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# Why Families Choose Catholic High Schools In Neighborhoods With Highly-Ranked Public Schools

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WHY FAMILIES CHOOSE CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOLS  
IN NEIGHBORHOODS WITH HIGHLY-RANKED PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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A DISSERTATION

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**ABSTRACT**

In the San Francisco Bay Area of California, there are numerous options for secondary education, including free, well-ranked public schools and costly Catholic high schools. Although enrollment at Catholic schools is declining nationwide, there is still an interest in attending Catholic high schools due to the teaching of strong moral values, the benefit of long-term enrollment, the extraordinary classroom experiences which include a safe and welcoming environment for the students, extensive faculty and staff dedication, higher levels of parent involvement, advanced standards for student achievement, more civically engaged students, and a more infused college-going culture in the school promoting college readiness and the attendance at more selective higher education institutions. Overall, Catholic high schools attract better performing students from more privileged backgrounds and make a stronger positive impact on students, which leads to a perceived superior education experience. Catholic high school admissions must use these reasons families decide to attend Catholic schools to their benefit, by innovating their marketing strategies and admissions events to create more interest in the high school. By updating marketing and events, Catholic high schools will gain additional prospective families, creating a larger enrollment or more selective admissions.

University of New England

Doctor of Education  
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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

Public schools in affluent communities have extensive funding, resulting in extremely strong academics, robust extracurricular offerings, and stellar facilities. On the other hand, public schools, even those that are well-funded, are not always seen in the best light due to publicized reports about some students' educational experiences and concerns about school shootings and suicides. "Policy makers, parents, and researchers are increasingly concerned with how well public schools educate students and whether increasing the resources available to these institutions will lead to better schools and improved student achievement" (Smith, 2001, p. 1). Some families' preconceived idea that public schools are failing may lead them to believe they need to send their students to private schools, which are believed to be superior educational institutions (Smith, 2001, p. 2).

There is a strong interest by some families to have their children attend private schools in the San Francisco Bay Area, even though many of the public school systems are very well-ranked. Such evidence is based on the number of Catholic high school options in the area and the 22,538 San Francisco Bay Area students (Appendix A) who are enrolled in those schools (Niche, 2018). Although numerous studies exist about why families send students to private schools, most research focuses on families who can afford to send their students to private school who live in areas with low-ranked public schools (Kolko, 2014). "Neighborhoods with extremely high private school enrollment include wealthy areas in big-city school districts...Among neighborhoods with similar demographics in the same metro, private school enrollment is much higher in neighborhoods with lower public school ratings" (Kolko, 2014, p. 1). On the other hand, there are cities like those in the San Francisco Bay Area, with many public schools

that have 8, 9, and 10 out of 10 rankings, in addition to well-ranked Catholic high schools. In some cases, the public high schools have higher rankings than Catholic high schools in the area. In top rated public school districts (those with ratings of 9 or 10 on a 1-to-10 scale), only 4% of students attend private school, compared to 18% of students in low ranking (1 or 2 on a 1-to-10 scale) public school districts (Kolko, 2014, p. 1).

This research project discovered the family's reasoning in the decision to send students to Catholic high schools in San Francisco Bay Area communities that have well-ranked and well-funded public high school offerings. There are 33 Catholic high schools in the San Francisco Bay Area (Appendix A), most of which are in communities that have well-funded and academically strenuous public high school options (Niche, 2018). This research was conducted through data collection via surveys and interviews. Families in the San Francisco Bay Area who have children who attend or have attended Catholic high schools were invited to take the survey (Appendix B) that requested demographic data for descriptive purposes and reasons why the families decided to have their students attend the Catholic high schools over the local public school. Interviews were conducted with families who volunteered after taking the survey to provide more information about their school decision making. The findings describe the family decision-making process and can be used to enhance admissions processes and marketing to create a larger base of interested families, leading to higher enrollment.

### **Catholic Schools**

Thousands of students nationwide attend a variety of private schools each year; in most communities, it is due to the lack of strong public schools. "Nationally, ten percent of students grades 1-12 attend private schools, and in some neighborhoods the majority of kids go to private school" (Kolko, 2014, p. 1). About 40% of private school students attend Catholic schools, while

another 40% attend another religiously affiliated private school, and the rest attend private independent schools (Kolko, 2014, p. 1).

Research on the outcomes of Catholic school attendance suggests that achievement for students in Catholic schools is “higher and more alike among students with different educational, racial and religious backgrounds than in public schools” (O’Keefe & Scheopner, 2009, p. 19), which has led to the continuous debate as to “whether or not Catholic schools are more effective than public schools” (O’Keefe & Scheopner, 2009, p. 19). The decision to attend Catholic school may be based on the idea of a better educational environment, for religious/moral reasons, or both, but Catholic high schools do not always hold higher standards and greater academic achievement than the local public schools (Monto, 2009).

### **Public Schools**

Public schools in the wealthy communities of the San Francisco Bay Area are often seen as superior to the neighboring private schools (Richtel, 2015). At the public Palo Alto High School, “the SAT scores are so high on average that a student who finishes in the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile in the [school] district has a 2,200 (out of 2,400), the 99<sup>th</sup> percentile in general for college-bound seniors” (Richtel, 2015, p. 3). In addition, Palo Alto High School has “a new performing arts center and a \$24 million athletic facility, funded by a private family foundation” (Richtel, 2015, p. 3). At many public high schools in the San Francisco Bay Area, “the bar for academic success has become so high that solid performance can feel mediocre” (Richtel, 2015, p. 3).

### **Comparing Public and Catholic Schools**

In the wealthiest areas of the country, the public high schools are often more academically rigorous than the community’s Catholic high schools (Richtel, 2015). Compared to Catholic high schools, these public schools frequently offer more course options, sports teams,

and extracurricular opportunities, and send students to a wider range and higher-ranked colleges (Richtel, 2015). *The San Francisco Business Times* (2017) proved this theory through ranking public and private schools in the San Francisco Bay Area by SAT scores. They discovered that out of the top 10 private high schools, only number 10 was a Catholic high school, while the rest were independent college preparatory high schools with an average SAT of 1350 out of 1600 (McDermid, 2017). Seven of the top ten public high schools had an average total SAT of 1350 or higher (McDermid, 2018). Although independent, non-religious, private high schools were found to be extremely academically rigorous through the rankings based on SAT, Catholic high schools are not always as academically rigorous as the community's public high school (McDermid, 2017; McDermid, 2018).

### **The Decline of Catholic Schools**

The public high schools in the San Francisco Bay Area are well-funded due to high property taxes, leading to increased competition for students between the local, free public schools and the costly private schools. In addition, the increasing number of private schools (Catholic, other religiously-affiliated, and private independent) in the area has led to an over-saturation of the market, causing Catholic schools to either have declining enrollment or to close permanently (Bath, 2013; National Catholic Educational Association, 2018). Catholic schools had steady growth from the 1920s to the mid-1960s. In 1965, there were 5.6 million students enrolled in 13,500 Catholic schools, but over the next two decades, the number of schools and enrollment drastically declined (McDonald, 2001, p. 12). "Faith-based schools have closed at alarming rates. Since 1990, more than 1,300 Catholic schools have closed, affecting some 300,000 students...the loss represents an additional cost to taxpayers of more than \$20 billion a year" (Council for American Private Education, 2013, p. 2). In 2006 and 2007, over 200 schools

closed each year, and 170 Catholic schools closed in 2008, many of which were in urban areas (O’Keefe & Scheopner, 2009, p. 15). The school closures were likely due to decreasing parish subsidies in conjunction with decreasing school enrollments, leading to the increased cost of educating students (O’Keefe & Scheopner, 2009, p. 15). Pandey, Sjoquist, and Walker (2009) explained that Catholic schools are more likely to close in those markets with an excess supply of private schools in which all seats at the school are not always filled. The probability of a Catholic school closure is “positively correlated with excess supply of private schools [and] is an increasing function of the difference between the supply of and the demand for private schools in the market, as well as a function of school-specific factors” (Pandey, Sjoquist, & Walker, 2009, p. 55).

As the data suggests, Catholic school enrollment is decreasing annually, triggering the closure of Catholic schools in the San Francisco Bay Area of California (Bath, 2013; National Catholic Educational Association, 2018). Many Catholic schools in the area have a stagnant or declining enrollment, leading to staff layoffs, fewer program offerings, and even school closures (Bath, 2013; National Catholic Educational Association, 2018). Two recent examples of closures in the San Francisco Bay Area include St. Lawrence Academy, a Kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade school in San Jose, which closed in 2016, and St. Charles Borromeo School, a Kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade school in San Francisco, which closed in 2017 (Almazol & McGrath, 2016; California Catholic Daily, 2017). St. Lawrence Academy closed in 2016 due to the declining enrollment levels and inability to raise funds to sustain operations, which could reflect the numerous highly-ranked public schools in the area in addition to the vast amount of private religious and independent school offerings (McGrath & Almazol, 2016). Recently, Stratford Schools – a 23-campus private school system in California focused on science,

technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) – purchased the Saint Lawrence Academy campus to create Stratford School’s first high school; this private-school building movement shows that, while Catholic schools may see declining enrollment and closures, independent private schools continue to experience enrollment growth (Adams, 2017). In addition, the enrollment at St. Charles Borromeo School, a 129-year old school serving kindergarten through eighth grade students, managed by the Archdiocese of San Francisco, had enrollment decline by almost half in the past three years. The school building also had serious construction and seismic challenges, and due to a lack of funds to fix the problems, the school closed (California Catholic Daily, 2017).

### **Statement of the Problem**

Large amounts of data have been collected on why families send their students to private schools in areas with lower-ranked public schools, but not much research exists on why families send their students to Catholic high schools in communities with well-ranked public high schools (Kolko, 2014). This idea is explained through Smith’s (2001) and Walton’s (2010) research on private school attendance. Smith (2001) explained that “if competition results in better public schools, some of the gains to private schools will be ‘transferred’ to public school students” (p. 142), and Walton (2010) noted that “even though the students who attend the higher quality school are much better off, the students who attend the school of lower quality are worse off” (p. 749). Walton’s (2010) and Smith’s (2001) research detailed the benefits of private schools, but only in communities in which the local public school was not a competitor academically. Walton (2010) concluded that if the public school is as or more academically strenuous than the private school, public school students may be better off.



