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An Examination Of Educational, Occupational, And Religious Characteristics Associated With Decisions Of Suburban Catholic Parents About The Elementary School Education Of Their Children

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AN EXAMINATION OF EDUCATIONAL, OCCUPATIONAL, AND RELIGIOUS CHARACTERISTICS ASSOCIATED WITH DECISIONS OF SUBURBAN CATHOLIC PARENTS ABOUT THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL EDUCATION OF THEIR CHILDREN

BY

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SETON HALL UNIVERSITY

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It is often said that doctoral dissertations are labors of love. In the most fundamental and obvious way, this assertion is true to the point of being trite. After all, doctoral candidates are always encouraged to select a topic that will sustain their interest over the inevitable "long-term" relationship that is the writing of any dissertation. Dissertations are labors of love in a more subtle way, however, and it is this level of unstinting support and genuine care that the researcher wishes to acknowledge, as follows:

To his immediate family of loving wife and five children, who represent fifty per cent of the following dedication, the researcher's gratitude is simply beyond words. Their never-ending patience with his preoccupation bordering on surliness during this project is especially noted. During the course of doctoral study the researcher was often asked how a person with a wife and five children could possibly complete a dissertation. Given all the love and support they have shown him throughout the completion of this project, the researcher instead wonders how doctoral candidates without a wife and five children can possibly finish!

To his extended family of loving mother and seven siblings the researcher also wishes to extend his deepest thanks. They provided support in the way their Catholic faith says it is most needed, that of constant prayer. But their support also included frequent solicitations about the project and, in the case of some, direct participation in it (e.g., the addressing of envelopes and the like).

The researcher's extended family also includes a father now long since gone to the Lord, who represents the other fifty per cent of the following dedication. His dad
provided a lifelong model of a loving father, probing intellect, and dedicated teacher and administrator, as well as a career path in a way that even he would never have imagined.

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DEDICATION

To Chris, Jenn, Nancy, Marybeth, Matt, and Lauren

and

to the memory of the first Dr. Ward
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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

The Research Problem and Its Setting

For most of their history in the United States, Catholic schools for their children were effectively a de rigueur choice for Catholic parents, many of whom were recent immigrants whose prelates were highly suspicious of the Protestant-dominated education provided by American public schools. Catholic schools were almost defensive in nature, founded largely to allow immigrant Catholics to maintain their faith while in every other way promoting their enculturation into American ways.

A statement by Catholic bishops in 1843 typifies the mentality of many Catholic churchmen in the embryonic years of Catholic education: “We have seen with serious alarm efforts made to poison the fountains of public education, by giving it a sectarian hue and accustoming the children to the use of the Bible made under sectarian bias” (Walch, 1996, p. 31). A somewhat earlier pastoral letter focused on what parents could do to protect the spiritual lives of their children:

It is no easy matter to preserve the faith of your children in the midst of so many difficulties. We are always better pleased to have a separate system of education for the children of our communities because we have found by painful experience, that in any common effort it was always expected that our distinctive principles of religious belief in practice should be yielded to the demands of those who thought it proper to charge us with error” (Walch, 1996, p. 31).

Greeley (1976) is even more blunt in stating the reason for the beginning of Catholic schools in the United States, seeing them as “a Catholic response to a perceived
threat from nativist bigotry.” Calling the American public schools of the time “non-denominational Protestant schools,” Greeley mentions the refuge-like quality of the fledgling parochial schools: only there would “Catholic children be free from the proselytizing efforts” of the dominant Protestant culture (Greeley, 1976, p. 168).

Writing as late as the Vatican II period, Mary Perkins Ryan explored the mentality behind the Catholic school system, perceiving an essentially defensive set of attitudes toward Catholicism and the environment around it as creating a need to maintain a separate set of schools. She hypothesized that Catholic school Catholics were different from public school Catholics in their possession of a siege mentality (Ryan, 1964). The current study proposes to explore what differences, if any, exist between these respective groups of Catholic parents.

As Catholics of various national origins assimilated into American culture, a number of developments occurred which threatened the high enrollment rate of Catholic schools. For one thing, Catholics became forces to be reckoned with in city and town governance, so now the public schools would not be so reflective of the Protestant tradition. For another, many successful Catholics left the urban enclaves behind and became part of what one historian has called the crabgrass frontier (Jackson, 1995). With their high property taxes supporting in most cases an excellent public school system, and the scarcity (relative to urban areas) of schools in the suburbs, many Catholics began to opt out of Catholic school education and enrollments in parish religious education programs (or what used to be commonly called “CCD” classes, for Confraternity of Christian Doctrine) increased. (Walch, 1996 & Greeley, McCready, & McCourt, 1976)
Catholic historians would say that the exodus of suburban Catholics from Catholic schools was, in large measure, a self-inflicted wound. When Catholics moved to the suburbs in large numbers during the 1950s and 1960s, they did not find as many schools as they had enjoyed in their urban neighborhoods. Walch (1996) writes of a crisis of confidence in the 1960s, following the Second Vatican Council. With fewer and fewer religious sisters available or willing to staff Catholic schools, more laypersons filled the void. This made running Catholic schools more expensive, and many suburban parishes refused to take on the cost. Daniel O’Rourke also writes about how Vatican II had left many people in the pews wondering what it meant to be a Catholic, let alone if they should continue to support Catholic schools (Walch, 1996, p. 230).

Interestingly enough, at the same time that school enrollment by Catholic suburban parents was dropping, enrollment by non-Catholics in inner city schools was growing. In the researcher’s own Archdiocese of New York enrollment in both city schools (Manhattan, the Bronx, and Staten Island) and suburban schools (Dutchess, Orange, Putnam, Rockland, Sullivan, Ulster, and Westchester) dropped significantly between 1965 and 2000. Urban elementary school enrollment, which stood at 111,312 students in 1965 dropped to 56,740 by 2000. Suburban enrollment dropped from 61,615 to 25,714 during the same period (Archdiocese of New York, 2000). Greeley, McGready, & McCourt (1976) posited the Church’s unwillingness to build new schools to accommodate the burgeoning suburban population as the reason for this decline. Whatever the reason, the decline is noteworthy.

The enrollment of non-Catholic students in Catholic schools during this period is also remarkable, if only for its steady growth. First, neither the National Catholic
Education Association nor the Archdiocese of New York even collected enrollment figures on non-Catholics until the 1982-83 school year. In 1985 the enrollment of non-Catholics in New York City schools of the Archdiocese stood at 17%. By 1990 it was 18%, and by 2000 it had reached 25%. Figures for the suburban schools also showed an increase, albeit at lower overall percentages than in New York City. For example, non-Catholic enrollment in the suburbs was 5% in 1985, 9% in 1990, and 12% by 2000 (Archdiocese of New York, 2000).

In effect, the urban Catholic schools were continuing their historical mission of assimilating newly arrived immigrants into the American mainstream. In the 1840s these immigrants were largely Irish and German. By the 1880s and through the 1920s these groups were joined by many Italian immigrants. Today the immigrant groups served by Catholic schools include more Filipinos and Haitians, as well as more non-Catholic African-Americans and non-Catholic Hispanics. While this situation was certainly faithful to Christ’s Command to teach all nations, it put Catholic school leadership in the paradoxical position of heavily subsidizing the education of non-Catholics while schools serving Catholic populations in some suburbs closed due to withering enrollments.

In a continuing effort to put Catholic schools on a firmer financial footing, dioceses and archdioceses in the United States are now developing marketing programs for Catholic schools. For example, in 1997 the Archdiocese of Chicago engaged a firm to develop a marketing program for its Catholic schools. The Archdiocese of New York had done the same thing two years earlier, and at present is the recipient of an $800,000 grant from the Steiniger Foundation to market its schools in various suburban communities in the ten county region served by the Archdiocese.
The Chicago and New York programs market primarily to suburban Catholic parents because, frankly, it is not at all necessary to market Catholic schools to even non-Catholic parents in inner cities who are already plagued by what many of them perceive as unsafe and ineffective public school systems. Parents of inner city children have spontaneously turned to Catholic school education as a safe and effective alternative without needing any further stimulus from a marketing program.

Suburban parents, on the other hand, have viable options for the education of their children, including sound public and non-sectarian private education. In most cases both these options far exceed the Catholic school option in terms of programs and desirable features, such as small class size, full sports programs, computer and technological education, along with counseling and other ancillary services. The high property taxes that suburban homeowners face in most of these school districts provide, if nothing else, a particularly cogent economic reason to take advantage of the educational program offered by the local district. Despite these factors, though, suburban Catholic schools continue to exist if not thrive. Indeed, some dioceses, like the Diocese of Metuchen, New Jersey, are considering building schools for their increasing suburban populations.

It is the persistent decision of at least a segment of the suburban Catholic population to place their children in Catholic schools that prompts the current study. Are there factors or characteristics that might be associated with a decision by a suburban Catholic parent to place his or her child in a Catholic elementary school? Is there a profile of a “typical” Catholic school parent and, conversely, a “typical” parent who places his or her child in the parish religious education program? If such a profile can be developed, it may inform further diocesan Catholic school marketing efforts.
This study posits the concept that "Catholic school parents" and "religious education parents" are almost like Coke and Pepsi drinkers with tremendous "brand loyalty" brought on by a number of factors which the subsidiary questions of this study will try to address. As such, parents may be relatively impervious to the blandishments of any marketing program, no matter how well constructed. The current study will explore associations that may help to develop a profile of the respective parent groups to see if resources committed to marketing programs are a wise investment of the limited funds available to diocesan school systems.

Support for this intuition is provided, to a degree, by the field of decision theory and the concept of heuristics, or rules of thumb, in decision making. People use heuristics whenever something provides aid or direction in the solution of a problem but otherwise is incapable of justification. A good part of the literature review for this study includes a number of studies that found the most likely factor associated with a parent’s decision to enroll his or her child in a Catholic school is the parent’s own enrollment history in Catholic school.

The Research Question

Do suburban Catholics who enroll their children in Catholic schools demonstrate different educational, occupational, and religious characteristics than their counterparts who enroll their children in public schools?
Subsidiary Questions

1. Is there an association between the parents' religious education in their youth and the enrollment decision they make for their children?

2. Is there an association between the educational level attained by the parents and the enrollment decision they make for their children?

3. Is there an association between the occupation of the parents and the enrollment decision they make for their children?

4. Is there an association between the parents' level of religiosity and the enrollment decision they make for their children?

5. Is there an association between the parents' acceptance of certain teachings of the Roman Catholic Church and the enrollment decision they make for their children?

Terms

"Enrollment decision" means the decision on the part of a parent to enroll his or her elementary school child in a Catholic school, public school, or non-sectarian private school while participating in the parish religious education program.

"Suburban Catholic school parents" are those choosing to place their own children in a Catholic elementary school in the following communities of New York State (including three counties in the Archdiocese of New York: Orange, Rockland, and Westchester): Briarcliff Manor, Bronxville, Cornwall, Nanuet, Pearl River, Rye, Scarsdale, and Valhalla.
These school districts emerged as leading districts in their respective counties according to data annually submitted for a report to the governor, including: highest percentage of students exceeding New York State reference points for reading and math testing at the elementary school level; and highest percentage of secondary school graduates being awarded the prestigious New York State “Regents Diploma” at the conclusion of their high school years. Also, each of these communities had a Catholic parish with an elementary school and a religious education program.

"Religious education parents" are those enrolling their children in the parish religious education program while enrolling them in a local public school or other non-sectarian private school in the same suburban communities listed above.

"Parents’ religious education in their youth" means whether the parents attended Catholic school or public or non-sectarian private school during their elementary and secondary school years.

"Educational level attained by the parents" means the terminal education achieved by the parents in their own education (i.e., no high school diploma, high school diploma, bachelors degree, graduate school, or advanced degree).

"Occupation of the parents" means the primary source of livelihood of the parents. This study will distinguish between “jobs” (i.e., positions not requiring formal schooling beyond a high school diploma) and “professions” (i.e., positions for which advanced training or a graduate or professional degree is necessary, such as a law degree, nursing license, medical degree, etc.).

"Parents’ level of religiosity" means whether or not parents regularly (a) attend Sunday Mass (b) receive Holy Communion (c) receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation
(i.e., "go to Confession") and (d) say daily prayers. The study will analyze each of the foregoing separately and then develop a composite score of religiosity by adapting the religiosity index developed by Greeley and Rossi (1966).

"Parents' acceptance of certain teachings of the Roman Catholic Church" means whether or not the parents support Church teaching on the following: (a) abortion (b) artificial means of contraception (i.e., the "birth control" teaching) (c) the ordination of women as priests and (d) remarriage after divorce. The rationale for including these teachings in the study was the researcher's sense that these issues would have particular resonance for women and professional women, at that, since all of them clearly have an impact on a woman's life in the most fundamental ways. For example, would "professional" women find these teachings to be too limiting on women, especially those who have advanced degrees and/or professional training? And would these perceptions of an "archaic" Church out-of-step with the women's movement have a stronger association with not enrolling their children in Catholic schools? Other Church teachings, such as about homosexuality and capital punishment, were not included, on the grounds that while often commented upon in the media, they did not have as particular a resonance for professional women.

