

Running head: CATHOLIC EDUCATION IN NOVA SCOTIA

**Catholic Education in Nova Scotia: Understanding Parents and their Motives
for Enrolling their Children in Catholic Schools**

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A thesis submitted to the Department of Education
in partial fulfillment
Of the requirements for the degree of
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For my parents, the wind beneath my wings

For my brother, my stronghold and fortress

and

For the Almighty Father, indeed, our purpose in writing You this,
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Abstract

The small Catholic school community in Nova Scotia must rely upon networking and working with each other to provide updates and exchange views with each school.

Understanding why parents support Catholic schools in Nova Scotia will greatly help the Catholic school community in providing direction and informing leadership for existing Catholic schools. It is important to know what parents are seeking when they chose Catholic schools, as the survival of these schools depends on the tuition-paying parents.

In this study, the researcher sought to understand the motives that parents in Nova Scotia have for enrolling their children in Catholic schools. This research employed a mixed method study which illustrates two major perspectives in research. Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, percentages) were used to tabulate and analyze the survey data. The researcher did a face-to-face interview with a small number of parents and each interview was audio taped and transcribed by the researcher. Common characteristics among parents interviewed were identified based from the survey, and themes were established based on interview results.

An examination of previous dissertations conducted revealed a list of factors parents consider in choosing Catholic schools. This list was utilized to develop the factors presented to parents in the survey and during the interview. Parents were asked to rate each of 25 reasons for choosing a Catholic school on a Likert-type scale.

Three out of the four invited Catholic schools in Nova Scotia with an elementary level participated in the study. Ten out of 10 Catholic parents from School A answered the survey. Twenty-seven out of the 58 surveys distributed to Catholic parents in School B were completed. Three out of four Catholic parents from School C completed the survey. Five

parents from School A, four parents from School B and three parents from School C were interviewed. In total, survey return rate was 40 out of 72 (55.56%) and twelve Catholic parents were interviewed.

Analysis of parent interviews revealed several factors out of the 25 given choices are interconnected but are subsequent under four major themes. The first factor considered is that the school's philosophy mirrors that of home. The next factor considered is the quality of curriculum, and that is linked with well-defined academic structure and instructional goals. The third factor identified is the school's emphasis on religious and moral values. The fourth factor related to the teachers. Parents recognize the value of the teachers' commitment, their high behavioral expectations from children and their involvement in the academic but also the character formation of the child. The fifth factor identified is related to school environment. Parents give importance to the safe school environment and the warm and friendly school climate. This is associated with parent's perception of a sense of community in these schools

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Education is not just about accumulation of facts, no matter how true. Education is about human growth and wholeness. Education aims constantly to move us beyond our present limits toward realization of our full possibilities. At least implicitly, therefore, all education is a reach for the transcendent. Insofar as all education is a reaching for transcendence and an expression of that human quest, all good education must have a spiritual dimension. (Geernaert, D. February 18, 2010)

How then does one identify good education? Are there certain precepts, certain standards, and certain criteria that parents have in mind when talking about education for their children? Are there particular factors that parents consider when choosing a school for their child(ren)? This research explored the factors that parents deem important when it comes to the education of their children. Factors behind their motives for enrolling their child(ren) in Catholic schools were identified.

A. Purpose/Research Question

In the province of Nova Scotia, the Nova Scotia School Boards Association (NSSBA) is the provincial voice for school boards, advocating on behalf of the best interests and needs of the public school and their students. (www.nssba.ednet.ns.ca) Its mission states that it is committed to excellence in public education for students by providing services to all its member schools.

The Catholic school community of Nova Scotia however, is a small group. There is no known Catholic District School Board like the one located in Toronto. In the Canadian Catholic School Trustee's Association (CCSTA) website, there is little or no update regarding Catholic Schools in Nova Scotia. The closest that the Catholic school community in Nova Scotia can have is through networking and working with each other to provide updates and exchange views with each school.

Working with parents in any way to support Catholic Education in Nova Scotia will greatly help the Catholic school community in providing direction and mutual support to existing Catholic schools and enhancing the good sense of community Catholic schools have that has been traditional within Catholic communities. To meet the needs of the Catholic families, Catholic school educators and the school system alike must learn as much as they can with regard to concerns/thoughts these families have. It is important to know what parents are seeking when they chose Catholic schools, often in the face of financial challenge. Such information is vital not only for the families but also for the continued existence of these Catholic schools whose survival depends on the tuition-paying parents. Parents must be satisfied with the quality of education these Catholic schools provide, and knowing parent motivations in enrolling their children in schools other than the public schools will help the Nova Scotia School Board Association (NSSBA) in knowing why many Catholic and other religious families are not satisfied with the education offered in their schools.

The study will focus on these questions:

- 1) What are the factors motivating Nova Scotia parents to choose Catholic schools for their child(ren)?
- 2) What, if any, are the common characteristics of parents/families in Nova Scotia who enroll their child(ren) in Catholic schools?
- 3) What, if any past educational experience of the parents may have influenced their decision?
- 4) To what extent do the impact of school culture, peers, teachers and administration influence parents in their decisions?
- 5) What teacher attributes do parents think play an important role when it comes to being the “second parents” of their children while they are in school?
- 6) What concerns or reservations, if any, do parents have before and during their child(ren)’s enrollment in Catholic schools?

B. Significance of the Study

In the year 2006, from the total estimated population of 913,462 in the province of Nova Scotia (<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/>), a total estimate of 327, 030 are Catholics (<http://www.catholic-hierarchy.org/>). The influx of immigrant families through the years likely would have increased the percentage of Catholics in the general population.

Nova Scotia is divided into three archdioceses: Halifax, Antigonish and Yarmouth. At present, there are only five identified Catholic schools across the province. Results of this

study will provide better understanding of Catholic education for the estimated 327,030 members of the Catholic population and for those responsible for public education. The results may also be of use to the small number of Catholic schools currently operating in the province and those individuals or groups who are considering establishing Catholic schools.

In our changing world, parents can benefit from understanding or being aware of other parents' motivation or reasons behind their choice of school. This study might give parents insights and better perceptions about the choice of school for their children. For parents, both Catholic and non-Catholic, who want their children enrolled in a school other than the public schools, this study may provide them background to help them make reasoned educational decisions about the kind of schools they want for their children. This study will also give a chance to parents to voice their concerns about both public and independent Catholic schools.

It is hoped that this study will provide insights into the past, present and potential future of the Catholic school community in Nova Scotia. Conducting a study about Catholic schools in the province may contribute to the survival of the few existing Catholic schools in Nova Scotia. Knowing what the parents want will provide the schools a better understanding on how to tailor and improve their programs to the standards and expectations of their foremost 'clients' who are the tuition-paying parents. This study hopes to provide information on the factors parents consider in enrolling their child(ren) in Catholic schools. Once these existing schools discover the real reasons why parents enroll their child(ren) in Catholic schools, they may find the results beneficial in being able to better satisfy or maintain the parents' expectations. It will also give the schools an opportunity to better

package and present themselves to potential parents and students. By understanding the factors parents consider important in choosing a school for their children, effectiveness and school satisfaction will greatly be improved. According to Coleman (1994), better schools are created by the act of choice itself. This act of school choice assures an affinity of interests and purposes among the entire school community. It also helps the schools develop goals and get support from all involved in attaining them.

To date, no study has been done in Nova Scotia about the motivation of parents in enrolling their children in Catholic schools. Although not regarding the said topic, one thesis has been written about Catholic education in Nova Scotia. Sister Francis Xavier Walsh (1958) discussed the evolution of Catholic public schools in Nova Scotia. In 2009, Reverend John M. Schultz (2009) conducted a study in the US on why parents choose Catholic schools. This study gathered answers from parents who have their child(ren) enrolled in Catholic schools in the Diocese of Erie, Pennsylvania, USA. In 2002, Robert Janzen conducted a study about parents who chose to enroll their grade one child(ren) in an independent school in Manitoba. This proposed study about understanding the motives of parents from Nova Scotia will serve as springboard for future studies regarding Catholic schools/education in the province. Educational researchers from other provinces may also find it interesting to conduct a study about Catholic schools in Nova Scotia no matter how small the Catholic school community is. In the Canadian Catholic School Trustee's Association website, there has been no update about the current situation of Catholic schools in Nova Scotia. This study desires to spark the interest of educational researchers to conduct more studies thus putting Nova Scotia in the loop with the rest of the Catholic schools in the country.

The researcher believes that it is time to give attention to Catholic education/schools in Nova Scotia which once served a significant proportion of students in the province but which today operates on the margins of the educational system.

C. Limitation

Limitations of this study include:

- 1) Only Catholic parents of currently enrolled students were surveyed and interviewed.
- 2) The participants are parents of primary to grade seven students only.
- 3) The parents interviewed are only 12 out of the 40 parents who answered the survey
- 4) Only three of the four Catholic schools in the province with elementary level participated.

D. Definition of Terms/Acronyms

CAIS: Canadian Association of Independent Schools

Catholic: Many dictionaries define the word “catholic” (small “c”) as meaning “universal”.

This according to Fowler, is a somewhat limiting definition as the word catholic comes from two Greek words, kata and holos. Holos means “whole”. It refers to the concept of many parts working together and it can also mean “everyone.”

When the word kata is used with holos (i.e. katholos) it means “welcoming everyone.” Being catholic then, entails living with authentic love of self and other, and in solidarity with all people. It believes in the universality of God’s love, the core Christian conviction that God loves all people. (Fowler, p.5)

Catholic school: as defined in the Second Vatican Council, *Declaration on Christian Education*, " *Gravissimum Educationis* ", 8, the Catholic school is committed thus to the development of the whole man, since in Christ, the Perfect Man, all human values find their [fulfillment] and unity. Herein [lies] the specifically Catholic character of the school. Its duty to cultivate human values in their own legitimate right in accordance with its particular mission to serve all men has its origin in the figure of Christ. (para. 35)

Catholic education: The Second Vatican Council stated that Catholic education seek to achieve an effective system of education at all levels which corresponds to the total educational needs of young people today in Catholic schools. The Sacred Congregation also addresses itself to all who are responsible for education - parents, teachers, young people and school authorities - and urges them to pool all their resources and the means at their disposal to enable Catholic schools to provide a service which is truly civic and apostolic. (para. 4)

CCSTA: Canadian Catholic Schools Trustee's Association

Independent schools: as Wikipedia defined, is a school that is independent in its finances and governance; it is not dependent upon national or local government for financing its operations nor reliant on taxpayer contributions, and is instead funded by a combination of tuition charges, gifts, and in some cases the investment yield of an endowment. It is governed by a board of directors that is elected by an independent means and a system of governance that ensures

its independent operation. It may receive government funds but its board must be independent (para. 1).

NSSBA: Nova Scotia School Boards Association

School choice: as Wikipedia defined, is a term used to describe a wide array of programs aimed at giving families the opportunity to choose the school their children will attend. School choice does not give preference to one form of schooling or another; it manifests itself whenever a student attends school outside of the one they would have been assigned to geographically. The most common options offered by school choice programs are open enrollment laws that allow students to attend other public schools, private schools, charter schools, tax credit and deductions for expenses related to schooling, vouchers, and homeschooling (para. 1).

E. Education in Canada/ Overview of the Public Schools

Education in Canada has been governed and overseen by each province since the British North American Act of 1867. Each province has its Ministry or Department of Education, which oversees the public education system within that province including the curriculum and operation of the school. Under the umbrella of the department/ministry of education are the district school boards. Canada generally has 190 days in a school year. The school year officially starts in September and runs until the end of June. Starting at grade one up to grade twelve, education is publicly funded. Attendance in school is mandatory until the age of sixteen or eighteen depending on the province. The provincial school board or the Ministry of Education is the authority in implementing the curriculum to be followed by the

schools under their jurisdiction. Generally, a child goes to the public school that serves the area where their family lives. It is uncommon that a child will be accepted at a public school in another area, unless it is under excruciating circumstances. Each city provides profiles of their local schools and comparative scores for different grades. According to a website to assist new immigrants to Canada, www.justlanded.com, most communities take pride in the quality of their local public school system, which is crucial in maintaining property values (para. 6). Inasmuch as each province has their school board, the quality of public schools varies from province to province and community to community.

F. Independent Schools / Overview of Independent Schools in Canada

After parents have done their ‘homework’ in researching about the school which serves their community, it could have two results. One could be that, the public school serving their community does not meet the standards they had in mind or the second result could be, thinking it would work, they have tried the public school system and later on discovered it does not fit their child(ren) very well. This is the case when educational alternatives or school choice comes in the picture. Choice in schooling is central to education. For the majority of Canadian parents, there are alternatives to the neighborhood school. There are increasing numbers of independent schools available because Canadian parents are becoming more willing to spend their own money to buy educational services for their child(ren). So choice remains an open option for parents. (Coleman, 1994)

“Canadians are among the most mobile citizens in the world, and most Canadian children change schools several times during their 13 years or so of public schooling.” (Coleman, 1994, p. 15) As mentioned previously, depending on the area the family lives in

and the zoning rules governing their city, the public school closest to their home is their school choice by default. There are other alternatives available, in the event that the parents do not want to go by 'default' with regard to their child(ren)'s school.

Independent schools are autonomous in terms of their finances and governance. According to Wikipedia.com, an independent school does not rely upon federal or provincial government for its funding or operations. Many independent schools rely on public money, but they do not rely on public money alone. Instead, funding is a combination of tuition charges, gifts, bursaries, endowments. Furthermore, most independent schools are governed by a board of directors. These boards are elected, appointed or selected through a combination of appointment and election. Like the Catholic Separate Schools in Ontario, they may receive government funds; however, their boards must be independent. Independent schools may or may not have a religious affiliation.

The Canadian Association of Independent Schools (CAIS) has a listing of independent schools across Canada including those in the province of Nova Scotia. There are also several schools, which are religiously affiliated. The Canadian Catholic Schools Trustee's Association (CCSTA) is the association of Catholic schools in Canada. Although some provinces like Ontario, have their own Catholic School Boards, Nova Scotia does not have its own Catholic school board. The public school system is governed by the Nova Scotia School Board Association (NSSBA), which was founded in 1954 by a group of concerned citizens.

Under the Education Act, parents may provide a home education program for their child(ren) centered in their home (<http://homeschooling.ednet.ns.ca/>). However, the

Department of Education and school boards do not provide funding for home schooling. There are certain roles and responsibilities that parents need to follow if they wish to home school their child(ren). As listed on the Nova Scotia Department of Education website, one of which is that they have to advise the Department of Education of their intent to educate their child(ren) at home. (<http://homeschooling.ednet.ns.ca/roles/parentsguardians>) Further, registration should be done annually and a report of the child's progress must be submitted to the Department of Education. In the province of Nova Scotia, there are several network or support groups for families who home school their child(ren), these include: Nova Scotia Home Education Association (<http://www.nshea.ca/>), Home Learners of Nova Scotia (<http://ca.groups.yahoo.com/group/HomeLearnersNS/?tab=s>), Home Based Learners of Nova Scotia (<http://sites.google.com/site/homebasedlearnersofnovascotia/>). Halifax/Dartmouth Home Educators Group. Home Educating Mothers' Support (<http://www.hems-ns.ca/>). Most of these are discussion groups open to all home schooling families in Nova Scotia so families can network, share experience, and seek for advice and support. The families who home school their children commonly follow the K-12 curriculum guidelines for Nova Scotia public schools since these documents may be downloaded or ordered free of charge from the Nova Scotia Department of Education Website.

G. Catholic Education / Catholic Education in Canada

Catholic author Thomas Lickona writes: the purpose of the Church and of Catholic education is to turn us into little Christs. It is to continue the process of our transformation in Christ that began in our baptism. We experience this continuing transformation through the sacraments, through prayer, through the many ways we receive God's grace, and through our own efforts to cooperate with that grace. Finally,

we may be transformed, if our spirits are open, by our encounter with the Jesus in others. (2000, p.160)

From a study he conducted in the Diocese of Erie in the USA, Reverend John M. Schultz (2009), discovered from his mother's personal experience in the year 1930's, that if a parochial or Catholic school was available in the town in which a family lived, the children of the Catholic families automatically went to Catholic schools for their entire school career. The study maintained that for many Catholic families, enrolling their children in the Catholic school was not an 'option' or an 'alternative' but a given. Catholic parents automatically sent their children to the local parish school.

Catholic schools, as defined by the Education Committee of the Canadian Catholic School Trustee's Association (CCSTA), is more than a school with a typical catholic name, or staffed by teachers who are Catholic, or attended by students who are baptized Catholics. CCSTA, quoting Archbishop Philip F. Pocock (Toronto, March 1971), "a Catholic school is one in which God, His truth, His life are integrated into the entire syllabus, curriculum and life of the school." These aspects and many more may be present but particular elements must be present for a Catholic school to be recognized as fully Catholic. When these are found, the school is able to pursue the goal of educating the whole child – academically, socially, physically, psychologically, morally and spiritually. As further defined by the CCSTA, a Catholic school system is more than the sum of the board and its schools. In its fullest sense, it is comprised of those groups, the parents, supporters and associates across the district. As CCSTA further defined, the support of the church, especially its leaders such as the Bishops, Religious orders and lay organizations should be available. The responsibility of

bridging the gap is the board and its member's responsibility. A valued part of the work of the Board is a regular contact with the diocese, parish, and other lay organizations.

