

**Catholic Female Religious Orders' Legacy of Leadership in Irish Post-Primary
Education.**

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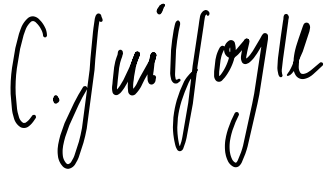
RELIGIOUS SISTERS' LEGACY OF LEADERSHIP IN EDUCATION

Declaration:

I hereby declare that this dissertation is a presentation of my original research work.

Wherever contributions of others are involved, every effort is made to indicate this clearly.

This work has not been submitted previously at this or any other educational institution. The work was done under the guidance of Dr Julie Uí Choistealbha at the Marino Institute of Education, Dublin. I agree that the Library may lend or copy this dissertation upon request.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'C. Guilfoyle'. The script is cursive and fluid, with the first letter 'C' being large and prominent. The signature is written on a plain white background.

Ceithre Guilfoyle

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Abstract

The aim of this research is to explore Catholic female religious orders' legacy of leadership in Irish post-primary schools. The research was timely, due to the dearth of research regarding female religious leadership, particularly in the area of religious sisters' contribution in the educational arena. With the numbers of religious orders having significantly decreased and the reality of pluralism in Ireland, it is interesting to investigate the insights of religious sisters on their educational leadership experience in Irish post-primary schools through their perspective. The Holy Faith congregation was chosen as a focus for this investigation due to the researcher's teaching experience in a school with a Holy Faith tradition and the sparse literature on the order. Narrative inquiry, semi-structured, qualitative interviews were used to elicit eight participants' perspectives on their post-primary educational leadership experience. Six of the sisters had been principals, one had been a teacher, and one was a current board member of a post-primary school where she had been a chaplain. The following findings emerged from the study: care; Christian servant leadership and structures. This study provided participants with an opportunity to reflect on their educational leadership experience and captured insights on female Christian approaches to educational leadership, which have implications in terms of recommendations for policy, training and practice for future educational leaders.

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Catholic Female Religious Orders' Legacy of Leadership in Irish Post-Primary Education

Chapter One

1.1. Introduction

The purpose of this study is to explore the educational leadership legacy of religious sisters in Irish post-primary schools. This chapter outlines the rationale, context and approach of the study. It concludes with an outline of how the study is structured.

1.2. Rationale and Research Question

Existing literature on nuns' contribution to education is only beginning to develop and focuses for the most part on documenting female religious orders' histories or schools that they founded rather than exploring their legacy of Christian leadership in education. Research needs to be conducted on individual congregations, their foundresses and the educational life and spirit of convent schools (Raftery, 2012, p.305). MacCurtain (1995) advocated the importance of listening now, to the testimonies of the sisters who are willing to share their experience of Christian leadership in education (p.58). The paucity of literature on this legacy in general in Ireland, is acknowledged and it is even more strongly pronounced in respect of particular orders such as the Holy Faith order. Indeed, Hellinckx et al. (2009;2013) referred to the lack of scholarly research on the contribution of female religious orders generally, to educational leadership (p.13). Authors writing on this subject used a variety of different research methodologies. Harford and O'Donoghue (2011) for example, conducted an oral history research project, listening to nuns' own perspectives on their experience of teaching in Ireland in the twentieth century from an interpretivist, social science, paradigm, which is in keeping with the integral nature of perspective, to this paradigm (p.404). Trimingham Jack (2003) used a variety of different methodologies to research teaching

sisters and their convent boarding school in Australia in the twentieth century. She drew from her own experience, nuns' oral testimony as well as an analysis of visual representations of the sisters' vision in the school's architecture, landscape and symbols found in paintings (as cited in Hellinckx et al., 2009;2013, p.27). Another methodology that Driver (2008) used was to analyze the content of cook books produced by teaching sisters in Canada in terms of what they articulated about the morality of cooking and directions for being virtuous in the kitchen (as cited in as cited in Hellinckx et al., 2009;2013, p.32). Hellinckx et al. (2009; 2013) also referred to Burley's (1997) investigation of obituaries to evaluate some of the Dominican sisters' approach to educational leadership as principals, in post-primary schools in South Australia (p.43). Moreover, they recommended the use of diaries, letters, autobiographies and memoirs to explore the legacy from sisters' experience of the past whereas interviews are valuable for their provision of more recent information (p.44). A number of authors pointed to the significance of Vatican 11 in reshaping teaching sisters' self-identity and emphasized the importance of establishing whether sisters who constitute the research sample joined the order pre, during or post Vatican 11 (Harford & O'Donoghue, 2011, p.403). Furthermore, a difficulty with the literature available is that it pertains to the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and deals scantily with the aspect of the nuns' educational vocation and focuses more on charting their history. This study briefly charts the educational and social context in which these sisters worked and explores the realisation of their foundress' mission in their educational leadership through current sisters' testimony. The strategy attempts to align with Lorna Bowman's endeavour at an interpretative framework, based on Max Weber's study that correlates the realisation of an educational philosophy in the daily routines of an organisation with the vision of the founder (as cited in Hellinckx et al., 2009; 2013, p.30).

The aim of the study is to explore the positive legacy of female religious orders' approach to Christian leadership in education in Irish secondary schools as exemplified by the Holy Faith order, founded by Margaret Aylward. Greenleaf (2004) describes Christian leadership as a service of love (as cited in Frick et al., p.15). By focusing on the motivation, purpose and approaches to realising Christian leadership, of the Holy Faith order in education, the study seeks to make an incremental contribution to current literature on female Christian educational leadership and provide insights to post-primary leadership. The research question was as follows:

What is the positive legacy of Catholic female religious orders' approach to Christian leadership in Irish post-primary education in the late nineteen and twentieth century as exemplified by the Holy Faith order?

As we are in a post-religious society, the question of this legacy is important (White, 2011, p.82). Accessing the afterlife orientated rules which used to govern approaches to morality have been side lined, so it is more important than ever for educators to lead students towards developing their own, motivating, virtuous habits through self-reflection (Jubilee Centre of Character & Virtues, 2014, p.2). If as Martin (2013) argued, the revitalisation of the Church in Ireland must be self-generated, the same is also true of Christian leadership in education (p.12). This exploration of the legacy of Christian leadership through the insights of female religious orders in Irish secondary schools in the past can contribute to this process.

1.3. Method

Narrative inquiry semi-structured, qualitative interviews were used to elicit participants' perspectives on their post-primary educational leadership experience with the purpose of identifying their legacy. All ethical considerations were met. A purposive sample constituted eight members of the Holy Faith congregation and was followed by a thematic analysis of the data.

1.4. Structure of Dissertation

This introduction outlined the rationale, aim, context and approach of the dissertation and is followed in chapter two by a review of the literature. The methodological research design is described in chapter three. In chapter four, the findings of the research are presented; they are discussed and synthesized in light of the literature. Chapter five concludes with a discussion of the implications of the findings in light of the research question and makes recommendations for further studies. The next chapter will review the main features of the literature.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

In her paper on Sister Principals in Catholic schools, Collins (2014) claimed that religious sisters' employment of a number of strategies, which enabled them to negotiate ecclesiastical authority structures, their subjection to the convent hierarchy and to undertake the diverse tasks associated with the leadership of Catholic schools in a world dominated by men, is under-acknowledged (p.2). Female religious orders represent a synthesis of three sources of community wisdom on effective leadership, which are Christian leadership, general leadership theory and female leadership. Insights gathered from these school leaders may help in balancing the priority to educate students for flourishing with commercial pressures and university interests through full participation in "the essential element of understanding that is brought to bear on human experience [which] is usually the inherited wisdom of the community we live in" (Lane, 1985, p.21). In examining religious sisters' educational work, Hellinckx et al. (2009;2013;) cited MacCurtain's (1995) appeal for religious women's voices to be heard and argued that whereas there are several collections and studies in existence about the autobiographical writings of male teachers analogous works relating to teaching sisters' educational contribution are completely lacking (p.44).

This chapter highlights the relationship between religious sisters' underlying Christian values as professed women, the professional leadership styles required in administering a school and the challenge they faced as women in a patriarchal world. Smyth (1999) referred to McNamara's (1996) argument that the tensions associated with the engagement of sisters as professional workers in the church and in the secular world have been well documented yet there has been little research on the work of Sister Principals and the way they challenged the gendered boundaries of educational work (as cited in Collins, 2014, p.4). The literature

reviewed revealed key areas of religious orders' educational leadership as: purpose; personal qualities; leadership styles; social context and charism. These areas provided the guiding theoretical framework for the interview schedule to investigate the sisters' educational leadership legacy.

2.2. Female Religious Educational Leadership

Religious Orders' Social Context. In examining religious sisters' educational leadership, Raftery (2012) referred to the lack of research on female religious orders' contribution to education in Ireland; indeed she stated that there is more literature available on nuns' international contribution (Raftery, 2012, p.302). Ruether and McLaughlin (1998) pointed to the marginalisation of women in Jewish and Christian religious traditions throughout the centuries. They cited the consequential challenge to charting female history resulting from the paucity of source material (p. 16). Fahey (1998) traced religious congregations' energy back to male orders' of the sixteenth and seventeenth century such as the Jesuits' who realized their evangelizing mission of the church through their medium of elite education and scholarship. He described new orders' development of methods for working with the poor in the seventeenth century such as St. Vincent de Paul's Congregation of the mission. In examining involvement by religious congregations in the provision of education in Ireland from the eighteenth century, Griffin (2018) suggested that it was largely a religious response to extreme poverty among the overwhelmingly Catholic population and to their exclusion from almost all other social institutions (p. 2). Accordingly, Fahey outlined the wave of religious founders emerging in the nineteenth century who established religious congregations dedicated to social provision and evangelization (p.146). He quoted Clear (1987) in highlighting that this heralded the mushrooming of female congregations geared to practical teaching and social service rather than cloistered devotion, most notably the Presentation Sisters, the Irish Sisters of Charity, the Loreto Sisters and the Mercy order (as

cited in Fahey, 1998, p.146). Raftery (2012) quoted O'Donoghue's (2004) lament at the dearth of research that would give insights into the Christian educational leadership of religious orders in favour of research that concentrated more on industrial perspectives (p.300).

Magray (1998) asserted that the religious sisters affected transformative change rather than merely reacted to societal and cultural currents (p.10). Female religious sisters' approach to Christian leadership in education was formative, in its prioritising of Church values, spiritual development, nurturing a sense of vocation and fostering an outward looking social justice mission in students which was quite a different emphasis than the state programmes or examinations (Raftery, 2012, p.302). To give further context, Raftery's (2001) research described a movement in late nineteenth century Ireland, towards Intermediate education for girls similar to that which had characterised boy's middle class education up to this time (p. 321). She outlined how the repeal of the penal laws in the late eighteenth century paved the way for religious orders to establish Catholic schools (p.324). Ironically, it was the founding of Alexandra College, with an Anglican ethos but for young women of all denominations, in 1866, along with the passing of the Intermediate Education (Ireland) Act, 1878, that prompted an improvement in the Irish education system. Raftery (2001) described a situation where denominational competition arose due to Alexandra College students' high achievements in the Intermediate examination and the resulting eagerness of the Catholic hierarchy to equip the girls to compete, which lead to the introduction of academic subjects, to the curriculum of the Catholic convent schools (p.,325).

Pressures on Christian leadership in the Irish educational context of the time were both similar and different to current pressures. Raftery referred to the Cabra Annals in identifying tensions to be negotiated between the founding ethos of religious orders and the pressure for high achievements at examinations (as cited in Raftery, 2001, p.326). Moreover

she pointed to O'Connor's (1987) illustration of highly prevalent, societal gender inequality issues (as cited in Raftery, 2001, p. 328) and very like today, outlined further pressure on the sisters' Christian leadership to prepare students for the work force via high achievements in a state examination (p.329). Magray (1998) pointed to the pressure religious sisters were under to conform to the wishes of the highly dominant patriarchal clergy at the time (p.108).

2.2.1. Purpose and Charism. According to Gibbons (1927), the Holy Faith's mission was primarily meeting the needs of the poor; one of their aims was to establish schools for higher classes to use the profits to educate help and protect the Catholic faith of the poor (p. 419). Prunty (1999) recounted Margaret Alyward's personal story as one of "courage and colour, a woman of great faith" (p.163). Prunty described Margaret Alyward's journey from her Waterford roots, born into a Catholic merchant family to her pioneering charitable work for the people of Dublin. Her Catholic faith was realised through charitable institutions such as Ladies of Charity, St. Brigid's Orphanage and Poor Schools, and the Sisters of the Holy Faith. (p.165). Collins and Goan (2014) wrote of Alyward's establishment of the Ladies association of Charity which was the first Dublin branch of St. Vincent de Paul and of St. Brigid's Orphanage in Eccles Street. This initiative represented Margaret Alyward's stance against proselytism, provided orphan children with caring Catholic foster families, and resulted in her imprisonment. The founding of Holy Faith schools was to follow, the principal object of which was an education to be strong in faith (p.41). Collins and Goan also noted Margaret Alyward's value of the lay vocation. They outlined her legacy as "a passionate and courageous commitment to the preservation of, and education in, the Catholic faith, an active compassion and respect for the poor, emphasis on dignity of each person, the central role of family" (p.41).

In line with Hellinckx et al. (2009;2013;) suggestion to investigate the identity of a specific teaching congregation this study focused on the post-primary educational leadership

legacy of religious sisters as evidenced in the Holy Faith order (p.31). The exploration of these female religious women's purpose and approaches to their educational leadership in Ireland at post-primary level may offer insights to future Christian educational leadership. It is important to look at Christian leadership in examining female religious' educational leadership legacy.

2.3. Christian Leadership in Education

Magray (1998) cited Emmet Larkin's record of the expansion of women's orders in the nineteenth century as a manifestation of the revolution in the devotional attitudes and practices that occurred in post-famine Ireland. Magray argued that women religious through their intimate and influential relationships with ordinary Irish Catholics, especially young female Catholics, successfully fostered an environment for a new style of religious devotion and social behaviour (p.11).

