

CHAPTER 5 - METHODOLOGY

All cases are unique, and very similar to others

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In this research I adopt the interpretative paradigm thereby entering 'a process of exploration' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983, p.12). In studying the constructs Marist Brothers, their colleagues and their students use to make sense of the events and phenomena in their worlds, 'the researcher comes face-to-face with the social situations that reveal such constructs and the taken-for-granted components of such worlds'. I endeavour to understand these phenomena through active mental work, interactions with the external context and transactions between my mental work and the external context (McCutcheon and Jung, 1990, pp.146-147).

This paradigm looks back to Weber's distinction between understanding which involves direct observation of the meaning of given acts including 'verbal utterances' and understanding which analyses the motive behind an action. 'This ... consists in placing the act in an intelligible and more inclusive context of meaning' (1978 [1921], p.8). Habermas believes these two types of understanding *Erklaren* (explanation) and *Verstehen* (understanding) involve different rules in methodological usage (1990, p.10). Weber saw the notion of *Verstehen*², as centring on the interpretative grasp of meaning

(a) as in the historical approach the actually intended meaning for concrete individual action; or (b) as in cases of sociological mass phenomena, the average of, or an approximation to the actually intended meaning; or (c) the meaning appropriate to a scientifically formulated pure type (an ideal type) of a common phenomenon (1978 [1921], p.9).

This sounds more rationalistic than in fact it is. Its purpose is methodological convenience. Weber does not believe in an 'actual predominance of rational elements in human life'. In fact he sees 'a danger of rationalistic interpretations where they are out of place' (*ibid.*, pp.6-7).

¹ Quoted in Moran, 1992, p.4.

² *Verstehen* became central to Weber's methodology (Kasler, 1988, p.151). It is now closely associated with qualitative methodology (Platt, 1985, p.448).

Since people's meanings cannot be predicted, interpretivists allow their research design to develop as the research unfolds (McCutcheon and Jung, 1990, p.149). Meaning questions cannot be solved and 'done away with', they can only be better or more deeply understood (van Manen, 1990, p.155). The interpretivist researcher seeks to dialogue with the researchee so that a 'rich description of action and intentions' emerges (McCutcheon and Jung, 1990, p.150). This causes research questions to take on greater or less significance as the process develops.

Great emphasis has been given to the split between the qualitative and quantitative research traditions (Miller and Lieberman, 1988, p.5). I identify with Guba's (1978) position that these two research approaches 'are incompatible because they are based on paradigms that make different assumptions about the world and what constitutes valid research' (quoted in Firestone, 1987, p.16). I choose the qualitative approach for this research so as to concentrate on interpretation and meaning. Soltis believes the purpose of qualitative research in education is to 'inform our deep understanding of educational institutions and processes through interpretation and narrative description' (1989, p.125). Of the qualitative methods, Arbuckle sees case study methodology suiting the study of religious congregations and their schools, because it illustrates theoretical principles in a 'flesh-and-blood' way, and discusses particular individuals, rather than abstract roles such as 'agents of change' or 'refounding persons' (1988, p.168).

In this research I aim to move from subjectivity to objectivity. At the beginning of *Economy and Society* (1978 [1921], p.4) Weber defines sociology as 'a science concerning itself with the interpretive understanding of social action and thereby with a causal explanation of its course and consequences'. In this definition, Weber conceptualises 'the new social sciences as cultural sciences with a systematic intent'. He combines 'methodological principles that philosophers had found in opposing types of sciences: the social sciences have the task of bringing the heterogeneous methods, aims, and presuppositions of the natural and cultural sciences into balance' (Habermas, 1990, p.10). Since Weber made his postulate on subjective interpretation it has been observed consistently in the 'theory-formation of all social sciences'. Hence 'all scientific explanations of the social world *can*, and for certain purposes *must*, refer to the subjective meaning of the actions of human beings from which the social reality

originates (Schutz, 1954, pp.269-270), for, as Freire insists, 'no one can say a true word ... *for* another' (1990, p. 61). Weber speaks of 'action' in so far as the 'acting individual attaches a subjective meaning' to his or her behaviour - 'be it overt or covert, omission or acquiescence'. Action is 'social' when its 'subjective meaning takes account of the behavior of others and is thereby oriented in its course' (1978 [1921], p.4).

Schutz believes that social sciences, 'like all empirical sciences, have to be objective in the sense that their propositions are subjected to controlled verification and must not refer to private uncontrollable experience'. He claims 'an objectively verifiable theory of subjective meaning-structures' can be formed by establishing constructs of those constructs which have been formed 'in common sense thinking' by the people involved in the social scene. He sees these second level constructs as being of 'a different kind from those developed on the first level of common-sense thinking'. This device for arriving at objectivity, Schutz contends, has been used long before the concept of subjective interpretation was formulated by Weber and developed by his school (1954, p.270).

5.1 - CASE STUDY METHODOLOGY

Case study is 'an umbrella term for a family of research methods'. Its eclectic methodology chooses methods on the basis of their appropriateness to 'the purpose of the study and the nature of the case' (Adelman *et al.*, 1980, pp.48-49; MacDonald and Walker, 1977, p.183; Simons, 1989, p.116). It involves 'an intensive, holistic description and analysis' of a single case or a bounded system whether simple and specific or abstract and complex in a naturalistic way (Merriam, 1988, p.xiv; Stake 1985, p.278). It is an 'examination of an instance in action' which acknowledges that the instance is embedded in historical, social, political, cultural, biographical and other contexts (MacDonald and Walker 1977, p.181; Adelman *et al.*, 1980, p.48; Stake, 1985, p.279; Miller and Lieberman, 1988, p.14). MacDonald and Walker describe it as 'the way of the artist', who, in portraying a single instance locked in time and circumstance, reveals properties of the class to which the instance belongs and in so doing 'communicates enduring truths about the human condition'. It is also likely, particularly in education, to take the researcher into 'a complex set of politically sensitive relationships' (1977, p.182 and p.185).