According to D'Souza (2003), the Canadian Catholic Bishops have some influence in the education of Catholic schools, but federal laws, provincial jurisdiction and the independence of the Catholic school boards limit this influence.

According to the précis of a letter to teachers from the Congregation for Catholic Education, Farm (1997) summarized that the fundamental characteristics of the Catholic school are as follows: a place of integral education of the human person, a clear educational project of which Christ is the foundation, an ecclesial and cultural identity, a service to society – a mission, a work of love. According to Mc Dermott (1997) what makes a Catholic school unique is that it is a religious community within an academic community. He also stated that in a Catholic school, learning and believing are both present.

Perhaps for many Catholic parents, it is indeed a given more than an option. For some parents, it may be the best option they have with regard to the factors they consider in selecting a school for their children.

It is important, however, to consider the historical context in which the independent Catholic schools examined in this study were formed. Unlike Ontario, Québec, and several other Canadian provinces, Nova Scotia never had any formal provision for the public funding of Catholic schools. Rather, as it has been described in the work of Sister Francis Xavier, in certain parts of the province, where the number of Catholic families formed a majority or a sizeable minority of the population, local school boards could operate public schools that were staffed by Catholic teachers, including members of religious orders, attended by

Catholic children from the area. While these schools could not teach religion during the prescribed school day, they could do before or after the school day, and they could maintain a Catholic atmosphere in their building and grounds. (Walsh, 1958) This so-called “gentlemen’s agreement” continued in force until the late 1960s. In other parts of the province, where Catholics were less numerous, individual parishes often maintained independent parochial schools, but these, too, by the late 1960s, became, with the decline in the numbers of teachers in religious orders, too expensive for parishes to support. (Bérard, 2008) For nearly forty years, Catholic education in Nova Scotia effectively disappeared. In recent years, however, a reawakening of interest in Catholic education among the laity led to the establishment of several independent, lay-controlled and administered, Catholic schools, three of which provided the families interviewed in this study.

H. Parents (rights and roles) and Catholic education

“Is this the right place for my child?” According to Coleman (1994), this is something all parents have asked themselves at some point in their child(ren)’s schooling. He also mentioned that a “place” could refer to a classroom, sometimes to the school and sometimes, to a particular school system. Perhaps, it could also mean the ‘community’ comprising of the administrator, teachers and the rest of the staff in the school. Moreover, Coleman denoted that, for a parent, especially with a first child, the school is not a place to explore the possibility of changing their child’s circumstances. Parents would not want to change their child’s condition to fit in a particular school and they would not have the ability either to change the school. Hence, the parents would have to find a school which will best suit their child(ren).

Mc Dermott (1997) quoting Supreme Court Justice McReynolds (1925), “the child is not the mere creature of the state; those who nurture him and direct his destiny have the right, coupled with the high duty, to recognize and prepare him for additional obligations.” (p.36) He furthered that parents are the primary and principal educators of their child(ren), that parents are the first to help a child develop, parents are the ones to teach their child(ren) new skills like walking and talking and to direct the formation of habits like table manners or social customs. Indeed, parents play a very huge and pivotal role when it comes to their child(ren)’s education.

Hahn and Hasson (1996) referencing the encyclical of Pius XI on the Christian education of Youth, mentioned that as it is that parents are the ones who gave life to their child(ren), on them lies the greatest obligation of educating them and that the role of parents in education is very vital that it is almost impossible to provide a substitute. This definition of irreplaceable role is the reason why some Catholic parents home school their child(ren) and more often than not, the Catholic schools continue this education that began at home.

“Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord” (*Ephesians 6:4, New American Standard Bible*). “Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it” (*Proverbs 22:6, New American Standard Bible*). “You shall teach [God’s word] to your children ... when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up” (*Deuteronomy 11:19 New American Standard Bible*). These are samples of Bible verses which highlights the role of parents regarding their child(ren)’s education. This says

that parents play the primary part in bringing up their child(ren) in a way that is in accordance to the teachings of the church.

The Vatican council (The Catholic School, para.73) stated in its Sacred Congregation for Catholic education that, while it is the task of the whole educative system to ensure that a Christian environment is maintained and practiced, the responsibility chiefly applies to Christian parents who enroll their child(ren) to a specific school. It does not stop from choosing a school and it does not relieve them of their personal duty to give their children a Christian upbringing.

In an apostolic exhortation by Pope John Paul II, Hahn and Hasson (1996) mentioned in their book that, the Catholic Church has long considered parents as the first and foremost educators of their children. They have also stated that parents play a very crucial role in shaping and teaching their child – it is in the family that a child's education begins. Further, it was also mentioned that, there is a link between the responsibilities of having children with the need to ensure their education.

With roles come rights. Inasmuch as parents have pivotal roles to play when it comes to their child(ren)'s education, they also have corresponding rights. Catholic schools are present to help provide every child with an education that respects his complete development but they are also giving the parents the right to choose an education for their children which conforms to their legitimate requirements. (Cf Second Vatican Council, *Declaration on Christian Education "Gravissimum Educationis "*, 6) Parents have all the right to choose what they deem to be the best for their children. They have the right to choose a school wherein they know their child(ren) will grow in all areas of their lives, whether it be

physically, intellectually and spiritually. Parents these days have more and more opportunities for choice and they have to make informed judgments about schools to be able to exercise this right to choose.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of Related Literature

Education, unlike clothing, is not one-size fits all. It is not like a piece of clothing that even if it is not the perfect fit, one can still wear it and it will somehow work. One school structure or school system might not work for all the children in the neighborhood. Children of different ages, different cultural and socio economic backgrounds have unique needs and every individual student might need different accommodations. Education is also not like buying a house. When one plans to purchase a house, one goes around the neighborhood, find one that almost suits what they want or need, then after buying it, one can renovate or have it re-structured to their wishes. Again, it is not the case for finding a school for one's child(ren). Parents cannot "renovate" or "re-structure" the school where they enroll their child(ren). Parents may not have that ability but they have the power and the freedom to choose the school which they believe is the best fit for their child(ren).

Parents know what is good for their child(ren) and they generally strive to give the best for them. Parents work hard to provide the basic needs of their children, a decent shelter, good clothing, healthy meals and education is no different. Parents want the best possible education for their child(ren) and they need all the opportunity to choose what they think is best for them, even if they do not always agree on that it might entail.

A. Overview on School Choice

According to Schneider et al. (2000): “School choice is designed to shift power to parents, enabling them to shop around for their child’s school” (p.87). This transforms parents from passive participants in the educational school system to active decision makers.

In the American context, The Foundation for Educational Choice website, defined school choices as a “common sense idea that gives every parent the power and freedom to choose their children’s education” (para. 1). Common sense means that parents are given the freedom to choose a school, not based on their home address but based on the school’s quality and their child(ren)’s need/s. School choice will give parents the financial power by letting them use public funds to send their child(ren) to a public or private school of their choice. In America, children are assigned to a school based on where their parents live, parent freedom as further defined in the website, gives parents the freedom to choose a school whether is it public or private, near or far, religious or secular, that they think will work best for their child(ren) regardless of where they live. School choice will also push all schools, private or public to offer high quality education possible in order to recruit and retain students. As further identified in the Foundation for Educational Choice website, the different forms of school choices available in the US are as follows: school vouchers, this allows parents to use all or a part of the tax funding to send their children to the public or private school of their choice; tax-credit scholarship programs, corporations or individuals receive a tax credit from state taxes for making donations to non-profit organizations. In turn, these organizations use the money to fund private scholarships for students who have to pass a certain criteria to be eligible for the awards. Alternative schooling is also another form and under this are: home schooling, where children are schooled at home. There are also charter

schools which are tuition-free and independent public schools, then there are also virtual or online schooling where curriculum is primarily taught online. Magnet schools are public schools that have a specialized function like art or science but these schools are not open to all students, one must write a test and pass to be able to get into the school.

In the Canadian context, www.schoolchoice.ca website defined school choice as “parents can choose the school their child(ren) attend without financial penalty or burden resulting from that choice” (para. 1). The school choice website further mentioned that school choice exists when the government supports parents in choosing the type of school which best suits their child(ren), this would lessen the financial burden of parents from choosing outside the public school system. In Canada, for the moment, choice is still restricted (Coleman, 1994). Some parents choose independent schools, a few families within the public school system choose French immersion school or other specialized type of school and some choose home schooling. As enumerated by Bosetti (2004), school choice forms in Canada include: alternative programs like the language immersion and arts based education program, Montessori school, the private schools whether it is secular or religious affiliated and home schooling. Tax Credit was at first implemented in the province of Ontario but the government repealed this Tax Credit scheme in 2003. Owens (2004) mentioned that in the province of British Columbia and Alberta, special focus public schools or specialty schools like hockey schools, schools for the gifted and schools for the disabled have been created. Charter schools, often described as independent public schools are also in existence in the province of Alberta, they are independent from the structures that govern the regular public school but are still under the public school umbrella. As further discussed by Owens (2004), “traditional” schools are also available in the province of British Columbia. These schools

have special focus on basic academics and students are held firm to academic standards, participate in character development programs, are subject to strict a dress code, and are expected to complete regular homework. According to Boyd and Walberg (1990) it is difficult to give a synopsis of parent choice of schools in Canada because situations and policies differ among provinces. As further explained by Boyd and Walberg (1990), unlike in the United States which has an application of nationwide legal principles regarding school choice, Canada is under the political jurisdiction of each province.

B. General Literature on School Choice

When children are still young, parents take charge of almost every aspect in their lives and choosing a school is not an exception.

Godwin and Kemerer writes, School choice is not a behavior that occurs in a single moment of time as does the decision to purchase a refrigerator. Rather, choosing behavior is related to cultural predispositions and ways of looking at the world. Some parents see themselves as active consumers of education while others see their role as passive participants in an educational process where teachers, principals and other experts decide what schools and classes are best for their child. (2002 p. 37)

Public school dissatisfaction

In North America, public school is the common school choice for parents. Their child(ren) usually go/goes to the public school close to their home. Not all parents though are happy with those public schools and end up seeking alternatives and placing their child(ren) outside of the public school system.

In a book by Hepburn (2001) a student from Indianapolis shared his perspective on public school, school voucher, and Catholic school experience and concluded in saying that if everybody had his experience in public school and Catholic school and could choose between them, he guaranteed that everybody will choose the Catholic school. He concluded his sharing with:

Public schools get so much more money than any of the private schools I know, and the private schools are doing a much better job for students. It doesn't make sense. So instead of wasting money on a public school, trying to help a losing cause, you should help a winning cause and give more money to private schools. (Alphonso Harrell, Speech delivered at the Fraser Institute Conference, April 1, 2000)

Patterson (2001) cited in Parker (2007), mentioned that a while a number of parents who favored school choice increased substantially over the 1900s, it is paralleled with the parents' increasing dissatisfaction with the public schools. Pressures for choice, as some claim, are a direct outgrowth of dissatisfaction with public schools (Chubb & Moe, 1990 cited in Davies, 2004). Davies further mentioned that many parents seek various forms of private education because they are unhappy with public schools. The demand for private tutoring, which is a way to supplement a student's academic needs, may also be attributed to public school dissatisfaction. Often, when parents see that their child(ren) are not getting enough of what they deserve, whether it be in education or in a another aspect, they are willing to look for supplements or alternatives.

Some studies reveal specific reasons for parents choosing private schools. For example, Badawi (2005) noted that, one of the most important reasons parents send their

child to an Islamic school was to protect them from public school influences. This decision may not directly reflect public school dissatisfaction but it indirectly implies that there are aspects in the public school system that they do not care about.

A study on why parents in Utah left public schools and chose private school was conducted by Bukhari and Randall (2009). Certain factors were revealed in their study that influenced the parents to leave public education. Among these factors were: quality of curriculum or lack thereof, religious values, moral values, quality of instruction, class size, school climate and disciplined environment. Leaving the public school system might be interpreted that they are not satisfied with it. These were also the same reasons mentioned why parents chose private schools. Bukhari and Randall (2009) further mentioned that parents who participated in this study made significant financial and time investment in choosing the right school for their children.

Peck and Carr (1997), cited in Marsh et al. (2009) mentioned that parents are motivated to break from traditional schooling by dissatisfaction. Marsh et al further mentioned that this dissatisfaction is most simply expressed as an inability on the part of traditional schools to help a student reach their potential.

Better academic programs

Among the many reasons for parents to favour school choice, the quality of academic program was predominant. Burgess et al (2009) found that parents indeed value academic performance in schools. The main reason parents send their child(ren) to school is for them to learn their academics, needless to say, parents would look for a school which performs well

in academics. Driver (2001), also ranked academic achievement as top factor which influenced them to place their child(ren) outside the public school system. Parents wanted a high quality of education for their child(ren). Similarly, Bauch and Goldring (1995), found that parents in the sample schools of their study chose schools overwhelmingly for academic reasons. Moreover, Hsieh and Shen (2001), also revealed that the common motivation for all parents was better academic programs.

The study of Taylor (1996) showed that, among the four different types of private schools, Catholic, Episcopal, Independent and Fundamentalist Christian, quality of curriculum (relevance of what is taught) has the highest total mean and was ranked first. It came in close to quality of instruction (how is it taught) which can both be considered under better academic program. In the study of Lauder milk (1994) parents who enroll their children in the private schools focused on academic rigor.

Bell (2009) in her study about the role of choice set in the selection of schools revealed that in one Midwestern city in the US, an overwhelming proportion of parents cited academic and holistic reasons for selecting a school. Academic reasons pertain to aspects that focused on concerns around classroom teaching and learning. In another study done by the same author, other than geography as an important factor, parents from Detroit also emphasized the school's academic focus was important.

This focus on academics was also evident when parents chose specialty schools for their child(ren). It is interesting to note that in Jackson and Bisset's (2005) study focusing on the relation of gender and school choice, even for parents who send their child(ren) to a single-sex school, academic distinctions or factors also come into consideration. The study

mentioned that single-sex schools are seen to have academic benefits especially for girls. Marsh et al. (2009), in their study done with families in Pennsylvania discovered that the technology behind the Cybercharter schools can afford far greater attention to the individual needs of their children, more power and significant academic rigor.

Hossler and Stage (1992) observed that the educational level of parents was positively related to expectation for the student, higher GPA and greater involvement in school activities. Parents with high educational levels often expect more from their children. Most of the time, they want their children to achieve the same if not more educational level than they have. Parents who have doctorate or post secondary degrees generally will be particular with the quality of curriculum or academic program their children receive in school.

Religious and moral and values

Not only were parents concerned with the academics in their children's school but they were also concerned with the religious and moral values that their child(ren) can acquire while in school.

Hsieh (2001) discovered through a national survey that 34% of the parents who send their children to religious schools claim that religious and moral motivation are important factors considered. Similarly, Lauder milk (1994) found that home school parents focused on values.

Bauch and Goldring's (1995) study revealed that religion, income and ethnicity are important in understanding parents' reasons for school choice. They further mentioned that patrons of denominational schools seek them basically for religious reasons.

In the study of Johnson (1996), one of the top three reasons parents selected private schooling for their child in place of public school because of the consistency of values between home and school.

In the study of Badawi (2005) the most important reason parents send their children to an Islamic school in the US are religious education and Islamic environment. Sometimes, religious practice is so important to a family that it becomes the top factor when choosing a school. Parents coming from a certain religious background would prefer that their child(ren) get religious schooling or at least be exposed to peers with the same religious values.

Cohen-Zada mentioned in her article, *Preserving religious values through education*, that “obviously a religious household will prefer a religious private school to a secular one” (p.7). Further, in the model of their study, it was revealed that parents wanted to transmit their religious traits to their child(ren) and take this desire into account when choosing a school. The intent of this decision was to shelter them from outside influences.

Glenn (2003) reviewing the study done by Benveniste, Carnoy and Rothstein revealed that parents in California who place high value on a religious educational environment or on the greater safety and discipline tend to send their child(ren) to religious schools.

In the study of Bukhari and Randall (2009) conducted in the State of Utah, most respondents in their study were members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints and religion play a major part in a parent’s view on education. In the same study, the researchers discovered that factors such as religion and moral values can overlap. Edwards and Richardson (1981), cited by Bukhari and Randall (2009) examined why 1,927 students

left the county public school in the state of Maryland in order to enroll in a private school. One of the factors was the lack of religious values which parents gave high importance to.

In a 2005 study by Russo in Yoder, Wisconsin, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of the Amish parents who wanted their child(ren) to be exempted from the compulsory education law. These parents believe that their way of life and religion were inseparable therefore sending Amish children to public schools will destroy their religious beliefs.

Safety

Parents cannot watch over their child(ren) 24/7. In as much as they want to, they have other responsibilities to fulfill. Therefore, it is in their top concern that their child(ren) spend most of the day in a safe environment.

Bauch and Goldring (1995) discovered in their study that Catholic and single-focus magnet schools were similar in that they were chosen more frequently for safety and discipline reasons and not for any other reason as compared to multifocus schools. One of the reasons parents enroll their child(ren) in an independent school in Manitoba is because they are looking for schools that provide a greater level of safety for their children, as researched by Janzen (2002).

Coleman, Hoffer and Kilgore (1981) as referenced by Noell (1982) reported that better behavior is observed in Catholic and other private schools than public schools, in which discipline problems are commonplace. It then follows that when better behavior is observed among students, it is likely that they would avoid trouble therefore the environment is safer in that sense. Glenn (2003) reviewing the study done by Benveniste, Carnoy and

Rothstein in the state of California discovered that parents, in particular urban parents seek out private schools as a safe place for their children.