Woodrow (2006) suggested that both individuals and institutions need a common purpose to flourish (p.313) and Christian leadership offers this common purpose of love in Jesus Christ. It is vocational, positively forms leadership and requires that decisions made by the Christian leaders will be informed by love and service with due regard to the preservation of the institution (Davis, 2015, p.61). "The question of God is not about the absence of God to the person; it is about the absence of the person to God who is permanently co-present." (Lane, 1985, p. 29). Richter (1990) asserted, "it is now a matter of conviction in the fields of sociology, psychology, and psychoanalysis that the use of rites and symbols is a necessary aspect of being human. If we close ourselves off from nonverbal signs, we get sick" (p.21). Religious sisters through their educational leadership and modelling of gospel values offered the transforming insight that trinitarian relationships with others are a realisation of the Kingdom of God; this revelation enables "us to engage more meaningfully in the dance of life" (O'Murchu, 2004, p.87).

2.3.1. Purpose. D'Souza (2016) described Catholic schools' purpose as nurturing children's formation in terms of how they interpret the world and how this informs their moral decisions and actions and so the type of people they become who will shape our society. In examining female religious orders' Christian educational leadership, Raftery (2012) explained that their spiritual impulse found expression in acts of duty, vocation and mission. These women religious creatively served the interests of their students and teachers by mediating state-required examination targets and elucidating the relevance and wonder in the prescribed material "that is commensurate with the resistance to functionalism that Rowan Williams has called for" (as cited in Luckcock, 2006, p.263). The value of spiritual intelligence is a sustaining essential force for shared moral purpose in schools. Emotional intelligence is important in recognising fear of change among teachers and intellectual intelligence has a role to play in the administration of a school and in the implementation of curricular reform. Within the New Testament and Christian tradition the theme of service, Shirin (2015) observed, is prominent (p.23). Sendjaya and Sarros (2002) suggested that Jesus was the first to introduce servant leadership to everyday human endeavour (as cited in Shirin, 2015, p.264). Sanders (1986) wrote that true greatness, true leadership, is achieved not by reducing men to one's service but in giving oneself in selfless service to them (as cited in, Thompson, 2017, p.82). A feature of both servant and transformational leadership theories is the importance of participative leadership in communities and establishing trusting relationships. Echols, (2009) suggested "Top-down, non-participative leadership creates dichotomy of those who have power and those who do not, with little in between. The masses and not just the minorities are marginalized" (p.88). Jesus is the ultimate role model for servant leadership. Kouzes and Posner (2002) posited that effective leadership "models the way and encourages the heart" (as cited in McMaster, 2013, p.76). Echols described concepts of transformational salvation and servant leadership in the teaching of Jesus as well

established (p.102). In examining the compatibility of transformational and servant leadership Echols (2009) argued that a synergism of these stances produces beneficial outcomes for inclusive leadership (p.101). Druskat's (1994) research study assessing gender differences in approaches to transformational and transactional leadership among subordinates of leaders from all-female and all-male religious orders in the Roman Catholic Church revealed more transformational than transactional leadership, with females displaying more transformational and fewer transactional leadership behaviours than male leaders (p. 99). This highlighted the transformational purpose of female religious sisters' educational leadership. In order to explore female religious sisters' legacy it is essential to examine their motivation in educational leadership.

2.3.2. Motivation. Stone and Duke (2006) define Christian leadership as faith seeking understanding. Religious Sisters' Christian faith motivated their application of revealed truth in their educational leadership in post primary schools (as cited in Huizing, 2011, p.58). Bekker (2009) asserted that there has been an inadequate synthesis of aspects of Christian leadership such as exegetical, theological, philosophical and historical approaches to leadership, to provide a comprehensive theory (p.148). According to Huizing (2011), Christian leadership presents God's salvific Mission to the world. He explained that salvation is planned by God, secured by Christ and mediated through the Holy Spirit (p.65). In examining, the nuns' realisation of their religious vocation through carrying out the "mission of education" Raftery (2012) highlighted religious sisters' responsibility of education for salvation. Furthermore, she quoted Pope Pius XII (1954) who outlined their legacy through asking, "How could the Church have fulfilled her mission of education and charity...without the aid given, with so much zeal, by hundreds of thousands of Sisters. How otherwise could the Church fulfil her mission today?"(p.312). Religious sisters' pioneering educational gospel mission was motivated by the centrality of their faith in Jesus; as Sohn (2015) declared "Jesus

Christ is the world's most influential leader of all time" (as cited in Bunkowske, 2019, p.1). The religious sisters' relationship with Jesus informed their educational leadership. It is necessary to explore the religious sisters' Christian approach to their educational leadership in terms of relationships.

2.3.3. Christian Relationships. Makhoul (2011) expressed the nature of Christian leadership in terms of relationship, as "a primacy of love and service, not of authority" (p.92). Boff (2000) agreed that relationship is central to Christian leadership (p.14). The key to developing new knowledge Christian leadership teaches, is through relationships. Communities provide a context to develop understanding of the nature of the Kingdom of God. Trusting the collective wisdom of communities provides an opportunity to critically reflect on experience as it is gained. Religious sisters interviewed in Harford and O'Donoghue's (2011) study emphasized the importance of their religious community in terms of the support network it provided. One participant in their study reported

I was living with women who had a memory of teaching and who were able to pass on to me...I was part of this group that had a communal identify as teachers, that understood what I was doing and that appreciated what I was doing...(p.410).

In the gospels, Jesus offers communion with the Kingdom of God through parables, table fellowship, miracles and discipleship. In practice, Jesus' parables offer a way to be, rather than a rubric of what to do, in our lives. O'Murchu (2004) suggested, "Across the sciences, there is mounting evidence for the fact that everything is created out of relatedness, sustained through relationships, and thrives on interdependence" (p.87). As effective Christian educational leaders, religious sisters used narrative frameworks to enhance relationships and indeed to share their insights of their legacy of educational leadership. There are many ways of presenting a narrative and Collins (2014) described the use of gramophones and tape recorders and quoted an example of a Sister Principal who was a keen

artist and loved to use colour in the classroom (p.20). Religious sisters often nurtured trusting relationships with their students, staff and school community through providing spiritual and educational experiences. Raftery (2012) in her study, quoted Clare Boylan's memories from her convent education by the Presentation sisters as she recounted "the theatrical swinging of the thurible with its clouds of scented smoke... the feast of Corpus Christi when we dressed up in our old Communion dresses for the procession". Raftery wrote that the performances of religious practices in girls' schools almost forms a backdrop to the academic element of schooling (p.309). Religious sisters interviewed in Harford and O'Donoghue's (2011) study highlighted excellent relationships with the religious sisters who had taught them. One participant in their study described the religious sisters who taught her as follows "I really, really thought they were fantastic women...they were very happy, there was a great sense of humour among them and also they were brilliant teachers, they were absolutely brilliant teachers" (p. 407). Hay and Nye (2006) proposed, "through the dynamic interaction of relational consciousness, a child is able to draw what is aesthetically and spiritually meaningful from what is apparently ordinary and common" (as cited in Stoyles, et al., 2012, p.5). Religious sisters mediated the Kingdom of God through aspects of school life such as, listening to the parable inspired narrative voice of the community both past and present, through community relationships in table fellowship, through discipleship and prayer and the miracle of transformative modelling of Christian leadership.

2.3.4. Christian Care. Challenging and exposing assumptions was a priority of female religious' leadership in education and remains a priority. Raftery (2012) described how nuns expressed their mission in education through specialist language and by reference to now unfashionable values such as piety, humility and obedience and to concepts such as salvation (p.313). A religious sisters interviewed in Harford and O'Donoghue's (2011) study discussed the care she observed in the religious sisters who taught her and reported "I think

one of my strongest memories is the very humane, loving treatment of one of the Sisters in particular towards very marginalized girls in my class” (p.407). Moreover religious sisters modelled a Christ like, self-aware, sacramental way of living in communion with others that Richter described as the Christian sacramental system instituted by Jesus’ entire life” (p. 58).

2.3.5. Christian Structures. In addition to role modelling, Danylewycz (1987) highlighted the legacy of female religious in motivating vocations through their educational ministry. Religious sisters interviewed in her study recounted their stories about the “carefully ordered life of convent schools”, “sustained contact between girls and religious women” and “the frequent moments of prayer, silence and meditation”. The atmosphere this created encouraged girls to opt for a religious life. (as cited in, Harford & O'Donoghue, 2011, p.406). Harford and O'Donoghue (2011) described that while prayer is an essential part of religious sisters’ lives; their time was also spent in such good works as teaching, health care and social service (p.765). The religious sisters’ realisation of gospel values through sacraments and structures follows Pascal’s suggestion to “Take comfort; you would not be seeking me if you had not already found me” (as cited in Lane, 1985, p. 28). The Sacraments Cooke (1983) claimed are the deepest level of Jesus’ ministry in his very existing as sacrament of God’s saving presence in human life (p.178). Religious sisters’ reflective qualities led their students to explore, construct and express their inner emotional lives through the frameworks such as the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

2.4. Female Religious and General Leadership Theory

Huizing (2011) cited Jones’ (2009) description of the difference in Christian and general leadership theories. He explained that Christian leadership is not, in reality headed up by local leaders, it is rather a community of leaders following Jesus as the head of the church offering a participatory role in proclaiming the gospel (p.67). This Christian approach to participative leadership is evidenced in O'Donoghue and Harford’s (2013) depiction of

Catholic women religious who realized their purpose through their dedication to a social justice agenda (p.782). While there is much value to be derived from general leadership theory for Christian educational leadership their purpose, motivation and criteria for judging success are different. In Harford and O'Donoghue's (2011) paper on women religious perspectives on themselves as teachers, love and care were two qualities identified by the religious sisters in the female religious educational leaders they wished to emulate (p.407). Their central focus as Christian educational leaders was the importance of why what is done "conforms to Jesus" (as cited in Huizing, 2011, p. 5). In considering the general features of female teaching congregations Rogers (2005) observed their intention to have been the formation of good Christian women to influence their families and society in carrying out charitable work (as cited in Hellinckx et al., 2009;2013; p. 29). Huizing cited Bartz's (2009) observation from Scripture that "God is willing to work with the traits available within imperfect individuals" (p.65.) This authenticity in terms of personal leadership emerges in female Christian leadership.

According to Collins (2014), religious sisters needed to adopt a range of strategies to respond to opportunities and manage the diverse political, historical, social, gendered and religious complexities of their school leadership experience (p.24). In examining religious sisters' capacity and training for their educational leadership roles O'Donoghue and Harford (2013) described how they adapted their practice of peer collaboration and reflection for planning lessons within their community and transferred this collaborative critical reflection strategy to their leadership of schools. O'Donoghue and Harford highlighted how along with utilizing their formal training, a number of Sister Principals from various congregations began to meet regularly for support by sharing experiences, information and problems (p. 708). This adaptive, situational and contingency style of school leadership by Sister Principals was follower centered, but with the Christian emphasis on as Clark (2008)

described making followers of Jesus and faithfulness to God's revelation that leads to service to the King rather than kingdom building (as cited in Huizing, 2011, p. 60). Transactional leadership style is task orientated and the achievement of specific goals is an incumbent aspect of Sister Principal's role in their administration of a school. O'Donoghue and Harford (2013) referred to Sheehan's recognition of the challenge for female religious educational leaders in negotiating between their separate professional role as school administrator and their religious values (p.782). Sheehan (1972) illustrated the unique position the sister administrator finds herself in compared with the hospital or social service professional. She described how the Sister Principal's decisions affect the education of students in the formative years of their lives and the quality of teaching and learning in the school through job satisfaction of teachers. Sheehan's research demonstrated how decisions of female religious school leaders had far-reaching implications for whole school and community flourishing (p.10). Khanin (2007) alluded to Bass' (1985, 1998) idea that it may be tempting to achieve a task using "the stick-and-carrots transactional leadership" (p.5). However, Beeley argued that all practical matters will be subsumed under the theological for all those who are followers of Jesus (as cited in Huizing, 2011, p. 63).

The research developed on general leadership theories over decades forms another part of community wisdom on effective leadership. These diverse general leadership theories range from Great Man theory; trait theory; behavioural; situational and contingency; participative theory; transactional, to servant and transformational theory. While these theories did inform the exploration of religious sisters' educational leadership legacy, a comprehensive exploration of the general leadership theory is beyond the scope of the word count of this thesis. Echols (2009) cited Blanchard and Hodges (2005) and Ford's (1991) suggestion that servant and transformational leadership are the main leadership concepts in the New Testament (p. 102). Huizing further highlighted servant and spiritual leadership as

styles that most closely align with Christian leadership (p.59). In examining leadership theory, Abramson (2007) echoed this direction in leadership theory development. He outlined leaders' tendency to apply either a task-orientated (TO) or a relationship-orientated (RO) approach to leadership (p.116). Abramson cited Blake and Mouton (1977) who posited that a combination of both a high TO and high RO is the superior leadership approach (p.116). According to Neumann (1974) and Stevens (2003) cited by Abramson, in archetypal leadership theory the mother archetype represents the relationship-orientated approach and the father archetype is associated with a task-orientation to leadership (p. 119). Pitt and Behnke (2012) suggested that women more than men had to "find ways to exploit the zones of ambiguity present in institutional mandates intended to constrain their opportunities" in their pursuit of their calling to religious leadership (p.16).