With stagnant or declining enrollment comes the need to understand why families choose to send their students to Catholic high school in areas with well-rated public high schools (Bath, 2013; National Catholic Educational Association, 2018). This understanding may help innovate current admissions practices to better recruit students and their families, ultimately increasing enrollment.

### **Purpose of the Study**

Many Catholic high schools have stagnant enrollment levels, due to the high-quality public-school offerings in the area (Bath, 2013; National Catholic Educational Association, 2018). The purpose of the study is to discover why families send their students to Catholic high schools when they have access to free, highly-rated public high schools. There is a lack of research on this specific topic (Davidson, 2014; Smith, 2001; Walton, 2010) as most research that revolves around private school selection focuses on communities with the choice between strong private schools and poor, urban, low-ranked public schools. When investigating public and private school rankings on *greatschools.org*, Catholic schools are not always rated higher than the public schools in the same communities. The goal of this research is to understand why families choose Catholic schools—an understanding that could lead to better recruitment and retention of students and their families in the Catholic high school sector.

### **Research Question**

The research question for this study is why do families living in communities with highly-ranked public high schools choose to enroll their students in Catholic high schools?

### **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework of this research is based on the findings of multiple studies that identified reasons why parents choose Catholic schools for their children. These findings

pull directly from the Catholic School Advantage (CSA), which refers to the higher educational outcomes of Catholic school students compared with their public school peers (Freeman & Berends, 2016). The Catholic School Advantage creates an educational environment inspiring hard work and internal motivation, which leads to Catholic schools providing a plethora of outstanding educational experiences. Catholic high schools provide a superior educational experience that includes strong moral values, long-term friendships with classmates, spiritually-based curriculum, dedicated and caring faculty and staff, a high level of parent involvement, higher expectations of academic success, importance of being civically engaged, and an increased probability of attending the best colleges (Berkowitz & Hoekstra, 2011; Bernardo, Ganotice & King, 2015; Coughlin & Castilla, 2014; Heida, n.d.; National Catholic Educational Association, n.d.; Sanderson, 2015).

### **Assumptions, Limitations, and Scope**

The current assumption in the literature examine here is that families send their students to private school, over local public schools, to receive a superior education (Smith, 2001, p. 2). In many areas of the country, this rationale is borne out by data; public schools in urban, poorer areas are often not as strong and may not have the financial ability to create a superior educational environment. In other areas of the country, like the San Francisco Bay Area, communities exist that have a superior public education system, so families are choosing between two viable options: free public school and costly private school.

The limitation to this study is that the research was conducted only in the San Francisco Bay Area, which is very different from many metropolitan areas due to the amount of high-quality public schools, the average price of a home, and what is distinguished as low-income for

the area. In addition, this study only focused on Catholic high schools, not private schools in general.

The scope of the study was limited to families who attend Catholic high schools in the San Francisco Bay Area. The families who were studied had to live in a neighborhood with a well-rated (8, 9, or 10 on a 1-10 scale) public school for the data to correctly answer the research question.

### **Significance**

By collecting data on families' decisions about sending their students to Catholic high school, this study explored the reasoning behind the decision-making process, which can be used to innovate marketing and recruiting strategies, to better connect with families, and to help families understand why a Catholic high school education is beneficial to their student and their entire family. By increasing enrollment at Catholic high schools, there will be less of a burden on public high schools, due to educating so many students (Council for American Private Education, 2013, p. 2).

### **Definition of Terms**

#### **Private School in California**

Private schools in California are exempt from taxation and do not need to be accredited. The California state government prohibits the appropriation of public money for the support of private schools, although private schools must follow all state-wide education recordkeeping and health laws (U.S. Department of Education, 2009, p. 23-30).

**Independent School**

An independent school is a private school that has no religious affiliation (“State Regulation”, 2009, p. 23-30); often, these schools have a higher tuition than the religious schools.

**Religious School**

A religious school is a private school that has a defined religious affiliation. Often, the school is connected to a convent or parish (“State Regulation”, 2009, p. 23-30).

**Public School**

In California, each public school is a part of a school district (separate kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade districts, high school districts, or unified PK-12 school districts). Many schools are very well-funded through the city’s property taxes in an area where the average home price is over a million dollars (Kolko, 2014).

**Well-ranked School**

Any school ranked 8, 9, or 10 out of 10 on GreatSchools.org is considered a well-ranked school. GreatSchools.org focuses on three measures of academic quality: student achievement (meeting state standards via standardized tests); student growth (measured through gains on test scores year-over-year, comparing similar students with each other); and college readiness (measured via data on high school graduation rates and performance/participation on college entrance exams) (GreatSchools.org, 2017).

**Summary**

In the San Francisco Bay Area, public schools are well-funded through property taxes in neighborhoods in which the median home price exceeds one million dollars. Due to the opportunities that public schools can offer, coupled with the amount of private independent and

private religious schools in the area, Catholic high schools are struggling to meet enrollment goals year after year.

Literature and the Catholic School Advantage suggest reasons why families select Catholic high schools for their students to attend, but this prior research greatly focuses on families who live in areas with low-ranked public schools who can afford sending their students to private school (Kolko, 2014). The study discovered, through surveys and interviews, why families send their students to Catholic high schools when they have access to free, highly-rated, public high schools. This information can be used to innovate current admissions and marketing practices and lead to better recruitment and retention of students and their families, which will ultimately increase enrollment (Bath, 2013; National Catholic Educational Association, 2018).

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The focus of this research is on the family decision to send students to Catholic high schools in communities that have well-ranked and well-funded public high school offerings. The geographic focus is the San Francisco Bay Area in California, which includes numerous communities with both well-rated public and Catholic high schools, and, in many cases, public schools that outrank the area's Catholic schools, according to *niche.com*.

Because there is a lack of research on why families choose Catholic high schools in communities with well-ranked public schools, this literature review analyzes the general idea of why parents choose to send their students to Catholic high schools over public schools and the decision-making process (Smith, 2001; Walton, 2010). There is an abundance of research on the impact private schools make in communities with poorly-rated public schools, but not in communities with well-rated public schools (Bernardo et al., 2015; Council for American Private Education, 2013; Davidson, 2014; Hay, 2009; Kolko, 2014; Monto, 2009). The main topics of this literature review are how school location drives decision making, the benefits of Catholic schools, parent decision-making, and choice overload. In addition, the theoretical framework of the Catholic School Advantage is reviewed.

This information is used to better analyze parent decisions on school choice in the San Francisco Bay Area and the general beliefs about Catholic high school versus public high school. The purpose of this research is to understand why families choose Catholic high schools over highly-ranked public high schools.

### **School Location Drives Decision Making**

Davidson (2014) analyzed private school attendance based on community location, race, and religion. He noted that families in metros that are largely wealthier, more educated, whiter, and more Catholic are most likely to have their children privately educated. According to the real estate website Trulia, the city with the highest population of private school enrollees is New Orleans; 25% of students in the community attend private schools (Kolko, 2014). The private school attendance is so high in this area due to the community members' dedication for education embedded in the Catholic faith and because many prominent members of the community went to private school (Davidson, 2014). Furthermore, students in areas with the worst public schools are four times more likely to attend private schools than their peers in communities with highly-ranked public school systems (Davidson, 2014). In areas where more than 90% of students receive a public education, the housing prices are more than twice the national average; housing prices directly correlate with the quality of the local public schools (Davidson, 2014).

This is noticeable in the San Francisco Bay Area where the average housing is about five times higher than the national average (Kolko, 2014). Although in most areas this would lead to drastically low enrollment for private schools, the private schools in the San Francisco Bay Area continue to thrive due to the significant finances many families have in the area because of the tech industry. Weise (2014) noted that approximately one-third of San Francisco's school-aged children attend private schools, and over the last six years, 11 more private (not specifically Catholic) schools have opened in the city. About 9% of students in California attend private schools, while the national figure is 10% (Weise, 2014). So, although the public schools are

often well-rated, many families select private schools for their students because of the perceived benefits.

### **Catholic Schools**

In the private school sector, there are many independent and religiously-affiliated schools to choose from. This research focused on the Catholic high schools within the private school sector, specifically in the San Francisco Bay Area of California. Community location, race, and religion play a major role in a family's decision to attend a Catholic high school even if a family is not Catholic. According to the Public Religion Research Institute, only 26% of San Francisco Bay Area adults are Catholic, while 33% are unaffiliated with any religion (CBS Bay Area, 2015).

### **Catholic Primary Schools**

A large portion of Catholic high school students graduated from Catholic elementary schools often run by parishes. The Catholic high schools create positive relationships with these elementary schools in hopes to recruit students from most of the Catholic elementary schools in the neighboring area. Elder and Jepsen (2014) focused specifically on Catholic primary schools including what impact the private primary school had on where students attend high school, how well the Catholic primary school students were prepared for high school, and the Catholic primary school students' educational success in high school and beyond. The data was pulled from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics, which collects national data on children's status at birth and at various points thereafter, including performance in school. Elder and Jepsen (2014) studied the effects of Catholic schooling on cognitive and non-cognitive outcomes measured between kindergarten and eighth grade. The analysis found that Catholic school attendees had higher reading and math



achievement before entering formal schooling, although this gap disappeared for math but stayed the same for reading through eighth grade (Elder & Jepsen, 2014). The analysis also suggested that Catholic schooling decreases mathematics achievement. Overall, the results suggested that Catholic school advantages present in eighth grade were largely due to differences in the skills of public and Catholic school students that existed prior to kindergarten (Elder & Jepsen, 2014). These pre-elementary school opportunities include academically stimulating preschool, educational activities in the home, and participation in community-organized educational opportunities (Elder & Jepsen, 2014). Lastly, while the peer-group quality in Catholic schools is better, the students' poor scores can be blamed on lower teacher quality because of lower salaries or lower achievement due to superior curriculum design in public schools (Elder & Jepsen, 2014).