Safety was not always top choice but was among the top choices. In data analysis section in the study of Howell (2006) regarding the importance of different factors in parental assessments of schooling options, “quality of teaching, discipline, safety and order and class size are far and away the most important qualities of a school to parents” (p. 168). Bell (2009) discovered that in the study of Schneider et al. (2000) a study about parental choice in the US, an overall pattern emerged with regard to the most mentioned preference, safety was the third top choice. In the said study, no matter what the ethnicity of the family or whether the families belong to a low or high economic status, safety was a major concern for them in choosing a school for their child(ren). Hausman and Goldring (2000), in their study about parent involvement and satisfaction in magnet schools discovered that the top third reason for choice of parents is associated with the factor of discipline and safety. Although the safety concern does not directly relate to the satisfaction of the parents, they perceive that their child(ren) will be safer in these schools.

C. Literature on Catholic School Choice

According to the Sacred Congregation of Catholic Education: Thus, while policies and opportunities differ from place to place, the Catholic school has its place in any national school system. By offering such an alternative the Church wishes to respond to the obvious need for cooperation in a society characterised by cultural pluralism. Moreover, in this way she helps to promote that freedom of teaching which

champions and guarantees freedom of conscience and the parental right to choose the school best suited to parents' educational purpose. (para. 14).

Parents know what is best for their child(ren), therefore they have all the right to choose the school they know will best suit their child(ren). According to Sander (2005), other than the influence of religion, income might affect the demand for Catholic schooling because households that are more affluent have a greater ability to invest and finance their child(ren)'s education. Families with high socio economic status will generally have the spending power to send their child(ren) to alternative/private schools. For some families, it might prove to be a financial sacrifice but still, they enroll their child(ren) to Catholic schools.

Curriculum/academics

Curriculum, as defined in the American Heritage Dictionary, is all the courses of study offered by an educational institution. An excellent curriculum will definitely attract parents with high academic standards/goals for their child(ren). A study in the southwestern United States revealed that one of the two main reasons Anglo-Hispanic parents choose Catholic schools is because of academics (Nelson, 1988). Parents send their child(ren) to school for academic, cultural, and social learning required for them to become educated individuals. Good curriculum is central to good education. Gholson-Driver (2001) indicated in her study that academic achievement was the top factor that influenced parents to choose a specific type of school. The study of Taylor (1996), on the other hand, regarding the variables that motivate parents to choose a specific type of private schools, proved that quality of curriculum ranked at the top among all other variables. Quality of curriculum

specifically ranked first for parents who send their child(ren) to Catholic schools. According to Bauch and Goldring (1995) white parents were most likely to choose Catholic schools for academic reasons. Generally, a school has a core curriculum established and prescribed by the local department or ministry of education. Obviously, for parents wanting more, they will seek for alternative schools, which can meet their academic standards.

Religious/moral values

William Sander (2005) referencing Greely and Rossi (1996) mentioned that earlier studies on Catholic schools showed that the parents' religiosity as measured by their religion (Catholic) and church attendance had a great effect in the probability that their child(ren) attend Catholic schools. For some Catholic families, it has been a family tradition to send their child(ren) to Catholic schools. It is more of a given rather than an option. In the study of Elizabeth Penn (1985), families whose parents are both Catholic and whose child(ren) is/are Catholic attribute their decision to their own educational background and religious beliefs. A Catholic father of six children from the said study mentioned that he chose a Catholic school because of his religious background and his raised in that atmosphere.

Bauch and Goldring (1995) discovered in their study that regardless of income and ethnicity, Catholic school choice is preferred by Catholic parents who have high expectations for their child(ren)'s level of educational attainment and for academic, moral development and disciplinary reasons.

Parents may also want to defend their child(ren)'s Catholic faith or to protect it from being challenged thus not wanting to send them to non-Catholic schools. Emphasis on morals

by Catholic parents was ranked the second most considered factor in the study of Taylor (1996) about variables motivating parents in choosing a specific type of private school. Every parent, Catholic or non-Catholic will agree that values and morals such as honesty, humility, responsibility and obedience to name a few are important virtues they would want their children to learn and observe. The study by Janzen (2002) surveyed parents who chose to enroll their grade one children in an independent school in Manitoba. He defined moral education to be learning about conduct, including manners and thoughtfulness. He further defined it as the development of character, the stable qualities of a person that are revealed through actions. Janzen (2002) quoting Holtrop (1996), “Parents want what is best for their children. Since their values are important to them, obviously, parents wish to maximize the chances that their children will embrace their values” (p. 36).

Teachers

In loco parentis is Latin for, in the place of a parent. As defined in West’s Encyclopedia of American Law (2008), it defines a situation in which an individual assumes parental rights, duties and obligations without going through the formalities of legal adoption. In the education context, the most common usage of *in loco parentis* relates to teachers and students.

In the Nova Scotia education act, a “parent” is likewise defined as a guardian and a person acting *in loco parentis* to a child. In this definition, a teacher acts as a parent to a child while in the classroom or within the official hours the student is in school. As outlined in chapter three of the Teachers’ Rights, Responsibilities, and Legal Liabilities publication of the Alberta Teachers’ Association (<http://www.teachers.ab.ca>), it states that in relation to the

student, the teacher stands in the position of a caring parent as an unofficial guardian. It was further stated that for any damage caused to a student when the teacher's conduct falls below the standard of care commonly accepted as being reasonable in a parent-child relationship, the teacher could be held liable. In line with this concept, a parent would definitely want a teacher who would be the same or at least the closest in their likeness. If one were a Catholic parent, they may have an ideal concept that their children be educated by a Catholic teacher who would be able to support and foster on their children's Catholic values.

Russo (2005) in his study mentioned that in the US, the concept of *in loco parentis* is the basis of the compulsory attendance laws grounded in the common-law presumption that parents voluntarily submit their children to the authority of school officials. It is also associated with the compulsory attendance law which states that parents must ensure that their children are educated.

In the study of Nelson (1988), one of the secondary reasons that parents mentioned was the teachers. Nelson (1988) quoting Kozel (1981) mentioned that parents want caring teachers who accept children as unique individuals. In the same study of Nelson (1988), quoting Kapel and Kapel (1983) it was discovered that parents in a Jewish day school sought a school with well-trained teachers; they wanted teachers concerned with the individual student.

Gholson-Driver (2001) in her study, defined teacher expectation and teacher efficacy; she defined teacher expectation as having a positive attitude toward high expectations for all students. It influence the ways students behave in the classroom and how much they learn, this is one aspect that parents look for in the teacher who would be teaching their child(ren)

in school. On the other hand, Gholson-Driver (2001) defined teacher efficacy as an aspect related to the teacher's own ability to affect student learning. These two key terms make up a part of the conceptual framework of the said study.

Teachers portray not only one role in the classroom. The role that they portray does not end in teaching or transferring knowledge to students. That may be their main job but indirectly; they also function as an advisor, a mentor and a role model. All these roles are directly linked to how a teacher can shape a child's view of the world. Next to the parents, teachers can be the next most influential persons in a child's life. With this concept, parents would want a teacher who holds values acceptable to them. According to Janzen (2002), education is not neutral; it teaches some aspect of good and bad, right or wrong. This is one concern parents have about the type of person teaching their child(ren). Janzen (2002) further mentioned that parents are aware that in choosing a particular school, it is linked to choosing teachers who adhere to the culture, the norms and values of a certain educational institution.

Environment

Among other reasons why parents choose to send their child(ren) to Catholic school is the quality of the school and classroom environment. Out of the 24 hours in a day, students spend an average of seven to eight hours in school. That is almost a third of a student's entire day. In as much as parents do their best to provide a happy, safe and good environment at home, they would of course want their child(ren) to spend most of their waking hours in an environment, which mirrors the safety of home. From the study of Janzen (2002), school atmosphere may not have topped the survey as the most important concern, although 88% of the surveyed parents agreed that their chosen school has a positive environment.

Safety issues as Gholson-Driver (2001) defined, is an environment free from danger and dangerous incidents. Discipline policies, good character, freedom from weapons and violence are the aspect 'safe schools' focus on. Parents want their peace of mind that their child(ren) is/are safe in school.

In the study of Taylor (1996), one of the top three variables that parents considered in choosing a Roman Catholic school was safe environment. It was mentioned that students could not get out of school until dismissal. Parents valued this aspect because they know that within school premises, their children are safe. According to Bauch and Goldring (1997) Catholic schools were chosen more frequently for discipline and safety reasons.

Public school dissatisfaction

Whether they have experienced it themselves or they have heard stories, some parents choose independent schools because of public school dissatisfaction. It can be various reasons such as curriculum, school safety or teacher factor.

In the study conducted by Janzen (2002), 51% of parent respondents did not believe that standards in the public school were high. The study of Nelson (1988) pointed out that parental dissatisfaction with the public school seems to be the unifying reason for parental choice of independent schools in the Southwestern USA. When it comes to the involvement of parents, some feel that public schools are failing in this area. Generally, in public schools, parents have an option for meaningful participation. In independent schools, parents are required to participate. Nelson (1988) further mentioned that the public school system had become too big to be effective and in that effect, the public schools were non-productive. The

growing public school system can be compared to running a business, as the business grows bigger; the priorities become managing the staff, maintaining facilities, cost cutting, budget allocation and the like. As the public school system grows bigger, the administrators become occupied with more things like these thus becoming detached from the teaching/instructional function. Obviously, as parents are dissatisfied, they would look for alternative options, as they want the best for their child(ren)'s education.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Ora et Labora, Prayer and Work (St. Benedict); *Religio Mores Cultura*, Religion, Morals, Culture; *Duc ad veritatem*, Lead towards the Truth; *Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam*, For the Greater Glory of God (St. Ignatius of Loyola); *Veritas ad Deum ducit*, Truth leads to God (Mount Saint Vincent University motto). A life guided by these mottos, as a student or as an educator, the researcher's passion for Catholic education developed through the years. More than 20 years of collective exposure as a student and as a teacher in a Catholic education system, the researcher's orientation towards the research topic evolves from the experience of being immersed in this kind of educational system. It was to the researcher's surprise that there are not many Catholic schools in Nova Scotia. However, it is good to know that even though small in number, there is a strong advocate in the stakeholders of the Catholic educational system in the province. It is therefore a rewarding experience both personally and professionally for the researcher to have worked on this topic regarding Catholic education in Nova Scotia.

A. Design of the Study

"The time has come for mixed methods research." (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p.24). Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) also stated that many research questions are best and most fully answered through mixed research solutions. In addition, Johnson and Onwuegbuzie referencing Sechrest and Sidana (1995) noted that mixed methods can incorporate the strengths and weaknesses of both methodologies therefore, it has the potential

to decrease some of the issues associated with singular methods. Most importantly, researchers who use mixed methods are more likely to select approaches with respect to their underlying research question rather than with regard to preconceived biases.

This study tried to illustrate the two major perspectives in research. Glatthorn (1998) states that, a quantitative perspective holds an objective reality that can be expressed numerically; on the other hand, Glatthorn (1998) quoting McMillan (1996) states that the qualitative perspective emphasizes understanding an area of study from the participants' perspectives. Studies with a qualitative perspective focus on meaning and understanding of naturally occurring situations. Glatthorn (1998) referencing Morgan (1997) outlined four general ways of combining the two perspectives, basing it upon two factors: which perspective is primary and which perspective is secondary; and which perspective is used first and which is used second. This study employed the use of the third combination, which is, qualitative as the primary research perspective, and quantitative as the first research perspective to be used. Quantitative preliminary data were gathered first with the use of a survey, before collecting and interpreting the primary qualitative data. Quoting Bogdan and Biklen (2007), "The qualitative research approach demands that the world be examined with the assumption that nothing is trivial, that everything has the potential of being a clue that might unlock a more comprehensive understanding of what is being studied" (p. 5).

B. The Setting

Nova Scotia, unlike the province of Ontario does not have a Catholic public education system. Halifax, the province's capital has two known Catholic private schools. Going further eastern shore, there is one in Cape Breton, one in New Glasgow and one in

Antigonish. As confirmed with the Catholic Diocesan office, there is none in the western shore area. Following the province's school year structure, the study was carried out a few weeks after the school year started therefore the school administration, teachers, students as well as the parents have already settled in. This timeline also allowed the school to verify who among students from their school come from Catholic families. To provide neutral atmosphere and convenience to parents, interviews were conducted in the school premises, 20-30 minutes earlier before the parents come to fetch their child(ren) from school or after they have dropped their child(ren) off to school.

C. The Subject/Participants

Catholic schools were identified as such depending on the school's perception of its classification. It did not matter if the school adheres to the Nova Scotia public school curriculum, as long as the school identifies itself as Catholic based from the school's historical identity, it was considered for this study. A university chaplain from one of the Catholic oriented universities in Nova Scotia served as the key informant for identifying the schools outside the province's capital city. Three out of the four invited Catholic schools in Nova Scotia with elementary level participated in the study, two schools from the province's capital and one from a rural area. Names of Catholic private schools have been assigned a code name. There were no participants under the age of minority in this study. The target participants for this study were Catholic parents of students attending these Catholic schools. Surveys were distributed to all Catholic families in each school. Ten out of 10 Catholic parents from School A answered the survey. Twenty-seven out of the 58 surveys distributed to Catholic parents in School B were completed. Three out of four Catholic parents from

School C completed the survey. Parents who have agreed to be interviewed were chosen based on the grade level of their child(ren). For better comparability of results, parents who have children from primary to grade four were chosen for the interview. Out of the 40 parents who answered the survey, 21, all of who are mothers, agreed to be interviewed. Five parents from School A, four parents from School B and three parents from School C were interviewed. In total, survey return rate was 40 out of 72 (55.56%) and twelve Catholic parents were interviewed.

D. Instrumentation/Materials

The quantitative part of the study used descriptive research. According to Glatthorn (1998), this research is usually undertaken in the early stages of exploring a phenomenon. Best and Kahn (1993) states that this kind of research seeks to identify factors in which seem to be associated with certain types of behavior, outcomes, occurrences, situations or conditions. Questionnaires which were estimated to take eight minutes for parents to complete were constructed and sent to the parents for them to fill out. The survey questionnaire is divided into two parts. Part I is comprised of 17 questions pertaining to family demographics. Part II of the survey listed 25 possible factors associated to school choice (Choi, 2006; Gholson-Driver, 2001; Janzen, 2002; Penn, 1985; Schultz, 2009; Taylor, 1996) and parents rated them whether they consider each factor to be very important, important, not very important or not at all important. At the end part of the survey, the parents checked off the choice whether or not they are interested to participate in an interview (See Appendix G). The data gathered was summarized in a table and organized to be able to proceed with the primary research design, which is qualitative.

Bogdan and Biklen (2007) quoting Morgan (1997) mentioned that an interview is a purposeful conversation, usually between two people but sometimes involving more. Information from one interview may be used to shape or draw information from other interviews. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) also mentioned that interviews might be the dominant strategy for data collection in the qualitative research. This interview is used to gather descriptive data in the subjects' own words so that the researcher can interpret and develop insights on how subjects interpret the phenomenon being studied. Hoepfl (1997) defined a "schedule" to be the list of questions the interviewer wants to explore during the interview. Although it is prepared to ensure the same information is obtained from each participant, there are no pre-determined responses and in semi-structured interview, the interviewer is free to probe and explore within these predetermined inquiry areas. Semi-structured interviews were conducted using open-ended interview questions. A "schedule" was used to ensure good use of limited interview time and it made interviewing more systematic and comprehensive. Further, Hoepfl (1997) referencing Lofland and Lofland (1984) mentioned that in keeping the flexible nature of qualitative research designs, the said "schedule" can be modified to focus attention on areas of importance and exclude questions the researcher has found to be not necessary in answering the research problem. Among other questions (See Appendix G), parents were asked to indicate their top five among the 25 factors associated with Catholic school choice from the survey questionnaire. Parents were requested to identify teacher attributes they think play an important role when it comes to being "the second parents" of their children while in school. Finally, parents were asked about their overall impression or feeling about their child's attendance at a Catholic school.

Audiotape was used to record the interview. According to Hoepfl (1997), in capturing data more faithfully, recordings have the advantage over hurriedly written notes. It also makes it easier for the researcher to focus on the interview.

E. Procedure/Data Collection

After the proposed study was approved by the review board, the ethics board and all the rest of the boards or panels that needed to approve the study, the next task was to contact the identified Catholic schools. School administrators were reached through telephone and/or e-mail. School administrators were the first point of contact since there is no Catholic school board in the province. All schools identified are independent schools. Once agreement was reached the surveys in paper format along with all the necessary letters of introduction and letters of consent were hand delivered or mailed to the schools. Teachers in the schools were requested to act as liaisons to distribute and collect the survey. Parents interested in participating in the interview indicated their intent on the end part of the survey, which required them to provide their contact information.