2.4.1. Servant Leadership Theory. Fiebig and Christopher (2018) found that features of servant leadership style such as care and concern for others prevailed in the statements from religious sisters interviewed (p.509). Covey (2006) suggested, "The leadership that inspires followership comes only when you put service above self" (p.6). Adjibolosoo (1994) opined servant leadership aligns best with the type of leadership the world needs as it "serves others, invests in their development and fulfils a shared vision." (as cited in Page & Wong, 2000, p.1). Fiebig and Christopher (2018) observed in their recent paper, that the women religious emphasized the importance of guiding the people they were leading to experience personal growth (p.509). This apparently paradoxical description of leadership was first introduced by Greenleaf in 1970 in his essay 'The Servant as Leader'; he proposed the idea that the most important aspect of leadership is to serve. He required leaders to ask themselves "Do those served grow as persons?" (Greenleaf, 1970, p.7). Page et al., (2000) noted an important feature of servant-leadership is that it is goal centred and people orientated. In this paradigm for leadership, according to Page and Wong (2000) "character is

central to servant-leadership” (p.5). Some characteristics of servant-leadership that they highlighted include listening, enabling, respect, understanding, praise and encouragement, both process as well as accomplishment focused, accountability, humility, leadership development and investments in others (p.6). It is interesting to observe similarities through comparison with the ten aspects of servant-leadership that Spears identified comprising of listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualisation, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people and building community (Spears, 2010, p.28-29). Fiebig and Christopher (2018) opined that effective leadership should include both transformational as well as servant leadership traits. They posited that these traits are often viewed as feminine skills and may be necessary attributes for exceptional leaders (p.505). Spears claimed that we are experiencing a rapid shift in many businesses and not-for-profit organisations, away from the more traditional autocratic and hierarchical models of leadership and toward servant-leadership as a way of being in relationship with others. “Servant leadership seeks to involve others in decision making, is strongly based in ethical and caring behaviour and enhances the growth of workers while improving the caring and quality of organizational life” (Spears, 2010, p. 25). Serving the person is a core feature of servant leadership; indeed according to Enyia (2018), respecting the dignity of person is central to this moral approach to leadership (p.51).

2.5. Female Leadership

In her paper examining the purpose of nineteenth century Irish Dominican Sisters teachers' educational journey, Collins' (2015) added to the scholarly literature acknowledging the centrality of nuns not only to Catholic history but also to women's global education and social history (p.44). Goethals and Hoyt (2016) commended the extraordinary accomplishments that so many women around the world have achieved, and made clear that women's leadership will have much greater impact in the future, as we face un-precedented

global and national challenges (Goethals & Hoyt, 2016, p. xv). Despite these achievements, Goethals and Hoyt argued, women remain dramatically underrepresented in formal leadership positions in the major institutions of the United States (Goethals & Hoyt, 2016, p.37). Goethals and Hoyt proposed that The Great Man Theory of the nineteenth-century epitomises the patriarchal social structures that determine the human experience as male. They claimed that prevailing social structures are defined by core cultural ideas pertaining to men and masculinity, such as “the accepted notion of a good leader as being one who is decisive and in control” (Goethals & Hoyt, 2016, p.33). Cockburn suggested that

Patriarchy is not merely a colourful term used by feminists to rebuke men. It is not a thing of bygone days, nor a rhetorical flourish. It is an important dimension of the structures of modern societies, whether capitalist or state socialist. It is a living reality, a system that quite observably shapes the lives and differentiates the chances of women and men. The struggle for sex equality...is an attempt to contradict, to undo, patriarchy. (as cited in, Goethals & Hoyt, 2016, p.37)

Although female leaders have definitively changed the patriarchal status quo, the sluggish rate of this progress demonstrates the enormity of the challenge that still exists. According to Holzhammer (2014) women have outnumbered men at universities for over thirty years, with thirty-four per cent of women, as compared to twenty-eight per cent of men, in today's workforce having received a tertiary education. Despite this fact, the European Commission reported that only sixteen point six per cent of board positions across the EU are held by women. The Commission further reported that in ninety-five to ninety-seven per cent of companies, just one in ten influential managerial positions are held by women, with the most powerful positions such as that of chairman and CEO being held by men (Holzhammer, 2014, p.434).

Miranda (2019) referred to Brandt and Laiho's (2013) contention that within the education and business fields, there is a need for transformational leadership style to lead organizations more effectively. Isaac et al. (2010); Ismail and Al-Taei (2012); Rupprecht (2009) and Silva and Mendis (2007) proposed that literature has identified gender differences in preferred leadership styles such as women's tendency to utilize a collaborative approach, while men tend to use a directive approach, or, a non-authoritative approach, when leading their followers (as cited in, Miranda, 2019, p.605). Goethals and Hoyt affirmed women's tendencies to engage in more behaviours deemed transformational and to deliver more rewards for followers' good performance as "more consequential for effectiveness" (Goethals & Hoyt, 2016, p.5). Carli and Eagly (2011) characterised female leadership as more communal, that is, more orientated towards the concerns and needs of others, and less agentic, that is, focused on individual achievement and advancement (as cited in, Goethals & Hoyt, 2016, p x).

There are challenges for both men and women to gaining leadership positions but women have the additional gender stereotyping obstacle of what Bloom and Erlandson, (2003) referred to as "illusory opportunities" (p.345) to surmount. Goethals pointed out that what used to be called the glass ceiling is now termed the leadership labyrinth to acknowledge the nuanced and hidden maze of impediments women must negotiate in their leadership journey. Ryan et al., (2016) referred to research into the glass cliff which shows that women, relative to men, are preferentially appointed to precarious leadership positions coupled with greater risks and criticism (as cited in, Goethals, et al., 2016, p. xii). This female prejudice is born out in Murtadha and Larson's (1999) contention that despite their availability and preparation to ascend into campus leadership position, "principals of colour, especially African American women, typically emerge as the leaders of urban schools that are under supported and economically depleted" (as cited in, Bloom et al. 2003, p. 346).

Whereas, Harford and O'Donoghue, (2011) argued membership of a female religious congregation provided concrete educational leadership opportunities that were not as freely available to lay women. They asserted that religious orders in Ireland, as elsewhere, promoted their own, in terms of access to leadership positions in schools. The sisters were expected to assume leadership roles to fulfill the will of their order and for the realization of the will of God and not for personal gratification (p.114). Collins (2006) outlined that Sister Principals were faced with negotiating ecclesiastical authority structures of the Catholic Church and an assumption of man's 'natural' role as leader, one that gave him a range of political and economic rights in the religious, cultural and educational context (as cited in Collins, 2014, p.19).

Goethals, et al., (2016) referred to the double bind that female leaders face in the simultaneous demands of leader roles and their gender role. Conforming closely to their gender role would produce a failure to meet the requirements of their leader role, and conforming closely to their leader role would produce a failure to meet the requirements of their gender role (Goethals, et al., 2016, p.8). Eagly's research attested to the reality of the gender bias dilemma that women face, as she found that in specific circumstances, when leaders chose typically masculine styles, such as being autocratic and nonparticipative, female leaders were evaluated more negatively than were their male counterparts (as cited in, De Nmark, 1993, p.347). Schein (2001) lamented the worldwide devaluation of the status of women, and quoted Rhodie (1989) who concluded, "the social, economic and political status of women, compared to men, is still one of subordination" (as cited in, Schein, 2001, p.686). As Eagly suggested women are more likely than their male counterparts to have a repertoire of the leadership behaviours that are particularly effective under contemporary conditions-specifically, transformational and contingent reward behaviours, there is an

unfortunate consequential loss to the long-term success of many organisations (Eagly, et al., 2003, p.587).

2.6. Conclusion

From exploring the literature in this chapter, the key features of female religious orders' educational leadership are: purpose; personal qualities; leadership styles; social context and charism. These features provided the framework for participants' interview questions. This structure also offered an opportunity for comparison of participants' understanding of their female religious educational leadership and the strategies they used to improve schools against the above literature. The next chapter outlines the methodology used in the study. According to Durepos and Mills (2011) historical narratives depend not on the simple compilation of a timetable containing a sequence of events, but rather on an act of imaginative intervention that constructs an "order of meaning," with the goal of revealing themes and interactions (as cited in Spector, 2016, p. 251).

Chapter Three

Method

3.1. Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodology for the study and identifies the stance of the researcher. It discusses the research design and instrumentation and the approach used for data collection and analysis. Ethical considerations are also described.

3.2. Purpose

The intention of this study was to explore the legacy of female religious orders' educational leadership in Irish post-primary schools in the late nineteenth and twentieth century. This was a qualitative research study. Denzin and Lincoln (1998) defined qualitative research as multimethod in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter (p.3). Participants in this study were interviewed using narrative inquiry to ascertain their experience of female religious educational leadership within the Irish post-primary sector through their stories. Narrative inquiry was described by Webster, and Mertova (2007) as a method set in human stories of experience (p1). This chapter outlines the methodology chosen and the rationale for the adoption of the research design in this study. The methodology is described and its consistency with the epistemological paradigm and purpose of the research is set out. The criteria for the selection of participants involved in the study is given. Finally, techniques for data gathering and analysis are explained and any pertinent ethical issues are identified.

3.3. Epistemological Research Paradigm

In accordance with Creswell's (2013) view as to what constitutes good qualitative research work, this section makes explicit the appropriate philosophical assumptions, paradigms and frameworks that shape the content of this project (Creswell, 2013, p.15).

According to Aspin (1995), the epistemological theory which regards experience as the source of knowledge is described by the philosophical term of empiricism. Accordingly, the constructivist or interpretive paradigm in this study was influenced by the empirical philosophical epistemology that reality is experienced or observed (as cited in Punch, 2009, p.2). Groome (2014) suggests that a Catholic epistemology promotes criticality and a pursuit of truth in education and in all aspects of life (Groome, 2014, p.125). This study employed narrative inquiry situated in a constructivist epistemological paradigm to interpret the testimonies of the Holy Faith sisters' 'direct experience of the world' (Punch 2009). The purpose was to provide data on the sisters' approach to realising Christian leadership in post primary education. The epistemological stance of this study was influenced by Noddings' belief, which emphasises "Caring relations" as a route through which responsible educators can empower students to realise happiness (Noddings, 2005, p.1). It also took its bearings from wisdom theorists such as Kristjánsson who posit flourishing as being "the ideal aim of education" (Kristjánsson, 2016, p.17). By referencing these sources, the author was positioned within this qualitative study and the axiological assumption regarding the value of care in education that characterises the study is explicit. Furthermore, during the course of this qualitative research exploring religious sisters' approach to Christian leadership in post-primary education, it was important to recognise the ontological issue of reporting on multiple realities. Different researchers embrace different realities, as do also the individuals being studied and the readers of a qualitative study (Creswell, 2007, p.18). The purpose of this study was served in collecting data through triangulating the researcher's transcripts with the perspectives of the Holy Faith sisters to construct valuable insights on approaches to Christian leadership in the post primary setting.

3.4. Research Methodology and Design

The qualitative methodological and structural approach, instrumentation, participant selection process, ethical and confidentiality considerations and techniques for data collection and analysis are described in this section. Denscombe (2017) defines qualitative research as using words or visual images rather than numbers as the unit of analysis (p.6).

3.5. Research Methodology

This study used qualitative rather than quantitative research methods because for qualitative research, subjectivity is a resource, rather than a problem. According to Parker (2011), research is always conducted from the 'position of the researcher' with regard to both how the problem is understood and the means used in its investigation. The opportunity for a reflexive analysis is offered which respects the different meanings brought to the research by researcher and volunteer in an ethical enterprise (as cited in, Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor & Tindall, 2002, p.15). Qualitative research methods are appropriate to a constructivist or interpretive epistemology for the construction of reality from experience.

Another reason for the selection of a qualitative research method in this study was the impact that feminist theory is having on changing qualitative research practices, particularly from the viewpoint of epistemology. Research by Denzin and Lincoln (1998) supported the idea that feminist theory and perspectives are making lived experience central to qualitative inquiry and developing criteria of evaluation based on ethics of caring, personal responsibility, and open dialogue (p.189). In this light, feminist theory had particular significance for this research as the primary focus of the study is female religious' perspectives in a context of care. Silverman (2016) pointed to a disadvantage for qualitative researchers in terms of the scope for addressing social problems through influencing changes

in practice being frequently over-estimated (p.27). Qualitative research was appropriate for this study as it was used for gaining insights rather than gathering statistical data (Yin, 2003).

3.6. Research Design

Faraday and Plummer (1979) define narrative inquiry as a qualitative research method where the interviewer invites the participant to interpret, understand and define the events of their life in detail through their story (as cited in Bryman, 2008, p.440). Narrative research was deemed appropriate for this study as Creswell (2007) described narrative research as the best research method for capturing the detailed stories or life experiences of a single life or the lives of a small number of individuals (p.55). The specific research question this qualitative study addressed was:

What is the legacy of Catholic female religious orders' approach to Christian leadership in Irish post-primary education in the late nineteen and twentieth century as exemplified in the Holy Faith order?

The value of the research is due to the increase in secularisation (Kirwan, M., 2005, p.14). Female religious congregations are in decline and without this research, many of these insights would be lost. Even in the educational realm there is a “need for people to rediscover the human story in a meaningful way...[because] parents, educators and clergy have been concerned at the lack of interest and connection that young people have with the stories and teachings of their religious heritage” (De Souza & Rymarz, 2003, p.67). Moreover, the researcher was facilitated by the narrative inquiry method in interpreting and constructing meaning from listening to participants telling stories of their lived experience and it sat comfortably within the interpretivist paradigm, as the interpretivist stance is that reality and meaning can be interpreted and constructed from people's behaviour. According to Atkinson (1998), experience is the meaning maker in our lives (p.45). A key feature of this process of constructing insightful meaning in the narrative inquiry method that Pinnegar and Danynnes

(2006) noted is the relationship between the researcher and the researched in which both parties will learn and change in the encounter (as cited in Creswell, 2007, p.57). In addition, Creswell and Miller (2000) claimed that the relationship between the participant and researcher adds a validation check to the process as the parties negotiate the meaning of the stories (as cited in Creswell, 2007, p.57).