Limitations

First and foremost, this is not a study of why parents choose the particular program they choose for their children. It is only intended to explore the possible existence of a Catholic school parent profile and a parish religious education parent profile, based on an examination of educational, occupational, and religious factors. For
example, this study does not examine in any degree the respective features of the educational program that might lead certain parents to choose a public school (e.g., small class size, superior facilities and ancillary services, etc.). It does not explore household disposable income or other economic factors that might result in a particular enrollment decision.

Second, this study does not present any associations that might emerge as causative or even correlative. It simply examines whether there is a consistency of association between these factors for parents choosing Catholic schools or parish religious education programs for their children.

Third, once survey returns started to come in, a limitation on the occupational variable became very evident. The sole open-ended question on the survey instrument was for occupation (see Appendix A). Participants were asked to state what they did for a living and they were given instructions and specific examples to guide their response. They were also asked to do the same for their spouse's occupation. The researcher hoped that the responses to this item would then be specific enough for him to code the occupations according to Duncan's socioeconomic index. Unfortunately for the study, many respondents failed to be specific enough in this regard, naming only the general field in which they worked (e.g., "banking," "retail sales," "real estate," and the like), and not naming the specific position they held. This prevented the use of Duncan's index and significantly limited the conclusions the researcher might want to present on the occupational variable. Not wanting to abandon entirely the occupational variable, the researcher used those responses that were specific enough to make a rough categorization of parents into "professional" and "non-professional" occupations. The former included
occupations like attorney, physician, dentist, psychologist, architect, teacher, and nurse. The latter included occupations like homemaker, police officer and other public service worker, and secretary. A further attempt at objectivity on this categorization was to consider the highest educational level attained by the person. In the case of the "professional" occupations, a graduate degree was necessary for inclusion; "non-professional" occupations included only those who had a high school diploma. Using this approach, the researcher generated a sample of 130 parents and 92 spouses. While these sample sizes were certainly large enough to perform appropriate chi-square tests, only the most tentative conclusions are offered herein for the occupational variable.

A fourth limitation of the present study lay in the area of the piloting of the survey instrument. Time constraints allowed the researcher to pilot the instrument only to a group of school parents, and a rather esoteric group of school parents at that. That is, the 11 parents who participated in the pilot were all parents who were at St. Pius X School for a school outing. In no sense were these randomly selected parents but parents interested enough to have the time and the interest to accompany their children on a school outing. Given the nature of this group, it is perhaps not surprising that they were so agreeable to the survey format and individual response items. That the pilot study did not include any religious education parents proved to be a very real limitation on the development of the survey instrument. This is attested to by the strong exception that some religious education directors and coordinators of the parishes in the study took to the items in the instrument that addressed Church teachings, even to the point of their deciding not to participate in the project. Here the essential criticism focused on what some of the directors and coordinators saw as a tendentious or even negative expression
of the items about Church teaching, that is, that Church teaching was presented in a less than favorable light by the eight statements in the survey. Unfortunately, this potential limitation of the survey instrument was only discovered at the time the instrument was presented to the directors and coordinators for distribution to their parent participants. Had the pilot included a randomly selected cohort of religious education parents, this limitation might have been better addressed at the pilot stage.

A final limitation of the current study lay in the nature of the enrollment of some of the parish schools in the study. The study's focus was to examine the decision-making behavior of suburban parents who had a choice in the sense of school performance about their child's school. A particular focus was to avoid including parents who might be avoiding having to enroll their children in public schools in urban areas that they might perceive as less than satisfactory from whatever standpoint. It was for this reason that the researcher tried to include public school districts that were high performing on various academic variables. While certainly achieving that goal on the basis of public school districts, it became evident that Catholic school enrollment does not follow as neat a pattern, particularly in the case of some parish schools in the study that lay close to a larger city. For example, St. Joseph's in Bronxville and the three parish schools in Scarsdale are close enough to attract a number of parents whose children might otherwise have to attend the Yonkers public schools. Holy Name School in Valhalla attracts a good number of parents who are residents of White Plains. The reality that parish schools no longer follow strict parish lines or public school district lines at all meant that a good part of the random parent sample could have included the very people for whom Catholic schools represent the only viable alternative for their child's elementary education.
Hence, the levels of religious practice or agreement with Church teaching, along with the amount of Catholic education in their youth, might have resulted in stronger associations had the study controlled better for the inclusion of suburban parents who were themselves residents of the public school districts in the study. While the study found statistically significant differences between the two parent groups nonetheless, the researcher is left to wonder whether those differences would have been stronger with a more "purely" suburban parent sample.
Chapter II

REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

The general theoretical framework for this dissertation is the field of psychology and decision theory. More specifically, it focuses on how individuals use heuristics in making decisions, which in turn may help us to understand the strategies suburban Catholic parents employ in choosing to enroll their children in either Catholic schools or parish religious education programs.

Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky have authored and edited various books and articles on how heuristics influence decision-making. They assert that people often use heuristics in judging the likelihood of an event, particularly when they are faced with uncertainty, change, or the possibility of a loss resulting from an incorrect or an inappropriate decision. Heuristics, which can be likened to rules of thumb, result in intuitive rather than evidence-based decision-making.

Kahneman and Tversky (1972) posit two types of heuristics that are pertinent to this study. The first is representativeness. In many situations one event is judged more probable than another whenever the former event appears more “representative” than the latter. For example, how a parent represents or conceives of each type of educational program (i.e., a Catholic school or a parish religious education program) strongly influences the decision the parent eventually makes. If a parent represents the Catholic school as providing a good academic education in a value-oriented environment, then the likelihood of enrollment there increases. More generally, parents who themselves
attended Catholic schools and had good experiences would use the representative heuristic to associate a Catholic school with a good education.

The second heuristic posited by Kahneman and Tversky (1972) is the availability heuristic, which uses the strength of association as a basis for judging the likelihood of an event. One assumes that if an association is easily made, then it must be accurate, since associative bonds are built with experience. (Taylor, as cited in Kahneman & Tversky, 1982) Furthermore, it is the ease of retrieval, construction, and association that provides the estimate of frequency or probability, not the sum total of examples or associations that come to mind. Thus, one important difference between the use of the availability heuristic and the use of some more elaborate inferential process is that little actual retrieval or construction need be completed by the decision-maker. An estimate of the ease with which this process would be performed is sufficient as a basis for inference and then, decision-making.

Taylor goes on to posit how a salience bias in the decision-maker’s available data might bias subsequent decision-making. A salience bias occurs whenever colorful, dynamic, or other distinctive stimuli disproportionately engage attention and accordingly disproportionately affect judgments and decisions.

Nisbett, et. al. (as cited in Kahneman & Tversky, 1982) continue with Taylor’s theme of salience bias in their essay on popular induction. Quoting the British philosopher Bertrand Russell in 1927 that “popular induction depends upon the emotional interest of the instances, not upon their number” (p. 192), they refer to various experiments about the effects of consensus information, wherein sheer numbers of instances have been pitted against instances of some emotional interest. Consistent with
Russell's hypothesis, emotional interest has in every case carried the day, according to Nisbett.

On the basis of this work we may conjecture that concrete, emotionally interesting information has greater power to generate inferences when people are faced with new decisions because of the likelihood of such information's calling up what Nisbett calls scripts, or schemas involving similar information. The decision-maker's inference then proceeds along the well-worn lines of the previously existing script. Abstract information, on the other hand, is probably less rich in potential connections to the associative network by which scripts can be reached.

Nisbett and his colleagues discuss a concrete example of a person thinking about buying a certain model car. Consumer Reports informs the person that the experts' consensus is Model X, and the person plans to buy that car. Before he does, however, he meets a friend at a party who tells of his brother-in-law's woes with that model. The logical status of the information this person has provided is that the N of several hundred Model X-owing Consumer Reports readers has been increased by only one, yet the mean frequency of repair record shifted up by an iota on three or four dimensions.

All of this theory may have a great deal to do with the manner in which parents choose an elementary school setting for their children. A fairly uniform body of research appears to support the idea that parents who had a certain type of schooling in their youth appear to choose their children's setting accordingly, which is the first hypothesis of the study being proposed.

**First Subsidiary Question:** Is there an association between the parents' religious education in their youth and the enrollment decision they make for their children?
Darling-Hammond and Kirby (1988) did a study examining the effects of a tax deduction for educational expenses on parents’ school choices in the state of Minnesota. The authors did a telephone survey of 476 Minnesota parents of public and private school children, and their sample was demographically similar to the study undertaken here (i.e., predominantly white, fairly affluent, predominantly suburban, and highly educated parents). They found that 47% of private school parents, especially those who attended private schools themselves, seemingly automatically enrolled their children in a particular private school. They also found that among private school parents, Catholics were the most likely to be non-choosers.

Gratiot (1979) interviewed parents of children in both public and non-public schools in a largely white, affluent, and well-educated community in San Francisco that had a very reputable public school system. She found that the parents of children who had received their entire education in private schools were more apt to have attended non-public school themselves.

Greeley and Rossi (1966) did a national survey of Catholics and found that parental attendance at Catholic schools to be an “extremely strong predictor” of the Catholic education of the respondent to the survey (p. 46). Respondents whose parents went entirely to Catholic school in their youth attended Catholic schools themselves at a 90% rate. On the other hand, respondents whose parents had no Catholic school education attended Catholic schools at only a 33% rate. Greeley and Rossi (1966) concluded, “It appears that Catholic education may well be a matter of family tradition” (p. 46).
A second Greeley study with different collaborators confirmed the earlier Greeley and Rossi finding. Greeley, McGready, and McCourt (1976) found that the major difference between Catholic parents who sent their children to parochial school and those who did not was total years of parental Catholic education. They suggested that a parent's own schooling history predisposes him or her to choose a similar type of education for his or her child.

Checchia (1989) conducted a study of high school selection through a questionnaire study of students and their parents in the suburban Long Island counties of Nassau and Suffolk. Among other things, Checchia found that mothers whose eighth graders had chosen a Catholic school had a greater frequency of Catholic education than their counterparts who had chosen a public high school. Likewise, mothers whose children had chosen a public school had a greater frequency of public education in their own background.

The E.H. White Company (1983) did a study for the United States Department of Education as part of the School Finance Project. They conducted a telephone interview survey of a national sample of 1,223 households regarding the motivation of parents in choosing private schools for their kids. They found that the demographic factors of parents who sought private schools for their children included a parental history of private school.

Gibson (1993) explored the motivation of parents in choosing private elementary schools for their children by disseminating surveys and conducting telephone interviews among private elementary school parents in suburban Milwaukee. Gibson found inconsistent data to indicate that the educational history of the fathers influenced the
decision to enroll the child in private school. For example, only 12% of the Jewish fathers and approximately 50% of the Lutheran and independent school fathers had themselves attended private schools. Similar percentages resulted for the mothers. Significantly, Catholic parents presented an exception to this data, with 68% of the fathers and 80% of the mothers choosing Catholic schools for their children after having attended Catholic schools themselves.

Second Subsidiary Question: Is there an association between the educational level attained by the parents and the enrollment decision they make for their children?

The review of research on this question presented mixed results. Checchia (1989) did not find the level of education achieved by the parents to be influential in the selection of a high school for their children. In a study of Catholic school commitment by parents in the Archdiocese of St. Louis, Holtz (1972) also found that parental education level is not significantly associated with a Catholic school commitment by parents.

While not finding the difference to be a significant one, though, Holtz did find more parents choosing a non-Catholic setting for their child if they had a higher education level. For example, among Catholics with a high school diploma, 33% chose Catholic schools and 29% chose public schools for their children. Among those with some college education, 23% chose Catholic schools and 27% chose public schools. Among those who completed college, Holtz found percentages even lower, with 19% choosing Catholic schools while 24% chose public schools for their children.

In the same vein as Holtz, Moore (1993) presented survey results that bear on the question of a higher educational level being associated with less support for the Church. While the Gallup survey did not relate educational level attained to the possibility of
enrollment in Catholic school, as this study proposes, it reported some interesting results between educational level attained and levels of religiosity, which is explored in the fourth subsidiary question, and support for certain Church teachings, which is explored in the fifth subsidiary question.

For example, Gallup poll participants were asked about their agreement with Church teaching regarding the possibility of women priests. “Strong” agreement was highest among college graduates (44%), with decreasing percentages of agreement reported for those with some college, a high school diploma, and less than a high school diploma. The latter group posited the lowest level of strong agreement with the survey proposition (25%).

Also significant was the level of “strong” disagreement with the proposition, wherein the highest percentage with this viewpoint found among non-high school graduates (24%) and the lowest among college graduates (14%).

A similar pattern was found for other Church teachings and some religious practices, which are pertinent to this study. For example, poll participants were asked if a person could use artificial birth control and still be considered a good Catholic. Percentages of agreement with this proposition increased as a function of increased education, with non-high school graduates showing the least amount of support for the proposition (72%) and college graduates showing the greatest amount of support (84%). An inverse relationship was shown for the poll participants who disagreed with the proposition: college graduates disagreed at a 14% level, and non-high school graduates disagreed at a 24% level.
Poll participants were also asked if a person could be a good Catholic and not attend Mass regularly or receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation at least once per year. Again, the highest level of support for such propositions came from respondents with at least some college, and the highest levels of disagreement came from those without a high school diploma. The same kinds of patterns were reported on the questions of having abortions and remarrying without an annulment of one's first marriage.

On the other hand, a number of studies did find an association between a higher parental education level and an inclination to enroll children in private school. For example, Darling-Hammond and Kirby (1988) found that the parents' level of education displayed a monotonically increasing relationship with the propensity to enroll in private schools. They also found that the higher the level of education on the part of fathers led to a greater tendency to choose private schools.