Stake describes a bounded system as an 'institution, a program, a responsibility, a collection, or a population' (1978, p.7). The Marist Brothers' Congregation constitutes the bounded system for this research. Here a 'tolerably full understanding of the case is possible' and the boundaries of the system have a common sense obviousness (Adelman *et al.*, 1980, p.49). In studying the Congregation, other bounded systems, namely three schools within its aegis, are chosen for detailed study.

Qualitative case study is located within naturalistic research which interprets 'higher-order interrelations within the observed data' by studying objects in their own environment with 'a *design* relatively free of intervention or control' (Stake, 1985, pp.277-278). Naturalistic research involves 'free exploration in the area, getting close to the people involved in it, seeing a variety of situations they meet, noting their conversations, and watching their life as it flows along' (Blumer, 1969, quoted in Hammersley, 1990, p.34). It focuses on meaning in context and consequently requires data collection instruments which are sensitive to these meanings. Merriam claims 'humans' are best-suited to this task 'using methods that make use of human sensibilities such as interviewing, observing, and analyzing' (1988, p.3). Naturalistic research requires dialogue in order to locate the participants' intentions and meanings 'in causal and temporal order with reference to their role in the history of the setting or settings to which they belong' (MacIntyre, 1985, p.208). Such research must be carried out with an attitude of respect and is reported 'in ordinary (rather than technical) language' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983, p.6; Stake, 1985, p.278).

Theories supporting this research include the sociology of charismatic social movements, the theology of religious congregations and the role of charismatic social movements in education. Such broad theoretical bases prevent any 'theoretical absolutism' where the study is constrained to 'one preferred approach' (Johnson, 1980, p.5). As Merriam recommends, these theories will permeate the entire research process and will provide a context for personal and shared reflection, the choice of experiences observed, the selection of documents to be analysed and an orientation for interview questions and discussions (1988, p.61). Theory is also important to this research because I aim to assist in the deepening and broadening of existing theoretical understandings of Marist educational vision as expressed in Congregational literature. Qualitative case study methodology assists the building of theory particularly when it employs 'one's imagination, personal experience, the experiences of others, and

existing theory' (Merriam, 1988, p.57 and p.60). It provides flexibility, allows promising ideas to be tried and developed and the direction of the research to be changed if necessary.

I'm reminded of Hume's classic dilemma as to how 'unobservable *connections* among events' can 'be postulated'. Huberman and Miles respond to this challenge by recommending the combination of three methodological traditions: 'analytic induction, clinical and expert judgement and qualitative methods in the ethnographic and interpretive traditions'. These methodologies, they contend, involve the analyst in progressively scanning the data 'for clusters of similarly appearing or similarly-functioning variables and for the relations between these phenomena'. These are then tested during the next stage of data collection (1989, pp.55-56). In such analyses, however, comparisons are rather implicit than explicit and emerging themes and hypotheses remain subordinate to the understanding of the case as a whole. Indeed, Stake believes case study methodology is expansionist rather than reductionist, requiring attention to the 'idiosyncratic more than to the pervasive', with the intention, ultimately, of adding to 'existing experience and humanistic understanding' (1978, p.7).

Weber, in his ten methodological foundations for sociology, insists it is customary to designate sociological generalisations (1978 [1921], p.18). He sees such generalisations as
typical probabilities confirmed by observation to the effect
that under certain given conditions an expected course of
social action will occur which is understandable in terms of
the typical motives and typical subjective intentions of the
actors [and actresses].

Weber believes the 'more sharply and precisely the ideal type has been constructed, ... the more abstract and unrealistic in this sense it is, the better it is able to perform its functions in formulating terminology, classifications, and hypotheses'. As well as providing objective assistance, Weber sees these sociological theoretical concepts as having subjective relevance. 'In the great majority of cases actual action goes on in a state of inarticulate half-consciousness or actual unconsciousness of its subjective meaning.'

Every sociological ... investigation, in applying its analysis
to the empirical facts, must take this fact into account ... But
the difficulty need not prevent the sociologist from

systematizing his [or her] concepts by the classification of possible types of subjective meaning (*ibid.*, p.21).

Case study methodology enables the researcher to reach the general by studying the particular and move continually between the two³ (Aldeman, Jenkins and Kemmis, 1980, p.47; Eisner, 1981, p.7). Cronbach, however, believes such generalisations decay over time: 'At one time a conclusion describes the existing situation well, at a later time it accounts for rather little variance, and ultimately it is valid only as history' (1975, pp.122-123). While other styles of research, such as survey analysis, aim to elicit general relationships, case study methodology concentrates on 'the context of individual instances'. Stake sees the results of case study research as being generalisable 'in that the information given allows readers to decide whether the case is similar to theirs' (Stake, 1985, p.277). Generalisation can be rationalistic, propositional and lawlike (scientific discourse) or naturalistic, the last form being more intuitive, empirical and based on personal direct and vicarious experience (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.120).

Naturalistic generalisations develop within a person as a product of experience. They derive from the tacit knowledge of how things are, why they are, how people feel about them, and how these things are likely to be later or in other places with which this person is familiar. They seldom take the form of predictions but lead regularly to expectation (Stake, 1978, p.6).

Within the limits of the study, I attempt to gain as general an understanding as possible of current Marist Educational Vision.

³ Lincoln and Guba (1985, p.125) demonstrate, within the limits of a metaphor, the means by which they believe the whole of a bounded system can be studied:

- that full information about a whole is stored in its parts ...
- that samples need not be representative in the usual statistical sense to render generalizations warrantable; any part or component is a 'perfect' sample in the sense that it contains all of the information about the whole that one might ever hope to obtain;
- that imperfect (blurred) information from any source can be improved (clarified), if one has the appropriate filters for so doing; and
- that both the substantive information about an object and the information needed to clarify it are contained in the unclarified versions.

