceptions of administrators and teachers regarding the identity and culture of St. John's College, a Lasallian Catholic secondary school in Australia.

#### Overview

The literature review was undertaken in four major sections. Section One surveyed Church documents related to the identity and culture of Catholic schools from three perspectives: 1) Papal and Roman Church documents written for the universal Church, 2) pastoral letters, State, and diocesan publications on Catholic education in Australia, and 3) related literature advanced by leading experts on Catholic education. Where relevant, reference was made to secular literature that relates to the topic being reviewed. Section Two reviewed the literature on the identity and culture of Lasallian

schools. This section examined the literature concerning these components: the nature of charism, the role of charism from an ecclesial perspective, Lasallian culture, the transmission of the charism of a religious congregation, the shared mission between the De La Salle Christian Brothers and their lay colleagues, and the Lasallian formation programs offered in Australia. Section Three reviewed literature on Australian Catholic education with particular attention to Catholic secondary schools, their administrators, and their teachers. Section Four examined the educational literature regarding school identity and culture advanced by practitioners in the field.

### The Identity and Culture of Catholic Schools

#### *Papal and Roman Church Documents*

Catholic schools derive their identity and culture from their nature and the purpose of their mission within the Catholic Church. The identity and culture of Catholic schools has been addressed in documents issued by Popes (Pope John Paul II, 1990; Pope Leo XIII, 1885, 1887; Pope Pius XI, 1929), the Second Vatican Council (Vatican II, 1965a), and the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education (1977, 1982, 1988, 1997, 2002, 2007), in addition to references in Canon Law (Euart, 2000).

Church documents form the prime source from which the distinctive characteristics of Catholic education are defined. Authors, such as Groome (1996), McLaughlin (1996), Flynn and Mok (2000), Porath (2000), O'Donnell (2001), Grace (2002), Laffan (2004), Miller (2006), Denig and Dosen (2009) and Huber (2009), have analysed papal and Church documents to identify the characteristics of Catholic schools. The characteristics identified by each of the authors vary in wording and number, but in

general they can be found within the five characteristics of Catholic schools that Miller, the former Secretary of the SCCE, identified.

A Catholic school should be inspired by a supernatural vision, founded on Christian anthropology, animated by communion and community, imbued with a Catholic worldview throughout its curriculum, and sustained by gospel witness. (p. 17)

Miller's five characteristics of Catholic education provide the framework for this section relating to papal and Church documents.

#### *Inspired by a Supernatural Vision*

The first characteristic identified by Miller, that the Catholic school is inspired by a supernatural vision, is found in the encyclical of Pope Pius XI (1929).

In fact, since education consists essentially in preparing man [sic] for what he must be and for what he must do here below, in order to attain the sublime end for which he was created, it is clear that there can be no true education which is not wholly directed to man's last end. (¶ 7)

Likewise, Vatican II (1965a) reiterated the position taken by Pope Pius when it stated that the purpose of education is to provide people with a formation that is "directed towards their final end" (¶ 1). Arthur (1995) and Mellor (2005) both noted the centrality of the "final end" to the goals of Catholic education. However, Arthur commented that there is "no agreement, no unity of purpose among Catholics in education on the necessary means to achieving this [final] end" (p. 246).

#### *Founded on a Christian Anthropology*

The second characteristic of Catholic education identified by Miller (2006), that it is founded on a Christian anthropology, is essentially concerned with the nature of the human person and the human person's relationship with God. Consequently, a Catholic school is required to be more than an institution whose focus is restricted to the transmission of knowledge and skills required by universities or businesses. The SCCE

(1977, 1982) confirmed that Catholic education is dedicated to the education of the whole person, with Christ as the model to imitate. Moreover, it affirmed that those who minister in Catholic schools must consciously work in communion with the Church to safeguard the dignity of the individual and to promote human rights within a pluralistic world.

All schools aim, to varying degrees, to educate students in their intellectual, moral, physical, social, emotional, aesthetic, and vocational aspects. However, the Catholic perspective on education differs from many other perspectives because it recognizes that a holistic education must include religious and spiritual aspects as well. Bryk (1996) commented on this characteristic by positing that the reason for the purpose of Catholic education to educate the whole person is because each person is a unique gift from God:

Prevalent in the mission statements of Catholic schools is the phrase “education of the whole person.” A Catholic education today stresses that each person . . . [is] equal in the eyes of God. Each student has dignity and worth because each one is a person-in-community. (p. 33)

Likewise, Groome (1996) argued that the characteristic of Christian anthropology has implications for the whole curriculum in a Catholic school. The whole curriculum has to reflect and promote three commitments: to affirm the basic goodness of students because they are reflections of God; to educate students to be responsible partners; and to convince students that they are capable of making a difference as history makers. He maintained that these commitments are especially important because they influence the educational methodology used in Catholic schools.

*Animated by Communion and Community*

A Catholic school's animation by communion and community is the third characteristic identified by Miller (2006). Shimabukuro (1998) noted that following Vatican II there was a significant change in the Church's perception of the nature of a Catholic school. Her research described the shift as one "from institutional observances and hierarchy to individual formation in the context of the community" (p. 3). Specifically, in the Declaration on Christian Education, Vatican II (1965a) stated that a prime function of a Catholic school is "to create in the school community an atmosphere animated by a spirit of liberty and charity based on the Gospel" (§ 8). Groome (1996) posited that "theologically, Catholicism's communal emphasis arises from its conviction that we need to be church . . . for the sake of our salvation" (p. 114).

Catholic high school researchers in two different countries, Bryk, Lee, and Holland (1993) in the United States, and Morris (2005, 2008, 2009) in the United Kingdom, maintained that the communal nature of Catholic schools is an important factor in the higher academic standards achieved in Catholic schools. Specifically, Morris (2009) pointed out that his research suggested that "the more extensive and coherent the Catholic community within a Catholic school, the more academically successful are its pupils" (p. 737). Both research studies were quantitative in design and did not delve into the personal beliefs, values, and practices of the teachers, students, and parents who made up the school communities that were being considered. However, O'Donnell (2001), whose research in New Zealand was qualitative in design, cautioned that a non-critical view of a Catholic school, such as could arise from a quantitative study, may hide "a far

more complex, and less than ideal, reality” (p. 26), because of the diversity of beliefs, values, and practices represented by the teachers, students, and parents of the school.

For Miller (2006), the concepts of communion and community in Catholic schools are witnessed and advanced through four means: 1) teamwork between school and home, 2) cooperation between educators and bishops, 3) interaction between teacher and students, and 4) the relationship between the school’s physical environment and its students. These four means will be considered in the light of Church documents and other literature.

#### *Teamwork.*

The first means related to community, teamwork, reflects the relationship of the school and parents in the education of students. Pope Pius XI (1929) perceived the school as being an institution that assisted the family to educate children “not only [in] religious and moral education, but in physical and civic education as well” (¶36). The need for teamwork by all members of the school community is stressed in SCCE documents. In *The Catholic School*, the SCCE (1977) declared,

Christ is the foundation of the whole educational enterprise in a Catholic school. . . . The fact that in their own individual ways all members of the school community share this Christian vision makes the school “Catholic”; principles of the Gospel in this manner become the educational norms since the school then has them as its internal motivation and final goal. (¶ 34)

In *Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith*, the SCCE (1982) urged teachers in Catholic schools to work collaboratively and collegially. The document stated that teachers must establish “a close relationship . . . with one’s colleagues; they should work together as a team” (¶ 34). The document further noted, “Before all else, lay people should find in a Catholic school an atmosphere of sincere respect and cordiality; it should

be a place in which authentic human relationships can be formed among all of the educators” (§ 77). In *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School*, the SCCE (1988) stated:

Everyone directly involved in the school is a part of the school community: teachers, directors, administrative, and auxiliary staff. Parents are central figures, since they are the natural and irreplaceable agents in the education of their children. And the community also includes the students, since they must be active agents in their own education. (§ 32)

*Cooperation Between Educators and Bishops.*

Miller (2006) identified the second area of community as cooperation between educators and bishops. In its most recent document, *Educating Together: A Shared Mission Between Consecrated Persons and the Lay Faithful*, the SCCE (2007) linked the community dimension of a Catholic school with the need for teachers to be united with the Church:

By its very nature, the Catholic school requires the presence and involvement of educators that [sic] are not only culturally and spiritually formed, but are also intentionally directed at developing their community educational commitment in an authentic spirit of ecclesial communion. (§ 34)

*Relationship Between Students and Teachers.*

The third means recognized by Miller (2006) was the necessity for Catholic schools to encourage professional relationships between students and teachers. The nature of these student-teacher relationships was developed by the SCCE (1982).

Direct and personal contact between teachers and students . . . is a privileged opportunity for giving witness. A personal relationship is always a dialogue rather than a monologue, and the teacher must be convinced that the enrichment in the relationship is mutual. But the mission must never be lost sight of: the educator can never forget that students need a companion and guide during their period of growth; they need help from others in order to overcome doubts and disorientation. Also, rapport with the students ought to be a prudent combination of familiarity and distance and this must be adapted to the need of each individual student. (§ 33)



In its document, *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School*, the SCCE (1988) described the role of the teacher in terms of attitude and behavior to be one of “preparing the soil” (¶ 71). It noted that teachers were expected to love their students, and show this love in the way they interacted with them.

Their words, their witness, their encouragement and help, their advice and friendly correction are all important in achieving these goals which must always be understood to include academic achievement, moral behaviour and a religious dimension. (¶ 110)

The SCCE noted that the fullest and most complete expression of the religious dimension of the Catholic school would be through interaction in prayer, in which teachers prayed for the students and students prayed for their teachers. This interaction would enable a relationship to be built up that was both human and divine. Shimabukuro (1998) observed that this document and other SCCE documents echoed the *Declaration on Catholic Education* (Vatican II, 1965a), which described the “special qualities of mind and heart” (¶ 5) that teachers needed in order to be effective ministers of faith.

*Physical Environment.*

Miller (2006) posited that the fourth means of community related to a Catholic school was its physical environment. The SCCE (1988) stated in *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School*, “From the first moment that a student sets foot in a Catholic school, he or she ought to have the impression of entering a new environment, one illumined by the light of faith, and having its own unique characteristics” (¶ 25). The document proceeded to present examples of the culture of a Catholic school, such as the presence of crucifixes, liturgical celebrations, and the close proximity of a school to a parish church.

*Imbued with a Catholic Worldview Throughout Its Curriculum*

The fourth characteristic of a Catholic school identified by Miller (2006) in the Church documents on education was that “the spirit of Catholicism should permeate the whole curriculum” (p. 6) and not just its religious instruction. The development of a Catholic worldview through the school curriculum has been a constant theme in papal encyclicals and church documents. Pope Leo XIII (1885) wrote a short encyclical concerning Christian education to the Catholic bishops of England to support them in their arguments for a place for religious education in the school curriculum. The encyclical stated that the purpose of Catholic schools is “to form them [the children] to a Christian life, and to instruct them in the elements of knowledge” (§ 2).

Pope Pius XI (1929) argued that a Catholic school must be more than an institution that provided religious instruction. He posited that its Catholic identity must be shown through a Christian spirit that permeated its teaching, its organization, its teachers, its syllabus, and its texts. Pius XI saw the product of Christian education as a person who thought, judged, and acted in ways that were influenced by the teaching and example of Christ, especially in the area of justice.

The SCCE (1977) in *The Catholic School* asserted that “like every other school, the Catholic school has as its aim the critical communication of human culture and the total formation of the individual, [and] it works towards this goal guided by its Christian vision of reality” (§ 36). The document further maintained that the task of Catholic education “is fundamentally a synthesis of culture and faith, and a synthesis of faith and life” (§37). In its document, *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School*, the SCCE (1988) reiterated that Catholic schools were not simply places where lessons

were taught, but they were centers in which faith, culture, and life were integrated into the curriculum in a manner that was attentive to the needs of youth. It also stressed the importance of Gospel values being explicitly mentioned in the educational goals of a Catholic school.

While commenting on the implications of an integration of faith, culture, and life, McLaughlin (1996) argued that a goal of Catholic schools must be to enable students to identify elements of societal culture that are opposed to the gospel (p. 142). Grace (2002) noted that one of the main purposes of Catholic schools is “to keep alive and to renew the culture of the sacred in a profane and secular world” (p. 5). Bryk, Lee, and Holland (1993), likewise, perceived Catholic schools “as a realization of the prophetic Church that critically engages contemporary culture” (p. 355).

*Sustained by Gospel Witness*

Miller (2006) posited that the fifth characteristic of an authentic Catholic school relates to the school being sustained through witness to the Gospel by its administrators and teachers. Church documents have been explicit over many decades in recognizing the vital role of teachers as witnesses to the Gospel message, for it is through their witness that the aims of a Catholic school will be achieved. In one of the earliest papal statements on this topic, Pope Leo XIII (1887) wrote to the bishops of Bavaria because he was particularly concerned that “the most noble duty of instruction should not be left in the hands of those who are either careless or lax in their religion” (§ 11).

Pope Pius XI (1929) recognized that teachers were the means by which the school would achieve its purpose when he wrote:

Perfect schools are the result not so much of good methods as of good teachers, teachers who are thoroughly prepared and well-grounded in the matter they have

to teach; who possess the intellectual and moral qualifications required by their important office; who cherish a pure and holy love for the youths confided to them, because they love Jesus Christ and His Church . . .” (§88)

Jacobs (1996), commenting on this quotation, noted that Pius XI required teachers to have an intrinsic motivation that surpassed “a purely materialistic view of education in order that they may offer their students a formative experience of extraordinary and permanent value” (p. 35). Pope Paul VI (1975) succinctly summarized the role that is expected of the teacher in a Catholic school when he declared, “Modern man [sic] listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses” (§ 41).

Vatican II (1965a) emphasized that whether a Catholic school achieved its purpose depended chiefly on teachers. Vatican II reminded teachers that they bore testimony to Christ through their attitude towards each other and towards their students:

Splendid, therefore, and of the highest importance is the vocation of those who help parents in carrying out their duties and act in the name of the community by undertaking a teaching career. This vocation requires special qualities of mind and heart, most careful preparation, and a constant readiness to accept new ideas and to adapt to the old. (§ 5)

Jacobs (1996) noted that Vatican II, in addition to recognizing that teachers in Catholic schools had a special vocation to educate youth, also reminded teachers that they also served the mission of the Church through their individual and collective witness.

In *The Catholic School*, the SCCE (1977) reminded Catholic school teachers that they are expected to reveal the Christian message, not only by word but also through their behavior when it stated that “By their witness and their behaviour, teachers are of first importance to impart a distinctive character to Catholic schools” (§ 78). The SCCE

further noted that careful and thorough formation is required to animate teachers to be witnesses of Christ in a classroom.

In *Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith*, the SCCE (1982) emphasized that a key role or responsibility of lay teachers in a Catholic school was one of Christian witness through direct and personal contact with students in the context of an educational community. Lay teachers were perceived not only as professional educators, but also as persons with a vocation. They were expected to participate in the liturgical and sacramental life of the school because this would offer students the witness of committed adults. The SCCE also acknowledged that lay teachers were to be provided with on-going theological and spiritual formation so that they could perform their responsibilities.

The *Code of Canon Law* (Euart, 1984) also emphasized the witness that Catholic school teachers must give to their students. The *Code* focused particularly on the witness given by teachers of religious education, and gave the local bishop the right to approve teachers of religious education and the power to remove them if “a reason of religion or morals requires it” (§ 805). The *Code* identified three areas in which teachers of religious education must be distinguished, namely the teaching of Catholic doctrine, the witness of their lives, and their skills as teachers.

In 1990, Pope John Paul II wrote *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* to define the identity and role of the Catholic university. While it focused on tertiary education, Heft (2001) identified some aspects of the document that were relevant to the identity of Catholic secondary schools and their teachers. He noted that the document stated that the number of Catholic teachers should form a majority of all teachers in the institution in order not to endanger the Catholic identity of the institution. This meant that Catholics are to be

preferred when administrators are hiring teachers. Heft also noted that the document required that teachers of religious education be faithful to the Magisterium of the Church in their teaching, which in turn, necessitated their certification and professional development in theology and religious education.

The SCCE (1997) document, *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium*, also recognized the important role that teachers as witnesses play in the formation of a school culture and its sustainability.

The prime responsibility for creating this unique Christian school climate rests with the teachers, as individuals and as a community. Teaching has an extraordinary moral depth and is one of man's most excellent and creative activities, for the teacher does not write on inanimate material, but on the very spirits of human beings. The personal relations between the teacher and the students, therefore, assume an enormous importance and are not limited simply to giving and taking. Moreover, we must remember that teachers and educators fulfill a specific Christian vocation and share an equally specific participation in the mission of the Church, to the extent that it depends chiefly on them whether the Catholic school achieves its purpose. (¶ 19)

### *Summary*

Papal and Roman Church documents addressed the numerous ecclesial, social, and education changes that Catholic schools have experienced within the last 45 years. Miller's (2006) framework has shown five essential characteristics of a Catholic school that are found in the documents. Huber (2009) contended that

Not only are the church documents the best source for Catholic educational formation, but ministers in Catholic education have a need and a right to have the church's essential teachings on Catholic education presented and made available to them. (p. 9)

This study explored the ways in which administrators and teachers characterize the identity and culture of a Lasallian Catholic school in general, and of St. John's College in particular.

*Church Documents Relating to Catholic Education in Australia*

Papal and Roman documents on Catholic schools are written for the universal Church. The principles and practices that are espoused in these documents have to be implemented and adapted by bishops and Catholic education authorities in each country to meet the needs and culture of the society in which the Church operates locally. Because the Catholic Church in Australia is organized into seven Archdioceses and 21 dioceses, there are a variety of Church authorities at diocesan, state and national levels that are responsible for the implementation and adaptation of Papal and Roman Church documents in Australia. The review of literature in this section restricts itself to recent documents and initiatives related to Catholic identity and culture in the states of New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria, and South Australia. The Catholic educational authorities in these four states have been especially proactive in addressing challenges to the identity and culture of Catholic schools. In particular, the review focused on the perceived challenges for contemporary Catholic schools in Australia, the changing role of Catholic schools, and the formation and appointment of administrators and teachers.

*Perceived Challenges for Contemporary Catholic Schools*

In their 2007 Pastoral Letter, the Bishops of New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory (NSW/ACT) recognized that when Catholic schools were first established in the 19th century, their mission was to assist poor families to educate their children and to pass on the Catholic faith and practices in a sometimes hostile social environment. They noted that by the mid-20th century, students at Catholic schools came from families where there were high rates of religious practice, there was a social environment that was largely Christian, and the faith formation of the students was

fostered primarily by the family and supported by the school. The bishops also observed that by the first decade of the 21st century, the poor were under-represented in Catholic schools, many young people had no connection with the Church outside the school, and there were many more students from a non-Catholic background in Catholic schools. The Bishops of NSW and ACT stated that the schools “now have a different mix of students and less support for their specifically religious mission from outside the school than they had in the past” (p. 6).

The Bishops of NSW/ACT (2007) considered two possible directions that they could take regarding the future of Catholic education. On the one hand, they considered whether they should resist the pressure of demand for Catholic schooling and restrict Catholic education to a scale where teachers and students could be selected who readily identified with the mission of a Catholic school. On the other hand, they could reaffirm their commitment to the essential elements of the Catholic school while “embracing changing enrollment patterns as ‘signs of the times’ and of a new mission for Catholic education” (p. 8). The bishops agreed that the second course of action would be the better way to move forward to the future. This course of action had implications for administrators and teachers in Catholic schools. Recognizing this situation, the Bishops of NSW and ACT challenged administrators and teachers:

To dedicate themselves to ensuring that our schools:

- are truly Catholic in their identity
- are centres of “the new evangelisation”
- enable our students to achieve high levels of “Catholic religious literacy” and practice
- are led and staffed by people who will contribute to these goals. (p. 5)

Likewise, Hutton (2002), Director of Catholic Education in the Archdiocese of Brisbane, challenged administrators and teachers to more fully embrace the “religious, educational



and social purposes of schooling . . . appropriate to the world in which they operate . . . [in order to] fulfil their multifaceted mission” (p. 59).

*The Changing Role of Catholic Schools*

Guided by Church documents and other literature, the Bishops of NSW/ACT (2007) defined the Australian Catholic school as:

The principal educational arm of Catholic families, parishes and the wider Church for those generally aged under eighteen. It is there to assist parents and parishes in their educational, evangelical and catechetical mission, as well as to help the wider community in its educational and civic service. (p. 10)

The bishops maintained that there had to be a critical mass of Catholic students in the schools, but did not quantify what this critical mass was to be. They contended that a genuine Catholic school was more than one that had a majority of students from Catholic families. They argued that for a genuine Catholic school to exist, it was essential for administrators to understand, and commit themselves to, the Catholic identity of the school. In terms of school culture, the Bishops of NSW/ACT insisted that schools must have a sacramental and prayer program that was supported by the creation of a “Catholic visual culture” (p. 10)

In recognizing Catholic schools as centers of evangelization, the Bishops of NSW/ACT (2007) made a distinction between evangelization and catechesis. They defined evangelization as “proclaiming the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ. Its goal is bringing people to faith through an encounter with Him,” while catechesis involved “deepening and instructing the faith already received” (p. 12). While in past decades Catholic schools had been able to focus on a catechetical mission, contemporary Catholic schools have to focus on an evangelizing mission because of the growing number of non-practicing Catholic and non-Catholic students in the schools.

The reality of the changed religious composition of school enrollment was revealed in a report of the Queensland Catholic Education Commission (2001) – a group that represents all Catholic education authorities in Queensland – to the bishops of that state. It reported that for two-thirds of the students in Catholic schools, the school is the only place where they have a relationship with the Church. D’Orsa (2002), Director of Catholic Education in the Diocese of Sale (Victoria), further confirmed this situation.

There is no denying that a major shift has occurred with that large section of Australian schools which supports Catholic schools. While a significant proportion is still linked to Catholic parishes, a larger proportion has at least tenuous links. The situation changes the evangelising possibilities of many Catholic schools. The make-up of the local Catholic community is now a key issue in determining the mission of the school. The homogeneity once evident across Catholic schools is fracturing under the pressure of cultural change not only within the broader Australian context, but also from within our Catholic community – a change over which the Church authorities have limited capacity to exercise control. In practice, one set of evangelising possibilities is being replaced by another. (p. 34)

Consequently, Australian Catholic schools have become “church” for most students. In recognition of this reality, the Catholic Education Office Melbourne (2009) identified Catholic schools with terms such as “sacred landscape,” “a holy place,” and “a graced territory” – terms usually associated with a church building.

#### *Formation and Appointment of Administrators and Teachers*

The Bishops of NSW/ACT (2007) stated that “no-one doubts that the faith and practice of the leaders and faculty in a school significantly affect the students and the character of the education offered” (p. 16). They argued that if Catholic schools are to succeed in their mission, only faithful Catholics should be appointed as senior administrators and religious education teachers, and all teachers must be committed to the mission of the school and live in accordance with the teachings of the Church. The

bishops also recognized the need for initial and continuing formation for teachers regarding the identity and mission of the Catholic school. They acknowledged the need to evangelize teachers as well as students in contemporary Australian Catholic schools.

The Catholic Education Office Sydney (2009) responded to the call of the bishops of NSW/ACT (2007) for a new evangelization for employees in Catholic schools with proposals to strengthen its accreditation policies for all administrators, teachers, and support staff in Catholic schools. It also recognized the need to rewrite contractual arrangements to include on-going formation for teachers to maintain their accreditation to teach in a Catholic school.

The South Australian Commission for Catholic Schools (SACCS) (2004) in its policy document, *Religious Leadership in a Catholic School*, identified seven responsibilities of a Catholic school leader, namely: establishing partnerships with parish, family, and diocese; facilitating school ethos; designing curriculum; providing liturgy; enabling faith formation; promoting social justice; and ensuring faculty development. In recognizing the complexity and comprehensiveness of religious leadership, SACCS (2009) mandated, and provided funding for, each Catholic school to add a new position, the Assistant Principal for Religious Identity and Mission (APRIM), to its administrative structure by the end of the 2011 academic year. SACCS expected that

As a leader in Faith and Religious Education, the APRIM will be a member of the leadership team, and together with the Principal who is responsible in a unique way for the school's identity, the APRIM shapes the religious identity through the development of Catholic ethos and culture. (p. 6)

This new role effectively upgraded the role of the Religious Education Coordinator in a school and offered the person a higher monetary and time allowance in return for

accepting greater responsibilities. This new policy will provide the Principal with assistance in carrying out the role of religious leadership in the school.

### *Summary*

The identity and culture of Catholic schools in Australia have undergone dramatic challenges and changes because of the increasing numbers of non-Catholic and non-practicing Catholic students enrolled in the schools, and teachers employed by the school. To address this reality, the Bishops of NSW/ACT (2007) initiated a major policy decision which called Catholic schools to become centers of evangelization, not only for students, but for teachers as well. Other Catholic education authorities have responded to these challenges and changes through the provision of spiritual formation programs for administrators and teachers, and by providing financial resources to implement administrative changes to enhance the religious leadership of Catholic schools.

### *Related Literature By Leading Experts on Catholic Education*

Related literature by leading experts on Catholic education is addressed in this section. Specifically it focused on the identity and culture of Catholic schools, and the challenges to the identity and culture of Catholic schools. The challenges addressed are the purpose of Catholic schools, parental expectations of Catholic schools, and lay teachers in Catholic schools.

### *The Identity and Culture of Catholic Schools*

Groome (1996) has made a significant contribution to the literature on Catholic identity and culture, and his insights and framework concerning Catholic education are supported by numerous researchers (Coughlan, 2009; Grace, 2002; Hutton, 2002; Laffan, 2004; D. McLaughlin, 2000a; Mellor, 2005; O'Keefe, 1999; Ryan & McLaughlin, 1999).

Groome postulated that “the distinctiveness of Catholic education is prompted by the distinguishing characteristics of Catholicism itself, and these characteristics should be reflected in the whole curriculum of Catholic schools . . . [which entails] the content taught, the process of teaching, and the environment of the school” (p. 107). For Groome there are eight characteristics of Catholicism, which formed the framework of Catholic education. He labelled the first five as “theological” characteristics because they are grounded in the Catholic understanding of God and of human existence. These five include a positive anthropology of the person, the sacramentality of life, the communal emphasis regarding human and Christian existence, a commitment to tradition, and an appreciation of rationality and learning. The remaining three he labelled as “cardinal” characteristics because they are the hinges that bind the other five together. These include a commitment to the personhood of people, to justice, and to “catholicity,” which Groome (1998) defined as

Being catholic entails an abiding love for all people with commitment to their welfare, rights, and justice. It welcomes human diversity, is open to learn from other traditions, and lives in solidarity with all humankind as brother and sister. A catholic cherishes her or his particular culture and roots of identity while reaching for an open horizon and a global consciousness. A catholic community is radically inclusive of diverse peoples and perspectives, is free of discrimination and sectarian sentiment, and welcomes “the stranger” with outreach, especially for those most in need. (p. 413)

McLaughlin (2000b) supported Groome’s framework of Catholic education because it provided a theological rationale for the identity and culture of Catholic schools, unlike papal and Roman church documents concerning the subject.

Joseph (2001) and Nuzzi (2002) also addressed the issue of identity and culture of Catholic schools. Joseph contended that the identity of a Catholic school is rooted in theological truths, which guide and govern the school’s philosophy and its religious

education program. These truths call Catholic schools to be countercultural as the Church is called to be. For Nuzzi, the Catholicity of Catholic schools emanates from three sources. The first is theological or canonical wherein the bishop determines it is Catholic. The second is sacramental referring to its call to make Christ present through sacramental celebrations. The third is ecclesial which calls Catholic schools to fulfill the Church's mission to educate children in the faith and to spread the message of salvation.

Like Nuzzi (2002), Treston (1997) also highlighted the sacramental nature of Catholic schools. He concluded,

A Catholic school will seek to celebrate its Catholic identity by drawing from the deep wells of Catholic heritage, its sacramentality, communion of saints, sacraments, devotions, doctrines, sacred stories and ethical principles, especially the principle of the common good for the community. (p. 16)

Likewise, Haldane (1996) argued that the “primary function of Catholic schools . . . is to provide forms of education through which the essential doctrines and devotions of Catholicism are transmitted” (p. 133), thus focusing on the faith formation of the students.

### *Challenges to the Identity and Culture of Catholic Schools*

The challenges to the identity and culture of Catholic schools come from a variety of perspectives that have been identified and researched in different parts of the world. Three areas of challenge are explored in this review: the purpose of Catholic schools, parental expectations of Catholic schools, and lay teachers in Catholic schools.

#### *The Purpose of Catholic Schools.*

A major challenge relative to the identity and culture of a contemporary Catholic school concerns its purpose. Modern research suggests that secular norms, conflicting perceptions, and a changing populace impact the identity and culture of Catholic schools

in Australia. For example, Collins (1986) suggested that Australian “Catholic secondary schools have absorbed an ethos which is pragmatic, competitive, consumerist and materialist” (p. 217), which impacts and minimizes its religious purpose. His criticism has been echoed to varying degrees by other commentators of Catholic education, such as Doyle (1989), Dwyer (1986, 1993, 1998), Wagner (1989), and McLaughlin (2000b) who contended that Catholic schools have absorbed a secular societal ethos at the expense of any countercultural statement.

Writing from a British perspective, Grace (2002) opined that the success of Catholic schools paradoxically threatened the holistic nature of the Catholic educational mission. He commented that there was the potential for schools to become

Preoccupied by the visible and measurable in education to the detriment of the invisible and more tangible outcomes of schooling; the potential for Catholic schools to be incorporated into a secular marketplace for education that may weaken their relation with the sacred and the spiritual and distinctive culture of Catholicity itself. (p. 4)

Similarly, Morris (2008) noted the “apparent success in marketing terms has created tensions between the traditional values and perspectives of the essentially religious mission that is integral to Catholic schooling, and the demands of 21<sup>st</sup> century consumerism” (p. 166).

According to Ryan and McLaughlin (1999), the increased criticisms of Australian Catholic secondary schools arose because the schools were driven by “conflicting, if not incompatible goals, which in some cases bear little relevance to the realities of the world or the church” (p. 22). Ryan and McLaughlin contended that the conflicting goals were religious and social in nature. The religious goal related to the aim of Catholic schools to imbue students thoroughly in the beliefs and practices of Catholicism. The social goal

was to provide for Catholic schools to provide an education that would improve the social status of Catholics, “not so much to change and challenge [society], but to enjoy its fruits” (p. 15). Further, Ryan and McLaughlin noted that the Irish background of the bishops might have led to the perception of the Catholic school as a bastion for Catholic children in an otherwise religiously hostile world. They also found that there was a resistance to the reorientation of Catholic schools to reflect social justice and the essential purpose of Catholic schools outlined in Church documents. Ryan and McLaughlin also pointed out that contemporary Catholics in Australia seemed to value Catholic schools more as a means by which their children would belong to, and succeed, in society, rather than as a means for their religious education.

Earlier research by McLaughlin (1996) noted that the issue of the identity of a Catholic school is not just a phenomenon of the post-Vatican II era. He wrote: “Throughout its history, the Church has been concerned to clarify and to emphasize the distinctiveness of its educational vision” (p. 126). He attributed the modern concerns regarding Catholic school identity to complex factors involving theological, philosophical, sociological, and cultural considerations. He posited that as the personal beliefs and behaviors of individual Catholics have become less sharply distinguished from other beliefs and lifestyles, “it is no surprise that this is true also of Catholic educational principles and policies” (p. 137).

McLaughlin (1996) also maintained that there is a phenomenon of dispute and disagreement within the Church that has led to an “increasing heterogeneity of belief and practice among Catholics” (p. 149), that has extended into Catholic schools. Morris (2008) affirmed this viewpoint when he wrote that “an increase in social and religious



mobility, greater cultural and ethnic diversity and the emerging plurality of religious belief and opinion means it is no longer possible to discuss Catholic schools as serving a single homogenous faith community” (p. 156).

Arthur (1995), a British researcher, argued that Catholic schools were losing their Catholic identity because they were becoming less holistic and more dualistic and pluralistic. The dualistic Catholic school separates the secular and religious aims of schooling, while the pluralistic Catholic school accepted many students of non-Catholic background into the schools. Arthur maintained:

Neither the “dualistic” model nor the “pluralistic” finds much support in the Conciliar or post-Conciliar documents. . . . The documents of Vatican II overwhelmingly support the “holistic” model of Catholic education. They provide a statement of philosophy and goals, which express the holistic principles to which the Catholic school should be committed. (p. 246)

*Parental Expectations of Catholic Schools.*

Flynn’s (1993) research suggested that parents chose to send their children to Catholic schools first because of the quality of the teachers, secondly because of the education offered by the school, and thirdly because of the religious nature of the school. Griffiths (1998) reported that Catholic schools “appear to attract parents because of a values position they jointly hold, although the specificity of the shared values position may be unclear” (p. 69). Milliken (1984) suggested that non-government schools, including Catholic schools, are attractive to parents who are concerned with society’s loss of cultural identity and support: “The development of school culture is of increasing importance – when young people are increasingly in need of social and psychological support and philosophical foci” (p. 79).

In a qualitative research project regarding the reasons for parental choice of Catholic schools undertaken in Boston, Bempechat, Drago-Severson, and Dinndorf (1994) reported that religious reasons ranked behind quality of education and discipline. In an Australian quantitative study on parental expectations of Catholic secondary education, Griffiths (1998) reported that parents, regardless of whether they were Catholics or not, and whether they attended church regularly or not, shared a reasonably coherent view of what constituted a “good” Catholic education. Griffiths stated:

This shared view may not necessarily be consonant with basic church teaching about the nature of the Catholic school as a Christian community. This research confirms the trend . . . that parents are tending to express their expectations more in pragmatic terms rather than as an expression of personal ideology or faith. (p. iv)

Like Griffiths, O’Donnell (2001) also recognized the tension that can exist between the religious purpose of the school and parental expectations for a more academic and vocational orientation. She stated, “Given the decline in attendance at worship in local parishes, it cannot be assumed that [the] reasons [of parents] have necessarily anything to do with the religious development of young people” (p. 63).