Greeley, McGready, and McCourt (1976) also reported that as the amount of parental education increases, there was a greater tendency on the part of those parents to enroll their children in Catholic schools, but they did not find this association strong enough to be statistically significant. Greeley's earlier study with Rossi (1966) did find that parents were more likely to enroll their children in Catholic school if they had more education. This finding was consistent with Murray (1959), who found that certain subgroups of parents, including those with greater amounts of education, had a more favorable view of Catholic schools for their children.

The E.H. White Company Study (1983) found the income and education levels of private school parents to be higher than that of the average public school parent. Finally, Johnson and Suter (1971) conducted a study of private school enrollment trends and
student characteristics, finding that the higher the education of the father, the more likely a child is to be enrolled in a private school rather than in a public school.

**Third Subsidiary Question:** Is there an association between the occupation of the parents and the enrollment decision they make for their children?

There were fewer studies of this particular question in the literature reviewed, but even those presented findings on both sides of the proposition. Checchia (1989) found that the socioeconomic levels of the family, including the occupation of the parents, were not influential in the selection of a high school. On the other hand, Greeley and Rossi (1966) found that parents with a more prestigious occupation were more likely to enroll their children in Catholic school. This study, however, proceeded along the lines of familiar sociological research, positing that people higher up on the economic ladder, including not only occupation but income, tend to use private rather than public schools. The current study examines the existence of a link between the nature of professional parents, particularly mothers, and certain Church teachings especially impacting women, to see if these factors are associated with a certain kind of enrollment decision for their children.

Costabile (1986) did a study of an affluent suburban population in Westchester County, one of the counties in New York State proposed as part of this study. Surveying parents in their choice of a high school for their youngsters, Costabile found that occupation did not prove to be indicative of school choice, since the professions of both subgroups (i.e., parents choosing Catholic high schools and parents choosing public high schools) were fairly evenly distributed among the five occupational categories in his study (i.e., homemaker, unskilled worker, skilled tradesperson, clerical or secretarial,
administrative/managerial/professional occupation). The current study makes a finer distinction among professional occupations. For example, one of the limitations of Costabile's study was the relatively wide grouping of "administrative," "managerial," and "professional" categories.

Likewise, Fichter's (1958) sociological study of a parochial school found that the school and non-school parents were similar in terms of social class and economic and occupational status. A limitation of Fichter's classic study, though, is its limitation to one parish. Perhaps the current study, which incorporates several parishes, will yield different results on this question.

Finally, Holtz (1972) found no significant occupational differences between Catholics sending their children to Catholic schools and those sending their children to public schools. Among "white collar jobs," in which he included executives, major professions, administrative, sales, and clerical workers, Holtz found the same percentage of parents choosing Catholic and public schools. Holtz shares the same limitation of Costabile, though, by providing a rather wide category of occupations, including, for example, professionals and even secretaries within the same grouping. The current study hopes to refine this distinction somewhat further to see if in fact there is a "professional" demarcation as to the enrollment decisions which parents make for their children.

**Fourth Subsidiary Question:** Is there an association between the parents' level of religiosity and the enrollment decision they make for their children?

This question presented studies on both sides of its premise. Gratiot (1979) presented findings that both support and detract from the hypothesis this study posits. Her work established a distinction in the religious practice of two public school subgroups
(i.e., parents who preferred public schools for their children and parents who preferred private school but had to keep their children in public school). While finding no differences among the prefer-public group and the religion of the mother, Gratiot did find a lack of any religious practice reported by the mothers in that group. On the other hand, Gratiot also found that the always-private group of fathers were more apt to be Catholic, while the fathers who switched their children from public to private schools were more apt to be traditional or evangelical Protestants.

Fichter (1958) did find that the major difference between school and non-school parents lay in the religious background of the two groups. Fichter found that among "public school Catholics" there were fewer prayers in the home, more mixed marriages (i.e., a Catholic married to a non-Catholic), and less interest in religious education. Fichter's findings are limited to the degree that he presented an ethnographic study of a single Catholic parish.

Greeley and Rossi (1966) did a more extensive study of the religiosity of Catholic parents and the enrollment decisions they made for their children. They found that if parents were "very religious" on the scale of religiosity they developed, 75% of their children went to Catholic schools. This study proposes to incorporate an adapted version of the Greeley-Rossi religiosity scale, which limits religiosity to Sunday Mass attendance and the reception of Holy Communion. The current study incorporated more factors into the religiosity scale, including the reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the recitation of daily prayers.

Gibson's (1993) findings confirmed that the motivation of suburban parents for choosing private elementary schools for their children was reflective of firmly held
values, which could include the ritual practices of faith. Holtz (1972), however, found a significantly positive association between what he termed "ritualistic religiosity" and a commitment to Catholic schools on the part of certain parents. He found that among school Catholics, 70% were either "high" or "mid-high" on the Greeley and Rossi religiosity scale, with only 42% of the non-school Catholics scoring in those categories. More specifically, Holtz found that Catholics who attend Mass regularly and receive Communion regularly used Catholic schools more than their confreres who are less committed to engage in these practices of their faith.

Costabile (1986), however, found no significant difference between Catholic and public school parents regarding weekly Mass attendance. The current study seeks to clarify further the association of parental religiosity with a Catholic school choice for their children by incorporating a wider scale of religious practice than either the Costabile or the Greeley-Rossi studies.

**Fifth Subsidiary Question:** Is there an association between the parents' acceptance of certain teachings of the Roman Catholic Church and the enrollment decision they make for their children?

This question is the most limited in terms of the literature review, with only two studies on point and both providing limited support for the hypothesis. Greeley, McGready, and McCourt (1976) found that a person's involvement in Church activities and his or her acceptance of the teachings of the Church meant a greater likelihood to enroll children in Catholic schools. While supportive of this study's hypothesis in this regard, Greeley, McGready, and McCourt's study touched only on the "religious beliefs" of the two parental groups, concluding that "it was not serious doubts about their religion
that keep families from sending their children to Catholic schools” (p. 225). Rather, this study proposes something a bit different, focusing less on dogmatic issues like the Trinity or Christ’s real presence in the Eucharist, and more on Church teachings that do not rise to that level, like abortion, artificial contraception, women priests, and remarriage after divorce. Consistent with the Greeley, McGready, and McCourt study, it posits no real difference among school and non-school Catholics on issues of dogma. It explores, though, whether a differentiation does not occur when it comes to the more controversial issues just listed.

Gibson’s (1993) study only tangentially touches upon the concept of support for Church teaching, inasmuch as its findings confirmed that the motivation of suburban parents for choosing private elementary schools for their children was reflective of “firmly held values,” including perhaps tenets of the faith and other Church teachings. The limitation discussed above in regard to Greeley, McGready, and McCourt is even more pronounced in Gibson. Therefore, the current study is even more necessary to explore whether a differentiation exists among school and non-school Catholic suburban parents on the issue of support for certain Church teachings.

Summary of the Review of Relevant Literature

Based on the studies reviewed, it is evident that as a concept, private school choice appears most significant in the suburbs. Many of the studies reviewed focused on affluent suburbs of major cities such as New York (Checchia, 1989 and Costabile, 1986), Milwaukee (Gibson, 1993), and San Francisco (Gratiot, 1979). Darling-Hammond’s study (1988), while conducted state-wide for Minnesota, also focused on white, fairly affluent,
predominantly suburban, and highly educated families. Owing to this focus, the strongest areas of the literature review concentrated on the private school background of parents and the parental level of education. Weaker areas of the literature reviewed tended to be in the areas of parental occupation, levels of religiosity, and agreement with Church teachings. Even in those studies which took into account religiosity and Church teachings (e.g., Greeley & Rossi, 1966; Greeley, McGready, & McCourt, 1976), these tended to be rather dated studies of some 35 and 25 years ago. Holtz also touched on ritualistic devotion among Catholic school parents, and his study is now 28 years old. The researcher searched in vain for more recent studies that explored the connections of religiosity and level of agreement with Church teachings. Considering all of the controversy in this country concerning abortion and other life issues, it seems as though this is an area that would have featured more research and exploration. Greeley's seminal studies of the 1960's and 1970's, which drew on national samples of Catholics, badly need updating.

The types of research design and methods used in the literature reviewed for this study tended to be surveys and questionnaires, with the analysis using chi-square and other tests of the strengths of the association found among variables. Some of the studies (e.g., Costabile, 1986 and Gibson, 1993) also included interviews with parents who indicated on the survey instrument a willingness to participate in this manner. Given this approach, the researcher strongly considered including an interview component in the current study. Ultimately, however, this was rejected for both procedural and substantive reasons. The procedural issue was largely one of time. Substantively, however, the researcher also wondered about the candor research subjects would show in discussing
their own practice or, perhaps more relevantly, their non-practice of the faith. The researcher's position as an "Archdiocesan official" was not perceived to encourage that kind of candor in interview subjects.

The literature review clearly influenced the researcher in deciding to explore the concept of parental religiosity and adherence to Church teachings, since so few studies did it in the first place and virtually all of those had been conducted some time ago. Finally, the literature review influenced the current study's design to the degree that the bulk of the studies focused on suburbs, where the concept of choice is relevant, as opposed to cities, where many parents may not have so much choice due to the costs of a private school education and their own financial limitations.
Chapter III

METHODOLOGY

This section of the study contains descriptions of the selection process for the suburban communities in the study, the development of the parent sample, the development of the survey instrument, and an explanation of the methods proposed for analyzing the data.

Criteria for the Selection of Suburban Communities

In selecting the suburban communities for the study, the researcher used the following criteria:

First, the public school districts must have a relatively homogeneous racial composition, so that racial composition will not be a factor in the parents' enrollment decision. Second, the public school districts must be academically of high enough quality so that the parents' enrollment decision is not an automatic choice for anyone with the financial resources to pay Catholic school tuition. Third, there must be a Catholic parish in the suburban community selected according to the above criteria, and it must have its own parish school and its own parish religious education program.

The following suburban communities that met the above criteria were selected for the study: Briarcliff Manor, Bronxville, Cornwall, Nanuet, Pearl River, Rye, Scarsdale, and Valhalla.
Communities Meeting the Selection Criteria

To verify racial composition, public school enrollment data were taken from *Statistical Profiles of Public School Districts – A Report to the Governor and the Legislature on the Educational Status of the State’s Schools: Submitted February 1997*. The white enrollment percentage of these communities ranged from a low of 79% (Scarsdale) to a high of 96% (Bronxville). The combined Black and Hispanic percentage ranged from less than 1% (Bronxville) to a high of 17% (Valhalla).

To verify school district quality, the researcher chose communities in which local public schools have high average pupil achievement in elementary school math and reading tests administered by New York State, as well as higher percentages of students receiving prestigious Regents diplomas at the end of high school. This data was also taken from the above-mentioned New York State *Statistical Profiles*.

New York State administers annual Pupil Evaluation Program tests in math and reading in grades three and six. A composite score is derived for the school’s performance. The composite scores for the suburban communities selected for this study shows an extremely limited but nonetheless excellent range of a low of 98% (Cornwall) to a high of 99.75% (Pearl River). The percentage of New York State Regents diploma recipients is similarly high, showing a range from a low of 53% (Rye) to a high of 73% (Briarcliff Manor). It should be noted that neither Bronxville nor Scarsdale reported such percentages in that category. However, their reported percentages of high school seniors going on to college (93% and 99%, respectively) were sufficiently high to provide adequate assurance, along with the high Pupil Evaluation Program composite scores, of the excellent educational program provided by these districts.
Finally, all of the suburban communities chosen for this study have parish elementary schools and parish religious education programs. It should be noted, however, that not all parishes or programs selected for this study chose to participate. For example, one parish did not participate because the religious education director lodged a complaint with the pastor about the nature of the survey instrument, considering it "anti-Catholic." And the researcher never received responses from the religious education directors in three other parishes. The school programs of ten parishes and the religious education programs of seven parishes did agree to participate in the study and sent parent lists as requested by the researcher.

Development of the Parent Sample

The researcher developed the parent sample as follows. Both the principal of the parish elementary school and the director or coordinator of the parish religious education program were asked to provide the researcher with a list of families currently enrolled in their respective programs. The lists also included the home addresses of the families for purposes of mailing second solicitations of the survey instrument to the family’s home.

Families were numbered consecutively in each of the nine suburban communities listed in alphabetical order, with separate lists of school families and another list of religious education program families for each parish being generated. Starting with a blind pencil stab on a table of random numbers, the researcher chose the last digits of the stabbed number and selected a family from each of the separate school and religious education program lists. He then proceeded down the column and over to the next column until the requisite sample size was filled with families from each group.
According to Rea and Parker (1997), an adequate sample size should reflect two factors: the confidence interval (or margin of error) that the researcher is willing to accept and a confidence level for testing the significance of the test statistic. This study proposes the conventional statistical level of significance of 95%, along with a margin of error of plus or minus 5%. The required sample size, according to Rea and Parker (1997), therefore, is 385.

This study divided this number by two, yielding a targeted population of 193 parents with children enrolled in Catholic schools and 193 parents with children enrolled in parish religious education programs. Rea and Parker (1997) also posit that the researcher should send the survey to twice as many potential respondents as the number required for the overall sample. Since 386 respondents were required, the researcher selected 700 potential respondents to receive the survey.