5.2 - METHODS, DATA COLLECTION, ANALYSIS AND REPORTING

The qualitative case study researcher relies primarily on interviews, document analysis and observation (Miller and Lieberman, 1988, p.4). These methods are often employed in combination as is normal for naturalistic inquiry (Smith, 1987 and Schatzman and Strauss, 1973 quoted in Simons, 1987, p.95). Such a variety of methods can be employed if the researcher builds a rapport, and therefore a trust, with the people being researched. Trust results first when, 'researchers appear good, honest and decent' (Peshkin, 1984, p.257), second, when they are predictable and third when they establish agreement over the research aims (Nias, 1981 quoted in Simons, 1989, p.123).

In this research I interviewed, observed, collected documents, tape recorded, photographed and took field notes. In most cases observations were 'background rather than foreground' (Cotter, 1991, p.76). There was flexibility in the design and carrying through of the research, with changes of tack resulting particularly from the suggestions of participants (Adelman *et al.*, 1980, p.49; Simons, 1987, p.72; Huberman, 1992, Lect.). This flexibility enabled me to 'change direction, probe relevant issues, investigate unanticipated effects and undertake additional studies' (Simons, 1987, p.72). The data were collected mainly as open-ended narrative without attempting to fit people's experiences into pre-determined or standardized categories. Each school was treated as 'a unique entity' with its own particular sets of meanings and relationships (Patton, 1980, p.20 and p.40).

INTERVIEWS Interviews provided the prime source of data. Patton believes the 'purpose of interviewing is to find out what is in and on someone else's mind' - 'not to put things in someone's mind ... but rather to access the perspective of the person being interviewed'.

We interview people to find out from them those things we cannot directly observe ... feelings, thoughts and intentions ... behaviours that took place at some previous point in time ... how people have organized the world and the meanings they attach to what goes on in the world - we have to ask people questions about those things (1980, p.196).

I endeavoured to listen also to the non-rational being 'spoken' by observing how people sat, the way they appeared to relate to me and how relaxed they

seemed to be. I sometimes found the times of silence most poignant because it was then that another, perhaps mystical, dimension of communication was experienced. As a 'non-positivist' researcher, I afforded these silences 'a special and prestigious place' (Sultana, 1992, p.19). Throughout the research I adopted Measor's principle that the quality of the data is dependent on the quality of the relationships built with the people being interviewed. I found it important, for example, to dress in keeping with the kind of professional dress normally worn by the interviewees (1988, pp.57-58).

Patton (1980, pp.197-205) describes three ideal types of qualitative interviewing.

(1) The Informal Conversational Interview. In this 'phenomenological' interview, typical of the 'unstructured kind advocated in case study research', questions flow from the immediate context and the interviewer goes with the flow (Simons, 1981, p.27).

(2) The General Interview Guide Approach. This type of interview involves preparing a list of issues whose coverage is broadly the aim of the interview.

(3) The Standardised Open-ended Interview. This form of interview, which involves framing questions before the interview and then using them consistently in a set of interviews, constituted the main interview format. This strategy allows comparisons to be made without diminishing the special contribution made by each interviewee.

I employed all these interview types, however. Some conversational interviews were conducted with individuals, others with groups. These group interviews gave the interviewees some extra control over the discussion and questions asked (Burgess, 1984, p.118). Most general interviews took place away from the interview room environment. In these discussions I sought to deepen my understanding of emerging themes and issues. The standardised open-ended interviews were held in the interview room assigned to me. Each interviewee was asked the following four research questions:

(1) What is the nature of the contribution being made by the Marist Brothers' Congregation in Catholic secondary schools today?

(2) Where does the educational vision of the founder of the Marist Brothers, Marcellin Champagnat, fit into this contribution?

(3) What part does the Marist Congregation's history play in its educational vision today?

(4) How do Marist educators resolve the tension between the need to be historically authentic to the educational vision of Marcellin Champagnat, while still being relevant, and even 'prophetic', for today's educational needs?

Interviews normally lasted forty five minutes with some going considerably longer and others requiring two sessions. They were all characterised by free-ranging discussions where feelings, values and common understandings were shared (Stake, 1978, p.5). Where possible, I tried to encourage the interviewee to be 'proactive' (MacDonald and Sanger, 1982, p.179). I asked supplementary questions of a personal nature if I felt such questions were not intrusive as I found people wanted to talk about themselves and their feelings about the school, faculty or programme they were leading or in which they were involved. I tape recorded each interview. When I relistened to the interviews I was able to 'hear' what I hadn't 'heard' at the time of the interview and to check my understanding of what I thought people had said.

Rarely did I know the people I interviewed and hence I found the initial few minutes required different responses. Some interviewees wanted to talk immediately about where they had just been, others asked who I was and why I was doing this research. Some laboured over the answers to my questions with a few being apologetic for what they felt were inadequate answers. Two or three people seemed 'on edge' wanting to say more than they felt they could for 'political' reasons. The interviewees talked amongst themselves outside the interviews with some providing me with feedback afterwards. A few changed the time of the interviews and one chose to decline the offer of an interview due to overwork, though in his case I was able to interview him on my second visit to the school. In both schools I had ready access to interviewees. At St. Mungo's the one Marist Brother on the staff, Br. Stephen Smyth selected the interviewees, while at Archbishop Molloy, Br. John Klein, the school principal, carried out this task. I relied on these two Brothers to provide the variety of interviewees I required after explaining to them the purpose of my research. I chose this approach because both men seemed to have a good understanding of the goals of my study and, as I knew little about both schools, and had limited amounts of time at both places, that seemed the most practical course of action. Stephen acknowledged the possibility of selecting only 'favourable interviewees' and believed he avoided this, while John informed me he deliberately included members of staff who were periodically negative

about the school acknowledging, as a doctoral graduate himself: 'you want to get an honest study' (Smyth, 1991b, SMA Int.; Klein, 1991, AMHS Int.).