*Lay Teachers in the Catholic School.*

The laicization of the faculty of Catholic schools has raised challenges for their identity and culture. Bryk, Lee, and Holland (1993) noted this concern following their research regarding American Catholic high schools. They wrote,

The gradually increasing numbers of non-Catholic faculty represent another potent secularizing force. Although these individuals bring subject-matter expertise that is much needed, they also express somewhat different motives for teaching in Catholic schools and may introduce different conceptions of a “good school” into conversations about future directions. (p. 334)

As a point of interest, Francis (2001), in his report regarding teacher perceptions of Anglican schools in England, found that teachers who attended church less frequently had a less positive attitude towards the religious identity of the school.

McDonough (2010) posited that teachers in Catholic schools have a professional obligation to the Church, to the state, and to parents to “coordinate the converging foundational aims that these three players present to the teaching-learning relationships in Catholic schools” (p. 288). His research suggested that teachers avoid dealing with controversial religious and moral issues by suggesting that students follow up at home with their parents on the issue. He concluded that such an approach was flawed because it allowed the teachers to divest their academic and ecclesial obligations in this area.

Writing from an American perspective, Wallace (2000) contended,

There is a major identity crisis occurring in Catholic schools. The dramatic shift from religious to lay personnel raises the question of whether or not some Catholic schools are becoming private schools with a religious memory but a secular presence. The tension between survival, mission, and market are central to this crisis. (p. 191)

McGettrick (2005) maintained that it is essential that Catholic schools have teachers who support the values and practices of Catholicism “since it is the teachers who form the most stable and lasting elements in the school community. In effect they set the values of the school and create its culture and ethos” (p. 111).

### *Summary*

The literature revealed that there is considerable disquiet regarding the purpose of Catholic schools. One perspective focuses on a social justice and counter-cultural position for the schools, while another focuses on the religious position. The two perspectives reflect an ongoing debate in the Church regarding the future. The literature

also highlighted the pressures that Catholic schools face in terms of competing societal and parental expectations that do not meld easily with the purpose for which the school is established. Teachers are perceived to be the key to achieving the purposes of Catholic schools, but emerging trends suggest that there is less commitment by teachers to the Church and the religious purposes of the Catholic school.

### The Identity and Culture of Lasallian Catholic Schools

Church documents of papal, Roman, national, state, or diocesan origin provide characteristics that are common to all Catholic schools. The Church over the centuries has approved and encouraged Catholic schools established and directed by religious congregations. The De La Salle Christian Brothers have been involved in Catholic schools for over 300 years, and endeavor to give their schools a distinctive identity and culture within a Catholic education framework. This section will review literature that links Lasallian schools to their wider ecclesial context. It will consider the nature of charism, the role of charism from an ecclesial perspective, Lasallian culture, the transmission of the charism of a religious congregation, the shared mission of Lasallian education between De La Salle Christian Brothers and lay administrators and teachers, and Australian formation programs concerning Lasallian identity and culture.

#### *The Nature of Charism*

The relationship between identity, culture and charism is complex, with the terms sometimes being used interchangeably and at other times they are juxtaposed. For example, Augenstein, Kauffman and Wister (2003) used a heading “Charism and Ethos,” to imply two separate concepts. For Botana (2006), charism is “a gift or personal quality with a positive social impact” that was given by the Holy Spirit “to enable a person to

contribute to the community's mission" (p. 7). This definition is similar to that posited by Lydon (2009) for whom charism is understood as a free gift, grace, or talent vouchsafed by God. From a biblical perspective, the Apostle Paul recognized charism as a gift that enabled the Christian to contribute to the building up of the community (1 Cor 12: 27-28). Englund (1995) summarized the biblical understanding of charism as follows

The Christian Scriptures witnessed to a consistent understanding, first of all, that a charism was a gift freely given by the Holy Spirit, and secondly, that the purpose of the charism was for the building up of the community of believers.  
(p. 24)

The term "charisma" is found in literature relating to organizational theory, notably in the work of Weber (1968). Weber stated that charismatic authority existed when an individual's claim to "special gifts of body and mind" (p. 1,112) were recognized by others as basis for participation in an extraordinary program of action. Drawing on both religious and organizational understandings of charism, Lydon (2009) posited that a charismatic leader must "demonstrate the ability to share his/her vision with the community, build up trust in the vision, and create a genuine commitment to it" (p. 46). The link between charism and culture can be seen by considering Schein's (2004) outline of the three stages involved in the transmission of culture: (1) the beliefs, values, and assumptions of founders of organizations; (2) the learning experiences of group members as their organization evolves; and (3) new beliefs, values, and assumptions brought in by new members.

Cook (2010) argued that each Catholic school has a charism of its own, regardless of whether the school had established links with a religious congregation or not. He defined school charism as signifying "the divinely inspired character of Catholic

schooling as well as the focused identity of an individual Catholic school” (p. 3). For Cook (2001, 2004, 2010), each school charism reflects spiritually-inspired core values.

*The Role of Charism From an Ecclesial Perspective*

Since Vatican II, SCCE documents have consistently recognized the importance of the charisms of religious congregations that permeate Catholic schools. For example, in *Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith*, the SCCE (1982) declared,

Certain elements will be characteristic of all Catholic schools. But these can be expressed in a variety of ways; often enough, the concrete expression will correspond to the specific charism of the Religious Institute that founded the school and continues to direct it. Whatever be its origin - diocesan, Religious, or lay - each Catholic school can preserve its own specific character, spelled out in an educational philosophy, rationale, or in its own pedagogy. Lay Catholics should 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 realizing the specific nature of the school. (¶ 39)

In its most recent document, *Educating Together in Catholic Schools: A Shared Mission Between Consecrated Persons and the Lay Faithful*, the SCCE (2007) again referred to the relationship of lay teachers to the charism of a particular congregation. In it, the SCCE posited that religious congregations have a special responsibility to keep alive the spirit of the founders and foundresses in their schools through the formation of teachers. The SCCE opined that a shared charism could broaden the horizons of lay educators because of the international nature of many religious congregations. It stated, “[A shared charism] offers a witness to the living strength of a charism that unites, over and above all, differences. The richness of this communion in the universal Church can and must be shared” (¶ 51). Consequently, the SCCE proposed that lay teachers be involved in regional and international formation occasions and meetings because they share, and have a responsibility to, the educational mission of a particular charism.

*Lasallian Culture and Charism*

In this study, the terms “Lasallian culture” and “Lasallian charism” are used interchangeably. In the literature, culture is generally associated with a broader school context inclusive of a religious dimension, while charism is particularly associated with its religious mission. Sanderl’s work (2004) highlighted the combined elements of both concepts in that Lasallian culture includes considerations regarding 1) who is served and educated, 2) who shares in the educational mission and is responsible for its implementation, and 3) the principles of Lasallian education. Sanderl also posited that the concepts of Lasallian culture and charism are developed from the life and story of St. John Baptist de La Salle, his vision and mission, and the manner in which this vision and mission are lived and expressed in the contemporary world. Schenider (2006) stated that Lasallian culture and charism are particularly focused on the “association for the educational service of the poor” (p. 236).

Prior to Vatican II, the De La Salle Christian Brothers exclusively transmitted the Lasallian culture and charism in their schools by their presence. However, since Vatican II, and as the Brothers declined in number, the Brothers and their lay colleagues recognized that the characteristics of Lasallian identity and culture needed to be more explicitly articulated and shared. The articulation of the characteristics of Lasallian identity and culture arose from a renewed study of the writings of St. John Baptist de La Salle, as well as the contemporary experiences and insights of administrators and teachers in Lasallian schools. Van Grieken (1999) argued that the source for dialogue between the charism of St. John Baptist de La Salle and the contemporary world is found in the language of spirituality. This view is shared by Botana (2006), who wrote that “the

Lasallian charism gives rise to Lasallian spirituality, which expresses the sense and human depth of the educational task, and highlights that task as the privileged place of the educator with God” (p. 9).

Van Grieken (1999) identified two complementary sources for Lasallian spirituality, namely its relationship with Lasallian pedagogy, and with the life of Jesus Christ:

Lasallian spirituality is a spirituality that has the school as its setting, the teacher as its focus, and the salvific potential of education as its inspiration. . . . There is no separation between the professional journey and the spiritual journey. . . . And the way he [De La Salle] came to describe that spirit[uality] was in terms of faith and zeal. (pp. 123-124)

Christ is to be found in the teacher: “you are ambassadors and ministers of Christ . . . representing Christ himself. He wants your disciples to see him in you and receive your instructions as if you were giving them to them.” . . . Christ is to be found in the student: “Recognize Jesus [in] . . . the children whom you have to instruct. Adore him in them.” . . . Christ is to be found in the work of education: the task is “to help your disciples to save themselves . . . you must lead them to unite all their actions to those of Jesus Christ.” (p. 124)

Van Grieken also examined the values, beliefs, attitudes and practices that contribute to the uniqueness of Lasallian schools. Ten “operative commitments” evolved from his research regarding the life and writing of St. John Baptist de La Salle, which he combined with traditional and contemporary practices in Lasallian schools. The first five commitments reflect the spirit of faith and address the interior aspects of spirituality. The second five commitments relate to the spirit of zeal and address the exterior aspects of spirituality. The ten operative commitments are:

“The spirit of faith

1. Centered in and nurtured by a life of faith
2. Trusting Providence to discern God’s will
3. With creativity and fortitude
4. Through the agency of the Holy Spirit
5. Incarnating Christian paradigms and dynamics



The spirit of zeal

6. With practical orientations
7. Devoted to accessible and comprehensive education
8. Committed to the poor
9. Working in association
10. Expressing a lay vocation” (pp. 127-128).

Numerous researchers (Lombaerts, 1998; Mann, 1991; Mueller, 1994; Tidd, 2001) have supported the views expressed by Van Grieken.

Lombaerts (1998) pointed out that Lasallian culture is inclusive of the oneness of the ministry of the teacher and his or her personal sanctification, together with an organized approach to the mission and a concern for others. Lombaerts wrote:

According to De La Salle, the work of attending to the needs of others is God’s work. In terms of the two parts of the Lasallian formula, he tells his followers to make no distinction between their educational work and their own sanctification. Growing in holiness involves a change of perspective, so that all one’s attention is redirected to the needy person who is in danger. In the life of De La Salle, the two parts of this formula, efficient organisation and concern for others, are inseparably linked. He worked very hard to unite the two kinds of activity. (p. 223)

Lombaerts also maintained that contemporary Lasallian schools “will reflect the dedication of people two or three hundred years ago, not through close copying, but through the same readiness to take responsibility and to set up suitable organisations and organisational cultures with the necessary imagination” (p. 227).

Mann (1991) posited six characteristics of the Lasallian school that are similar to the ten commitments developed by Van Grieken (1999). The similarities are not surprising because both researchers based their characteristics on the life and writings of St. John Baptist de La Salle, the early Brothers, and the contemporary writings of the identity and culture of a Lasallian school. For Mann, a Lasallian school exhibits the following six traits:

- 1) It is a Christian school in the Roman Catholic tradition.
- 2) It has a curriculum suited to the needs of students.
- 3) Its students are prepared for productive citizenship.
- 4) Its students acquire Christian values.
- 5) The example [of teachers] is the primary means of instruction.
- 6) It is a well run and disciplined operation (pp.20-28).

In another perspective regarding Lasallian culture and charism, Tidd (2001) emphasized that the foundational purpose of the Lasallian school was to procure the two-fold salvation of poor children – from sin, and from want. On the other hand, Mueller (1994) studied Lasallian schools in terms of the goals in relationship to Lasallian culture and charism. He found that principals, teachers, and De La Salle Christian Brothers thought that the schools should have given more emphasis to the Lasallian goals of education. This view was held more strongly by the Brothers than the lay principals and teachers who participated in the study.

#### *Transmission of the Charism of a Religious Congregation*

St. John's College, a Lasallian Catholic school in Australia, no longer has any members of the De La Salle Christian Brothers among its administrators or teachers, but does have a Brother as Chair of the College Board of Directors. This study explored the knowledge that administrators and teachers have regarding the Lasallian charism and how this knowledge has been transmitted. The review of the literature in this part addresses the transmission of the charism of a religious congregation.

Herb (1997) posited three reasons for the continuance of the charism of a congregation in a school when there are few or no members of the religious congregation remaining in the school:

Maintaining the charism of a congregation can be viewed as the transmission of the culture from one generation to another. This can be done through patterns, customs, traditions, and other social mechanisms. Keeping the charism alive is a

way for a religious congregation to sustain the original spirit and collaborate with lay colleagues to insure that it is present in the sponsored institution. Maintaining the charism of the congregation is also a way to help define the Catholic identity of the institution. (p. 60)

Arguably, the maintenance of the charism of a religious congregation in a Catholic school may be viewed as particularly challenging when there are few or no members of the religious congregation involved in the school.

While Lydon's (2009) research noted that modeling by members of religious congregations is the most effective means of transmitting a particular charism, he maintained that a religious charism may also be transmitted by "those lay teachers who have been influenced by working with religious in the past" (p. 54). Tidd (2001) concurred and stated:

From the day to day experience of working alongside the Brothers and older lay teachers. . . . [the lay teachers] in turn, performed the cultural transmission roles . . . for newer lay teachers after them, a process that continues today. The "osmotic effect" of experience as the most important source of one's value orientation in a Lasallian school is supported by the research on school culture. (p. 223).

Grace (2002) maintained that "the charism of the founder and the spirit of the order is [sic] intended to be a significant influence upon the culture and work of those Catholic schools derived from their traditions and origins" (p. 129). He observed that the tradition of charism influence appeared to be in decline in Catholic schooling, but acknowledged the efforts being made to find ways of "handing on the charism" (p. 130).

Tuite (2007) affirmed the important role that lay principals play in transmitting the charism of their school to others, which is of key interest to the study at hand. Tuite's research focused on schools owned by the Congregation of Christian Brothers that embraced the Edmund Rice ethos or charism. Her work revealed that the school's ethos

and values were clearly articulated by the lay principal at all appropriate opportunities, both verbally and in school documentation. Because of these actions, the Edmund Rice charism was learned, understood, and embraced by the school members and its articulation and promulgation were not reserved to the Brothers alone. In addition, her research supported the importance of school formation programs that deepened the faculty's knowledge and understanding of the Edmund Rice charism, which in turn, assisted them in making his charism their own.

The term "sponsorship" is commonly used in the United States to describe the relationship between a school and the religious congregation with which it is associated. However, while the term is not used in the Australian context, the principles of sponsorship are applicable when school administrators are expected to promote the charism of a religious congregation because of the constitution of the school or because the school opts to do so due to historical links. Mueller (2000) advocated sponsorship structures so that the culture of the religious congregation could be maintained in the schools. Sponsorship can enable the identity and culture of the school to be communicated to the school community that no longer has the benefit of extended contact with members of the religious congregation. Mueller argued that

The special . . . culture brought to schools by religious congregations, a culture with a clear foundational history, with heroes and heroines with names and faces, with special traditions, and with special rituals, has been and can still be a source of institutional strength. (p. 59)

In contrast, Herb (1997) noted that the sponsorship of a religious congregation may not necessarily influence the culture of the school. She reported that, unlike the administrators, the teachers did not necessarily identify with the culture of the congregation. The lack of identification arose because individual teachers, one of the

primary influences of school culture, tended to identify with cultures found among their peers, rather than in the cultures found at the governance and administrative levels. The lack of identification by teachers with the culture of a religious congregation is exacerbated when the teachers have little or no contact with members of the religious congregation. Herb claimed that the influence of the founding religious congregation continued to shape the school because of the role of the organization's, in this case a school's, memory. She reported, "My research indicates that the role of a religious congregation is important in shaping the organizational memory. Through the memory of the school and current practices the ideals and mission of the congregation are articulated" (p. 224).

*The Shared Mission of Lasallian Education*

The shared mission of Lasallian education between the De La Salle Christian Brothers and the lay administrators and teachers has its roots in the *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity* (Vatican II, 1965b) and in the documents of the De La Salle Christian Brothers (Arteaga Tobon, 1998; Lasallian National Secretariate, 1997; Schieler, 1995). Johnson (1998), the Superior General of the De La Salle Brothers addressed this shared mission.

[Lay people] take their place as full partners – and we Brothers gladly associate them with us in our mission. We accept that from now on our schools will not be Brothers' schools, animated by the Brothers' community with secondary collaboration of lay teachers, parents, and students. They will be instead, Lasallian schools animated by Lasallian educative communities of faith within which the apostolic activity of the Brothers' community takes place. (p. 4)

Van Grieken (1999) noted that the changes in the role of the laity in Lasallian schools have been both great and radical giving them full and equal partnership in the mission of the school. He further noted that the term shared mission that was used

initially to describe the changed level of association is used less and less, and “Lasallian mission is the preferred way of speaking about the educational activities that are being shared every day in Lasallian schools throughout the world” (p. 17). Tidd (2009b) commented that the movement to full lay partnership with the Brothers “underscored the transformative effects of the concept of shared mission on the Brothers’ Institute and the mission they had committed themselves to with tens of thousands of lay men and women throughout the world” (p. 444).

#### *Australian Lasallian Formation Programs*

The De La Salle Christian Brothers in the District of Australia, New Zealand, and Papua New Guinea established Lasallian Education Services (LES) in 1990 to provide formation programs for Brothers, administrators, teachers, and faculty in Lasallian Catholic schools. Since then Lasallian Education Services has offered one or two day programs at individual Lasallian Catholic schools, and week-long programs for participants from Lasallian Catholic schools throughout Australia at a conference center owned by the De La Salle Christian Brothers at Narooma, in New South Wales. In 2009, 58 participants (including two from St. John’s College), participated in the Narooma programs. A further 16 administrators and teachers from Lasallian Catholic secondary schools are enrolled in Lasallian pedagogy and history courses offered by LES which are recognized for Masters-level credit at the Australian Catholic University (Private communication, B. Carroll, October 10, 2010). These courses are offered online with periodic class attendance required. Participants in the United States of America and England also utilize these courses. Each Lasallian school has appointed a Lasallian

facilitator who coordinates personnel attending courses and arranges programs, distributes resources, and encourages participation in Lasallian events and functions.

### *Summary*

The charism of St. John Baptist de La Salle is well documented, and its application to schools defined. The need for the articulation of these characteristics has increased as the presence of De La Salle Christian Brothers has decreased in Lasallian Catholic schools. This has been crucial in the continuance of the Lasallian tradition in schools where the Brothers are either few in number or no longer have a presence. Researchers have noted that the physical presence of religious was important in having an influence on the culture of the school as perceived by teachers, and that the transmission of the charism of the religious congregation was successful when modelled by senior members of the faculty. The De La Salle Christian Brothers have increasingly shared responsibility for Lasallian schools with their lay partners, and have established formation programs to assist them in sharing these responsibilities.

### Research on Australian Catholic Education

This section considers studies related to Catholic secondary schools, administrators (principals, deputy principals, and religious education coordinators), and teachers. In particular, it reviews studies connected with the influence of spirituality on the perceptions of teachers, teacher expectations and perceptions of their school, and the perceptions of teachers regarding the charism of a religious congregation.

Since Vatican II (1962-1965), there have been an increasing number of research projects relating to Catholic schools in Australia. Many of these projects arose from doctoral research programs of Catholic and public universities, while other research

projects were commissioned by Catholic education authorities regarding diverse topics, such as curriculum development, student achievement, vocational education, and pastoral care (Catholic Education Office Melbourne, 2010). However, to date, there have been comparatively few studies undertaken on the identity and culture of Catholic secondary schools or the role of the teachers in sustaining and promoting that identity and culture. In addition, research regarding administrators in Australian Catholic secondary schools has focused mainly on the principals of the schools rather than other levels of administration.

### *Catholic Secondary Schools*

This section considers the qualitative studies performed by Angus (1988) and Laffan (2004) regarding the Catholic identity and culture of secondary schools in Australia. Angus's (1988) ethnographic study investigated the manner in which Christian Brothers' College (CBC), a combined primary and secondary school for boys in Newburyport (a pseudonym), experienced both continuity and change in response to the broader social and cultural context in which the school operated. The school was owned and administered by the Congregation of Christian Brothers, a religious congregation founded by Blessed Edmund Rice. When the research was undertaken in the mid-1980s, even though the number of Brothers in the school had decreased to 20% of the total number of administrators and faculty, the school was still widely regarded as a Brothers' school. Historically, the students at CBC came from working-class families, but CBC did not aim to reproduce the working-class culture of its students. Rather, the goal of the school was to transform the social position of Catholics in the city from working class to white-collar employment and the professions. Other characteristics of the culture



identified by Angus's review were the transmission of the Catholic faith to students, a strict disciplinary structure within the school, and competition among the students in study and sport. As a result of his investigation, Angus concluded,

The comfort and stability of a combined unity of purpose, the predictability of institutionalized traditions, which once characterized CBC and which were the active creations of an earlier generation of Christian Brothers and Newburyport Catholics, have given way to a period of uncertainty. . . . Although an appearance of stability and conformity exists at CBC, changes have occurred and are occurring at the school. (p. 145)

Angus argued that CBC did not develop in students a critical view of the society in which they lived, but rather prepared the students to perpetuate a social system at variance with Catholic teaching on social justice.

Laffan (2004) conducted an ethnographic study of a Catholic secondary school in Victoria to ascertain its nature and purpose. Her study differed from that of Angus because it was conducted in a regional coeducational school owned by a diocese rather than by a religious congregation. Laffan reported that the principal's vision of the school diverged from those advanced in Church documents because the principal focused on bureaucracy rather than on community, transformation, and service. She claimed that the religious dimension of the school was limited to the "philosophical rhetoric of the school's charism and to prescribed routine practices" (p. 414). In addition, when Laffan compared her findings with those of Angus (1988), she noted that both works revealed schools with an "ethos of authority and control" (p. 424) that was not conducive to the development of community, transformation, and service. She claimed that neither school challenged the prevailing social system, but rather sought to work within it and to perpetuate it.

*Administrators in Catholic Secondary Schools*

The literature within this section addresses Australian research concerning principals, deputy principals and Religious Education Coordinators.

*Principals*

In his ethnographic study of Christian Brothers' College (CBC) (a pseudonym), Angus (1988) paid particular attention to the role of the principal relative to fostering change. He concluded that the culture and tradition of the school had a greater impact than the principal's efforts in affecting change. In contrast, McManus (1992) and Tuite (2007) both found that the principal was the most effective agent in initiating change in a school. In addition, McEvoy (2006) opined that principals are "charged with maintaining charisms and nurturing the essential Catholic nature and purposes of the school in the midst of a complex, ever-changing secular and often antagonistic culture" (p. 268). Belmonte and Cranston (2009), who surveyed principals in Victoria, commented that the Catholic educational ethos is no longer an unquestioned aspect of school culture. They noted that principals now needed to explicitly state the characteristics of Catholic school identity and culture because it could no longer be assumed that teachers were implicitly familiar with them. Principals in the survey contended that other challenges to the Catholic identity and culture of the school arose from the pressure for academic success and the increasing number of students who were either non-Catholic or had no regular connection with a local parish.

Bracken's (2004) case study explored the duties of principals, particularly their leadership regarding the spiritual formation of Catholic school teachers. His work took place in the diocese of Parramatta in New South Wales. His study revealed that the

principal played a critical role in the ongoing spiritual formation of teachers by providing opportunities for them to attend either school-based or diocesan-sponsored programs related to spiritual development. Mellor (2005) maintained that an important benefit of the spiritual formation of teachers is that it increased their commitment to the distinctive identity and culture of the Catholic school.

McEvoy's (2006) research regarding the importance of the principal to the Catholic identity of a school found that "the way in which the principal exercises . . . symbolic and cultural leadership is critical to its authenticity as Catholic" (p. 268). However, the research of d'Arbon, Duignan, and Duncan (2002) suggested that the emphasis on symbolic and cultural leadership required of principals may have led to a shortage of applicants for principals' positions in Catholic schools in New South Wales. The reasons cited were that the responsibilities of principals were too demanding and complex, and the faith leadership dimension of the role was too challenging.

Davison's (2006) study focused on the perceptions of Catholic secondary school principals in the state of Victoria in relation to the religious and spiritual dimensions of their role, while McEvoy's (2006) study was undertaken in South Australia. The principals in both studies perceived their role as being multi-faceted in the sense that not only were they required to lead the school in terms of religious education, they were also expected to be faith community leaders when clergy and pastoral staff were unavailable. Mellor (2005) reported that the principals in his study reported personal tension between their role as a principal and their personal dissent from some official Church teachings. A similar tension between the role of the principal and official Church teaching was also noted in the works of McLaughlin (1996) and Coughlan (2009). McEvoy asserted that

diocesan education authorities perceived that the role of the principal in a Catholic school was essentially a religious one.

Mellor's (2005) study explored the changing perceptions of Catholic school principals in Queensland regarding the nature of the contemporary Catholic school.

Relative to the changing context, Mellor wrote:

A renegotiation and re-imagining of the nature and function of the Catholic school concerns two main points. On the one hand, lay people, both men and women, are being called to the ministry of principalship in Catholic schools as lay people assume roles within the educational ministry previously usually fulfilled by religious. If this is not to be denigrated as "ministry by default", a clear appreciation of both the vocation of the lay state and the nature of ministry is crucial. On the one hand, issues of popular credibility in the wider, institutional Church and, to some extent, its clerical leadership, add an element of delicacy to the situation. (p. 67)

Mellor also noted that the principals stressed the effects of a holistic education, but seldom viewed the school's mission in salvific terms. In addition, his research revealed that principals and the institutional Church did not share the same views regarding the goals of evangelization in Catholic schools. The institutional Church maintained that evangelization should be directed towards participation in the ecclesial community, while principals promoted Gospel values as their goal. Mellor contended that principals acknowledged the reality of conflict, tension, and diversity in the wider community, and took this into account when building community in a contemporary Catholic school.

Other contemporary researchers (Belmonte & Cranston, 2009; Belmonte, Cranston, & Limerick, 2006; Coughlan, 2009; McEvoy, 2006) have studied the changed context of Catholic schools and the resultant implications of that changed context for principals. The researchers noted that many characteristics of contemporary Catholic schools in Australia required a change in the role of the principal as students no longer

come from a struggling underclass and no longer form a homogenous single-faith community. Coughlan (2009) maintained that

The growing divide between the principal's understanding of the nature and purpose of the Catholic school and the "official" or "traditional" understanding as espoused by Church documents and Church leadership presents a real problem. Principals are expressing a very different understanding of their role, particularly in the area of faith leadership. . . . There are concerns that the authentic identity of Catholic schools is being diluted to dangerous levels, while others would argue that the recent directions being taken by schools is in harmony with the fresh spirit of Vatican II. (p. 8)

McEvoy, together with Belmonte and Cranston, argued that it was now more important than ever for school principals to know the meaning of the identity, culture, and purpose of a Catholic school. Belmonte and Cranston's study found that principals "as architects and caretakers of Catholic schools, preserving the Catholic character of a school is not something that will happen automatically" (p. 313).

### *Deputy Principals*

Novacek and Godfrey (2002) asserted that deputy principals are significant contributors to the culture of Catholic schools. This finding is of special note as this study aims to explore the perceptions of such leaders relative to the school culture at St. John's College. Novasek and Godfrey based their assertion on the fact that students, teachers, and other administrators see the seniority and experience of deputy principals as being important. They noted that in the West Australian Catholic secondary school context where they conducted their research, the deputy principal is responsible for the day-to-day management of the school, and therefore is particularly influential in shaping school culture. The deputy principal thus has a strong influence on the religious culture of the school through: timetabling; interaction with other administrators, teachers, and

students; presence and involvement in religious activities; and, positive reinforcement of the religious values of the school.

### *Religious Education Coordinators*

A key position in Australian Catholic secondary schools is that of the Religious Education Coordinator (REC). The REC will be classified as an administrator for the purpose of this study because the REC has an important role relative to the Lasallian and Catholic identity and culture of St. John's College. Fleming (2002) conducted a mixed methods study that analysed the perceptions of RECs in secondary schools of the Archdiocese of Melbourne. He reported that they perceived their role in relation to the Catholic identity and culture of the school as delegated leadership. The RECs argued that while the primary responsibility for Catholic identity and culture rested with the principal and the school board or diocesan education office, their religious education role was an integral component in promoting the Catholic identity and culture of the school.

### *Teachers in Catholic Secondary Schools*

One of the factors studied extensively during the past 20 years in Australia has been the spirituality of teachers in Catholic schools (Downey, 2006; Flynn, 1993; Flynn & Mok, 2000; Hughes, 2008; Prest, 2000). Researchers have particularly focused on the relationship between the spirituality of the teachers and their perception of their own role and their perception of the identity of their school. In the studies conducted by Prest, Downey, and Hughes respectively, the perceptions of teachers regarding the charism of the religious congregation emerged although it was not a focus of any of the studies. Teachers' perceptions of the charism of a religious congregation is particularly relevant

to this study at St. John's College because the school identifies itself with the charism of the De La Salle Christian Brothers.

*The Influence of Spirituality on the Perceptions of Teachers*

Research in Australia confirms a positive correlation between the level of teachers' spiritual development and their commitment to the Catholicity of their school, that is, the more developed teachers were spiritually, the greater was their commitment to the Catholic identity and culture of their schools. For example, Flynn (1993) in his survey of teachers in Catholic secondary schools in New South Wales concluded that Catholic teachers who attended Church weekly held a significantly higher level of religious values than those who did not in areas such as the following:

- the religious nature of the school,
- religious expectations,
- standards expected by the school,
- religious commitment,
- attitudes to Mass,
- attitudes to the Church,
- social justice values,
- moral values,
- spiritual reading, and
- the Catholic character of the school. (p. 405)

Flynn noted, "On all the above values, the differences between practicing Catholic teachers and other teachers were highly significant" (p. 405). However, Flynn's research was criticized by Ryan and McLaughlin (1999) because it failed to reflect some of the transformational themes found in documents issued by the SCCE (1977, 1988), and because his research seemed to assume that Catholic schools were mono-cultural.

Likewise, Prest (2000) conducted a survey regarding the spirituality of 2,714 lay teachers in Catholic secondary schools in Victoria and Tasmania. He considered,

The spirituality of teachers arises from the particular ways in which they respond to the Holy Spirit who urges them to nurture, form, and educate the young. A spirituality is initiated by the Holy Spirit, engendered by a religious tradition (in this case Catholicism), experienced by others as qualities and attitudes of the person, and arises, at the level of secondary causes, out of the human struggle to make meaningful the particular circumstances of one's life. (pp. 8-9)

In addition to his large-scale survey, Prest also interviewed 198 teachers identified by their principals as especially committed to the Catholic ethos of their schools. He reported that teachers who attended Church weekly showed more support for the teaching authority of the Church, and were more active evangelizers of their students. He contended that teachers who did not attend church on a weekly basis identified significantly less with the local Catholic community and with the Church than those who did attend weekly.

The research of Bracken (2004), Downey (2006) and Hughes (2008) focused on teachers in Australian Catholic secondary schools and their spirituality. Downey claimed that Catholic schools operated on an assumption that teachers knew about, and were animated by, the ecclesial identity of the school. He suggested that by nourishing the spirituality of teachers through formation programs and experiences, teachers were more likely to be committed to promoting the Catholic identity of their school. Bracken noted that a core of committed Catholic teachers was vital for shaping the Catholic culture of a school, and like Hughes, recommended spiritual formation programs for teachers to enhance the Catholic culture. Hughes's study found that the perceptions of teachers regarding the Catholic identity of their schools ranged from being "too Catholic" to not being "sufficiently Catholic." He classified 32 of the 60 teachers in his study as Catholics, of whom nine teachers were classified "uncritical" Catholics because they felt it inappropriate to question the authority of the Church, while the other 23 teachers were



classified “reflective” Catholics because they had thought critically about religious faith and the Church. Six teachers were classified as “religious” because of their membership of a Christian denomination, while the remaining 22 teachers practiced no religious faith or had varying degrees of belief in something beyond this life. Hughes reported that the teachers interviewed were open to formation programs that explored how the Catholic identity and culture of their school should affect their teaching and the relationships they built with students.

#### *Teacher Expectations and Perceptions of Their School*

Leavey (1993) maintained that “the quality of [faculty] and their understanding of and continued commitment to the religious goals of the school and to the theory of Catholic education is the major safeguard to the school’s religious identity” (p. 9). However, she contended that most teachers had little knowledge of the goals of Catholic schools, and even less understanding of the policies and curriculum practices arising from the goals. She attributed the reason for the lack of knowledge and understanding of official Church goals to different professional priorities, different degrees of belonging and identification with the Church, and different levels of maturity.

The study of teachers’ perceptions of the Catholic identity and culture of St. John’s College will include teachers in the early stages of their professional careers in a Catholic school, and McLaughlin’s (1999) survey of 600 students in teacher education programs at the Australian Catholic University offers insights regarding the religious background and attitudes of younger teachers. His study noted that an increasing number of these students could be described as cultural Catholics. He described cultural Catholics as having loyalty to the Church and sympathetic towards its heritage, but

refusing to unilaterally acknowledge the authority of church leaders. Most of the teacher education students at the Australian Catholic University who participated in the survey would have applied for teaching positions in Catholic schools. Consequently, their level of commitment to Catholicism influences their perceptions of their school, and their ability to be witnesses to the Gospel message is lessened.

In their survey of 1,657 teachers in Catholic secondary schools in New South Wales, Flynn and Mok (2000) included questions regarding teachers' expectations of their school and their perceptions of its culture. Flynn and Mok found that only two religious expectations were included among the highest priorities of teachers relating to personal, academic, social and religious goals, namely:

- Provide an atmosphere of Christian community where people are concerned for one another (3<sup>rd</sup> in rank and endorsed by 96% of teachers)
- Develop Christian values in students' lives (16<sup>th</sup> in rank and endorsed by 85% of teachers). (p. 122)

Flynn and Mok also noted that these findings were similar to those obtained in an earlier survey conducted as part of a longitudinal study (Flynn, 1993).