Data collection was accomplished in two phases. In the first phase of the study, participants were asked to complete a research designed survey consisting of two sections. These questions provided the data for examining the relationships between demographic characteristics and the factors that motivate parents in choosing Catholic school for their children. In the demographic characteristics part, parents answered questions regarding their family background including the number of children, who among the children go to a Catholic school or the public school, combined household income, educational background of the parents to name a few. In the part II of the survey, parents were asked to rate each of

25 reasons for choosing a Catholic school on a Likert-type scale. These items were generated from the literature (Choi, 2006; Gholson-Driver, 2001; Janzen, 2002; Penn, 1985; Schultz, 2009; Taylor, 1996). Answering the said survey was timed to have taken the parents a maximum of eight minutes to complete. The second phase of the data collection was comprised of questions that were asked of parents to better understand their motivations for sending their child(ren) to Catholic schools. Once the survey was collected back, parents who were interested to be interviewed were reached by phone and email to set up an interview schedule. Data collected from the first phase were used to generate questions. Parents were scheduled 20-30 minutes before they come to get their child(ren) from school or after they have dropped their child(ren) off in school. Interviews were conducted in the school premises. The interviews were 14-25 minutes in length and were audio taped with consent from the participants. After all data have been collected, data analysis then followed.

F. Data Analysis and Interpretation

The process of systematically searching, arranging the interview transcripts and other materials collected to be able to come up with findings is data analysis, according to Bogden and Bilken (2007, p. 159). On the other hand, interpretation is referred to as developing ideas about the findings and relating them to the literature and to the concept and concern being studied. The tasks involved in analysis, according to Bogden and Bilken (2007) are working with the data, organizing, breaking the data in units, coding, synthesizing them and searching for patterns. Interpretation involves the task of explaining and framing the ideas as well as showing the importance of the findings and making them understandable.

Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, percentages) were used to analyze the survey data and to know which among the factors rank higher on the scale of importance for parents.

The data from the second phase of the study was transcribed and analyzed. Common characteristics among parents interviewed were identified based from the survey and themes were established based on interview results. Words, phrases and patterns were merged into meaningful statements, which were then organized, and emerging themes were finally identified.

G. Reliability and Validity

Reliability and validity in quantitative research

Joppe (2000) as referenced by Golafshani (2003) defined reliability as the extent to which results are consistent over time and there is an accurate representation of the total population under study. In addition, a study is referred to as reliable if the results of the study can be reproduced under a similar methodology. It is then that the research instrument can be considered reliable. As further mentioned by Joppe (2000), validity in quantitative research determines whether the research truly measures that which it was intended to measure or how truthful the research results are. Validity is generally determined by asking a series of questions and will often look for answers in the research of others. In this study, choosing an instrument and method that can be simulated for future study was given careful consideration.

To develop the questionnaire, the researcher reviewed the results and analysis of several dissertations across North America. This review was the primary source of items. Further, the questionnaire was reviewed by the researcher's thesis committee and institutional analyst for clarity and accuracy.

Reliability and validity in qualitative research

Eisner (1991) as quoted by Bashir et al (2008) said that a good qualitative study can help us to understand a situation that would otherwise be enigmatic or confusing. On the other hand, Stenbacka (2001) as referenced by Bashir et al (2008) viewed reliability as 'generating understanding' in qualitative approach to research. This research aimed at understanding a naturally occurring phenomenon with regard to parental motivations in Catholic school choice. Bashir et al (2008) further stated that in qualitative research, validity has to do with description and explanation, and whether or not the given explanation fits a given description. He also stated that in qualitative studies, researchers rely upon experience and literature to address the issue of validity, generalizability and reliability. Bashir et al (2008) also indicated a list of strategies to increase validity in qualitative research paradigm. Some of these strategies were observed in this study. Participant language verbatim accounts which meant obtaining literal statements of participants and quotations from documents were done in this study. Another strategy involved recording data through the use of audiotape.

According to Ratcliff (1995), there are several approaches researchers can find validity in qualitative studies. Some of these were observed in this research. First is, divergence from initial expectations – personal notes kept from the beginning and checked how the data pushed the researcher from initial assumptions. The researcher had personal

notes in the beginning of the study and other annotations that were reorganized as the data collection and analysis moved along. Next is the use of extensive quotations – from transcripts of interviews. The researcher employed the use of comprehensive quotations to establish the basis for thematic analysis. The third approach that was applied was the use of other research data – research data from related literature were extensively looked into to validate if results are in line from those data previously studied by other researchers. Further, reliability can be achieved in qualitative research by, multiple listening of the audio tape and multiple transcriptions of the audio tape. In the case of this study, the researcher listened to the audio recording multiple times and the transcriptions were coded multiple times until the final four themes emerged.

The qualitative portion of this study could not be replicated exactly. Moreover, ideas shared with the twelve parents interviewed cannot be generalized to a wider population in the traditional quantitative sense. Eisner's (1991) notion of Naturalistic Generalization might apply, however. That is, the findings and insights generated from this study can be used as the basis for contrast and comparison by other qualitative researchers. Those conducting interviews in another locale could search for commonalities and differences between their study and this study.

“You never cross the same river twice, because it is never the exact same water,” as qualitative researchers are fond of saying. It is because reality is dynamic and changes constantly, according to Ratcliff (1995). Putting two different accounts together, in both the quantitative and qualitative perspectives might produce a better understanding of the whole rather than each separately.

H. Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles outlined in the University Research Ethics Board were observed in this study. Although the participant's involvement in this study was voluntary, several steps were done to address these principles. These steps will be shared.

Special considerations

No special considerations are applicable in this study. Consent of third parties was established. There is no school board for independent schools therefore the school administrators were the first point of contact. Consent was obtained from the three Catholic schools in the province which agreed to participate in the study. The result of the Ethics approval was discussed with the administrators and was mentioned in the letters sent to them. The school administrators reviewed the proposal and granted permission to conduct research in their schools. Consent with the teachers was also established for them to act as liaison for this research.

Protection from harm

No debriefing procedures were necessary. This research study involved minimal risk only. Possible harms implied by participation in this study were no greater than those encountered in the participants' everyday lives. Considerations of the participants' needs were given top priority.

Fair distribution of risks and benefits

Participation in the study was completely voluntary and parents or guardians who participated in the study was informed that they may refuse to answer any item in the survey package and they may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

The participants were given contact information of the researcher, her thesis advisor and the Mount Saint University Research Ethics Board should they have any questions or comments about the research.

The researcher in this study does not have a dual relationship with participants.

Confidentiality

Privacy, confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the course of the study, after the study is complete, and in any resulting publications. All information collected during the study remains confidential, and the background information that was asked for cannot be used to identify individual participants. Completed survey packages were stored in a locked filing cabinet and identified only by a code number. Signed consent forms were not stored with the surveys. Any computer disks holding data were erased, and surveys/consent forms were shredded immediately after completion of the study. A summary of the results is planned to be distributed to the school administrators and any interested parents or guardians. In resulting publications, individual results were not published, and the names of participants were confidential. Pseudonyms were assigned to interview participants.

Informed consent/dissemination of results

After the study was approved by the Mount Saint Vincent Research Ethics Board and school administrators, letters describing the study were given to teachers who assisted in distributing the survey package to the students to take home to their parents

Parents or guardians who were interested in participating in the interview were asked to sign the consent form and it was placed in a sealed envelope for return to the school. Once identified, parents willing to be interviewed were sent interview information through email. An interview schedule was set up and interview consent form was presented by the researcher then signed by the parents before the interview started.

Parents were informed that participation for both phases of data collection is voluntary and that they were free to withdraw at any time without penalty.

When participants received the information package, the consent form had a section asking if parents would like to be sent a summary of the results. For those who indicated yes, the researcher will mail/email a result summary to the school administrators to whom the parents can ask for the results.

CHAPTER FOUR

Results and Data Analysis

A. Demographics of Families who Enroll their Children in Catholic schools in Nova Scotia.

There were many characteristics common to the said families. Characteristics, Response Total and Response Percent were arranged in a table. Percentages were used to illustrate the distribution of the data.

Table 1

Parents were asked to identify the highest level of education attained for both parents. The eighty responses obtained are presented in Table 1.

#3 Highest educational attainment of both parents	Response Total	Response Percent
Elementary	0	0.0%
High School	3	3.8%
College / University	38	47.5%
Post Graduate	30	37.5%
Prefer not to say / No answer	9	11.3%
Total	80	100%

Among the 80 parents, 60 (85%) of them have finished college or post graduate schooling. Nine (11.3%) preferred not to disclose their educational attainment. Only three (3.8%) of the parents did not complete secondary education.

* Tables adapted from Schultz, J. (2009). *Why parents choose Catholic school: A social theory understanding* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database.

* Number on the table title refers to the corresponding question in the survey

Table 2

Parents were asked to identify their annual combined family income. See table 2 for results.

#4 Annual combined family income	Response Total	Response Percent
Over \$100,000	22	55.0%
\$50,000 - \$99,999	9	22.5%
\$25,000 - \$49,000	3	7.5%
Under \$25,000	0	0.0%
Prefer not to say / No answer	6	15.0%
Total	40	100%

A response total of 22 (55%) declared that their combined family income is over \$100,000. Nine (22.5%) families are in the \$50,000-\$99,000 income range. Six (15%) preferred not to disclose. No family falls under the \$25,000 income bracket. Only three (7.5%) are in the \$25,000-\$49,000 income range.

Table 3

The researcher asked the parents how much financial sacrifice for their family to enroll their child(ren) in a Catholic school. Responses are in Table 3.

#11 Financial effort / sacrifice	Response Total	Response Percent
To a great extent	21	52.5%
Somewhat true	12	30.0%
Very little	4	10.0%
Not at all	2	5.0%
Prefer not to say / No answer	1	2.5%
Total	40	100%

Twenty one (52.5%) families said that enrolling their child(ren) in a Catholic school is a great extent of financial effort/sacrifice. Twelve (30%) said it is true for their family at some extent. Four (10%) families consider it as a very little sacrifice. Two (5%) families consider it as not at all a financial sacrifice and one (2.5%) family preferred not to answer the question. One parent mentioned from the interview that even though the school was

affordable, they still need tuition to make the commitment. (Parent A1, personal communication, October 2010). Another parent mentioned, “financially, we knew it was going to be tight...” (Parent B1, personal communication, October 2010) Parent B3, when interviewed about the concerns and reservations they had when they first thought of enrolling their child(ren) in a Catholic school said, “...I guess the reservation is the huge, is the big financial commitment. It cost a lot of money to go here; however, we are very fortunate that we have the means to do that.” (personal communication, October 2010) One parent from the rural area mentioned that, “financially, we have to sort of make things stretch to make it work.” (Parent C4, personal communication, October 2010) The same parent made a point that, as they are paying taxes, their tax go completely towards the public school system and that way, they are paying twice so they make certain financial sacrifices to send their child(ren) to a Catholic school.

Table 4

The families surveyed were asked about their primary religious background and their responses are summarized in Table 4.

#6 Primary Religious background	Response Total	Response Percent
Roman Catholic	40	100%
Anglican	0	0%
Baptist	0	0%
Islam	0	0%
Other	0	0%
Total	40	100%

All forty (100%) parents surveyed are Catholic. The survey was initially designed to survey families from several religious backgrounds, but was changed to all Catholic families before the survey was distributed.

Table 5

Families were asked to share their primary ethnic background and results are indicated in Table 5.

#5 Primary ethnic background of the family	Response Total	Response Percent
Canadian	22	55.0%
French-Canadian	2	5.0%
English-Canadian	8	20.0%
Asian	1	2.5%
Other	6	15.0%
Prefer not to say / No answer	1	2.5%
Total	40	100%

Twenty-two (55%) of the families surveyed are Canadian. Two (5%) are French-Canadian and eight (20%) are English-Canadian. One (2.5%) family comes from an Asian background and another one (2.5%) family preferred not to disclose their ethnic background. Six (15%) families come from other ethnic backgrounds not listed on the choice.

Table 6

Parents were asked the length of time their family has lived in Nova Scotia and their answers are indicated in Table 6.

#7 Length of time the family has lived in NS	Response Total	Response Percent
More than 10 years	35	87.5%
5-10 years	5	12.5%
1-4 years	0	0.0%
Less than one year	0	0.0%
Total	40	100%

Thirty-five (87.5%) of the families surveyed have lived in Nova Scotia for more than 10 years. Five (12.5%) families have lived in Nova Scotia for five to 10 years. No family surveyed has lived in Nova Scotia for less than five years.

Table 7

An approximate of how many kilometers is the family's home from the nearest Catholic school was asked by the researcher. Parent responses are summarized in Table 7.

#13 Approximately how many kilometers is it from your home to the nearest Catholic school?	Response Total	Response Percent
Less than 5 kms	10	25.0%
6-10 kms	10	25.0%
11-15 kms	19	47.5%
Prefer not to say / No answer	1	2.5%
Total	40	100%

Ten (25%) of the families surveyed indicated that their homes are less than 5 kilometers away from the nearest Catholic school. Ten (25%) families as well said that they live 6-10 kilometers away from the nearest Catholic school. Majority of the families, 19 (47.5%) of them live approximately 11-15 kilometers away from a Catholic school. One (2.5%) family preferred not to disclose their answer. It can be noted that for most families, the far distance of the nearest Catholic school, did not deter them from enrolling their child(ren) in a Catholic school. One parent, when asked about the adjustments that they had to make now that their child(ren) is/are attending a Catholic school, her answer was, "There was not really any adjustments that we had to make just other than driving because we live 20 kilometers outside the city so that is basically the only thing." (Parent A5, personal communication, October 2010).

Table 8

Parents were asked to give an approximate distance in kilometers is their home from the nearest public school.

#14 Approximately how many kilometers is it from your home to the nearest public school	Response Total	Response Percent
Less than 5 kms	36	90.0%
6-10 kms	3	7.5%
11-15 kms	1	2.5%
Prefer not to say / No answer	0	0.0%
Total	40	100%

Thirty six (90%) of the families live less than 5 kilometers away from the nearest public school. Three (7.5%) live 60-10 kilometers away and one family lives 11-15 kilometers away from the nearest public school. It is interesting to note that even though majority of the families live within 5 kilometers from the nearest public school, they still chose to send their child(ren) to a Catholic school, instead to the nearest public school.

Table 9

Parents were asked to rate the closest public school in their home. Results are indicated in Table 9.

#15 Rate the closest public school	Response Total	Response Percent
Very Good	12	30.0%
Moderate	19	47.5%
Not good	7	17.5%
Other (Unknown)	1	2.5%
Prefer not to say/ No answer	1	2.5%
Total	40	100%

A majority of the parents, 19 (47.5%) of them rated the closest public school at their home to be moderate. 12 (30%) of the parents rated it to be very good. Seven (17.5%) said it is not good, one (2.5%) family said it is unknown to them and another one (2.5%) family chose not to disclose their answer. It is interesting to note that even if some families rate the

public schools near them to be very good, they still chose to enroll their child(ren) in Catholic schools.

Table 10

Families were asked to indicate the number of children in the family and whether they are enrolled in a Catholic school or other schools.

#17 Number of children in the family and whether they are enrolled in a Catholic school or other schools	Response Total	Response Percent
Families who have all children currently enrolled in a Catholic school	38	95.0%
Families who have children currently enrolled in a Catholic school and other schools	2	5.0%
Total	40	100.0%

A majority of the families, 37 (92.5%) currently have all their children enrolled in a Catholic school. Three (7.5%) of the families have children enrolled in a non-Catholic schools. However, the families who have children enrolled in other schools have it done that way because of the reason that two of the Catholic schools surveyed only have until grade school and the child(ren) who go to another school are in the older grade level. One parent noted that, “all the other older children went to Catholic school pre-kinder to grade seven complete.” (Parent C1, personal communication, October 2010)

Table 11

Parents were asked to indicate whether the mother or the father attended Catholic school at any level. Results are indicated in Table 12.

#12 At least one of the parents attended Catholic school at any level (Elementary, High School, College/University)	Response Total	Response Percent
Yes	32	80.0%
No	3	7.5%
Prefer not to say / No answer	5	12.5%
Total	40	100%

Thirty-two (80%) of the families have at least one of the parents attended a Catholic school whether it was in the Elementary, High School or College/University level. Three (7.5%) of the families stated that neither of the parents attended Catholic school at any level and five (12.5%) of the families surveyed preferred not to disclose their answer. One parent mentioned in the interview, “I went to an all-girls Catholic school, that was junior high, and for high school I went to an all-girls school...I had the time of my life. It was great. It was wonderful.” (Parent A4, personal communication, October 2010). Quoting another parent when asked why they chose that certain Catholic school, “One reason why we chose this school was I was an [alumni] here, I am familiar with the school.” (Parent B4, personal communication, October 2010). It can be noted that a parent’s wonderful experience in a Catholic school was one of the major consideration in their Catholic school choice for their children.

B. Importance Level of the 25 Possible Factors Associated with Catholic School

Choice

Table 12

Parents were asked to rate the 25 factors associated to Catholic school choice on a 4-point Likert-type scale. Results are shown in Table 12.