3.7. Population and Sample

The population for this study comprised Holy Faith sisters with experience of leadership in Irish post-primary schools. Through a process of combining purposive and snowball sampling, eight sisters from the Holy Faith order were selected for this study because they could “purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem” (Creswell & Creswell, 2007, p.125). Purposive sampling was appropriate for this study because according to Johnson and Rowlands (2012) purposive or theoretical sampling methods are used in preparation for in-depth interviews due to the importance of identifying interviewees who have specific knowledge of issues relating to the area of research (Gubrium, Holstein & Marvasti, 2012, P.105). Furthermore, Denscombe (2017) stated, “people can be asked to nominate others who meet certain criteria for choice, certain conditions related to the research project and certain characteristics” (p.43). This process of referencing from one person to the next is known as snowball sampling and its use is complementary to purposive sampling (p.43). The compatibility of purposive and snowball sampling provided an appropriate framework for this research. Accordingly, a Holy Faith sister, known professionally to the author was able to name other sisters who were contacted to participate in the study. Eight Holy Faith sisters participated in the study. The intention of this research was that narrative testimonies given by these Holy Faith sisters would yield descriptive data for coded analysis of themes and categories, which would reveal insights into Christian leadership in Irish post primary education, thus meeting Boeije’s (2010) definition

of what constitutes qualitative research (p.11). Rubin and Rubin (2011) suggested that “you do not need a vast number of interviewees to demonstrate balance and thoroughness so long as you show that you have explored alternative points of view and evaluated them carefully” (p. 63). E-mails were sent to the participating sisters confirming their availability and times and dates for the proposed interviews, which were planned for March 2020 but due to COVID-19, took place in April and May 2020.

3.8. Investigative Techniques

Gillham (2000) opined that “it is a curious fact that people are, in general, far more willing to devote an hour and a half to an interview (even of no benefit to themselves) than to give fifteen minutes to the completion of a questionnaire” (p.15). This research used semi-structured open-ended interview questions to collect primary source data from eight Holy Faith sisters. Denscombe (2017) stated that interviews can be used in the life course perspective to ask participants about their recollections of events and the reasons they took particular decisions (p.101). Clendenin's (2007) three step method was employed in this study, firstly in planning for the interview to understand the benefits of a narrative inquiry method; secondly, in guiding participants through telling their story and recording it aurally and thirdly, through an awareness that the transcript represents the participant's flowing narrative (p.237). Gubrium, et al., (2012) suggested that it is necessary for the researcher to have developed a high level of self-awareness through active self-reflection if the interview is to be a trusting, collaborative intellectual endeavour (p.105).

This study used the narrative inquiry method to place the issue of women's daily lived experiences at the centre of the research process; Smith, (1997,1990) noted that the formulation of the research questions can implicitly contain hidden gender evaluations or perspectives (as cited in Gubrium, et al., 2012 p.105). Furthermore, this research study process was informed by feminist scholarly thinking such as Gilligan's (1982) assertion that

women's relatively greater uses of relational categories and perspectives are largely neglected as women's responses are more often interpreted according to hegemonically masculine standards (hierarchy, individualisation,) (as cited in Gubrium, et al., 2012, p.105). This reflexive interview approach allowed for a holistic exploration of participants' experiences to explicate insights from triangulating similarities and differences from the participants' life stories.

3.9. Instrumentation

Semi structured, open-ended interview questions offered opportunities in this qualitative research study for the development of ideas through a flexible approach rather than a standardized interview procedure (Denscombe, 2017, p.204). Bryman (2008) noted an important advantage of semi-structured interviewing as its capacity to provide insights into how research participants view the world (p.438). A benefit of open questions was it allowed for the salience of new ideas to be explored by respondents (p.232). The semi-structured interview in this study also offered flexibility and scope for the interviewee to explicate events, forms and patterns of behaviour that they deemed important within their own frame of understanding (p.438).

Although Bryman (2008) posited that an unstructured interview may allow for a greater degree of genuine access to the world views of members of the social setting involved a semi-structured approach was used in this study. According to Gillham, (2005) a semi-structured interview anticipates analysis and facilitates the organisation of that final stage (p.75). Bryman (2008) attested to the fact that in both unstructured and semi-structured cases, the interview process is flexible (p438). The external structural measure of using the defined group of Holy Faith sisters was employed to reduce the potential of a set of unanalysable transcripts (Gillham, 2005, p.49). A further rationale for the use of semi-

structured interviews was interviewees' potential doubt of the relevance of their contribution without 'interruption' designed to maintain momentum rather redirect the participant (Gillham, 2005, p.49). Jochelovitch and Bauer (2007) cautioned, "In practice, the NI often requires a compromise between narrative and questioning" (as cited in Gillham, 2005, p.49).

3.10. Data Collection

3.10.1. Pilot Study. The purpose of the pilot interview was to conduct an initial exploration of a religious sister's Christian leadership in the Irish post primary educational context. In line with Gillham's (2005) direction, the pilot interview was used to refine aspects of the interview content for the main study (p.75). The pilot study also assessed aspects such as timing, recording, transcription and analysis. A Mercy sister who had worked as a chaplain in both the ETB, co-educational and all girls Voluntary Secondary sectors engaged with the pilot. The interview lasted for one hour. Changes were made to the interview questions in light of the sister's comments; for example some ambiguous questions were reworded. The sister suggested asking future interviewees about teachers who had influenced them. Semi-structured questions, which were used for the pilot interview, were informed by the literature review and are set out in Appendix A of this study.

3.10.2. Interviews. Stories, according to Dyson and Genishi (1994), "help to make sense of, evaluate, and integrate the tensions inherent in experience: the past with the present, the fictional with the 'real', the official with the unofficial, personal with the professional, the canonical with the different and unexpected" (as cited in Webster & Mertova, 2007, p.2). In line with the intention to understand and compare experiences of educational leadership of Holy Faith sisters in their historical contexts through narrative analysis, a narrative inquiry data collection methodology was used. Semi-structured interviews from a purposive sample of eight members of the Holy Faith congregation was followed by a thematic analysis of the data. Riessman (1993) noted that aspects of narrative analysis including sequences of action,

choice of language and narrative style and audience/reader response are features of narrative analysis (p.12).

Johnson and Rowlands (2012) recommended that the in-depth interview process is simplified if “members of the group of interest are usually or regularly located in the same place or scene” (as cited in Gubrium, et al., 2012, p.105). While the participants were located in their usual place of residence during the interview, due to COVID-19 the interviews were conducted by phone. Sturges and Hanrahan (2004) suggested that telephone interviewing can be highly efficient in generating detailed replies suitable for qualitative research (as cited in Bryman, 2008, p.457). One Holy Faith sister requested that she type her responses to the questions and e-mail them to the researcher due to hearing difficulties and this was permitted by the supervisor. Atkinson (1998) proposed that the length of a life story interview can typically take one hour (as cited in, Gubrium, et al., 2012, p.212). While Bryman (2008) stated that qualitative research is predominantly unstructured, a level of coherence was maintained with an interview guide containing proposed questions and prompts (p.442). In line with Gunter's (2000;1999) suggestion, the interviews were “audio-recorded for later transcription and interpretation” (p.26). The research sessions lasted for one hour. The audio-recording was carried out using two digital devices – an iPhone 6 and a Microsoft Surface Pro 3 tablet laptop as Minichiello et al., (1990) and Patton (2002) suggested that the “researcher must be adept at using the equipment” (as cited in Punch, 2009, p.152). The devices provided good quality recording and as with conventional tape recorders the interviewer was free from invasive note taking and enabled to interact sensitively with the interviewees' narratives (Bryman, 2008, p.443). Participants' permission was confirmed through their signatures on letters of consent describing how the interview was to be conducted and outlining that a number of Christian leadership-related questions would be asked. The letter informed participants that their conversation would be recorded and a

transcription produced using voice recognition software. An account was then sent by e-mail to them for their approval. Interview times and dates were agreed. The questions for discussion comprised five sections each containing three questions. Interview questions for the Holy Faith Sisters are set out in Appendix B of this study.

3.11. Data Analysis

Following the interview process, the transcripts were written and analysed. Riessman (2004) identified four models of narrative analysis: thematic; structural; interactional and performative (as cited in Bryman, 2008, p.535). The form used in analysing the transcripts for this study was thematic. The analysis comprised the process described by Bryman (2008) of going through the interview data and marking sequences of text in terms of thematic codes; next all sequences of text coded in a particular way were gathered together for each code (p.565). A framework or "conceptual map" (Webster & Mertova, 2007, p.114) was applied. Transcripts were sent by e-mail to participants for their assessment of the accuracy of the record of their narrative accounts. Barbour (2001) stated that respondent validation can be particularly valuable in qualitative studies (p.1117). The involvement of participants in critiquing the accuracy of the transcripts enhanced the validity of the study. According to Boeije (2010) the examination of a social phenomenon from different angles is known as triangulation (p.176). This member checking method of triangulation was used to avoid bias. Creswell and Miller (2000) described member checking as taking data and interpretations back to the participants so that they can confirm the credibility of the information and narrative account (p.127). Lincoln and Guba (1985) referred to member checking in a qualitative study as "the most crucial technique for establishing credibility" (as cited in Creswell & Miller, 2000, p.127). This involvement of the participants allowed for systematic evaluation of the data.

3.12. Ethical Considerations

Denscombe (2017) emphasized that the protection of the public should never be compromised in the interests of social research (p.337). According to Ryen (2004) professional guidelines direct that the researcher is responsible for informed consent, for trust and for the protection of the confidentiality of the participants (as cited in Silverman, 2016, p.38). Ethical principles were observed with regard to this research. Both the pilot interview and subsequent interviews were voluntary and participants were invited to sign letters of consent. Patton (2002) asserted that “interviews are interventions [that] affect people” (p.405). Participants were advised of their freedom to withdraw from the study at any time should they wish to do so. Explanations were given as to the purpose and procedures of the interviews and assurances were provided regarding anonymity and confidentiality including in the event of participant’s withdrawal. Participants were advised that only data relating to the study would be gathered and stored securely on a password protected computer hard drive and destroyed after one year. Participants were informed that the researcher and supervisor were aware of the specific data but otherwise no individuals or schools would be named; they were informed that there may be a possibility that data from the dissertation may be presented in future publications. Participants were given the researcher’s contact details in the event that any queries should arise and offered opportunities to discuss any questions regarding the process or implications of involvement at the beginning and end of the interviews. Transcripts were sent by e-mail to participants who were requested to highlight any inaccuracies for data validation purposes.

3.13. Bias

The researcher’s stance was influenced both by their Christian faith and experience of teaching since 1996. The researcher’s perspective was that Christian leadership in education is vocational.

3.14. Assumptions

According to Gubrium et al. (2012) interviews are an evolving data collection method, with the reflexive revision of long-standing assumptions (p.ix). The assumptions of the researcher for this study included the potential for some life events not to be clearly remembered and for participants to “engage in assumptions of what the researcher wants to hear” (Gillham, 2005, p.52).

3.15. Limitations

Gillham (2005) argued that as “the limitations of single methods are appreciated, the use of multiple methods, different kinds of evidence” is seen as a more adequate account in qualitative studies (p.7). The member checking method of triangulation was used for validation of data in this study. Participants' evaluation of the information in the narrative accounts supported the credibility of the study (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p.127). Further to credibility, the researcher was conscious of the transferability, dependability and confirmability of the data generated in this study.

3.16. Conclusion

Clandinin (2007) proposed that we bring meaning to our lives through story (p.224). This qualitative in-depth narrative interview study sought to discern meaning from the Holy Faith sisters' perceptions of connections between their life experiences within their respective contexts as revealed through their narrative perspectives. Bryman (2008) wrote that sensitivity to the connections in people's accounts of past, present and future events and people's sense of their place and role within those events and the stories they generate about them; including the significance of the context constitute narrative analysis (p.553)

The methodology for this study has been outlined and the stance of the researcher identified. Research design and instrumentation used were discussed along with the approach for data collection and analysis; ethical considerations have also been described.

A constructivist epistemological paradigm was used in this study. The aim of which was to interpret the lived experience of the Holy Faith sisters through narrative inquiry in-depth semi-structured interviews and analysis with the intention of revealing rich insights of the sisters' approach to realising Christian leadership in post primary education

Chapter Four

Results

4.1. Introduction

This chapter of the study reports insights specifically from Holy Faith sisters' experience of school leadership on Boards of Management and as principals, chaplains and teachers. Narrative inquiry, semi- structured, qualitative interviews were used in the study, to elicit participants' perspectives on their educational leadership experience. The literature review provided a framework for the interview questions, which guided the collection of data; they are listed in chapter three. Processes used for the selection of participants, confidentiality, data collection and analysis were discussed in chapter three. Codes were ascribed to participants as follows Sister 1, Sister 2, Sister 3, Sister 4, Sister 5, Sister 6, Sister 7 and Sister 8. This chapter describes the main themes that emerged from the five sections of the interviews.

4.2. Data analysis

Narrative analysis as described in chapter three was used both in the approach to conducting interviews with participants to elicit their life stories and in the construction of codes and subsequent themes during the analysis of the interview transcripts. Bryman (2008) cited Roberts' (2002) description of narrative analysis as both an approach to the analysis of qualitative data as well as the stories people tell in interviews recounting their lives (p.553).

4.2.1. Broad coding. Thematic analysis of the qualitative data was undertaken following close initial readings of the transcripts and searching for codes. Codes were assigned to ideas that were identified as being potentially significant in terms of providing

insights as to the legacy of female religious educational leadership at post-primary level in Ireland in the first instance.

4.2.2. Grouping into themes. Themes were generated by refining and reducing codes on the basis of patterns that were repeated and connections that were identified between ideas. Data in the transcripts relating to ideas in the literature review was coded accordingly. The modified codes were mapped on to the theoretical framework that guided the interview schedule from the literature review. The themes and subthemes revealed in the study were represented on a matrix. The main themes that emerged from the data were: empowering care and service; Christian faith; relationships; inclusion and structures of care. Please see Table C1, Appendix C for themes and subthemes revealed from the data.

This study identified the post-primary educational leadership legacy of female religious using three questions under five separate sections in the interviews. The five sections focused on educational purpose, personal qualities for school improvement, leadership styles, social issues and Holy Faith legacy and charism in educational leadership. The data revealed five themes of empowering service and care; Christian faith; trusting relationships; inclusion and structures of care.

4.2.3. Theme one: Empowering service and care. This was a primary purpose of each religious sisters' educational leadership of a post-primary school as it came up repeatedly throughout their testimonies. A variety of examples of serving students and teachers' needs were given and a common goal of their educational leadership as Sister 1 explained was that "they might realise their potential". While each respondent stated that they were appointed to their position rather than having sought to lead a school, they all wanted to make an impactful difference by empowering those around them through care in their leadership roles. Related sub themes that arose under the first theme were enabling; personal effort rather than

academic achievement; experiential learning; community collaboration; dignity; respect; wisdom and self-belief.