Flynn and Mok (2000) conceptualized the culture of a Catholic school in terms of five dimensions that provide meaning to the school community, namely core beliefs, values, traditions, symbols, and patterns of behavior. They found that 75% of teachers were very positive in their responses to the 25 survey statements regarding their perception of the culture of the school. Three statements in particular dealt with aspects of the religious culture of the school:

- The Principal places importance on the religious nature of the school (1<sup>st</sup> in rank and endorsed by 90% of teachers)
- The school places importance on the religious mission of the school (4<sup>th</sup> in rank and endorsed by 87% of teachers)

- The school provides an experience of life based on the values of Christ and the Gospels (12<sup>th</sup> in rank and endorsed by 77% of teachers). (pp. 170-171)

Prest (2000) noted that only 28% of all teachers were nominated by their principals as being capable teachers who were committed to maintaining the Catholic identity and culture of their schools. He questioned whether the Catholic school system had grown beyond the ability of capable and committed teachers to maintain the Catholic identity and culture of the schools. Flynn (1993) expressed similar sentiments when he wrote that “It would appear that if we are serious about having Catholic schools whose religious character makes them distinctive, then the quality of the teachers whom principals employ will make an important difference” (p. 406).

#### *Perceptions of Teachers Regarding Charism*

The relationship between the identity and culture of a Catholic school and its relationship to the tradition of a particular religious congregation surfaced during the interviews conducted by Hughes (2008). He commented:

It is noteworthy that the founder of the order running the school (such as Edmund Rice and Mary Ward) or the patron of the school was quite frequently mentioned in the interviews and always positively. Several interviewees explicitly said that they identified more with the religious order of the school than with it being a Catholic school. One possible reason for this was that most of the people referred to were practical and pastoral in their concerns for young people. . . . Another possible reason is Catholicism as a broad institution has some negative associations which are avoided by a specific focus on founders or patrons. (p. 26)

Prest (2000) likewise noted that two-thirds of the lay teachers interviewed in his study recognized that the educational philosophy and practice of a religious congregation had been influential in forming their personal philosophy of education. However, Downey (2006) argued that the spirituality of a religious congregation had little relevance to lay

teachers because of the lay teacher's vocation to be a spouse and a parent, as well as a teacher.

### *Summary*

Beginning with Flynn's (1975) research, there has been a steady stream of research projects undertaken on Catholic schools and those who administer and teach in them. The portrait that emerges is one in which administrators are faced with numerous challenges to the identity of their schools. The review of literature indicates that the increasing distance of many teachers from traditional Catholic practices and beliefs has considerable implications for the future identity and culture of the schools.

#### Educational Literature Related to School Identity and Culture

This section focuses on literature related to school identity and culture by practitioners in the field. In particular, it considers the role of administrators and teachers in relation to the promotion of school identity and culture. Educational leadership in Catholic schools extends beyond the office of the principal to every level of the school (Peterson & Deal, 1998). Moreover, both Church and Lasallian documents emphasized the importance of teachers to the fulfilment of the mission of the Catholic school (Vatican II, 1965a). However, the role of the principal must not be overlooked for it is an extremely important one. For example, the work of Lawrence-Lightfoot (1983) acknowledged this, noting:

The people most responsible for defining the school's vision and articulating the ideological stance are the principals or headmasters of these schools. They are the voice . . . of the institution, and it is their job to communicate with the various constituencies . . . The tone and culture of schools is said to be defined by the vision and purposeful action of the principal . . . [who] must inspire the commitment and energies of the faculty; the respect, if not the admiration of . . . students; and the trust of parents. (p. 322)

According to Peterson and Deal (1998), school leaders do several important things when they shape culture:

First, they read the culture – its history and current condition. Leaders should know the deeper meanings embedded in the school before trying to reshape it. Second, leaders uncover and articulate core values . . . Finally, leaders work to fashion a positive context, reinforcing cultural elements that are positive and modifying those that are negative and dysfunctional. (p. 30)

Deal and Peterson maintained that the role of school leaders in shaping culture is pervasive – by their words, their non-verbal messages, their actions, and their accomplishments.

Sergiovanni (2009) identified five forces of leadership – technical, human, educational, symbolic, and cultural. The last two are particularly relevant to the relationship between leadership and school culture. Sergiovanni characterized the symbolic force available to principals as the power that leaders had to focus the attention of others on matters of importance to the school. He stated, “Symbolic aspects are managing sentiments, expectations, commitments, and faith itself. Because symbolic leadership affects the faith that people have in the school, it provides the principal with a powerful force for influencing school events” (p. 137). He suggested that when the cultural force of leadership is expressed, the principal assumes the role of a “high priest” (p. 142). In the role of “high priest,” the principal seeks “to define, strengthen, and articulate those enduring values, beliefs, and cultural strands that give the school its unique identity over time” (p. 137). He stated that the ultimate intent of cultural leadership was to transform the school into a moral community where relationships are “more special, meaningful, and personalized” (p. 113).

Church and Lasallian documents have long recognized the central role of teachers in relation to a school's identity and culture. However, educational literature has focused mainly on the role of the principal in shaping the identity and culture of the school (Deal, 1993; Deal & Peterson, 1990, 1999; Lancaster, 1992; Sashkin & Sashkin, 1993; Sergiovanni, 2009), while relatively few have considered the role of teachers (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1983; Sizer, 2004). Deal and Peterson (2009) observed that teachers have a dual role as transmitters and shapers of the school's culture. They held that there are heroes and heroines among the teachers in every school who are the key to forming a strong culture for the school.

To be a hero or heroine, one doesn't have to be Joan of Arc, Martin Luther King Jr., or Patton, Mother Teresa, or Cesar Chavez. One only needs to be an emblem or exemplar of core values. . . . Heroines and heroes show us what we can aspire to. They provide the culture with a concrete image of what a school values and holds most dear. (pp. 120-121)

### *Summary*

Both administrators and teachers have a vital role to play in the promotion of the identity and culture of a school. While the principal defines and articulates the identity and culture of the school, teachers are especially important in transmitting and shaping the identity and culture of it. The review of the literature indicates that administrators and teachers have the responsibility and authority to promote the Catholic identity and culture of their school, but that they often lack the knowledge, willingness, and spiritual formation to do so.

### Summary of the Review of Literature

The identity and culture of Catholic schools is facing challenges from the ecclesial, social, and educational contexts in which they operate. In Australia, the

challenges for Catholic school administrators arise from an increasingly non-Catholic and unchurched school community that includes teachers, students, and parents. Of particular note is the widening gulf between the sentiments expressed in papal and Church documents and the reality of the situation in Catholic secondary schools in Australia. The Catholic Church in Australia is becoming increasingly cognisant of these challenges and is moving from a catechetical approach in its schools to one of evangelization for all members of the school community. Related literature by leading researchers in Catholic education has validated these emerging trends.

Lasallian Catholic schools face the challenge of maintaining and promoting its charism when there are few or no Brothers in the schools. They are meeting these challenges by providing formation programs, as well as clarifying the essential elements of Lasallian identity and culture for those responsible for their promotion. The literature suggests, however, that there is a gap between what administrators and teachers have a responsibility and authority to do and what they are willing and capable of undertaking.

Research on Australian Catholic schools, administrators, and teachers confirms the trend that contemporary Catholic schools face a crisis regarding their identity and culture. The most important issue to emerge is the need to enhance the spiritual formation of teachers as critical to the promotion of a greater commitment to the Catholic identity and culture of the schools.

This study explored qualitatively the knowledge that administrators and teachers have regarding the Lasallian and Catholic identity and culture of St. John's College and how they perceive their role in the promotion of the Lasallian and Catholic identity and culture. The literature has raised some issues that administrators and teachers at the

school may have regarding its Catholic or Lasallian identity. The chapter that follows details the methodology used to explore these perceptions and issues.



## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

#### Restatement of the Purpose

This study responded to the need for more in-depth exploration of Catholic schools in Australia. It explored qualitatively the perceptions of administrators and teachers relative to the identity and culture of St. John's College (a pseudonym), a Lasallian Catholic secondary school in Australia. The researcher investigated through interviews, observations, and analyses of school documents, how administrators and teachers of St. John's College characterized the identity and culture of a Lasallian Catholic secondary school, and the ways in which they perceived St. John's College reflects those characteristics. It considered how administrators and teachers perceived their role in the promotion of the Lasallian Catholic identity and culture of St. John's College. Lastly, it sought to identify what has enhanced, as well as challenged, the Lasallian Catholic identity and culture at St. John's College.

#### Research Design

The research was a case study of St. John's College, because this design provided an appropriate means of answering the research questions under exploration. The five research questions were answered through an analysis of data collected primarily through interviews, supplemented by observations, and the analyses of documentation at St. John's College.

According to Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2001), case study research enables the following benefits. First, it promotes understanding of complex interrelationships. Second, it is grounded in "lived reality." Third, it facilitates the exploration of the

unexpected and the unusual. Fourth, it describes the processes involved in causal relationships. Lastly, it facilitates rich conceptual and theoretical development. All five are pertinent to this study, which sought to answer its research questions through interviews, observations, and analyses of documents.

## Research Setting

### *Background*

Secondary schools in Australia are identified by terms such as “College,” “Secondary College,” or “High School.” Students are identified by their “Year” level rather than by their “Grade.” A typical Australian secondary school caters for students in Years (Grades) 7-12 or Years (Grades) 8-12 depending on the State in which the school is located. In a small number of cases, a school may cater to primary school students, as well as secondary school students. In such cases, both the primary and secondary school students attend a particular “College.” The schools that cater to both primary and secondary school students usually have the primary students located on a separate or adjacent campus. St. John’s College, the site for this case study, caters to both primary and secondary school students on two separate campuses.

### *Historical Development*

St. John’s College is located in the suburbs of an Australian state capital. Its development has been shaped by the changing needs for Catholic education in the geographical area that it serves. Table 2 presents the stages in the historical development of St. John’s College from 1954 to the present.

Table 1

*Stages in the Historical Development of St. John's College From 1954 to Present*

Years	Junior Campus Site	Senior Campus Site
1954 - 1966	Years 4-12 Boys	—————
1967 - 1971	Years 4-8 Boys	Years 9-12 Boys
1972 - 2005	Years 4-8 Boys	Years 9-10 Boys Years 11-12 Coeducation
2006 - present	Reception (Kindergarten) - Year 7 Boys	Years 8-9 Boys Years 8-9 Girls Year 10 A Combination of Coeducational and Single-sex Classes Years 11-12 Coeducation

The senior campus was established on another site to cater for the increased enrollment of boys as the local population grew in numbers. The Catholic girls' schools that served the same geographical area as St. John's College did not offer classes at Years 11 and 12, so St. John's College began accepting girls as students in those grades in 1980. In 2001, the Catholic Education Office undertook a study of the provision of Catholic education in the Archdiocese, and this led to a reconfiguration of some of the schools including St. John's College.

*Governance and Administration*

The De La Salle Christian Brothers served as administrators and teachers at St. John's College from its foundation in 1954 until 2009. The Brothers formed the majority of the faculty in the early years, but an increasing number of lay teachers were employed as the College expanded. Lay teachers increasingly undertook administrative positions within the College, and this culminated with the appointment of the first lay principal in 2005.

A Board of Directors accountable to the Visitor of the De La Salle Christian Brothers was established in 2005 as part of a two-tier governance structure. The Visitor of the De La Salle Christian Brothers and the District Council determine matters, such as the philosophy of St. John's College, the composition of the Board of Directors, the appointment of the principal, and any matters connected with the property on which St. John's College is located. The Board of Directors has the power to recommend the appointment of a principal, to undertake the appraisal of the principal, to conduct periodic reviews of the College, and to develop policies for the College in collaboration with the principal.

The administrative team of St. John's College is comprised of a principal, three deputy principals, and the business manager. One of the three deputy principals is located on the junior campus of the College. On the senior campus, the site for this study, there are also 95 faculty members, 30 of whom serve in dual roles as administrators and teachers. One of these administrators and teachers is the Religious Education Coordinator (REC). The REC has important responsibilities regarding the promotion of the Lasallian Catholic identity and culture of St. John's College. Other administrative roles include participant department chairs, pastoral care campus ministry coordinators, and liaison officers with State examination and employment organizations. Administrators and teachers are employed under the conditions of an Enterprise Agreement that limits a full-time teacher's allocated teaching load to about 24 periods (19 hours) per week.

### *Students*

The senior campus of St. John's College had 1,150 students in Years 8-12 in 2010, and the number of students will rise to 1,200 as coeducation is phased in. The College has gender-specific classes in Years 8 and 9, and Year 10 classes are transitional with some classes being gender-specific and others coeducational. The Year 11 and 12 classes are coeducational. Girls comprised about 30% of the total student enrollment on the senior campus of the school in 2010, but a more equitable gender balance is expected over time. The senior campus of the College has one of the largest non-government secondary school enrollments in its State.

Socio-economically, 15% of the students come from families in the bottom quarter of the population, 17% from families in the top quarter of the population, and the remaining 68% are from the middle quarters. The students are predominantly from a European background, with many being descendants of Italian immigrants. In terms of religious affiliation, 80% of students come from Catholic families, 17% of students come from families of other Christian denominations, and 3% come from families with non-Christian or no religious affiliation.

St. John's College follows the State curriculum for all secular subjects. The Archdiocesan Catholic Education Office provides the Religious Education curriculum. In Years 8, 9 and 10, students follow a core curriculum with several electives available. In Year 11, students must undertake courses in English, Mathematics, and Studies in Religion. In addition, students choose from over 40 subjects and courses to meet the requirements for the State Certificate that is awarded on successful completion of Grade 12. St. John's College offers over 20 subjects in Vocational Education courses as varied

as Aquaculture, Building and Construction, and Hospitality that combine classroom lessons with workplace experience. After completion of Year 12, 70% of St. John's College students enroll at universities, 15% attend technical colleges, 10% commence apprenticeships or traineeships, and the remaining 5% either enter employment or their post-school destination is unknown.

#### *Finances*

Funding from the Federal Government and the State Government provides about 70% of the \$15,750,000 (USD) budget for both campuses of St. John's College. The remaining 30% comes from school fees. The annual tuition fee for a student at the senior campus of the College in 2010 was about \$5,500 (USD). The largest item in the College budget is wages and salaries (70%), followed by administration costs (10%), and teaching expenses including participant department budgets and professional development (8%).

#### *Facilities*

The senior campus of St. John's College occupies a 9.5-hectare (23.5 acre) property. There are 50 general classrooms in single and double storey blocks, as well as a large chapel, gymnasium, drama theatre, music room, library, six technical participant rooms, and three studios.

#### *Population*

The universal population for this study were the 99 administrators and teachers at St. John's College. The school has three senior administrators – the principal and two deputy principals. It has 30 teachers who serve in both administrative and teaching roles at the school and 66 who are full-time teachers. St John's College has a junior campus on

another site, but the administrators and teachers on that campus did not participate in this study.

Approval to conduct this study was received from the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS) at the University of San Francisco (Appendix A), and the Board of Directors of St. John's College (Appendix B).

### *Sample*

The sample for this case study was 15 participants, each of whom were assigned pseudonyms to protect their identity. Three of the participants were administrators – the principal, and two deputy principals. Twelve teachers were selected proportionately from a stratified matrix based on gender and length of service (0-5 years, 5-15 years, greater than 15 years) at St. John's College. The matrix is shown in Table 3, with the number of teachers interviewed shown in parentheses. Two teachers initially selected to participate in interviews did not wish to participate, so other teachers were selected from the same category. The advice of administrators was sought to ensure that the teachers selected for interviews on the basis of gender and length of service also represented a broad cross-section of the faculty in terms of their level of commitment to the Lasallian Catholic identity and culture of St. John's College.

Table 3

*Number of Teachers at St. John's College and the Number Who Were Interviewed (in parentheses)*

	Less than 5 years of service at St. John's College	5-15 years of service at St. John's College	More than 15 years of service at St. John's College	Total
Female	26 (3)	10 (2)	4 (1)	40 (6)
Male	18 (2)	19 (2)	18 (2)	55 (6)
Total	44 (5)	29 (4)	22 (3)	95 (12)

Administrators and teachers selected to participate in the study received the following documents for consideration: (1) a letter inviting them to participate in the study, and informing them that their right of confidentiality is guaranteed (Appendix C); (2) two copies of *Consent to be a Research Participant* (Appendix D), of which if they willingly consented to participate in the study, one copy was retained for their records, and the other copy was signed and returned to the researcher; (3) a *Research Participants' Bill of Rights* (Appendix E); and, (4) a *Pre-Interview Demographic Questionnaire* (Appendix F) that consenting participants completed and returned to the researcher with the signed consent form.

## Instrumentation

### *Interviews*

A researcher-designed *Interview Guide* (Appendix G) derived from the five research questions of the study and the literature of Lasallian and Catholic school identity and culture guided the interviews for the administrators and teachers of St. John's College. The interviews lasted between 25 minutes and 70 minutes as the administrators and teachers who participated in the study varied considerably in their ability to respond to the questions posed by the researcher. The interviews were digitally recorded and took place in a private office at St. John's College to insure confidentiality.

### *Observations*

During the period of research at St. John's College, the researcher observed a faculty meeting, weekly faculty briefings, and an administrative team meeting. The researcher had intended to attend a Religious Education subject area meeting, but none were held during the weeks that he was present at the school. Casual observations were



undertaken in the faculty room, and at school events and celebrations. The researcher-designed *Observation Guide* (Appendix H) assisted the researcher in this observational process and augmented the information provided by participants during interviews. The *Observation Guide* focused on the following general topics:

- Environment
- School Practices and Programs
- Relationships
- Presentations and Informal Conversations

When the opportunity arose in informal conversation, individual participants in the study were asked questions regarding their perception of an event, meeting, or presentation that the researcher observed in which there were issues relating to Lasallian and Catholic identity and culture. Observation notes that described what happened at the presentation, meeting, or event were typed up each day.

#### *Documentation*

During the period of research at St. John's College, the researcher collected copies of the faculty handbook, the *Constitution of St. John's College*, the *Collective Bargaining Agreement* (union contract), school newsletters, faculty appointment letters, and faculty role description documents. The *Documentation Guide* (Appendix I) was used to analyze these documents relative to the following topics:

- The Lasallian and Catholic Components of School Identity and Culture
- Administrators' Role Relative to Identity and Culture
- Teacher Formation
- Community Relationships

## Validity

Golafshani (2003) noted that the aim of a good qualitative study is to provide understanding of a topic that might otherwise be unknown. He posited that validity emerges from the quality, rigor, and trustworthiness of the research, and that reliability is a consequence of validity.

The issue of validity of the qualitative methods used in this case study are addressed through data triangulation and method triangulation. Triangulation is used by qualitative researchers to check and establish validity in their studies, and the use of multiple methods strengthens their studies (Guion, 2002; Patton, 2002). Patton (2002) asserted that in qualitative research . . .

There are no formulas for determining significance. No ways exist of perfectly replicating the researcher's analytical thought patterns. No straightforward tests can be applied for reliability and validity. . . . [The qualitative researcher must, with] full intellect fairly represent the data and communicate what the data reveal given the purpose of the study. (p. 433)

Data was obtained from interviews with administrators and teachers, the collection of documents related to school philosophy, promotion, and teacher professional development, and observation of meetings and the weekly prayer and briefing for administrators and teachers. Care was taken in the transcription of interviews and recording field notes. Participants checked the transcripts of the interviews to ensure that the data collected was accurately recorded and clearly understood by the researcher.

## Reliability

Reliability in quantitative research is linked with the replicability of results or observations. The test for reliability in a qualitative research is the quality of the study, the ability to which it can promote understanding. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) stated that

Qualitative researchers tend to view reliability as a fit between what they record as data and what actually occurs in the setting under study . . . two researchers studying a single setting may come up with different data and produce different findings. Both studies can be reliable. One would only question the reliability of one or both studies if they yielded contradictory or incompatible results. (p. 40)

The reliability of this study comes from its focus on accurately identifying and documenting recurrent consistent or inconsistent behavioral patterns, conceptual themes, and personal views regarding the identity and culture of a Catholic secondary school that are being studied in the school situation.

#### Data Collection Procedures

To answer the research questions of this study, data collection consisted of interviews with administrators and teachers, observations, and collection of documents. The interviews were recorded on a digital voice recorder, and were transcribed manually by the researcher after each interview. The researcher used *Transcriva*, a software program designed to permit audio recordings to be linked with interview transcriptions. A copy of the interview transcript was given to each participant for review. A follow-up meeting was scheduled with each participant to enable the participant to clarify or correct any responses recorded in the transcript. Notes of observations using the *Observation Guide* were transcribed each day. Printed transcripts of the interviews, together with observation notes, and documentation summaries, were filed in three binders – one for administrator and teacher interviews, one for observation notes, and one for documentation. All printed data were stored securely in a locked filing cabinet to which the researcher had the only key. At the conclusion of the research, all interviews, observation notes, and documentation summaries were scanned and filed electronically.

These electronic files were stored on an external hard-drive and in password-protected Google documents on the University of San Francisco website.

### Data Analysis

Patton (2002) maintained that the lines between data collection and analysis are not clear-cut because ideas for directions of analysis will emerge as patterns take shape and possible themes come to mind. A cross-interview analysis of each question in the *Interview Guide* was made. This involved grouping together similar answers from participants to the same question, and identifying different perspectives on important issues relating to Lasallian and Catholic identity and culture. A qualitative data analysis (QDA) software program, *HyperResearch*, was utilized to facilitate data storage, coding themes, retrieval, comparison of passages in interview transcripts and observation notes, and potential links. Hurworth and Shrimpton (2007), in a review of *HyperResearch*, asserted that the program enabled strong coding and retrieval, as well as generation and testing of theories and cross-case analysis, useful features for this case study. However, as Patton noted, it is not a particular QDA program but the researcher who “decide[s] what things go together to form a pattern, what constitutes a theme, what to name it, and what meanings to extract” (p. 442). Patton described a pattern or theme as “a core meaning”, and maintained that a pattern is primarily “a descriptive finding . . . while a theme takes a more categorical or topical form” (p. 453).

The interview transcripts and documents were searched for themes - recurring words, phrases, and concepts. The analyses of themes were both inductive and deductive. The early stages of the analysis were primarily inductive as codes were developed, while the latter stages were deductive during which the inductive content

analysis was tested for authenticity and appropriateness, and data that did not fit the categories inductively developed were carefully examined.

#### Qualifications of the Researcher

The researcher has 33 years of experience in Lasallian Catholic secondary schools. His educational experiences have taken place in Australia, New Zealand, and California. His experiences have also been in many different roles: classroom teacher, boarding master, grade-level co-ordinator, participant department head, careers advisor, sports coach, head of campus, and principal. In these varied roles within Catholic secondary schools, the researcher has been part of discussions and decision-making that have influenced the direction of the Catholic schools in which he was employed. He worked in Catholic schools during the period of transition from 1972 until 2006 when lay teachers gradually assumed the teaching and administrative roles formerly held by members of the De La Salle Christian Brothers. He was involved in two large-scale quantitative research projects regarding the work practices of teachers in Catholic secondary schools in Sydney, Australia, and the role of teacher-librarians in Catholic schools. He has two bachelor's degrees and four master's degrees in participant areas as diverse as theology, religious education, history, scripture, geography, and mathematics. This broad range of experience and education, together with 40 years of commitment to Lasallian education and ideals, provide a strong foundation for the qualitative research that is at the heart of this study.

The researcher is passionate in his belief that administrators and teachers in Catholic schools are ultimately responsible for ensuring that their school develops and retains its Catholic identity and culture. He also strongly believes that the Lasallian

tradition offers teachers a spirituality and philosophy that will enhance their effectiveness as administrators and teachers. The researcher recognizes that there is always much more to learn about Lasallian Catholic education, and that this study has significantly increased his knowledge and understanding of the topic.

#### Summary

This chapter has outlined the methodology that was used in this case study. It identified the sample of administrators and teachers at St. John's College who were interviewed regarding their perceptions of the identity and culture of a Lasallian Catholic school. It described the observations and analyses of documentation that supplemented the data obtained from the interviews. It outlined the basis for the validity and reliability of this study. Lastly, it summarized the qualifications of the researcher who served, together with the *Interview Guide*, *Observation Guide*, and *Documentation Guide*, as an instrument of this qualitative study.

The first three chapters outlined the need, the purpose and the background of the study, the literature that informed the study, and the methodology used to answer the five research questions. The chapter that follows focused on the findings of the study.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

#### Introduction

This chapter provides the reader with a descriptive account of the perceptions of administrators and teachers regarding the Lasallian Catholic identity and culture of St. John's College based on the findings of interviews, observations, and data analysis of school publications that formed the methodology for this case study. The five research questions provide the framework for reporting the findings. Themes are linked to the literature reviewed in Chapter II where appropriate.

Three administrators and 12 teachers participated in the case study. In this chapter, the teachers were classified by the length of their employment by St. John's College. The three classifications used are "relatively new teacher" for a teacher employed by St. John's College for less than five years, "established teacher" for a teacher employed by St. John's College between five and 15 years, and "long-serving teacher" for a teacher employed by St. John's College for more than 15 years. Two of the teachers classified as "relatively new teachers" had prior experience in other secondary schools before being employed by St. John's College, while the other three "relatively new teachers" had only been employed as teachers by St. John's College. Pseudonyms were assigned to each of the study participants. Appendix K lists the study participants by their categories. Appendix K also includes the number of times that each participant is identified in the study for a quotation, or for a remark that was paraphrased by the researcher, and shows that all participants contributed, to varying degrees, to the findings of the study.

### Research Question 1 Findings

The first research question sought to ascertain how administrators and teachers at St. John's College characterized the identity and culture of a Lasallian Catholic secondary school. Participants were asked questions relating to the identity and culture of Catholic schools and Lasallian schools as distinct but related concepts, as well as how they had come to their understanding of these concepts. Data were obtained from interviews with the study participants that lasted between 30 minutes and 70 minutes.

#### *Characteristics of a Catholic School*

The first question in this section sought to ascertain the distinguishing characteristics of a Catholic school. The characteristics and themes that emerged from analysis of the responses are listed alphabetically in Table 4. The four major characteristics – educational, organizational, religious, and relational – are divided into specific themes.

Table 4

#### *Characteristics and Themes Emerging From Analysis of Data Relating to Administrators and Teachers' Characterizations of a Catholic Secondary School*

Characteristics	Themes
Educational	Education of Whole Person Promotion of Student Spirituality Religious Education Program
Organizational	Diocesan, Systemic, and Parish Links Employment Policies Enrollment Policies Governance
Religious	Identification with Christ and the Catholic Church Charisms of Religious Congregations Visual Catholic Culture Communal Worship
Relational	Community Outreach Relationships Between Members of the School Community



A majority of the participants, especially the teachers, were unable to distinguish clearly the characteristics of Catholic schools, in general, and the distinctive Catholic traits of St. John's College, in particular.

### *Educational Characteristics*

Only one participant, Wayne Thompson, an established teacher and a non-Catholic, identified the education of the whole person as a distinguishing feature of a Catholic secondary school. He noted that one of the strengths of a Catholic school that gave him enjoyment was the education of the whole person. For him, education was “not just the academic or the artistic or the sporting, but the aim of a Catholic school . . . is to give a holistic education – an education in all realms of a person's character.” This statement supports one of the characteristics of St. John's College listed in its faculty handbook: “[A] holistic curriculum is delivered to meet the needs of students and actively develops students for adult life” (p. 15). Andrew's views also affirmed the work of Miller (2006) which identified the education of the whole person as one of the five characteristics of an authentic Catholic school. Both Bryk (1993) and Groome (1996) also included a holistic education focus in their lists of the characteristics of a Catholic school.

The principal and two teachers mentioned the promotion of student spirituality as a feature of a Catholic school. Octavia Daniels, a long-serving teacher and a non-Catholic teacher, noted,

[A Catholic school provides] a really good opportunity for students to be reflective and to think about the way they relate to their community and to themselves and their beliefs. So I think there is a lot of space, an opportunity for Catholic and non-Catholic students in the school to think about their relationships with themselves, with their world, and to reflect spiritually.

Another long-serving teacher, Roger Lowe, contended that Catholic schools promoted student spirituality through events, such as retreats and seminar days.

Two administrators and five teachers pointed out that there should be a Religious Education program in a Catholic school. Oliver Dixon, a long-serving teacher, contended that Religious Education as a subject in contemporary Catholic schools was challenging, but provided an opportunity for students to be exposed to a variety of religious viewpoints and to examine their spirituality. Susan Gaines, a relatively new teacher, thought that Religious Education should be taught in a Catholic school so the students “understand why they are there and what it means to be Catholic.” Natalie Edwards, an established teacher, expected Religious Education in a Catholic school to be “a religious presentation, not indoctrination.” Moreover, she noted that students are expected to participate in this presentation and that parents are expected to support this expectation.

The principal, Ray Carr, commented, “the Catholic mission of the school is [based on] evangelisation and quality learning.” This viewpoint coincided with the views of the Bishops of NSW/ACT (2007) who wrote: “The Catholic school . . . is there to assist parents and parishes in their educational, evangelical and catechetical mission, as well as to help the wider community in its educational and civic service” (p. 10). However, the bishops later added, “Evangelisation is crucial, but not enough. . . . That is why our schools must deepen and instruct the faith once received. We call this catechesis or religious instruction” (p. 14).

#### *Organizational Characteristics*

The principal, Ray Carr, also contended that the relationships between schools and parishes have changed: “The diocese now is trying to work schools back to parishes,

whereas it used to be the other way around.” He further stated, “The [Catholic] school takes on a far, far greater role than the family and the local parish used to [undertake].”

One of the deputy principals, Ian Griffin, noted that a Catholic school is connected to the Catholic Church through its involvement in the broader Catholic school system, particularly at diocesan and state levels. He maintained, “Our commitment to the Catholic nature means that . . . we need to have direct links to the Catholic facilities, and services, and sources, and church to make that link very explicit.”

Two administrators mentioned employment policies in relation to the general Catholic identity and culture of a Catholic school. The principal, Ray Carr, suggested “that it’s very difficult to run a Catholic school if you do not have [faculty] that have some background and training within Catholic studies of some form or another,” while Bill Dobson, a deputy principal, perceived the culture of a Catholic school being manifested in a number of different ways, one of which was its employment practices. In addition, the principal, Ray Carr, suggested that it was important for Catholic schools to be “up-front” in connection with enrollment policies. In particular, the policies should be clear about what sort of school it is and why parents could choose it. Natalie Edwards, an established teacher, suggested that many former students of Catholic schools send their children to the same schools that they attended, “so there is that tradition within the family.”

One of the two deputy principals, Ian Griffin, commented that a characteristic of a Catholic school is found in its organizational structure, particularly in terms of how it is owned and operated. Catholic schools could be a part of the diocesan system of schools, or independent Catholic schools answerable to the Provincial and his administration. The

principal, Ray Carr, viewed the governing structures of the school as being responsible for bringing about a particular focus on education, a focus in which “the Church elements, the Catholic elements are fundamental to the learning and development of the child.”

### *Religious Characteristics*

All of the participants in the study spoke about the religious characteristics of a Catholic school. The focus on religious characteristics compared to other characteristics may be the result of participants associating “Catholic school” primarily with elements of religion and spirituality. This connection was noted by most of the participants in the study.

Eleven of the 15 participants expressed the view that a Catholic school was linked in some way to Christ and the Catholic Church. The perspective of Ray Carr, the principal, was shaped by his belief that, fundamentally, Catholic Church teachings are “so rich and challenging.” He contended that Catholic schools have Christ as their model, and the Catholic Church connection with a school has to be “up front.”

Andrea Duncan, a relatively new teacher and an active member of a non-Catholic church, associated a Catholic school with faith: “I think of faith. I think anything spiritually related and [an] acknowledgement of Jesus Christ in our midst. Essentially faith.” Similarly, Kate Cummins, another relatively new teacher, expressed the view that “a school is Catholic if it encompasses the life of Jesus. . . . If it suggests and again encourages the students to live their life in Jesus.” Sam Egan, yet another relatively new teacher, contended that a Catholic school was a place “first and foremost [where] we live Christ’s values.” Allison Keller, an established teacher, expected that teachers in a

Catholic school would integrate Gospel values into all their subjects, not just Religious Education. Ian Griffin, a deputy principal, contended that Gospel values would be found in a Catholic school in “the language that is used, the decisions that are made.”

The comments of the administrators and teachers were very similar to the fourth of the five characteristics of a Catholic school identified by Miller (2006). He maintained that a Catholic school is “imbued with a Catholic worldview throughout its curriculum” (p. 42). Miller further commented that a Catholic school had to be guided by the Gospel, and founded on the person of Christ and his teaching.

Two administrators and one teacher commented that the charisms of religious congregations were influential in characterizing a Catholic school. The principal, Ray Carr, maintained that “most Catholic schools will have a particular flavour or charism attached to them around saints or congregations or bishops. So there’ll be a particular aspect of the Church that’s celebrated within most Catholic schools as being important.” He contended that from his experience in working in Catholic schools with unique but related charisms, that the influence of a charism took a Catholic school to a different level, to a deeper connection with the Catholic Church. Ian Griffin, a deputy principal with prior experience in a Catholic school associated with the Marist Brothers, noted that in that school there was a special emphasis on the role of Mary in salvation history that he did not find in a Lasallian school. Walter Gardner, an established teacher who had experience in several different Catholic schools, observed that the charisms of different congregations all led to a greater connection to Catholicism.

Three administrators and four teachers spoke about the manner in which the culture of a Catholic school should be physically represented and visualized. The

presence of icons, a chapel, crucifixes, and crosses were mentioned as means by which there could be a visual Catholic culture in the school. The principal and one of the deputy principals mentioned that the school's name could identify the school as Catholic. Miller (2006) noted, when discussing the third characteristic of a Catholic school as being an environment animated by community and communion, the importance of the physical environment of a Catholic school. He wrote: "A chapel, classroom crucifixes and statues . . . should be evident. All these signs embody the community ethos of Catholicism" (p. 40).