Because of cost and time constraints, the researcher asked school principals and religious education program directors or coordinators to send the survey directly to selected families via the “communication envelope” or similar type of periodic communique to parents. Parents were given a postage-paid envelope to return the survey directly to the researcher and thus have a greater sense of the anonymity of their responses.

Development of the Survey Instrument

While not finding a “perfect” instrument during the literature review, the researcher did find enough surveys from which to construct questions that the instrument (See Appendix A) is fairly derivative of other surveys, particularly the August, 1993
Gallup Survey of American Catholics (Moore, 1993). The survey instrument also used the Greeley and Rossi (1966) and the Greeley, McGready, and McCourt (1976) for format and presentation purposes, especially as to sections on parental education level and the amount of parental education in Catholic schools. Finally, the August, 1993 Gallup Survey (Moore, 1993) provided the current study’s survey instrument with its eight statements regarding Church teaching.

The researcher refined this first draft of the survey instrument as follows. The first draft was reviewed by a panel of experts composed of the researcher’s dissertation committee. Their suggestions were used to create a second draft instrument, which was piloted to a group of 11 randomly selected parents from St. Pius X School in Scarsdale, New York. The suggestions coming from the pilot group were then evaluated by the researcher and his mentor to create the final survey instrument.

The parents at St. Pius X School were selected primarily because a random group of parents was readily available, as the school had an outing in December, 1999 on which parents were invited to participate. The school principal also graciously provided an appropriate setting for the pilot session, which lasted approximately one hour (i.e., 15 minutes or so for survey completion and another 45 minutes for discussion and debriefing).

The pilot group made no suggestions regarding instrument wording, reporting that vocabulary and statement construction were understandable. The group made its biggest suggestions in the area of survey format and presentation, suggesting that the cover letter be reproduced on Archdiocesan superintendent of schools letterhead. They also suggested that the return envelope be a superintendent’s office type and not a plain white type.
Finally, the pilot group suggested the survey be returned to the researcher’s office instead of the researcher’s home address or a post office box. These suggestions were revelations for the researcher, who initially assumed that such items might be more “intimidating” to the average participant. The pilot parents believed there was a greater likelihood of response in an "official" envelope to an "official" address.

The parents in the pilot group presented conflicting points on one item, which the researcher then resolved in favor of stimulating a quicker and more abundant response rate. This concerned their suggestions regarding adding an optional sheet for participants to "explain further" their responses to some of the items in the Church teachings section of the instrument. They found some of the statements to be incomplete and they wanted to explain the circumstances under which they would make a selection according to the instrument's code. A primary example of this was the statement about a person remaining a good Catholic even though she had an abortion.

The researcher responded to this positively until even more vocal opinion emerged among the pilot participants as to the length of any survey instrument. The consensus emerged that participants might not read the survey carefully enough to realize that the extra sheet to explain items was "optional," and its mere existence may cause a participant to shrink from completing it. Given this potentially chilling effect on the response rate, either in terms of numbers or alacrity, and after discussion with his mentor, the researcher decided not to include the optional sheet.
Methods for Analyzing Data

Parent survey responses were coded and the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for WINDOWS was used to generate frequencies, develop cross-tabulations, and perform a statistical test for each of the proposed study's five subsidiary questions. The statistical test this study employed is the chi-square test. The chi-square test is appropriate because of the categorical (or nominal, non-numerical) nature of the data collected by the study. Chi-square evaluates whether observed frequencies for a single categorical variable are adequately described by hypothesized or expected frequencies (Rea & Parker, 1997).

Because observations in this study were cross-classified according to two categorical variables (i.e., whether parents were "school" or "religious ed" with every other variable in the study's five subsidiary questions), this study featured a "two way chi-square test" for all variables at issue. Its null hypothesis always makes a statement about the lack of a relationship between two categorical variables in the underlying population. Accordingly, the two-way chi-square test is often referred to as a "test of independence" for the two categorical variables under study. In all cases contingency tables of observed and expected frequencies will be presented.

First Subsidiary Question: The variable of how much Catholic school education a parent had in his or her youth was examined in three separate categories: those with no Catholic education, those with an elementary school Catholic education, and those with a secondary school Catholic education.

Second Subsidiary Question: The variable of how much education a parent had in his or her youth will be examined in three separate categories: persons with a high school
diploma, persons with a college diploma (bachelors degree), and persons with a graduate
degree and/or advanced professional training.

**Third Subsidiary Question:** The variable of a parent's livelihood was divided into
"professional" and "non-professional" categories developed by the researcher, using the
limited number of respondents who made their profession quite clear on the survey
instrument, along with a consideration of the education level attained by that parent.

**Fourth Subsidiary Question:** First, each of the four ritualistic variables (i.e., Mass
attendance, Holy Communion reception, reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation,
and prayer life) were separately examined. A composite score for a parental religiosity
was also developed, using an adapted version of the Greeley-Rossi religiosity scale
(1966). It was used to place responding parents into groups of "high," "medium," or
"low" religiosity.

**Fifth Subsidiary Question:** The variable of a parent's acceptance of Church
teachings, using the same adapted version of the Greeley-Rossi scale, was used to place
responding parents into the same three groups as for the fourth subsidiary question (high,
medium, and low).

In all cases where the two way chi-square test resulted in a statistically significant
finding, an additional test (squared Cramer's phi coefficient) was performed to test the
strength of the association and to control for sample size. Cohen's rule of thumb (Witte &
Witte, 1997) to categorize such associations as "small" (an association of .01), "medium"
(an association of .09), and strong (as association of .25 or greater) was used.
Chapter IV

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

Response Rate

Surveys and cover letters were distributed to 700 randomly selected parents from the ten schools and seven religious education programs in the parishes surfaced on the basis of the performance of the public schools in their communities (See Appendices A and B). As mentioned above, principals and religious education directors distributed the first solicitation to parents in the sample. This resulted in responses from 174 school parents and 99 religious education parents, for a total of 273 responses.

After consulting with his mentor, the researcher mailed a second solicitation (See Appendix C) to those parents who had not responded to the first solicitation, some 427 in all. The researcher was able to identify who had not responded while preserving the anonymity of responses in the following manner. Once the entire sample of 700 potential participants was selected, the researcher assigned code numbers from 1 to 700 for the 350 school parents (odd numbers) and for the religious education parents (even numbers). The participant's code number was written on the return envelope. When the envelope came in the mail, the code number was crossed off a master list and then the survey was removed by an office secretary. In this way, the researcher could know who had responded or not (for purposes of a second solicitation) while preserving the anonymity of the individual responses.

The second solicitation resulted in a response rate that met the requirements set out by Rea and Parker (1997), with specific numbers as follows. Another 164 parents (50
school, 104 religious education) responded to the second solicitation. In all, 437 surveys were received back, for an overall response rate of 62%. Among school parents, 224 responded for a rate of 64%. Religious education parents returned 213 surveys for a response rate of 61%. Forty-nine surveys were received too late for inclusion in the sample, and seven were returned by the post office for an address problem. Fifteen surveys had their code numbers crossed out to the point of being indecipherable. Because it could not be determined with any accuracy whether the crossed-out response was from a school or religious education parent, and not wanting to compromise his findings, the researcher decided not to include these 15 responses in the tabulation. Finally, four surveys were unusable since key section(s) of the instrument were not completed in a manner that allowed for their tabulation.

With the exception of St. Pius X School in Scarsdale, all other schools and religious education parents responded at a rate above 50%, with some groups of school parents and religious education parents responding at rates as high as 86% (St. Margaret School, Pearl River) and 71% (Immaculate Heart of Mary School, Scarsdale). While not reaching these numbers, some religious education programs saw their parents respond at very healthy rates of 66% (St. Theresa, Briarcliff Manor; Holy Name of Jesus, Valhalla; and St. Joseph, Bronxville), with the highest response rate (67%) from Our Lady of Fatima, Scarsdale.

Manner of Analysis for the Research and Subsidiary Questions

The research question of the current study asks if suburban Catholics enrolling their children in Catholic schools demonstrate different educational, occupational, and
religious characteristics than their counterparts who enroll their children in public
schools. This general question is explored in five different subsidiary questions.

The first subsidiary question examines whether there is an association between
the parents’ religious education in their own youth and the enrollment decision they make
as parents for their children.

The second subsidiary question wonders if there is an association between the
educational level attained by the parents and the enrollment decision they make for their
children.

The third subsidiary question wonders if there is an association between the
occupation of the parents and the enrollment decision they make for their children.

The fourth subsidiary question wonders if there is an association between the
responding parents’ level of religiosity and the enrollment decision he or she made for his
or her child.

Finally, the fifth subsidiary question wonders if there is an association between
the responding parents’ acceptance of certain teachings of the Roman Catholic Church
and the enrollment decision he or she made for his or her child.

As mentioned above, since the data for this study is categorical in nature, the chi-
square test of statistical significance for exploring possible relationships is appropriate.
Since in all areas of research interest the responses were cross-classified according to two
categorical variables, a two-way chi-square test was performed.

For all five subsidiary questions one categorical variable was whether the
respondent was a “school parent” or a “religious education parent,” depending on where
his or her child was enrolled in elementary school. Each subsidiary question then provided the second categorical variable for the two-way chi-square test of significance.

For the first subsidiary question the second categorical variable was the nature and amount of elementary, secondary, and collegiate education the parents in the sample received in their youth. Separate tabulations were performed for elementary, secondary, and collegiate levels of education.

For the elementary school level, responses were divided into three categories: those with 0 years, those with eight years, and those with between one and seven years of Catholic school and public school education. Separate tabulations and chi-square tests were performed for the responding parent and the responding parent's spouse (as long as the spouse was living with the responding parent at the time the survey was completed). A composite tabulation and chi-square test was also performed to compare parents with eight years of Catholic elementary education and those with eight years of public elementary education.

For the secondary school level, responses were divided into three categories: those with 0 years, those with four years, and those with between one and three years of Catholic secondary school and public secondary school education. Separate tabulations and chi-square tests were performed for the responding parent and the responding parent's spouse (as long as the spouse was living with the responding parent at the time the survey was completed). A composite tabulation and chi-square test was also performed to compare parents with four years of Catholic secondary education and those with four years of public secondary education.
For the collegiate level, responses were divided into three categories: those with 0 years, those with four years, and those with between one and three years of college education in a Catholic or non-Catholic setting. Separate tabulations and chi-square tests were performed for the responding parent and the responding parent's spouse (as long as the spouse was living with the responding parent at the time the survey was completed). A composite tabulation and chi-square test was also performed to compare parents with four years of Catholic college education and those with four years of college education at a non-Catholic institution.

For the second subsidiary question the second categorical variable was the final educational level attained by the parents. Respondents were divided into three categories: those with a high school diploma, those with a bachelors degree, and those with education beyond the bachelors level, whether they received a degree or not. Separate tabulations and chi-square tests were performed for the responding parent and the responding parent's spouse (as long as the spouse was living with the responding parent at the time the survey was completed).

For the third subsidiary question the second categorical variable was the occupation of the parents. Separate tabulations and chi-square tests were performed for the responding parent and the responding parent's spouse (as long as the spouse was living with the responding parent at the time the survey was completed).

Because of a limitation in the survey instrument that only became evident when responses were being received, this area by far presented the greatest challenge for the researcher and the most limited type of exploration. On the survey instrument the "occupation" category presented the one relatively "open-ended" area where a respondent
was asked to list his or her primary livelihood. The respondent was then asked to do the same for his or her spouse. Many examples were given, but, as often happens in survey research, respondents did not quite follow them. As a result, many respondents provided areas of employment (such as "computers," "restaurant management," and the like) without specifying the type of work they did in these areas. It therefore became impossible to rate occupations according to a scale like Duncan's socioeconomic index, which sub-divides work into various levels and categories and assigns specific point levels to each.

Not wanting to abandon entirely the exploration of a possible association between the choice of schooling for a child and the occupation of the parents, the researcher explored those responses where specific enough information was provided to make an extremely rough categorization of parents into "professional" and "non-professional" occupations. The former category included those responses that included the following as occupations and were accompanied by an education level that included a graduate degree: attorney, physician, dentist, psychologist, architect, teacher, and nurse. Included in the latter category, provided they were accompanied by an education level no higher than a high school diploma, were: homemaker, police officer and other public service worker, and secretary. Separate tabulations and chi-square tests were performed for the responding parent and the responding parent's spouse (as long as the spouse was living with the responding parent at the time the survey was completed).

For the fourth subsidiary question the responding parent's level of religiosity was the second categorical variable. Separate chi-square tests were performed for each of the
religious practices presented in the survey instrument: Mass attendance, reception of Holy Communion, reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and prayer life.

For Mass attendance respondents were grouped into three categories: those attending weekly, those attending monthly, and those attending yearly. The same division was used for the reception of Holy Communion. Because the Sacrament of Reconciliation is received so irregularly, respondents were grouped into categories of monthly, yearly, and "practically never." Likewise, prayer life required an adjustment in categories because so many respondents reported at the high end of this scale. Therefore, responses were tabulated and statistically examined according to three categories: daily, weekly, and monthly.