OBSERVATION AND DOCUMENT ANALYSIS Burgess (1984, pp.80ff.) adopts Gold's (1958) typology when classifying observational styles. They are:

- (1) the complete participant 'where the researcher merges into the action' so that his or her role is hidden from the researched;
- (2) where the researcher moves about 'without a pre-ordained schedule';
- (3) where the observer is participant but involving a more formal and less naturalistic approach to observation;
- (4) where the researcher is the complete observer, eliminating interaction with the researched.

I adopted all these observational approaches. I experienced the 'complete participant' role when, for example, I joined the audience at Archbishop Molloy High School's Christmas musical; the 'no pre-ordained schedule' role when I walked around the St. Mungo's Academy's and Archbishop Molloy playgrounds and corridors during the various breaks; the 'observer as participant' role when I was invited to join a group of parents who had helped run an orientation evening for parents of new students at St. Mungo's Academy and the 'complete observer' role when I travelled on the New York subway at the end of the school day with Molloy students who didn't know who I was. While I aimed to adopt the first three observational roles, I found total anonymity to be unavoidable on some occasions. I preferred to observe in natural settings finding these reflected 'the reality of the life experiences of participants more accurately' than 'more contrived settings' (Goetz and LeCompte quoted in Merriam, 1988, pp.168-169).

Documents also provided a valuable resource for this research. Merriam defines a document as 'an assortment of written records, physical traces and artifacts' (Merriam, 1988, p.xv). As well as contributing new data, documents confirmed insights I had gained through interviews and observations. They revealed, to some extent, the degree to which the spirit of the overall Marist social movement had been incarnated at the local level. They generally provided basic information which was often assumed knowledge during interviews, but they also reminded me later of details I had forgotten.

SELECTION OF CASES During the research I could identify with MacDonald and Walker's observation that case-studies are always 'partial accounts, involving selection at every stage' (1977, p.187).

For my preliminary 'mini-studies' I had sought one secular and one religious based international social movement committed to education where a founding person could be identified and was regarded as charismatic. I selected the United World Colleges as the secular social movement because it is a relatively new and dynamic school movement with its international headquarters in London. For the religious social movement, I chose the Society of Jesus as a long established religious congregation that had been through a refounding process and that continually clarifies and documents its educational vision. In approaching the main Marist study I decided to study schools in three countries and then to broaden the study to other schools towards the end of the research. In selecting the three schools, I explained the aims of my research to Brothers working in the administration of the Congregation, particularly Brs. Richard Dunleavy (Rome), Rick Shea (New York) and Chris Mannion (Glasgow) and then relied on their advice. For practical reasons I chose English medium schools, where the school's age, the number of Brothers working in the school and the school's tradition varied. As the research developed it became clear that the Melbourne school, where I had been principal prior to coming to London, provided the major source of my research questions and could also, through an autobiographical and reflexive analysis, generate relevant data for the study. Adding Glasgow's St. Mungo's Academy, with its long history and changed status to a government Catholic school, and New York's Archbishop Molloy High School, with its large number of teaching Brothers, provided the research with a good variety of schools.

I then chose ten other schools from all continents, selecting some boarding and day schools, some day schools, some where I knew Brothers, others I had visited prior to, or could visit during, the research period⁴. The chosen responding schools were: Marist College, Ashgrove, Australia; Marist High School, Bayonne, U.S.A.; St. Gregory's College, Campbelltown, Australia; Marist High School, Chicago, U.S.A.; Moyle Park College, Clondalkin, Ireland; St. John's High School, Dundee, Scotland; St. Paul's Secondary School, Kabwe, Zambia; St. Francis High

⁴ *cf.* the earlier reference in this chapter to testing initial data during a second stage of data collection (Huberman and Miles, 1989, p.56).

School, Pleebo, Liberia; Sargodha Catholic School, Pakistan and Maris Stella High School, Singapore. Of these ten, eight eventually provided data in sufficient quantity to justify inclusion, the two exceptions

being Marist High School, Chicago and Moyle Park College, Clondalkin.

DATA COLLECTION Marcellin College differed from the other two study schools in being both retrospective and - to some extent - autobiographical. My own memory was therefore a necessary 'data source' - averagely fallible, selective and inclined to self-deception though that memory is. Fortunately, however, it did not have to stand alone but could interact with other sources and stimuli. These included, for example, two hundred pages of documentation which were sent to London after having been carefully selected either by senior College staff who had themselves been involved in the leadership team during the years being studied or by the archivist and the supervisor of schools of the Marist Brothers who both work at the Marist headquarters of the Melbourne Province at Templestowe - on the basis of criteria I had sent them. I found it helpful to have selection from each of these sources, representing complementary 'insider' and (relatively speaking) 'outsider' perspectives. Further data on Marcellin College were obtained through interviews carried out in England with former staff and colleagues of the period. In addition to these independent voices which functioned as both a stimulus and a check on memory, there was the further stimulus - particularly important in this case - provided by my supervisor's interrogations of several successive drafts of the Marcellin story.

Data from St. Mungo's Academy were obtained through interview and observation at the school and the Brothers' residence during June 1991 and September 1992, further interviews carried out in England, Ireland, France and America at other times during the research period, correspondence with present and past members of the school community, and analysis of documents. Data from Archbishop Molloy High School came in similar ways: from interview and observation at the school in December 1991 - January 1992, and again in June and July 1992, further interviews held in England, Scotland, Ireland and France at other times during the research period, correspondence with people who know the school, and analysis of documents. The periods of time spent at these

schools were determined principally by the differing numbers of Brothers on the staff.