Two established teachers, Walter Gardner and Natalie Edwards, remarked that the presence of religious was a visible sign of a Catholic school in earlier decades, but acknowledged that there were few members of religious congregations in contemporary Catholic schools in Australia. Walter Gardner reflected, "If we saw them [members of religious congregations] in their habits, [the school] felt more Catholic." The visible presence of members of religious congregations in administrative and teaching positions affirmed for these two teachers that the school had a religious and spiritual function, as well as an educational function.

The three administrators as well as seven teachers identified aspects of communal worship as characteristic of a Catholic school. Ray Carr, the principal, conceptualized a Catholic school as being a place where students experienced "faith practices which are specifically Catholic and . . . you'd be disappointed if you went into a Catholic school and there was no sacramental celebration, let alone programs." He highlighted the celebration in Catholic schools of important Church events, such as Easter and Christmas, which "take on a particularly Catholic flavor, not the commercial flavor." Oliver Dixon, a

long serving teacher, commented that a Catholic school's identity and culture are particularly demonstrated by the celebration of the Eucharist, which must be at the center of both realities. Natalie Edwards, an established teacher, maintained that parents of students understood that participation in liturgies was a normal expectation of a Catholic school. Susan Gaines, a relatively new teacher, stated that Catholic schools have "a lot to do with going to church, [and] making sure that the students understand the sacraments."

### *Relational Characteristics*

Two teachers commented that a Catholic school encouraged community work. A long-serving teacher, Roger Lowe, recognized a Catholic school as one in which all members of the school community followed the example of Jesus by helping others. Allison Keller, an established teacher, noted, "a lot of community work is encouraged . . . in a Catholic school." This theme of community outreach was raised more frequently as a characteristic of Lasallian identity and culture than in relationship to Catholic identity and culture.

Three teachers identified relationships between members of the school community as essential characteristics of a Catholic school. Andrea Duncan, a relatively new teacher, suggested that caring, compassionate, understanding relationships were a defining characteristic of a Catholic school. Sam Egan, a comparatively new teacher, maintained that relationships are at the heart of a Catholic school:

For me, my experience of [a Catholic school] is first and foremost how we live out Christ's values, but also in a very human way how we treat each other. That's underlying everything else in a Catholic school. And it starts at the front office, how people are welcomed, and it permeates how everything else works in the school. But that's at the core of it for me, is authentically treating each other in the way that we should.

Wayne Thompson, an established teacher and a non-Catholic, agreed with this viewpoint, noting:

I think compassion and empathy is [sic] very, very important, and I think that's what sets Catholic schools apart, and in particular, Lasallian schools apart from a normal state school.

Ian Griffin, a deputy principal, expressed the view that relationships were “a deeper level” of the identity and culture of a Catholic school than other aspects, such as masses and visual symbols that could be easily observed.

Church and papal documents have identified relationships as being of the utmost importance to a Catholic school. In his discussion of community as one of the five characteristics of a Catholic school, Miller (2006) wrote, “Direct and personal contact between teachers and students is a hallmark of the Catholic school” (p. 37).

Shimabukuro (1998) and Groome (1996) similarly contended that building community was an essential characteristic of a Catholic school.

#### *Researcher Comments*

There was a considerable range of responses by participants regarding their perceptions of Catholic identity and culture. Teachers usually identified only one or two distinctive characteristics of a Catholic school, although when the responses were considered collectively, many of the characteristics of a Catholic school identified in the literature review were mentioned. The interviews of administrators lasted longer than those for teachers, and it was clear that the administrators had discussed, studied, and reflected on issues relating to Catholic identity and culture at some depth, individually and collectively. Teachers occupying “middle management” positions in pastoral care or



subject areas were generally able to provide more reflective answers than those who were exclusively classroom teachers.

From the *Pre-Interview Demographic Questionnaire*, it was noted that the only Catholic school that eight of the 12 teachers in the study had taught at was St. John's College. These teachers found it difficult to conceptualised the identity and culture of a Catholic school in general, and limited their responses to what they knew or had experienced at St. John's College. Rather than dismissing their remarks because they had no relationship to the question of Catholic identity and culture, the researcher chose to report them under the more appropriate question under exploration. The participants suggested characteristics as they came to mind and not necessarily in order of importance. It is not possible to compare the importance of the characteristics by the number of administrators and teachers who contributed to them, because administrators and teachers varied markedly in the depth to which they conveyed their thoughts on the characteristics.

There was no reference by any administrator and teacher to the "supernatural vision" that Miller (2006) presented as the first of five characteristics of a Catholic school that emerged from his synthesis of Church and papal documents regarding Catholic schools. Only one teacher mentioned another of the five characteristics of a Catholic school, the education of the whole person. However, it was clear that some administrators and teachers were aware of this characteristic when they spoke about the Catholic identity and culture of St. John's College.

None of the participants of this study mentioned that their characterization of the identity and culture of a Catholic school was influenced through reading Church or papal

documents on Catholic education or by any contemporary commentators on Catholic education. The principal was asked in a follow-up interview whether literature relating to Catholic schools was distributed to teachers, and he noted that literature issued by the diocesan Catholic Education Office was available to faculty. However, he thought that the publications produced were not sufficiently relevant to engage teachers in thoughtful reflection about their role as Catholic school educators. He perceived faculty briefings and meetings, together with professional development, to be more effective in promoting reflection on the mission of the school.

Seven teachers spoke of their path to teaching in a Catholic school. Four of the teachers intentionally looked for a position in a Catholic school, based primarily on their familiarity with Catholic schools. The remaining three teachers did not specifically seek to teach in a Catholic school because it was Catholic. Rather, their need of a teaching position was the determining factor. None of the teachers who mentioned that they sought a position in a Catholic school were primarily motivated by a desire to be engaged in an evangelizing role. However, the teachers who had been at St. John's College for longer periods of time expressed more clearly that they perceived their role as a teacher to be a vocation rather than a job.

#### *Sources of Perceptions of Catholic School Identity and Culture*

The second question in this section sought to ascertain the sources where the participants had gained their knowledge regarding the identity and culture of a Catholic school. The sources and themes that emerged from analysis of the responses are listed alphabetically in Table 5. The two sources – experience and instruction – are divided into specific themes.

Table 5

*Sources and Themes Emerging From an Analysis of Data Relating to Administrators and Teachers' Perceptions of Catholic School Identity and Culture*

Sources	Themes
Experience	Student in a Catholic School Prior Teaching Experience in a Catholic school Family Upbringing
Instruction	Diocesan Catholic Education Office Induction Program Graduate Certificate Program

*Experience*

Two administrators and three teachers acknowledged the influence of their own experience in a Catholic school as contributing to their knowledge regarding the identity and culture of a Catholic school. The two administrators and two of the teachers mentioned their own school experience as one of several influences. However, the third teacher, Susan Gaines, a comparatively new teacher, noted that her experience as a student in a Catholic primary school was quite influential as a source, because this was where she received her sacramental formation and was enculturated into Catholicism.

An administrator and three teachers cited their prior experience in other Catholic schools or their personal upbringing as important contributors to their understanding of Catholic identity and culture. A deputy principal, Bill Dobson, mentioned that his prior experience at another Catholic secondary school had been a source for understanding the identity and culture of a Catholic school. Andrea Duncan, a relatively new teacher and a non-Catholic, compared her experiences at two Catholic secondary schools, and found faith and action in both schools, but expressed in different ways. Two long-serving teachers, Oliver Dixon and Roger Lowe, both of whom grew up in parishes served by St. John's College, commented that it was the influence of their family upbringing and their

parish experience as youths that formed their perception of what being Catholic was in terms of education.

### *Instruction*

The diocesan Catholic Education Office offers an induction program for teachers in Catholic schools to provide them with a basic understanding of Catholicism and Catholic schools. The principal and six teachers reported undertaking the program, but only the principal had found it beneficial. The six teachers who undertook the program found that, while it enabled them to reflect on some aspects of Catholicism or Catholic schools, they did not learn anything that was new.

The Graduate Certificate in Catholic Education (commonly known as the “Grad. Cert.”) is a four-course program delivered by the diocesan Catholic Education Office in partnership with a local university. The four courses focus on curriculum design, teaching methods, theology, and scripture. It is available to all teachers employed in Catholic schools. The Enterprise Agreement (the contract governing conditions of employment in Catholic schools) provides an annual allowance of \$1250 for teachers who undertake the Graduate Certificate in Catholic Education program. A similar Graduate Certificate in Religious Education is also offered.

Five of the interview participants mentioned that their understanding of the identity and culture of a Catholic school had been influenced by their Graduate Certificate studies. The extent of the influence of the program varied. Sam Egan, a relatively new teacher, thought that the program was more suited to beginning teachers who did not have a strong Catholic formation at home or in a Catholic secondary school.

Another relatively new teacher and a non-Catholic, Andrea Duncan, spoke enthusiastically about the program:

[The Graduate Certificate program] challenged me to think about my beliefs and my values. It gave me a better understanding of Catholicism and the Catholic ethos. But what I really enjoyed was relating what we were learning, what the course was about, relating that to my own work environment, to my own situation in my own classroom, what I was teaching, whether there was any relevance to what I was teaching and how I actually marry that with Catholic teachings and Catholic values and beliefs.

Kate Cummins, a relatively new teacher, thought that some of the Graduate Certificate courses would be offered at the school, and so she had not enrolled in the off-campus program. She was keen to commence the program, and noted that while she had been told that teachers were expected to undertake it during their first three years at a Catholic school, there had not been any pressure from administrators for her to start the program at this time. The perceived lack of enthusiasm for the Graduate Certificate program was raised as one of the challenges to the Catholic identity and culture of St. John's College, and is discussed further in a later section.

Administrators expressed differing views regarding the value of the Graduate Certificate. Ray Carr, the principal, encouraged teachers to undertake the program, but had reservations about the depth of the program, which he likened to a "*Reader's Digest* version" of theological and scriptural education. However, a deputy principal, Bill Dobson, thought that the expectation that new teachers complete the Graduate Certificate in their early years was too demanding because of all the other pressures and commitments faced by new teachers in contemporary Catholic schools.

During his visit to St. John's College, the researcher requested a list of the academic qualifications of administrators and teachers who served at St. John's College.

This list revealed that about 20% of the faculty had completed accreditation courses, Graduate Certificate, or Master's level programs in either Catholic education or Religious Education. It was suggested by the principal that other faculty may have completed one or more of these programs but their qualifications had not been recorded in the school's qualifications database.

*Researcher Comments*

The teachers at St. John's College formed their perceptions of the characteristics of a Catholic school primarily from their own experiences as students in Catholic schools or as teachers at St. John's College or at other Catholic schools. The professional development and academic courses provided by the diocesan Catholic Education Office enabled some participants to increase their understanding of Catholicism, but no participants mentioned that they had attended any courses that focused on the philosophy of Catholic education or the role of teachers in contemporary Australian Catholic schools. No participants mentioned any Roman or Australian church documents that had helped them to understand the nature and purpose of Catholic schools.

The researcher concluded from the comments of the principal and the two deputy principals that they were aware of the inadequacies regarding teacher commitment and articulation concerning Catholic identity and culture, but they felt that existing diocesan professional development programs were not sufficiently transformative to make any difference to the existing situation. The administrators were also very conscious of the other demands made on the lives of teachers, as well as the challenge to meet other educational professional development needs with finite monetary and time resources.

*Characteristics of a Lasallian School*

The third question in this section sought to ascertain the distinctive characteristics of a Lasallian school. The characteristics and themes that emerged from analysis of the responses are listed alphabetically in Table 6. The four major characteristics – educational, organizational, religious, and relational – are divided into specific themes. The *Pre-Interview Demographic Questionnaire* revealed that no administrator or teacher had taught in another Lasallian school. Five of the 12 teachers had attended St. John’s College as secondary school students, and the principal had attended a Lasallian secondary school in another Australian State.

Table 6

*Characteristics and Themes Emerging From Analysis of Data Relating to Administrators and Teachers’ Characterizations of a Lasallian Secondary School*

Characteristics	Themes
Educational	Well-Run School
	Curriculum Catering to Needs of Students
Organizational	Sub-set of Catholic Identity and Culture
	Wider Lasallian Network
Religious	Lasallian Charism
	Teaching as a Vocation
Relational	Relationships
	Affinity with the Poor

*Educational Characteristics*

The two deputy principals perceived a Lasallian school as a well-run school. Ian Griffin associated terms such as “Well-run, well-ordered, systems, methods in place” with a Lasallian school. This same view was echoed by Bill Dobson when he stated, “A Lasallian school has got to be a good school. It’s a well-run school.”

One deputy principal and two teachers suggested that a Lasallian school in general offered a curriculum that met the needs of students. Other administrators and

teachers raised this characteristic when discussing St. John's College as a Lasallian school. Wayne Thompson, an established teacher, maintained that the teaching of Saint John Baptist de La Salle meant that a Lasallian school had to cater to students who did not aspire to go to a university, as well as for those who did aspire to undertake tertiary studies. He contended that a Lasallian school had to form students into people of good character, irrespective of their academic ability.

### *Organizational Characteristics*

The three administrators, as well as two teachers, observed that Lasallian schools were Catholic schools with particular emphases. Bill Dobson, a deputy principal, maintained that Lasallian schools had to be seen as a sub-set of Catholic schools. An established teacher, Allison Keller, noted that she became more aware of the overlap between Lasallian and Catholic schools as a result of attending an off-campus Lasallian professional development activity. Another established teacher, Natalie Edwards, perceived the connection between Catholic schools and Lasallian schools as follows:

They [Catholic schools and Lasallian schools] really have to be one and the same, one hopes, ultimately. So when you're talking about Lasallian, in my mind, I think there's an educational bias. When you're talking about the Catholic identity, the educational bias fits into the whole thing, so I think you start with Catholic first.

An administrator and three teachers recognized that a Lasallian school is part of a wider network of Lasallian schools. This characteristic became more apparent to the participants when they attended off-campus programs that involved faculty from Lasallian schools, as well as staff from Lasallian welfare and counselling programs that have been established in Australia. Ian Griffin, a deputy principal, maintained that a Lasallian school in Australia had to keep connected to the Brothers and Lasallian Education Services for Lasallian professional development. A long-serving teacher,



Oliver Dixon, commented that he felt very much at home when he visited Lasallian schools in different countries. He proclaimed, “To be a Lasallian is a unique gift,” and this gift is found in Lasallian schools universally.

### *Religious Characteristics*

Three administrators and six teachers mentioned the charism of St. John Baptist de La Salle to be essential to a Lasallian school. Ian Griffin, a deputy principal, echoed the perceptions of the other administrators and teachers when he contended that traditions and core values promoted by St. John Baptist de La Salle should be infused in every aspect of the school: identity, culture, curriculum, and community. In particular, two administrators and three teachers made particular reference to writings of St. John Baptist de La Salle relating to the qualities that should characterize a teacher in a Lasallian school.

An administrator and seven teachers spoke in general terms that it was not only the school that was influenced by the teachings of St John Baptist de La Salle, but individual teachers were influenced by his teaching philosophy as well. For example, a long-serving teacher, Roger Lowe, reflected that he sought to educate his students with “the gentleness of a mother and the firmness of a father,” a saying he attributed to St. John Baptist de La Salle. Ian Griffin, a deputy principal, maintained that reference to Lasallian terms and concepts should be evident in the written publications and documents of a Lasallian school.

Four teachers identified the idea that “teaching as a vocation” was integral to Lasallian education. They noted that this concept is also central within Catholic education. In addition, Octavia Daniels, a long-serving, non-Catholic teacher at St.

John's College noted that the Lasallian philosophy of education provided teachers with a "moral purpose" for their vocation. She contended that Lasallian philosophy provided a framework for teaching, and that it was attractive to teachers who are otherwise quite diverse in their attitudes and approaches to areas such as curriculum and discipline. The other three teachers did not develop their perception of teaching as a vocation as integral to Lasallian schools, but just acknowledged its importance.

#### *Relational Characteristics*

Ian Griffin, a deputy principal, summed the views of the other deputy principal and six teachers when he stated, "relationships are at the core" of what a Lasallian school is. One of the long-standing teachers and a non-Catholic, Wayne Thompson, highlighted the emphasis on respectful and empathetic relationships in the Lasallian educational philosophy. A long-serving teacher, Roger Lowe, amplified this viewpoint when he maintained that St. John Baptist de La Salle "wanted the teachers to really know their kids" that included "understanding who they are and where they came from." In addition, two administrators and three teachers stated that a characteristic of a Lasallian school is that it had a particular affinity with the poor. Susan Gaines, an established teacher, commented, that a Lasallian school sought "opportunities to help others, . . . [especially] those in need."

#### *Researcher Comments*

Overall, the administrators and teachers were able to articulate their views regarding the identity and culture of a Lasallian school more so than their articulation of the identity and culture of a Catholic school. Because most teachers had only taught at St. John's College, they were unable to generalize the concept of a Lasallian school

beyond St. John's. All participants pointed out that a Lasallian school fosters student-teacher relationships and promotes social justice in the school and within the wider community. Although the notion of a "human and Christian education of youth" is central to Lasallian education, most teachers involved in the study emphasized the human dimension of education of Lasallian schools with little or no overt recognition of the Christian dimension. The teachers at St. John's College usually did not recognize that Lasallian schools are Catholic schools with a distinctive charism. The teachers expressed a greater connection to Lasallian identity and culture than to Catholic identity and culture.

A key goal of Lasallian education is its focus on the salvation of the students as a means of salvation for the teachers (Lombaerts, 1998; Mann, 1991; Sanderl, 2004; Tidd, 2001; Van Grieken, 1999). No administrators or teachers mentioned this feature when addressing the distinctive qualities of Lasallian schools. Lombaerts argued that the Lasallian mission is inclusive of the oneness of the ministry of the teacher and his or her personal sanctification, together with an organized approach and a concern for others. Administrators and teachers in the study recognized an organized approach and a concern for others as features of a Lasallian school, but the salvific feature of Lasallian schools was not recognized.

Van Grieken (1999) identified 10 commitments that reflected the values, beliefs, attitudes, and values of Lasallian schools. The first five commitments reflected the spirit of faith and addressed the interior aspects of spirituality. The second five commitments related to the spirit of zeal and addressed the exterior aspects of spirituality. The latter, specifically practical orientation, comprehensive education, commitment to the poor, working in association, and expressing a lay vocation, were identified as features of a

Lasallian school to varying degrees. However, the five commitments linked to the spirit of faith – centered and nurtured by a life of faith, trust in Providence, creativity and fortitude, the agency of the Holy Spirit, and incarnating Christian paradigms and dynamics – were not.

*Sources of Perceptions of Lasallian School Identity and Culture*

The fourth question in this section sought to ascertain the sources from which the participants had gained their knowledge regarding the identity and culture of a Lasallian school. The sources and themes that emerged from analysis of the responses are listed alphabetically in Table 7. The three sources – experience, instruction and interaction – are divided into specific themes.

*Experience*

Two former students of St. John’s College, Oliver Dixon, a long-serving teacher, and Frank Power, a comparatively new teacher, commented that when they returned to St. John’s College as teachers, they were surprised regarding how little they knew about Lasallian identity and culture. They admitted remembering nothing about the life and teachings of St. John Baptist de La Salle, though they had been informed of both as students of St. John’s College. Frank Power was told that the emphasis on Lasallian culture had “been happening [at St. John’s College] since the beginning of time!” Somehow, they did not absorb it when they were students. Ray Carr, the principal, noted that while he had not graduated from St. John’s College, he did attend Lasallian schools in another Australian state. He commented, that although his experiences in these institution were formative, both schools did not demonstrate what Lasallian literature describes Lasallian education to be. He explained that some of the punitive discipline

policies used by administrators and teachers at the school were the antitheses of the pastoral care practices commonly found in contemporary Lasallian schools and in current Lasallian literature.

Table 7

*Sources and Themes Emerging From an Analysis of Data Relating to Administrators and Teachers' Perceptions of Lasallian School Identity and Culture*

Sources	Themes
Experience	Student in a Lasallian School Teacher in a Lasallian School Contact with Other Lasallian Schools Visits to Lasallian Heritage Sites Leadership of Lasallian Conferences
Instruction	Narooma Program Leadership Programs School In-Service Program Private Reading Principal Presentations
Interaction	Conversations with a Brother Informal Conversations Informal Observations

*Instruction*

The principal, a deputy principal, and five teachers commented on the influence of the weeklong course in Lasallian spirituality and philosophy offered at Narooma in the state of New South Wales. The focus of the Narooma course is to serve as an introduction to Lasallian spirituality and philosophy. However, the most memorable aspect of the course mentioned by the study participants was meeting teachers and social workers from Lasallian schools and institutions in other Australian states and countries. This experience contributed to their understanding that St. John's College was part of a larger Lasallian network of educational and welfare institutions, including an outreach to a marginalized group in Australian society, the Aborigines. Allison Keller concluded from her

experience with the Narooma course that teachers and other Lasallians participate in the Lasallian mission “because they believe” that they can make a difference to the lives of others, a conclusion also reached by the other study participants.

The Lasallian Leadership program offered online by Lasallian Education Services and requiring some weekend residential components was rated as highly influential by the two administrators and one teacher who had participated in the program. The courses offered by the program are eligible for Master’s degree credit at the Australian Catholic University. For Ian Griffin, the Lasallian Leadership program, compared to the Narooma program, “gave me a much greater insight into . . .the traditions and an in-depth understanding of those [traditions].” Roger Lowe was more effusive in his enthusiasm for the leadership program:

I learnt a lot through [the Lasallian Leadership program]. . . . [St. John Baptist de La Salle] had a great philosophy about how to run things. . . . It just felt like it fits quite well with contemporary society as well.

The principal, Ray Carr, noted that all members of the Leadership Team at St. John’s College had completed the online Master’s course, except himself. However, he had undertaken the Buttimer program, a Lasallian leadership program of United States origin. Recognition of Ray Carr’s expertise in Lasallian leadership was evident in his appointment to chair two conferences, one international and one local, concerning the Lasallian mission during the coming year.

### *Interaction*

In the year prior to the research for this study, two Brothers were members of the St. John’s College faculty. At the end of the academic year, the two Brothers were reassigned to Lasallian schools outside the state where St. John’s College is located. One

of the two Brothers, Brother Henry, who had been involved particularly with special needs students in his many years at St. John's College, died a short time before the research for this study was undertaken at St. John's College. The principal and five teachers commented positively that Brother Henry had highly influenced their perception of what it meant to be Lasallian. For example, a comparatively new teacher, Andrea Duncan, commented, "somehow Brother Henry always had a way, very subtly, of reminding us" about what a Lasallian school should be.

The two deputy principals and five teachers acknowledged that the principal and the senior teachers of St. John's College were influential in increasing their understanding of Lasallian identity and culture. Ian Griffin, one of the deputy principals, pointed out the commitment of the principal, Ray Carr, in promoting the school's Lasallian identity and culture was commendable. He perceived that this commitment arose because Ray Carr was "highly embedded in the [Lasallian] charism," and his explanations and use of Lasallian terminology were evidence of the extent to which he had embraced the charism.

Natalie Edwards, an established teacher, expressed the sentiments of five teachers when she stated that she learnt about Lasallian identity and culture by "just chatting with other [faculty] and . . . learning from them." Octavia Daniels also noted that, besides conversations, observation of teachers was also important. She outlined the process by which she came to her understanding of what a Lasallian school is:

[I] started attending some of the sessions where they talked about the life of St. John Baptist de La Salle and I started reading more about some of the things that he wrote . . . then said [to myself], "You know what, these people are actually living that out." So then that made it not just a little bit of useless documentation but something which I had already observed. It also gave it a bit more structure. So, I think it was by observation to start with, and then that was backed up by

some instruction and immersion. . . . After that point, I felt empowered to be a little bit of a person who would watch and say, “Well, is that Lasallian?” Once I had an understanding of it, I could then be a protector of that or a supporter of that, as my role as a teacher.

### *Researcher Comments*

In general, the administrators and teachers were familiar with literature related to St. John Baptist de La Salle and Lasallian education, either through courses or programs, or from literature that had been distributed at St. John’s College. Some suggestions regarding the reasons for the difference relating to literature from diocesan and Lasallian sources could lay in the emphasis given by school administrators, a perception that the Lasallian literature was more relevant to the everyday life and practice of teachers, and that the Lasallian literature produced was written by teachers for teachers.

No teachers specifically mentioned that they had sought a teaching position at St. John’s College because it was a Lasallian school, and the teachers who had not attended St. John’s College as students stated that they were unfamiliar with St. John Baptist de La Salle or what a Lasallian school was when they applied for the position. Some of the administrators and teachers who had been students or teachers at Catholic schools associated with the charism of another religious congregation commented on similarities or differences (mainly in terms of emphasis) between a Lasallian school and another Catholic school in which they had prior experience.

The participants’ familiarity with Lasallian identity and culture can be attributed to the investment by St. John’s College of money and resources into professional development, and the promotion of Lasallian identity and culture by administrators at the school through literature, reflections, and artifacts. These factors also contributed to the ability of faculty to articulate characteristics of Lasallian identity and culture more clearly



than features of Catholic identity and culture. However, based on the responses of the study participants, it seemed that Lasallian characteristics to which all teachers could readily subscribe were promoted in professional development sessions, and in faculty meetings and briefings. These characteristics included positive teacher-student relationships and an outreach to the poor. There was no evidence that Lasallian characteristics concerning faith and belief had been promoted to any great extent.

#### Research Question 2 Findings

The second research question sought to ascertain how administrators and teachers at St. John's College perceived the identity and culture of St. John's College as a Lasallian Catholic secondary school. Participants were asked questions relating to the identity and culture of St. John's College as a Catholic school, and as a Lasallian school. Where applicable, teachers were asked to compare the identity and culture of St. John's College to another public or other Catholic school so that their perceptions of aspects of identity and culture could be further defined. The comparative data obtained is included in the report of St. John's College as a Catholic school or as a Lasallian school and not as a separate section.

#### *St. John's College as a Catholic School*

The characteristics and themes that emerged from analysis of the responses to St. John's College as a Catholic school are listed alphabetically in Table 8. The three major characteristics – demographic, organizational, and religious – are divided into specific themes.

Table 8

*Characteristics and Themes Emerging From Analysis of Data Relating to Administrators and Teachers' Characterizations of St. John's College as a Catholic Secondary School*

Characteristics	Themes
Demographic	Italian Influence Socio-Economic Status
Organizational	Diocesan and Parish Links Faculty Faith Formation Employment Policies Enrollment Policies
Religious	Religious Practices Visual Catholic Culture Social Justice Program Religious Education and Retreats Witness of Teachers

*Demographic Characteristics*

St. John's College is located in a suburb that was originally a working-class area and home to many new migrants to Australia, especially from Italy. However, there had been a change in the demographic character of St. John's College since it was established 50 years ago, and the suburb would now be categorized as a middle-class area.

The principal and one teacher commented that the Catholic culture of St. John's College was strongly influenced by the Italian heritage of its students. The area in which the school is located had a high proportion of first-generation and second-generation Italian families, who were seen as being culturally Catholic, in that their church practices were tied into major familial and community celebrations but not to regular worship in a local parish. The principal, Ray Carr, commented on this situation noting that because students and their families perceived religious knowledge and practices to be extraneous to their lives, teachers found it difficult to engage the students in religious instruction and discussion.

Two teachers specifically mentioned that the socio-economic status of the students attending St. John's College influenced by its Catholic identity and culture. An established teacher, Natalie Edwards, commented that the school primarily served middle-class families, although there were some students from poor families and others from relatively rich families. The presence of students from mainly middle-class backgrounds had led to "different expectations about education and life," these expectations being primarily related to academic achievement and economic advancement. Three teachers expressed the view that many parents perceived St. John's College simply as a school that offered a cheap private education for their children. St. John's College was not important to them. A long-serving teacher at the College, Oliver Dixon, claimed that parents primarily chose St. John's College for the education of their children "because of its education, discipline, and structures, all those things that they've heard about the school," and seldom for religious reasons. Frank Power, a comparatively new teacher, noted that the parents would accept the school's Catholic ethos only because it was one of the enrollment requirements of St. John's College. An established teacher, Natalie Edwards, noted that many parents in the city in which St. John's College is located tended to send their sons and daughters to the same Catholic school that they themselves had attended, creating "a tradition within the family."

#### *Organizational Characteristics*

There were four organizational themes that highlighted St. John's College as a Catholic institution. The first was its diocesan and parish links. The second was its faculty faith formation programs. The third centered around its employment policies, and the fourth centered around its enrollment policies.

Ray Carr pointed out that the school had strong links with the local diocese. In past two years, two faculty members involved in student faith formation at St. John's College had been identified as possible leaders at a diocesan level and the school had agreed to release them for that work. Ray Carr is a member of the State Commission for Catholic Schools, a position he accepted despite having school and Lasallian responsibilities to meet. He maintained that the diocese perceived St. John's College, in comparison to other Catholic secondary schools, as a school that was particularly supportive of activities organized by the diocese. Two of these diocesan activities that involved St. John's College teachers and students were diocesan charity appeals and ANZAC Day commemorations (similar to Remembrance Day in the USA). Ian Griffin, a deputy principal, noted that students from St. John's College also participated in an awareness program in which students visited different organizations associated with the diocese.

St. John's College was able to offer its students liturgical celebrations because priests from local parishes came to the school to celebrate these Masses in the College chapel. Ray Carr, the principal, highlighted the involvement of local priests as an important contribution to the school's Catholic identity and culture. He noted that the priests were committed to continuing their chaplaincy role at St. John's College in spite of diminishing numbers and many other demands on their time, and he attributed this commitment to the belief of the priests that "there's a level of reverence and religious practice here [at St John's College]."

Ian Griffin, a deputy principal, expressed a view that faculty faith formation was not particularly strong at St. John's College, especially in comparison with that offered at

the school in terms of faculty formation in Lasallian education and traditions. Sam Egan, a relatively new teacher, expressed a similar viewpoint when he commented on faculty retreats: “I think they’re important, and we haven’t had one for four years.”

Each of the three administrators commented on the role of employment policies and practices in ensuring that St. John’s College maintained its Catholic identity. Bill Dobson, a deputy principal, noted that hired teachers do not have to be Catholic, but they are expected to be supportive of “the principles on which this school is founded.” These principles include “their commitment to high quality education, support of gospel values, and demonstration of the value of community,” that are articulated in their employment contracts or agreements.

Interestingly, Ian Griffin, the other deputy principal, pointed out a practice that he perceived as not promoting the Catholicity of the school. He noted that there was a trend in some Catholic schools in the diocese, including St. John’s College, to hire non-Catholic teachers over Catholic ones. He noted that there was the tendency to hire for subject matter expertise than for someone who has a strong faith formation and an adequate expertise in the subject area.

Of note is that St. John’s College has nearly twice as many student applicants for positions than the school can accept. The College enrollment policies give priority to the children of former students, siblings of past or current students, and students who are enrolled in Catholic primary schools that are designated as “feeder” schools. The student population is about 85% Catholic, with most non-Catholic students who attend St. John’s College having been enrolled in local Catholic primary schools prior to entry into St. John’s College.

The enrollment pro-forma used by administrators who interview prospective students and their parents specifically asks students and their parents if they are prepared to participate in Religious Education classes, retreats, and other activities associated with the Catholic nature of the school. The incoming students and their parents have to sign a statement that they accept these terms. The principal, Ray Carr, stressed that it was important for St. John's College to stress "up front and clearly" the requirement for student participation and involvement in the school's Catholic religious activities as important.

### *Religious Characteristics*

Three administrators and 10 teachers remarked on the importance of Mass and prayer to the Catholic identity and culture of St. John's College. The principal, Ray Carr, maintained that when there were occasions for prayer in the school, teachers and students participated or were respectful of the prayerful nature of the activity. He commented that St. John's College provided students with opportunities to learn and experience Catholic ritual and culture by celebrating events in the liturgical calendar of the Church, events that were not usually celebrated by many families of students attending St. John's College.

Three administrators and five teachers named the practice of morning prayer and reflection in homerooms at the start of a school day as an important Catholic characteristic of the school. A daily prayer or reflection prepared by the campus ministry team was issued to all homeroom teachers each morning for use with their classes. Kate Cummins, a relatively new teacher explained that, for her, the morning prayer and reflection promoted in the students a life-long practice of prayer and reflection.

The canonization of Mary MacKillop was a major national and religious event in Australia that occurred during the research phase at St. John's College. The canonization received widespread media coverage, and Mary MacKillop was presented in the secular press as an Australian woman of great courage and vision. The three administrators, as well as six teachers, commented positively on the commemoration of the event at St. John's College, and other venues associated with the diocese, and thought that these commemorations enhanced the Catholic identity and culture of the school. Frank Power, a comparatively new teacher, suggested that the enhancement arose because St. Mary MacKillop was committed to Catholic education in Australia, and she provided a role model for teachers.

Three administrators and eight teachers spoke about the weekly Mass program as exemplifying the Catholic identity and culture of St. John's College. They all perceived that the weekly Mass program was particularly important because a great majority of students did not participate in local parish worship. However, the principal, Ray Carr, pointed out,

We still do have a solid core of kids involved in their parishes. Now it would only be in the 10-15%, but it's enough of a critical mass to maintain a link to what you might call traditional Catholic practice and community.

There is a practice at the weekly Masses that all students come forward to receive either communion or a blessing. At the weekly Masses the researcher attended, about 40% of the students received a blessing rather than communion. Oliver Dixon, a long-serving teacher, had a positive perception of the practice of all students going forward at communion time, noting that because of it all students "feel very included . . . and no-one is ever embarrassed if you're taking the host or not."