4.2.4. Theme two: Christian faith. This was a core motivation throughout all five interview sections. Sister 3 characterised her Christ centred, motivation by saying “your Christian faith is not separate from who you are”. Sister 7 explained how “my Christian faith was alive; it wasn't just something in Scripture”. These quotes were representative of how the religious sisters understood the motivating influence of their Christian faith on their own leadership. Nurturing Christian values in others was another aspect of the ‘why’ of the sisters’ educational leadership as described by Sister 4 in the following quotation “I always felt blessed when young people, who completed their schooling, left with a sense of confidence and positive Christian values and outlook”. Sub themes that arose were prayer; gospel values; role models; mission and leadership styles.

4.2.5. Theme three: Building relationships. This was a key approach of female religious’ in their educational leadership as evidenced in the data from transcriptions of respondents’ accounts across all five interview sections. All respondents emphasised the importance of building trusting relationships with all educational stakeholders through honest communication, service and listening to embrace change and highlighted a variety of strategies. The following comment represents the sisters’ view of the value of trusting relationships in educational leadership as Sister 5 stated “I want to be able to look everybody in the eye, every day of the week. You know, and to know that we’re all telling the truth to each other”. Interestingly, in contrast to the literature reviewed there was an overall rejection of the idea that gender bias had been experienced with some minor exceptions. Sub themes that arose were: all educational stakeholders; community; international training networks;

trust; honesty; listening; practical measures; service and transformative leadership; experiences and no gender bias.

4.2.6. Theme four: Inclusion. This was another feature of participants' approach to educational leadership that spanned all five interview sections. Many inclusive and caring approaches to addressing poverty, social justice and attitudes were discussed including through dignity and respect, time and courage. Sister 7's assertion that she had "a great sense of justice and fairness" was typical of their approach to educational leadership. Sub themes that arose were poverty; attitudes; generosity; courage; discernment; humility; drugs; abuse and meeting needs.

4.2.7. Theme five: Structures of care. Structures of care and their value in promoting positive relationships and supporting communication and change in schools was another common feature of each participants' approach to educational leadership. Sister 4 who was responsible for introducing a number of national care structures in Irish post-primary education as a means of meeting social change, described school as "both a human system and a human community". Sub themes that arose were care; review and evaluation; reflection; distributive leadership; pastoral; year heads; Board of Management; collaboration; discernment; administration; support.

4.2.8. Conclusion. Eight Holy Faith sisters were interviewed for the study. They had a broad range of educational leadership experience including leadership in post-primary schools. Six of the sisters had been principals of at least one, if not a number of post-primary schools. One sister had worked as a chaplain in an all girls post-primary school and was a current member of the Board of Management. Another of the sisters had been a teacher in a post-primary school.

4.3. Summary of Findings

Sister 1 summed up the findings of this study when she spoke about the workload that current principals face:

The amount of work that each of them has to, the principal could spend the whole time in the office and never be on the floor of the school. They would be a very unwise person to do that. She might be so pressurised that she'd find herself doing that.

Overall, the findings from the data of the sisters' perceptions of their educational leadership were threefold. The first finding was a legacy of care. The sisters nurtured cultures of care through their educational leadership in Irish post-primary schools. The second finding was that the religious sisters used Christian servant leadership to nurture relationships. The third finding was that the sisters used formal and informal structures to meet the needs of their school communities.

4.4. Discussion

In this section, appointed in line with the purpose of this study, which is to explore the Christian educational leadership legacy of religious sisters in post-primary schools in Ireland, findings are outlined and discussed in light of the literature. The three main findings were a legacy of care, Christian servant leadership and structures. These findings supported the hypothesis regarding religious sisters' legacy of leadership in Irish post-primary schools as care, Christian servant leadership and structures.

4.4.1. Care. Care was identified by participants' in this study as their key purpose in leading post-primary schools. The provision of good quality education was viewed as central to enabling young people to realise their full potential. Participants placed a strong emphasis

on learning through the provision of experiences with the main focus being on students' happiness and flourishing. The sisters spoke of staff, student and community collaboration in serving the needs of students and teachers through providing care and experiences as Sister 4 explained her main purpose was to "engage with staff and students in the journey of learning which leads to wisdom. Within this journey to help provide each student with experiences that developed a belief in self and in one's own giftedness". This data was supported by the literature as Raftery (2012) pointed out that one way that nuns could live out their vocation and fulfil the Church's mission was by contributing to the perfection of others and the salvation of souls through their work in education (p.311). Religious sisters' legacy of holistic care in Irish post-primary educational leadership recognised that the purpose of education as a moral activity is human flourishing, rather than high points in the Leaving Certificate; "Flourishing is a richer property than happiness, sensitive to many more features of a person's life than just her inner states." (Brighouse, 2008, p.62). Religious sisters' educational leadership purpose of care towards students and teachers speaks to the need for educational leaders to meet changing student contexts shaped by reconfigured economic, family and religious societal conditions and indeed a global pandemic. The reliance on technology and alternative emergency educational assessment procedures that COVID-19 has necessitated demonstrates that the legacy of care of the religious sisters in education is more relevant than ever. While technology can provide a useful communication and learning tool, it can be isolating and its value can be limited in terms of human relationships. Burgess and Sievertsen (2020) argued that this episode will lead to an increase in the inequality of human capital growth for the affected cohorts as there will likely be substantial disparities between families in the extent to which they can help their child to learn (p.2). A deficit in educational opportunities has been an enduring challenge for educational leaders. The evidence from the interviews shows many examples of the religious sisters' resourceful and

creative solutions to overcoming these inequities, often by enlisting the support of the community. These insightful examples of care through community collaboration can provide direction in navigating the obstacles of the current adjustments necessitated by the current pandemic. The sisters' broad perspective on their educational leadership purpose of care was evidenced in the account of Sister 5 where she described a community scholarship programme to nurture dignity through working with schools:

We were greatly helped by Guinesses. Guinesses had an excellent scholarship scheme where every year they gave five scholarships to third level between the local schools. There was a whole programme leading up to that. So the youngsters were motivated from the beginning of fifth year to see there was a possibility of getting one of these scholarships. And we got one every year for the years I was there and every one of those kids stayed the course at third level. I mean, they did things like, Pharmaceutical Technician, Electronic Engineering, English and History in Trinity; certainly a first for their families. So that was, I think, very important for their families.

Sister 5 illustrated the importance of community collaboration in providing a variety of educational opportunities for students to elevate families' morale and lift community spirit and self-belief. The finding in this study of religious sisters' educational purpose of care was consistent with findings in previous studies as the religious women interviewed in Fiebig and Christopher's (2018) study emphasized the importance of helping individuals to experience personal growth and gain self-confidence (p.510). Woodrow (2006) suggested both individuals and institutions need a common purpose to flourish (p.313). Christian leadership offers this common purpose of love in Jesus Christ. It is vocational, positively forms

leadership and requires that decisions made by the Christian leaders will be informed by love and service with due regard to the preservation of the institution (Davis, 2015, p.61).

Moreover, the contribution of the religious sisters to educational leadership served the need to develop a moral compass, which is essential to the happiness, and flourishing of both students and wider society (Jubilee Centre of Character & Virtues, 2014, p.10). D'Souza (2016) posited that Catholic schools nurture children's formation in how they interpret the world and this informs their moral decisions and actions and the type of citizens they become. An aspect of religious sisters' educational leadership purpose of care was nurturing Christian faith, as Sister 3, a chaplain and member of the Board of Management outlined, "no matter what you do, you do it to create the possibility of nurturing faith" and Sister 4 reflecting on her appointment to lead a school in her mid-twenties explained:

My purpose was rooted in, and inspired by, my faith in the God who created each of these young people in my care, and who gifted each of them differently. I don't remember judging my success but I always felt blessed when young people, who completed their schooling, left with a sense of confidence and positive Christian values and outlook.

A characteristic value of the Holy Faith order that universally influenced participants' purpose was respect for the dignity of each person, Sister 8 stated "I do believe I have a well developed sense of respect for each individual as individual pupils and teachers and parents. It's a core value of mine that everybody is worthy of respect." Participants' care for the person was clear in their accounts of helping people to overcome poverty through education as Sister 3 outlined for example:

The poverty that people experienced because of lack of education and so forth; the fear was that that was damaging their faith in a loving God. But now I suppose you're creating opportunities; trying to give everybody a level playing field, a decent start.

Poverty is one example of an assault on the dignity of the person, as is judging people based on a collection of figures on a page. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused an emergency overhaul of the state exams and consequently an opportunity for reflection on the efficacy of the current system. Burgess and Sievertsen (2020) suggested that it is possible that some students' careers might benefit from the interruptions. They cited Maurin and McNally (2008) who showed that the 1968 abandoning of the normal examination procedures in France (following the student riots) led to positive long-term labour market consequences for the affected cohort (p.2). The religious sisters' focus on the realisation of gospel values rather than on constituent success may be the orientation required for educational leadership at this time. Sister 2 provided an example of the sisters' caring approach to their educational leadership in the following terms:

Success was not always the As and Bs; I refused to promote in the local press, the success of the really high achieving students. And I think that was reinforced for me at a gathering of parents one night when we were talking about a ability and success. I define success as the effort that was being made. And what this meant for all the students, especially those who found it difficult. Well, I voiced this; that the result I looked for first, was the students had made the effort and were struggling and to me, success was that they achieve it. There was almost a standing ovation from parents gathered, very acutely aware at that moment of the struggle, that in most families, there would be one, that perhaps, was struggling more than the others. And that, that having this acknowledged publically was somehow a relief for them.

The religious sisters' emphasis on care in terms of their educational leadership purpose is in line with Raftery's (2001) argument that far from placing emphasis on the academic development of female pupils, or the pursuit of higher education for women, the Rules and Constitutions of congregations promoted duty, mission and vocation. Raftery explained that in order to gather evidence that certain female congregations were promoting an agenda for female educational revolution scholars identified a steady increase in the numbers of pupils who entered for the Intermediate examinations and the examinations of the Royal University that were open to women from 1879 (p.311).

O'Donovan (2015) drew attention to varying contexts and identities between schools. There are considerable varieties of social, gender, religious and cultural diversity between individuals in schools, between groups and within larger society, all of which need to be negotiated. As Ruth posited "By giving visibility and a voice to the full range of diversity, the lives of all the members are enriched and enhanced, issues and challenges are named in a non-attacking way that keeps the organization moving forward" (Ruth, 2006, p. 209). Sister 2 described caring for students through the provision of educational experiences:

Maybe as teachers, we see success in the number of As, Bs and Cs rather than, in what where I've brought my students. What does success mean for them? When I was teaching 5th year English, and I could get lost in all of this now, I would never finish the year without having brought them to the Gate, the Abbey, for something. I always brought them. I would do books not on the curriculum; Do you know what I mean? You are talking to somebody who worked outside the box anyway.

The religious sisters' role modelling of care through providing experience in education was echoed in Harford and O'Donoghue's (2011) research as sisters interviewed in their study reported a great desire to emulate their teachers (p.405). Harford and O'Donoghue (2011)

cited Danylewycz (1987) in her study in Quebec in the early twentieth century suggesting that “the carefully ordered life of convent schools”, the “sustained contact between girls and religious women” and “frequent moments of prayer, silence and meditation”, created an atmosphere, which encouraged pupils to opt for the religious life (p.406). Findings in this study showed, that the participants role modelled care through the provision of equitable educational experiences as Sister 3 emphasised:

It's always been a Holy Faith thing to educate the whole person. That's why even doing the musicals and the drama, all those things are so important. And then the faith, you know, allowing time for prayer, allowing time for reflection, the meditation, that it's not all in your head. There's the spiritual. We would always have had that holistic approach, you would never have left a child out because of their religion. It didn't matter. The main thing was the child getting to school.

Participants related a wide variety of approaches where they showed courage and creativity in their care, Sister 4 stated “every aspect of life, personal and professional, are integrated in faith. I reflect on Jesus as teacher, calm, clear and courageous”. Sister 1 spoke of a parable that represented her approach to social justice and care:

I love that story about the woman accused of adultery, where he starts to write in the sand, you know, gradually they all disappear, like he says, he without sin cast the first stone and they all disappear gradually. And then he says to her, did anyone condemn you, neither do I condemn you, go now and sin no more. Part of the human condition.

Sister 7 shared the following example of her empathy and support of students who were troubled:

They're just learning. All right. Here is one thing I would never, that's expulsion. I have a great relationship with the guidance counsellor. And we use a can we move this child sideways? You get a chance of starting again. Without a label around her neck.

Sister 2 gave an account of her courageous and creative approach to caring for students who experienced challenges to their learning and the unforeseen benefits of her approach:

Now creativity was about looking at new ways of doing things. For example, I sent a teacher and a parent of a dyslexic kid to England to study, to do training on dyslexia hoping that they would come back and do work here. That parent held a meeting of all the Principals of all the primary and post primary schools in the local area, because what I didn't know was, she was dyslexic herself. The result of that, I said this is something I could do, I took up the training and I'm now doing it.

These experiences speak to the need Raftery, Harford and Parkes, (2010) identified of using explicitly feminist approaches to capture, not only policy changes and institutional developments but also Irish girls and women's experience of education in Ireland through methodologies such as oral history, collective biography and visual history (p.3). In this study, religious sisters' reflected on their experiences of leading educational change for the care of all. They promoted a culture of care by providing learning experiences for all, addressing poverty and breaking down barriers to learning and supporting academic progress. The religious sisters' care was emphasized by the importance they placed on providing education to empower all. Sister 1 recounted her memory of the following story:

The legacy of our founding sisters is alive and well within our community and it would have had its influence. I would never have experienced it in my time but I have

heard stories of the children who came early to school and came to the back door of the convent to be fed and of those who came back in the evening before they went home to get a parcel. All those things were an integral part in enabling the children to come to school in order to get an education.