Collecting data at St. Mungo's Academy and Archbishop Molloy High School involved:

- interviewing administrators, teachers, parents and students on a one-to-one basis in an office in the school building or in a small room in the Brothers' house.
- interviewing groups of staff, parents, students and past students in staff rooms, large offices, classrooms, Brothers' dining rooms and lounges.
- attending meetings involving staff, parents and students both as an observer and a participant such as the 'United Nations' meeting run by the students at Archbishop Molloy.
- teaching and sitting in on class activities, such as religious education classes at St. Mungo's and a basketball lesson at Archbishop Molloy and engaging in open discussion with students and teachers.
- spending time in staff rooms having meals and informally chatting with staff and parents and reading the available literature.
- discussing informally with administrators, teachers, parents, students and friends of the school in offices, corridors, libraries, around photocopy machines, in playgrounds, while travelling together and when shopping at the local stores. Some of these discussions were confidential, emotionally charged and therefore not able to be reported. They did, however, contribute to the overall orientation of the findings and conclusions of the research.
- living with Brothers who worked in the schools and visiting other communities of Brothers associated with the school.
- joining in school Masses and other prayer experiences and having lengthy informal discussions with participants after these services.

- participating in social and sporting occasions such as concerts, dances, interschool basketball competitions, track training and the end of year Christmas dinner at Archbishop Molloy - much of the data received on these occasions came more freely, because at these times, my being a Brother and a researcher seemed less apparent and
- collecting documents from reception desks, staff rooms and, on two occasions, from rubbish bins.

In all, I tape recorded and analysed 60 hours of interviews and collected and studied 600 pages of relevant documents, field-notes and

journal entries. I kept a daily journal on all but nine days of the research period, using my portable computer which I took with me during the majority of my research journeys. This journal documented places I visited, key people with whom I spoke, feelings I experienced, emerging themes and other important data I wanted to record. I kept additional field notes giving details about particular interviews and changes in my thinking as I analysed the data. When I didn't have my computer with me, I handwrote the journal and fieldnotes adding the journal notes to the computer files on my return to London. All incoming and outgoing telephone calls were recorded, the time of the call being noted and copies of incoming and outgoing correspondence filed alphabetically by surname.

Throughout the research period I also received considerable methodological and theoretical input from:

- the Institute of Education M.A. courses on research methodology and curriculum design during the Autumn term of the 1990-1991 academic year,
- discussions with academics in France, Ireland, the United States and Canada on research methodology, educational theory, Marist culture and Max Weber's thinking,
- participating in the European Taize Congress in Prague during December 1990 and January 1991,
- participating in the International Congresses on School Effectiveness and Improvement in Cardiff during January 1991 and Victoria, British Columbia in January 1992,
- visiting the provincial centres of the Franciscan Missionaries of the Divine Motherhood in Godalming, the Sisters of Christ in St. Pancras and the Sisters of the Society of the Sacred Heart in Roehampton and discussing aspects of their educational vision
- studying the archives of the Marist Fathers in London,
- interviewing Marist historians at L'Hermitage in St. Chamond during March and April 1991 and
- visiting Marist Brothers' communities in London, Paris, Dublin, Poughkeepsie, Bayonne and Chicago.

DATA ANALYSIS The analytical framework for this research can be represented as below.

TABLE 5.1 - ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

MARIST CONTRIBUTION TO SCHOOLS
ROLE OF MARCELLIN CHAMPAGNAT
PLACE OF THE CONGREGATION'S HISTORY
PROPHETIC RELEVANCE YET HISTORICAL AUTHENTICITY

THEORIES:

WEBER'S THEORY OF CHARISMATIC SOCIAL MOVEMENTS
THEOLOGY OF RELIGIOUS CONGREGATIONS
EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT THEORIES

SPECIFIC CONTRIBUTIONS:

UNITED WORLD COLLEGES SOCIAL MOVEMENT
SOCIETY OF JESUS SOCIAL MOVEMENT
THREE CASE STUDY SCHOOLS
EIGHT RESPONDING SCHOOLS
RESEARCHER'S REFLEXIVITY

During the research, the theory developed in parallel with the fieldwork. The notion of the charismatic social movement brought the two together initially and acted as a broad foundation for data collection and analysis. Other theoretical perspectives, such as the distinction made by Avis between the sociological and the theological senses of charisma in Weberian terms, and new findings emerged together over time (1992, pp.67-75). These broadened my understanding of the cases, thereby highlighting the need to be both 'theoretically sensitive' and open to unexpected 'detours' during the gathering of data (Glaser, 1978, p.1). Valuable theoretical suggestions were sometimes made by research participants. My personal experience in Marist schools helped me to understand the context of the schools I was studying and put me fairly immediately 'in dialogue' with the data I was collecting (Huberman, 1992, Lect.). As I analysed data and developed research categories, the bases for tentative theories about Marist educational vision began to emerge. These were later tested for authenticity by trying them out on participants both in the case study schools themselves and in the responding schools.

Yin (1989, p.106) believes the aim of data analysis is 'to treat the evidence fairly, to produce compelling analytic conclusions, and to rule out alternative interpretations'. Miles and Huberman see this occurring through three interrelated processes (1984, quoted in Miles, 1990, p.42):

- (1) data reduction or 'selection and compression of anticipated and available information',
- (2) data display or 'arrangement of reduced data in an ordered, compressed format' to allow
- (3) conclusion drawing and verification involving processes such as 'raw comparisons, making metaphors, triangulation' and 'testing rival hypotheses'.