Importance Level of the 25 possible factors associated with Catholic School Choice										
#	Factors associated with Catholic School Choice	Very Important	Important	Not Very Important	Not at all Important	Total	Mean	Standard Deviation	Variance	Ranking
1	Quality of curriculum	36	4	0	0	40	3.90	0.303822	0.092308	1st
2	Quality of instruction	36	4	0	0	40	3.90	0.303822	0.092308	1st
3	Commitment of teachers	35	5	0	0	40	3.88	0.334932	0.112179	2nd
10	Well defined academic and instructional goals	35	5	0	0	40	3.88	0.334932	0.112179	2nd
6	High achievement and standards	33	7	0	0	40	3.83	0.384808	0.148077	3rd
24	Friendly/warm school environment	32	8	0	0	40	3.80	0.405096	0.164103	4th
5	Emphasis on moral values	31	9	0	0	40	3.78	0.422902	0.178846	5th
14	Safety of the school environment	33	6	0	1	40	3.78	0.576795	0.332692	5th
21	High behavioral expectations	32	7	1	0	40	3.78	0.479717	0.230128	5th
19	Teachers are good role models	32	7	0	1	40	3.75	0.588348	0.346154	6th
8	Warmth of school climate	29	11	0	0	40	3.73	0.452203	0.204487	7th
7	Discipline environment	28	11	1	0	40	3.68	0.525625	0.276282	8th
9	Small class size	29	8	3	0	40	3.65	0.622237	0.387179	9th
23	Teachers who get involved not only in academics but also in character formation	28	10	1	1	40	3.63	0.667467	0.445513	10th
11	Responsiveness to the expectation of parents	24	16	0	0	40	3.60	0.496139	0.246154	11th
13	Preparation for the desired college	27	9	4	0	40	3.58	0.675107	0.455769	12th
17	School's philosophy mirrors that of home	24	15	1	0	40	3.58	0.549475	0.301923	13th
16	Sense of community is observed	22	17	1	0	40	3.53	0.554122	0.307051	14th
15	Opportunity for parental involvement	14	24	2	0	40	3.30	0.563869	0.317949	15th
4	Emphasis on religion	17	16	7	0	40	3.25	0.742484	0.551282	16th
20	Co-curricular activities such as sports, band, journalism, etc.	13	21	5	1	40	3.15	0.735544	0.541026	17th
25	Regular Catholic activities such as prayer, mass, outreach	16	11	11	2	40	3.03	0.946993	0.896795	18th
22	Students are exposed to peers of the same Catholic values	11	14	9	6	40	2.75	1.031553	1.064103	19th
12	Proximity of the school's location	9	13	13	4	39	2.63	0.950176	0.902834	20th
18	Teachers are Catholic	8	12	10	10	40	2.45	1.084861	1.176923	21st

* The “#” column indicates the corresponding item number on the survey. *Note that in item #12, the total is 39, as one parent did not rate that item.

Out of the 40 surveys, parents responded to this forced choice survey independently. Parents ranked each 25 items as: very important (VI), important (I), not very important (NVI), and not at all important (NAAI).

Among the 25 factors indicated, parents rated most factors either very important or important. The factors related to Catholicism that were rated to be either 'not very important' or 'not at all important' were: 'regular Catholic activities such as prayer, mass, outreach,' 'students are exposed to peers of the same Catholic values,' 'emphasis on religion,' 'teachers are Catholic.' The result came as a surprise to the researcher knowing that all the families surveyed were Catholic. The Non-Catholic related factors which were either 'not very important' or 'not at all important' for the parents were: 'co-curricular activities such as sports, band, journalism, etc and, 'proximity of the school's location.' It can be noted that, in Table 7, majority of the families live 11-15 kilometers away from the nearest Catholic school which supports the factor of the proximity of the school being not that important for the parents.

Mean is one of the three major types of estimates of central tendency and is probably the most commonly used method to estimate the center of distribution of values (Donnelly and Trochim, 2007). The means for factors given range from 3.90 to 2.45, it was computed by multiplying the number of votes by the weight of each importance factor: very important (VI) has a weight of 4, important (I) has a weight of 3, not very important (NVI) has a weight of 2, and not at all important (NAAI) has a weight of 1 and then dividing the total by 40, which is the total number of the respondents.

‘Quality of curriculum’ and ‘quality of instruction’ tied on the first spot with a mean of 3.90. Having the highest mean, it is the factor that the parents give high consideration. The second factors which have a high level of importance are ‘commitment of teachers’ and ‘well defined academic and instructional goals.’ ‘High achievement and standards’ ranked third with a mean of 3.83. The fourth factor of high importance is ‘friendly and warm school environment’ which has a mean of 3.80. The fifth factor includes ‘emphasis on moral values,’ ‘safety of the school environment’ and ‘high behavioral expectations.’ Twenty three of the factors have a mean of 3.0 and above, having 4.0 as the highest possible mean; this indicates that 23 of the 25 factors are considered very important by the parents. Only three of the 25 factors got a mean in the range of 2.0 to 2.99, these are, ‘proximity of the school’s location,’ ‘teachers are catholic’ and ‘students are exposed to peers of the same Catholic values.’ It is surprising that two of those three factors are Catholic related.

Standard deviation, a measure of variability, shows the relation of the set of scores to the mean of the sample (Donnelly and Trochim, 2007). In the results obtained, it can be seen that the standard deviation is low, meaning the data are tightly clustered, while a high standard deviation means the data are widely scattered. The standard deviations range from 0.303822 to 1.084861. This also shows that the data is closely spaced about the mean.

Variance is standard deviation squared (Donnelly and Trochim, 2007). Like the standard deviation, it illustrates how far the data is spread apart. If the data all lie close to the mean, then both the variance and standard deviation will be small in value. Outliers in the data will increase its value. In table 12, variances range from, 0.092308 to 1.176973. It is surprising to note that although the data lie close together, the outliers are Catholic related in

nature, which are: ‘students are exposed to peers of the same Catholic values, with a variance of 1.064103 and ‘teachers are Catholic’ with a variance of 1.176923 which are still relatively small.

C. The Interviews

Twelve mothers who were interviewed were asked to choose the top five from among the 25 factors associated with Catholic school choice that they have previously answered in the survey. They did not have to rank the factors but they simply chose their top five out of the 25. A paper copy of the survey was presented to them and they were given a few minutes to browse through it. The twelve mothers chose five factors each resulting in 60 items as the total number of choices.

Participant Top Five Choices of Factors

Interview participants were asked to select their top five factors. The top five choices of factors identified by the twelve participants are revealed in Table 13. Individual items are organized in this table by the number of times parents chose the item. They are ranked from the most frequently to the least frequently chosen.

Table 13

Interview result: Top 5 Factors

#	Top 5 Factors Associated with School Choice	Choices	Ranking
17	<i>School's philosophy mirrors that of home</i>	8	1st
1	<i>Quality of curriculum</i>	7	2nd
5	<i>Emphasis on moral values</i>	6	3rd
3	<i>Commitment of teachers</i>	5	4th
14	<i>Safety of the school environment</i>	5	4th
4	<i>Emphasis on religion</i>	3	5th
6	<i>High achievement and standards</i>	3	5th
9	<i>Small class size</i>	3	5th
19	<i>Teachers are good role models</i>	3	5th
24	<i>Friendly/warm school environment</i>	3	5th
25	<i>Regular Catholic activities such as prayer, mass, outreach</i>	3	5th
23	Teachers who get involved not only in academics but also in character formation	2	6th
2	Quality of instruction	2	6th
8	Warmth of school climate	1	7th
10	Well defined academic and instructional goals	1	7th
12	Proximity of the school's location	1	7th
16	Sense of community is observed	1	7th
18	Teachers are Catholic	1	7th
21	High behavioral expectations	1	7th
22	Students are exposed to peers of the same Catholic values	1	7th
*** Total = 12 parents choosing 5 factors each		60	

* The “#” column indicates the corresponding item number on the survey.

‘School’s philosophy mirrors that of home’ ranked as the first of the top five factors identified. It was chosen eight times by the parents. In the course of the interview, there was great approval in their voice when they indicated this factor. It came as a surprise for the researcher that in Table 12, this only ranked 13th among the 25 factors, although it has a mean of 3.58 which is still considered high in importance. The factor ‘quality of curriculum’ was chosen seven times therefore ranking second. ‘Emphasis on moral values’ ranked third out of the 25. ‘Commitment of teachers’ and ‘safety of school environment’ were chosen five

times. Several factors were mentioned three times therefore being the fifth out of the top five indicated factors. These were: ‘emphasis on religion,’ ‘high achievement and standards,’ ‘small class size,’ ‘teachers are good role models,’ ‘friendly and warm school environment,’ and ‘regular Catholic activities such as prayer, mass, outreach.’ Another surprise is the fact that in the interview, the factor ‘regular Catholic activities such as prayer, mass, outreach’ came as one of the identified top five factors but in Table 12, it only came it as 18th in ranking with a 3.03 mean value.

D. Thematic Analysis of the Interviews

Other than being able to identify the top five factors that motivate parents in Nova Scotia to enroll their child(ren) in a Catholic school, four themes emerged from analyzing the interview transcripts. These were Individual Motivations for School Choice, Influences on Catholic School Choice, Teacher Qualities and Initial Concerns, Ongoing Sacrifices and Ultimate Satisfaction.

Individual Motivations for School Choice

When responding to interview questions, parents revealed individual motives for why they enrolled their child(ren) in a Catholic school. Although commonalities could be found across participants’ motivations, a number of different motivations were shared. In other words, individual parents had different priorities when they selected Catholic schooling for their children. Although the ranking might be different, the most common motivations related to: the school’s philosophy as an extension of their home, curriculum and academics,

religious and moral values, outstanding teacher attributes, good/safe school environment and public school dissatisfaction.

School philosophy as an extension of the home. Among motivations for school choice was parent's approval of the philosophy of their Catholic school. Other parents believed that it was important for the school to reinforce what they teach at home or at least not contradict it. They believed that a school philosophy which mirrors what they have at home will avoid confusion in their child(ren).

We had no worries about what was being taught at home is going to be taught likewise here in this school. (Parent A3)

We wanted them to be in an environment where it would mirror what we were trying to do in the home. (Parent B1)

You really feel that they are replicating what you are doing at home. (Parent B3)

The holistic nature of Catholic school was also mentioned as important as the school sought to develop the cognitive, social, emotional and spiritual side of the child. This approach made their parenting job easier.

There was also the whole approach to education. (Parent B1)

Big concern to me personally, I would say that there is the philosophy of education of the whole child is something that appeals to me. (Parent B4)

Academics and curriculum. All the parents who were interviewed mentioned the importance of academics and curriculum. For them, one of the primary reasons their child(ren) go to school is to learn their academics.

Quality of curriculum because it is the base of everything. (Parent A1)

They stress here strong academics. (Parent C3)

Strong academic curriculum that is always striving to improve. (Parent A3)

Religious and moral values. Catholic parents believe that teaching religion and moral values are equally as important as academics. Parents are happy that in their choice of Catholic school, religious and moral values are instilled in their child(ren).

Number one reason is my husband is Catholic so it was very important for him for our daughter to go to a Catholic school. (Parent B2)

We wanted our children to receive religious instruction along with their academic instruction, to reinforce the religious beliefs that we have. (Parent C3)

First of all, the school is Catholic and we do not have a lot of options here ... we also liked the religious part of it, along with the values that your children can get through being here at this school. (Parent A1)

Nurturing a child's spirituality and their belief in God, particularly Catholicism ... I know that this is a sound Catholic education that appreciates the balance between the child as a learner, the child as the child of God and the child as a person of society.

(Parent A2)

We were strongly interested because it is a Catholic school ... our faith is extremely important for us and our goal to raise our children would be to transfer the love of our Catholic faith to them as they are growing up. (Parent A3)

We chose this school because of the religious aspect, because it is Catholic. (Parent A4)

The big thing was the Catholic education. (Parent B1)

The intertwining of Catholic religion with the everyday school curriculum. (Parent C1)

Other parents value not only the religious aspect but also the value formation that their child(ren) get from the school. Parents believe that the moral values their child(ren) learn while they are in school will be a good foundation for them.

We wanted our daughter to grow up with values coming from a good place. (Parent B2)

We are a Catholic family and the values that go along with that so we thought that this was the best option for us. (Parent B1)

The values system here is certainly unique. (Parent B4)

Other than the religious part, along with it are the values that your children can get through being here at this school. (Parent A1)

The good value foundation that they will get here. (Parent C4)

The long term integration of the morals and the values with their studies I think has allowed them to succeed. (Parent C1)

Outstanding teacher attributes. When asked about the important attributes of teachers being the second parents for their child(ren) while they are in school, the parents who were interviewed ended up describing the characteristics of the teachers in their choice of Catholic schools. Outstanding qualities were mentioned and this is further explained in the analysis of the theme titled ‘Teacher Qualities’.

Good/safe school environment. Every parent aims to provide a good and safe home environment for their child(ren). It is not surprising at all that a good and safe school environment is also one of their priorities in choosing a school for their child(ren).

Parents value that the school environment of their chosen Catholic school is safe and free from harm. They want an environment in which they would have a peace of mind knowing that while their children is out of their sight, they are in a safe place.

It is a very safe school and that is a big concern. (Parent B4)

I am very concerned in the safety, security, in making sure that my children are not exposed to things that perhaps they will be exposed to elsewhere. (Parent B4)

Other than the safety of the school itself, a good environment for the parents is the sense of community that Catholic schools naturally have.

We also like the nurturing environment. (Parent B1)

There is a sense of community here; there is a sense of respect for one another.

(Parent B3)

Public school dissatisfaction. There are several things that parents did not care about the public school system or there is something lacking in the public school system that they resulted to choosing a Catholic school for their child(ren). This choice resulted from either their personal experience when they were a student or something they heard from other people or from something that they have observed.

I think it is important that they nurture the spirituality of the child. It is really important and you do not get that in the public school system. (Parent A2)

We also feel that there are certain things that go on in the public school system that we do not care for, so we just felt that this was a better option for our children.

(Parent A3)

This school has been known to give good education. Good education, much better than the public school system. (Parent A4)

I know if they were going to a public school, they would have to hide their faith.

(Parent B1)

That is basically a big factor, the fear of public school system. (Parent B2)

There is a part in the public school, the information, it is not delivered in the context of family. (Parent C4)

Some parents saw the school as an important dimension of their child's total socialization and had some concern with the contradictory socialization that their children might encounter in public schools. For example, one of the parents expressed worry about some of the things going on in public school and did not want their child(ren) to be exposed to the same behavior as the children from the public school.

We were originally thinking of sending our daughter to the local public school but we used to go to the playground a lot and saw certain behaviors that we were not really sure that we wanted that to be the place where we wanted our children to be.

It definitely scared us when we moved to this province and heard so many negative things about the public schools. (Parent B2)

Every parent may have individual motives and they may rank the importance level of each factor differently, but the common ground for all of the parents interviewed is their appreciation of the Catholic school of their choice. It can also be noted that the parents' motives are justified by these Catholic schools.

Influences on Catholic School Choice

The parents' educational history plays a big role in the decision to enroll their child(ren) in a Catholic school but inputs of other family members and close friends also play a part. Some parents' decisions were reinforced by family members and friends who agree that enrolling their child(ren) in a Catholic school is a good choice.

I found about it through my mom, otherwise I would have never known about this school. So my mom suggested it and I looked into it. (Parent A4)

My brother probably because he is a teacher, so we talked to him first before we came to talk to the headmistress and he gave us a few pointers and things to look out for. (Parent A5)

My mother was actually instrumental with the board of people in getting the school off the ground and she has hopes that we would enroll the children in it. (Parent C1)

The decision was definitely ours but we do have family members involved in the school and in the creation of the school so I think without a doubt there is an influence there. (Parent C3)

I think once you made the decision ... it is reinforced by parents of other children. It is reaffirmed by those already here. (Parent A2)

Friends already have their children in this school as well so of course they shared information with us and that information helped us to decide if we wanted our children here or not. (Parent A1)

One parent had negative influences instead but that did not deter her family from enrolling their child(ren) in the Catholic school.

Yes, any other influence was more negative, the idea of putting the children in this little private Catholic school, they were more not supportive of it. (Parent C4)

These parents have researched and sought out the school themselves. The child(ren)'s mother and father are the usual decision makers when deciding which school to choose. It is

evident though that other significant people in their lives, like relatives and friends play an important role as well in their decision.

Teacher Qualities

Teachers stand as the ‘second parents’ while students are in the school premises and during class hours. It is very important that they possess parental attributes because looking after children whether as a parent or a guardian is a big responsibility. When asked about what teacher attributes parents think play an important role in being the ‘second parents’ of their children while in school, they identified teacher qualities they believe are important. It was evident during the interview that the parents were describing their child(ren)’s teachers.

Parents value the aspect that the teachers are very knowledgeable. They would want to entrust their child(ren) to people who have expertise and experience in what they do.

I think they are knowledgeable. I think they are just wise. I think the teachers are just wise in what they do. (Parent B3)

Obviously, you want the teachers to know what they are doing, academically. All the teachers here have been great so far. (Parent B4)

She is a good teacher. She can teach. She can teach. She can teach. (Parent C1)

Several character traits of teachers that were identified were: compassion, passion, commitment, patience, openness, huge love for the children.

Oh! Compassion and commitment. Yeah. Compassion and passion and commitment. (Parent A2)

I think patience is one. Patience because you know, I do have little children and it is not at all easy to be patient (Parent A3)

I think love is a huge, huge, one, especially in today's age. (Parent A4)

The teachers are very open. Anytime you need to speak with them, they are a very much open door policy. (Parent B3)

The teachers are very open in communication. You can communicate with them anytime. (A1)

Following the basic character traits that the parents have identified, they also pointed out the importance of the teacher's love in what they do which makes them willing to go the extra mile and be involved with activities in school and assist a child who would need an extra hand.