Finally, using the Greeley-Rossi (1966) scale of religiosity as a starting point, the researcher developed a composite scale to categorize respondents into "high," "medium," and "low" categories. Originally, the researcher had hoped to adapt the Greeley-Rossi scale almost directly from their seminal study, with an extra category to account for the reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation (which was not included in the Greeley-Rossi study). Unfortunately, a large portion of that scale derived from whether both parents were Catholic or not and whether both parents received weekly Communion.

Unlike the Greeley-Rossi (1966) study, however, parents in the current study were overwhelmingly Catholic, so that did not provide a meaningful line of categorization. Further, the current study did not include the spouse's responses on the religious practices items, in part because the researcher and his mentor wondered whether these more personal aspects of conduct could be reliably provided on behalf of the non-responding parent or (in the case of prayer) indeed whether they were even known by the
responding parent. The researcher also judged that a quicker and higher response rate would result if only the respondent was asked to complete the section on religious practices.

For the fifth subsidiary question the responding parent's view of certain Church teachings provided the second categorical variable. Separate chi-square tests were performed for each of the eight statements concerning Church teachings presented in the survey instrument: women priests, re-marriage after divorce, artificial means of contraception, and abortion. Responses were divided into three categories: those agreeing with Church teaching, those disagreeing with Church teaching, and those unsure about the Church teaching.

The eight statements in the instrument contained two statements about each of the four Church teachings being explored in this study. All eight statements were taken from an instrument provided by the Gallup Poll Monthly (Moore, 1993), but for purposes of developing a composite scale combining the statements into "high," "medium," and "low" categories (as with the religious practices section above), the researcher considered it appropriate to group the eight statements further into two distinct groups based on the nature of the statement presented in the instrument.

The first four statements in this section of the survey instrument more policy-oriented statements (e.g., "The Church should re-examine its teaching on this or that..."), while the second four statements were more personally oriented statements (e.g., "A person could have an abortion and still be a good Catholic"). Actually, this bifurcation of the statements was first suggested to the researcher by the written comments made by many of the respondents on their surveys, even though the instrument itself did not have a
space for such comments. For this category only two composites were developed and then tested separately using chi-square.

Finally, since chi-square is a test of statistical significance to determine whether or not a relationship exists between two variables, it does not by itself measure the strength of that relationship. Further, statistical tests of significance often can result in a calculated value that exceeds the critical value, particularly when sample sizes are large, in which case a researcher can detect "statistically significant" but not very "important" difference in the two groups under study.

It then becomes important to conduct a test that measures the strength of the association that the test of significance found. In all cases where a statistically significant difference was found between the two groups (or in any case where the null hypothesis had to be rejected), the squared Cramer's phi coefficient was calculated to measure the strength of the association found by the chi-square test. Using Cohen's "rough rule of thumb" for correlations (as cited in Witte & Witte, 1997), the strength of an association between two variables was considered "small" if the squared Cramer's coefficient approximates .01, "medium" if it approximates .09, and "large" if it approximates or exceeds .25. The squared Cramer's phi coefficient is useful in that it controls for sample size and gives some clue as to the importance of a finding.

For Tables 1-34 presented below, both observed and expected frequencies are shown, with the latter shown in parentheses. Below the table the calculated value of chi-square is shown, along with the degrees of freedom, and the sample size based on the number of respondents to the question. If a statistically significant difference between the two groups of parents was found, the p value is shown with an asterisk, along with the
level of significance of .05, and the null hypothesis positing no relationship between the variables was not accepted. For findings that were not statistically significant, the p value is shown without an asterisk, and the null hypothesis was accepted.

Finally, where a statistically significant relationship was found, the value of the squared Cramer's phi coefficient is shown. Next to this value in parentheses is an assessment of the strength of the association using Cohen's rule of thumb. In all cases of two-by-two chi-square tests, the null hypothesis is that the two variables at issue are independent. Rejection of the null hypothesis means that it is false, and the variables at issue are not independent.

Presentation of the Data - First Subsidiary Question

The first subsidiary question wonders if there is an association between the parents' religious education in their own youth and the enrollment decision they make as parents for their children. Tabulations were performed on the basis of the type of education (elementary, secondary, and collegiate) received by the respondent and that received by the respondent's spouse. A composite tabulation for a "full" education of a certain type (eight years elementary, four years secondary, four years collegiate) was also performed.

Tables 1-5 deal with elementary school education, tables 6-10 deal with secondary education, and tables 11-15 deal with college education. Tables 6-10 do not include a category of "All Others" because the observed frequencies in many cases were less than five, thereby violating one of the assumptions of the two-way chi-square test, which says that categories with observed or expected frequencies of less than five should be avoided (Rea & Parker, 1997).
Table 1

School Choice and the Respondent's Amount of Catholic School Elementary Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>8 Years</th>
<th>0 Years</th>
<th>All others</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Parents</td>
<td>129 (117)</td>
<td>57 (68)</td>
<td>31 (32)</td>
<td>217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relig Ed Parents</td>
<td>100 (116)</td>
<td>75 (64)</td>
<td>31 (30)</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>423</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Observed frequencies are listed first, with expected frequencies following in the parentheses.

Chi-square \( (2, N = 423) = 7.17, *p < .05 \) (Cramer's = .02, slightly greater than small).

Table 2

School Choice and the Respondent's Spouse's Amount of Catholic School Elementary Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>8 Years</th>
<th>0 Years</th>
<th>All others</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Parents</td>
<td>96 (84)</td>
<td>80 (95)</td>
<td>22 (19)</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relig Ed Parents</td>
<td>72 (84)</td>
<td>109 (94)</td>
<td>16 (19)</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>395</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Observed frequencies are listed first, with expected frequencies following in the parentheses.

Chi-square \( (2, N = 395) = 9.12, *p < .05 \). (Cramer's = .02, slightly greater than small).
Table 3

**School Choice and the Respondent's Amount of Public School Elementary Education**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>8 Years</th>
<th>0 Years</th>
<th>All Others</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Parents</td>
<td>53 (64)</td>
<td>136 (124)</td>
<td>28 (29)</td>
<td>217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relig Ed Parents</td>
<td>72 (61)</td>
<td>106 (118)</td>
<td>28 (27)</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>125</td>
<td>242</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>423</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Observed frequencies are listed first, with expected frequencies following in the parentheses.

Chi-square ($2, N = 423$) = 6.32, *p < .05.* (Cramer's = .01, small).

Table 4

**School Choice and the Respondent's Spouse's Amount of Public School Elementary Education**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>8 Years</th>
<th>0 Years</th>
<th>All Others</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Parents</td>
<td>71 (84)</td>
<td>103 (95)</td>
<td>24 (19)</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relig Ed Parents</td>
<td>97 (84)</td>
<td>87 (95)</td>
<td>13 (18)</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>168</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>395</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Observed frequencies are listed first, with expected frequencies following in the parentheses.

Chi-square ($2, N = 395$) = 8.07, *p < .05* (Cramer's = .02, slightly greater than small).
Table 5

School Choice and the Respondent's 8 Years of Elementary School Education

(Composite of Catholic and Public School)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>8 Years Catholic</th>
<th>8 Years Public</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Parents</td>
<td>129 (118)</td>
<td>53 (64)</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relig Ed Parents</td>
<td>100 (111)</td>
<td>72 (61)</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>354</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Observed frequencies are listed first, with expected frequencies following in the parentheses.

Chi-square \( (1, N = 354) = 5.99, *p < .05 \) (Cramer's = .02, slightly greater than small).

Table 6

School Choice and the Respondent's Amount of Catholic School Secondary Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>4 Years</th>
<th>0 Years</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Parents</td>
<td>115 (102)</td>
<td>97 (110)</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relig Ed Parents</td>
<td>84 (97)</td>
<td>118 (105)</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>414</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Observed frequencies are listed first, with expected frequencies following in the parentheses.

Chi-square \( (1, N = 414) = 6.55, *p < .05 \) (Cramer's = .02, slightly greater than small).
Table 7

**School Choice and the Respondent's Spouse's Amount of Catholic School Secondary Education**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>4 Years</th>
<th>0 Years</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Parents</td>
<td>78 (67)</td>
<td>113 (124)</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relig Ed Parents</td>
<td>57 (68)</td>
<td>126 (125)</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>135</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>384</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Observed frequencies are listed first, with expected frequencies following in the parentheses.

Chi-square \((1, \, N = 384) = 5.54, \, *p < .05\) (Cramer's = .01, small).

Table 8

**School Choice and the Respondent's Amount of Public School Secondary Education**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>4 Years</th>
<th>0 Years</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Parents</td>
<td>91 (102)</td>
<td>120 (109)</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relig Ed Parents</td>
<td>108 (97)</td>
<td>93 (104)</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>199</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>412</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Observed frequencies are listed first, with expected frequencies following in the parentheses.

Chi-square \((1, \, N = 412) = 4.71, \, *p < .05\) (Cramer's = .01, small).
Table 9

School Choice and the Respondent's Spouse's Amount of Public School Secondary Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>4 Years</th>
<th>0 Years</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Parents</td>
<td>96 (105)</td>
<td>94 (85)</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relig Ed Parents</td>
<td>115 (106)</td>
<td>77 (86)</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>211</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>382</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Observed frequencies are listed first, with expected frequencies following in the parentheses.

Chi-square \((1, N = 382) = 3.42, p < .05.\)

Table 10

School Choice and the Respondent's 4 Years of Secondary School Education (Composite of Catholic and Public School)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>4 Years Catholic</th>
<th>4 Years Public</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Parents</td>
<td>115 (103)</td>
<td>91 (103)</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relig Ed Parents</td>
<td>84 (96)</td>
<td>108 (96)</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>199</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>398</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Observed frequencies are listed first, with expected frequencies following in the parentheses.

Chi-square \((1, N = 398) = 5.80, *p < .05* (Cramer's = .01, small).\)
Table 11

School Choice and the Respondent’s Amount of Catholic College Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>4 Years</th>
<th>0 Years</th>
<th>All Others</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Parents</td>
<td>48 (54)</td>
<td>136 (137)</td>
<td>31 (24)</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relig Ed Parents</td>
<td>57 (51)</td>
<td>131 (130)</td>
<td>16 (23)</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>419</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Observed frequencies are listed first, with expected frequencies following in the parentheses.

Chi-square (2, N = 419) = 5.57, p < .05.

Table 12

School Choice and the Respondent’s Spouse’s Amount of Catholic College Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>4 Years</th>
<th>0 Years</th>
<th>All Others</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Parents</td>
<td>40 (34)</td>
<td>141 (150)</td>
<td>16 (13)</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relig Ed Parents</td>
<td>27 (33)</td>
<td>157 (148)</td>
<td>10 (13)</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>298</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>391</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Observed frequencies are listed first, with expected frequencies following in the parentheses.

Chi-square (2, N = 391) = 4.62, p < .05.
Table 13

School Choice and the Respondent's Amount of Non-Catholic College Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>4 Years</th>
<th>0 Years</th>
<th>All Others</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Parents</td>
<td>53 (54)</td>
<td>94 (98)</td>
<td>69 (64)</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relig Ed Parents</td>
<td>52 (51)</td>
<td>97 (93)</td>
<td>57 (62)</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>422</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Observed frequencies are listed first, with expected frequencies following in the parentheses.

Chi-square \((2, N = 422) = 1.16, p < .05.\)

Table 14

School Choice and the Respondent's Spouse's Amount of Non-Catholic College Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>4 Years</th>
<th>0 Years</th>
<th>All Others</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Parents</td>
<td>68 (71)</td>
<td>78 (79)</td>
<td>52 (47)</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relig Ed Parents</td>
<td>73 (70)</td>
<td>80 (79)</td>
<td>43 (47)</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>394</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Observed frequencies are listed first, with expected frequencies following in the parentheses.

Chi-square \((2, N = 394) = 1.15, p < .05.\)
Table 15

School Choice and the Respondent's 4 Years of College Education (Composite of Catholic and non-Catholic College)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>4 Yrs Catholic College</th>
<th>4 Yrs Non-Catholic College</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Parents</td>
<td>48 (51)</td>
<td>53 (51)</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relig Ed Parents</td>
<td>57 (55)</td>
<td>52 (55)</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Observed frequencies are listed first, with expected frequencies following in the parentheses.

Chi-square (1, N = 210) = .49, p < .05.

Presentation of the Data - Second Subsidiary Question

The second subsidiary question wonders if there is an association between the level of education achieved by the parents and the enrollment decision they make for their children. Tabulations were performed for the responding parent and the responding parent's spouse, divided into education levels of high school graduate, college graduate, and post-graduate education, including both graduate study and the receipt of an advanced degree.
Table 16

**School Choice and the Respondent's Level of Education**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>High School</th>
<th>College</th>
<th>Post-College</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Parents</td>
<td>20 (19)</td>
<td>71 (65)</td>
<td>72 (79)</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relig Ed Parents</td>
<td>17 (18)</td>
<td>57 (63)</td>
<td>82 (75)</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>319</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Observed frequencies are listed first, with expected frequencies following in the parentheses.

Chi-square (2, N = 319) = 2.50, p < .05.

Table 17

**School Choice and the Respondent's Spouse's Level of Education**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>High School</th>
<th>College</th>
<th>Post-College</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Parents</td>
<td>18 (22)</td>
<td>66 (62)</td>
<td>71 (70)</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relig Ed Parents</td>
<td>27 (23)</td>
<td>60 (64)</td>
<td>71 (72)</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>313</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Observed frequencies are listed first, with expected frequencies following in the parentheses.