Three teachers mentioned the Graduation Mass for Year 12 students as a Catholic characteristic of St. John's College. Roger Lowe, a long serving teacher, noted that the Graduation Mass was one of the two main religious events of the academic year for Year 12 students, the other being their retreat experience. The Year 12 retreat was a three-day, two-night off-campus retreat and a Graduation Mass. Roger Lowe, a long-serving teacher, maintained that the students' sense of spirituality was stronger as a result of their retreat experience. The experience gave many of the retreat participants the confidence to return home and repair relationships with their parents and siblings, thus incorporating the principle of healing and the practice of reconciliation that are foundational to Catholicism. He commented that many of the Year 12 students listed their retreat as their greatest memory of St. John's College when asked to recall their education at St. John's College, and "we're always really proud of that."

The principal and three teachers noted that there were visual signs and symbols at St. John's College that proclaimed it to be a Catholic school. Three of these four participants mentioned that there were crosses or crucifixes to be found in classrooms, and that the College chapel occupied a prominent position on the school site. However, a comparatively new teacher, Sam Egan, sensed that during his time at St. John's College there had been a reduction in the display of visual Catholic symbols. He commented,

We used to have crucifixes in rooms, now we don't. We have little crosses. And I think that's because the crucifixes could offend some people. What's with that? Little things like that. We used to have statues of Mary and Christ. It's [sic] all gone. Little reminders, you know.

The researcher noted the presence of crosses on the facade of the school buildings that denoted St. John's College as a Christian school. The school was named after a saint, and this name was prominently displayed in the foyer of the school as well at the



entrance. The school crest was prominently displayed at the entrance to the school, and a cross was a prominent feature on the crest. Collectively, these visual components gave witness to the Catholic identity and culture of St. John's College.

A deputy principal and five teachers expressed the view that involvement in social justice activities was a characteristic of the Catholic identity and culture of St. John's College. The participants identified three service and social justice groups in the school. For Octavia Daniels, a long-serving non-Catholic teacher, the presence of the social justice program at St. John's College was an important consideration in her choice of school for the education of her own children. She wanted a school for her children that promoted a "social conscience and a sense of social justice," and she had found that these qualities were "part of the dialogue every day" at St. John's College. Oliver Dixon, another long-serving teacher, summed up the views of the participants when he commented that they were very proud of the service programs offered at the school.

The Religious Education program at St. John's College has some characteristics common to other Catholic schools in Australia and some that are fairly unique. Most Catholic secondary schools in Australia do not have specialist Religious Education teachers. However, in years past, when the faculty of Catholic schools was predominantly comprised of members of religious congregations, they did. Currently at St. John's College, the researcher was able to identify only one part-time teacher who was considered by the faculty to be a specialist in Religious Education. From the list of faculty academic qualifications obtained from the school, the researcher verified that only nine teachers had identifiable qualification in theology, religious education, or Catholic education. Consequently, a majority of the teachers of Religious Education at St. John's

College had no qualifications in this subject area and relied on their own schooling or religious experiences, as well as the advice of experienced teachers to fulfill their teaching responsibilities in this area.

Participants revealed, and documentation verified, that St. John's College has developed its own Religious Education program at all grade levels rather than use a diocesan Religious Education program. Of particular note was the provision of Religious Education in the final two years that a student spends at St. John's College. In Year 11, students receive formal instruction in Religious Education class for only one semester. In Year 12, Religious Education is delivered through periodic seminar days and the Year 12 retreat. Unlike some Australian states where there are religious studies or scripture courses that are recognized by accreditation authorities for graduation and university eligibility requirements, the Australian state in which St. John's College is located does not offer or recognize religious studies or scripture courses.

There were no academic awards given for Religious Education in Year 12 at St. John's College, a point that the researcher noted when he attended the Academic Awards assembly for graduating students. The awards were presented to graduating students by the heads of various subject areas, but because no academic awards were linked to Religious Education, there was no role during the assembly for the head of the Religious Education subject area. However, the researcher recorded that some graduating students received special prestigious awards near the conclusion of the assembly, the criteria for which included recognition of the students' participation in parish or school liturgical life, as well as service programs.

Five teachers who participated in the study were engaged in teaching Religious Education to one or more classes. The *Pre-Demographic Interview Questionnaire* completed by interview participants showed that four of those teachers identified themselves as Catholics. Of these four teachers, two teachers self-reported that they attended Mass occasionally outside school hours, while the other two teachers self-reported that they seldom attended Mass outside school hours. The fifth teacher, Andrea Duncan, came from an Anglican background and self-reported that she attended church regularly. Andrea Duncan, a relatively new teacher and an active member of a non-Catholic church, was enthusiastic about her role as a teacher of Religious Education:

I had taught Bible Studies, Bible Education in the public system in another country which was just seen as another subject completely on its own and not linked to the school ethos. . . . I think I would have mentioned in my interview that I would like to teach R. E. [Religious Education] . . . I know there's not many people who volunteer to teach it [Religious Education]. . . . But, for me, that's just an opportunity to speak about the gospel.

Three teachers remarked that the witness of teachers was one of the features that characterized St. John's College as a Catholic school. One teacher, Natalie Edwards, commented, "In this school I've witnessed some of the teachers who certainly go way beyond what you would normally expect" to assist students. Another teacher, Allison Keller, maintained that the Catholic identity and culture of St. John's College emerged from "the people and the way that they interact and conduct themselves. The Christian values are coming through in daily interactions."

#### *Researcher Comments*

During the interviews, all the participants clearly perceived St. John's College to be a Catholic school. There was a concern expressed by one participant that the "Catholic" identity and culture of the College was less than it had been in the past, but

this concern was not shared by other participants. The Catholic identity and culture of St. John's College emerged from many sources: its links to the diocese and the local parishes; its Mass and prayer program; its religious education program and student retreats; its visual Catholic culture of crosses and crucifixes, an imposing chapel on its campus, and buildings and the school itself bearing the names of saints; and its policies and practices relating to the enrollment of new students and the employment of faculty.

From a different perspective, the Catholic identity and culture of the school could be viewed as less than optimal. The small percentage of students who come from families that are involved in their local parishes suggests that the main reason for enrollment at St. John's College is not religious. This, in turn, can influence the expectations of the parents and students of the schools, and the adjustments that the school makes to cater to these expectations.

The qualifications of teachers involved in the delivery of the Religious Education program at St. John's College is generally below the qualifications held by the teachers for other subjects. The location of the school in a city without access to Catholic tertiary institutions also contributes to qualification challenges. There is a need for ongoing evangelization and spiritual formation of the teachers, as most of the Catholic teachers who participated in the study reported their attendance at Mass outside school hours as being only occasionally or rarely.

#### *St. John's College as a Lasallian School*

Participants were asked to name characteristics that identified St. John's College as a Lasallian school. The characteristics and themes that emerged from analysis of the responses to this interview question are listed alphabetically in Table 9. The four

characteristics – educational, organizational, relational, and religious – are divided into specific themes.

Table 9

*Characteristics and Themes Emerging From Analysis of Data Relating to Administrators and Teachers' Characterizations of St. John's College as a Lasallian Secondary School*

Characteristics	Themes
Educational	High Academic Expectations Teacher Commitment to Lasallian Philosophy Meets the Needs of Students
Organizational	Governance Structures Leadership Wider Lasallian Network
Relational	Discipline Policy Pastoral Care of Students and Teachers School as Community Student Relationships
Religious	Identification as Lasallian St. John Baptist de La Salle and Lasallian Charism Lasallian Student Leadership Programs School Events Solidarity with Poor Visual Lasallian Symbols

*Educational Characteristics*

The principal, a deputy principal, and three teachers expressed the view that St. John's College encouraged high academic expectations because it was a Lasallian school. The researcher heard the unofficial motto, "Be the best you can be," mentioned in speeches given by administrators, teachers, and students at school assemblies, faculty meetings, and during the interviews of participants. The principal responded to a question regarding this unofficial motto by explaining that students at St. John's College had been underperforming academically during the previous decade. He used the unofficial motto to challenge students and teachers to improve their academic results, relationships, and work ethic. The underlying message that Ray Carr wished to convey

was that each student had received “a gift from God” and should use this gift to the best of his or her ability. The official school motto was in Latin, and the principal felt that it did not convey a strong or inspirational message to the school’s contemporary community.

Other administrators and teachers also commented on the unofficial motto of St. John’s College and its relationship to Lasallian identity and culture. Ian Griffin, a deputy principal, noted a Lasallian influence in the unofficial motto because St. John Baptist de La Salle had “massively high expectations and I think that you will see . . . that at St. John’s.” Natalie Edwards, an experienced teacher, commented, “We encourage the kids to be the best. I do believe we support them [in this task].” Octavia Daniels suggested that a question for teachers arising from the school’s Lasallian philosophy was “What opportunities do we offer to [the students] to be the best they can be, in the sense that there are both personal development challenges for students and there are academic challenges for students?” Sam Egan, a comparatively new teacher, reflected that the culture at St. John’s College was different from the Catholic high school sponsored by another religious congregation where he had taught previously. He particularly noticed that the administrators of St. John’s College spoke often about the importance of achieving excellent academic results, a feature that he had not noticed at his previous Catholic high school.

Two teachers commented that the presence of committed teachers was a Lasallian characteristic evident at St. John’s College. Natalie Edwards, an established teacher, observed, “I’ve witnessed some of the teachers who certainly go way beyond what you would normally expect. Normally they’re old scholars [alumni], so there’s a certain

tradition that's passed down through the school.” Oliver Dixon, a long-serving teacher, claimed that the commitment of teachers at St. John’s College influenced many former students to choose teaching as their career. Two other teachers attributed the low faculty turnover at St John’s College to teacher commitment to Lasallian philosophy.

Analysis of school documentation gave evidence of a broad curriculum offered to students in Grades 11 and 12. Examination of faculty teaching assignments revealed that there were six special education teachers and six special education support staff, one teacher who received a time and monetary allowance to work with, and promote programs for, gifted and talented students, and another teacher who received a time and monetary allowance for coordinating VET (Vocational Education and Training) classes that were conducted both on and off campus. Wayne Thompson, a teacher, was enthusiastic regarding the range of programs that St. John’s College offered students who were not aiming to attend a university or college when they left school. He perceived this provision as emanating directly from the school’s Lasallian ethos where there is “the compassion, the empathy, the understanding; treating people with respect and . . . developing them into good [people], irrespective of their academic ability.”

In addition, the school had six student counsellors in addition to the 10 teachers who had pastoral care responsibilities as Year Level Directors or Assistant Year Level Directors. The researcher’s experience and knowledge of Australian high schools suggests that six counsellors is above average for high schools of a similar size to St. John’s College. Andrea Duncan, a relatively new teacher at St. John’s College considered the school’s great emphasis on counselling to be “fantastic” because such efforts benefitted everyone: students, teachers, and parents.

The principal and one teacher made reference to the Lasallian characteristic of service to the poor. Both acknowledged that the demographics of the school meant that there were a limited number of students from poor families, and this was an area that St. John's College needed to work on. Sam Egan, a comparatively new teacher, commented that "We've got 1,200 kids, and there might be a handful that might fit the categories that I would have thought [are] marginalised." The principal, Ray Carr, commented that St. John's College could probably do more to challenge the structures and situations that led to poverty and marginalization in Australian society. In the school newsletter, he challenged everyone at St. John's College not to simply reflect on social justice issues, but to actively work to address them for this is what it means to be Lasallian.

Ray Carr also noted that an increasing number of former students of St. John's College wanted "to reconnect with the College in whatever way they can," and the school was directing these former students to outreach programs for marginalized youth. During the weeks that the researcher was present at St. John's College, about 10 former students conducted Camp La Salle, an activity camp for younger marginalized high-school age students witnessing the principles of Lasallian education.

#### *Organizational Characteristics*

Only one teacher mentioned the governance of St. John's College as a Lasallian characteristic of the school. The reference to governance was in terms of the accountability of the principal to the Provincial of the De La Salle Christian Brothers. No administrators or teachers mentioned the role of the St. John's College Board of Directors, consisting of one Brother and six lay members, as being important in developing or maintaining the school's Lasallian identity and culture.



One deputy principal and two teachers commented that St. John's College was a Lasallian school because it was part of a wider Lasallian network. Participants noted that the shared links with other Lasallian schools was especially felt when faculty participated in professional development and when students and faculty participated in regional or national Lasallian functions. The researcher observed this interconnection when he accompanied some administrators from St. John's College to a Lasallian function for the Superior General of the De La Salle Christian Brothers in another Australian city. Bill Dobson, a deputy principal, agreed that the participation of St. John's College in the wider Lasallian network of schools was an integral part of its Lasallian identity and culture. During a sabbatical, he visited three Lasallian schools in New Zealand where he investigated how the Lasallian charism was understood and expressed. He maintained that St. John's College compared very favourably in its promotion of Lasallian identity and culture compared to the schools he had studied.

#### *Relational Characteristics*

Three teachers mentioned that the discipline policy followed at St. John's College emanated from the Lasallian philosophy of the school. These teachers particularly perceived Lasallian philosophy being evident in the numerous ways that students were empowered to change their behavior. Susan Gaines summarized their viewpoint when she stated, "I know that this school gives them a lot of chances and opportunities to redeem themselves."

Closely aligned with the discipline policy at the school is the pastoral care of the students. The principal and six teachers acknowledged that pastoral care was an important characteristic of the Lasallian identity and culture of St. John's College.

Specifically, Natalie Edwards, an established teacher, noted that St. John's College really supported its students academically and pastorally. Allison Keller, an established teacher, contended, "the teachers go that extra mile for the students."

Four teachers commented on the pastoral care of teachers as also being a characteristic of the Lasallian identity and culture of St. John's College. Three of the teachers spoke positively about their experience at the school, while the fourth teacher felt that the school needed to change to be more authentically Lasallian. Wayne Thompson claimed that positive pastoral care of teachers by the administrators at St. John's College flowed over into increased pastoral care of students. Andrea Duncan was enthusiastic about her treatment by the administrators and other teachers: "People really care for me, I feel cared for, I feel valued, and I'm not just another individual. I'm not just a teacher. I'm seen as so much more than that, and I certainly feel so much more valued." However, Sam Egan, a comparatively new teacher contended:

The way people are treated, particularly [faculty], on many occasions, leaves a lot to be desired. . . . You know when your boss values your [subject] area and what you do, and I just often feel like . . . he just doesn't. . . . I would have thought that Lasallian philosophy would be very strongly entrenched in the way that people are treated, and particularly [faculty].

Sam Egan acknowledged that his negative perception of the pastoral care of teachers may have been influenced by two intensive personal activities that occurred about the time of his interview: namely, students seeking extra help and assistance prior to external examinations, and organizing teachers and students for school functions near the end of the academic year.

The principal and four teachers considered the community dimension of St. John's College as an important Lasallian characteristic of the school. Octavia Daniels, a

long-serving teacher echoed the expressions of the principal and other teachers when she maintained:

We are a community. We don't separate as teachers, we don't separate ourselves from the students, we act as an older brother or sister. We have that role, that responsibility . . . of achieving those Lasallian principles of child-centered education and being part of a community and educating the whole child and all of those other aspects that make it Lasallian.

Sam Egan, a comparatively new teacher who was critical concerning some aspects of the Lasallian identity and culture of St. John's College, also recognized that St. John's College was "a good community," and he thought that the faculty "appreciated feeling Lasallian."

Two teachers noted that the school community of St. John's College expanded beyond current parents, students, and teachers, and embraced former students and the broader community. As evidence of the broad-based community nature of the school, Oliver Dixon, a long-serving teacher, cited a fundraising event that had been held in previous weeks at the school for a former student who had been paralysed as the result of an accident, and the event had raised \$25,000 for him. Oliver Dixon claimed that this event exemplified the Lasallian spirit of the St. John's College community, and he proudly proclaimed, "That's us!"

The principal, a deputy principal, and three teachers commented on the importance of relationships to the Lasallian identity and culture of St. John's College. When Andrea Duncan, a comparatively new teacher, began teaching at St. John's College, the aspect that most impressed her was the emphasis on relationships by administrators and faculty, and then to observe "the relationships at work. That's been really striking for me." The principal, Ray Carr, and a long-serving teacher, Roger Lowe,

both maintained that the strong relationships developed between teachers and students were what former students remembered most favourably about their time at St. John's College.

However, a deputy principal, Ian Griffin, noted that teachers sometimes misunderstand what the Lasallian notion of relationships between teacher and student was. He contended that such relationships were not about being "warm, fuzzy, soft in nature," but rather about finding an appropriate balance between gentleness and firmness. He maintained that faculty also had to recognize that the positive relationship between teacher and student in a Lasallian school promoted high academic and behavioral expectations.

#### *Religious Characteristics*

The two deputy principals and three teachers made comments regarding the self-identification of teachers (and students) as "Lasallian" rather than "Catholic." Bill Dobson, a deputy principal, opined that students used the term "Lasallian" more frequently because they were not committed to regular participation in Catholic parishes and because they had difficulties with some Catholic beliefs. He also thought that the emphasis on community, relationships, and service to the poor that characterized Lasallian educational philosophy was more appealing to teachers who were not Catholic or observant Catholics. Allison Keller, an established teacher, commented that she had heard new teachers at St. John's College characterize the school as "more Lasallian than Catholic." For Sam Egan, a comparatively new teacher, the self-identification of teachers as Lasallian rather than Catholic was a source of concern for him:

[The faculty] seem to talk . . . more about the Founder and the order and the ideals of the Brothers than . . . about Christ and about what he was about. . . . We talk a

lot about being Lasallian, and I think the school does really try to live it, but it always intrigues me how we talk more about that than we do about Christ.

However, he also acknowledged that the Lasallian philosophy offered “a good connecting point” for teachers and students who were not Catholic, and consequently allowed them to “feel part of the community.”

The researcher observed a Lasallian emphasis rather than a Catholic emphasis at an Awards Assembly that he attended. A senior teacher acting as a Master of Ceremonies (not one of the study participants) introduced the Awards Assembly as “a public statement of who we are,” as “a link between the past and the present,” and as a reflection of “a shared Lasallian ethos.” The procession at the start of the assembly included a portrait of St. John Baptist de La Salle, and the Master of Ceremonies commented that the portrait was included because it was a “symbol of service and community.” References were made during the course of the assembly to the life of St. John Baptist de La Salle, his promotion of community service and leadership, and his encouragement of teachers and students to “work together and by association.” In his address to the assembly, the principal, Ray Carr, referred to two saints. He used St. John Baptist de La Salle as an exemplar for teachers and students to think beyond themselves, and he used a quote of St. Mary MacKillop: “Never see a need and not do something about it,” to encourage and recognize community outreach by teachers and students at St. John’s College.

The researcher noted that in the weekly newsletters of St. John’s College, there were numerous references to the Lasallian nature of the school. This included news items on the visit of the Superior General of the De La Salle Christian Brothers to Australia and quotes from Lasallian documentation. The Lasallian references were

complemented by items dealing with broader Catholic events, such as the canonization of St. Mary MacKillop, a statement from the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council, the local Archbishop's Christmas message, and the St. Vincent de Paul Society Hamper Drive. Each newsletter included an invitation to parents to attend a weekly school Mass, as well as an invitation to a family end-of-year Mass for St. John's College, and special parish youth Masses on Sunday evenings.

The three administrators, as well as four teachers, made reference to aspects of the life and writings of St. John Baptist de La Salle and the Lasallian charism having an influence on the Lasallian identity and culture of St. John's College. The principal, Ray Carr, maintained:

The story of the Founder . . . gives a particular flavor to an organization, in the sense that, in the Lasallian tradition, you have a very learned Founder, who was able to work with people and bring together the training of teachers in a schooling system.

A deputy principal, Bill Dobson, perceived "that people do actually have an affinity with the Lasallian charism and really sort of hang their hat on it." Octavia Daniels, a long-serving teacher, maintained that St. John's College used the writings of St. John Baptist de La Salle regarding good teachers and good schools to provide a checklist and structure for what was undertaken in the school. Wayne Thompson, an established teacher, claimed that the identity and culture of St. John's College was based on the writings of St. John Baptist de La Salle, and that these writings influenced the way that teachers operated within the school. He claimed that St. John's College is unique because it is Lasallian. An established teacher, Allison Keller, thought that the faculty "seem to have that extra little bit of motivation because we have this cause of being Lasallian." Roger

Lowe, a long-serving teacher, commented that the “Lasallian ethos to touch the hearts of the pupils” was a defining Lasallian characteristic of St. John’s College.

During their interviews, a deputy principal and three teachers maintained that there was strong faculty support for the Lasallian charism in the school. Bill Dobson, a deputy principal, commented that he thought that teachers may have different opinions regarding the constitutive elements of a Lasallian school, but all would be able to affirm, “We’re a Lasallian school.” Sam Egan, a relatively new teacher, perceived faculty support for the Lasallian charism by their responses during prayer at St. John’s College. Another two teachers cited the invocation of St. John Baptist de La Salle at the end of prayers at faculty meetings and briefings in addition to the Lasallian invocation, “Live Jesus in our hearts – Forever!” as indicative of the Lasallian identity and culture of St. John’s College. The researcher noted that Lasallian invocations were used at the beginning or end of all the meetings, briefings, and assemblies that he observed during the period of the study. The use of the invocation of St. John Baptist de La Salle and the Lasallian invocation are features found in Lasallian schools throughout the world.

Four teachers commented on the Lasallian Student Leadership Program as an important characteristic of the Lasallian identity and culture of St. John’s College. The focus of the Lasallian Student Leadership program in 2010 was community outreach and involved students and teachers interacting with the residents of a local retirement home. About 20 students were involved, and assisted the elderly residences with a range of activities, such as technology, arts and crafts, and gardening.

Three administrators and three teachers cited two whole-school events, De La Salle Day and Mission Action Day, as evidence of the Lasallian identity and culture at St.

John's College. The purpose of De La Salle Day was to take the life of St. John Baptist de La Salle and celebrate it through lessons and liturgies. Besides lessons from teachers, Year (Grade) 11 students also instructed classes about an aspect of the life of St. John Baptist de La Salle. The principal, Ray Carr, claimed that the students had the confidence to do this because of the exposure they had received to St. John Baptist de La Salle and the Lasallian charism during their schooling. He further noted that recent alumni who had been hired as teachers at St. John's College were able to articulate and promulgate their knowledge of St. John Baptist de La Salle and his philosophy with ease and conviction.

The principal, a deputy principal, and two teachers contended that Mission Action Day, an annual fund-raising day for the Lasallian missions in Australia and in the Asia-Pacific region, was an integral part of the Lasallian identity and culture of St. John's College. Ray Carr, the principal, maintained that the \$50,000 raised came from "a sense of empathy," because the students recognized that students in other countries were less fortunate. Besides fund-raising, the students also learned about needs in the Asia-Pacific region. Roger Lowe, a long-standing teacher, commented that fundraising for disadvantaged students in other countries is of the essence of being Lasallian. However, Bill Dobson, a deputy principal, sounded a note of caution regarding Mission Action Day and its effects on the students:

Mission Action Day . . . [has] grown in terms of pure money, and we can take that as a measure. [However] in actual fact, . . . the social economic rating of St. John's has gone up over that period of time. The school numbers have gone up. So if we were to say we only raised \$10,000 then, [and] now we raise \$50,000, there's a whole range of things that don't necessarily reflect the fact that we're more giving, or more accepting of others, or we're caring more in our empathy or sympathy for the poor.



In short, Bill Dobson pointed out that there may be false accolades being touted here.

A deputy principal and three teachers also highlighted that the commitment of St. John's College to solidarity with the poor arose from its Lasallian identity and culture. Octavia Daniels, a long-standing teacher, noted that unlike her previous experience in a government school, involvement in promoting solidarity with the poor is a school commitment at St. John's College rather than an initiative proposed by an individual or an interested group. A relatively new teacher, Andrea Duncan, commented that at St. John's College there is a "constant reminding and acting out of social justice. Making our students aware of others who are less fortunate, and doing something about it. Getting students to act, getting students to also not put themselves first all the time." Wayne Thompson, an established teacher, stated that based on his experience at St. John's College and other secondary schools, "compassion and empathy of helping people, helping the poor . . . that's really what sets [St. John's College] apart from other schools."

Although no administrators or teachers made a comment regarding visual Lasallian symbols characterizing St. John's College as a Lasallian school, the researcher observed a number of Lasallian artifacts in the school and that were present in its documentation. The foyer of the administration center had a large picture of St. John Baptist de La Salle. Several buildings were named after Lasallian saints. There were framed copies of the St. John's College mission and statement located in the lobby, meeting rooms, and offices in the administration center. Lasallian pictures and publications emanating from the Australian and global Lasallian community were observed in the faculty lounge. The College crest had as its centrepiece a large star, a Lasallian symbol commonly observed in the crests of Lasallian schools throughout

Australia. The College newsletter had the banner line “A Catholic School committed to a Vision of Lasallian Education” and included a star symbol used by the De La Salle Christian Brothers in Australia on all their publications and promotional material.

*Researcher Comments*

The overwhelming impression given by the administrators and teachers at St. John’s College was that they not only identified themselves as Lasallian but that they were committed to making St. John’s College a Lasallian school. There was a particularly strong emphasis on a commitment to social justice and to the poor, as well as to high academic expectations. There was evidence of St. John’s College being a community through its policies and emphasis on positive relationships between teachers and students. Prayers, liturgies, and assemblies had a Lasallian character through the use of Lasallian invocations.

The term “Lasallian” was used more frequently at St. John’s College than “Catholic” because it was perceived as being more inclusive and relevant. Teachers subscribed to Lasallian philosophy more easily than Catholic philosophy and beliefs. Lasallian educational philosophy and practice have emerged from the accumulated wisdom of many committed teachers over 300 years, and the administrators and teachers at St. John’s College were able to resonate with both. Even though non-Catholic and non-observant Catholics did not relate to some aspects of Catholicism, they found that they could embrace Lasallian philosophy because of its educational and humanitarian values.

Two key elements of Lasallian spirituality are the presence of God and the spirit of faith. Participants did not raise either of these two elements during interviews relative

to the Lasallian identity and culture of St. John’s College. Neither “the presence of God” nor “the spirit of faith” featured in observation records or in documentation analysis. In fact, mention of God during participant interviews and in documentation was notably absent.

### Research Question 3 Findings

The third research question sought to ascertain how administrators and teachers perceived their role in promoting the Lasallian Catholic identity and culture of St. John’s College. The participants first recounted their perceived role in promoting the Catholic identity and culture of the school. The participants then recounted their perceived role in promoting the Lasallian identity and culture of the school.

#### *Role in Promoting the Catholic Identity and Culture of St. John’s College*

The types of promotion and themes that emerged from analysis of the responses to this interview question are listed alphabetically in Table 10. The two types of promotion – personal and professional – are divided into specific themes.

Table 10

*Types of Promotion and Themes Emerging From Analysis of Data Relating to Administrators and Teachers’ Perceptions of their Role in the Promotion of the Catholic Identity and Culture of St. John’s College*

Types of Promotion	Themes
Personal	Alignment of Values Pastoral Care of Students Personal Witness
Professional	Campus Ministry Positions of Responsibility Religious Education Teacher

*Personal Promotion*

Three teachers, two of whom were not Catholic, contended that they promoted the Catholic identity and culture of St. John's College because the values articulated in the school's philosophy aligned closely with their own values. Wayne Thompson, an established teacher, who is also a non-Catholic, explained that he supported "the whole ethos . . . [because it is] practised in a positive, constructive way. . . . I guess I already had those values that aligned with . . . Catholicism." Octavia Daniels shared a similar viewpoint to Wayne Thompson, but her focus was on the spirituality that emerged from the Catholic identity and culture of St. John's College. She claimed:

I'm not Catholic but spiritually I feel really comfortable with the ethos. . . . I don't think about being Catholic, I think about being spiritual and looking at the spiritual side of students. . . .

Everything that we say is about being Catholic, I totally support, and so anything I'm asked to do in my role as a teacher in a Catholic school, I'm comfortable with because, in terms of my spirituality or my understanding of religion, that's quite cohesive. So, if I'm supporting students to be prayerful, if I'm supporting them to be reflective, if I'm encouraging them to look at others and the way they relate to others, . . . if I'm wanting them to be more compassionate, all of those things fit totally comfortably with me. I never at any . . . stage say, "I'm encouraging them to be a good Catholic." I'm encouraging them to be a good person. And to be a good Catholic, I think you need to be a good person, so that all fits together very nicely as far as I'm concerned.

Walter Gardner, an established teacher who indicated on his questionnaire that he seldom participated in church activities outside school, reflected that he felt a degree of alienation from Catholicism because he was divorced. He maintained that he promoted "the best" values and beliefs of Catholicism because these values matched up with his own set of values.

Five teachers with homeroom responsibilities indicated that the pastoral care of students was an important way in which they promoted the Catholic identity and culture

of St. John's College. Sam Egan, a comparatively new teacher, reflected the viewpoints of the other teachers when he stated that his promotion of Catholic identity and culture was intrinsically linked to "how I treat others, . . . that's at the core of it all, really. It's not what I say; it's what I do. And I've always tried to connect with all people, regardless of age, color or creed." He continued that he tried to be "a Christ-like figure to them, in a humble way, not in . . . an over-the top way." Octavia Daniels, a long-serving teacher and a non-Catholic, added that some students had difficulty relating to Catholic beliefs and practices. She saw her role as "keeping my eye out for that . . . individual student who is [saying], 'This is all crap. I'm not really interested in this,' and tried to make a positive connection to Catholicism for that student."

The principal, a deputy principal, and five teachers remarked that they promoted the Catholic identity and culture of St. John's College through their personal witness.

Ray Carr, the principal, stated:

There is a personal faith element that I think the kids pick up on pretty quick whether you're delivering a subject or something you really believe in and try to live out. . . . [Catholic social justice is] something I share . . . on a regular basis with other teachers and leaders, because I think it's really motivating. I'm a kid of the seventies, [a decade] that was fairly idealistic. I'm still idealistic, and those ideals are based in Catholic culture and Catholic belief. I don't agree necessarily with certain directions the Church may have taken; that's another story. But fundamentally, the Catholic Church teachings are so rich and challenging, that's where I'm based.

Likewise, Oliver Dixon, a long-serving teacher, maintained that students were quick to pick up whether a teacher was a genuine witness or not:

My main task . . . is certainly in terms of professing my faith, letting the kids see me. I guess it's not just the Wednesday Masses; it's the other things that you can do. But most importantly, it's who you are and how you live your life. . . . You can't be one person here and another person [elsewhere]. Children pick that up straight away, so you have to be genuine. You have to let them know that this is what I believe. If you're putting on masks, if you're trying to hide as a teacher,

you're in the wrong profession because they can read through that very, very quickly. So, yeah, it's through my dealings with the kids, but it's all those other things that I do.

Roger Lowe, a long-serving teacher, promoted the Catholic identity and culture of St. John's College by speaking to students about religion in pastoral care situations.

Andrea Duncan, a comparatively new teacher, contended that teaching at St. John's College provided her with "an opportunity to speak about the gospel" that wouldn't be permissible in an Australian public school. Only one teacher, Natalie Edwards, mentioned that Catholicism influenced her teaching of classes other than Religious Education. She remarked, "Even in English, . . . I always try to draw the Christian philosophies that are present within the text, because kids don't seem to grasp that as quickly and as readily."

#### *Professional Promotion*

Frank Power, a relatively new teacher, and Allison Keller, an established teacher, noted that their involvement in the campus ministry program at St. John's College was a way in which they facilitated the Catholic identity and culture of the school. Both teachers assumed responsibility for campus ministry after the incumbent campus minister left St. John's College in the latter part of the academic year. The researcher observed these participants' commitment to performing their campus ministry duties during his time at St. John's College. These responsibilities included organizing school-wide diocesan events, as well as student liturgies relative to weekly masses, feast day masses, and the graduation mass. Although both saw their efforts as a way of promoting the Catholic identity and culture of St. John's College, Allison Keller pointed out that they

could also be seen “ as obligations because that's what I am employed to do, but everything that I've done, I've been passionate about, and I've enjoyed doing it.”

Three of the teachers participating in the study were Year Level Directors, a role that combined teaching with a time allowance for pastoral care matters. Two of these teachers perceived their Year Level Director roles as a way in which they promoted the Catholic identity and culture of St. John’s College. Natalie Edwards commented:

I'd like to think that I project, as a person, concern over the welfare of most people that come into my life, and I think that's a very Catholic, Christian perception. I love the story of the Good Shepherd looking after each and every one, and I would hope that that comes through in my personality.

Roger Lowe linked his Year Level Director responsibilities as an opportunity to implicitly witness Catholic values to the students. He maintained, “I have to . . . show a good example to them. . . . There's a lot of mediation [required] between the kids and the teachers, and I hope that the students see my modelling as an example of that.”

The principal, Ray Carr, named three ways in which he promoted the Catholic identity and culture of St. John’s College. First, he embedded Catholic practices and faith in the culture of the school. Second, he maintained the Catholic-principled enrollment procedures. Third, he included the Catholic identity and practices in the induction program for new teachers to the school. He also noted that these areas required him “to go into battle for some things that not all families will support, or all kids will support,” such as attendance at off-campus retreats. He was emphatic regarding the need to be very clear with new parents about the Catholic identity and culture of St. John’s College:

At the [student enrollment] interview, . . . the last question is a statement I put on [the interview question form], and it basically goes along the lines of, “St John's is a Catholic school with a rich tradition. It's been around for 50 years. It will be

here for another 50 years. These things are non-negotiable, and if this is not the sort of school you are after, . . . you might want to consider another school. We're a Catholic school with religious practices and traditions. We have prayer, we have uniform, we have structure . . . and if you're not Catholic, you will still cope because, trust me, it won't kill you." And parents have to sign off to that, and . . . that's before they even get here. Now most of these kids come from other Catholic schools, but . . . to say it up front and clearly is important.

Ray Carr also commented that his role as principal required him to ensure that new faculty became familiar with the Catholic identity and culture of the school.