The teachers here seem to be more involved in all the activities of the school and it is expected that they are going to be involved ... there is the sense that we are in this together or we are in it as a community, as a second family, so there is not that resentment here. (Parent B4)

They are very dedicated. You know that teachers in the private sectors are not paid as much. They are here because they love what they do. (Parent B2)

My two children when they were younger went to the speech therapy... of course they both needed a little extra work and that was no problem for her. She knew what to do and actually had extra experience in that area. (Parent C1)

Parents also value that other than being committed to academics, teachers are also dedicated to character formation, which includes disciplining the child(ren) and being a good role model.

Even the discipline follows sort of Christ and how He would do things, so it is great.

(Parent A4)

Somebody whom you know can deal with children in a constructive way ... discipline

... it is important for us ... and to set a good example for children as well. (Parent

C3)

As a parent, you are not there all the time all day to correct and make adjustments for

your child, so the teacher is very instrumental. Teachers who strive hard to push

those values. (Parent B2)

I am not afraid to shy away from a teacher who has the courage to discipline. I think

sometimes teachers are afraid they can get in trouble, but I know from personal

experience with my own children, they need discipline; they need to have a boundary

line to know they have crossed and they cannot be floating around not knowing where

they stand. (Parent A3)

The teachers here are good role models. (Parent A1)

Patience is one, but there is also integrity, walking the talk. (Parent A3)

Being able to model appropriate and responsible behavior. (Parent A4)

Teachers often play several roles other than being that person who delivers the curriculum to the students. Teachers are sometimes the friend, the mentor, the adviser, the big sister or brother, the aunt or the uncle and indeed, the ‘second parents’ while the child(ren) are in school. It is good that these parents find that the teachers to whom they entrust their child(ren) have outstanding qualities.

Initial Concerns, Ongoing Sacrifices and Ultimate Satisfaction

Even though most of the parents did their research and sought out these schools themselves, they still had some concerns and reservations at the start before enrolling their children. Some parents were concerned that being in a Catholic school might shelter their child(ren) too much. After their child(ren) is/are enrolled, there are certain adjustments that they have to make but the positive aspects of having their child(ren) in a Catholic school outweighs all the sacrifices.

Initial concerns. One of the concerns that parents have is regarding the financial aspect. In Table 3, 82.5% of the parents indicated that it is true for their family that enrolling their child(ren) in a Catholic school is a financial sacrifice.

In terms of the financial point of view, we really put a lot of thought into that, this school is affordable but we still need tuition to make the commitment. (Parent A1)

The only reservation is the huge, big financial commitment. It cost a lot of money to go here ... I suppose at the end of the day, if you cannot spend your money on your children's education, what is it for? (Parent B3)

For us, it is a huge commitment. (Parent C1)

Financially, we knew it was going to be tight. (Parent B1)

Some parents expressed their concern that the small size of the school, the very same thing that they like somehow was also an initial concern. Some parents from the smaller schools were worried whether the school would have enough students to keep open for the next school year or would it have enough students for their child(ren)'s social skills to develop.

Because we are small and we are not government funded, we get our money from tuition and fund raising, it has been a struggle financially for families and even the school as well, to keep its doors open and you always wonder if the school will still be there next year, next year, next year. (Parent A3)

The same thing we liked about the school was also one of our reservations ... it was so small so we did like the fact that it has small class sizes but it is very, very small We are a bit concerned that she would not be able to socialize with many kids her age. (Parent A5)

Because the school is so small, the social atmosphere would not be advantageous. (Parent C1)

Having their child(ren) exposed to other children with the same values is something parents give importance to. However, some are concerned that their child(ren) might end up becoming too sheltered that they may not be prepared to face the outside world.

You do not want to shelter your children too much because at some point, they have to deal with views that are different from their own. (Parent C3)

Adjustments / ongoing sacrifices. When a child in the family starts going to school, it definitely brings changes to the family's schedule or usual routine. Parents would start to consider that, like them, their child(ren) now have a schedule to follow and abide by. In Table 7 of this chapter, 47.5% of the families indicated that their home is 11-15 kilometers away from the nearest Catholic school. This indicates that unlike other child(ren) in the neighborhood who usually go to the nearest public school, families who send their child(ren) to a Catholic school have to consider the ride to and from school. Planning a carpool scheme is quite a challenge for some parents. Most of the parents interviewed mentioned that the logistics of bringing their child(ren) to school and getting them from school after class hours is the biggest sacrifice that they had to make.

Basically, planning the number of children we would take ... we have been in a situation where in economically, I would have to stay in school because it would be too expensive to come back the third time ... although it is running smoothly, things happen, delays and traffic and so on ... (Parent A3)

That is the most trying part, in getting to school on time. (Parent A4)

Because there are no busses, it is close but it is not close enough for the little ones to walk. (Parent C4)

We try to carpool ... but some way we manage to get to school, I have my own business, I close my business from 2:30 to 2:45 to be gone and put a sign on the door. (Parent C1)

For us it is logistics. Huge logistics ... We are on the road two hours every day back and forth. I am very involved with the school as class mom and as ambassador for the school so sometimes I am back and forth over the bridge three or four times. (Parent B2)

There was not really any adjustment that we had to make other than driving because we live 20 kilometers outside the city. (Parent A5)

Ultimate satisfaction. Parents indeed had concerns and reservations before enrolling their child(ren) in Catholic schools and each family have adjustments and ongoing sacrifices that they have to make. Parents admit that those sacrifices are quite challenging but the positive outcomes of sending their child(ren) to a Catholic school outweighs all of the sacrifices they have to make. It is also unanimous to all parents interviewed that they are very satisfied and happy with their choice of school.

I am absolutely, beyond happy. It surpassed my expectations actually. (Parent A2)

Oh, I could not imagine going anywhere else, like I could not imagine them, really. (Parent B3)

As far as our appreciation of the school, I believe it has been fantastic and magnificent. (Parent C1)

I feel very at peace. There is a sense of contentment and peace that we made the right decision ... for that peace of mind, there is no price tag for that.

Absolutely happy, as a parent we feel she could not be in a better place that makes us feel very good. (Parent B2)

Parents who place their child(ren) outside the common public school system spend a considerable amount of money for their children's education. Some parents view it as being double taxed. It is only fair enough that they are very satisfied and that they get their money's worth. Or according to some parents, what they get is even much more than the money they put in.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion

The findings from this study offer insights on what is good about the Catholic education system, the benefits it brings not only to the students and families but to the whole Catholic community. In this section, the results will be revisited through the interview questions. Insights from the interviews will also be integrated within the discussion.

Reasons why parents chose a Catholic school for their child(ren). Other than the 25 factors that are on the list of possible motivations for parents to choose Catholic schools, each parent mentioned their individual motives and reasons why they chose a Catholic school for their child(ren). The answers of parents revealed three major aspects. The first aspect of their school choice is related to the public school system. In the course of the survey and interview, public school dissatisfaction does not rank high but it is present and parents have given valid points to support their dissatisfaction. They prefer a Catholic school over a public school because there are things that go in the public school system that they do not care for. They also believe that the school that they chose is known to give a better education than the public school system. For several parents, objection to the public school system may not be the main reason but rather faith and value formation are included in their priority. The Catholic school system has fairly clear philosophy and moral vision which parents cannot seem to find in the public school system. This research is not about what is unpleasant in the public school system but rather, what Catholic school system can provide which the public school system lacks. According to Father James Mallon, parish priest in Halifax as he mentioned in one of his homilies regarding faith formation in families, communities and the

school system, “To speak of something lacking is not to pass judgment but to adapt to the incredible shift due to the changing society.” There are indeed a number of things lacking in the public school system. Even though the choice about public school dissatisfaction was never in the given factors in the survey or the interview, it came out from every parent who was interviewed.

The next aspect of school choice is related to curriculum and academics. In one parent’s case, a younger child was enrolled in a Catholic school and the older child in a public school, after one term, the younger child was overtaking the older child. This motivated them to enroll both children in the Catholic school. One parent mentioned that the school of their choice has an excellent reputation. Parents felt that academically, the Catholic school system is a better option for their child(ren).

The third reason is that parents want religious instruction as well as moral values formation. They know that in their Catholic school choice, values will come from a good place. Parents acknowledge that values and virtues are taught in school. They believe that in a Catholic school their child(ren) will have a good foundation for their morals and values. Parents prefer that their child(ren) get religious instruction along with academics and they believe that a Catholic school can nurture their child(ren)’s spirituality.

Fourth reason is related to the school environment. The small school environment is also something in their list of priorities and that the school’s philosophy is like an extension of what they have at home or it mirrors what their family have. In this kind of familial or sense of community environment, parents also appreciate the amount of involvement they can have. In a small school environment, the teachers and administrators alike have the

chance to be more in tune with the wishes of the parents. Small class size is also more effective to motivate students and for teachers to connect with parents. More individual attention for the child(ren) is really important for parents.

Unique characteristics of the school compared to other schools. Small class size is the top answer when parents were asked about the unique factors of their chosen Catholic school. They believe that in a small class size, their child(ren) gets unique and individual attention and they are not 'lost' unlike in large classes. Also, in a small class size, it is easy to recognize each child's individual strengths. In a small class size, the children can go their own pace. The next unique characteristic that was mentioned is the religious and values system. There is also an integration of core values with their studies. The school is connected to the certain Catholic values of social justice and recognizing the dignity of the human being. Third, parents have also mentioned that what is taught at home is reinforced and the philosophy of the school mirrors what they have at home. Fourth, the teachers' commitment and their love for the children are huge. Role modeling by teachers is also fantastic. A fifth characteristic is the school environment with its sense of community. As stated in the Sacred Congregation for Catholic education of the Vatican council (1977), "the community aspect of the Catholic school is necessary because of the nature of the faith and not simply because of the nature of man and the nature of the educational process which is common to every school." (para. 54) There is personal contact and everybody knows everyone. The setting is like a family. Sixth is that the academic part is strong and that the school has the holistic approach to education. One very interesting characteristic that was mentioned is that, the families who enroll their child(ren) to Catholic schools get so much for what they pay.

Impact of school culture, peers and teachers and administration on their decision.

When asked about the extent of the school community in influencing their decision, it was a unanimous answer that the impact of the school culture, peers, teachers and administration is huge. Parents said that the leadership/administration have a big impact. Administrators being able to answer all questions and being reassuring made all the difference. The staff, not only the teachers also contribute to the influence. Teachers are engaged and they have control over their class. The staff are caring and concerned. In other words, the entire community and the school culture are great influence to the decision of the parents to enroll their children and to keep the child(ren) in their chosen Catholic school. As mentioned by Wagner (2001) Catholic education will survive and thrive only if teachers, administrators, trustees, clergy and parents are passionate proponents and advocates.

Concerns or reservations before enrolling their child(ren) in their chosen school.

Even if parents sought after the school where their child(ren) is/are currently enrolled, each had their concerns and reservations before enrolling their child(ren). It was mentioned though that those concerns are not a huge factor. As indicated in Table 2 in the Results and Data Analysis chapter, more than 55% of the participants have an annual combined family income of over 100,000 and yet all of the parents have the concern that enrolling their child(ren) to a Catholic school is a very huge financial commitment. Table 3 supports that claim as 52.5% of the parents agreed that it is a great extent of financial sacrifice to send their child(ren) to their chosen school. Some parents were concerned that the very same thing they liked about the school is also their concern – small class size. Some parents from the smaller schools were initially concerned if the small class size will be able to survive the following school year. Some parents were concerned that the small social atmosphere might not be

advantageous, that there would not be enough socialization and exposure. This aspect even turned out beneficial because, for the smaller schools which have mixed grade levels, interaction proved to be better because of the different age groups. Several parents were also concerned that their children might turn out to be too sheltered although they believe that, the children would need to be sheltered first when it comes to their faith so they can face the negative values that might come their way in the future. It was a unanimous answer for the parents that their concerns and reservations were outweighed by the benefits and the positive benefits that having their child(ren) enrolled in a Catholic school bring to their families.

Adjustments and accommodations that the family had to make now that their child(ren) is/are attending a Catholic school. When parents were asked about the biggest adjustment that they had to make, it evolved with just two major concerns. First, that it is a huge adjustment financially. Some parents think they are double taxed as they pay their taxes and still have to pay for their child(ren)'s education. They believe it is really a huge financial commitment but most agree that, at the end of the day, if they would not invest their money to their child(ren)'s education, where will it be for? The next adjustment is logistics wise. Every parent mentioned about the drive /carpool to school. In the rural area where there are no busses, it was indeed an extra challenge for parents to bring their child(ren) to school every day but as some of the parents mentioned, it is well worth the drive. Parents are very much willing to makes these sacrifices for their child(ren).

Positive aspects attending a Catholic school brought to their families. In the previous sections, it has been noted that there is indeed a great amount of sacrifice coming not only from the parents but to the entire family as well since their child(ren) go to an

independent school. Although it has already been mentioned that families find all the sacrifices well worth it, this section will highlight the positive aspects of having their child(ren) enrolled in a Catholic school bring to their families. It is heartwarming to note that the benefits are not only for the child(ren) but also for the parents and the entire family as a whole. Parents mentioned that there are a lot of wonderful things that private Catholic schooling has done for their child(ren). One parent mentioned that her child's outlook on the world and her thoughts about peace, love and understanding are all incredible. Most parents mentioned that their child(ren) realize(s) where their faith fits in their everyday lives. They realize that it is a very important part of their lives. Their child(ren) are able to talk about their faith and are not hesitant to share it with their peers. The sense of responsibility among the child(ren) is coming through and one can tell that they have been taught about other people's sensitivity, feelings and empathy in school. Inasmuch as values taught at home are evident in the child(ren), the religious and moral values they learn in school also translate not only at home but everywhere the child(ren) go/goes. The child(ren) is/are also held to a higher standard, not only academically but in other aspects as well, like discipline and character wise. It is unanimous to all parents that they see their child(ren) happy and thriving in the school that they chose. According to parents they are happy children and there is always a smile on their faces. They are excited to go to school and are happy to be there. A child's happiness certainly is on the priority list of parents. The third benefit it brings is related to the parents. The parents are more relaxed knowing that their child(ren) are well taken care of. Parents have the peace of mind that their child(ren) is/are in good hands. The family as a whole also benefits because it serves as a faith boost for the entire family. It strengthens the family's faith and it improves the way the family functions as a

team. The entire family is also more encouraged to get involved with church and other religious activities. Parents agree that it has been all positive influence for the entire family.

Past educational experience of parents which may have influenced their decision to choose a Catholic school for their child(ren). Often times, it is the parent's educational history that would influence their educational choices for their children. In regard to the educational history of the participants, it can be categorized in two ways, either the parents had a chance to be in a Catholic school system and they want their children to experience it as well or the parents went to a public school and did not like their experience at all therefore they do not want their children to experience the same thing. In chapter IV, Table 11, 80% of the families have at least one parent attend a Catholic school in at least one grade level. It is interesting to note that there are several families in which neither parent went to a Catholic school and yet their child(ren) attend/s a Catholic school. Parents who did not have a pleasant experience in the public school system mentioned that they did not want their child(ren) to experience what they had gone through. One parent mentioned that she was disillusioned and did not enjoy the public school experience at all. One parent mentioned that when she was a young child, she found the public school to be too overwhelming thus she does not want her child(ren) to experience the same thing. Parents who had a very positive experience in the Catholic school system want to be able to share that experience with their child(ren). One parent mentioned that she had an absolutely great experience and had the time of her life during her stay in a Catholic school. One parent is an alumna of the school where she sends her child(ren) and mentioned that there are some things that people get accustomed to and in her case, she was accustomed to the school's values. Some parents have the small-school experience and found it effective; therefore they want their child(ren) to have that experience

as well. One parent mentioned that they want their child(ren) to be exposed to students who share similar values and beliefs. The same parent whom neither she nor her husband attended a Catholic school actually stated that, “Catholic education is really what education is supposed to be.” (Parent C3) She also mentioned that for their family, Christ’s history of how He lived His life is what they want for their child(ren).

Other people’s inputs which influenced their decision. With regard to a child’s education, the case often times is that the parents, whether it be both parents or at least one parent, who decides where to enroll their child(ren). More often than not, it is just the parents who decide, backed up by the research that they have done about the schools. In some cases, there are several family members whom they consult. Some families, the influence of the child(ren)’s grandparents were greatly considered. Some of these grandparents were instrumental in putting up the smaller Catholic schools. Some parents have family members who are teachers in the public school system therefore their inputs were highly considered. One parent is actually a teacher herself in the public school system therefore she has a good understanding of which school system will work best for her child(ren). Several parents have friends who have already enrolled their child in the Catholic school therefore those friends shared their experience and provided positive inputs. One parent mentioned that it is actually the network of parents who reinforces each and everyone that they made the right decision in enrolling their child(ren) in a Catholic school. Several parents were influenced by the school administrators themselves. With administrator’s knowledge and helpful inputs, it was easy for the parents to be convinced that the Catholic school system would work well for their child(ren). It is interesting to note, however that several parents from the rural area actually

had negative inputs from friends and relatives; although those negative inputs did not discourage them from enrolling their child(ren) to a Catholic school.