Chi-square (2, N = 313) = 1.96, p < .05.
Presentation of the Data - Third Subsidiary Question

The third subsidiary question wonders if there is an association between the parents' occupation and the enrollment decision they make for their children. As mentioned above, limitations of the responses on this part of the survey instrument resulted in a more limited exploration of this variable than the researcher first proposed. The decision was to consider only those occupations where a clear-enough distinction was made so that a rough categorization into categories of "professional" and "non-professional" could be made. The former category included attorneys, physicians, dentists, psychologists, architects, teachers, and nurses, while the latter category included full-time homemakers, police officer and other public service workers, and secretaries. To refine these categories further, they were only included if accompanied by a specific education level. In the case of the "professional" workers that meant an advanced degree and in the case of the "non-professional" workers that meant a high school diploma. Tabulations were performed for both respondents and spouses, and the results are summarized in Tables 18 and 19.
Table 18

School Choice and Respondent's Occupation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Professional</th>
<th>Non-Professional</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Parents</td>
<td>56 (55)</td>
<td>12 (13)</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relig Ed Parents</td>
<td>49 (50)</td>
<td>13 (12)</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Observed frequencies are listed first, with expected frequencies following in the parentheses.

Chi-square ($1, N = 130$) = .20, $p < .05$.

Table 19

School Choice and the Respondent's Spouse's Occupation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Professional</th>
<th>Non-Professional</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Parents</td>
<td>24 (27)</td>
<td>23 (20)</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relig Ed Parents</td>
<td>28 (25)</td>
<td>17 (20)</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Observed frequencies are listed first, with expected frequencies following in the parentheses.

Chi-square ($1, N = 92$) = 1.53, $p < .05$. 
Presentation of the Data - Fourth Subsidiary Question

The fourth subsidiary question wonders if there is an association between the parents' level of religiosity and the enrollment decision they make for their children. Tabulations were performed for each of the religious practices presented in the survey instrument: Mass attendance (divided into weekly, monthly, and yearly), reception of Holy Communion (divided into weekly, monthly, and yearly), reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation (divided into monthly, yearly, and "practically never") and prayer life (divided into daily, weekly, and monthly). A composite tabulation for Mass attendance, Communion reception, and prayer life was then developed to arrive at "high," "medium," and "low" levels of religiosity.

First, taking some inspiration from the Greeley-Rossi (1966) scale of religiosity, the researcher considered a respondent's religiosity "high" if he or she attended Mass weekly, received Holy Communion weekly, and prayed daily. A respondent was considered "medium" if he or she attended Mass monthly, received Holy Communion monthly, and prayed weekly. Finally, respondents "low" on religiosity attended Mass a few times a year, received Holy Communion at the same frequency, and engaged in monthly prayer.

Second, an average score was developed for each category of respondent, using their numbers for Mass attendance, Holy Communion reception, and frequency of prayer.

Tabulations are presented on each variable for respondents only, as the survey instrument only included their responses.
Table 20

**School Choice and Mass Attendance**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Weekly</th>
<th>Monthly</th>
<th>Yearly</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Parents</td>
<td>122 (106)</td>
<td>52 (57)</td>
<td>21 (32)</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relig Ed Parents</td>
<td>93 (109)</td>
<td>65 (60)</td>
<td>44 (33)</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>397</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note.** Observed frequencies are listed first, with expected frequencies following in the parentheses.

Chi-square ($2, N = 397$) = 13.04, *p < .05 (Cramer's = .03).

---

Table 21

**School Choice and Holy Communion Reception**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Weekly</th>
<th>Monthly</th>
<th>Yearly</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Parents</td>
<td>112 (95)</td>
<td>44 (54)</td>
<td>25 (32)</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relig Ed Parents</td>
<td>81 (98)</td>
<td>65 (55)</td>
<td>40 (33)</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>367</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note.** Observed frequencies are listed first, with expected frequencies following in the parentheses.

Chi-square ($2, N = 367$) = 12.67, *p < .05 (Cramer's = .03).
Table 22

School Choice and Reception of Reconciliation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Monthly</th>
<th>Yearly</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Parents</td>
<td>27 (25)</td>
<td>59 (52)</td>
<td>122 (131)</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relig Ed Parents</td>
<td>23 (25)</td>
<td>45 (52)</td>
<td>140 (131)</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>262</td>
<td>416</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Observed frequencies are listed first, with expected frequencies following in the parentheses.

Chi-square \((2, N = 416) = 3.44, p < .05\).

Table 23

School Choice and Prayer Life

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Daily</th>
<th>Weekly</th>
<th>Monthly</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Parents</td>
<td>133 (117)</td>
<td>45 (58)</td>
<td>24 (27)</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relig Ed Parents</td>
<td>96 (116)</td>
<td>68 (55)</td>
<td>28 (25)</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>394</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Observed frequencies are listed first, with expected frequencies following in the parentheses.

Chi-square \((2, N = 394) = 12.29, *p < .05\) (Cramer's = .03, slightly greater than small).
Table 24

School Choice and Religiosity (Composite)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Parents</td>
<td>122 (107)</td>
<td>33 (40)</td>
<td>16 (23)</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relig Ed Parents</td>
<td>90 (105)</td>
<td>47 (40)</td>
<td>30 (23)</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>338</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Observed frequencies are listed first, with expected frequencies following in the parentheses.

Chi-square (2, N = 338) = 10.96, *p < .05 (Cramer's = .03, slightly greater than small).

Presentation of the Data - Fifth Subsidiary Question

The fifth subsidiary question wonders if there is an association between the parents' acceptance of certain teachings of the Roman Catholic Church and the enrollment decision they make for their children.

Tabulations were performed for each of the eight statements concerning Church teachings presented in the survey instrument. Responses on each statement were divided into three categories: those agreeing with the survey statement (and therefore disagreeing with the Church teaching), those disagreeing with the survey statement (and therefore agreeing with the Church teaching), and those unsure. To develop a composite tabulation for Church teaching the eight statements were divided into two groups, based on whether the statement was more "policy-oriented" or "personally-oriented."
Continuing with the Greeley-Rossi (1966) approach, composite tabulations categorized respondents as either "high," "medium," or "low" agreement with Church teaching. An average score was computed from the raw data strongly agreeing or agreeing with the Church teaching on each of the four statements in the two groups of statements. The same was done for the "medium" and "low" categories. Tabulations are presented on each variable for respondents only, as the survey instrument only included their responses.

Tables 25-29 deal with the policy-oriented statements from the survey instrument, and tables 30-34 deal with the personally-oriented statements. It should again be noted that as used in Tables 25-34, a respondent categorized as "Agree" actually disagrees with Church teaching (while agreeing with the survey instrument's statement), and a respondent categorized as "Disagree" actually agrees with Church teaching (while disagreeing with the survey instrument's statement).
### Table 25

**School Choice and Abortion Teaching**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Parents</td>
<td>110 (132)</td>
<td>96 (69)</td>
<td>6 (10)</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relig Ed Parents</td>
<td>153 (131)</td>
<td>42 (69)</td>
<td>14 (7)</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>263</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>421</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note.** Observed frequencies are listed first, with expected frequencies following in the parentheses.

Chi-square \((2, N = 421) = 37.10, \*p < .05\) (Cramer's = .09, for a medium association).

### Table 26

**School Choice and Artificial Contraception Teaching**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Parents</td>
<td>183 (193)</td>
<td>21 (14)</td>
<td>8 (6)</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relig Ed Parents</td>
<td>200 (190)</td>
<td>6 (13)</td>
<td>3 (5)</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>383</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>421</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note.** Observed frequencies are listed first, with expected frequencies following in the parentheses.

Chi-square \((2, N = 421) = 9.79, \*p < .05\) (Cramer's = .02, slightly greater than small).
Table 27

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Choice and Teaching About Women's Ordination</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Parents</td>
<td>121 (134)</td>
<td>60 (47)</td>
<td>31 (30)</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relig Ed Parents</td>
<td>146 (114)</td>
<td>34 (47)</td>
<td>29 (30)</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>421</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Observed frequencies are listed first, with expected frequencies following in the parentheses.

Chi-square ($2, N = 421$) = 17.5, *p < .05 (Cramer's = .04, greater than small).

Table 28

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Choice and Teaching About Divorce/Re-marriage</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Parents</td>
<td>130 (146)</td>
<td>69 (53)</td>
<td>13 (13)</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relig Ed Parents</td>
<td>160 (144)</td>
<td>36 (52)</td>
<td>12 (12)</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>420</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Observed frequencies are listed first, with expected frequencies following in the parentheses.

Chi-square ($2, N = 420$) = 13.28, *p < .05 (Cramer's = .03, greater than small).
Table 29

School Choice and Adherence to Church Teaching (Composite of Policy-Oriented Statements)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Parents</td>
<td>46 (32)</td>
<td>63 (60)</td>
<td>89 (106)</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rel Ed Parents</td>
<td>18 (32)</td>
<td>56 (59)</td>
<td>121 (104)</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>393</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Observed frequencies are listed first, with expected frequencies following in the parentheses.

Chi-square \( (2, N = 393) = 18.07, *p < .05 \) (Cramer's = .05, greater than small).

Table 30

School Choice and Abortion Teaching

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Parents</td>
<td>124 (137)</td>
<td>63 (43)</td>
<td>25 (31)</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rel Ed Parents</td>
<td>149 (136)</td>
<td>23 (43)</td>
<td>37 (31)</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>421</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Observed frequencies are listed first, with expected frequencies following in the parentheses.

Chi-square \( (2, N = 421) = 23.39, *p < .05 \) (Cramer's = .06, greater than small).
Table 31

School Choice and Artificial Contraception Teaching

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Parents</td>
<td>184 (191)</td>
<td>20 (13)</td>
<td>7 (8)</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rel Ed Parents</td>
<td>195 (188)</td>
<td>5 (12)</td>
<td>8 (7)</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>379</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>419</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note.** Observed frequencies are listed first, with expected frequencies following in the parentheses.

Chi-square \((2, N = 419) = 8.9, \ast p < .05\) (Cramer's = .02, slightly greater than small).

Table 32

School Choice and Teaching About Women's Ordination

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Parents</td>
<td>141 (151)</td>
<td>39 (30)</td>
<td>32 (32)</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rel Ed Parents</td>
<td>158 (148)</td>
<td>20 (29)</td>
<td>31 (31)</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>299</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>421</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note.** Observed frequencies are listed first, with expected frequencies following in the parentheses.

Chi-square \((2, N = 421) = 6.22, \ast p < .05\) (Cramer's = .02, slightly greater than small).
Table 33

School Choice and Teaching About Divorce/Re-marriage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Parents</td>
<td>148 (160)</td>
<td>51 (38)</td>
<td>13 (14)</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rel Ed Parents</td>
<td>170 (158)</td>
<td>24 (37)</td>
<td>15 (14)</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>318</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>421</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Observed frequencies are listed first, with expected frequencies following in the parentheses.

Chi-square ($2, N = 421) = 10.97, *p < .05 (Cramer's = .03, greater than small).

Table 34

School Choice and Adherence to Church Teaching (Composite of Personally-Oriented Statements)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Parents</td>
<td>27 (19)</td>
<td>54 (48)</td>
<td>112 (126)</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rel Ed Parents</td>
<td>10 (18)</td>
<td>41 (47)</td>
<td>135 (121)</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>247</td>
<td>379</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Observed frequencies are listed first, with expected frequencies following in the parentheses.

Chi-square ($2, N = 379) = 11.63, *p < .05 (Cramer's = .03, greater than small).
Tables 35-40 summarize the findings of the chi-square calculations for school choice and all of the variables in the study.

Table 35

**Summary Table - School Choice and First Subsidiary Question** (the nature of the respondent's and spouse's education in youth)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable:</th>
<th>Accept or Reject</th>
<th>Strength of Association</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Catholic Elem/ Respondent</td>
<td>Reject</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic Elem/ Spouse</td>
<td>Reject</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Elem/ Respondent</td>
<td>Reject</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Elem/ Spouse</td>
<td>Reject</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Yrs Elem/Cath vs. Public</td>
<td>Reject</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cath HS/ Respondent</td>
<td>Reject</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cath HS/Spouse</td>
<td>Reject</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public HS/ Respondent</td>
<td>Reject</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public HS/Spouse</td>
<td>Accept</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Yrs HS/Cath vs. Public</td>
<td>Reject</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic College/ Respondent</td>
<td>Accept</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic College/ Spouse</td>
<td>Accept</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Cath College/ Respondent</td>
<td>Accept</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Cath College/ Spouse</td>
<td>Accept</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Yrs College/Cath and Non-Cath</td>
<td>Accept</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 36

Summary Table - School Choice and the Second Subsidiary Question (the level of education of the respondent and the spouse):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable:</th>
<th>Accept or Reject</th>
<th>Strength of Association</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respondent</td>
<td>Accept</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spouse</td>
<td>Accept</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 37

Summary Table - School Choice and the Third Subsidiary Question 3 (the occupation of the respondent and the spouse):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable:</th>
<th>Accept or Reject</th>
<th>Strength of Association</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respondent</td>
<td>Accept</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spouse</td>
<td>Accept</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 38

Summary Table - School Choice and the Fourth Subsidiary Question (the respondent's level of religiosity):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable:</th>
<th>Accept or Reject</th>
<th>Strength of Association</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mass attendance</td>
<td>Reject</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communion reception</td>
<td>Reject</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reconciliation reception</td>
<td>Accept</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prayer life</td>
<td>Reject</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religiosity Composite</td>
<td>Reject</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 39

Summary Table - School Choice and the Fifth Subsidiary Question (policy-oriented statements of Church teaching):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable:</th>
<th>Accept or Reject</th>
<th>Strength of Association</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abortion</td>
<td>Reject</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artificial Contraception</td>
<td>Reject</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women Priests</td>
<td>Reject</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorce and Re-marriage</td>
<td>Reject</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 40

Summary Table - School Choice and Fifth Subsidiary Question (personally-oriented statements of Church teaching)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Accept or Reject</th>
<th>Strength of Association</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abortion</td>
<td>Reject</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artificial Contraception</td>
<td>Reject</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women Priests</td>
<td>Reject</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorce and Re-marriage</td>
<td>Reject</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research question of this study attempted to explore possible associations between the decision of suburban Catholic parents about their children's education with various factors. These factors included the type of religious education the parents received as youngsters; the level of education they achieved in their lives; their occupation; their practice of their faith; and their adherence to certain Church teachings.