This narrative of caring service in educational leadership was supported by the literature as Fiebig and Christopher (2018) reported religious sisters felt that it was important to be a good role model and to help others gain confidence and self-worth. They also observed that the women religious they interviewed demonstrated their leadership skills within a variety of social justice initiatives and worked to care for the less fortunate (p.510). Sister 1 described examples of students being offered financial help to support their education:

I know now that several girls who were at school with me while it was still a fee paying school were on scholarships. They were scholarships from the sisters so they were coming to school for them you know. There were boarders among those but I would never have known that if I hadn't entered the congregation.

Sister 2 spoke of the Holy Faith order's approach to social justice and echoed Sister 1's view of education for empowerment:

I think the work, the work was done quietly and consistently, never seeking status but offering, particularly to those who were deprived and very often even in secondary education when, you still had to pay for it. You would meet regular students who had quietly been offered an education without fees, because of parental circumstances.

Alongside the religious sisters' care, it is important to examine their lasting legacy in terms of their Christian servant leadership.

4.4.2. Christian Servant Leadership. Fiebig and Christopher (2018) identified women religious' leadership styles as predominantly transformational and servant (p.505). According to the literature, Servant and transformational leadership theory have qualities in common with Christian leadership. Washington et al. (2014) identified these common characteristics as “respect, vision, influence, modelling, trust, integrity and delegation” (as cited in Thompson, 2017 p.17). Sister 8 pointed out the importance of a shared vision in Christian educational leadership in her description of how she measured the level of success of her purpose as follows:

The only way to judge it was by the behaviours and attitudes of both students and staff, really a general sort of climate of a happy purposeful community as it were, working towards a common end. I don't know how else it could've been judged because we're talking about some intangibles. Obviously, there would be certain assessments academically and so on, sports wise and curriculum criteria as it were. But the key thing would be what's going on in the minds and hearts of the pupils which of course can only be judged by the way they behaved. That's the only way of assessing the essential purpose of the school as I thought.

This testimony highlighted the Christian leadership purpose of a shared vision that was underlined in the narrative accounts of all participants in the study. This testimony accorded with the literature as Zohar (2005) proposed that a vision-led and values- led spiritual leadership is essential if we are to avoid what Bennis (2009) warned against “Whatever our schools are teaching-or at least testing-has increasingly less to do with what we have historically considered education, and more to do with the ubiquitous bottom line.” (p.76). Religious sisters' legacy of spiritual educational leadership provides the responsible,

authentic response to current challenges in education that Zohar (2005) described as spontaneity (p.48).

According to Huizing (2011) general leadership theories are goal centered and concerned with the 'what' of leadership, whereas the 'why' question was more important to female religious servant educational leaders, as its motivation is the spiritual development of the individual and society in the context of the Kingdom of God (p.60). Sister 4 explained, "My faith in Jesus Christ is central in my life, therefore central to all practices". While participants were appointed as school principals and did not seek leadership positions, the resounding consensus among interview participants was a desire to utilise their agency for dynamic innovation that would serve the needs of the students and teachers and benefit the whole community. Sister 2 explicated:

You see, originally as religious, you were appointed. So, in actual fact, you regarded it was an assignment, you were asked to undertake and therefore, you went and you did what you were told, what you were asked to do. But then it became, as you went into this job, took it up, it became a mission and the mission became to make a difference.

This mission of service to make a difference underpinned the vocational motivation of all Holy Faith sisters interviewed. Sister 4 asserted that in a school community that "All members, leader in the centre, know that the Christian mission and values inspire and motivate, they are normative and familiar". Indeed, Sister 8 described her mission as:

Behind that, in terms of leadership as such I believed in the power and still believe in the power of education to help young people grow in every way, spiritually, intellectually, emotionally and so on. You know, the gospel phrase that I particularly

like from my own life. And so that anybody with whom I had dealings is Christ saying, you know, I have come that you may have life and life to the full. That would be an overarching concept I mean, in terms of anything I would be doing.

Rogers (2005) in her study observed the educational intention of religious sisters, to have been the formation of good Christian women to influence their families and society in carrying out charitable work (as cited in Hellinckx et al., 2009;2013; p. 29). For Huizing (2011) Christian leadership is Christ-centric servanthood, since Jesus Himself came not to be served, but to serve (Mark 10:45). This accorded with Adjibolosoo's (1994) suggestion that servant leadership aligns best with the type of leadership the world needs as it "serves others, invests in their development and fulfils a shared vision" (as cited in Page et al., 2000, p.1). Sister 1 explained, "As a religious leader in the school it's not for the glory or the power or attachment to the position or anything, it's a Kingdom work. My personal prayer life would ground me in that". This was in line with the literature as Harford and O'Donoghue's (2011) study reported that religious sisters were regularly told that the time might come when they would be placed in charge of a school. Furthermore, it was constantly impressed upon them that whenever one would be called upon to take on a leadership role it should not be embraced for personal gratification, but rather because it was the will of the order and, thus, reflected the will of God (p. 411). Sister 2 recounted a creative collaborative community initiative to serve diverse needs of students in the school where she was principal:

Parents would have been in jail, in some cases they might have been peddling drugs for the parents, because the parents were in jail and couldn't do it. The third school I was in was which was a co-ed again; it was over 900. So, there was a great variety in all of this, but in the last co-ed school, I realised that there was a cohort of students for whom the regular system mightn't always suit; So, in conjunction with St. Michael's

House and in conjunction with other schools in the area, we set up a special programme, we called it for the Fingal Educational Resource Group.

These creative community solutions to meet students' diverse needs exemplify the interviewees' Christ centred servant leadership in the development of individuals and community. Sister 7 articulated another example of discernment and courage in serving students' needs. She recounted how she had introduced the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme with the help of the programme coordinator, despite staff opposition, as she felt it would suit some weaker students who had managed to cope with the Junior Certificate but were "floundering" at senior level:

I could see that these students would not cope with the regular Leaving Cert and they at one stage had to present their projects. Slowly, I encouraged them with the help of the coordinator of the programme to present it in public. It became very clear that those who then were in the traditional Leaving Cert. felt that they were being deprived of something. They had not got the opportunity for this. Very quickly, they all stayed on and they got their exam and they had more skills. They had more life skills leaving school, than some of them following the traditional school, who were getting their A's and B's because they had businesses coming in and working with them and they got to go out to businesses. The work experience was invaluable. The projects they did were counted as part of their Leaving Cert.

The introduction of L.C.V.P. in the face of opposition was a change that required courage and provided students with opportunities to develop their self-confidence in ways that suited their needs and involved them with the local community through work experience. This servant leadership approach was mirrored in the literature as Collins (2014) wrote that in response to

changing cultural, political and educational circumstances there was a gradual movement from religious sisters' provision of an elite education to offering 'academic' courses for girls with university ambitions and more 'general' courses for those going on to work in the commercial world (p.63). This nuanced response represents the legacy of their spiritual quotient which is an essential feature of effective school leadership. As Bennis (2009) stated "unless the leader continues to evolve, to adapt and adjust to external change, the organization will sooner or later stall." (p.137). Personal dignity, which is characteristic of the Holy Faith order, is central in this example of spiritually intelligent leadership. Zohar (2005) described spiritual intelligence as an ability to access higher meanings, values, abiding purposes, and unconscious aspects of the self and to embed these meanings, values, and purposes in living a richer and more creative life (p.46). Their "mission to make a difference" was conveyed to all stakeholders at school, community and classroom level by the religious sisters through their roles as principals, chaplains and teachers. The purpose, according to Eisner, of "narrative inquiry...helps us, in the realm of education to understand the context, that is, "what teachers and children do in the settings in which they work" (as cited in McMaster, 2013, p.69). Sister 6 recalled Jesus' parable of the woman at the well as representative of her Christ centered service in her educational leadership in her classroom teaching:

I mean, you know about the woman at the well. I love that whole dynamic there where he led her to see the truth in something. He didn't push it down her neck or tell her. Through conversation and through listening through interaction he led her to seeing. Maybe I have been coming to the wrong place or doing the wrong thing for joy in my life. So my faith in the way Jesus interacted and led and brought about change would've been hugely influential. Like in the classroom I would always have prayed with the children at the beginning of class. They take turns lighting a candle,

and you probably couldn't do that now but you could at that stage. It's so important for them. So we prayed before every class and you know, I really worked on getting them to see the value in that and to include family. So my faith was very much part of how I was.

This Christian servant leadership informed their shared moral purpose of, as Sister 1 described, “trying to live the gospel”. These findings were in partial accordance with those of Harford and O'Donoghue (2011) as interview participants in their study cited opportunities to play a role in the formative development of children or young people by instilling values as an important feature of their educational leadership. Interview participants in their study also identified carrying on a legacy of their own teachers as a significant feature of their Christian servant leadership but that was not a significant finding of this study (p.408). Exploring religious sisters' Christian servant leadership may have potential benefits in terms of resourcing and sustaining future post-primary educational leaders in Ireland. This spiritual quotient underpinned the sisters' approaches to realising their gospel mission for school improvement.

Religious sisters' testimonies outlined a variety of approaches to nurturing relationships in their legacy of educational leadership. Sister 1 explained that when she took over as principal, she used the challenge of the school building needing refurbishment as an opportunity to develop trusting relationships with her new staff. She stated, “They weren't very happy campers. So it took a lot of effort to kind of get them to trust me. I think it was quite literally you know, making it work. Initially, the whole fabric of the building, the tension.” Sister 1 narrated an account of her Christian servant leadership through practical means as follows:

My main purpose was to make the school a welcoming and safe place for both teachers and students. Then I set out by ensuring that those facilities were improved because the staffroom accommodation was actually in a cloakroom. It was very inadequate and uninviting. There was no hot water for instance in the toilet facilities, the classrooms were all disorganized, used for storage and full of rubbish, and windows were cracked and hurting my eyes and the heating system wasn't actually working very well. So I actually decided to get somebody in to do a survey of the building and then submitted it to the DES at the time. At that time, we're talking about the 1980s, they gave me 92,000. Which was an awful lot more than what I was seeing when the survey was done; the architects pointed out things that I would not have seen, more structural things, important things like DP insulation you know.

Interestingly to this thesis study was that this empathetic service of Sister 1 to the needs of her staff and students is in line with the literature regarding servant leadership theory. Covey (2006) suggested, "The leadership that inspires followership comes only when you put service above self" (p.6). Researchers in Fiebig and Christopher's (2018) study found that features of servant leadership style such as care and concern for others prevailed in the statements from religious sisters interviewed (p.509). Sister 1 showed emotional intelligence in her approach to building trusting relationships with her staff. It was progressive and provides a relevant insight for today as it resonates with Redmond's (2016) appraisal of the evolving nature of school leadership in Ireland; he wrote that the:

rejection of a professional; demeanour that is primarily rational and carefully controlled emotionally has coincided with a changing school leadership and management landscape in which teachers want leaders to be more caring, connected, supportive and committed to relationship. This demand is coupled with, in Ireland as

elsewhere, a policy environment demanding the emergence of a culture of collaboration. (Redmond, M., 2016, p. 18).

Sister 1 described the success of her Christian servant leadership in building upon trust and interconnectedness in ways that provided a sense of agency, recognition and respect amongst all teachers and students in her school (Blackmore, J., 2007, p.28) as follows:

The success of that really was the change of attitudes. I experienced more cooperation. Even initially nobody would do supervision outside the classroom, so my way of dealing with that was, well I can't do it myself ; I'm willing to do it but I'm not shaped to be by located yet. And so I left it free and I put notice in the staffroom, would people be willing to volunteer, all but one volunteered. What came out of that, they were gradually coming to me with new methods of teaching things and could they try out this and could they try out that. But the younger one, particularly were interested in becoming involved in extra-Curricular activities.

This example accords with James' suggestion that if leaders' emotional intelligence is developed their capacity to manage change will significantly improve (James 2001). He affirmed that "Life in schools is complex substantially because emotion is integral to the process of teaching and learning and the management of those processes." (as cited in James & Vince, 2001, p.307). Benefiel (2005) cited Gandhi's proclamation that "You must be the change you wish to see in the world" (cited in Benefiel, 2005, p.27). In this case, Sister 1 was the change. Her servant leadership led to the transformation of her staff. Zohar's theory (2005) of spiritual intelligence is marked by the following twelve aspects: self-awareness, spontaneity; being vision- and value- led, holism, compassion; celebration diversity, field independence, humility; the tendency to ask fundamental "why" questions; the ability to reframe; positive use of adversity and a sense of vocation (p.47). Sister 1 demonstrated her

ability to reframe the challenge of a dilapidated school building into an opportunity to serve the needs of her staff and students and build trusting relationships across the whole school community provides an insight into the legacy of religious sisters' transformative, servant leadership in post-primary education in Ireland. Sister 1 reflected on the transformation that took place resulting from her Christian servant leadership as follows:

And then the other thing because the actual children came back after Christmas the floors were all these beautiful parquet floors in the building, had all been sanded and we had all the desks stained, although the staining of the desks had been done by my two nephews. I wouldn't have had the money for that, they sanded them all and stained them and we got matching chairs; they thought they were in a different school. That whole kind of milieu, I think had a big impact on how the school developed from there. You know how to get there. And how people responded to that, because it was so supportive. And they you know, they trusted that you were genuine, you know?

These integral elements of spiritual intelligence for change in schools were clearly evidenced in the participants' interviews. Like Gandhi, the religious sisters personified many of these aspects of spiritual leadership. Their testimonies recounted numerous examples where they saw beyond their context. They were visionary, progressive and energetic. They asked discerning questions and had the ability to transform adversity into opportunity. Sister 8 related an instance from her principal ship where a high degree of emotional intelligence, empathy and compassion was required to manage a school closure where a number of the staff were being redeployed. She explained that "it was a real challenge to keep the staff onside for the phasing out of the school because they were annoyed and they were angry and they didn't want the school to phase out and I could understand that perfectly". She reported that:

When we were closing down, when that announcement was made that we were phasing out, I spent a lot of time with the individual members of staff, talking to them, you know, interviewing them all about how they felt about it, how it was going to impact on them. I think that helped them from then on because, do you know that thing, it showed a certain concern for them as individuals, not just for the school.