### **Catholic High Schools**

Kim (2009) examined the effects of attending a Catholic high school on test scores, high school graduation, and college attendance. The average years of schooling for a public school student is 13.54, and the average years of schooling for a Catholic school student is 14.26. Although the schooling gap could be due to the Catholic school education, the data also suggested that Catholic school students tended to come from more advantaged families, which leads to an additional schooling gap. Kim (2009) found that attending a Catholic high school had a “permanent impact on educational attainment apart from the immediate achievement in high school years” (Kim, 2009, p. 347). While the schooling gap may spawn from the mostly advantaged family background make-up at private schools, those sending their students to private schools likely do not choose that as their reason (Kim, 2009). Instead, it is the opposite.

The focus is on the belief that a private school education will allow for further academic success post-high school graduation, compared to public schooling (Kim, 2009).

### **Benefits of Catholic Schools**

Even in communities with strong public schools, families send students to Catholic schools for many different reasons. The belief that parents have selected a Catholic school for their child only because they attended Catholic school themselves is seldom true (Sanderson, 2015). Families associate a “strong moral center, a feeling of personal worth, character, integrity, compassion, and caring for others” (Sanderson, 2015, p. 1) with a Catholic school education.

**Strong moral values.** Georgetown University’s Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) confirmed that the top reason parents chose to send their student to Catholic school was strong moral values (Sanderson, 2015). An educational environment rooted in the Catholic faith emphasizes respect, kindness, reverence to God, and benevolence to others (Heida, n.d.). In addition, Catholic schools teach children respect for themselves and others, emphasize moral development and self-discipline, and instill character so students make the right choices (National Catholic Educational Association, n.d.; Sanderson, 2015).

**Long-term enrollment.** Because most Catholic elementary schools are preschool or kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade, they have a more stable enrollment with many students who stay for the duration of the school’s educational offering (Heida, n.d.). In addition, following 8<sup>th</sup> grade promotion, Catholic elementary school students are likely to continue to Catholic secondary schools with the same group of students (Heida, n.d.). Continuous enrollment with the same group of students allows the students to form long-term friendships with classmates, creating the feeling of all being part of one big family (Heida, n.d.). “The continuity of both people and place

creates a very stable environment for children, which in turn gives them a feeling of security” (Heida, n.d., p. 1).

**Classroom experiences.** Catholic schools have the freedom to form their own curriculum and incorporate spirituality into every aspect, which is not found in state-mandated lesson plans (Sanderson, 2015). Catholic schools provide a safe and welcoming environment for all and use technology effectively to enhance education (National Catholic Educational Association, n.d.). Lastly, students in Catholic schools have fewer behavioral problems than students in public schools—even when adjusted for socioeconomic status, race, and gender—likely due to the peer groups at the private school (Sanderson, 2015). Private schools not only tend to attract students from more privileged backgrounds but also better performing students, which leads to peer groups being particularly important to prove that private schools make a stronger positive impact on a student compared to a public school (Sakellariou, 2016).

**Faculty dedication.** Faculty and staff in Catholic schools are held to a higher standard of professionalism, morals, and ethics in and out of the classroom (Sanderson, 2015). Catholic schools ensure faculty are dedicated, caring, and effective (National Catholic Educational Association, n.d.). In addition, “parents look at the teachers at Catholic schools as partners, trusting they are teaching the same values in school as they teach at home” (Sanderson, 2015, p. 2).

**Parent involvement.** There is a higher level of parental involvement in Catholic schools (Heida, n.d.). Parents are more likely to volunteer their time to assist with school events, community service, and extracurricular activities and to volunteer to plan and facilitate additional events like career-focused talks, science workshops, Boy and Girl Scout clubs, and drama clubs (Heida, n.d.). Parents of Catholic school students are encouraged to become partners

in their child's education and faith formation (Heida, n.d.; National Catholic Educational Association, n.d.). In addition, due to the long-term, continuous enrollment at the Catholic school, the cohort of families form a lasting, supportive social network, which is seen as a strength of the Catholic education experience (Sanderson, 2015).

**Student achievement.** Catholic schools set high standards for student achievement through an education that combines Catholic faith with academic success (National Catholic Educational Association, n.d.). According to the U.S. Department of Education, Catholic school students consistently score higher on advanced achievement tests in math and reading than their public-school peers, and Catholic schools have higher expectations of students and encourage them to take harder courses (Sanderson, 2015). Although Catholic students are more likely to be more academically successful than their peers in public schools, for most Catholic school parents, academic success is not the number one priority; they are more concerned about their children becoming kind, compassionate, and helpful (Sanderson, 2015).

Hay (2009) discovered that the private school students more often indicated that pressure to perform at high levels was a characteristic of the culture of the school compared to the public-school students. The public-school students, on the other hand, were led to believe the lack of pressure reflected that high achievement was not important for the students to pursue. In addition, private schools created ranking systems, which led to students believing in the importance of the ranking and relative performance. In public school, students noted that they did not believe they were competing with their peers for good marks. Overall, Hay (2009) explained there was an abundance of teacher and student recognition of school pressure and competition, while the public schools generally felt the opposite.

**Civically engaged students.** Catholic school students are more politically tolerant, more supportive of civil liberties, and have higher levels of civic engagement and knowledge than public school students (Sanderson, 2015). Catholic schools prepare students to be productive citizens and future leaders and teach the value of service to others (National Catholic Educational Association, n.d.). In addition, the community service requirement many Catholic schools have helps create a student body of generous, socially-minded adults ready to help their community (Sanderson, 2015).

**College placement.** Catholic high schools are more likely to create a college-going culture within the school (Aldana, 2013, p. 132). This “college-going culture facilitates student learning, college readiness, and college matriculation for all of its students” (Aldana, 2013, p. 132). The prominence of the college-going culture leads to the increased likelihood of Catholic school students finishing high school and entering a more selective four-year college, compared to public school students (Eide, Goldhaber, Showalter, 2004, p. 1349; Evans & Schwab, 1995, p. 944).

### **Parent Decision-Making**

Although the student voice is heard, parents make the final decision for their child to attend Catholic high school, and they pay for an education that is available at no cost elsewhere for a variety of reasons. Each family may have a different reason why they send their children to Catholic high schools, but the majority focus on the same reasoning: the belief that attending Catholic high school leads to an academically successful student, compared to a student who attended public school (Monto, 2009).

Often, parents believe that their children will receive a superior educational experience if they attend a private institution. Monto (2009) explained that most parents send their children to

private school to secure a better educational environment or for religious/moral reasons, or both. Private schools regularly outperform public schools, but only due to the family background makeup of private schools (Monto, 2009). This means that due to the parents' level of education, type of employment, race, and other factors, the student is more likely to attend and afford private schools (Monto, 2009). Private schools create a community of a large group of families who can afford the education, leading to many students with similar family backgrounds being at the same school (Monto, 2009). The diversity of family backgrounds in public schools leads to a more likely chance that the percentage of high-achieving family backgrounds in public schools is smaller, compared to the private schools (Monto, 2009).

The Council for American Private Education (2013) analyzed a survey given to K-12 students' parents in Georgia identifying why parents chose private schools. Many of these families received scholarships or vouchers to attend the private schools. The survey results explained that families chose a private school for their child due to the perceived better learning environment, better education, smaller class sizes, more individual attention, religious education, and better preparation for college the private schools offered compared to the public schools in the community (Council for American Private Education, 2013). Private schools had higher percentages of eighth-graders at or above the proficient level in math and reading on standardized testing (Council for American Private Education, 2013). Although families who received the scholarships or vouchers could not afford the full price of private education, they continued to apply in hopes of financial aid and vouchers, due to the possibility of a better educational experience for their student (Council for American Private Education, 2013).

### **Choice Overload**

Although some families may think private schools are always the best decision, parents are not always effectively educated about school choice, and may not be aware of the costs and benefits of selecting different schools for their students. Cheng, Trivitt, and Wolf (2015) have documented that families often reach choice overload when selecting a school for their child to attend, which leads to the consumer response of ignoring many of their options or failing to choose at all. Choice overload creates the importance for well-marketed institutions to create quick brand affiliation. For Catholic high schools, Church as a brand denotes high academic standards, discipline and moral values, and religious instruction (Cheng et al., 2015). On the other hand, public schools, based on their location and funding, may offer additional extracurricular activities, special programs, and have the resources to build extensive facilities (Cheng et al., 2015). Unfortunately, the family making the school selection must do their own research to ensure the marketing is truthful, so the student can gain the entire educational experience.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The Catholic School Advantage (CSA) refers to the higher educational outcomes of Catholic school students compared with their public-school peers (Freeman & Berends, 2016). Beginning in the early 1980s, policy makers “theorized [that] Catholic schools and public schools operated from different models of education such that the parochial model resulted in higher overall outcomes” (Freeman & Berends, 2016, p. 24). The Catholic school advantage also includes “stronger ties between stakeholders invested in Catholic schools, a more explicit curriculum aimed at college attendance for those who attend Catholic schools, a skimming effect whereby parochial schools in underserved areas recruit the strongest students to their schools,

and an educational environment inspiring hard work and internal motivation as well as a caring community” (Freeman & Berends, 2016, p. 24).

The Catholic School Advantage movement outlines the benefits of Catholic schools for students and their families, as expressed through the Catholic School Advantage itself and various other literature that supports Catholic education. Families select Catholic schools for their students to attend due to these benefits, which include the teaching of strong moral values, the stable, long-term enrollment which creates the feeling of family, extraordinary classroom experiences, faculty and staff dedication, extensive parent involvement, higher achievement standards set for students, more civically engaged students, and enhanced college support and placement. A high school can measure its success by its college placement, and the Catholic School Advantage creates a college-going culture, as expressed by Aldana (2013), which leads to Catholic high school students not only being more likely to go to college, but also attend more selective colleges than their public school peers (Eide, Goldhaber & Showalter, 2004, p. 1349; Evans & Schwab, 1995, p. 944).