Findings of the Study

First subsidiary question

The first subsidiary question explored the possible association between the nature of the parents' education in their own youth (i.e., Catholic school or religious education while attending public school) and the enrollment decision they made for their own children years later. The findings on this question were mixed, in that associations were found in some relationships but not in others.

Significantly, virtually all of the explorations of earlier education (i.e., elementary and secondary, for both respondents and spouses) found a result in which the null hypothesis of an independent relationship between the two variables was rejected. As a matter of fact, it was only on the criterion of a spouse's education in public schools at the secondary level was no relationship perceived.

Still, the associations found using Cohen's rule of thumb (as cited in Witte & Witte, 1997) were, at best, small. No value of the squared Cramer's phi coefficient went beyond .02, or just one-hundredth beyond what Cohen posits as a "small" relationship.
Also, the finding of no relationship increased as the level of education increased. The null hypothesis of independence between the two variables was accepted in all cases of college education, including attendance at both Catholic and non-Catholic institutions. This finding suggests various possibilities. First, this finding is consistent with the study's finding about the level of education and the likelihood of choosing a Catholic school. Second, it may mean that the difference between a "Catholic" and "non-Catholic" education becomes less pronounced at higher levels of education. Finally, it may mean that a "Catholic school effect" is most pronounced at lower levels of education where efforts between the educational setting and home are most directed toward forming a child in the Catholic faith.

While noting the existence of even a very mild relationship between the type of elementary and secondary education received by the parent and that parent's decision to enroll his or her child in a certain elementary school setting, the relationship's small effect may tell us more about the nature of today's Catholic school parents as distinct from yesterday's.

Whereas parents years ago (certainly at the time of the Greeley studies in the 1960's and 1970's) may well have chosen Catholic schools as a matter of "family tradition" and having their children "formed in the faith," today's parents may be choosing Catholic schools for different reasons that were not explored in this study. Such reasons may hark back to another Greeley theme, that of parents selecting private schools as a function of their income or social class.

This finding of the current study may underscore the current approach in some dioceses of undertaking marketing efforts of Catholic schools with Catholics who have
not yet chosen such schools for their children. At any rate, the finding of only a small relationship between the parents' schooling as youngsters and their decision for their own children is certainly not enough to dissuade continued marketing efforts. Even more positively, such a state may actually open up the possibility of forming more children in the Catholic faith in a school setting, and not just the children of parents who, in Greeley's term, "automatically" choose Catholic schools.

**Second subsidiary question**

The second subsidiary question of this study explored the relationship between the parents' level of education and the enrollment decision they made for their children. In neither the respondent parent's case nor the spouse's case was the null hypothesis of independence rejected. On the basis of this study the level of education achieved by suburban Catholic parents is independent of the decision to enroll their children in either a Catholic or public elementary school. It appears that this conclusion would not agree with the Greeley thesis that people partake of private education as a function of rising social class, assuming that level of education and social class are linked, at least to some degree.

**Third subsidiary question**

The third subsidiary question of this study explored the association between the occupation of the parents and the enrollment decision they make for their children. In neither the case of the respondent nor the spouse was the null hypothesis of independence between the two variables rejected. While this was by far the most limited part of the study (due to the limitations of the information provided by the parents and the survey instrument itself), no relationship was found for even those occupations that are more
clearly categorized as "professional" (such as doctors and lawyers) and "non-professional" (such as police officers and full-time homemakers), even when controlling classifications based on the level of education achieved (so you would not have a full-time homemaker who went to, say, law school or medical school).

This finding of the study provides further confirmation of the possibility that people are not necessarily going to choose Catholic school education simply as a function of their social class, in this case measured by the nature of their livelihood. It is in the fourth and fifth subsidiary questions where a consistency of relationship, albeit small in virtually all cases, was found.

Fourth subsidiary question

The fourth subsidiary question explored the relationship between the parents' religious practices and the enrollment decision they make for their children. This question looked at four essential rituals of the Catholic faith: attendance at Mass, reception of Holy Communion, reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and prayer life.

On all but reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation was the null hypothesis rejected. A consistent .03 relationship ("better than" small but still a distance from Cohen's .09 for a medium relationship) was found for the other three rituals. The lack of a relationship for Reconciliation may say more about the parlous state into which frequency of its reception has devolved in the last several years than any curiosity of the current study. In the researcher's lifetime penitents have gone from a practice of weekly reception to an extremely limited once-a-year reception. That this unfortunate reality holds true for both school and religious education parents should surprise no one.
The difference in ritual practice between the parent groups, however, is only a mild one, according to Cohen's rule of thumb. This finding appears to be consistent with some of the other findings of this study, especially the finding of a mild relationship between the enrollment of a child with the parent's type of religious education during youth. After all, if a decision to enroll one's child in a Catholic school is not as strongly an "automatic" one based on the education received in one's own youth, then parents who enroll their children may not necessarily themselves be strong in the practice of their faith, as defined in this study. This finding may be consistent with the emerging idea of "parent as consumer," considering all of the options at his or her disposal in the critical decision of a child's education is considered. This has obvious implications for the practicality of diocesan marketing efforts. For example, even a parent who had no Catholic education during youth might be enticed to enrolling his or her child.

Fifth subsidiary question

The fifth subsidiary question wondered about the relationship between the decision to enroll a child in a certain setting and the adherence of parents to certain teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. This study specifically explored parental views of the following Church teachings: abortion, artificial contraception, women priests, and re-marriage after divorce. The rationale for including these teachings in the study was the researcher's sense that these issues would have special resonance for women in general and "professional" women in particular. All of the teachings touched upon major life issues for women, including decisions about childbearing, the ability to re-marry after a divorce, and the level of Church ministry they could exercise.
The survey instrument contained two statements about each of these teachings, for a total of eight. In every single instance the null hypothesis was rejected. It was here, though, where the strongest relationships of the study were detected. For example, the idea that the Church should reconsider its decision to ban abortion in all circumstances resulted in the study's sole detection of what Cohen (as cited in Witte & Witte, 1997) would classify as a "medium" relationship (.09). Even when the abortion issue was presented in a more personal way (i.e., that a person could have an abortion and remain a good Catholic) it resulted in a .06 relationship, which was larger than virtually all of the other findings of this study. This finding suggests that Catholics may believe that Church teaching needs to take into account the kinds of exceptions (such as cases of rape or saving the life of the mother) most often cited as favoring abortion.

The concept of allowing women priests drew a .04 relationship, when presented as a "good thing" to allow. When presented as a more obscure issue of the Church not going far enough to expand roles in ministry for women, the relationship receded to a .02, in large measure due to the much higher frequency of "unsure" responses. This dichotomy of result suggests an idiosyncrasy of the survey instrument. Where the possibility of women priests was made clear, it resulted in a stronger finding. The more esoteric "expanding roles in ministry for women" prompted more "unsure" responses and a weaker finding.

Divorce and re-marriage drew an identical .03 relationship no matter how the issue was presented. Finally, the weakest relationship (.02) was detected on both statements concerning artificial contraception. On this very controversial issue for
Catholics, the divisions between school parents and religious education parents are very slight indeed.

The study had originally hoped to explore the view of Church teachings and professional female respondents. Unfortunately, the limitation of the survey instrument, along with the fact that respondents were not specific enough about their occupation, did not permit this question to be fully explored. Making the survey instrument less open-ended on this question would no doubt have improved the possibility of exploring this question further. Including in the instrument separate areas for stating the general job area (e.g., real estate, banking, public service, etc.), along with another area for specifying job responsibilities (e.g., administrative, clerical, managerial, laborer, etc.) would have considerably narrowed down this area for respondents.

Despite the instrument's limitation in this regard, all of the Church teachings chosen for exploration in this study have particular resonance for women and most of the respondents were women (348 out of 431, or 80.7%). Given these facts, that a relationship of dependence was found on all aspects of Church teaching provides some answer to this part of the study. If anything, the percentages of respondents disagreeing with Church teaching would appear to cut across any lines of education or profession.

Relationship of the Study's Findings to the Literature

The first subsidiary question explored the association between the parents' own education in their youth with the enrollment decision they made for their children. Most of the literature reviewed posited a fairly strong connection between attendance by parents at private school with an enrollment decision for their children in private school.
For example, Darling-Hammond and Kirby (1988) had found that 47% of their private school parents \(N = 473\) who had attended private schools themselves seemingly "automatically" enrolled their children in private school. Gratiot (1979) found the parents of children who had spent their entire careers in private schools were more apt to have had a history of attendance at non-public schools themselves. Greeley and Rossi (1966) found that people whose parents went entirely to Catholic school in their youth attended Catholic schools themselves at a 90% rate, while people whose parents had no Catholic school education attended Catholic schools themselves at only a 33% rate. Greeley, McGready, and McCourt (1976) found that the major difference between Catholic parents who send their children to Catholic school and those who do not were total years of parental Catholic school education. Checchia (1989) found that mothers whose eighth graders had chosen a Catholic high school had a greater frequency of Catholic education than their counterparts who had chosen a public high school. The E.H. White Company (1983) found that the demographic factors of parents who sought private schools for their children included a parental history of private school. And Gibson (1993) found that Catholic parents who chose Catholic schools for their children had significant periods of attendance themselves at Catholic schools.

The current study did not find as strong a connection between the parents' own education in their youth with the enrollment decision they made for their children. Consistent with most of the literature reviewed, it did find some association between the two factors, but not a very strong connection. This may be consistent with the development of a greater "consumer culture" among parents nowadays. For example, unlike their parents, today's parents can choose their telephone company and even their
provider of electricity. They can use the Internet to bargain over prices for everything from airline tickets to groceries. Given these developments, is it so unreasonable to think that parents who can afford to send their children to private schools might consider a Catholic school even though they themselves did not attend them in their youth? This consumer mentality may have the opposite effect on parents who had a good deal of Catholic education in their own youth. Rather than "automatically" select what was selected for them, they seem to be keeping their options open when it comes to choosing schools for their own children.

The second subsidiary question focused on the relationship between the level of education achieved by the parents and the enrollment decision they made for their children. Here again, the finding of this study (i.e., an independent relationship between the two variables could not be rejected) did not support some of the literature reviewed on this issue. For example, Darling-Hammond and Kirby (1988) found that the parents' level of education displayed a monotonically increasing relationship with the propensity to enroll their children in private schools. Greeley, McGready, and McCourt (1976) also found that as the amount of parental education increased, there was a greater tendency on the part of those parents to enroll their children in Catholic schools. Somewhat consistent with the acceptance of the null hypothesis found in this study, though, Greeley, et. al. did not find this association strong enough to be statistically significant. On the other hand, this study's finding on this question was consistent with some of the other literature reviewed. For example, Holtz (1972) found that parental education level is not significantly associated with a Catholic school commitment by parents. Now the Holtz study and the current study are similar in that they were limited to a particular diocese,
while the Darling-Hammond and Greeley studies involved state-wide and national samples. That may account for the difference in findings.

The third subsidiary question explored the possible connection between the occupation of the parents and the enrollment decision they made for their children. As with the education level issue of the second subsidiary question, this study found no relationship between the occupation and enrollment decision. Admittedly, though, due to a limitation in the survey instrument along with the respondents' disinclination to provide specifics of their occupation, this finding is very limited.

That very limited finding is consistent, however, with what Checchia (1989) found, that the socioeconomic levels of the family, including the occupation of the parents, were not influential in the selection of a high school. Similarly, Costabile (1986) had found that occupation did not prove to be indicative of school choice, and Fichter (1958) had found that Catholic school and public school parents were similar in terms of social class and economic and occupational status. Finally, Holtz (1972) found the same percentage of "white collar" parents choosing Catholic and public schools. All of these studies were relatively narrow in their demographic scope, focusing on affluent suburbanites and, in the case of Fichter, a single parish. The current study originally intended to avoid this limitation by looking at parishes across three counties, so that a greater occupational variety might be encompassed. Unfortunately, the participating parishes in one county were extremely limited and that may have limited the variety in the sample.
On the other hand, this study's finding on this question was not consistent with that of Greeley and Rossi (1966), who had found that parents with a more prestigious occupation were more likely to enroll their children in Catholic school.