Of these tasks, Miles and Huberman believe data display to be the most important at a time when 'researcher isolation and reliance on idiosyncratic analysis methods' are 'giving way to documentation, explicitness, and collegial sharing' (Miles, 1990, p.43). Data displays 'reduce batches of data in ways that enhance their comparability, and allow hypothesis generation for further analysis'. The chosen display modes inevitably condition the analysis and conclusions (Huberman and Miles, 1983, p.286 and p.331) and consequently Huberman warns against 'over-rationalisation' because 'research has an inbuilt tendency to assume a rational, logical, plausible structure'⁵ (1992, Lect.).

The data collected for each of the case study schools were ordered, analysed and then used to generate tentative themes or scenarios for that school. These were categorised and 'clustered' and then causal networks - 'the visual rendering of the most important independent and dependent variables ... and the relationships between them' - were developed, enabling the formation of initial hypotheses (Huberman and Miles, 1989, p.57). After gathering more data from both the case study schools and responding schools, some of these hypotheses were disproved, others confirmed and new ones proposed.

The hypotheses from each of the three case study schools were brought together and 'pattern matching' was carried out for each site by the respondents in the eight schools (*ibid.*). Smith and Robbins suggest 'there is no simple way to determine the significance of patterns found across sites in qualitative analyses' (1982, p.57). Nevertheless, overall hypotheses for the bounded system were established with, once again, some hypotheses as proposed in individual case studies being disproved and others added (Merriam, 1988, p.60). Throughout this analysis the variables underlying the theoretical framework and the research questions provided the 'building blocks' for the 'causal networks' thereby helping to extend the theory of Marist educational vision (Huberman and Miles, 1989, p.57).

During the research period I tape recorded the tutorials with my supervisor, Dr. Paddy Walsh, and listened afterwards to the recording. In addition to gaining a better understanding of the issues discussed and the suggestions made, this proved particularly helpful when analysing data.

⁵ This warning could be levelled at those who developed the theories concerning the eras of religious life and the life cycle of the typical religious congregation as discussed in Chapter 2 (Duffy, 1991, Int. DUB.).

Hypotheses sometimes emerged through my having 'bounced off' my thoughts and feelings about particular experiences on Paddy - as indeed on other interested colleagues and friends.

REPORTING In writing this thesis, I adopted a number of recommendations which I culled from current literature about case study writing. They were that case study

- endeavours to see the 'world of the site' through the eyes of the respondents (Lincoln and Guba 1985, p.365),
- distinguishes between the sections on 'reconstructing the site' and the writer's own interpretations (*ibid.*),
- is informal, includes narrative and illustrations where helpful (Stake 1980, p.71) and uses 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973b) 'so essential to an understanding of context and situation' (Lincoln and Guba, 1990, p.54),
- acknowledges the researcher's 'conscious reflexivity', since a case study researcher has 'an obligation to be self-examining, self-questioning, self-challenging, self-critical, and self-correcting' (*ibid.*),
- endeavours to convey the 'body of knowledge' obtained from the research (Huberman, 1992, Lect.),
- includes data displays which can represent 'substantial data selection and reduction' (Miles, 1982, p.127),
- includes verbatim quotations from interviews giving those being researched their 'distinctive voices' (Webster, 1991, p.1347). In selecting these I adopted Opie's (1992, pp.59-63) selection principles which are based on a) the intensity of the speaking voice, b) the contradictory moment, c) emotional content or tone, d) the extent to which the participant uses whole sentences rather than the more usual recursive speech patterns and e) the control of the interpretation.

In the case study of Marcellin College, I 'reflected on action' which I 'reframed' in an autobiographical account (Schon, 1983, p.276, Russell, 1989, p.275). This differed from the reflection on action which is carried out 'by observers rather than by participants' (Hargreaves and Fullan, 1992, p.178). As an act of writing, I experienced the truth of the remark that autobiography 'perches in the present, gazing backwards into the past while poised ready for flight into the future' (Abbs, 1974, pp.6-7). Since autobiographical work involves 'a struggle against the loss of memory', as already mentioned, I relied for the factual information principally on documents produced during the years being studied (Mundhenk, 1986, p.82). Although all autobiography contains 'a cone of darkness at the

centre' (Pascal, 1960, p.184) I found it 'can be instructive in the quest for contradictions in both individual and social spheres' (Edgerton, 1991, p.86). As it 'ends in the figure of the writer', it remains in conflict with the writing of history which

does indeed come to conclusions and reach ends, but actually moves forward through the implicit understanding that *things are not over*, that the story isn't finished, can't ever be completed, for some new item of information may alter the account as it has been given (Steedman, 1990, p.246).

Autobiography differs too from memoir and reminiscence by the 'status and function of *experience* within it' (*ibid.*, p.247). This particular exercise in interpretive autobiography focused more on meaning than on the narration as reflected in stories, metaphors and folk knowledge (Clandinin and Connelly, 1990, p.245). It expressed 'the particular peace I had made between the individuality of my subjectivity and the 'intersubjective and public character of meaning'. Grumet contends it is this struggle and resolve 'to develop ourselves in ways that transcend the identities that others have constructed for us that bonds the projects of autobiography and education' (1990, p.324).

5.3 - VALIDITY, RELIABILITY, REFLEXIVITY AND ETHICS

VALIDITY In this research I make a 'commitment to truth' representing as 'faithfully and honestly' as possible the dialogue which occurred, the observations I made and the documents I studied (Elliott 1990, p.56). I aim to produce 'valid and reliable knowledge in an ethical manner'. Merriam distinguishes between internal validity - 'the extent to which one's findings are congruent with reality' and external validity which 'is concerned with the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations' (Merriam, 1988, p.163, p.173 and p.183). For Ratcliffe, there is no universal way of guaranteeing validity and limiting oneself to a particular notion of validity can narrow the range of methods 'that can be applied to pressing problems' (quoted in *ibid.*, p.167). Any judgements about validity 'not only include assessments of the accuracy of descriptions, but also assessments of their *relevance* in capturing what is important in the situation' (*ibid.*, p.50).