### **Summary**

The purpose of the study was to discover why families send their students to Catholic high schools when they had access to free, highly-rated, public high schools. Although there is ample research on private versus public schools in areas in which public schools are underperforming, there is a lack of research on this specific subtopic of Catholic high school attendance in areas in which public schools are highly-rated (Smith, 2001; Walton, 2010). This study discovered that the overarching benefits of Catholic high schools identified in the literature matched the reasons why families choose to send their students to Catholic high schools, instead of well-ranked public schools. This published research can be used by Catholic high school



administrators, admissions officers, and other stakeholders to better understand why families are selecting Catholic high schools over public high schools in the San Francisco Bay Area for their students to attend. By implementing the ideas found in the research, admissions can more strategically market their schools to new families and create a larger enrollment pool.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

There was a lack of research on why families send their students to Catholic schools in communities with strong public schools (Smith, 2001; Walton, 2010). Most research on private school selection concentrates on communities with strong private schools and poor, urban, and low-ranked public schools. The researcher's goal was to understand why families choose Catholic high schools in communities with highly-ranked public high schools. The study explored the question: Why do families living in communities with highly-ranked public high schools choose to enroll their students in Catholic high schools?

A sequential explanatory qualitative multiple-case study research design, using surveys and personal interviews, was used to discover why families choose to send their students to Catholic high schools.

A survey (Appendix B) was sent to families of current students and alumni of Catholic high schools, to determine reasons why families choose Catholic high schools over highly-ranked public high schools. Section one and two of the survey included descriptive demographic questions, including family size, family religious beliefs, race/ethnicity, residence, income bracket, the local public high school, the high schools attended by each child (to distinguish if not all family members attended a Catholic high school), and the type of kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade school the students attended. Section three of the survey included questions about why families selected Catholic high schools for their student(s) to attend. These questions used a 1-5 Likert scale to distinguish the topics that had the most impact on the decision to attend Catholic high schools. Survey participants also had the option to provide personal contact information if they chose to participate in an interview.

The semi-structured interviews (Appendix C) were based on the information provided in the surveys and were conducted with parents of Catholic high school students and alumni. The interviews provided descriptive data and validated the findings of the survey. The results of the interviews allowed for a more comprehensive understanding of family decision making on school choice. By using both data collection methods, the results provide a better understanding of the research problem and provide extensive results about the issue.

### **Setting**

This research focused on the San Francisco Bay Area in California, which has a total population of about seven million people and consists of the following counties: Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Napa, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Solano, and Sonoma. In these nine counties, there are 33 Catholic high schools, including nine female-only schools, four male-only schools, and 20 co-educational schools. There are 229 public schools in the nine counties that have a rating on *greatschools.org* that are included in the research (Appendix D); numerous continuation schools and six unrated high schools located in the San Francisco Bay Area were not included in the data set. Out of the 229 high schools, 99 are ranked either an 8, 9 or 10 out of 10 on *greatschools.org*. The number of Catholic high schools, number of female-only Catholic high schools, number of male-only Catholic high schools, Catholic high school student total, number of public schools, and number of public schools rated an 8, 9 or 10 out of 10, and the student population total of these rated schools of each county can be found in Table 1.

Table 1

*Data on Catholic and Public High Schools in San Francisco Bay Area Counties - 2018*

County	Catholic Schools	Female-only	Male-only	Co-ed	Catholic School Student Total	Public Schools	Public Schools rated 8, 9 or 10/10	Public Schools rated 8, 9 or 10/10 Student Total
Alameda	6	1	0	5	3409	53	22	35283
Contra Costa	3	1	1	1	2267	29	14	25322
Napa	2	0	0	2	684	7	1	475
Marin	1	0	0	1	760	8	5	6638
San Francisco	7	3	2	2	4627	19	7	8768
San Mateo	5	2	1	2	2619	23	13	17654
Santa Clara	6	2	1	3	6778	52	27	47703
Solano	1	0	0	1	476	13	3	4103
Sonoma	2	0	0	2	918	25	7	7015
Total	33	9	5	19	22538	229	99	152961

*Note: Additional data sets can be found in Appendix A and Appendix D; All school rankings and student body population data were found on niche.com and greatschools.org*

Families who live within the boundaries of the 99 highly-rated public schools but attend one of the 33 Catholic schools in the San Francisco Bay Area were studied. Catholic school families who completed the survey but live within the boundaries of a public high school rated below an eight on *greatschools.org* were not included in the study.

### **Participants/Sample**

The participants of the study were parents and/or guardians of students who attend or attended a Catholic high school in the San Francisco Bay Area. The survey was conducted with the parents/guardians instead of the students because in most households, attending Catholic high school is a family's decision. In addition, asking only students may not have led to quality survey results because students are unlikely to provide accurate demographic information or extensive rationale for their parents' decisions on school choice. Potential participants received communication about the study from their school's officials and volunteered their time to participate in a survey and/or interview. By connecting with numerous schools, the surveys

collected were from a diverse set of educational institutions, including 10 co-educational, two female-only, and two male-only Catholic high schools, and resulted in a description of the participants compiled based on the demographic information collected in the surveys.

### **Participant Rights**

Participants' rights were protected, and confidentiality was maintained in the survey because the survey did not require any personal information (name, email, phone number) unless the participant provided the information to participate in an interview. If the participant agreed to participate in the interview, the interview transcript and personal information associated with the interviewee remained confidential.

The consent form for the online survey (Appendix E) included the following about participation in and benefits of the survey: (a) participation is voluntary, (b) freedom to decline to answer any question, and (c) there are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in the study. The consent form for the online survey included the following about confidentiality of survey answers: (a) data will be stored in a password protected electronic format, (b) the Google Form will not collect identifying information such as your name, email address, or IP address, and (c) your responses will remain confidential. The consent form also included information for participants who decided to provide personal information for a follow-up interview, including (a) if you provide contact information such as your phone number or email address, your survey responses may no longer be anonymous to the researcher, (b) no names or identifying information will be included in any publications or presentations based on this data, and (c) your responses to this survey will remain confidential.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

The literature about the benefits of Catholic schools was used to create the questions in the survey (Heida, n.d.; National Catholic Educational Association, n.d.; Sanderson, 2015). The benefits of Catholic schools include the teaching of strong moral values, long-term enrollment, positive and faith-based classroom experiences, dedicated faculty and staff, strong parent involvement, high student achievement, elevated amounts of civically engaged students, and significant impact on college placement (Heida, n.d.; National Catholic Educational Association, n.d.; Sanderson, 2015). These benefits were intertwined into the questions in the survey, to distinguish why families select Catholic high schools over highly-rated public high schools.

Each Catholic school's administration was contacted by the researcher to request that an invitation to participate (Appendix F) along with a link to the survey (Appendix B) be placed in the school's parent e-bulletin or somewhere else that is easily accessible by parents of the school. Overall, two schools posted the survey request in their parent e-bulletin. In addition, the invitation to participate was posted on LinkedIn and Facebook to reach as many families as possible. Because the survey requested the name of the local public school in the family's community, surveys completed from families who did not live in the correct areas were easily removed from the data set.

The invitation to participate in the study linked to the online Google Form with a consent form and the survey questions. This platform was utilized to easily graph and organize the collected data. Through the researcher's current work in a Catholic school and the support from administration, this researcher felt confident that the numerous other schools understood the benefit of helping the survey circulate in their school community.

The interview script (Appendix C) was preliminary and was updated based on the flow of conversation with the interviewee. The interview included deeper questions about the benefits of Catholic high schools that were selected most frequently, to further understand the family's decision to attend a Catholic high school over the local highly-rated public high school. All survey respondents could provide their contact information to participate in an interview. All potential interview participants who fully completed the survey were categorized into groups based on their student's Catholic high school of attendance, resulting in 14 interview requests. There were 10 interviews completed in total.

The data was collected through a survey conducted over the Internet and followed up with semi-structured interviews. The survey (Appendix B) included questions rated on a Likert scale, 1 to 5, with 1 being 'not at all important' and 5 being 'top reason to attend'. From the 72 submitted survey responses, 53 qualified for the research topic. The survey data was easily grouped and analyzed and was used to refine the semi-structured interview script. The semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants who previously took the survey and provided their contact information to participate in the interviews. The interviews, conducted over the phone, were recorded and transcribed through online software. The interview transcripts were cleaned of personal and confidential information and coded to find trends. The interviews provided additional qualitative data, to further understand families' school attendance decisions.

### **Analysis**

Two categories of data were analyzed: the Likert scale data from the survey and the data from the personal semi-structured interviews. The survey had questions with a Likert scale range of responses. The results of each question were easily understood, and the results of each question were compared with the results of the demographic questions.

The personal interviews were recorded and transcribed by a professional transcription company through online software to allow for manual coding. Using a thematic content analysis, the interview transcripts were coded to discover themes and patterns. Coding the personal interview transcriptions allowed for clarity and the ability to combine like results and recognize any outliers. Once the themes were defined, the researcher created a narrative including quotes from the interviewees, connecting directly to the results of the surveys.

### **Potential Limitations of the Study**

The researcher was concerned that, even though she had professional connections with several sites, the main group of participants would be Catholic high school attendees from her school, which is single-gender. It might be difficult to collect numerous survey responses from the other 32 Catholic high schools. Although a large portion of the survey results came from the researcher's school of employment, the researcher collected survey results from 14 of the 33 Catholic high schools, which included 10 co-ed schools, two female-only schools, and two male-only schools. Two Catholic high schools posted the survey through an electronic bulletin to parents, which led to most of the participants. The other results were collected through LinkedIn and Facebook.