Sister 8 went on to describe her practical service in terms of timetabling and communication that she used to nurture trust with staff members during these changes. She shared her insights regarding the transactional nature of managing this process below:

It worked out well because the staff, the staff were on side, you know and what we tried to do in the last year, when you really wouldn't have had a completely full timetable for every member of staff but the Department were okay with that because they knew it was a particular situation and would be ending. To try and work really hard on the staff timetable to give everybody some little perk on their timetable. You know, to compensate for the other horrors you were putting up with. You know and I would say to them, look, this is, this will be different next year so make the most of it. It was also the challenge of helping the staff through the redeployment, process.

Sister 8 served the needs of the school community through transactional practical measures and this example resonated with the literature as according to Bass, (2000) transactional leaders cater to the self-interests of their constituencies by means of either positive or aversive reinforcement as the case may be (Bass, 2000, p.22). As discussed in the literature, Sheehan (1972) illustrated the unique position the sister administrator finds herself in compared with the hospital or social service professional. She described how the Sister Principal's decisions affect the education of students in the formative years of their lives and the quality of teaching and learning in the school through job satisfaction of teachers. Many

of the participants shared their reflections in relation to the importance of building relationships with all the stakeholders through listening and empathetic communication. Sister 1 stated that she “Always heard the child's point of view”. She recounted her successful empathetic leadership approach in dealing with students who had truanted from school as follows:

One of my best examples was two of my sixth years went on the hop one day. Yes, well like in the last term. Two excellent students but unfortunately for them they were seen by a staff member, who reported it and wanted them grossly punished, you know. So anyhow, I sent for the two girls that morning and they probably knew I knew it, but I said to them “did you stay off yesterday”? They said "Ah yeah", but they admitted it. "What did you do"? "Well, we were in my house, we were, studying all morning". "We went to the local shop to get our lunch, and we were studying all afternoon". So and I said “you could have been in school”. They said "we've never done anything wrong; we just wanted to try it". I said “and now, I'm in the position where I'm supposed to punish you”, but I said, “I understand your bit of devilment”. I said, “I'm not going to punish you”. So I said “I am sending you back to your classrooms and in the afternoon, I'll call out both your names over the P.A. system”. And the staff member was satisfied.

Reflection as evidenced in this example is another aspect of Christian servant leadership. Sister 3 explained “I suppose you're kind of you're always reflecting back in to, you know. And was that a Christ-like thing to do? Did I cause hurt, or so you're constantly reflecting back on how you do things”. Another aspect of self-reflection was discussed by Sister 7 when she shared her thoughts on her meaning and purpose in response to VII.

There were huge changes following on the Second Vatican Council when many religious sisters would have questioned their role in education in the life of the founding intention of the congregation, and I would have questioned, in fact I used to say to myself, 'Oh, why am I teaching science?' 'Is this part of the founding intention of Margaret Aylward?', but I kept doing it.

The literature confirmed the search for meaning and identity for religious sisters' that resulted from the changes of VII as Harford and O'Donoghue (2011) identified the significance of Vatican II in reshaping teaching sisters' self-identity in their study (p.403). In the sisters' Christian servant leadership, there were some occasions where the sisters underwent some personal growth as a result of listening to the students in their school as Sister 5 elucidated:

There were a few little incidents, I remember, in one of the schools I was teaching in, that made me think in a different way about faith. You know how we'd have values like, oh you know, mind your own business and in that school, if you were sometimes having a few words with one student, the others would be gathering round to see what was going on because that's what they did on the balconies in the flats. And you'd be saying, now listen, go ahead and mind your own business and after a while what I began to realise was, minding your own business isn't really a Christian value. It's more of value to be minding others people's business and wondering what was being said to your pal.

Another story that demonstrated the development of trusting relationships is through Sister 5's listening and her humility:

The other little thing was you how in school we're inclined to say to people 'Now have whatever you need' You know 'Have you ruler and your pen and your this, that and

the other and don't be borrowing'. Well that wasn't the case in that school where they could see no reason, if I'd a ruler and you'd a pencil parer, why we just couldn't swap, why everybody had to; and I remember thinking, actually, they're right, I'm wrong. They're right. Their values of sharing, it was in the community there; you'd be borrowing from your neighbours. It made me think about my own faith better and it challenged my kind of middle class respectability values and realise, in fact

This humility is in line with Raftery's (2012) description of how nuns expressed their mission in education through values such as piety, humility and obedience and to concepts such as salvation (p.313). Sister 4 stated that the "Holy Faith specific values are Faith, Charity, Humility and Simplicity. These virtues inform and guide an approach to life and therefore to school leadership". Another example of humility in the interests of nurturing open trusting relationships was recounted by Sister 7 as follows:

You know, and I think one thing that as teacher and as a principal that was valuable learning for me was having to apologize to a student. I thought the first time I did it would be the end of my teaching career. I had corrected a student, for something that she hadn't done and I later found she hadn't done it, and I had chastised her in public so I had to apologise to her and I didn't know what the outcome would be but to my amazement, she said that's okay. And that was fine. Yeah, I mean, it's part of Christianity to admit we're wrong.

The sisters also shared legacy insights in relation to how they approached building trusting relationships with parents. Sister 5 recounted a representative example below:

The other thing I suppose that was helpful, I, that I would remember, for parents in that area of the city, a lot of them wouldn't have had great experiences in school

themselves. You know, they would have gone on much in education and if you ever had to send for them, if somebody was in trouble or you...., they tended to be nervous and perhaps maybe a little bit, hostile. So very soon after I started, I held a meeting of the parents and I called them in year group by year group, you know and I just said to them, look, if I send for you, it's not that you're in trouble, it's that I need your help to deal with whoever she is, Mary or Joan or whoever. Now that made a big difference. I found that, that made a big difference. You know, I said to them, you know, I just need you to help me to see what together can we do to help your daughter. I said so don't feel you're in trouble if I'm sending for you.

These examples of building trusting relationships through empathy, listening, communicating with all stakeholders, giving time, serving practical needs and using emotional intelligence illustrated the difference at the heart of general leadership theory and female religious educational leadership. This difference was highlighted by Beeley and Britton (2009), they argued that the focus of general leadership theory is to ask what can be done to attain a specific outcome, whereas the central focus of Christian leadership is the importance of why what is done “conforms to Jesus” (as cited in Huizing, 2011, p. 5). In considering the general features of female teaching congregations Rogers (2005) observed their intention to have been the formation of good Christian women to influence their families and society in carrying out charitable work (as cited in Hellinckx et al., 2009;2013; p. 29). In addition to examining their Christian servant leadership, it is essential to examine religious sisters' use of structures in exploring their educational leadership legacy.

4.4.3. Structures. A final finding of this study's exploration of religious sisters' educational leadership legacy is structures. According to Fullan, “you cannot move toward systems thinking and sustainability in the absence of a widely shared moral purpose” (as cited

in Redmond, 2016, p. 39). Structures such as the pastoral care structure and the year head structure are examples of educational systems that religious sisters helped to establish to sustain young people, teachers and communities through societal and educational change in the past and will support them in the future. The sisters used structures of care to support improvements as Sister 1 pointed out “as a member of a religious community, you see you had support that was unseen and you had supports that were unnamed”. This example of structural care was supported by the literature as Harford and Donoghue (2011) reported in their study of female religious, that all members of the religious community were meant to provide support for each other through their very presence, as well as through constantly seeking the support of The Lord through communal and individual prayer (p.408).

Sister 1 referred to the ethos of a Catholic school:

The only thing I'd say is that faith based on the value of the gospel probably enhances the *modus operandi* of a leader. Whilst creating a kind of a Christian environment within the school. Like it might not be labelled, but it's kind of like an understanding, yes; kind of like a scaffolding on which you are operating.

The literature confirmed this Christian scaffolding as the Catholic ethos, which is lived through sacraments and liturgy in Catholic school life to affirm and liberate all members of the Catholic school community. The value of sacraments and the essence of liturgy are essential to the real, education of young people so that they are enabled to flourish and develop spiritually. Without the sacramental reality, which informs ethos, how can young people access, experience, articulate or realise all aspects of themselves? Indeed, how can educators fulfil their own vocations to lead them to this realisation of themselves? As Groome reflected “From very early on, then, the Church became convinced that giving people a good education is ‘conducive to salvation’.” (as cited in Groome, 2014, p.114).

Sister 1 related her perspective on Catholic ethos, sacraments and liturgy as structures for care:

With the intake to the schools now you can't assume anything. Children may not be baptised but there may have been very Christian living. And I suppose within the school, you have the opportunity to celebrate their faith, like with the liturgical seasons and they can be teaching points without being proselytising. It's very much being caught rather than being taught and personally I think it's very important to support the Catechetical team and make no apologies for them. You know, they can be a high point within the school to celebrate an innate faith the kids may have. What I find in situations like that is, that respond without realising they're responding. I saw recently in a school, where they had the prayer room completely refurbished and because I'm good at things like that I was brought in, the day the prayer room was open, we had the most beautiful ceremony; it was a representative group because they couldn't all fit into the prayer room, but they were really rejoicing in it.

The perspective of Sister 1 was represented in the literature as Drumm (2012) affirmed Catholic parents' entitlement to an education for their children that informs their values and virtues through Christian identity, this does not amount to indoctrination, because the reasoned thinking that Catholicism promotes is completely in opposition to the brainwashing indoctrination it is sometimes accused of. Catholic ethos encourages respect of other cultures and religions and is focused on nurturing the development of responsible and rational citizens. The common good is inclusive of our intercultural society and calls for a multi-faceted parish and school community approach; as Boyle asserted "The arrival of children and families from other cultures to Ireland provides Irish Catholic schools with an

opportunity to fulfil in a new way [the] aims of Catholic education” (as cited in Prendergast & Monaghan, 2003, p.144).

As well as discussing the ethos, sacramental and liturgical structure of the hidden curriculum, the importance of formal structures of care was emphasised by the interview participants in the study. Sister 2 explained how she used the year head distributive leadership structure to listen to and connect with the whole school community effectively:

And the Year Head, I delegated, I really, really, If I appointed somebody to a Year Head role I gave them the responsibility that went with it, with the accountability that was actually necessary. I wasn't looking over their shoulder. Go do it. That's your job. And then, I suppose you know, even in terms of and how they approached it, would be, would that be autonomous as well, you know? Yeah. We would have meetings. Every so often there would be meetings. They would give me, I would get the report of the meetings. Who ever chaired the meetings, would come down, go through the reports with me, receive instructions and then if needed to follow-up, I'd follow it up. Now I wasn't on their case; I let them do their job.

Sister 4 also emphasised the value of structures as systems of communication and care and described the school as:

A system and a community, and, most importantly both a human system and a human community. Therefore, it is always changing, hopefully improving. Leading this dynamic and organic process a leader needs to be significantly aware of her/his role in the life blood i.e. communication. The leader must also be active with management, staff, students and parents in the formal review and planning process.

These sisters' testimonies regarding the importance of structures to promote trusting relationships in a school are confirmed in the literature as religious sisters interviewed in

Harford and O'Donoghue's (2011) study emphasized the importance of their religious community in terms of the support network it provided (p.410). Sister 2 also recounted the value of structures in the care of students:

I remember, In my first school, and that's way back. I'm talking, I was there from '84 to '80; no, I was there, '78 to '84. It was that far back; and we had set up an excellent pastoral care structure; it was excellent and it was only in its infancy in the school at the time; and the ASTI were calling a strike and the way they were going to deal with the strike was they were suspending the pastoral care structures, the new structures that were coming in, this was relatively new, a member of our Holy Faith congregation was the person who had devised all this, she had studied in Swansea, gone over to subsequent courses there, so the ASTI decided that the best way they would deal with this would be to suspend. In the school where I was, they refused to suspend the structures because they were so effective in the school. We're coming back to structures. If your structures really work and people believe in them, you know you're highly successful with them.

Participants pointed to the importance of structural care in school communities as avenues through which to support and meet social change. The sisters identified examples such as the establishment of student councils, parents' associations and Boards of Management. Sister 7 described an example of the value of the student council structure where it provided an avenue for negotiation and for the students' voice to be heard in the context of a student walk out during a teachers' strike "Or they knew they could communicate with me. They were agreeable to go along with whatever the prefect negotiated with me". Participants described an enthusiasm for embracing change through training and involvement in national and international educational networks. Sister 2 explained:

I was at regional and national level, for example, I was Vice-President of the JMB for a while. I was a representative at the European Secondary Heads' Association when they were setting it up. We were in Maastricht, always on top of change. I nearly knew before it happened because if you were involved at JMB level, all my life I was in JMB, either Regional Council or the National Council of JMB; so you were discussing Circulars. The Department would send Circulars to the JMB and you would be discussing them before they actually went out to the schools. You were on top of the information. You know, you were way on top of the information.

This visionary, approach to structural care for students and staff accords with the literature as O'Donoghue and Harford (2013) described that it was the female religious orders in particular, who were responsible for establishing training programmes for principals including sending them abroad for training and not until 1994 did the state provide this training. Sister Principals were in a position to move from principal to classroom teacher to educational administrator positions outside schools affording them a broad perspective and an opportunity to reenergize (p.780). Sister 7 shared her perspective on how the introduction of the community and comprehensive school structure reenergized educational equality for Irish post-primary students as follows:

Definitely, the technical vocational school pupils were the second class in a community. I see that the rise of the community schools was a wonderful thing. They were coeducational and non-selective and they offered a very wide comprehensive curriculum. The facilities of the school were open to the community after school. I'm aware of that because we were involved in the first community school. Then throughout my years as principal, I began to see with the fast growing economy connected to the growth of third level education and the impact of that on secondary

school because now the exam became the method of selection for third level education. So, this was a more consumerist view of education. It's still there and I don't think it's a good thing at all.

This represents the religious sisters' holistic view of education and their use of structures to promote a local and national culture of care through their educational leadership.