Together with the two deputy principals, he developed an induction program for new teachers. One of the deputy principals, Bill Dobson, confirmed that he promoted the Catholic identity and culture of St. John's College by organizing induction and professional development programs on the school site and off-campus. He pointed out that many teachers at St. John's College had not started nor completed a Graduate Certificate or Accreditation programs designed to raise participants' theological and catechetical understanding. Bill Dobson added that new teachers did not show any enthusiasm to participate in them, "and we're not pushing them." He stated that some Graduate Certificate or Accreditation courses had been delivered on site in previous years, and that if similar courses were offered to non-accredited teachers at St. John's College, these teachers "would jump at them."

Three comparatively new teachers interviewed commented that they saw their role as a teacher of Religious Education as a means of promoting the Catholic identity of the school. Susan Gaines remarked, "I teach [Religious Education], which I never want to give up, because I think I can teach [the students] the fundamentals" of being a Catholic Christian. Frank Power stated that teaching Religious Education gave him an opportunity to clearly explain the Catholic position on many contemporary issues.



Andrea Duncan, spoke enthusiastically about the opportunity that teaching Religious Education gave her to promote the Catholic identity and culture of the school:

Well, I'm fortunate enough to teach [Religious Education] as a subject, and I've always taught it. . . . That's a bonus. For me, it's a bonus to be able to promote [Catholic identity and culture]. And it's part of our programs anyway. It's part of the curriculum that's always inbuilt. And there's always the opportunity to inform students . . . and remind them what the Catholic ethos is, what the values are, what the belief system is.

*Researcher Comments*

Administrators and some teachers have roles in the school that naturally lend themselves to the promotion of Catholic identity and culture. The impression given by the administrators and teachers at St. John's College is that they were committed to promoting the Catholic identity and culture through both words and actions. The commitment to the Catholic identity and culture of the school by two non-Catholic teachers and a non-practicing Catholic teacher was strong, even though they were unable to fully accept everything associated with Catholicism. Nearly half of the participants in the study saw their role as witnesses, which aligns with what Church documents call teachers to be. It was surprising that only one teacher mentioned that she promoted Catholicism in a subject other than Religious Education.

*Role in Promoting the Lasallian Identity and Culture of St. John's College*

The second question asked in this section of the interview sought to ascertain how the administrator and teacher understood their role in the promotion of the Lasallian identity and culture of St. John's College. The types of promotion and themes that emerged from analysis of the responses to this interview question are listed alphabetically in Table 11. The two types of promotion – professional and personal – are divided into specific themes.

Table 11

*Types of Promotion and Themes Emerging From Analysis of Data Relating to Administrators and Teachers' Perceptions of their Role in the Promotion of the Lasallian Identity and Culture of St. John's College*

Types of Promotion	Themes
Personal	Encouraging Student Participation Model Lasallian Values and Relationship Rationality
Professional Promotion	Appointments Lasallian Formation Programs Leadership

*Personal Promotion*

Three teachers believed that encouragement of student participation in community outreach and fundraising as an important aspect of their role in promoting the Lasallian identity and culture of St. John's College. Susan Gaines echoed that perspective when she commented that she actively promoted the events undertaken at the school, especially those that promoted community and involved an outreach to the "less fortunate than ourselves." Six teachers claimed that they promoted the Lasallian identity and culture of St. John's College by modelling Lasallian values. Allison Keller commented, "I think a lot of this is at a personal level. It is about role modelling . . . Lasallian [values] and acting towards other people in a way that I think is Lasallian." Wayne Thompson further developed this viewpoint:

I think that it is a really, really important role within the community to promote it [Lasallian identity and culture]. . . . You are a role model, . . . someone the students look up to. . . . You can relate to students and build a rapport and positive relationships, I think that's a strong Lasallian trait because obviously the students learn from that. We've had many students from here go on to do teacher education because their experience here has been good.

Roger Lowe remarked that in promoting the Lasallian identity and culture of the school, he emphasized rationality – explaining the reasons that underpinned his thinking and

decisions. He pointed out that pastoral care situations sometimes provided him with an opportunity to introduce students “to a bit of the Lasallian ethos.”

*Professional Promotion*

Ray Carr, the principal, stated that he promoted the Lasallian identity and culture of St. John’s College by appointing teachers to leadership positions who were committed, or showed signs that they would be committed, to continuing the Lasallian character of the school. For him, it was important “to choose somebody who . . . (a) has it or can learn it, and (b) will espouse it and continue to develop that aspect of the community.” He contended that it was the leaders at all levels of the school who were responsible for ensuring that Lasallian philosophy and values permeated all aspects of school life.

The principal and a deputy principal mentioned that their roles as administrators were linked with their promotion of the Lasallian identity and culture of St. John’s College. This role was primarily concerned with setting up structures that promoted the Lasallian formation of faculty, particularly new teachers. Ray Carr, the principal, explained further:

Each year begins with Lasallian input, and it's not always an outside expert. The [faculty] formation within Lasallian heritage and pedagogy and studies has changed a lot. I think 15 years ago, people went to Narooma [an off-site location for Lasallian formation programs], had a good time, came back, and did one or two things. Now, all members of the Leadership Team have done the online Master’s course, except myself because I've done the leadership and I've done the Buttimer [a Lasallian formation program emanating from the USA]. I think all the RE [Religious Education] teachers have been to Narooma.

So we get what [a local bishop] calls "the movers and shakers and scenery makers". We've got a critical mass. It's a great theory that he uses because it just makes so much sense, and I think good schools run like this. You have a core group of people who are capable, informed, and enthusiastic about a particular issue within a school, it is going to go well. If it's football, it's football, but in this case it's the Lasallian flavor.

*Researcher Comments*

With the exception of the principal, most participants in the study could not articulate in any depth the ways in which they promoted the Lasallian identity and culture of the school. There was an interesting difference in terminology used by administrators and teachers regarding their personal roles. When the administrators and teachers spoke about their role in promoting the Catholic identity and culture of St. John's College, they usually used "witness," while "modelling" was usually used when they spoke about the promotion of Lasallian identity and culture at the school. Structures set up at the school, such as the appointment of school leaders, the provision of induction and formation programs, and the scheduling of Lasallian events and activities during the academic year were important vehicles for the administrators and teachers to promote the Lasallian identity and culture of the school.

*Research Question 4 Findings*

The fourth research question sought to ascertain what administrators and teachers thought had enhanced the Lasallian Catholic identity and culture of St. John's College. Participants were first asked what had enhanced the Catholic identity and culture of the school, and secondly what had enhanced the Lasallian identity and culture of the school.

*Enhancing the Catholic Identity and Culture of St. John's College*

The enhancements and themes that emerged from analysis of participants' responses are listed alphabetically in Table 12. The three enhancements – organizational, religious, and relational – are divided into specific themes.

Table 12

*Enhancements and Themes Emerging From Analysis of Data of Administrators and Teachers' Responses Regarding the Enhancement of the Catholic Identity and Culture of St. John's College*

Enhancements	Themes
Organizational	Appointment of Director of Mission Diocesan, Catholic Schools, and Parish Links Principal
Relational	Care for Students Care for Teachers Feminine Influence Increased Respect
Religious	Prayer and Liturgy Role of RE Programs

#### *Organizational Enhancement*

In order to strengthen the identity and focus of Catholic schools, the diocesan Catholic Education Office mandated that each Catholic school must have an Assistant Principal for Religious Identity and Mission (APRIM). St. John's College appointed an alumnus to commence this role in 2011, although the school renamed the position as "Director of Mission." Ian Griffin, a deputy principal, explained that this appointment would enhance the Catholic identity and culture at St. John's College, as the alumnus would be promoting the Catholic mission of the school with the faculty and the Lasallian Youth Minister.

The principal and a teacher stated that the Catholic identity and culture of St. John's College had been enhanced by its increased links with the diocese, other Catholic schools, and local priests. Specifically, Ray Carr, the principal, cited a food hamper appeal at Christmas for the St. Vincent de Paul Society, an activity that was appreciated by the organization as few other Catholic schools undertook such an appeal, and one that

witnessed St. John's College as a Catholic institution. Octavia Daniels, a long-serving teacher, perceived that the enhancement arose from participation in sporting events with other Catholic schools, as well as involvement in the diocesan Catholic schools music program, as both activities created opportunities for links with other Catholic schools in the city. Both Ray Carr and Octavia Daniels mentioned the school's relationship with the priests of the local parishes as enhancing the Catholic identity and culture of St. John's College. Ray Carr noted that establishing and maintaining the relationship with the local priests was important for the liturgical life of the school, and that the school was just one of many calls made on the time of the local priests.

A comparatively new teacher, Frank Power, contended that having a lay person rather than a Brother as principal of St. John's College enhanced its Catholic identity and culture. He reasoned that students were more greatly influenced by the witness of Catholic values and principles by a lay principal than by a Brother living a lifestyle that was remote from the students' experiences. He concluded his remarks by saying that the current principal witnessed to "a strong faith . . . in Catholicism."

In contrast, another comparatively new teacher, Sam Egan, perceived that the principal was not sufficiently focused on the Catholic identity of the school when enrolling students at the school. He contended:

I don't think [Catholic identity and culture] has been enhanced. No, in fact, I sort of feel it might have gone the other way. I feel like, as time goes on, . . . the Catholic side of our school is probably diminishing. . . .

I had a read through [an enrollment prospectus] and it said something about "St. John's welcomes Christian-minded people," and I thought, "That's not fair-dinkum [an Australian expression meaning 'genuine'] Catholic." Christian-minded, what's that mean? . . . I can understand why [the principal] has done it. It's because he wants to be appealing to good quality people, and that's all well and good, but I guess the term "fair-dinkum" comes up. I'm not sure how "fair-

dinkum” we are about it. I think sometimes we talk about it when it suits us, and when it's going to help our cause.

### *Relational Enhancement*

Two teachers commented that the care of students at St. John’s College by administrators and teachers had enhanced the Catholic identity and culture of the school. Wayne Thompson, an established teacher, taught at public high schools prior to joining the faculty at St. John’s College. For him, the Catholic identity and culture at the school was evident and increased by the commitment of most teachers to the welfare and progress of the students. He contended, “At least 90% of the faculty” went “out of their way to assist students in their learning and supporting their learning.” Walter Gardner, an established teacher, remarked that the establishment of Year Level Directors and Assistant Year Level Directors’ pastoral care positions had contributed to the strengthening of the caring aspect of the school’s Catholic identity and culture. Walter Gardner also suggested that the care of teachers by administrators at St. John’s College had enhanced its Catholic identity and culture. He had observed an increased understanding by the school’s administrators concerning the needs of teachers, such as bereavement situations or family needs.

A deputy principal, Bill Dobson, claimed that the Catholic identity and culture of St. John’s College had been developed by an increased respect by members of the school community for each other. He stated that the local community judged a Catholic school by the manner in which students “treat each other, and the sorts of behaviors that they do.” The increased respect for each other led to a more “ordered, respectful school,” and this respect was evident during student Masses.

### *Religious Enhancement*

Three teachers thought that prayer and liturgy enhanced the Catholic identity and culture of St. John's College. Oliver Dixon, a long-serving teacher, commented that he had noticed developments in the practice of prayer and liturgy during his years, including his observation that Masses were "very welcoming." Octavia Daniels, a long-serving teacher, also maintained that prayer and liturgy enhanced the Catholic identity and culture at St. John's College because they provided a framework in which teachers and students operated:

Celebrations like Mary MacKillop's canonization, celebrations of Catholic saints' days, and so all of those rites and celebrations are respected. . . . It's just forming that extra framework around students to say, "This is an established belief, this is an established community that you can be part of." So when we go on retreats and when we have opportunities to reflect, a lot of those things are enhanced by the rituals and rites associated with Catholicism, so that gives the kids some sort of structure.

A comparatively new teacher, Kate Cummins, perceived prayer and liturgy as enhancing the Catholic identity and culture of St. John's College because they provided the means through which teachers and students became familiar with Catholicism and because it gave teachers an opportunity to witness to their faith and beliefs to the students.

A deputy principal, Ian Griffin, was ambivalent when he considered whether Religious Education programs enhanced the Catholic identity and culture of St. John's College.

I think . . . some would argue that RE [Religious Education] programs over time don't enhance the traditional Catholic identity within a school as much as they used to, because some would see that they are being watered down. . . . We've got our own [Religious Education program], and that's been modified over time.

His comments referred to a change of content in Religious Education programs where the formal presentation of religious and biblical teachings had been partially replaced by



classroom discussion of contemporary ethical and social issues that were of greater interest to students. The change arose in response to the increased number of students attending St. John's College who did not attend a parish liturgy on a regular basis.

Unlike some other Australian dioceses, the diocese where St. John's College is located had not mandated a Religious Education program to be followed by all schools. Ian Griffin added that he thought it likely that a diocesan Religious Education program would be mandated in the future, following the current trend that mandated Religious Education programs in other Australian states and dioceses.

#### *Researcher Comments*

Seven of the 15 participants noted factors that enhanced the Catholic identity and culture of St. John's College. There was no general consensus regarding which practices or what people had enhanced Catholic identity and culture at the school the most. However, these participants felt strongly that the various factors that were identified had indeed enhanced the Catholic identity and culture of St. John's College.

#### *Enhancing the Lasallian Identity and Culture of St. John's College*

The second question asked administrators and teachers what had enhanced the Lasallian identity and culture of St. John's College. The characteristics and themes that emerged from analysis of the responses to this interview question are listed alphabetically in Table 13. The two enhancements – organizational and religious – are divided into specific themes. Unlike the Catholic identity and culture enhancements, the Lasallian identity and culture enhancements did not include a relational component. This was unexpected as the relationship between teacher and students is a highly prized component of Lasallian pedagogy.

Table 13

*Enhancements and Themes Emerging From Analysis of Data of Administrators and Teachers' Responses Regarding the Enhancement of the Lasallian Identity and Culture of St. John's College*

Enhancements	Themes
Organizational	Embedding of Lasallian Events and Practices Appointment of Lasallian Youth Minister
Religious	Embedding Lasallian Identity and Culture Lasallian Youth Leader Program Presence of Brothers

#### *Organizational Enhancement*

The principal and a deputy principal remarked how the presence of a Lasallian Youth Minister during the past five years at St. John's College had enhanced its Lasallian identity and culture. Lasallian Youth Ministers are young men and women who generally work part-time at a school as they complete their university studies. They have usually been student leaders during their time at school. Many of their activities are linked with the campus ministry programs at schools, but they also have special responsibility for the Lasallian Youth Minister program and post-school activities, such as Camp La Salle, a holiday program for disadvantaged youths. Ian Griffin, a deputy principal, commented that the presence of a Lasallian Youth Minister at the school increased "the Lasallian nature of the school." Shortly before the researcher arrived at St. John's College to commence his study, the local diocese hired the Lasallian Youth Minister to establish and coordinate similar youth outreach programs throughout the diocese. Ray Carr, the principal, noted that St. John's College had appointed a new part-time Lasallian Youth Minister for the next academic year. The alumnus who was appointed spent a year as a Lasallian Volunteer in an Aboriginal Mission school and was very familiar with the Lasallian philosophy of education.

### *Religious Enhancement*

The principal, a deputy principal, and three teachers mentioned that administrators and teachers had become increasingly aware of the Lasallian identity and culture of St. John's College, and this awareness became more acute as the number of Brothers engaged in administration and teaching in the school gradually diminished in recent years. The principal, Ray Carr, maintained that Lasallian identity and culture was embedded in the school. He stated, "It's that classic definition of culture, how we do things around here. And people wouldn't even question whether you should or you shouldn't do it; it's just done [because of our Lasallian charism]." He also commented that his focus was on embedding Lasallian culture, rather than establishing new Lasallian initiatives. Roger Lowe, a long-standing teacher, contended that teachers were able to say, "That's not very Lasallian," because other teachers knew what that expression meant. He added that new teachers quickly learnt the importance of Lasallian identity and culture because "the deputies and the principal are always making sure that we understand what that is." Another long-serving teacher, Oliver Dixon, declared that he could not imagine St. John's College losing its Lasallian ethos. He continued, "I think it's too dear and too special to too many people to ever lose it." The principal and a deputy principal thought that particular school events and presentations enhanced the Lasallian identity and culture of St. John's College. For example, Ian Griffin, a deputy principal, commented:

Events such as our De La Salle Day, and Mission Action Day, are really vital in terms of the students because it is those bigger events, which stay in their mind. They all know De La Salle Day. They all know Mission Action Day. Mission Action Day is more about . . . raising money in a fun atmosphere to help Lasallian causes. De La Salle Day is more . . . fun, but you learn a little more through our liturgy and from our presentation about either De La Salle or the De La Salle

organisation. We have [the Director of the Lasallian Foundation] come in each year and speak to each of the Year levels, and I find that a very useful thing, because he does explain what the Foundation are doing, and puts that in the terms of “this is what we do as a Lasallian family.” We help each other, we provide support for those, there's a need here and so we will act on that as De La Salle would have. So, in terms of students, I think that is the key to that.

In addition to school events and presentations with a Lasallian focus, the principal, two deputy principals, and three teachers maintained that the Lasallian Youth Leaders program that operated at St. John’s College was an example of how the Lasallian identity and culture of the school had been enhanced. The principal, Ray Carr, maintained that students, who participated in the Lasallian Youth Leaders program, were “inducted in more depth into the Lasallian heritage,” and had the confidence and the understanding to be retreat leaders for students at lower grade levels. Natalie Edwards, an established teacher, was impressed by the establishment by the Lasallian Youth Leaders of “Camp Fish” for disadvantaged students, and noted that there were over 50 students from Grades 11 and 12 who were involved in the Lasallian Youth Leaders program.

The principal and two teachers remarked on how the past presence of the De La Salle Christian Brothers on the faculty and periodic visits to St. John’s College enhanced the Lasallian identity and culture of St. John’s College. The principal, Ray Carr, observed, “the continuing links with the Brothers are important, not only the Brothers’ presence on the board, but the Brothers’ presence to the faculty as well. You've seen the depth of the relationship and affection that people had for Brother Henry.” He continued, “There will also be a continuing use of names [on buildings] to build into the tradition. The ‘Brothers' House’ will always be the ‘Brothers' House’, and so it's a trigger as to what goes on.” Kate Cummins, a comparatively new teacher as well as a former student,

thought that the presence of the Brothers made the school Lasallian, and that their absence meant that the Lasallian identity and culture of the school was less enhanced. She stated, “I think having the Brothers here really made it [St. John’s College] Lasallian, . . . not that it’s lost it, but I think that it promoted it more.”

#### *Researcher Comments*

Fewer than half of the 15 participants could identify enhancements to the Lasallian identity and culture of St. John’s College. The principal was able to identify multiple ways, as expected from his leadership role. The remaining participants identified at least one enhancement inclusive of school-wide events and activities that promoted the Lasallian identity and culture of the school, particularly De La Salle Day, Mission Action Day, and Lasallian Youth Leaders service events. All participants, however, had high expectations of the roles that two alumnae hired by the school for the following academic year would have in reference to Lasallian identity and culture. While the role of Director of Mission was new to the school, the role of the Lasallian Youth Minister was highly regarded because of the contribution made to enhancing Lasallian identity and culture by the previous incumbent.

#### Research Question 5 Findings

The fifth research question sought to ascertain what challenges there are to the Lasallian Catholic identity and culture at St. John’s College. Participants were asked four questions in this section. The first question asked what challenges the participants saw to the Catholic identity and culture of St. John’s College, with a second follow-up question asking participants for their suggestions as to how these challenges may be overcome. The third question asked what challenges the participants saw to the Lasallian identity

and culture of St. John's College, with a fourth follow-up question asking participants for their suggestions as to how these challenges may be overcome.

*Challenges to Catholic Identity and Culture at St. John's College*

The challenges and themes that emerged from analysis of the responses to the first interview question regarding challenges to Catholic identity and culture are listed alphabetically in Table 14. The challenges – organizational and religious – are divided into specific themes. The suggestions of participants regarding how the challenges could be overcome are outlined in the following section.

Table 14

*Challenges and Themes Emerging From Analysis of Data of Administrators and Teachers' Responses Regarding Challenges to the Catholic Identity and Culture of St. John's College*

Challenges	Themes
Organizational	Accountability and Funding Future Leaders Leadership Expectations
Religious	Absence of Brothers Evaluation of Identity Lack of Whole School Worship Non-Religious Reasons for Enrollment New State Curriculum for Year 12 Religious Education Programs Religious Engagement of Students Religious Engagement of Teachers Wider Church Issues

*Organizational Challenges*

A relatively new teacher, Sam Egan, expressed concern that accountability pressures from governmental bodies, the Board of Directors at St. John's College, and the De La Salle Christian Brothers, could challenge the Catholic identity and culture of the school in terms of relationships and focus. He had perceived a change in the culture of

the school during his time at St. John's College from a culture that embodied the caring principles of Catholicism to a culture that was "business-like" because it focused on measurable outcomes in response to external pressures. The principal, Ray Carr, also noted that pressures from outside the school posed a challenge for St. John's College as a Catholic institution. He had noted a trend in which government funding was increasingly tied to requirements or outcomes that may not necessarily match the expectations or priorities of a Catholic school. He commented, "Catholic education needs to have a good look at itself," because during the term of the Howard government in Australia (1996-2007), the government had increased funding for Catholic schools, but in return, Catholic schools had to relinquish "more and more control" to the government. Ray Carr acknowledged that with government funding, St. John's College "would be very, very difficult, if not impossible, to run."

Bill Dobson, a deputy principal, reflected on the demographic and religious trends in Australia, and wondered if there would be sufficient committed Catholic teachers to take up leadership positions in Catholic secondary schools like St. John's College in the future. He acknowledged that some of the teachers were graduates of Catholic secondary schools and had picked up relational aspects of the charism of a religious congregation, but he thought that background alone without involvement in the local church was insufficient as a religious and educational foundation for a teacher to be a future Catholic school administrator. He perceived that the challenge would continue to exacerbate as many new teachers came from families with minimal or sporadic attendance at Mass and the sacraments.

Ray Carr, the principal, maintained that a challenge he faced was the wide variety of expectations and understandings held by teachers regarding the Catholic identity and culture of the school, and the personal challenge that he had as the school leader to promote a common Catholic identity and culture. He reflected, "Have you got the balance right in terms of all the key elements of the school? Am I doing the Catholic element justice when it should be done, or does it just get wheeled out at particular times?" He contended that a real challenge was to get the balance right in terms of promoting Catholic identity and culture, given that there were different expectations of St. John's College by its College Board of Directors, its faculty, its parents, and its students.

### *Religious Challenges*

The principal, Ray Carr, noted that the absence of Brothers on the faculty was a challenge for the Catholic identity and culture of the school. He explained:

When you had the Brothers' presence on [the faculty], there was a level of respect and symbolism about that . . . said upfront, this is the notion of Catholic Church, because that's the role the religious play. Now that it's lay leadership, that's not quite as apparent.

Ray Carr also mentioned the challenge involved in evaluating secondary schools, such as St. John's College, in terms of their Catholic (and Lasallian) identity and culture.

Levels of authenticity are critical, . . . it's a key question. What sort of tool would you use to measure the Catholic and/or the Lasallian nature of the school without it becoming the [an accrediting body] visit with thousands of items? . . . What do you do to maintain or verify that you are a Catholic school? If it was the number of bottoms on seats on a Sunday, we're an abject failure. If it's human and Christian education, we're probably closer.

Susan Gaines, a young teacher, mentioned that a challenge for St. John's College was the inability of the whole student body on the campus to come together for worship



and other liturgical acts. Neither the closest parish church nor the College gymnasium was able to provide seating for all the students. The College chapel was only able to seat about 200 faculty and students. The researcher noted that in the strategic plan for St. John's College, there were plans to construct a new multi-purpose gymnasium complex within three years that would be able to accommodate all the students on the campus for whole-school Masses, liturgies, and assemblies.

The principal, a deputy principal, and a teacher remarked on the implications of a new State-wide Year 12 curriculum that will be introduced at the start of the next academic year. Ray Carr, the principal, stated that there was a state-mandated curriculum that made Religious Education difficult to schedule. Over recent years, St. John's College had held an alternative program named "Religious Education Seminar" for Year 12 students. He maintained that the time spent on the Year 12 seminar program and retreat were the equivalent to the time spent delivering a Religious Education program that had been offered in earlier years at St. John's College and from which students had been "totally disengaged." Bill Dobson, a deputy principal, made similar comments to the principal regarding the challenges posed by the state-mandated curriculum, and was concerned whether St. John's College was really meeting its obligations as a Catholic school in not providing regular Religious Education classes to its Year 12 students.

The principal, a deputy principal, and three teachers considered that the non-religious reasons for which students were enrolled at St. John's College were a challenge to the Catholic identity and culture of the school. The principal, Ray Carr, contended that if "families, when enrolling, have no concept of the Catholic nature of your school, then you really have lost something pretty special." Bill Dobson, a deputy principal, stated

that many people enrolled their children in Catholic schools because they were “good” schools rather than “Catholic” schools. He saw benefits to the students because they were exposed to a Christian education, but he had doubts whether it would be possible to maintain an authentic Catholic identity for St. John’s College if an increasing number of students were enrolled because it was good rather than Catholic.

Natalie Edwards, an established teacher, thought that the reason that quite a few people enrolled their children at St. John’s College was because the school was located near their homes rather than because St. John’s College was a Catholic school. She noted that often children were enrolled in a local Catholic primary school so that they could be ensured of acceptance into St. John’s College. She concluded, “It’s a different mindset.”

The three administrators as well as two teachers regarded the current situation concerning the availability of Religious Education teachers and the quality of Religious Education courses as challenges to the Catholic identity and culture of St. John’s College. The principal, Ray Carr, noted that in earlier decades every teacher on the faculty taught a class of Religious Education in addition to other subjects. He stated that the school now struggled to provide the 20 teachers required to teach Religious Education, even though there were over 90 teachers employed at the school. Allison Keller, an established teacher, commented that there was just one part-time teacher, Natalie Robinson, whose teaching load consisted exclusively of Religious Education classes while other Religious Education teachers taught the subject to one or two classes as part of a broader teaching load. She noted that while some of the teachers were experienced teachers of Religious Education, many teachers were not and had to seek advice from the experienced teachers about teaching different aspects of the courses.

Bill Dobson, a deputy principal, commented that few difficulties emerged from the Religious Education program offered at St. John's College, but that could be because the contemporary Religious Education program was "diluting what is truly Catholic." This comment was echoed by the other deputy principal, Ian Griffin, when he stated, "Some would argue that RE programs over time don't enhance the traditional Catholic identity within a school as much as they used to, because some would see that they are being watered down." Natalie Edwards, an established teacher, concurred noting that she thought that the contemporary Religious Education program offered at St. John's College did not challenge students as much as it did when she first arrived at the College, probably because most students were not brought up in religious households and they had no formal links to a local parish. Consequently, students were unable to engage with their teachers in considering the "really deep questions" of the Catholic faith.

However, Roger Lowe, a long-serving teacher, was less concerned about the depth of the Religious Education program at St. John's College. He maintained that it is "very easy to push kids away from religion," and that teachers needed to engage students within the Religious Education program. He argued that it was necessary to "compromise or package" the Religious Education program so it focused initially on spirituality and then focused later more specifically on religion.

Likewise, three administrators and eight teachers commented that the religious engagement of students at present was a challenge to the Catholic identity and culture of St. John's College. Natalie Edwards, a long-serving teacher, thought that there had been a dramatic decrease in the percentage of students of Catholic background attending the school. Ray Carr, the principal, suggested that part of the challenge of a lack of religious

engagement by students arose from their Italian background. Culturally, the students of Italian background tended to participate only in rites of transition such as baptisms, weddings, funerals, and major religious events such as Christmas and Easter. They seldom participated in Sunday mass at their local parishes. A comparatively new teacher, Kate Cummins, found the experience of helping students to grow in faith frustrating, as many students were not open to being believers. Octavia Daniels, a long-serving teacher, indicated a greater emphasis on social justice was one of the responses at St. John's College:

We were faced with the . . . challenge [of] . . . having unchurched students. And so a lot of it fell back upon us to say, "Well, let's try and connect to them with a few of the principles of social justice." . . . It challenged us to sort of almost church some of those children.

The three administrators and seven of the teachers mentioned the non-participation of many of the students (and their families) in regular worship at a parish as a challenge to the Catholic identity and culture of St. John's College. Bill Dobson, a deputy principal, contended that there was "an anomaly" and "an inconsistency" regarding the Catholic identity of St. John's College when few students were active participants in their local parishes. Andrea Duncan, a comparatively new teacher, commented that she was disturbed that there were so many students in her Religious Education classes who were not regular participants in their local parish, and described them as just going "through the motions of doing whatever they need to do as Catholics." She reflected, "I'm not sure where that's going, so that's a little worrisome for me." Ian Griffin, a deputy principal, concurred with the viewpoints of the other administrators and teachers, noting that the school's Catholic traditions and teachings were not being practiced and reinforced by students' families. In particular, he noted that the "increasing

numbers of split families across the school” also contributed to the challenge of evangelizing and catechizing students.

A deputy principal, Ian Griffin, was quite frank in his assessment that a major challenge to the Catholic identity and culture of St. John’s College stemmed from teachers who were not active church members. However, he conceded that this challenge had to be related to the current practices and policies that were in place for the hiring of new teacher appointments for the school. He outlined the situation:

[An]other great challenge is in terms of [faculty] and their own expression of their faith, particularly Catholic faith. The trend of schools, and we would probably be one of them, . . . [the trend is] to employ excellent teachers, probably before Catholic teachers, that would be how that is. I . . . think we would fall into that category. People wouldn't necessarily like to hear that, but that's probably what would happen. The Catholic nature of that is a determining factor when you get down to the stage of two people, but most times, the excellent teacher will win the position. So all of those things are challenges, how [faculty] promote prayer, how [faculty] involve themselves in the liturgy, in the Masses, how they model their faith, the language they use, I think all those things are massive challenges for [Catholic] education.

A comparatively new teacher, Sam Egan, perceived that during his time at St. John’s College, there had been a noticeable diminution of active Catholic teachers on the faculty. He commented:

The biggest challenge is losing good people, and not being able to replace them. . . . And when I say good people I mean people who are authentically Catholic or Lasallian and not being able to replace them with similar people. I think that's the challenge that all Catholic schools face.

The principal, a deputy principal, and three teachers alluded to the challenge that the generally negative image of the Catholic Church portrayed in the media was also a challenge to maintaining the Catholic identity and culture of St. John’s College. The principal, Ray Carr, commented, “The challenges are firstly to do with the Church itself. With all that has gone on in terms of the child protection issues, the Catholic Church is

still a bit on the nose.” Bill Dobson, a deputy principal expressed a similar viewpoint when he stated that the sex abuse scandals and cover-up by the Church were harmful and led to cynicism about the Church in the wider society. He added that the scandals gave many people an excuse “to dismiss the Catholic Church” as being an important and relevant institution in society. Frank Power, a comparatively new teacher, reiterated these comments and noted that it was a challenge for schools to closely identify with an institution that was not perceived as a positive force in society.

Natalie Edwards, an established teacher, thought that a challenge to the Catholic identity and culture of St. John’s College was the broader issue of a lack of women in Church leadership and ministerial positions. She noted that from her participation in local parishes, “70% of them [the parishioners] are women.” She had watched the canonization of Saint Mary MacKillop on television and thought,

How many males have we got sitting on the altar? . . . [The Catholic Church] is a male-dominated hierarchical institution, and I don't know that in 2010 that is really where Western Catholic people are. Women . . . play a different role now in the West.

### *Researcher Comments*

The challenges confronting the Catholic identity and culture of St. John’s College are numerous and major. Most of the challenges identified by administrators and teachers are inextricably linked to each other, with societal pressures and wider Church issues influencing teacher, family, and student ties to their parishes, and Religious Education in the school being modified to meet students where they are at in their religious and spiritual journeys. The State in which St. John’s College is located is different to others in its Year 12 graduation requirements, and the new state graduation

requirements will exacerbate the challenge of the school providing a formal Religious Education program for its students in their final year of schooling.

*Overcoming Challenges to Catholic Identity and Culture at St. John's College*

Participants were asked to suggest possible ways in which the challenges to the Catholic identity and culture of St. John's College could be overcome. The characteristics and themes that emerged from analysis of the responses to these interview questions are listed alphabetically in Table 15. The two challenges – organizational and religious – are divided into specific themes.

Table 15

*Challenges and Themes Emerging From Analysis of Data of Administrators and Teachers' Responses Regarding Overcoming Challenges to the Catholic Identity and Culture of St. John's College*

Challenges	Themes
Organizational	Adaption or Resistance Part of Wider Church Solution Recruitment and Presence of Committed Catholic Teachers Professional Development of Teachers
Religious	More Engaging Chapel Services Need for Evangelization Positive Promotion of Religion

*Overcoming Organizational Challenges*

Bill Dobson, a deputy principal, acknowledged that there were two competing approaches used in discussions concerning the means to overcome challenges to the Catholic identity and culture of St. John's College. He contended that one approach was to change and reconnect with people. The other approach was to emphasize the Catholic identity and culture of the school and expect people to adjust to that reality. He maintained that good leadership was essential in overcoming challenges to the identity and culture of St. John's College, and he particularly thought that the principal, Ray Carr,

was a good role model in this respect because “the charism and the Catholic character [of St. John’s College] comes through; the school is run well; and the principles, the ideals, the philosophy, and the ethos are up front.”

The principal, Ray Carr, recognized that some of the challenges to the Catholic identity and culture at St. John’s College came from leadership and decisions made at a higher level in the Catholic Church, and therefore a way of overcoming them would emerge through decisions made by the Bishops. He perceived the Bishops as needing to be more engaged with Catholic people to understand how they viewed the Church. He mused, “I’m not sure where the Church is at as it battles away in its traditional tower. It tries to engage with youth and parishioners.” He added that during his time as principal of St. John’s College, the local diocese had been blessed by having as bishop, “a wonderfully pastoral man, who was very open to sharing responsibilities,” and Ray Carr argued that it was necessary “to get people leading the Church who are in touch with people.” He thought that there had been some improvement in what the Catholic Church was doing, but he was concerned that the voices of some capable Church leaders, such as Father Frank Brennan, a Catholic intellectual and lawyer, were not being sufficiently heard. Ray Carr contended:

I think . . . the Church is getting better at naming and shaming itself where it deserves to, and I also think that some of our more capable leaders probably need to emerge more publicly and put themselves out there. We all know [in Australia] who [Father] Frank Brennan is . . . [one of a few Catholic leaders who are] prepared to put themselves out there on the tough issues. . . . I’m not sure that we [as a Church] do that particularly well.