In addition, the researcher has worked in Catholic high school admissions for two years, so she understands why many families select Catholic schools for their students to attend, although some families choose public schools for the same reasons (i.e. stronger academics). To mitigate any bias, the researcher relied solely on the results of her research and information found in scholarly sources.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS

This chapter covers the analysis method and results of the online survey and the interviews. In addition, the results were analyzed to understand the reasons for the decision to attend Catholic high school in the San Francisco Bay Area and to determine if those reasons provide insight into the current literature on the topic.

#### **Analysis Method**

Data for this research was collected through an online survey and interviews. The survey results were compiled from the Google Form to a Google Sheet. The first step to organize the data was to remove all survey participants' submissions that did not meet the selection criteria – this included all participants whose assigned public high school was not ranked an 8, 9, or 10 out of 10, and all participants who did not complete the survey correctly by not correctly typing out the name of the assigned public school. From the 72 submitted responses, 53 qualified for the research topic.

Once the irrelevant surveys were removed from the data set, many additional spread sheet pages were created to organize the survey data. For the demographic questions of the survey, each question had a multiple-choice selection of answers, so all answers to those questions were easily organized into the percentage of survey participants who answered the question with each answer. The questions related to the family's decision to attend a Catholic high school had answers ranging from 1 to 5, with 1 being "not at all important in my family's decision to attend a Catholic high school" and 5 being "the top reason in my family's decision to attend a Catholic high school". All answers to these questions were organized into the amount of survey participants who answered each question with that answer.

At the end of each survey, participants were given the opportunity to provide their contact information to later participate in an interview. Ten interviews were completed, representing seven different schools – two female-only, one male-only, and four co-educational. All 10 families were asked a similar set of questions discussing the importance of admissions events, how the cost of tuition impacts a family's expectations of the school, what the most and least influential topics in the survey were on the family's decision to attend a Catholic high school, and if there were any reasons not mentioned in the survey that the family selected a Catholic high school to attend.

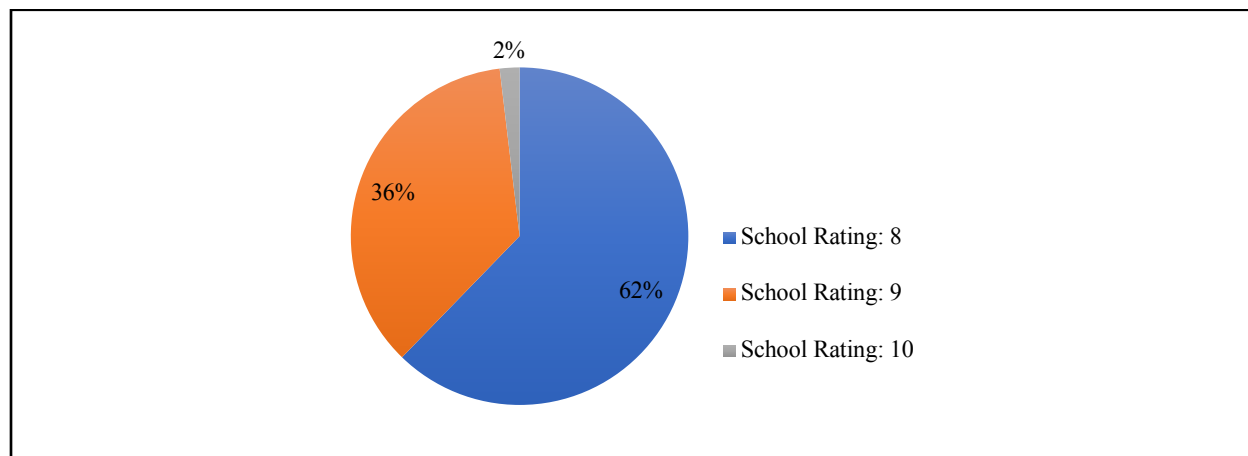
The interviews were conducted over the phone with the family member that completed the survey. The responses in the interview transcripts were first organized by topic. Next, the transcripts organized by topic were copied into a new document, and names of students and names of schools were deleted, to better understand the key ideas in each family's answer. From there, common themes were identified through self-coding, leading to the overall understanding of families' reasoning on the decision to attend Catholic high schools.

### **Presentation of Results**

Administrators of 33 Catholic high schools were sent the survey to disburse to families, and two completed the task. Survey responses were also received through postings on social media, including LinkedIn and Facebook. Of the 33 Catholic high schools, 14 Catholic high schools were accounted for in the survey results, which included 10 co-educational schools, two female-only schools, and two male-only schools.

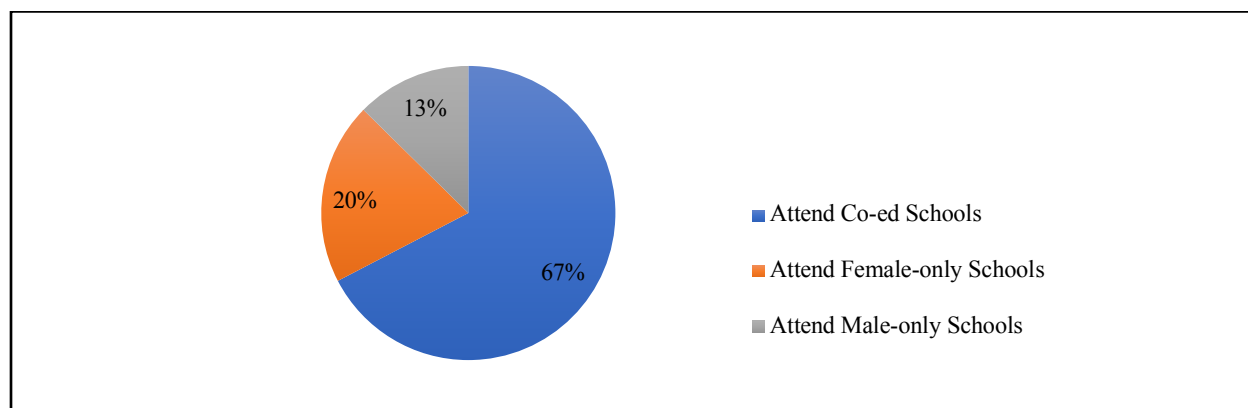
Seventy-two survey responses (further mentioned as survey participants and family/families) were collected, of which 15 survey responses could not be used because the survey participants' assigned public school was not ranked an 8, 9, or 10 out of 10 on

greatschools.com, and four survey responses could not be used because no assigned public school was entered, resulting in 53 qualified survey responses. Figure 1 includes the survey participants' local public schools that are rated an 8, 9, or 10 out of 10 via greatschools.com.



*Figure 1.* Public School Ratings. Percentage of survey participants' local public school ratings out of 10.

Of the 53 survey responses, 106 students were accounted for, with 95 attending Catholic high schools, four attending private independent high schools, and seven attending public schools. The 95 Catholic high school students represented co-ed, female-only, and male-only Catholic high schools, shown in Figure 2.



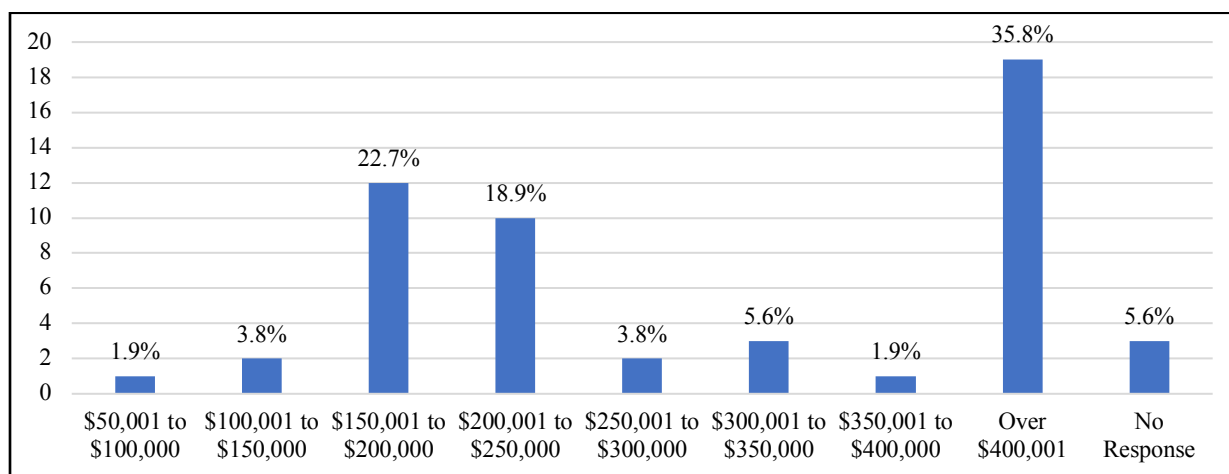
*Figure 2.* Attendance in Catholic High Schools. Percentage of Students Attending Co-ed, Female-only, or Male-only Catholic High Schools.

## Demographic Information of Survey Participants

The demographic information collected included household status, household income, family ethnicity, family religious beliefs, and kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade attendance of the Catholic school students.

**Household status.** Out of the 53 survey responses, 50 lived in a 2-parent household, 2 in a single-parent household, and 1 lived with “other guardian(s)”.

**Household income.** The 53 families who completed the survey had household incomes ranging from \$50,001 to over \$400,001, shown in Figure 3.



*Figure 3.* Family Household Income Brackets. Percent of survey participants who represent each household income bracket.