4.5. Conclusion

This chapter presented, discussed and synthesized the findings of care, Christian servant leadership and structures with the literature. It outlined the Holy Faith sisters' insights from their experience of school leadership as gathered through the narrative inquiry, semi-structured, qualitative interviews. Implications and recommendations arising from the findings are discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter Five

Implications and Recommendations

5.1. Introduction

Implications arising from the findings of care, Christian servant leadership and structures are discussed in this chapter and recommendations for future research are identified. Limitations of the study are outlined in chapter three and briefly alluded to in this chapter. These findings may make an incremental contribution to knowledge on effective post primary educational leadership.

5.2. Response to Research Question

This study set out to listen to the legacy of leadership of female religious orders in post-primary education in Ireland. Overall, the question as to what constituted this legacy was illuminated by the main findings of: care, Christian servant leadership and structures. These key findings have implications for future educational leaders as they highlight the importance of the religious sisters' legacy of spiritual leadership in education for the flourishing of the whole school community. Benefiel (2005) suggested that when "leadership grows out of a wellspring of deep spiritual groundedness, their leadership is characterized by compassion, service, respect, and wisdom. Paradoxically, keeping their eyes on the spiritual goal often results in material reward." (p. 39).

5.3. Implications of Findings

5.3.1. Care. This finding has implications for the training of principals, teachers and members of management boards. From the point of view of professional development, in-

service providers could use this finding to inform a greater emphasis on developing cultures of care throughout school communities in line with religious sisters' legacy. Their insights could help to support students who feel forsaken. Eilish O'Regan, Health Correspondent wrote that "The research from the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI) showed one in five young Irish adults aged 19-24 and one in six young people aged 11-13 were experiencing mental health problems." (2013, para. 2). In a disposable society that is so lost in materialism and despair divinely rooted, shared values are needed more than ever for leadership to be effective in schools. The sisters' care in providing inclusive experiences echoes today's philosophy, which advocates the motivation of the child to learn by including them and involving them, by placing them at the centre of their learning rather than leaving them to be unmotivated passive learners. The sisters' provision of experiences were also caring in terms of meeting differentiated needs of children with different strengths and abilities. This finding accords with Noddings' (2005) proposal to enter into "caring relations" with students and to listen to their context and respond authentically by way of what she terms "engrossment" (p.2). Providing broad educational experiences was also a way for the sisters to build trusting relationships. Their visionary approach has implications for today's educational system as the COVID-19 pandemic has shown in terms of the importance of rebuilding trusting relationships. It is acknowledged that trusting relationships will be more critical than ever for leaders to shepherd their organisations and stake holders through the COVID-19 crises as recovery without trust rests on shaky ground (Lee, Sniderman, Marquard & Galletto, 2020, p.2).

5.3.2. Christian Servant Leadership. This finding represented the sisters' role modeling of Jesus' example of servant leadership for the inclusion of all. From a policy perspective, this research may have implications for school leadership as spiritual intelligence directs an effective leader's moral compass. It is also manifest, as Zohar (2005) explained, in

their “tendency to ask fundamental “why” questions” (p.49). Barlosky (1992) asserted the essentiality of thinking critically in the sphere of education and stated, “As Hodgkinson’s Socratic paraphrases remind us, “the unexamined value is not worth holding” and “unexamined administration is not worth doing” (p.411). This finding of Christian servant leadership has implications for how principals, teachers and management bodies discern and mediate state targets with education for flourishing. The advancements in science and technology have the potential to increase social inequities if the goal of education is merely to prepare people for work. The purpose of education needs to be to empower people to develop knowledge, skills, attitudes and values to become citizens with purpose who can work with people with different perspectives and find creative solutions to future problems. (“Organisation for Economic, Co-operation and Development,” 2018, p.4). As religious sisters’ legacy of Christian servant leadership served students’ need for self-belief and flourishing, above academic success, this has implications for a more empathetic, relational and critically reflective spiritual purpose for future Irish post-primary educational leadership.

5.3.3. Structures. This finding speaks to leadership development in terms of religious sisters’ use of a variety of formal and informal structures to nurture relationships and support change and improvements. Many theorists acknowledged that structures can help school leaders to affect change while attending to fears of teachers. Ruth (2006) proposed “structuring out destructive conflict and creating safety for people to address difficult issues.” (Ruth, 2006, p.275). Another structural approach endorsed by Gottlieb and Sneden (2005), was Tuckman’s model of forming, storming, norming and adjourning “because it provided a framework and an effective lens for viewing practice settings” (as cited in Bonebright, 2010, p.116). An additional means of fostering trust is to arrange small groups so people can “talk about their fears or reservations.” (Corey & Corey, 2006, p. 132). The religious sisters’ use of a variety of structures from students’ councils to parables from the bible provided a

framework through which students could explore their identity. According to Fowler “the sequence of faith stages is, itself, a formal narrative of the self in the process of constructing and reconstructing its centring and life-interpreting meanings” (Fowler, 2001, p.164). The implications for this Christian educational leadership use of structures are in terms of the potential for self-actualisation for the whole school community. This study echoes Humphreys’ (2010) assertion that until recently, principals of voluntary secondary schools have been members of religious orders and their congregations supported them in their work (p.6). This was confirmed by the sisters’ testimonies in this study and in the literature review. Humphreys pointed to the introduction of The Articles of Management (AMCSS 1989) to prepare for the reduction in numbers of religious and increase in the numbers of lay principals (p.6). This acknowledgment represents a state endorsement of religious orders’ structural approach to leadership. Religious sisters’ relational use of a wide variety structures to support change is another enduring legacy of their educational leadership in Irish post-primary schools.

5.4. Recommendations

Ranges of initiatives were recently introduced to reduce principal and teacher isolation, provide structural support and nurture critically reflective collaborative and inclusive cultures in Irish post-primary education. Some of these include, Misneach, Droichead, Cosán and curricular reform. These developments implicitly acknowledge the void that the religious sisters’ decline has left in Irish education firstly in formal and informal structural support, particularly for the principal and also for mentoring young teachers but primarily in a deficit of spiritual purpose of care and servant leadership which Trusts, such as Le Chéile recognise. Further research into spiritual purpose in education encompassing a broader study on the female religious’ legacy as well as the legacy of male religious and a

synthesis of both could provide further insights to inform future Irish post-primary educational leadership.

5.5. Final Note

This qualitative study makes an incremental contribution to the specific problem concerning the lack of research, to date on religious sisters' Irish educational leadership legacy. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) highlighted the benefits of narrative data collection methodology in educational inquiry as it both allows for the percolation of time and experience and incorporates the participant and researcher stories (as cited in Webster & Mertova, 2007, p.88). Religious sisters' legacy to Christian leadership in Irish post-primary education as determined in this study is confirmed by research findings. The findings show that religious female leadership is understood in the Irish post-primary school context to be a legacy of care, Christian servant leadership and the use of formal and informal structures to nurture relationships and support change. Female religious orders represent a synthesis of three sources of community wisdom on effective leadership in education, which are Christian leadership, general leadership theory and female leadership.

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Appendix A

Pilot Interview Questions

1. How did you come to your decision to join a religious order?
2. What did joining an order and becoming a teacher mean to you?
3. How would you describe your achievements in respect of effective Christian leadership in post-primary education in Ireland?
4. How would you describe the contribution of your order to Christian leadership in Irish post-primary education?
5. How did your Christian leadership help you to serve as a role model in your educational environment?
6. How did you challenge people to reach their full potential, as a Christian leader in an Irish post primary context?
7. How would you describe your approach to Christian leadership in the Irish post primary educational context?
8. What prepared you for your role as a Christian leader in an Irish post primary context?
9. How was it helpful to you to live with women who had experience of Christian leadership in an Irish post primary setting?
10. How would you describe the role of your order in addressing gender stereotypes?

Appendix B

Holy Faith Sisters' Interview Questions

Christian Purpose, Motivation and Success

- I am interested to know, as a female religious school leader, what was your main purpose and how did you achieve this for your school community?
- How did you judge success, can you think of any examples?
- Could you tell me why you were motivated to lead a school?

The Person and Female Religious Identity

- Specifically in the context of female Christian leadership, what are the most important qualities needed to lead school improvement?
- Tell me about your own gifts as a female, religious, leader and about times when you used these qualities in your leadership of a school please?
- How did your Christian faith help you to evaluate your school leadership practice?

Combining General Leadership Style with Female Leadership and Christian

Leadership List. Please choose from the list of General Leadership Styles below to describe your general leadership style in answering the questions that follow:

- Behavioural Leadership;
- Autocratic Leadership;
- Democratic or Participative Leadership;
- Laissez-Faire Leadership;
- Paternalistic Leadership;
- Situational leadership.

Adjust style to fit the development level of the followers he is trying to influence.

- Transactional leadership:

Promoting compliance by followers through both rewards and punishments.

- Servant leadership:

Goal of the leader is to serve.

- Transformational leadership:

Works with teams to identify needed change, creating a vision to guide change through inspiration, with members of a group.

Questions. Talk to me about how you managed the 3 areas of female leadership, Christian faith leadership and general leadership style in leading a school:

- Can you think of an example when there was a conflict between your general leadership style and your Christian faith or how did they complement each other?
- Can you think of a time when you faced obstacles to your school leadership because you were a female leader?
- How has your application of your Christian faith in your leadership of a school helped you to understand your faith better?

Social Context:

Tell me about examples of personal and social challenges and conflicts you faced as a female religious leader of a post primary school in Ireland and how you coped with them:

- Looking back, from your student days at school, to your time as an educational leader, what are the changes and critical issues in Irish society that face the church, particularly for women?
- From your perspective as a female Christian leader, what insights can you share about examples of strategies you used to manage these issues that might help educational leaders in post primary education today?

- What opportunities or challenges did your role as a religious sister leading an Irish post primary school present?

Holy Faith Female Religious Order

Talk to me about what you see as the specific contribution that the Holy Faith order has made to Irish society through the importance of the educational work of your congregation in Irish post primary schools?

- How would you describe this legacy?
- How does the Holy Faith Sisters' specific approach to leadership influence your own educational leadership?
- Tell me about what preparation or support you had for educational leadership.

The questions seek to ascertain insights regarding key features of female religious sisters' leadership in Irish post primary schools from themes that may emerge. The insights may prove relevant in informing future educational leadership practices.

Appendix C

Themes and Subthemes

The themes and subthemes that emerged from the research are represented in Table C1 below.

Table C1

Table 1 <i>Themes and Subthemes</i>				
<i>Purpose (What)</i>	<i>Reason (Why)</i>	<i>Approach (How)</i>	<i>Approach (How)</i>	<i>Approach (How)</i>
<i>Theme One:</i>	<i>Theme Two:</i>	<i>Theme Three:</i>	<i>Theme Four:</i>	<i>Theme Five:</i>
Empowering care and service	Christian Faith	Relationships	Inclusion	Structures of Care
<i>Subthemes:</i>	<i>Subthemes:</i>	<i>Subthemes:</i>	<i>Subthemes:</i>	<i>Subthemes:</i>
Enabling through education and service; Personal effort rather than academic achievement; Experiential learning; Community collaboration; Dignity; Respect; Wisdom; Self-belief; Money; Change;	Prayer Gospel Values Jesus as role model; Mission; Leadership styles;	All educational stakeholders; Community; International training networks; Building trust; Honesty; Listening; Practical measures; Service; Transformative; Experiences; No gender bias; Emotional Intelligence; Empathy; Change.	Social issues; Poverty; Attitudes; Generosity; Courage; Discernment; Humility; Drugs; Abuse; Meeting needs; Change.	Care; Review and evaluation; Reflection; Distributive leadership; Pastoral; Year Heads; Board of Management; Collaboration; Discernment; Administration; Support; Change.

Appendix D

Abbreviations

Abbreviations are represented in Table D2 below.

Table D2

A.C.C.S.	Association of Comprehensive and Community Schools
A.S.T.I.	Association of Secondary Teachers of Ireland
F.E.R.G.	Fingal Education Resource Group
L.C.V.P.	Leaving Certificate Vocational Education Programme
N.C.C.A.	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
N.I.	Narrative Inquiry
VII	Vatican Council II

Appendix E

Mullingar,

Co. Westmeath,

14/04/2020

A Chara,

Thank you for agreeing to participate with this research into the positive legacy of female religious orders' Christian leadership in Irish post-primary schools.

My purpose is to explore five main areas from your experience as a female religious leader of an Irish post-primary school. The five areas are Purpose; Person; Leadership Style(s); Social Context and Religious Order. There are three questions in each of these section areas. Please do not be limited by the questions, as they are a guide.

Please find a consent letter for you to sign, along with directions as an attachment with this email.

Contact me any time with any queries you may have. Thank you and I look forward to working with you on this research.

Kind wishes,

Ceithre Guilfoyle

Appendix F

Mullingar,
Co. Westmeath.

14^h April 2020

A Chara,

Thank you for your kindness in participating in this research interview. The purpose of the interview is for a dissertation I am undertaking in Marino Institute of Education. My research question is **Exploring the Positive Legacy of Catholic Female Religious Orders' Approach to Christian Leadership in Education in Irish Post-Primary Schools in the Late Nineteenth and Twentieth Century.**

The aim of the interview is to explore your experience of Christian leadership in Irish post-primary schools. Your participation is completely voluntary and you can decide to disengage at any time. Please contact me if you have any questions during the process.

Given the current health crisis relating to the spread of COVID 19 the interview will be conducted online or by phone and will be recorded, with your permission as I hope to use your testimonies anonymously in my dissertation. It will take one hour and will then be transcribed with voice-recognition software and emailed to you for your review of the interview transcript for accuracy. Your review should take about 15 to 20 minutes.

My supervisor and myself as researcher will be aware of the specific data but otherwise no individuals or schools will be named. The material gathered in the interview will be stored securely on a password protected hard drive and destroyed after one year. The data from the dissertation may be presented in future publications.

Please indicate your consent by signing below and returning this letter to me by post or by returning a scanned/photographed copy by email to cguilfoyle@stwolstans.ie.

Thank you most sincerely for your time and participation in what promises to be an interesting meeting.

(Ceithre Guilfoyle)

Research Consent

I have read and understood the conditions under which I will participate in this online/phone interview and give my consent to be a participant and to have the discussion recorded.

I agree that any data contributed by me may be published without my identity being disclosed.

Signature: _____ Date: _____