Frank Power, a relatively new teacher, recognized that there were issues relating to the Catholic Church that were beyond the power of St. John’s College to overcome. He argued that the school needed instead to focus on those challenges that it could address.



Two teachers commented that the recruitment and presence of committed Catholic teachers could help in overcoming some of the challenges to the Catholic identity and culture of St. John's College. Allison Keller, an established teacher, noted that while she would not like to see committed non-Catholic teachers replaced, she would like to see more professional development that would "make them feel comfortable with their responsibilities of having prayer with students" and increasing their knowledge and understanding of Christianity. Oliver Dixon, a long-serving teacher, was optimistic about the "great young teachers who are going to be the mainstay of this place . . . [who are] going to be great ambassadors, despite them being Generation Y." He believed that these young teachers would eventually show an increased commitment to the Catholic identity and culture of St. John's College.

The principal, a deputy principal, and two teachers thought that a way to overcome the challenges to the Catholic identity and culture of St. John's College was through the professional development of all teachers. Ian Griffin, a deputy principal, perceived faculty formation and expectations as a way of overcoming organizational challenges to the Catholic identity and culture of the school. Sam Egan, a teacher, suggested that the focus of professional development needed to be more on spiritual aspects, and faculty retreats could be the means by which this is achieved.

#### *Overcoming Religious Challenges*

Two relatively new teachers perceived that one way of overcoming the challenges to the Catholic identity and culture of St. John's College would be to make chapel services, especially the weekly Year Level Masses, more engaging. Andrea Duncan

noted that she would like to see school “Masses and chapel services come to life a lot more,” a comment reiterated by Kate Cummins.

Octavia Daniels, a long-serving teacher and a non-Catholic, contended that to overcome challenges to the Catholic identity and culture of St. John’s College, the contemporary teacher must be a missionary:

A missionary has to be amongst unbelievers. And the other thing is to take someone who doesn't understand what it means to be Christian, Catholic, . . . and show them the benefits of it and see them acknowledge, “You know what, I like that idea.” That, to me, is much more dynamic. . . . You really feel you are making a difference.

However, while Walter Gardner, an established teacher, agreed with the need for teachers to be evangelizers, he maintained, “That's something we don't do too well. We seem to be reluctant to promote religion” here at St. John’s College.

*Researcher Comments*

The few participants who articulated a response in this section perceived that the means for overcoming challenges to the Catholic identity and culture of St. John’s College lay in leadership, faculty appointments, and professional and spiritual development of faculty. However, one participant was unable to suggest any ways in which the challenges could be overcome. However, he answered the question by saying:

I'm not the boss here and I don't get paid to do that. I've never thought about it. I suppose there's a philosophy . . . there are those who know how, and there are those who know why. So, I don't know how, and I probably don't know why either!

The overall impression gained by the researcher was that most participants had not considered how the challenges to Catholic identity and culture could be overcome.

*Challenges to Lasallian Identity and Culture at St. John's College*

Participants were asked to identify challenges to the Lasallian identity and culture of St. John's College, and then in a follow-up question, to suggest possible ways in which these challenges could be overcome. The characteristics and themes that emerged from analysis of the responses to these interview questions are listed alphabetically in Table 16. The two challenges – organizational and religious – are divided into specific themes. The suggestions of participants regarding how the challenges could be overcome are outlined in the following section.

Table 16

*Challenges and Themes Emerging From Analysis of Data of Administrators and Teachers' Responses Regarding Challenges to the Lasallian Identity and Culture of St. John's College*

Challenges	Themes
Organizational	Absence of Brothers Lasallian Programs Maintaining Core Lasallian Teachers Maintenance of Lasallian Links Stagnation in Lasallian Development
Religious	Clarity Regarding Lasallian Identity

*Organizational Challenges*

The two deputy principals and 11 of the 12 teachers who participated in interviews thought that the absence of Brothers from the faculty was a challenge to the Lasallian culture at St. John's College. The two remaining De La Salle Christian Brothers withdrew from the school at the end of the 2009 academic year, and no Brothers continued to live in the State in which St. John's College is located. Ian Griffin, a deputy principal, noted that the number of Brothers working in the school had been decreasing for the past 10 years, and he suggested that as administrators and teachers, "we've

probably been dealing with this [challenge] for some time.” Octavia Daniels, a long-serving teacher, further noted that the De La Salle Christian Brothers “prepared us really well for that over the years because I've been here for such a long time.”

Bill Dobson, a deputy principal, explained that he liked working in a Lasallian Catholic school because its identity and culture had more meaning than at a previous school where he had been a teacher. He maintained that it was possible to keep historical links with religious congregations, but the links were quite different without the daily presence of the Brothers. A comparatively new teacher, Andrea Duncan, expressed a view similar to most of the teachers when she commented that the presence of the Brothers in the school ensured that the Lasallian identity and culture of the school would continue, while the challenge would be maintaining the Lasallian identity and culture without their presence. Oliver Dixon, a long-serving teacher, saw the challenge regarding the Lasallian identity and culture of St. John’s College being in the future rather than the present. He was comfortable with the current emphasis on the school’s Lasallian identity and culture, but he was less sure what would happen “five, ten years after the Brothers have left, what happens to [a school’s] identity.”

Ray Carr, the principal, raised an important challenge to Lasallian identity and culture at St. John’s College and other Lasallian schools. His experience was that people who received professional development programs in Lasallian identity and culture had no obligation to remain in Lasallian schools, and often had to move outside Lasallian schools if they wished to gain promotion or further experience. He cited a special Lasallian professional development program that he attended in Australia in the mid-1990s. Of the 35 participants who attended the program, only two were now working in

Lasallian Catholic schools. He thought that every Lasallian school, not just St. John's College, ought to be promoting Lasallian lay leadership. "Otherwise, we are going to run out of manpower, or womanpower" for leadership positions in Lasallian schools. Susan Gaines, a comparatively new teacher, perceived that the challenge to the Lasallian identity and culture of St. John's College was rooted in the school's limited focus on what it is already doing to be Lasallian rather than what it could be doing.

### *Religious Challenges*

The principal, Ray Carr, contended that challenges to the Lasallian identity and culture at St. John's College arose because there was a lack of clarity regarding the language and concepts in Lasallian pedagogy. The term "Lasallian" was used in many different nations and consequently the understanding of its meaning by administrators and teachers varied because of the religious or social milieu in which their Lasallian institutions were located. Ray Carr also argued that accountability and co-responsibility were not given prominence in Lasallian pedagogy even though Lasallian literature suggested otherwise.

### *Researcher Comments*

The challenges to the Lasallian identity and culture of St. John's College were closely associated with the absence of the De La Salle Christian Brothers from the school for the past year. In addition, because St. John's College is physically isolated from other Lasallian schools, logistical and financial challenges arise in the quest to maintain links with other Lasallian schools and institutions in Australia. For some participants, the challenge was to prevent the possible stagnation that could occur in the development of the Lasallian identity and culture of the school. This could eventuate because there is no

interchange of administrators and teachers who have experienced Lasallian schools in other Australian states or even other countries. Further, Lasallian identity and culture was developed by and for De La Salle Christian Brothers for nearly 300 years, and the lay expression of this identity and culture is still in the process of being realized.

*Overcoming Challenges to Lasallian Identity and Culture at St. John's College*

Participants were asked to suggest possible ways in which the challenges to the Catholic identity and culture of St. John's College could be overcome. The challenges and themes that emerged from analysis of the responses to these interview questions are listed alphabetically in Table 17. The two challenges – organizational and religious – are divided into specific themes. Participants did not usually link the challenges to Lasallian identity and culture with their suggestions for overcoming the challenges.

Table 17

*Challenges and Themes Emerging From Analysis of Data of Administrators and Teachers' Responses Regarding Overcoming Challenges to the Lasallian Identity and Culture of St. John's College*

Challenges	Themes
Organizational	Employment of Former Students
	Lasallian Governance Structure
	Lasallian Professional Development
	Maintaining a Core Group of Committed Lasallian Teachers
	Maintaining Lasallian Links
	Periodic Presence of Brothers
Religious	Clarity Regarding the Lasallian Mission
	Commitment to the Lasallian Identity and Culture

*Overcoming Organizational Challenges*

Three teachers suggested that the employment of former students could be a way of overcoming challenges to the Lasallian identity and culture of the school. Oliver Dixon, a long-serving teacher, noted, "I think one of the great things about the school . . .

[is that we] have 20, 25 old scholars on [the faculty]. . . . I think that's good for our identity.” Octavia Daniels, another long-serving teacher, acknowledged that employing alumnae as teachers had positive aspects, but she also had reservations about the practice because diversity within the faculty was needed, as well. The principal, Ray Carr, when questioned about this practice, stated that St. John’s College did not have a policy of giving preferential appointment to former students, but that from a “shallow pool of applicants,” the former students were usually “able to articulate the ethos of the College in a way that other applicants were unable to do.”

One deputy principal and four teachers remarked that the governance structures used at St. John’s College could overcome challenges to Lasallian identity and culture. In most cases, their remarks were made without elaboration. A deputy principal, Ian Griffin, and a comparatively new teacher, Frank Power, thought that the presence of Brothers on the College Board of Directors would ensure that the Lasallian identity and culture of St. John’s College continued.

The principal, a deputy principal, and three teachers spoke about the necessity for Lasallian professional development programs to be developed and continued to overcome challenges to the Lasallian identity and culture of St. John’s College. Ian Griffin, a deputy principal, thought that teachers appreciated professional development concerning Lasallian identity and culture because of its practical and meaningful nature. Oliver Dixon and Octavia Daniels, both long-serving teachers, shared a similar viewpoint, and argued that newer teachers to St. John’s College needed more induction regarding Lasallian identity and culture so that they could gain understanding of what they were to be and to do. He also suggested a way to overcome the challenge to the Lasallian identity

and culture of St. John's College was to have a core group of committed Lasallian teachers who would both keep the Lasallian tradition going, as well as to challenge what is contradictory to its principles.

Oliver Dixon, a long-serving teacher, thought that challenges to the Lasallian identity and culture of St. John's College could be overcome by maintaining strong links with Lasallian schools in other states of Australia. He argued that the Lasallian links were "just too central to St. John's College" to be ignored. A deputy principal and three teachers mentioned the important link of the school to the De La Salle Christian Brothers. The periodic presence of Brothers at St. John's College could overcome some of the challenges to the Lasallian identity and culture of the school. Wayne Thompson, a teacher, was particularly emphatic about its benefits. He contended:

[I would like] to have the Brothers come in, even like a week at a time and to move around the College and to live at the Brothers' house and just walk around. But having them here, I mean that's the second best from having them here and living here. . . . You have to remember that we . . . [have] 190 [new students to Year 8] from other schools who have no idea about the Lasallian schools. So to have the Brothers in there and talking with the kids and explaining their journey of what they've done and where they've been. . . . it would certainly feed in to the keeping or even enhancing the Lasallian nature of the College. I think it would be a great thing. [Religious Education] classes or just coming into the [faculty] room, talking with [faculty], sitting with them, having recess and lunch with them . . . and have a chat. You know, I think that would be a wonderful thing to do.

### *Overcoming Religious Challenges*

Ray Carr, the principal, was adamant that some of the challenges to the Lasallian identity and culture of St. John's College could be overcome if there was a clearer understanding of what was meant by the term "Lasallian," particularly in relation to accountability and co-responsibility. He argued that the term "Lasallian" involved co-responsibility on the part of all the faculty, not just the administrators. All the members



of the St. John's College community needed to take responsibility for the mission given by the Brothers and the Church. He continued:

I think that the whole notion of co-responsibility is the word and theme that I'm prepared to use more and more, because that's what I think it is. It's Church and it's Lasallian community or Institute, but I'm not sure everybody has a sense of co-responsibility in a broader secular culture of self-interest, because what we do in a secular world is push responsibility onto somebody else.

Octavia Daniels, a long-serving teacher, also recognized the need for the administrators and teachers to take responsibility for the Lasallian identity and culture of St. John's College. She observed that the absence of Brothers from the school meant that the "responsibility [comes] back to us as being in association [with the Brothers]. We need to pick up those responsibilities."

The principal, a deputy principal, and three teachers affirmed that a commitment by administrators and teachers to the Lasallian identity and culture of St. John's College would overcome challenges that may arise. Andrea Duncan, a teacher, thought that it was possible to improve the Lasallian identity and culture of the school when she stated, "I . . . see the Lasallian philosophy at work, but I think the practice of what De La Salle was talking about . . . can be taken to another level." Kate Cummins, a young teacher, noted that the administrators and faculty are "strong in believing that we are a Lasallian school." The challenge for the teachers was to put that belief into action.

Bill Dobson, a deputy principal, maintained that the administrators and faculty at St. John's College could keep Lasallian identity and culture alive at St. John's College through naming buildings and constantly emphasizing the Lasallian story. He maintained that the Lasallian identity and culture of St. John's College made the school "more than Catholic!"

*Researcher Comments*

Because teachers were more familiar with, and committed to, Lasallian identity and culture than Catholic identity and culture, they were more able to articulate means to overcome challenges that may arise. The presence of the Brothers, either on the College Board of Directors or as periodic visitors, was perceived to be important. The presence of a core group of committed Lasallian teachers, often those who are long-serving teachers or alumnae, were also cited as being particularly important for the continuation of Lasallian identity and culture at the school. There was recognition by the administrators and faculty that the preservation of Lasallian identity and culture was the responsibility of all of them in association with the De La Salle Christian Brothers.

#### Summary of Findings

The researcher examined five questions in this case study. A summation of his findings is presented in this section. The first research question addressed the perceptions of the participants regarding the identity and culture of a Lasallian Catholic school in general. The discoveries to this question are divided into two sections: the first addresses the participants' responses relative to the characteristics of a Catholic school, and the second focuses on their responses relative to the characteristics of a Lasallian school.

The participants' perceptions regarding the identity and culture of Catholic schools in general were organized into four themes: educational, organizational, religious, and relational. Educationally, the participants maintained that Catholic schools are concerned with the development of the whole person, the spiritual growth of students, and the provision of religious education programs. Organizationally, the participants noted that Catholic schools are linked to the diocese and local parishes, and that its

Catholic mission influences its enrollment and employment policies. Religiously, the participants recognized that Catholic schools are identified with Christ, the Catholic Church, and often with the charism of religious congregations; that they exhibit a visual Catholic culture through signs, symbols, and rituals; and that they provide opportunities for communal worship. Relationally, the participants pointed out that Catholic schools engage in outreach programs to the greater community, and they promote a sense of community within their schools.

This case study found that the respondents seldom mentioned the term “God” and the salvific role of Catholic schools when describing the identity and culture of a Catholic school. It also found that the school’s administrators demonstrated a greater ability than teachers in describing the characteristics of Catholic school because of their wider experiences in Catholic education and their administrative roles within Catholic schools. Likewise, longer serving teachers were better able than teachers with limited experiences in Catholic schools to name the characteristics of a Catholic school. Their ability also arose from their experiences in Catholic schools. While none of the administrators and teachers singularly articulated all the characteristics of a Catholic school as outlined in Church documents, collectively they mentioned most of them.

The participants’ perceptions regarding the identity and culture of Lasallian schools in general were also organized into four themes: educational, organizational, religious and relational. Educationally, the participants maintained that Lasallian schools are well run, and offer a curriculum that caters to the needs of students. Organizationally, they pointed out that Lasallian schools share in the mission of Catholic education, and that they are part of a broader Lasallian network. Religiously, they recognized that

Lasallian schools are based on the charism of St. John Baptist de La Salle, and that teaching in a Lasallian school is considered a vocation, not a job. Relationally, they noted that teachers in Lasallian schools were expected to develop respectful relationships with their students and their colleagues, and that a Lasallian school must witness to an affinity with the poor.

The study also found that the participants did not recognize a Lasallian school as a means of salvation for both the teacher and the student. In general, the participants emphasized the humanistic dimension of Lasallian education with little or no overt recognition to its Christian dimension. In addition, none of the participants mentioned the concept of the spirit of faith, a key feature of the spirituality of St. John Baptist de La Salle.

Furthermore, the study found that the principal demonstrated the greatest ability to describe the identity and culture of a Lasallian school. The principal's knowledge of St. John Baptist de La Salle, Lasallian philosophy, and Lasallian pedagogy stemmed from his ongoing participation in professional Lasallian courses and conferences, as well as from his personal readings and reflections on Lasallian literature. The teachers' Lasallian knowledge stemmed from their participation within Lasallian professional development programs, their contact with the Brothers and a core group of long-serving teachers, who were committed to Lasallian identity and culture, and from the efforts of the administration.

The second research question addressed the participants' perceptions of St. John's College as a Lasallian Catholic school. The participants' responses are summarized in

two sections. The first focuses on their responses relative to St. John's as a Catholic school. The second focuses on their views regarding St. John's as a Lasallian school.

The participants' perceptions regarding St. John's College's Catholic identity and culture were organized into three themes: demographic, organizational, and religious. Demographically, the participants noted that a majority of the students at St. John's College were of Italian heritage who were culturally Catholic, but who were often not practicing Catholics. They suggested that the socio-economic status of the suburbs surrounding St. John's had changed since the foundation of the school from a working class to a middle class. The current student body of St. John's College has less than 25% of students from working class families.

The participants also perceived St. John's College as being Catholic because of its strong diocesan and parish links, its Catholic enrollment and employment policies, and its Catholic professional development opportunities. Religiously, they noted that many ways in which St. John's demonstrated its Catholic identity and culture: the availability of school Masses and liturgies; the presence of religious artifacts; an active social justice program; Religious Education classes, seminars, and retreats; and the Christian witness of teachers.

On the other hand, the participants reported that St. John's College reflected its Lasallian identity and culture in terms of four themes: educational, organizational, relational, and religious. Educationally, they recognized that St. John's College had high student academic expectations; that its teachers were committed to Lasallian philosophy, that the school met the needs of students through its curriculum, and that it supported students with special needs. Organizationally, the participants noted that St. John's

College was Lasallian because it had a College Board of Directors that was committed to Lasallian education, that the school administrators were dedicated to maintaining and enhancing St. John's Lasallian identity and culture, and that the school was part of a wider network of Lasallian schools and institutions in Australia. Relationally, they maintained that St. John's College reflected its Lasallian identity and culture through its discipline policy, its pastoral care of students and teachers, its emphasis on the school as a community, and its importance of positive and respectful relationships between teachers and students. Religiously, the participants noted that the administrators and teachers at the school identified themselves closely with the Lasallian charism; that the school offered Lasallian student leadership programs; that there were events in the school calendar that celebrated its Lasallian heritage and culture; that the school was committed through fund-raising and community outreach to helping the poor; and that there were Lasallian artifacts evident throughout the school site.

The third research question addressed how administrators and teachers promoted the Lasallian Catholic identity and culture of St. John's College. The study found that St. John's College's Catholic and Lasallian characteristics were promoted by personal and professional means. Personally, the participants promoted the Catholic identity and culture of St. John's by supporting the values of Catholic education, by pastorally caring for St. John's students, and by providing the students opportunities for personal witness and evangelization. Professionally, they promoted the Catholic identity and culture of St. John's by being involved in campus ministry, by being in administrative or middle management positions, or by being Religious Education teachers. On the other hand, the participants personally promoted the Lasallian identity and culture of St. John's by

encouraging student participation in Lasallian events, and by modeling Lasallian values and relationships with them. They professionally promoted Lasallian identity and culture at St. John's College by virtue of their positions, as well as their participation and leadership in Lasallian educational development programs.

The fourth research question explored the participants' perceptions relative to what factors enhanced the Lasallian Catholic identity and culture of St. John's College. Three categories—organizational, religious, and relational—were identified as enhancing St. John's College's Catholic characteristics. Organizationally, the participants noted that the appointment of a Director of Mission for the following academic year; the active promotion of links with the diocese, parishes, and other Catholic schools; and the commitment of the principal to the school's Catholic identity and culture were key enhancements. Relationally, the participants identified the caring ties between teachers and students, the respected role of women, and the increased respect shown by students for each other as being important. Religiously, the participants noted that the prayer, liturgy, and Religious Education programs enhanced the Catholic identity and culture of the school.

On the other hand, the participants perceived certain organizational and religious factors as enhancing the Lasallian identity and culture of St. John's College. Organizationally, several participants noted that the appointment of a new Lasallian Youth Minister for the next academic year, together with the embedding of Lasallian events and practices in the school's culture and annual calendar promoted St. John's Lasallian identity. Religiously, they pointed to the establishment and promotion of the Lasallian Youth Leader program, the presence of Brothers in earlier years, and the

periodic presence of Brothers during the year in which the study was undertaken as factors which promoted St. John's Lasallian identity.

The fifth research question explored the participants' perceptions relative to what factors challenged the Lasallian Catholic identity and culture of St. John's College. Participants perceived that challenges to the Catholic identity and culture of the school to be organizational and religious. They also considered them serious. Organizationally, participants were uneasy regarding government funding and its subsequent obligations because both altered the school's priorities and focus. They were concerned about the expectations that faced Catholic school leaders, and they were concerned about where the next generation of Catholic school leaders would come from. Religiously, the participants recognized that many of the challenges facing the Catholic identity and culture of the school were aligned with wider Church issues and societal trends. In particular, they noted the non-religious reasons for enrollment at St. John's College, the difficulty in engaging the students religiously, and the many students and teachers who were not actively involved in parish life. Participants suggested that some of the challenges could be met by recruiting committed Catholic teachers, a greater emphasis on the professional development of teachers, and a commitment to the evangelization of students and teachers.

The participants identified the challenges to the Lasallian identity and culture of St. John's College to be organizational and religious. They considered these to be serious as well. Organizationally, they noted the absence of Brothers from the school, the need to maintain a core group of Lasallian teachers on the faculty, the challenge of geographic isolation from other Lasallian schools and institutions in Australia, and the need to further



develop Lasallian identity and culture so in the school so that there was no stagnation. Religiously, the principal pointed out the need for clarity regarding Lasallian identity and culture. The participants suggested that challenges to the Lasallian identity and culture of the school could be overcome through the employment of former students of the school, Lasallian professional development programs, the periodic presence of Brothers, maintaining links with other Lasallian schools and institutions in Australia, and especially by the presence of a core group of Lasallian teachers in the school. On a broader level, the participants also suggested that clarity was required regarding the Lasallian mission of the school. Overall, the participants expressed more confidence that the challenges to the Lasallian identity and culture of the school could be overcome compared to the challenges to the Catholic identity and culture of St. John's College.

In Chapter V, conclusions are drawn regarding the perceptions of administrators and teachers regarding the Lasallian Catholic identity of St. John's College, as well as the implications of these findings for the school. The chapter also includes recommendations for future research and practice based on the literature, findings, and conclusions of this case study.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Summary of the Study

This research study explored the perceptions of administrators and teachers regarding the identity and culture of St. John's College, a Lasallian Catholic secondary school in Australia. The study arose in response to the call from leading educationalists (Croke, 2007; Flynn, 1993; Grace, 2002; Pascoe, 2007) for qualitative studies to complement the quantitative studies that had been previously undertaken relating to Catholic identity in Australian secondary schools.

The researcher reviewed literature relating to Catholic and Lasallian education found in Roman and Australian Church documents, Lasallian educational documents, and literary contributions by leading experts of Catholic and Lasallian education. Literature pertaining to contemporary issues in Catholic education in Australia, as well as to the literary contributions concerning the concepts of identity and culture in the context of both organizations and schools, were identified and reviewed.

The participants in this qualitative case study were three administrators and 12 teachers from the school's faculty of 95 teachers. The three administrators were male. The 12 teachers were selected proportionately from a stratified matrix based on gender and length of service (less than five years, between five and 15 years, and greater than 15 years). The advice of administrators was sought to ensure that the cross-section of teachers selected for the study also represented a broad cross-section of the faculty in terms of their level of commitment to the Lasallian Catholic identity and culture of St. John's College.

The researcher employed a mixed-methods design for his methodology, with one-on-one interviews of 25-45 minutes providing most of the study's data, supplemented by observations of school-wide and faculty events and analyses of school documents by the researcher. Prior to interviews taking place, participants completed a researcher-designed *Pre-Interview Demographic Questionnaire* (Appendix F) that provided the researcher with basic background information concerning the participants. An *Interview Guide* (Appendix G) designed by the researcher guided the interviews with the 15 participants in the study. A researcher-designed *Observation Guide* (Appendix H) guided the researcher during his observation of Masses, assemblies, faculty briefings, meetings, and other school events during his 10 weeks on site at St. John's College. A *Documentation Guide* (Appendix I) guided the researcher when he analyzed artifacts, such as school newsletters, faculty member qualifications, historical and legal documents related to the establishment and governance of St. John's College, *Induction Manual*, *Faculty Handbook*, and the agreement between the school and the teachers' union collected for his study.

The study explored five research questions regarding the Lasallian Catholic identity and culture of St. John's College:

1. How do administrators and teachers of St. John's College characterize the identity and culture of a Lasallian Catholic secondary school?
2. In what ways do administrators and teachers perceive St. John's College as reflecting the identity and culture of a Lasallian Catholic secondary school?
3. How do administrators and teachers perceive their role in the promotion of the Lasallian Catholic identity and culture of St. John's College?
4. What has enhanced the Lasallian Catholic identity and culture at St. John's College?

5. What challenges are there to the Lasallian Catholic identity and culture at St. John's College?

The findings of the five research questions are as follows: The participants' perceptions regarding the identity and culture of a Lasallian Catholic school in general, the first research question, were divided into two categories: the participants' knowledge of the characteristics of a Catholic school, and their knowledge of the characteristics of a Lasallian school. The study found that the participants maintained that Catholic schools are concerned with the development of the whole person, the spiritual growth of students, and the provision of religious education programs. The participants also noted that Catholic schools are linked to the diocese and local parishes, and that its Catholic mission influences its enrollment and employment policies. Furthermore, the participants recognized that Catholic schools are identified with Christ, the Catholic Church, and often with the charism of religious congregations; that they exhibit a visual Catholic culture through signs, symbols, and rituals; and that they provide opportunities for communal worship. In addition, the participants pointed out that Catholic schools engage in outreach programs to the greater community, and they promote a sense of community within their schools. Their responses included most of the distinctive characteristics of a Catholic school identified by Groome (1996), Hutton (2002), Miller (2006), SACCS (2004), Pope Pius XI (1929), SCCE (1977, 1988, 2007), and Treston (1997).

This case study found that none of the respondents mentioned the term "God" and the salvific role of Catholic schools when describing the identity and culture of a Catholic school. It also found that the school's administrators demonstrated a greater ability than teachers in describing the characteristics of Catholic school because of their wider experiences in Catholic education and their administrative roles within Catholic schools.

Likewise, the study found that longer serving teachers were better able than teachers with limited experiences in Catholic schools to name the characteristics of a Catholic school. It discovered that the knowledge of the characteristics of a Catholic school for most respondents stemmed primarily from their experiences rather than from their familiarity with Church documents concerning Catholic education. It also found that while none of the administrators and teachers singularly articulated all the characteristics of a Catholic school as outlined in Church documents, collectively they mentioned most of them.

In reference to the characteristics of Lasallian schools, the participants maintained that Lasallian schools are well run, adhere to high standards, and offer a curriculum that caters to the needs of students. They pointed out that Lasallian schools share in the mission of Catholic education, and that they are part of a broader Lasallian network. They recognized that Lasallian schools are based on the charism of St. John Baptist de La Salle, and that teaching in a Lasallian school is considered a vocation, not a job. Finally, they noted that teachers in Lasallian schools were expected to develop respectful relationships with their students and their colleagues, and that a Lasallian school witnesses an affinity with the poor. All of the characteristics mentioned by participants are found in Lasallian writings by St. John Baptist de La Salle (1720/1996), the founder of the De La Salle Christian Brothers, and the works of others who developed and adapted his ideas (Alpago, et al., 2006; Lasallian National Secretariate, 1997; Lombaerts, 1998; Mann, 1990; Sanderl, 2004; The International Council for Lasallian Studies, 2005; Tidd, 2001, 2009a, 2009b; Van Grieken, 1999).

The study also found that the participants did not characterize a Lasallian school as a means of salvation for both the teacher and the student, a feature that is central to the

writings of St. John Baptist de La Salle (1720/1996, 1730/1994). In general, the participants emphasized the humanistic dimension of Lasallian education with little or no overt recognition to its Christian dimension, which is inclusive of an eschatological purpose and an evangelizing role for the Church (De La Salle, 1720/1996, 1730/1994; Lombaerts, 1998; Mann, 1991; Van Grieken, 1999). In addition, none of the participants mentioned the concept of “the spirit of faith”, a key feature of the spirituality of St. John Baptist de La Salle (Van Grieken).

The study also found that the principal demonstrated the greatest ability to describe the identity and culture of a Lasallian school. This adeptness was due to his knowledge of St. John Baptist de La Salle, Lasallian philosophy, and Lasallian pedagogy that stemmed from his ongoing participation in professional Lasallian courses and conferences, as well as from his personal readings and reflections on Lasallian literature. The teachers’ knowledge of the characteristics of a Lasallian school stemmed from their participation within Lasallian professional development programs, and from their contact with the Brothers and a core group of long-serving teachers, who were committed to Lasallian identity and culture, and from the efforts of the administration.

The participants’ perceptions regarding the ways in which St. John’s College reflects the identity and culture of a Lasallian Catholic school, the second question, were divided into two categories: their perceptions of St. John’s College as a Catholic school, and their perceptions of St. John’s College as a Lasallian school. Relative to the school’s Catholicity, the participants noted that a majority of the students at St. John’s College were of Italian heritage who were culturally Catholic, but who were often not practicing Catholics. This factor contributed to the dynamics of the school’s Catholicity being

witnessed primarily within the confines of school life. They suggested that the socio-economic status of the suburbs surrounding St. John's had changed since the foundation of the school from working class to middle class which, in turn, impacted the aspirations of school families and changed the demographic population of the school. This study found that the current student body of St. John's College has less than 25% of students from working class families.

The participants also perceived St. John's College as being Catholic because of its strong diocesan and parish links; its enrollment process in which the Catholic character of the school was outlined and participation in all religious activities was a requirement; its hiring process in which the appointment panel considered the teacher's ability to contribute to the mission of the school; and the availability of professional development and induction opportunities through the diocesan Catholic Education Office and related agencies. They noted that many ways in which St. John's demonstrated its Catholic identity and culture: the availability of school Masses and liturgies; the presence of religious artifacts; an active social justice program; Religious Education classes, seminars, and student retreats; and teachers who witnessed to Christian values by their care and dedication for their students.

Relative to their perceptions of St. John's College as a Lasallian school, the participants recognized that St. John's College had high student academic expectations; that its teachers were committed to Lasallian philosophy, that the school met the needs of students through its curriculum, and that it supported students with special needs. The participants noted that St. John's College was Lasallian because it had a College Board of Directors that was committed to Lasallian education, that the school administrators were

dedicated to maintaining and enhancing St. John's Lasallian identity and culture, and that the school was part of a wider network of Lasallian schools and institutions in Australia. They maintained that St. John's College reflected its Lasallian identity and culture through its discipline policy, its pastoral care of students and teachers, its emphasis on the school as a community, and its importance of positive and respectful relationships between teachers and students, and its organization as a well-run school. The participants noted that the administrators and teachers at the school identified themselves closely with the Lasallian charism; that the school offered Lasallian student leadership programs; that there were events in the school calendar that celebrated its Lasallian heritage and culture; that the school was committed through fund-raising and community outreach to helping the poor; and that there were Lasallian artifacts evident throughout the school site.

The participants' perceptions regarding their role in promoting the Lasallian Catholic identity and culture of St. John's College, the third research question, were divided into two categories: their role in promoting the school's Catholic identity and culture, and their role in promoting its Lasallian identity and culture. The study found that participants promoted the Catholic identity and culture of St. John's by their respect for all students and teachers, by providing a holistic education for students, by pastoral care of the personal and academic development of students with whom they were associated, and by personal witness and evangelization through participation in student retreats and social justice outreach programs. The participants also promoted the Catholic identity and culture of St. John's by being involved in campus ministry or by being Religious Education teachers.



On the other hand, the participants promoted the Lasallian identity and culture of St. John's by encouraging student participation in Lasallian events, and by modeling Lasallian values and relationships with them. Some of the participants were able to promote Lasallian culture and identity to the faculty through presentations on Lasallian topics to faculty. Other participants, particularly those who were long-serving members of the faculty promoted Lasallian identity and culture by speaking positively about it to new teachers.

The participants' perceptions relative to what factors enhanced the Lasallian Catholic identity and culture of St. John's College, the fourth research question, were divided into two categories: factors that enhanced the school's Catholic identity and culture, and factors that enhanced its Lasallian identity and culture. The participants noted that the appointment of a Director of Mission for the following academic year; the active promotion of links with the diocese, parishes, and other Catholic schools; and the commitment of the principal to the school's Catholic identity and culture were key enhancements of the school's Catholicity. In addition, the participants identified the caring ties between teachers and students, the respected role of women, and the respect shown by students for each other as being important. Furthermore, the participants noted that the prayer, liturgy, and Religious Education programs enhanced the Catholic identity and culture of the school.

In reference to what factors had enhanced the Lasallian identity and culture of St. John's College, several participants noted the appointment of a new Lasallian Youth Minister for the next academic year, and the embedding of Lasallian events and practices in the school's culture and annual calendar. They pointed to the establishment and

promotion of Lasallian Youth Leaders who engaged in social justice activities and had a leadership role in student retreat days. Other factors that promoted St. John's Lasallian identity cited by participants were the presence of Brothers at the school in earlier years, and the periodic presence of Brothers during the year in which the study was undertaken.