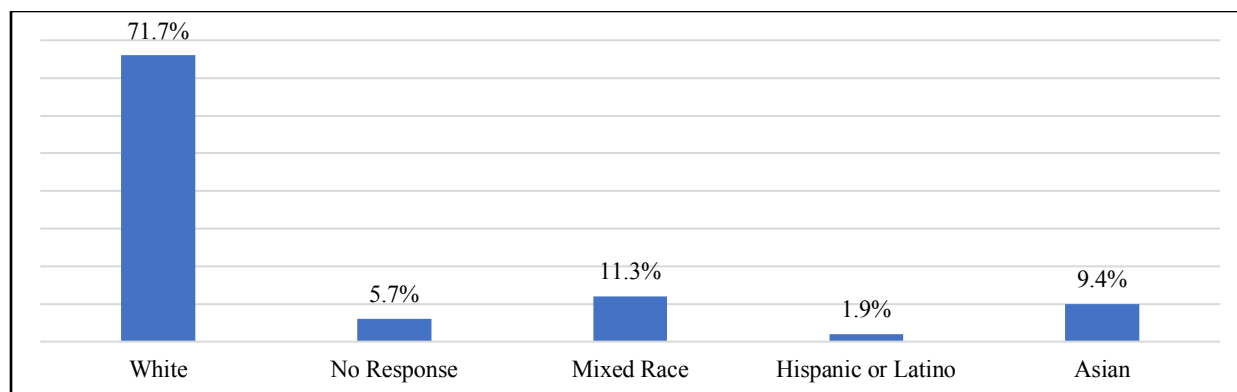
Of the families who took the survey, 52.8% believed the school’s student body diversity in terms of household income was either not at all important or minimally important to the decision to attend a Catholic high school. 30.2% families believed it was important and 17% of families believed it was very important, but no families believed it was the top reason to attend a Catholic high school.

Due to the high cost of living in the San Francisco Bay Area, coupled with the high cost of Catholic high school tuition, it is obvious that most families who send their students to Catholic high school have an income that is much higher than the average household income

nation-wide and in the San Francisco Bay Area. Based on a new definition of income limits released by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, in the San Francisco Bay Area \$117,000 is now considered low income (Sperling, 2018). This connects directly to the average tuition cost nation-wide, which is \$11,239, while in the San Francisco Bay Area Catholic high school tuition ranges from \$17,000 to \$43,000 (National Catholic Educational Association, 2018; Sacred Heart Schools, 2018; St. Francis High School, 2018).

Private schools disproportionately serve higher-income families, with only about 11% of students in Catholic schools considered low-income (Ee, Orfield, & Teitell, 2018, p. 30). Of survey participants, only 5.7% of families had a household income of less than \$150,000, which represents low income (or close to low income) in the San Francisco Bay Area. Due to the widening economic gap between public and private school enrollment, Catholic high schools are seeing fewer low-income and middle-class families enroll. Although the diversity of family household income is not strong in the San Francisco Bay Area's Catholic high schools, those families who can afford tuition see the benefits of spending substantial money to send their students to Catholic high schools (Ee et al., 2018, p. 30).

**Family ethnicity.** Most families who completed the survey were white, with additional families selecting mixed race, Hispanic or Latino, Asian, or no response as their race. No black families completed the survey. The amount of families who completed the survey who represent each ethnicity is shown in Figure 4.



*Figure 4.* Family Ethnicity. Percent of survey participants who represent each ethnicity.

Nationwide, white students make up 72.2% of the Catholic high school enrollment, while Asian students make up 6.3% of the enrollment, mixed race students make up 5.3% of the enrollment, and black students make up 9.1% of enrollment (National Catholic Educational Association, 2018). The ethnic composition of the San Francisco Bay Area is: 24% Hispanic, 41% white, 6% black, 24% Asian, and 5% other (Association of Bay Area Governments, 2015). The 53 families who completed the survey more closely represent the nation-wide ethnicity figures compared to the ethnic composition of the San Francisco Bay Area. This is because private schools disproportionately serve white and higher-income families (Ee et al., 2018, p. 36). While the nation has rapidly increased racial and ethnic diversity in the last two decades, changes within private schools were modest; the typical white student at a religious private school goes to a school that is more than three-quarters white, similar to this case study (Ee et al., 2018, p. 36).

Although Catholic high schools are made up of mostly white students, families who took the survey did not mention this as a major issue. Of the families who took the survey, 45.3% believed the school's student body diversity in terms of race and ethnicity was either not at all important or minimally important reason for the decision to attend a Catholic high school. 26.4%

of families believed it was important, and 28.3% of families believed it was very important, but no families ranked that it was the top reason to attend a Catholic high school.

**Family religious beliefs.** While more than half of families selected Catholic as their religion, many other religions are represented through this survey, as seen in Figure 5.

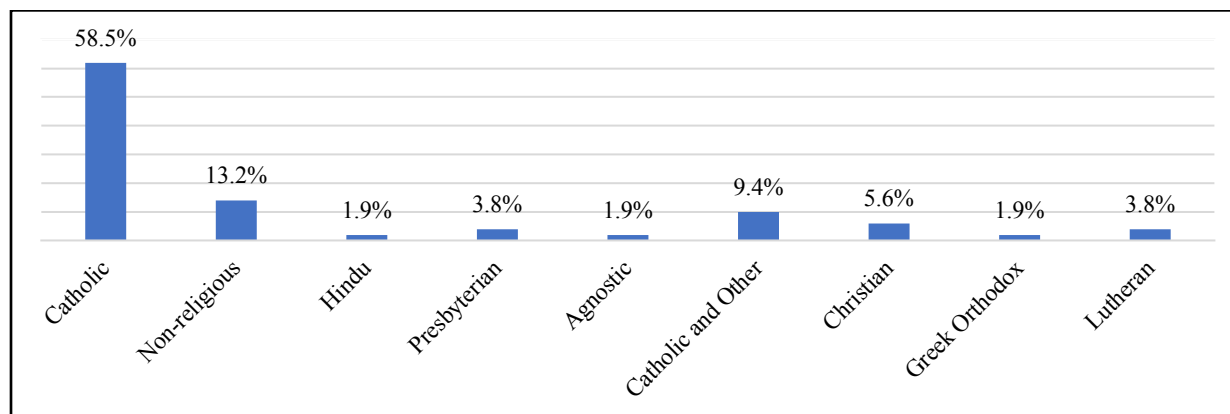
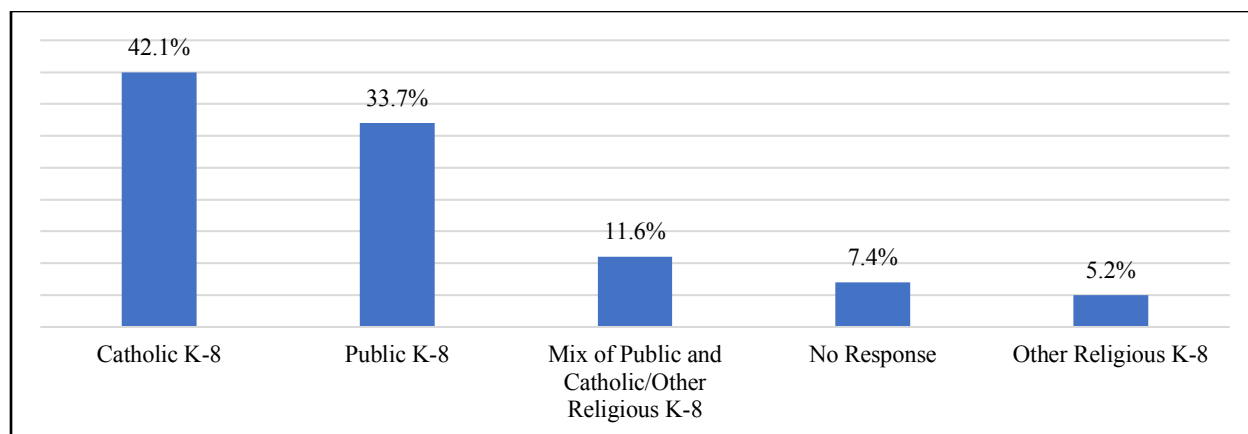


Figure 5. Family Religious Beliefs. Percent of survey participants who represent each religion.

Nationwide, 78% of families who attend Catholic schools are catholic, 19% are non-Catholic, and 3% are not reported (National Catholic Educational Association, 2018). The number of non-Catholic students attending Catholic schools has increased drastically since 1970, in which it was 2.7% and 11.2% in 1980 (National Catholic Educational Association, 2018). Catholic schools appeal to non-Catholic families because the schools cultivate a value-focused environment, the students receive a solid education, and the diversity of the student body creates a more enhanced academic and spiritual experience (Scott, 2015). In addition, parents see Catholic schools as safe and inclusive environments and know that the average child that attends Catholic school is more likely to graduate and attend college (Bateman, 2017).

**Kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade attendance.** Of the 95 Catholic high school students represented in the 53 surveys, less than half attended a Catholic school for kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade. This can be seen in Figure 6.



*Figure 6.* K-8 Attendance of 95 Catholic high school students.

Depending on the Catholic high school, the primary school the student attended (Catholic school versus all others) may have more or less weight on the admissions decision. Nationwide, there are more students who attend Catholic high schools than Catholic primary schools, so it is obvious that students must be recruited from numerous types of primary schools in order to reach an adequate high school student body (National Catholic Educational Association, 2018).

### **Results**

The 53 survey responses were first organized based on Likert scale ratings of each question. The results, shown in Figure 7, note how families ranked each reason in a family's decision to attend a Catholic high school.