Teacher attributes that play an important role when it comes to being the ‘second’ parents of their child(ren) while in school. Being a parent is not easy. It is a 24 hour job, seven days a week, four weeks in a month and 12 months in a year. In other words, parenting is a lifetime job. Being a teacher is not a 24 hour job, but being second parents to the child(ren) who go to school is not an easy job either. The role that teachers take on is big and challenging. Their students may not be their own child(ren) but in some way they are expected to treat them like their own and treat them with great love, understanding and compassion. When parents were asked what teacher attributes are important for them, it was as an easy question for them which appeared to be that they were describing the characteristics of the teachers in the Catholic school of their choice. Parents like that fact that the teachers have parental attributes. In relation to the religious values, parents appreciate that the teachers have a religious affiliation, know it and practice it. Several parents are pleased that the teachers are Catholic themselves and that they are solid in their faith therefore bringing in the Catholic aspect when they are teaching. As stated in the Sacred Congregation for Catholic education of the Vatican council (1977), “the teacher is in an excellent position to guide the students to a deepening of their faith and that the teacher can form the mind and heart of the students and guide them to a total commitment to Christ” (para. 40). Being ‘wise’ in what they do or in other words, knowing their subject matter is important for parents as well. The next big thing that parents recognize is the ‘huge, huge love’ the teachers in the Catholic school system have for their students. They have the genuine love for what they do that they do not mind “walking an extra mile” for the sake of

the children. This is even in the context that teachers in independent schools may not be compensated as high as the teachers in the public school system. They strive hard to push the values that the children need to learn. They have the courage to discipline and are firm but gentle in their ways. They are noted to be extremely caring and patient and have the authentic hope and faith that their students will do well in all aspects. Teachers in the said Catholic school system also adhere to the philosophy of the school. They model an appropriate behavior and known to ‘walk the talk’ according to one parent. (Parent A3) The list of positive characteristics could still run some more but to summarize everything, when asked about the trait that sets the teachers in the Catholic school apart from other teachers; Parent A2 mentioned that, “it is their passion, compassion and commitment.”

Top five out of the 25 factors. In trying to determine the top five factors parents deem significant, it is surprising to note that there is a slight difference in the level of importance in the result of the answered survey versus the result of the interview. Chapter IV, Table 12 has the factors in this following order of importance: academics, curriculum and instruction aspect come first, followed by aspects related to teachers, then the friendly/warm school environment, fourth is religious moral values. The factor ‘school’s philosophy mirrors that of home which is the top factor in the interviews came out to be in the 13th spot in the survey results when the mean of each of the 25 factors were ranked although it still got a high mean average of 3.58 compared to the top factor, ‘quality of curriculum’ which has a mean average of 3.90. In the interview results, the top five factors came out to be in this order of importance: first is that the school’s philosophy mirrors that of home or that parents see the school as the extension of the values they teach at home, then curriculum and academics come second, emphasis on religious and moral values and that regular Catholic activities are

observed came in third, aspects with regard to teacher's commitment is the fourth important factor and fifth top factor is the environment, whether it is physical meaning the location and actual school building itself that is safe or environment meaning the community, all the people involved in the school system, the sense of family and the warmth. In the survey, since it was a forced choice, and there is no option with regard to the public school, parents were not able to give much inputs about it except for the chance that they were able to rate the public school closest to their home. This is summarized in Table 9, Chapter IV. Since in the interview, parents had more chance to express more thoughts, each and every parent was able to provide, even without the researcher prompting, valid inputs with regard to why they did not choose the public school system for their child(ren).

Other concerns the parents may have. Choosing a school is not only because of the Catholic label, it is all the things combined: sense of family, sense of community, involvement that the parents can have, also the sense of safety and security. Several parents expressed frustration that there is no Catholic school system in Nova Scotia so the only way that Catholic families can avail of a Catholic education is out of their own pocket which may prove to be a day-to-day struggle so other Catholic parents may not be willing to consider this option. Several parents expressed her gladness that this research is being done.

General feeling/impression that their child(ren) is/are enrolled in a Catholic school. When parents were asked about their general feeling or impression that their child(ren) is/are enrolled in a Catholic school, a list of positive comments were given very quickly. Parents said that the entire experience is fantastic, wonderful and magnificent. They feel very happy, content, and blessed. They feel proud as well and they feel safe and secure.

They believe the school is a happy environment for their child(ren). They feel very at peace and they said there is no price tag for that. Parents also mentioned that they are satisfied and it even surpassed their expectations, they could not imagine their child(ren) going anywhere else and that they could not be in a better place than the Catholic school of their choice.

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion

Analysis of interviewed parents' top five choices revealed that several factors out of the 25 given choices are interconnected to four major themes. The first factor considered is that the school's philosophy mirrors that of home. The next factor considered is the quality of curriculum, and that is linked with well-defined academic structure and instructional goals. The third factor identified is the school's emphasis on religious and moral values. The fourth factor related to the teachers. Parents recognize the value of the teachers' commitment, their high behavioral expectations from children and their involvement in the academic but also the character formation of the child. The fifth factor identified is related to school environment. Parents give importance to the safe school environment and the warm and friendly school climate. This is associated with parent's perception of a sense of community in these schools. This study highlighted the positive qualities and strong points of the small but important Catholic school system in Nova Scotia, it did not dwell on why parents preferred the Catholic school over the public school system in the province although several parents have mentioned valid points regarding that aspect.

Four themes also emerged from analyzing the audio tape. These included Individual Motivations for School Choice, Influences on School Choice, Teacher Qualities and Initial Concerns, Ongoing Sacrifices and Ultimate Satisfaction. Individual Motivations are several factors that parents deem the most important motivation that they have for enrolling their child(ren) to a Catholic school. The Influences on School Choice explains that other than family members, the opinion of friends also matter to parents when deciding on concerns

regarding Catholic school choice. The theme on Teacher Qualities described the outstanding attributes parents believe are important for the teachers to possess. The fourth theme which is Initial Concerns, Ongoing Sacrifices and Ultimate Satisfaction revealed that there are initial concerns and ongoing sacrifices that parents go through but those sacrifices do not discourage them from enrolling their child(ren) in a Catholic school. It also proved that those parents who send their child(ren) to a Catholic school are very satisfied with their decision.

“Families are domestic churches.” That is according to Father James Mallon, a parish priest in Halifax, Nova Scotia as he mentioned in one of his homilies. It is not surprising that the top factor that came out is that parents see the school as the extension of their home, in regard to the values and virtues that they teach their children. Parents prefer that the values the school teaches are consistent with the home. That is, their children will find that values their parents teach at home are followed up by what their teachers, or what the school teaches them. For example, parent A3, was motivated by knowing that what is taught at home will be reinforced and will not be compromised. Parent C3 stated that it is a natural extension of the positive values and good principles their family have at home and their child(ren) going to a Catholic school enhances the positive values and good principles. For parents B1 and B3, they wanted an environment where it would mirror or replicate what is being taught at home.

According to Wagner (2001) quoting the Ontario Catholic Supervisory Officer’s Association: “Curriculum and faith development are not separate elements of Catholic education” (p.26). Curriculum and academics are central to good education. One of the primary reasons children go to school is for them to learn their academics as well as for them to develop into educated citizens of society. It is with no doubt that parents who enroll their

children to these Catholic schools give importance to this factor. Parent B3 mentioned that one of the unique factors of the school is that it has high academic standards. Parent A4 mentioned that, academically, her child is ahead of other children in the neighborhood who are in the same grade level.

Father James Mallon claimed from his homily that: “Ultimately, faith cannot be taught but must be caught, and children catch whatever their parents have.” It is evident from the interviews that Catholic parents want to pass on their Catholic faith, its teachings and virtues to their children. Inasmuch as parents know that in their homes, their child(ren) can catch these values, they all want to ensure that in school, their child can catch religious and moral values they deem important. Parent C1 highlighted that in Catholic schools, there is the intertwining of the Catholic religion with the everyday school curriculum and that whatever subject their child(ren) are learning, religion is intertwined with their day. Parent C4 mentioned that in Catholic schools, children will have a good moral foundation. Most parents expressed that values are important to their family and they know that the Catholic school is the best option available. Hay (1999) referencing Robert Davis stated, “Catholic teaching has always insisted that issues of value penetrate all systems of knowledge” (p.516). This statement supports the importance of incorporating teaching morals and values within the school curriculum.

“Oh! It is their compassion, passion and commitment.” This is what Parent A2 replied when asked about the most important characteristic of a teacher being the second parents of their children. Parent B2 said, that the willingness to go the extra mile is one attribute that the teachers in the Catholic school have. Parent A4 mentioned that it is the huge love for the

children. It is undeniable that teachers serve as second parents to their students. Students are in the classroom with their teachers for almost seven hours a day, five days of the week, and 44 weeks in a year. That is indeed a lot of time in the school, with the teacher. Next to the parents, the teachers may be considered as the next significant figure in a child's life. Parent A4 mentioned that in their school, role modeling is fantastic. Most parents give importance to the fact that they can see that teachers are committed, not only in academics but also in the character formation of their children.

It takes a community to raise a child. This statement may sound cliché but it is indeed true in every way especially for the Catholic school system in which the sense of community is observed. Wagner (2001) mentioned that people involved in the Catholic education are like family. They are more than just members of an organization. They support one another; they build positive relationships and connect by interlocking their roots. Parent A2 mentioned that other parents in their school reinforce each other that they made a good decision in sending their children to a Catholic school. Parent B4 mentioned that one of the unique characteristics of their school is that parents are involved, there is a close relationship and the school setting is [familial]. Further, there is the close personal contact, teachers know everybody. Parent C3 said that in their school, everyone knows everybody who goes there. Parents also give high importance to the desire for their children to be in a safe environment. Most of them mentioned that it gives them peace of mind. Parent B1 stressed that there is no price tag attached to the contentment and peace they feel knowing that their children are in a safe environment.

While this study has no intention of arguing which school system is better than the others, most parents mentioned points with regard to why they prefer the Catholic school system over the public school system in the province. Some of these are: discipline is lacking in the public school system, parents are worried about safety issues, and some parents observed behavior of children who attended the closest public school that they did not like.

Implication

The implications of this study are four-fold. First the study offers the benefit of added knowledge regarding Catholic schools in Nova Scotia. The second is a benefit to parents in being able to understand why other parents have made critical choices to educate their children outside the traditional school system. Parents who send their kids to non-Catholic schools can also gain insights from this study. The Catholic school community of Nova Scotia may better understand what are perceived as its key strengths, and finally, the provincial public school system will have important feedback from families who have placed themselves outside the public system.

A section of the review of related literature mostly reflected the American Catholic school context. As expected, this study reflected almost the same context for the province of Nova Scotia because parents, whatever their ethnic background or religious denomination, want the best education for their children. No matter what sacrifice it might entail, they will strive to find the best possible educational choice for their children. The new knowledge that the study produced showed that the motives of parents from the US are the same as the motives of parents from Nova Scotia. This study also serves as one of the few or even the

first and only study in Nova Scotia, which can be compared and contrasted, with similar studies done elsewhere.

For the families who send their children to Catholic schools, this study expects that it prompted them to reflect more deeply on the motives that have influenced their school choice. It is also hoped that this study made them re-evaluate their reasons or motives. Catholic parents who send their children to public schools or other independent schools will better understand Catholic schools in a holistic manner. Optimistically, this study also raised awareness among these parents about the responsibility they have in ensuring that their children who do not attend Catholic schools are not negatively influenced by non-Catholic or even anti-Catholic attitudes or issues in non-Catholic schools. This study provides further awareness about Catholic schools in Nova Scotia which hopefully results in more network-building and cooperation among other families who send their children to Catholic schools.

The few Catholic schools in the province will find this study of help in understanding parental expectations, based on what factors motivate parents to make this challenging school choice. The related studies that were used to explore the topic provide possible resources for the participating Catholic schools.

Lastly, the provincial public school system benefits by enhancing public school policy makers' awareness of the diversity of those families who send their children to schools other than the public schools. Knowing what choices parents seek when they enroll their children in school can allow the public school system policy makers to consider possible changes that might improve their system. More research on these special schools will

contribute to the broader field of research on alternatives to public schools and this will aid policy makers to assess the efficacy of the public school system.

Recommendations / Possibilities for Further Research

The researcher believes that this study can be a start of more interesting research topics in the field of Catholic education in Nova Scotia. Several possibilities for further research are as follows:

- a) Interviewing parents of high school students, to know whether they have the same motives as parents of elementary students.
- b) Catholic parents who send their child(ren) to non-Catholic schools might also be considered for a study.
- c) A study about whether Catholic parents in Nova Scotia who send their child(ren) to public schools will consider enrolling their child(ren) to Catholic schools if the government will give them vouchers or tax credits.
- d) Reasons why non-Catholic parents in Nova Scotia enroll their children in Catholic schools may also be a topic of interest for future research.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Letter to Administrators

Dear Administrator:

My name is Alva Ortile and I am a graduate student in the Master of Arts in Education program at Mount Saint Vincent University. I am gathering information about the motives/reasons parents in Nova Scotia have for enrolling their children in Catholic schools. I would like to conduct this study with the parents or guardians of students enrolled in your school. As part of my degree requirements, this research is being conducted under the supervision of my thesis advisor, Dr. Robert Bérard. This study has been reviewed and granted approval by the Mount Saint Vincent University Ethics Board.

Since I started teaching, one of my primary interests has been about Catholic education. I have learned that there are not many Catholic schools in Nova Scotia. From the review of related literature conducted to date, few studies could be found about Catholic schools in Canada, especially in Nova Scotia. One study about Catholic schools in Nova Scotia was dated back to 1958. I am hoping my study could serve as a springboard for other researchers and/or Catholic school educators to examine the different and more current aspects of Catholic education in Nova Scotia.

I am hoping that you will consider working with me in this venture. Data will be collected in two phases. The first phase of the study involves parents or guardians completing a survey with questions pertaining to demographics of families who send their child(ren) to Catholic schools. This survey will take approximately eight to ten minutes to complete. A package of surveys in large envelopes will be sent to your school. Each large envelope will contain a coded survey, a small envelope for the completed survey, an information letter, a consent form and a small envelope for the completed consent form. These large envelopes are to be distributed by teachers to the students who in turn, will take them home to their parents. Collecting the survey responses and consent forms will also be through the students bringing them back to their classroom teacher. Your office can then send the completed surveys and consent forms back to me through the self-addressed envelope provided in the initial package.

This study involves minimal risk. Only group data will be reported from the surveys. To ensure anonymity, parents or guardians will be instructed not to indicate any identifying information on the coded surveys. Signed consent forms will be placed in the small envelope provided and stored separately from the surveys. Parents or guardians will also be informed that completion of the survey is voluntary and they may refuse to answer any item. This survey will also be used to generate the questions for the follow-up interview, the second phase of data collection.

While the survey is being carried out, please recommend three parents or guardians who might be willing to participate in an interview of approximately 45 minutes. In addition,

parents or guardians interested in the second phase of the study will be asked to indicate whether they are willing to participate in a follow-up interview by signing the space and providing contact information at the bottom of the consent form. Once identified, those parents or guardians willing to be interviewed will receive information letters. I will then contact them to set up the interview schedule. On the day of the interview I will present the parent or guardian with an interview consent form. I will be accompanied by a colleague who will assist me with the interviews. All the information gathered for the interview will be kept confidential and the background information collected cannot be used to identify individual participants. Pseudonyms will be assigned to interview participants when reporting the data in order to protect their identity.

Completed survey questionnaires, all consent forms, audiotapes and transcriptions of audiotapes will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the thesis advisor's office and can be accessed only by us. Signed consent forms will not be stored with the surveys or interview transcriptions but placed in separate filing cabinet drawers. Any computer disks holding data and the audiotapes of the interviews will be erased, and surveys, consent forms and interview transcriptions will be shredded immediately after completion of the study. Similar to the survey, participants may refuse to answer any interview question and they may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your consideration of this request. If you have any questions, and/or concerns regarding this research, please contact my thesis advisor Dr. Robert Bérard, at (902) 457-6274; robert.berard@msvu.ca. If you wish to speak with someone not directly involved in this project, you are invited to contact the Coordinator of the Mount Saint Vincent University Ethics Board, Ms. Brenda Gagne at (902) 457-6350 or brenda.gagne@msvu.ca

Sincerely,

Alva S. Ortile
Graduate Student – MA Education
Mount Saint Vincent University

Robert Bérard, PhD
Thesis Supervisor / Director of Teacher Education,
Faculty of Education, Mount Saint Vincent University

Appendix B: Letter to Teachers

Dear Teachers:

My name is Alva Ortile and I am a graduate student in the Master of Arts in Education program at Mount Saint Vincent University. I am gathering information about the motives/reasons parents in Nova Scotia have for enrolling their children in Catholic schools. I would like to conduct this study with the parents or guardians of students enrolled in your school. As part of my degree requirements, this research is being conducted under the supervision of my thesis advisor, Dr. Robert Bérard. This study has been reviewed and granted approval by the Mount Saint Vincent University Ethics Board.

I am pleased that your school administrator has allowed me to conduct a study on Catholic school choice of parents or guardians from your school. It would be most appreciated if you would act as liaison for this study. If parents have questions about the study, they may prefer to speak with someone that they know. It is for this reason I am requesting your assistance.

Data will be collected in two phases. The first phase of the study involves parents or guardians completing a survey with questions pertaining to demographics of families who send their child(ren) to Catholic schools. This survey will take approximately eight to ten minutes to complete. A package of surveys in large envelopes will be sent to your school. Each large envelope will contain a coded survey, a small envelope for the completed survey, an information letter, a consent form and a small envelope for the consent form.