The fourth subsidiary question explored the association between the parents' practice of some aspects of their faith and the enrollment decision they made for their children. With one exception (i.e., reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation), a significant yet small difference was found between the religious practices of the two groups. That finding was not consistent with Costabile (1986), who found no significant difference between Catholic and public school parents regarding weekly Mass attendance.

The finding of this study, however, was consistent with Gratiot's (1979) that the group of parents who preferred public schools also reported a lack of any religious practice. Fichter (1958) also found that "public school Catholics" had fewer prayers in their home than those parents who had enrolled their children in Catholic school. Greeley and Rossi (1966) found that among parents classified as "very religious" (including Mass attendance and reception of Holy Communion), 75% of their children attended Catholic schools.

Finally, this study's finding agreed with Holtz (1972), but he found a "significantly positive" association between what he termed "ritualistic religiosity" and a commitment to Catholic schools on the part of certain parents. While finding a positive association between the two factors, this study found the relationship to be relatively milder than Holtz.
The fifth subsidiary question explored the association between parental support for Church teachings and the enrollment decision for their children. Across the board this study found an association between the two, in some cases a stronger association than found in other factors of the study, and in one case a "mild" association.

Unfortunately, this part of the literature review provided only tangential connections to this subsidiary question. Greeley, McCready, and McCourt (1976) touched only on "religious beliefs" of a dogmatic nature rather than Church teachings on certain issues like those presented in this study. And Gibson (1993) only talked about an enrollment decision reflecting a parent's "firmly held values" rather than his or her view of Church teachings that have been controversial for many Catholics. It is perhaps on this question, then, that the current study made some small contribution to our knowledge about what Catholics think on these issues and the possible relationship that may have for the enrollment decisions they make for their children.

Suggestions for Further Research

The first suggestions for further research should stem from the findings and the limitations of the current study. As to findings, taken together they suggest that a less traditional and more consumerist parent may be emerging, as opposed to the more traditional parent of the Greeley studies of the 1960's and 1970's. A study exploring more fully the reasons why parents choose Catholic schools could be instructive for some of the patterns that emerged in the current study.

For example, if Catholic school parents are only slightly more ritualistically faithful than their religious education counterparts, what does that suggest as to reasons
why Catholic school education is chosen for children? If it is for "formation in the faith," then why aren't the parents who are choosing Catholic school education for their children practicing that faith to a significantly greater degree than their counterparts who are sending their children to public school? If, as the sociologists might hold, it is more a function of social class and disposable wealth, then a future study focusing on these factors would be most useful.

The concept of a future study focusing on occupational factors is suggested by one of the more serious limitations of the current study. A survey needs to be conducted that would limit respondents a bit more specifically as to the nature of their job. In the current study an effort to limit the survey instrument to two sides of one page led to an open-ended survey question to which respondents routinely failed to supply specific enough information about the nature of their livelihood. This prevented an analysis using an objective measure of occupational status, such as Duncan's index. Perhaps a longer survey, presenting a detachable list of occupations with accompanying codes, might prevent the problems presented by this study. A researcher always runs the risk of a person declining to participate if presented with a longer survey. On the other hand, the data for those choosing to participate will be that much more specific and, therefore, susceptible of greater analysis.

Another limitation of the current study was the nature of Catholic school enrollment in some of the suburban communities under study. For example, both Scarsdale (which included three parishes in the study) and Bronxville are adjacent to Yonkers, New York, which is home to a public school system that some have found
unappealing. Valhalla is a suburb of White Plains, and Holy Name School there included many White Plains residents. This leads to the reality that many urban residents were part of the sample group meant to look at more suburban, high-performing districts like the three just mentioned. Their presence could have skewed the sample towards parents of any inclination, whether by educational history, occupation, ritualistic or other Church faithfulness, to enroll their children in a Catholic school as the only alternative to what they perceive as a poor urban public school system. The researcher wonders whether a "purer" suburban group would have established stronger statistical associations on the many variables in the study. A future study selecting such suburban communities might refine further the limited findings of the current study. The collection of demographic information about the survey participants (e.g., race and ethnicity, income levels, home ownership, etc.) would likely yield enough data to control for the presence of urban dwellers in the parent sample. Also, it would provide for a comparison of the two groups within the parish school to yield even more conclusions about the associations found between school enrollment and the variables under study. Another way to control for this problem might have been to avoid choosing public school districts contiguous to major urban areas like Yonkers and White Plains. Given the peripatetic nature of many Catholic parents seeking a school close to their place of work, as well as the reality of choosing a particular school because it provides "after care" for children to the end of the workday, this problem probably cannot be completely controlled. Despite this reality, requesting demographic information of survey participants or more judiciously selecting high-performing public
school districts would in all likelihood provide significant control for this research problem.

A future study should do a better job of piloting the survey instrument before implementation. Such a pilot must perforce include representation of both major groups in the study itself, so as to surface earlier some of the implementation problems that became evident in the survey. For example, the researcher might have gleaned a much earlier notification that the Church teaching questions were phrased in a way that might have seemed tendentious or even negative to some participants. This might have allowed for adjustments in the items presented on the instrument and would therefore have encouraged more religious education programs to participate in the study, with the attendant implications for the study's conclusions on the basis of a wider sample.

Finally, suggestions for further research should include at least one of a purely "wondering" mode. Toward that end a study similar to the current one could be conducted on the suburban parents of other faiths and their decisions concerning the education of their children. Would Jewish, Lutheran, or Islamic parents show similar or dissimilar tendencies regarding their decisions on their children's education and the various factors explored in this study? That might profitably be explored by a future researcher.
References


Appendix A

Parent Survey
PARENT SURVEY

Thanks for agreeing to participate in this survey of Catholic parents with at least 1 child in either a Catholic or public or other private elementary school.

Your responses are absolutely confidential, so please respond as honestly as you can. To insure further the confidentiality of your responses, PLEASE DO NOT PUT YOUR NAME ON THE FORM, OR MARK THE FORM IN ANY IDENTIFYING WAY.

Please return the completed survey in the postage-paid envelope provided. Please detach this cover sheet before mailing your survey.

Many, many thanks for your cooperation in completing the survey and returning it as soon as possible in the postage-paid envelope provided.

*                             *

Directions:

1. If both parents in a household are Catholic, then either parent may complete this survey.
2. If only one parent in a household is Catholic, then that parent should complete this survey.
3. If neither parent in a household is Catholic, then either parent may complete this survey up to (but not including) the section on "Religious Practices."
Background Information:
1. Who is completing this survey?  __ Father  __ Mother
2. Are you a Catholic?  __ Yes  __ No
3. Does your spouse live with you?  __ Yes  __ No
4. Is your spouse a Catholic?  __ Yes  __ No
5. Using the following code, write the number that corresponds to the highest level of education achieved by you and your spouse. (Note: If you are not currently married or your spouse doesn’t live with you, leave that part of this question blank.)

Code: 1 = Elementary school graduate  
       2 = High school graduate  
       3 = Trade, secretarial, or technical school graduate  
       4 = Some college  
       5 = College graduate  
       6 = Some graduate school  
       7 = Graduate degree or professional school graduate

YOU: ____ YOUR SPOUSE: _______

Now indicate the number of years of schooling you and your spouse had in each of the following settings, as applicable. (Note: If you are not currently married or your spouse doesn’t live with you, leave that part of this question blank.)

Catholic elementary school, grades 1-8  ____  ____
Public elementary school, grades 1-8  ____  ____
Other elementary school, grades 1-8  ____  ____
Catholic high school, grades 9-12  ____  ____
Public high school, grades 9-12  ____  ____
Other high school, grades 9-12  ____  ____
Catholic college  ____  ____
Non-Catholic (public or other) college  ____  ____

For the next questions about yours and your spouse’s occupation, please be as specific as possible without naming your employer. For example, “homemaker,” “police officer,” “clerk/typist,” “nurse,” “tax attorney,” “architect,” “elementary school teacher,” etc.

What do you do for a living? ___________________________

What does your spouse do for a living? (Leave blank if not married or if spouse does not live at home.) ___________________________

If you are not Catholic, you have completed the survey. Please return in the postage-paid envelope provided.

If you are Catholic, please complete the remaining portions of the survey on the back of this sheet and then return in the postage-paid envelope.
Religious Practices: This section presents a series of items about your personal religious practices. Using the following code, please write the number that corresponds to your practice for each item listed.

**Code:**
1 = every day  
2 = a few times per week  
3 = every week  
4 = a few times per month  
5 = once per month  
6 = a few times per year  
7 = about once per year  
8 = practically never or not at all

How often do you go to Mass?  
How often do you receive Holy Communion?  
How often do you go to Confession?  
About how often do you pray privately?

Opinion About Church Issues: This section presents a series of items about various issues faced by Catholics. Using the following code, please write the number that corresponds to your choice on each item.

**Code**
1 = Agree a lot  
2 = Agree a little  
3 = Disagree a little  
4 = Disagree a lot  
5 = No opinion or don’t know

It would be a good thing if women were allowed to become priests.  
Divorced Catholics should be permitted to remarry without an annulment.  
Catholics should be allowed to practice artificial methods of birth control.  
The Catholic Church should relax its standards forbidding all abortions under any circumstances.  
Married couples who feel they have as many children as they want are not really doing anything wrong when they use artificial methods to prevent conception.  
Two people who are in love do not do anything wrong when they marry, even though one of them is divorced and doesn’t have an annulment.  
The Church hasn’t gone far enough in expanding the roles of women in ministry.  
A person could have an abortion and still be a good Catholic.

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING AND RETURNING THE SURVEY.
Appendix B

First Parent Solicitation Letter
January 5, 2000

Dear Parent of an Elementary School Child,

I am the deputy superintendent of schools for the Archdiocese of New York and a doctoral candidate in education administration at Seton Hall University in South Orange, New Jersey.

I earnestly need your help in completing a major study for my degree, which seeks to understand the backgrounds and opinions of parents who have enrolled their elementary school age child(ren) in either Catholic or public schools. You are part of a randomly selected group of parents who have at least 1 child currently enrolled in elementary school.

Please take just a few minutes to complete the enclosed survey and return it to me in the pre-addressed, postage-paid envelope provided.

There are no correct or incorrect responses, only your much-needed opinions. The envelope I’ve provided contains an identification number that will be used for follow-up purposes only (in other words, it will allow me to know who has responded to the survey and, if not, to send them a reminder).

All responses will be treated confidentially and will in no way be traceable to any individual respondent. There are no known risks or benefits to participation. Your participation in the survey is completely voluntary on your part. Also please know that a decision not to participate will not in any way affect your child’s education or the services he or she currently receives in the program offered by your parish.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Seton Hall Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Research. The IRB believes that the research procedures adequately safeguard the subject’s privacy, welfare, civil liberties, and rights. The Chairperson of the IRB may be reached through the Office of Grants and Research Services. The telephone number of the Office is (973) 275-2974.

Please drop your completed survey in the mail no later than January 12, 2000. Your completion and return of the survey indicate your understanding of the project and your willingness to participate.

Should you need to contact me about the survey, feel free to call me at the Archdiocesan office at (212) 371-1011, extension 2890.

I thank you in advance very much for your assistance with this project. My own wife and children, who have had to live with me throughout this project, especially thank you!

Sincerely,
Paul E. Ward
Deputy Superintendent of Schools
Appendix C

Second Parent Solicitation Letter
2ND REQUEST - January 26, 2000

Please forgive me for bothering you again, but I'm still in need of a larger response of survey forms to conduct my doctoral study. According to the responses I've received through today, I haven't received your reply.

Enclosed please find another survey and response envelope. The envelope is numbered so I can know who responded. Earlier, some folks were kind enough to respond but they crossed out the code number. If you are receiving this second request and you did return the first survey, it's only because I couldn't read the crossed off number.

Please know that with each day's mail, I check off the code number on the sealed envelope against a master list of code numbers. Later on, another person without access to the code numbers opens the envelope and removes the survey. Only then do I receive the surveys. This ensures that your responses are absolutely confidential and in no way are traceable to you.

If you can see help me by sending a completed survey back to me as soon as possible, I will be very grateful. (It should only take about 5 minutes to complete it.) If I can finish my work this semester, I will avoid having to pay another semester’s tuition!

If your response crossed in the mail with this second request, please accept my deepest apologies for troubling you again, and my sincerest gratitude for sending it back.

My heartfelt thanks for helping me with this study.

January 5, 2000

Dear Parent of an Elementary School Child,

I am the deputy superintendent of schools for the Archdiocese of New York and a doctoral candidate in education administration at Seton Hall University in South Orange, New Jersey.

I earnestly need your help in completing a major study for my degree, which seeks to understand the backgrounds and opinions of parents who have enrolled their elementary school age child(ren) in either Catholic or public schools. You are part of a randomly selected group of parents who have at least 1 child currently enrolled in elementary school.

Please take just a few minutes to complete the enclosed survey and return it to me in the pre-addressed, postage-paid envelope I've provided.
There are no correct or incorrect responses, only your much-needed opinions. The envelope I've provided contains an identification number that will be used for follow-up purposes only (in other words, it will allow me to know who has responded to the survey and, if not, to send them a reminder).

All responses will be treated confidentially and will in no way be traceable to any individual respondent. There are no known risks or benefits to participation. Your participation in the survey is completely voluntary on your part. Also please know that a decision not to participate will not in any way affect your child's education or the services he or she currently receives in the program offered by your parish.

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Sincerely,

Paul E. Ward
Deputy Superintendent of Schools