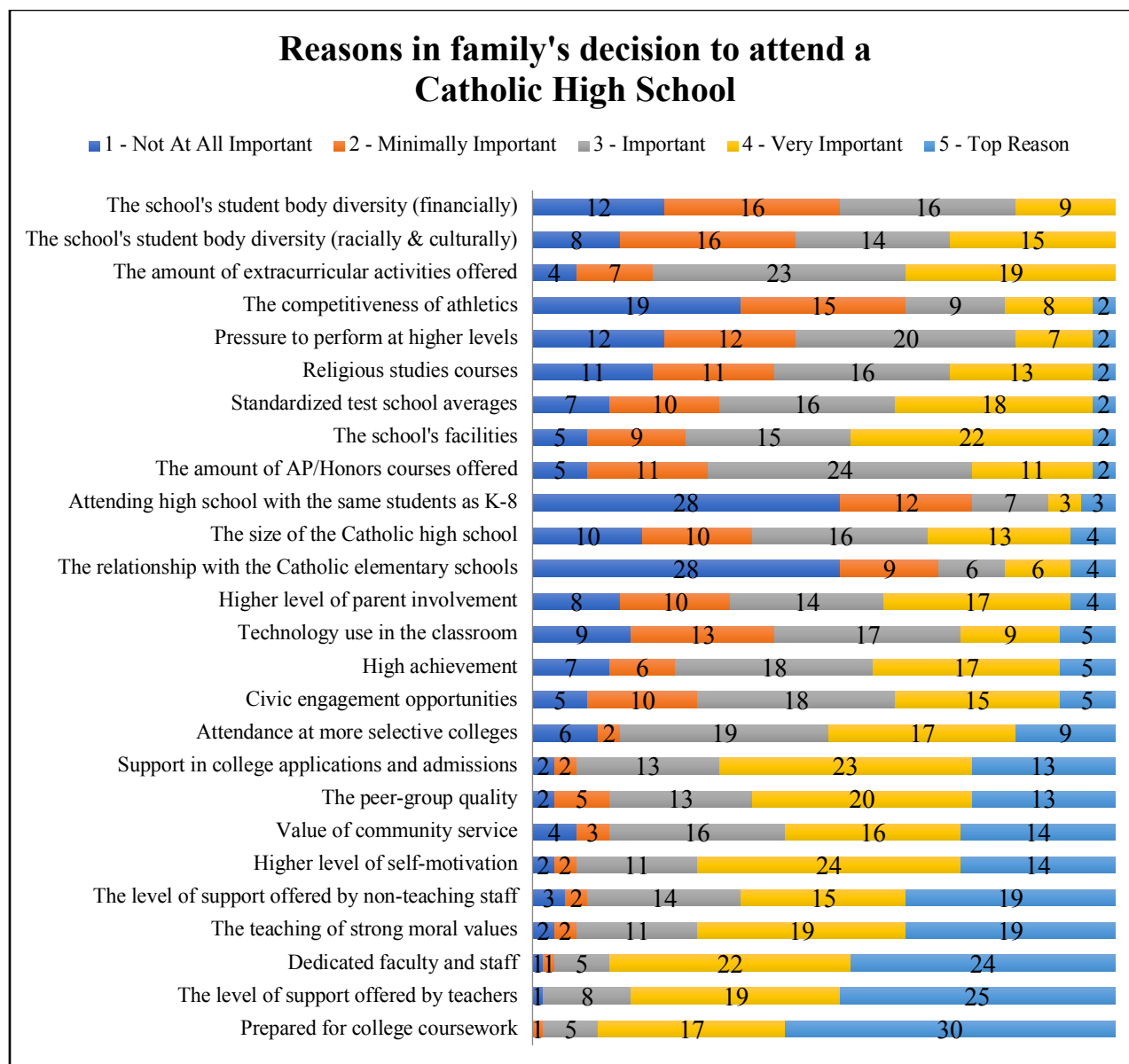


Figure 7. Reasons in family's decision to attend a Catholic High School.

### Top Reasons to Attend

Through the survey results, three statements were overwhelmingly selected as the top reason in a family's decision to attend a Catholic high school. Being prepared for college coursework was selected the most often as the top reason to attend Catholic high school, with 56.6% families rating it this way. The second most common top reason to attend was the level of

support offered by teachers, with 47.2% families rating it this way, while the dedicated faculty and staff was the third most common top reason to attend, with 45.2% families rating it this way.

### **Least Important Reasons to Attend**

The two most pronounced reasons that were not at all important in a family's decision to attend a Catholic high school were attending high school with the same students as in K-8 and the relationship with the Catholic elementary schools. Both factors in decision making had 52.8% of families mark them as not at all important in a family's decision to attend a Catholic high school. "The competitiveness of athletics" was the third-most selected as not at all important in a family's decision to attend a Catholic high school, with 35.8% families rating it this way.

### **Results That Confirm Assumptions from Literature**

Many assumptions about the reasons why families select Catholic high schools for their children that were reported in the literature review of this study were confirmed through the collection and analysis of the survey results and interview transcripts. The strong moral values taught in school, the enhanced classroom experiences, the dedicated faculty and staff, the extensive student achievement, the heightened college placement, and the greater parent involvement were all confirmed through the data collection as key reasons San Francisco Bay Area families selected a Catholic high school for their students to attend.

**Strong moral values.** Previous research has confirmed that the top reason parents choose to send their student to Catholic school is strong moral values (Sanderson, 2015). While not all families at Catholic high schools are Catholic, there is a tendency for most families, regardless of faith, to note that the teaching of strong moral values is a top reason in the decision to attend a Catholic high school. While only 58% of survey respondents were Catholic (the other 42%

representing six other faiths and non-religious) and only 42% of the students of the survey respondents attended Catholic K-8 schools, 72% of families believed strong moral values was either very important or a top reason in the decision to attend Catholic high school, noted in Figure 8.

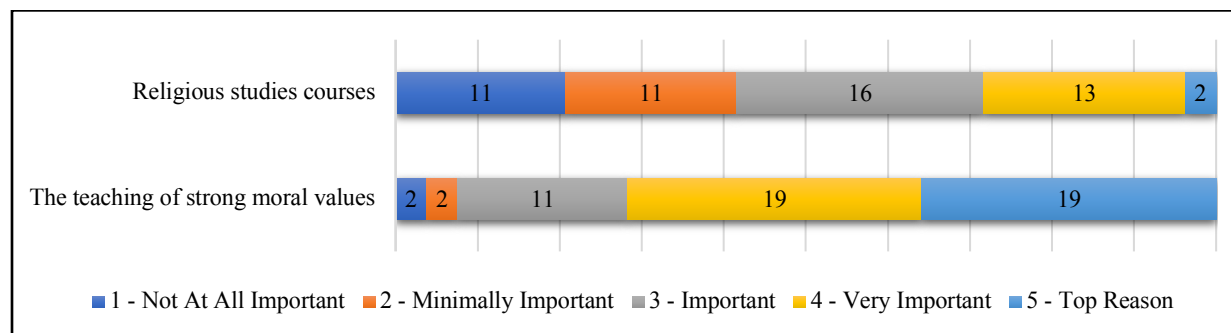


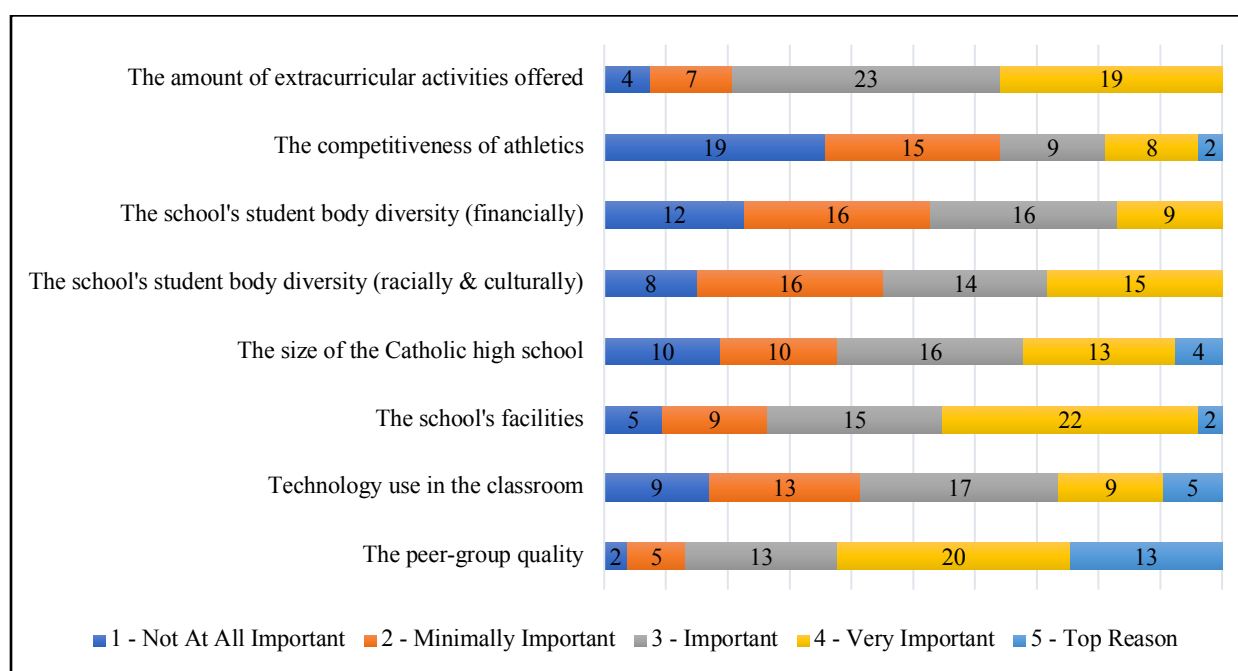
Figure 8. Survey Results: Strong Moral Values and Religious Studies. The importance of religious studies courses and the teaching of strong moral values on the decision to attend Catholic high school.

Although the teaching of strong moral values was important to families in the decision to attend Catholic high school, the offering of religious studies courses was not as important to families, with 41.5% of families ranking the religious studies courses as not at all important or minimally important. Multiple non-Catholic families in the interviews shared that while their student may feel awkward or unknowledgeable in a predominantly Catholic environment at first, the student can have a new experience with religion and make their own decision in committing to it or not. In addition, non-Catholic students can actively participate by performing (dancing and singing) at traditional religious services. Overall, families are selecting a school that is rooted in the Catholic faith because of the emphasis on kindness, respect, moral development, and self-discipline, instead of the specific teachings on the history of the religion (Heida, n.d.; National Catholic Educational Association, n.d.; Sanderson, 2015).