Partlett (1980, p.244) offers four methods for checking the accuracy of findings:

- (1) triangulation - the use of multiple sources of data impinging on a single phenomenon,
- (2) the noting down of negative incidences immediately and deliberately before they are glossed over and forgotten,
- (3) the use of consultants, 'devil's advocates' and independent collaborators to provide alternative perspectives, and
- (4) distributing drafts widely and checking for the achievement of a recognisable reality.

I employed all these methods in this research. Triangulation was carried out first, by using interviews, observation and documents as sources of data, second, by interviewing as many people as possible and third, by analysing documents from at least three different sources. Draft chapters were sent to research participants to enable them to read what they had said, check for accuracy and assess the context in which I had referred to them. I found I had made mistakes in these draft chapters. I had spelt some names incorrectly and had drawn incorrect conclusions from some of the data. The research participants generally appreciated the descriptions I sent them and could 'relate them to their own experience'⁶ (Simons, 1987, p.73). I also, on my return visit to St. Mungo's Academy and Archbishop Molloy High School, re-interviewed key people about my overall reporting of the case in which they were involved. On these second visits, I found the school principals and senior administrators very helpful in assessing the chapters as a whole, telling me what I had left out and giving me some key data I had not thought to seek.

Determination of relevance⁷ in this research involved first, accepting that 'the internal judgements made by those being studied are often more significant than the judgements of outsiders' (Walker, 1980, quoted in Merriam, 1988, p.167; Partlett, 1980, p.244), second, continually recalling the sociology and theology of charismatic social movements and their application to education, third, welcoming 'ambiguity' in discussions as this broadened the range of views (Simons, 1987, p.73) and fourth, participating in lengthy dialogue which teased out intended meanings (Elliott, 1990, p.56). Habermas emphasises dialogue or argumentation for purposes of validation claiming participants must have equal opportunities to adopt dialogue roles, and in particular, equal freedom 'to put forward,

⁶ One research participant remarked: 'We all like being quoted' (Maher, 1992, Int. AMHS.).

⁷ A researcher's view of 'what is relevant' is determined by his or her 'theory of knowledge' (Elliott, 1990, p.56).

call into question, and give reasons for and against statements, explanations, interpretations and justifications' (quoted in *ibid.*). Elliott believes researchers working from within an experiential perspective need to draw on this dialectical approach and 'move beyond the rather sloppy subjectivism' which can emerge 'as a reaction against the "objectivist" tradition of educational research' (*ibid.*).

RELIABILITY Throughout the research, I adopted Merriam's approach to reliability (1988, pp.172-173). This involves

- (1) explaining the 'assumptions and theory behind the study', my own position *vis-a-vis* the Marist Brothers' Congregation, the basis for choosing the participants and offering descriptions of them and of the social context from which data has been collected,
- (2) using 'intersite triangulation' particularly when one site 'seems to be behaving differently' (Louis, 1982, p.15),
- (3) describing in detail how data are collected, categories derived and decisions made throughout the inquiry so that other researchers can 'replicate' the study should they wish to do so.

There are, of course, theoretical issues regarding the relationship of reliability with validity. Merriam believes the validity and reliability of a study⁸ depend on the study's components (1988, p.164) such as 'the instrumentation, the appropriateness of the data analysis techniques' and 'the degree of relationship between the conclusions drawn and the data upon which they presumably rest' (Guba and Lincoln, 1982, p.378). Guba and Lincoln (1981) see 'a demonstration of internal validity' amounting to a 'simultaneous demonstration of reliability' (quoted in Merriam, 1988, p.171) while Delamont claims that as long as 'qualitative researchers are reflexive, making all their processes explicit, then issues of reliability and validity are served' (1992, p.9).

REFLEXIVITY Reflexivity is important in this research both because I'm carrying out naturalistic investigations (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983, p.14) and because I'm studying Marcellin College, Melbourne during my time there as principal. When researchers reflect on their participation in the social world of case study research, they find their personal qualities have the capacity 'to filter, skew, shape, block, transform, construe, and misconstrue what transpires from the outset of a research project to its

⁸ Smith and Robbins describe validity and reliability as the 'quality' and 'believability' of the data collected (1982, p.55).

culmination in a written statement' (Peshkin, 1988, p.17). Rather than engage in futile attempts to eliminate these effects, Hammersley and Atkinson recommend acknowledging them by, for example, trying to understand how people 'respond to the presence of the researcher', as this may be as informative as to how they react to other situations (1983, p.15). Peshkin insists that once researchers recognise the personal qualities influencing their research, 'they can at least disclose to their readers where self and subject become joined' - otherwise, he believes, during the research process subjectivities must be tamed (1988, p.17 and p.20). Interpretive researchers, unlike critical theorists, endeavour to resist the temptation to use their subjective sensitivities to participate 'in shaping the context' of particular situations (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983, p.18). Yet, I believe, they are not well described somewhat dismissively as 'relatively passive', as critical theorists Carr and Kemmis suggest, particularly when reflexivity is acknowledged in the research process - 'passive' is the last thing I felt myself to be during this research (Carr and Kemmis, 1989, p.183; Carson, 1990, p.168).

Reflexivity can assist researchers in criticising both their research strategies and the theories they develop to explain the behaviour of the people they are studying (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983, p.19). It can also provide researchers with the basis for making a distinctive contribution - 'one that results from the unique configuration of their personal qualities joined to the data they have collected'. Peshkin identifies the engagement of his subjectivity when his feelings are aroused, when there are experiences he wants to extend and others he wants to avoid and when he feels moved to act in roles beyond those necessary to fulfil his research needs. He finds feelings of distress help him to focus his inquiry and yet cause him to be defensive in his analysis (Peshkin, 1988, pp.18-19). Distress' close association with charismatic action made it an important experience for me to identify in this research (Tucker, 1968, p.743).