The participants' perceptions relative to what factors challenged the Lasallian Catholic identity and culture of St. John's College, the fifth research question, were divided into two categories: the challenges relative to St. John's Catholic identity and culture, and the challenges relative to its Lasallian identity and culture. Relative to St. John's Catholicity, participants were uneasy regarding government funding and its subsequent obligations because both impacted the school's Catholic priorities and focus. They were concerned about the expectations that faced Catholic school leaders from parents who had different priorities to those espoused by the school, and from Church authorities who did not necessarily appreciate the context in which the school operated. Some participants were concerned about where the next generation of Catholic school leaders would come from, given that there was a low level of regular religious practice in that generation and consequently there would be a small pool of potential practicing Catholic leaders to choose from. The participants recognized that many of the challenges facing the Catholic identity and culture of the school were aligned with wider Church issues, such as scandals and a shortage of clergy. They also pointed out numerous societal trends that challenged the Catholic identity and culture of St. John's College, such as the marginalization of religion and the pursuit of affluence. In particular, they noted the non-religious reasons for enrollment at St. John's College, the difficulty in engaging the students religiously, and the many students and teachers who were not

actively involved in parish life. Participants suggested that some of the challenges could be met by recruiting committed Catholic teachers, a greater emphasis on the professional development of teachers, and a commitment to the evangelization of students and teachers.

The participants identified the challenges to the Lasallian identity and culture of St. John's College as being the absence of Brothers from the school, the need to maintain a core group of Lasallian teachers on the faculty, the challenge of geographic isolation from other Lasallian schools and institutions in Australia, and the need to further develop Lasallian identity and culture so that it did not stagnate. The principal pointed out the need for greater clarity regarding Lasallian identity and culture. The participants suggested that challenges to the Lasallian identity and culture of the school could be overcome through numerous efforts: 1) having the periodic presence of Brothers at the school, 2) retaining the essential presence of a core group of Lasallian teachers in the school, 3) employing former students of the school who embodied the Lasallian charism and pedagogy, 4) participating in Lasallian professional development programs, and 5) maintaining links with other Australian Lasallian schools and institutions. On a broader level, the participants also suggested that further clarity was required regarding the comprehensive Lasallian mission of the school. Overall, the participants expressed more confidence that the challenges to the Lasallian identity and culture of the school could be overcome compared to the challenges to the Catholic identity and culture of St. John's College.

### Conclusions and Implications

This section addresses the four overarching conclusions and implications of this

case study. The first major conclusion of this study is that the administrators and teachers of St. John's College perceived their school as reflecting numerous components relative to the identity and culture of a Lasallian Catholic secondary school. These components include:

- being a well-run school,
- providing a commendable pastoral care program for the holistic growth of students, fostering positive and professional teacher-student relationships,
- offering a comprehensive curriculum that caters for the needs and interests of each student,
- providing a Religious Education program and religious experiences in a retreat program to nurture faith development, and
- promoting a social justice program that extends beyond the school environment to the wider community.

An implication of this conclusion with all its components is that administration and faculty at St. John's College are committed to fostering many of the humanistic and religious dimensions of a Lasallian Catholic education. They are to be commended for their efforts, and are to be encouraged to continue fostering the above-mentioned components at their school.

A second conclusion of this study is that although the participants identified many characteristics of a Lasallian Catholic school, none of them mentioned certain key spiritual components relative to Lasallian Catholic education, in general, and to St. John's College, in particular, namely, a reference to God, the Holy Spirit, the salvific message of Christ, the school as a means of salvation for both the teacher and the student, and the

school's oneness with the mission of the Church. These spiritual dimensions of a Lasallian school are supported by Church documents (Pope John Paul II, 1990; Pope Leo XIII, 1885, 1887; Pope Pius XI, 1929; Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977, 1982, 1988, 1997, 2002, 2007; Vatican II, 1965a), Lasallian writing (Alpago, et al., 2006; De La Salle, 1720/1996, 1730/1994; Lasallian National Secretariate, 1997; Lombaerts, 1998; Mann, 1990; Sanderl, 2004; The International Council for Lasallian Studies, 2005; Tidd, 2001, 2009a, 2009b; Van Grieken, 1999), and the works of experts in the field of Catholic education (Groome, 1996, 1998, 2003; Nuzzi, 2002; O'Donnell, 2001). An implication of this conclusion is that the identity and culture of Lasallian Catholic education cannot be fully achieved without the above spiritual components being articulated and promoted. It also suggests that ongoing and meaningful education regarding these particular aims will need to be provided by the administrators of St. John's College if the school is to fully realize its Lasallian Catholic mission.

A third conclusion of this exploration is that the study's participants appeared generally to be more comfortable with identifying themselves and St. John's College as being Lasallian rather than as being Catholic. In addition, they seemed to be more articulate regarding the promotion of the humanistic and social justice aims of St. John's College than about its evangelizing and eschatological aims. Moreover, they verbalized a greater appreciation for the Lasallian formation opportunities than for the Catholic certification programs sponsored by the diocese. An implication of this conclusion with all its dimensions is the need for the faculty at St. John's College to receive a greater understanding of, and preparation for, fostering the identity and culture of Catholic education so that they may fulfill the comprehensive mission of a Lasallian Catholic

school, inclusive of both its humanistic and spiritual dimensions. It also implies utilizing the appreciated format of Lasallian formation programs to present information and formation in relationship to Catholic identity and culture would be beneficial. The participant's affinity with the Lasallian charism aligns with the works of both Hughes (2008) and Prest (2000), which found that teachers develop an accord with the charism of the religious congregation that founded their school. Hughes commented that most of the founders of religious congregations "were practical and pastoral in their concerns for young people . . . [and] another possible reason is Catholicism as a broad institution has some negative associations which are avoided by a specific focus on founders or patrons (p. 26)." An implication of this conclusion is a recommendation that administrators and teachers be reminded that Lasallian education is a subset of Catholic education, and that focusing solely on St. John Baptist de La Salle and Lasallian writings would be incomplete without showing their link to Christ and the teachings of Sacred Scripture.

The fourth conclusion of this study is that numerous conditions impact the context in which St. John's College operates, thereby affecting its Lasallian Catholic identity and culture. All of them have been consequences of issues beyond the control of the school. In brief, they are as follows:

- The diminishing numbers of Lasallian Brothers in Australia has led to an all lay faculty at St. John's College, who often do not have a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of, preparation in, or alignment with the principles and practices associated with the identity and culture of a Lasallian Catholic education. This conclusion supports the work of Flynn and Mok (2000), Hughes (2008), Leavey (1993), and Prest (2000). For example, Flynn (1993) had noted,

“It would appear that if we are serious about having Catholic schools whose religious character makes them distinctive, then the quality of the teachers whom principals employ will make an important difference” (p. 406).

- The lack of proximity to Catholic tertiary institutions has prevented the lay faculty of St. John’s College from readily participating in Catholic educational leadership formation programs, and obtaining the training and certifications needed to fulfill their inherent duties as Catholic school educators.
- The marginalization of the Church in Australian society contributed to the increasing number of Catholic school families and Catholic school educators who are not affiliated with the local church, but who are able to promote Catholic social justice teachings in schools. This conclusion supports the research of Flynn (1993), Leavey (1993), and Prest (2000). Leavey (1993), in particular, contended that most teachers had little knowledge of the goals of Catholic schools, and even less understanding of the policies and curriculum practices arising from the goals. She attributed the reason for the lack of knowledge and understanding of official Church goals to different professional priorities, different degrees of belonging and identification with the Church, and different levels of maturity.
- Consonant with this factor is a divergence between the educational aspirations of parents and students at St. John’s and the aspirations and aims of Lasallian Catholic education, in general. While the aim of Lasallian Catholic education concerns both the spiritual and humanistic development of students, it is the latter that is mainly prized by students and their parents at St. John’s. This conclusion supports the perception of the Bishops of NSW/ACT (2007) who called for

Catholic schools to become centers of evangelization based on the aspirations and needs of students in contemporary Catholic schools.

- Increased government requirements relative to the curriculum at St. John's college has led to a reduction in religious education requirements in the latter years of schooling, which has the potential to diminish its Lasallian Catholic identity and culture.

An implication of this conclusion with its many facets is that the administrators of St. John's College have numerous challenges facing them relative to creating and sustaining the Lasallian Catholic identity and culture of their school. In addition, it implies that everyone in the school's community (faculty, students, and their parents) share a part in creating these challenges as well as solving them. This implies that education, communication, and collaboration among and for all stakeholders are essential. Furthermore, the study revealed that while none of the participants were knowledgeable concerning all the factors that comprise the mission of Catholic education, collectively they were able to identify most of them. This implies that it would be beneficial for the administration to provide opportunities for faculty members to share what they know about Lasallian Catholic education with one another as each one seems to possess a piece of the mission. This practice would also reflect the collaboration and collegiality promoted by the SCCE (1982) in *Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith*.

#### Recommendations for Future Research

This sections presents five recommendations for future study relating to the topic of the identity and culture of Lasallian Catholic secondary schools. They are as follows:



- The researcher recommends that a follow-up quantitative study based on the findings and conclusions of this study be undertaken at other Lasallian Catholic secondary schools in Australia, and involve all administrators and faculty. Such a study would enable generalizations to be made about the data collected, and provide a basis for future decisions at school, diocesan, and religious congregation levels.
- Lasallian Catholic secondary schools are found in many countries, and the challenges facing each school are very different to the others because of their demographic, geographic, or political situations. A research study could investigate how administrators and faculty in schools in different countries understand Lasallian Catholic identity and culture, and suggest how their understandings could contribute to a global vision of Lasallian Catholic identity and culture.
- The researcher recommends a quantitative study to ascertain the current levels of religious beliefs and practices by administrators and teachers in Lasallian Catholic secondary schools, and how their beliefs and practices influence their perception of the Lasallian Catholic identity and culture of their school.
- There are some young teachers in Lasallian Catholic secondary schools who have chosen teaching as a profession for religious reasons. The researcher recommends that a qualitative study be undertaken of these teachers so that their stories are heard and their motivation understood.
- Many non-government secondary schools in Australia have a religious identity and culture. A research study could investigate the differences between them and

Catholic secondary schools in perceptions of administrators and teachers regarding the religious identity and culture of their school, highlighting similarities and differences and the reasons for these similarities and differences.

#### Recommendations for Future Practice

The following section presents the researcher's recommendations for future practices that would promote and enhance the Lasallian identity and culture of St. John's College. These practices are divided into three categories. The first focuses on recommendations relating to future practice for administrators. The second focuses on recommendations relating to future practice for faculty. The third focuses on recommendations relating to future practice for the College Board of Directors. The recommendations are as follows:

##### *Recommendations Regarding Future Practice for Administrators*

- Administrators at St. John's College would provide ongoing, meaningful information and formation programs for all stakeholders (faculty, students, and their parents) regarding the philosophy, principles, and practices that underpin and define the identity and culture of Lasallian Catholic education. Consonant with this would be promoting an understanding that Lasallian education is a subset of Catholic education, and that both share a humanistic and spiritual education that aims to prepare individuals for this life and the next.
- Administrators at St. John's College would employ specialist teachers for Religious Education classes whenever possible. Specialist Religious Education teachers would have a vested interest in ensuring that Religious Education programs are comprehensive and well-resourced. The researcher is mindful that

the number of specialist Religious Education teachers available in Australia is very limited, so this recommendation would be implemented over a 5-10 year period.

- Administrators at St. John's College would provide for those teachers who have not completed their Catholic school accreditation requirements with support and encouragement, as well as setting a time limit to complete these requirements.
- Administrators at St. John's College would keep records concerning teachers who have completed professional development and academic programs relating to the Lasallian Catholic identity and culture of St. John's College, and systematically plan for all teachers to have the opportunities to study in these areas as time and resources permit.
- Administrators at St. John's College would seek opportunities to increase the number of Lasallian network opportunities and professional development programs as they were deemed to be both effective and educational.
- Administrators at St. John's College would consider providing faculty with opportunities for their ongoing faith and spiritual development in a retreat setting, given that a majority of the faculty do not regularly participate in a local parish.

*A Recommendation Regarding Future Practice for Faculty*

- Teachers at St. John's College would meet regularly to share collegially their knowledge and practices relative to what Lasallian Catholic identity and culture entail and how they are realizing their aims in their classrooms. This would be particularly relevant as this study revealed that while no participant had a complete understanding of the philosophy, principles and practices of Lasallian

Catholic education as outlined in the literature, collectively they articulated most of them. This practice would support the professional and spiritual development of the faculty.

*A Recommendation Regarding Future Practice for the College Board of Directors*

- The Board of Directors of St. John's College would consider the role of the school as a center of evangelization, and the implications this role has for student enrollment policies and practices at the school. In particular, given that a majority of the students come from families that do not regularly participate in the activities of local parishes, the Board could consider whether it is desirable and practical to require parental participation in a faith-related program in connection with the enrollment of students.
- The Board of Directors of St. John's College, in consultation with the De La Salle Christian Brothers, consider ways in which Brothers may be able to be periodically present to faculty and students, and thereby strengthen the Lasallian identity and culture of the school.

Closing Comments

The researcher was privileged to be able to undertake his study at St. John's College for 10 weeks, and during that time to listen to administrators and teachers as they shared their perceptions regarding the Lasallian Catholic identity and culture of St. John's College. St. John's College has made a genuine effort to be a Lasallian Catholic secondary school, but is limited by its location, culture, and broader governmental and religious contextual realities.

Secondary schools such as St. John's College have to adapt to meet the needs of contemporary students. O'Kelly, a former principal of St. Ignatius College, Adelaide, and currently bishop of Port Pirie, South Australia, told the faculty of Xavier College (Melbourne) on January 27, 2007, that simplistic answers to the challenges facing Catholic secondary schools were not realistic. He argued that there was no point in thinking that attendance at Religious Education class and school liturgies would alone be sufficient to develop a student religiously and spiritually. He contended that administrators and teachers had to recognise that they now worked in a school environment where each student had an individual religious quest, and the administrators and teachers had to adapt accordingly. Administrators and teachers at St. John's College have recognized that contemporary Catholic school students are quite different to those of the previous generation, and have used features of Lasallian Catholic school identity and culture to help the school achieve its mission of Christian and human education in the contemporary world. The administrators and teachers at St. John's College can be proud of what they have achieved so far, but they cannot be complacent as the challenges to Lasallian Catholic identity and culture will be ongoing.

This study has shown a remarkable alignment between its findings and those of other researchers in the Australian Catholic education context, particularly in regard to the challenges faced by Catholic secondary schools. The research of Flynn (1975, 1985, 1993) and Flynn and Mok (2000), identified some of the trends that were present in Australian Catholic schools in the latter decades of the 20th century. These trends, particularly those relating to the challenges facing Catholic schools resulting from the secularization of society and alienation from parish life and practice, have continued. It

is the hope and prayer of this researcher that this study will provide a basis for decisions regarding the future direction of Lasallian Catholic secondary schools.

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APPENDICES



Appendix A

University of San Francisco IRBPHS Approval

**Apps**  
STUDENT/ALUMNI

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## IRB Application #10-056 - Approved

4 messages

USF IRBPHS <[irbphs@usfca.edu](mailto:irbphs@usfca.edu)>

Wed, Jun 2, 2010 at 1:52 AM

June 1, 2010

Dear Br. Watson:

The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS) at the University of San Francisco (USF) has reviewed your request for human subjects approval regarding your study.

Your application has been approved by the committee (IRBPHS #10-056). Please note the following:

1. Approval expires twelve (12) months from the dated noted above. At that time, if you are still in collecting data from human subjects, you must file a renewal application.
2. Any modifications to the research protocol or changes in instrumentation (including wording of items) must be communicated to the IRBPHS. Re-submission of an application may be required at that time.
3. Any adverse reactions or complications on the part of participants must be reported (in writing) to the IRBPHS within ten (10) working days.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRBPHS at [\(415\) 422-6091](tel:4154226091).

On behalf of the IRBPHS committee, I wish you much success in your research.

Sincerely,

Terence Patterson, EdD, ABPP  
Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects

-----  
IRBPHS – University of San Francisco  
Counseling Psychology Department  
Education Building – Room 017  
2130 Fulton Street  
San Francisco, CA 94117-1080  
[\(415\) 422-6091](tel:4154226091) (Message)  
[\(415\) 422-5528](tel:4154225528) (Fax)  
[irbphs@usfca.edu](mailto:irbphs@usfca.edu)

-----  
<http://www.usfca.edu/soe/students/irbphs/>

<https://mail.google.com/a/dons.usfca.edu/?ui=2&view=bsp&ver=ohh...>

On Fri, Oct 15, 2010 at 12:57 PM, IRBPHS <[irbphs@usfca.edu](mailto:irbphs@usfca.edu)> wrote:

October 14, 2010

Dear Br. Watson:

The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS) at the University of San Francisco (USF) has reviewed your request for human subjects approval regarding your study.

Your modification application has been approved by the committee (IRBPHS #10-056).

Please note the following:

1. Approval expires twelve (12) months from the dated noted above. At that time, if you are still in collecting data from human subjects, you must file a renewal application.
2. Any modifications to the research protocol or changes in instrumentation (including wording of items) must be communicated to the IRBPHS. Re-submission of an application may be required at that time.
3. Any adverse reactions or complications on the part of participants must be reported (in writing) to the IRBPHS within ten (10) working days.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRBPHS at (415) 422-6091.

On behalf of the IRBPHS committee, I wish you much success in your research.

Sincerely,

Terence Patterson, EdD, ABPP  
Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects

-----  
IRBPHS ^ University of San Francisco  
Counseling Psychology Department  
Education Building ^ Room 017  
2130 Fulton Street  
San Francisco, CA 94117-1080  
(415) 422-6091 (Message)  
(415) 422-5528 (Fax)  
[irbphs@usfca.edu](mailto:irbphs@usfca.edu) <<http://irbphs@usfca.edu>>  
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## Appendix B

### “St. John’s” College Board of Directors Approval

(Note: The name of school, the school crest, the name of the principal and the name of the Chair of the College Board of Directors have been deleted from this letter in order to protect the anonymity of the research site)

21<sup>st</sup> March 2010

Brother Adrian Watson FSC

Dear Brother Adrian,

The Board of Directors of \_\_\_\_\_ College, \_\_\_\_\_, met on 15<sup>th</sup> March 2010 and considered your request to undertake research at \_\_\_\_\_ College for your doctoral dissertation.

The Board unanimously granted approval for the research to be undertaken, and requests that you communicate with \_\_\_\_\_, the College Principal, regarding the practical details of your time at the College. The Board noted that there may be some variation to the methodology or timing of the research when University of San Francisco approval is sought, and asked that you communicate these changes to \_\_\_\_\_.

The Board expressed its interest in your research topic and its findings. The Board asked me to convey their best wishes for a successful outcome to your study.

Yours sincerely,

Chair, \_\_\_\_\_ College Board of Directors

Appendix C

Letter of Invitation for Participants

Brother Adrian Watson FSC

---

10 October 2010

Name  
School Address  
Suburb, Postcode

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

My name is Brother Adrian Watson, and I am a doctoral student in the School of Education at the University of San Francisco. I am doing a study on the perceptions of administrators and teachers regarding the identity and culture of your school, and what factors have been influential in forming these perceptions. The College Board of Directors and the Principal have given me approval to conduct this research.

You are being asked to participate in this research study because you are an administrator or teacher at this school. A matrix was drawn up from data on gender and teaching experience provided by the school, and you were selected to represent one of the categories identified for the research. You will be asked to participate in an interview that will be recorded and transcribed. It is expected that the interview will take about 45 minutes. A copy of the transcript of the interview will be given to you, and we will subsequently meet for a short session to discuss the transcript and any feedback you may be able to give me regarding the interview process.

It is possible that you may feel uncomfortable with some of the questions you are asked. You are free to decline to answer any of the questions you do not wish to answer, or to stop participation at any time. Study records and will be kept as confidential as possible, and no individual identities will be used in any reports or publications resulting from this study. The data collected will be coded and locked in secure files at all times. Individual details provided by you will not be shared with the Board of Directors, administrators or teachers at your school.

While there will be no direct benefit to you from participating in this study, the anticipated benefit of this study is a better understanding of how administrators and teachers in a Catholic secondary school perceive the identity and culture of the school.

There will be no costs to you as a result of participating in the interview and debriefing, nor will you be reimbursed for your participation in the study.

If you have any questions about the research, you can contact me on [redacted]. If you have further questions about the study, you can contact the Institutional Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS) at the University of San Francisco, the body that is concerned with the protection of volunteers in research projects. IRBPHS can be reached by phoning 0011-1-415-422-6091 and leaving a voicemail message, by emailing [IRBPHS@usfca.edu](mailto:IRBPHS@usfca.edu), or by writing to the IRBPHS, Department of Psychology, University of San Francisco, 2130 Fulton Street, San Francisco CA 94117-1080, USA.

Participation in this research is voluntary. You are free to decline to be in this study, or to withdraw from it at any point. [redacted] College is aware of this study but does not require that you participate in this research, and your decision as to whether or not to participate in this study will have no influence on your present or future status as an administrator or teacher at [redacted] College.

Thank you for considering being part of this research. If you agree to participate, please complete the attached Consent Form and Pre-Interview Demographic Questionnaire, and return it in the enclosed envelope to my mailbox in the staff room.

Sincerely,

Brother Adrian Watson  
Doctoral Student  
University of San Francisco



Appendix D  
Consent Form for Participants

## CONSENT TO BE A RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

### Purpose and Background

Brother Adrian Watson, a doctoral student in the School of Education at the University of San Francisco, is doing a study on the perceptions of administrators and teachers regarding the identity and culture of \_\_\_\_\_ College, and identifying factors that have been influential in forming these perceptions.

You are being asked to participate because you are either an administrator or teacher at \_\_\_\_\_ College.

### Purpose

If I agree to be a participant in this study, the following will happen:

1. I will participate in a recorded interview that will last about 45 minutes.
2. I will read the transcript of the interview, and advise the researcher if any of my answers need to be modified to more accurately reflect my response to the questions asked.
3. I will participate in a debriefing session that will last about 10 minutes.

### Risks and/or Discomforts

1. It is possible some questions may make me feel uncomfortable. I am free to decline to answer any questions I do not wish to answer or to stop participation at any time.
2. Study records and will be kept as confidential as possible, and no individual identities will be used in any reports or publications resulting from this study. The data collected will be coded and locked in secure files at all times.

### Benefits

There will be no direct benefit to you from participating in this study. The anticipated benefit of this study is a better understanding of how administrators and teachers in a Catholic secondary school perceive the identity and culture of the school.

### Costs/Financial Considerations

There will be no financial costs to me as a result of taking part in this study.

### Payment/Reimbursement

There will be no financial reimbursement to me as a result of taking part in this study.

### Questions

Brother Adrian Watson is available to answer questions about this study. I may call him on \_\_\_\_\_ if I have further questions about the study.

If I do not wish to talk with Brother Adrian about questions or comments I have about the conduct of the study, I may contact the Institutional Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS) at the University of San Francisco, the body that is concerned with the protection of volunteers in research projects. IRBPHS can be reached by phoning 0011-1-415-422-6091 and leaving a voicemail message, by emailing [IRBPHS@usfca.edu](mailto:IRBPHS@usfca.edu), or by writing to the IRBPHS, Department of Psychology, University of San Francisco, 2130 Fulton Street, San Francisco CA 94117-1080, USA.

### Consent

I have been given a copy of the “Research Participant’s Bill of Rights” and I have been given a copy of this Consent Form to keep.

Participation in research is voluntary. I am free to decline to be in this study, or to withdraw from it at any point. My decision as to whether or not to participate in this study will have no influence on your present or future status as an administrator or teacher at \_\_\_\_\_ College.

My signature below indicates that I agree to participate in this study.

Participant’s Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant’s Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date : \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Researcher: \_\_\_\_\_ Date : \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete the “Pre-Interview Demographic Questionnaire” and enclose it with this consent form in the envelope provided. Please return the envelope with the enclosed forms to Brother Adrian’s mailbox in the staff room by \_\_\_\_\_ October. Thank you for consenting to participate.

Appendix E

Research Participants' Bill of Rights

The rights below are the rights of every person who is asked to participate in a research study. As a research participant, I have the following rights:

### Research Participants' Bill of Rights

Research participants can expect:

- To be told the extent to which confidentiality of records identifying the participant will be maintained and of the possibility that specified individuals, internal and external regulatory agencies, or study sponsors may inspect information in the medical record specifically related to participation in the clinical trial.
- To be told of any benefits that may reasonably be expected from the research.
- To be told of any reasonably foreseeable discomforts or risks.
- To be told of appropriate alternative procedures or courses of treatment that might be of benefit to the participant.
- To be told of the procedures to be followed during the course of participation, especially those that are experimental in nature.
- To be told that they may refuse to participate (participation is voluntary), and that declining to participate will not compromise access to services and will not result in penalty or loss of benefits to which the participant is otherwise entitled.
- To be told about compensation and medical treatment if research related injury occurs and where further information may be obtained when participating in research involving more than minimal risk.
- To be told whom to contact for answers to pertinent questions about the research, about the research participants' rights and whom to contact in the event of a research-related injury to the participant.
- To be told of anticipated circumstances under which the investigator without regard to the participant's consent may terminate the participant's participation.
- To be told of any additional costs to the participant that may result from participation in the research.
- To be told of the consequences of a participants' decision to withdraw from the research and procedures for orderly termination of participation by the participant.
- To be told that significant new findings developed during the course of the research that may relate to the participant's willingness to continue participation

will be provided to the participant.

- To be told the approximate number of participants involved in the study.
- To be told what the study is trying to find out.
- To be told what will happen to me and whether any of the procedures, drugs, or devices are different from what would be used in standard practice.
- To be told about the frequent and/or important risks, side effects, or discomforts of the things that will happen to me for research purposes.
- To be told if I can expect any benefit from participating, and, if so, what the benefit might be.
- To be told of the other choices I have and how they may be better or worse than being in the study.
- To be allowed to ask any questions concerning the study both before agreeing to be involved and during the course of the study.
- To be told what sort of medical or psychological treatment is available if any complications arise.
- To refuse to participate at all or to change my mind about participation after the study is started; if I were to make such a decision, it will not affect my right to receive the care or privileges I would receive if I were not in the study.
- To receive a copy of the signed and dated consent form.
- To be free of pressure when considering whether I wish to agree to be in the study.

If I have other questions, I should ask the researcher. In addition, I may contact the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS), which is concerned with protection of volunteers in research projects. I may reach the IRBPHS by calling (415) 422-6091, by electronic mail at [IRBPHS@usfca.edu](mailto:IRBPHS@usfca.edu), or by writing to USF IRBPHS, Counseling Psychology Department, Education Building, 2130 Fulton Street, San Francisco, CA 94117-1071.

Appendix F

Pre-Interview Demographic Questionnaire

## Pre-Interview Demographic Questionnaire

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Primary School(s) Attended (more than one may be chosen)

Catholic \_\_\_\_\_ Government: \_\_\_\_\_ Independent \_\_\_\_\_

Secondary School(s) Attended  
\_\_\_\_\_

Total Number of Years Teaching (to Dec 2010) \_\_\_\_\_

Total Number of Years Teaching at a Catholic school (including SJC) \_\_\_\_\_

Total Number of Years Teaching at St. John's College \_\_\_\_\_

Current Role at St. John's College: \_\_\_\_\_

Please choose one of the following that describes your religious denomination

Catholic \_\_\_\_\_ Anglican \_\_\_\_\_ Orthodox \_\_\_\_\_

Protestant \_\_\_\_\_ Non-Christian \_\_\_\_\_ No Religion \_\_\_\_\_

If you indicated in the question above that you were a member of a religious denomination, please indicate the extent to which you participate outside school hours in your denomination's Masses or services.

Regular \_\_\_\_\_ Occasionally \_\_\_\_\_ Seldom \_\_\_\_\_ Never \_\_\_\_\_

Please list any courses or programs relating to Lasallian educational philosophy and practice in which you have participated (continue overleaf if necessary).  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_Please list any courses or programs relating to Catholicism or Catholic educational philosophy and practice in which you have participated (continue overleaf if necessary).  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



Appendix G  
Interview Guide

## Interview Guide

1. *How do administrators and teachers of St. John's College characterize the identity and culture of a Lasallian Catholic secondary school?*
  - a. In your opinion, what makes a school Catholic?
  - b. How have you gained your understanding of what makes a school Catholic?
  - c. In your opinion, what makes a school Lasallian?
  - d. How have you gained your understanding of what makes a school Lasallian?
  
2. *In what ways do administrators and teachers perceive St. John's College as reflecting the identity and culture of a Lasallian Catholic secondary school?*
  - a. Can you name ways in which St. John's College is Catholic?
  - b. Have you had experience in a government or independent school? If so, what differences did you observe between that school and St. John's College?
  - c. Can you name ways in which St. John's College is Lasallian?
  - d. Have you had experience in another Catholic school with a different religious congregation or perhaps a Catholic school that has had no links with a religious congregation? If so, what differences did you observe between that school and St. John's College?
  
3. *How do administrators and teachers perceive their role in the promotion of the Lasallian Catholic identity and culture of St. John's College?*
  - 3.1 In what ways do you promote the Catholic identity and culture of St. John's College? Can you give me some examples? (If the respondent provides only formal ways, a follow-up question will be asked regarding the informal ways in which promotion was done).
  - 3.2 In what ways do you promote the Lasallian identity and culture of St. John's College? Can you give me some examples? (If the respondent provides only formal ways, a follow-up question will be asked regarding the informal ways in which promotion was done).
  
4. *What has enhanced the Lasallian Catholic identity and culture at St. John's College?*
  - 4.1 Can you provide examples how the Catholic identity and culture of St. John's College has been enhanced? What was it about these examples that have enhanced the Catholic identity and culture of the school?

- 4.2 Can you provide examples how the Lasallian identity and culture of St. John's College has been enhanced? What was it about these examples that have enhanced the Lasallian identity and culture of the school?
5. *What challenges are there to the Lasallian Catholic identity and culture at St. John's College?*
  - 5.1 What challenges are there to the Catholic identity and culture of St. John's College?
  - 5.2 How do you think these challenges to the Catholic identity and culture came about and how could they be overcome?
  - 5.3 What challenges are there to the Lasallian identity and culture of St. John's College?
  - 5.4 How do you think these challenges to the Lasallian identity and culture came about and how could they be overcome?

Appendix H  
Observation Guide

## Observation Guide

During the period of research at St. John's College, the researcher will observe faculty meetings, weekly faculty briefings, religious education department meeting, formation programs related to Catholic or Lasallian identity and culture, and administrative team meetings. Casual observations will be undertaken in the faculty room, school events and celebrations, and in non-classroom settings.

The researcher will be looking for evidence to support or reject the following characteristics of a Lasallian Catholic school:

### *Environment*

- Lasallian and Catholic signs and symbols
- A sense of community

### *School Practices and Programs*

- Lasallian Catholic mission focus
- Pragmatic in nature
- Well-organized
- Student-centered
- Holistic emphasis for students and teachers
- Opportunities for prayer and worship
- Community service programs

*Relationships* (Administrators with teachers, teachers with each other, teachers with students)

- Witness to Gospel values
- Collaborative
- Respectful
- Inclusive
- Acceptance of diversity

### *Presentations and Informal Conversations*

- Discussion of Lasallian Catholic identity and culture
- Promotion of Lasallian mission and vision
- Promotion of Church teachings
- Promotion of the human and Christian formation of students and teachers
- Use of Lasallian and Church language in relation school's mission

Appendix I  
Documentation Guide

## Documentation Guide

During the period of research at St. John's College, the research will collect and analyze the faculty handbook, the constitution of the College Board of Directors, the Collective Bargaining Agreement (union contract), school newsletters, faculty appointment letters, and faculty role description documents.

The researcher will be looking for evidence to support or reject the following characteristics of a Lasallian Catholic school:

### *The Lasallian Catholic Components of School*

- Statement of Lasallian mission, vision, tradition, and principles
- Statement of Catholic identity
- Statement of curriculum and practices

### *Administrators' Role Relative to Identity and Culture*

- Expectations of administrators are outlined regarding the Catholic identity and culture of the school

### *Teacher Formation*

- Expectations of faculty are outlined regarding the Catholic identity and culture of the school
- Opportunities are provided for the Lasallian formation of teachers
- Opportunities are provided for the Catholic formation of teachers

### *Community Relationships*

- Relationship with the wider Lasallian community is recognized
- Relationship with the wider Catholic community is recognized

Appendix J

St. John's College Enrollment Interview Questions



## St. John's College Enrollment Interview Questions

### *Student Questions*

1. What do you enjoy most at school?
2. What do you find challenging?
3. Why St. John's?
4. What are you looking forward to?
5. Do you have any concerns?

### *Parental Questions*

1. What are your expectations of the College?
2. Are there any particular issues that concern you?
3. St. John's College is a Catholic school with a rich tradition, such as religious celebrations, student responsibilities and uniform. Are you prepared to support the continuation of this tradition and ethos?

Appendix K  
Study Participants

## Study Participants

List of the study participants together with the number of times each participant was quoted or for a remark that was paraphrased by the researcher.

### Administrators

Ray Carr, Principal - 58 times  
 Ian Griffin, Deputy Principal - 30 times  
 Bill Dobson, Deputy Principal - 23 times

### Long-serving teachers with more than 15 years of service at St. John's College

Oliver Dixon - 20 times  
 Octavia Daniels - 19 times  
 Roger Lowe - 16 times

### Established teachers with 5-15 years of service at St. John's College

Natalie Edwards - 19 times  
 Wayne Thompson - 13 times  
 Allison Keller - 13 times  
 Walter Gardner - 7 times

### Comparatively new teachers with less than 5 years of service at St. John's College (\* a teacher who had previously taught at other secondary schools prior to teaching at St. John's College)

\*Sam Egan - 17 times  
 \*Andrea Duncan - 17 times  
 Frank Power - 10 times  
 Susan Gaines - 9 times  
 Kate Cummins - 8 times