I am requesting that you distribute and collect the surveys and consent forms, which you can then hand in to your administrator who will mail back to me. Attached is a copy of the survey for your reference. I have also provided a checklist or you may design your own checklist for the sole purpose of monitoring the return of surveys and consent forms. I will not collect the said checklist.

This study involves minimal risk. Only group data will be reported from the surveys. To ensure anonymity, parents or guardians will be requested NOT to indicate any identifying information on the coded surveys. Signed consent forms will be placed in the small envelopes provided and stored separately from the surveys. It is requested that each student will return both survey and consent form in their respective sealed envelopes, whether it was answered or not.

I understand it is a busy time of the year for you. Please be assured that your effort is greatly appreciated and it will definitely contribute to the future of Catholic schools in Nova Scotia.

I thank you for considering being an important part of this research. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at (902) xxxxxxxx; alva.ortile@msvu.ca or my advisor, Dr. Robert Bérard at (902) 457-6274; robert.berard@msvu.ca. If you wish to speak with someone not directly involved in this project, you are invited to contact the

Coordinator of the Mount Saint Vincent University Ethics Board, Ms. Brenda Gagné at (902) 457-6350 or brenda.gagne@msvu.ca

Sincerely,

Alva S. Ortile
Graduate Student – MA Education
Mount Saint Vincent University

Appendix C: Letter to Parents – Survey Information

Dear Parents:

My name is Alva Ortile and I am a graduate student in the Master of Arts in Education program at Mount Saint Vincent University. I am gathering information about the motives/reasons parents in Nova Scotia have for enrolling their children in Catholic schools. I would like to conduct this study with the parents or guardians of students enrolled in your school. As part of my degree requirements, this research is being conducted under the supervision of my thesis advisor, Dr. Robert Bérard. This study has been reviewed and granted approval by the Mount Saint Vincent University Ethics Board.

Since I started teaching, one of my primary interests has been about Catholic education. I have learned that there are not many Catholic schools in Nova Scotia. From the review of related literature conducted to date, few studies could be found about Catholic schools in Canada, especially in Nova Scotia. I am pleased that your school administrator has allowed me to conduct this study. I am hoping that you will consider my invitation to work with me in this study. Data will be collected in two phases.

The first phase of the study is an invitation for you to complete an anonymous survey which will only take eight to ten minutes to complete. This survey will include background demographic questions of families who enroll their child(ren) in Catholic schools. To ensure anonymity, you are requested NOT to indicate any identifying information on the coded survey. Once completed, please make sure to place the survey inside the envelope provided. Kindly seal the envelope.

This study involves minimal risk. Parents or guardians who participate in the study may refuse to answer any item in the survey packet and may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. All information collected during the study will be confidential and the background demographic questions we ask for cannot be used to identify individual participants. Only group data will be reported from the surveys. All contact information of parents provided in the consent form will be kept highly confidential.

Completed surveys will be stored in a filing cabinet and will be identified only by a number code. Completed surveys and consent forms will be stored in separate drawers in a locked filing cabinet and used only by the researcher and her supervisor and will be kept confidential. All surveys and consent forms will be shredded immediately after completion of the study. A summary of results will be distributed to the school administrator and to any interested parents when it is available.

The second phase of the study is an invitation to participate in a follow-up interview. Results of the surveys will be used to generate questions for these interviews. The interview phase will help better understand the reasons, motivations you have in enrolling your child(ren) in Catholic schools. The interview will last approximately 45 minutes. I will be accompanied by a colleague who will assist me in the interviews. If you are willing to participate in the interview, please complete page two of the survey consent form and

provide contact information on the space provided. Please seal it inside the envelope provided. If you are not interested in participating in the interview, please place the unsigned second page of the consent from inside the envelope. Kindly seal it and return it as well.

If you have any concerns, please contact me (902-xxxxxxx; alva.ortile@msvu.ca), or my thesis supervisor, Dr. Robert Bérard, (902-4576274; robert.berard@msvu.ca). You are also welcome to contact Brenda Gagné, Research Coordinator at Mount Saint Vincent University Research Ethics Board (902-4576350; brenda.gagne@msvu.ca) if you have any other concerns about the study.

Thank you for considering this request. The goal of this study is to better understand the reasons parents have in sending their child(ren) to Catholic schools. This information will support the future of the Catholic school system in Nova Scotia.

Sincerely,

Alva S. Ortile
Graduate Student – MA Education
Mount Saint Vincent University

Appendix D: Survey Consent Form

I, _____, have been informed about the research under investigation by Alva S. Ortile entitled, *Catholic Education in Nova Scotia: Understanding Parents and their Motives in Enrolling their Children in Catholic Schools*, as part of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Education at Mount Saint Vincent University. The purpose of this research is to identify the reasons parents or guardians in Nova Scotia have in enrolling their children in Catholic schools.

I understand that the survey will take eight to ten minutes to complete. I understand that my participation is voluntary. I have the right to refuse to answer any questions at anytime. I may withdraw anytime without negative consequence.

I further understand that strict measures are in place to protect my identity. No identifying information will be released in the thesis report. I understand that completed survey packets will be stored in a locked filing cabinet and will be identified only by a code number. Surveys and consent forms will be stored in separate filing cabinet drawers.

I understand there is no anticipated harm or risk related to my participation, and that an Ethics committee at Mount Saint Vincent University approved this research.

I understand that a final copy of the report will be available for participants to view.

I understand that if I have any questions about how this study is being conducted, I may contact the University Research Ethics Board, c/o MSVU Research and International Office, who is not directly involved in the study, at (902) 457-6350 or via email, research@msvu.ca

I have read the information letter as well as the consent form above and give my free and informed consent.

Participant's name Printed: _____ Participant's Signature: _____

Date: _____ Child(ren)'s School and Grade: _____

Researcher's signature: _____

_____ I wish to receive a summary of results when it becomes available.

Mailing address: _____

Whether or not you decide to participate in the survey, please place the survey (completed or uncompleted) in the envelope provided and seal the envelope. Please place this consent form (signed or unsigned) in the second envelope provided. Please seal the envelope and have your child return both survey and consent form envelopes to their classroom teacher.

An Invitation to Participate in an Interview

I am interested in being interviewed about the reasons for enrolling my child(ren) in a Catholic school. I understand that if I agree to be interviewed, I will receive a second information letter with further details about the interviews.

Email: _____

Home phone/ Cell phone: _____

Most convenient day-time to reach me: _____

Postal address: _____

Appendix E: Letter to Parents – Interview Information

Dear Parents:

My name is Alva Ortile and I am a graduate student in the Master of Arts in Education program at Mount Saint Vincent University. I am gathering information about the motives/reasons parents in Nova Scotia have for enrolling their children in Catholic schools. I would like to conduct this study with the parents or guardians of students enrolled in your school. As part of my degree requirements, this research is being conducted under the supervision of my thesis advisor, Dr. Robert Bérard. This study has been reviewed and granted approval by the Mount Saint Vincent University Ethics Board.

The second phase of the study is an invitation to participate in an interview. The information gathered from the interview will be used to understand and identify themes, trends, similarities and perspectives of families who enroll their child(ren) in Catholic schools. The interview will be comprised of several questions regarding factors that parents consider in choosing a school for their child(ren). The interview will last for approximately 45 minutes. A colleague will accompany me to assist in the interview process. With permission from you, I will make use of audio tape during the interview to fully attend to what is being shared.

This study involves minimal risk. Parents or guardians who participate in the study may refuse to answer any question during the interview and may withdraw anytime without penalty. The audiotape will be erased once the study is complete. Written transcriptions of the tapes will be shredded. All information gathered will be stored in an access-controlled computer file and stored in a locked filing cabinet which can be accessed only by the researcher and her supervisor. Consent forms will be stored separately from audio tapes and transcripts in a locked cabinet and will be shredded immediately after completion of the study. Written transcriptions of the interview will be available for you to review during the research. You can also review the data analysis once it has been completed.

If you have any questions before we proceed in setting up the interview schedule, please contact me, (902-xxxxxxx; alva.ortile@msvu.ca), or my thesis supervisor, Dr. Robert Bérard, (902-4576274; robert.berard@msvu.ca). You are also welcome to contact Brenda Gagné, Research Coordinator at Mount Saint Vincent University Research Ethics Board (902-4576350; brenda.gagne@msvu.ca) if you have any other concerns about the study.

Thank you for considering being a part of this research. The goal of this study is to better understand the reasons parents have in sending their child(ren) to Catholic schools. This information will support the future of the Catholic school system in Nova Scotia.

Sincerely,

Alva S. Ortile
Graduate Student - MA Education
Mount Saint Vincent University

Appendix F: Interview / Audiotape Consent form

I, _____, have been informed about the research under investigation by Alva S. Ortile entitled, *Catholic Schools in Nova Scotia: Understanding Parents and their Motives in Enrolling their Children in Catholic Schools*, as part of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Education at Mount Saint Vincent University. The purpose of this research is to identify the reasons parents in Nova Scotia have in enrolling their children in Catholic schools.

I understand that the interview will last approximately 45 minutes, and it will be audio recorded for later analysis of the content. I understand that the interview will be audio taped for transcribing and analysis and will be erased once this process is complete. I understand that my participation is voluntary. I have the right to refuse to answer any questions and/or to be audio taped at anytime. I may withdraw anytime without negative consequence.

I further understand that strict measures are in place to protect my identity. No indentifying information will be released in the thesis report. Pseudonyms will be used instead of names. I understand that written transcriptions of the tapes will be shredded. All information gathered will be stored in an access-controlled computer file or stored filing cabinet and used only by the researcher and her supervisor and will be kept confidential. Consent forms will be stored separately from audio tapes and transcripts in a locked filing cabinet and shredded immediately after completion of the study.

I understand there is no anticipated harm or risk related to my participation, and that an Ethics committee at Mount Saint Vincent University approved this research.

I understand that a final copy of the report will be available for participants to view.

I understand that if I have any questions about how this study is being conducted, I may contact the Coordinator of the Mount Saint Vincent University Ethics Board, Ms. Brenda Gagné at (902) 457-6350 or brenda.gagne@msvu.ca

I have read the information letter as well as the consent form above and give my free and informed consent.

Date: _____

Participant's name Printed: _____

Participant's Signature: _____

Child(ren)'s School and Grade: _____

Researcher's signature: _____

I have read the consent form above and give permission to be audio taped during this interview.

Signature of Participant: _____

Date: _____

_____ I wish to receive a summary of results when it becomes available.

Mailing address: _____

Appendix G: Survey Questionnaire / Interview Questions

Dear Parents:

Your time to answer the enclosed survey is greatly appreciated.

Please be reminded that all responses will remain confidential and no individual or school will be identified.

The purpose of this survey is to research the reasons parents in Nova Scotia have in enrolling their children in Catholic Schools.

Part I: Demographic characteristics

1) This form is being completed by:

- Father (or male guardian)
 Mother (or female guardian)
 Legal guardian
 Other (please specify)

2) Occupation (please specify):

- Father (or male guardian)
 Mother (or female guardian)

3) Highest educational level achieved: (Please check one)

Father (or male guardian):

- Elementary
 High School
 College/University
 Post Graduate
 Prefer not to say

Mother (or female guardian):

- Elementary
 High School
 College/University
 Post Graduate
 Prefer not to say

4) Annual combined family income:

- Over 100,000
 50,000 - 99,999
 25,000 - 49,999
 Under 25,000
 Prefer not to say

5) Primary Ethnic background of the family:

- Canadian
 French-Canadian
 English-Canadian
 Asian
 Other (please specify)

- 6) Primary religious background of the family:
 Roman Catholic
 Anglican
 Baptist
 Islam
 Other (please specify)
- 7) Your family has lived in Nova Scotia for:
 More than 10 years
 5-10 years
 1-4 years
 Less than one year
- 8) Whose decision was it to enroll your child(ren) in a Catholic school:
 Father (or male guardian) only
 Mother (or female guardian) only
 Both parents
 Other (please specify)
- 9) Was your child(ren)'s input considered when making this decision?
 Yes
 No
- 10) When was this decision made?
 Before the child was born
 Before the child attended primary
 When the child began grade one
 Other (please specify)
- 11) For some families, it is a financial effort/sacrifice to enroll their child (ren) in Catholic schools. To what extent is this true for your family?
 To a great extent
 Somewhat true
 Very little
 Not at all
 Prefer not to say
- 12) Did you attend Catholic schools at any of the following levels? (Please check all that apply)
- | | |
|---|---|
| Father (or male guardian): | Mother (or female guardian): |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Elementary | <input type="checkbox"/> Elementary |
| <input type="checkbox"/> High School | <input type="checkbox"/> High School |
| <input type="checkbox"/> College/University | <input type="checkbox"/> College/University |

13) Approximately how many kilometers is it from your home to the nearest Catholic school?
 _____ Less than 5 kms
 _____ 6-10 kms
 _____ 11-15 kms

14) Approximately how many kilometers is it from your home to the nearest public school?
 _____ Less than 5 kms
 _____ 6-10 kms
 _____ 11-15 kms

15) How will you rate the closest public school in your area?
 _____ Very Good
 _____ Moderate
 _____ Not good

16) How did you first hear about _____ school?
 _____ Friend/Relative
 _____ Advertising (Newspaper/telephone book/internet)
 _____ Saw the building and campus
 _____ Through affiliated church
 _____ Other (please specify)

17) For each child currently enrolled in Primary-Grade12, Public or Catholic or other independent school, please enter the following information:

	Check if currently in Catholic School	Check if currently in other schools	Age	Grade
Child 1	_____	_____	_____	_____
Child 2	_____	_____	_____	_____
Child 3	_____	_____	_____	_____
Child 4	_____	_____	_____	_____
Child 5	_____	_____	_____	_____

Part II: Factors associated with Catholic school choice

Listed are possible factors associated with choosing a Catholic school. Please check how important these are for you.

	Very Important	Important	Not Very Important	Not at all Important
1) Quality of curriculum	_____	_____	_____	_____

- | | | | | |
|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 2) Quality of instruction | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 3) Commitment of teachers | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 4) Emphasis on religion | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 5) Emphasis on moral values | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 6) High achievement and standards | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 7) Discipline environment | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 8) Warmth of school climate | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 9) Small class size | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 10) Well defined academic and instructional goals | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 11) Responsiveness to the expectation of parents | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 12) Proximity of the school's Location | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 13) Preparation for desired College | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 14) Safety of the school Environment | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 15) Opportunity for parental Involvement | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 16) Sense of community is observed | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 17) School's philosophy mirrors that of home | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 18) Teachers are Catholic | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 19) Teachers are good role | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |

Models	_____	_____	_____	_____
20) Co-curricular activities such as sports, band, journalism, etc.	_____	_____	_____	_____
21) High behavioral expectations	_____	_____	_____	_____
22) Students are exposed to peers of the same Catholic Values	_____	_____	_____	_____
23) Teachers who get involved not only in academics but also in character formation	_____	_____	_____	_____
24) Friendly/warm school Environment	_____	_____	_____	_____
25) Regular Catholic activities such as prayer, mass, outreach	_____	_____	_____	_____

Please check one:

_____ I am interested in participating in an interview about the reasons I have in enrolling my children in a Catholic school.

(Please see consent form included in the package)

_____ I am not interested in participating in an interview.

(Please return both this survey and the blank consent form even if you are not interested to participate in an interview)

Interview Questions

- 1) Parents may have individual motives for enrolling their children to a Catholic school, please tell us why you chose this school for your son/daughter.
- 2) What unique factors, if any, did this particular school have compared to others?
- 3) Before enrolling your son/daughter in this school, you may have thought of some concerns or reservations, please share with us those if there were any.
- 4) What are the adjustments/accommodations you had to make now that your child is attending a Catholic school, if there were any?
- 5) What past educational experience of yours may have influenced you to choose this school for your child?
- 6) Were there other people who influenced your decision? Who? What were there inputs?
- 7) What teacher attributes do you think play an important role when it comes to being the “second parents” of your children while they are in school? Why do you think these are important?
- 8) What are the other concerns / inputs you might want to share that were not discussed in the previous questions?

Appendix H: Ethics Certificate



University Research Ethics Board

UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS BOARD**Certificate of Research Ethics Clearance**

Title of project: *Catholic Education in Nova Scotia: Understanding Parents and their Motives for Enrolling their Children in Catholic Schools*

Researcher(s): Alva Ortile
 Supervisor (if applicable): Robert Berard
 Co-Investigators: n/a

File #: 2010-015

The University Research Ethics Board (UREB) has reviewed the above named proposal and confirms that it respects the *Tri-Council Policy Statement* as outlined in the *MSVU Policies and Procedures: Ethics Review of Research Involving Humans* regarding the ethics of research involving human participants.

This certificate of ethics clearance is valid one year from the date of issue. Renewals are available for up to two years in addition to the initial year and are contingent upon an annual submission to the UREB of a written request for renewal accompanied by a satisfactory annual ethics report thirty days prior to the expiry date as listed below. A final report is required within 30 days of expiry. Researchers are reminded that any changes to approved protocol must be reviewed and approved by the UREB prior to their implementation.

Dr. Michelle Eskritt, Chair
 University Research Ethics Board (UREB)

August 25, 2010
 Effective Date

[Expires: August 24, 2011]