I found writing reflexively reminded me of my accountability for, and my responsibility to the intelligibility of, the process involved. It also provided 'a forum for concrete social critique' (Phillipson, 1975, p.165; Mundhenk, 1986, p.82). Ultimately, Carr and Kemmis claim, reflexivity changes the knowledge base of the situation being studied, causing participants to judge similar situations differently (1989, p.33 and p.43). I found reflecting on the experience, reappropriated that experience 'in a new embodied form' (van Manen, 1990, p.156).

ETHICS Bassey contends that educational researchers should carry out 'systematic and critical enquiry on educational topics, within a twin ethic of respect for truth and respect for others' (1992, p.4). Soltis (1989, p.125) divides ethical considerations into personal, professional and public categories.

Throughout the research interviews were conducted 'on the principle of confidentiality' with interview data remaining the property of the interviewees for the term of the study and then made accessible to others with their agreement (MacDonald and Walker, 1977, p.188; Simons, 1981, p.29). Students were interviewed in both New York and Glasgow. The New York students were selected by the principal and interviewed as a group. The Glasgow students were those involved in a scheduled class. Documents, files and correspondence were studied, and in some cases photocopied, after obtaining appropriate permission (Simons, 1989, pp.123-124).

Since case-studies are 'public documents about individuals and events' (MacDonald and Walker, 1977, p.187) often involving close-up portrayals of people who are generators or implementers of a school's educational vision, I endeavoured to ensure that all participants had control over the information they gave me and how they were represented in the report (Simons, 1989, p.117). MacDonald and Walker recommend that wherever appropriate, the case-study report 'should contain the expressed reactions (unedited and un glossed) of the principal characters portrayed' (1977, p.188). For ethical reasons, I could not include all the data I received, especially data obtained when the interviewee asked me to turn off the tape recorder. I gained permission from participants before including direct quotations (Simons, 1989, p.124). Throughout the thesis I use the first person believing, with Minor (1970, p.196), that to maintain 'the fiction of the reporter' as 'an eye' without 'an I' is not in the best interests of case study reporting (quoted in Peshkin, 1988, p.21).

In conclusion, on the personal level Weber stresses the importance of freedom from value-judgement (*Werturteilsfreiheit*) and this can come to seem a further ethical requirement.

What is really at issue is the intrinsically simple demand that the investigator and teacher should keep unconditionally separate the establishment of empirical

facts and *his* [or *her*] own practical evaluations, i.e. ... evaluation of these facts as satisfactory or unsatisfactory These two things are logically different and to deal with them as though they were the same represents a confusion of entirely heterogeneous problems (1949 [1904], p.11).

Weber expects the researcher to 'recognize facts, even those which may be personally uncomfortable', and to distinguish them from his or her own evaluations. In this way the researcher should subordinate himself or herself to the task and 'repress the impulse' to exhibit 'personal tastes or other sentiments unnecessarily'.

Weber acknowledges the difficulty in distinguishing between 'empirical statements of fact' and 'value-judgements' (*ibid.*, p.5 and p.9). Currently many researchers approach this dilemma, as already indicated, by addressing the role their 'subjectivities' play in the research process (Peshkin, 1988, p.17). Once the researcher's subjectivity has been located in the research process, either in a reflexive case study or in the research process as a whole, Weber's discussion of relevance to values (*Wertbeziehung*) takes on added significance. The researcher encounters this question when considering the 'relevance' and relation of research results 'to' his or her own personal values. Weber asks 'in what sense can the evaluation, which the individual asserts, be treated, not as a fact but as the object of scientific criticism'? He recommends an 'understanding explanation' (*verstehendes Erklären*) which he deems important

(1) for purposes of an empirical causal analysis which attempts to establish the really decisive motives of human actions, and (2) for the communication of really divergent evaluations when one is discussing with a person who really or apparently has different evaluations from one's self (1949 [1904], pp.12-14).

The significance of discussing evaluations lies in their

contribution to the understanding of what one's opponent - or one's self - really means - i.e., in understanding the evaluations which really and not merely allegedly separate the discussants and consequently in enabling one to take up a position with reference to this value.

'Understanding all' does not lead, in principle, to its approval. For Weber discussion of value judgements can only serve:

a) The elaboration and explication of the ultimate, internally 'consistent' value-axioms, from which the divergent attitudes are derived ...

b) The deduction of 'implications' (for those accepting certain value-judgements) which follow from certain irreducible value-axioms, when the practical evaluation of factual situations is based on these axioms alone ...

c) The determination of the factual consequences which the realization of a certain practical evaluation must have ...

Finally:

d) the uncovering of new axioms (and the postulates to be drawn from them) which the proponent of a practical postulate did not take into consideration (*ibid.*, pp.20-21).

These value discussions, he contends, can be of 'the greatest utility as long as their potentialities are correctly understood'. Referring to the works of Heinrich Rickert, Weber sees the notion of 'relevance to values' as 'the philosophical interpretation of that specifically scientific "interest" which determines the selection of a given subject-matter and the problems of an empirical analysis' (*ibid.*, pp.21-22). For Weber, therefore, all social science phenomena are value laden. The researcher's own questions are value relevant to his or her own values for it is these values which shape the questions being asked as he or she 'feels through' a certain 'symbolic system', a 'pre-ontology', a 'bias' (Rolheiser, 1991, p.10; Hornsby-Smith, 1978, p.x). Elliott similarly believes bringing 'biases to bear on a practical situation is a necessary element in the movement to understanding' (1988, p.164). For 'understanding involves not freedom from bias but the reconstruction of bias' (Gadamer, 1975 quoted in Elliott, 1988, p.164).