**Classroom experiences.** In the State of California, accreditation and state approval are optional for private schools (U.S. Department of Education, 2009, p. 30). Because private

schools have the freedom to form their own curriculum, teachers have autonomy regarding what and how they teach in the classroom. This freedom also influences the student's overall experience at the school; students in Catholic schools have fewer behavioral problems and Catholic schools provide a safe and welcoming environment, while using technology effectively to enhance education (National Catholic Educational Association, n.d.).

Many topics about the student experience at Catholic high schools were included in the survey, including athletics, extracurricular activities, student body diversity, the size and facilities of the school, technology use, and the peer-group quality. Figure 9 displays the ratings of importance families gave each of these topics as a reason to attend Catholic high school.



*Figure 9.* Survey Results: Classroom Experiences. The importance of extracurricular activities offered, the competitiveness of athletics, the student body diversity, the size of the school, the school's facilities, the technology use in the classroom, and the peer-group quality on the decision to attend a Catholic high school.

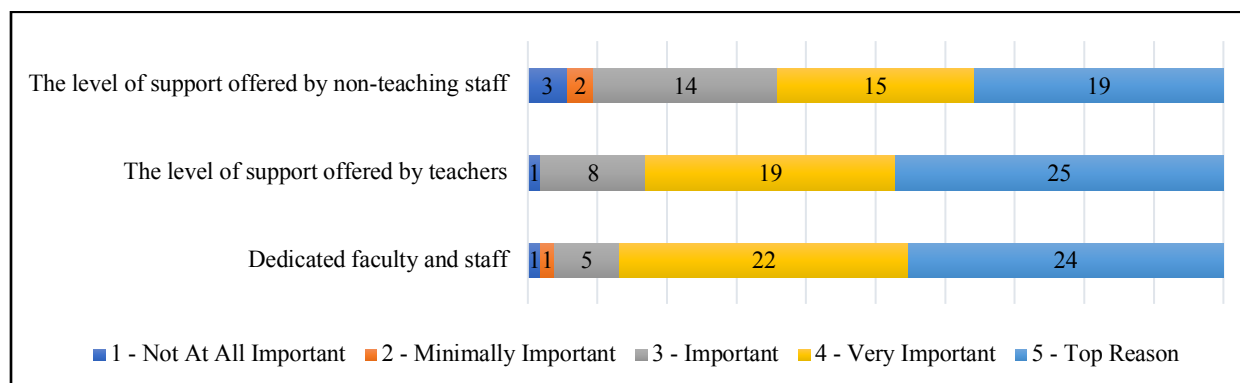
Catholic high schools give students opportunities for smaller class sizes, single-gender schools, and new friendships, as discussed through the interviews. Out of all the classroom experiences, the peer-group quality was selected the most often as the top reason in the decision

to attend a Catholic high school. The amount of extracurricular activities offered, the size of the Catholic high school, the school's facilities, and technology use in the classroom were also seen by a majority of families as important or very important in the decision to attend Catholic high school, while a majority of families selected the competitiveness of athletics and the school's student body diversity as not as important in the decision to attend a Catholic high school. As discussed in the interviews, because families are paying tuition, they expect smaller class sizes and more personal attention to each student. In addition, families expected better than average and clean school facilities, with technology as up to date as possible. One family noted that the smaller class size compared to the public schools was very important in their decision, because it gave their daughter the opportunity to actively participate in the classroom. The family believes the smaller class sizes provide an improved learning environment.

**Dedicated faculty and staff.** Nationwide, private school teachers are, on average, paid less than public school teachers, leading to many private schools suffering higher teacher turnover among early-career teachers (Orlin, 2013). On the other hand, private schools can hire whomever they want because state laws only require public schools to hire credentialed/licensed teachers (Orlin, 2013). Private schools can pay teachers less because the private school environment is seen as better for teachers – class sizes are smaller, teachers are more respected by their students, parents are more involved, students come prepared to learn, there is less red tape, and the school is invested in education (Orlin, 2013). Due to the work environment, 21% of private school teachers have more than two decades of experience in the classroom (same ratio as teachers in public schools) (Orlin, 2013).

In Catholic schools specifically, faculty and staff are held to a higher standard of morals, ethics, and professionalism, and the schools ensure the faculty and staff are caring, effective, and

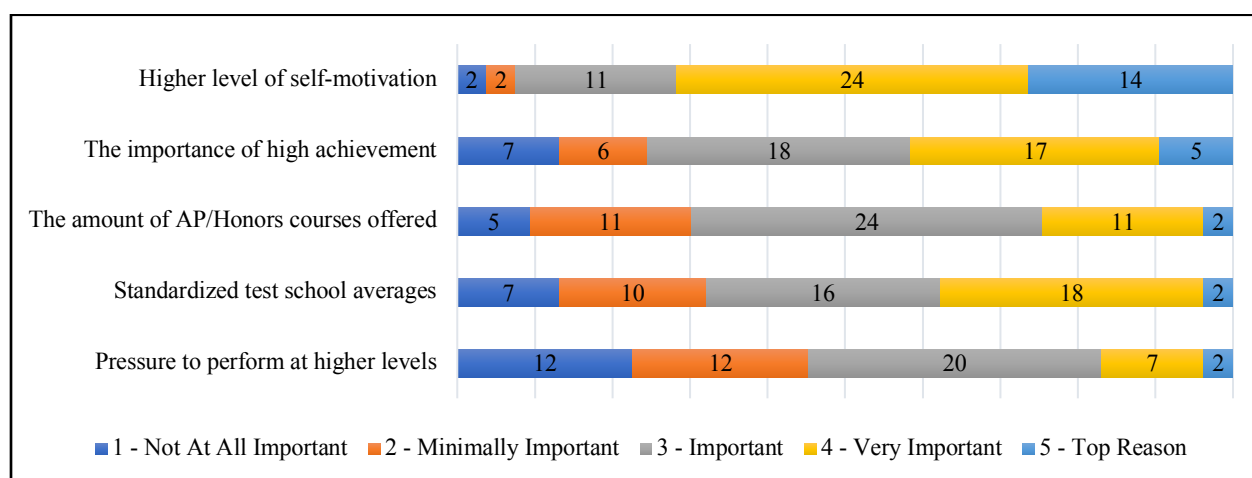
dedicated (National Catholic Educational Association, n.d., Sanderson, 2015). These ideas directly relate to the survey responses in which three of the top five reasons in a family's decision to attend a Catholic high school were faculty and staff related, noted in Figure 10.



*Figure 10.* Survey Results: Faculty and Staff. The importance of the level of support offered by non-teaching staff, the level of support offered by teachers, and dedicated faculty and staff on the decision to attend Catholic high school.

Through interviews, families noted they discovered the dedication of the faculty and staff and the support the faculty and staff provide before enrolling, through admissions events, which most, if not all, faculty and staff participate in. Once on campus and paying tuition, families expected high quality faculty who were available and provided personal attention to each student. When asked to explain their decision on the most influential reason when selecting a Catholic high school, most of the families interviewed discussed the dedicated faculty and staff and noted the faculty and staff's immense effort to ensure that the students thrive and promise to sustain the best teaching methods through professional development. Families also preferred Catholic high schools because the teachers were more willing to partner with the parents for the success of the students, through keeping communication lines open. Lastly, one family mentioned they selected a Catholic high school because they knew their son would get the most he could out of his education there, find his passion, and not fall through the cracks.

**Student achievement.** Catholic high schools hold higher expectations of their students and their students consistently score higher on achievement tests in math and reading than their public school peers (Sanderson, 2015). While not all Catholic high school parents believe academic success is the number one priority – they are more concerned about their children becoming compassionate and self-motivated – the importance of high achievement, the amount of AP/Honors courses offered, and higher standardized tests school averages are key reasons why a family would decide to send their student to a Catholic high school (Sanderson, 2015). The results of this study confirm Sanderson’s findings as noted in Figure 11.

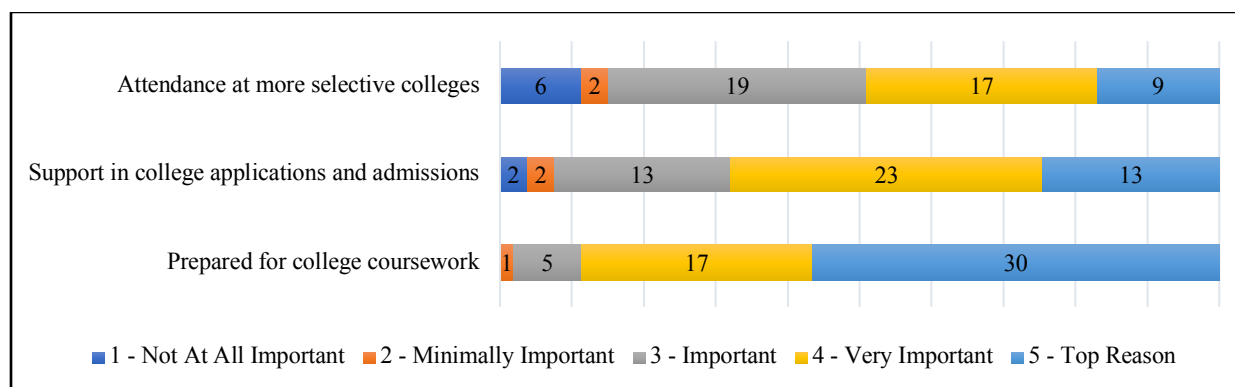


*Figure 11.* Survey Results: Student Achievement. The importance of a higher level of self-motivation, high achievement, the amount of AP/honors courses offered, standardized test school averages, and pressure to perform at higher levels on the decision to attend Catholic school.

The survey results showed how important student achievement is to families in the decision to attend a Catholic high school, although the higher level of self-motivation is seen as much more important than the pressure to perform at higher levels. Ninety-two percent of families selected that the higher level of self-motivation of the students within the school was important, very important, or the top reason to attend a Catholic high school, while only 54% selected the pressure to perform at higher levels as important, very important, or the top reason to attend. In the interview, one family noted that they were not impressed with the teachers at the

public high school because they did not seem to want to encourage the students to try their best and the students did not seem to have any need to perform themselves.

**College placement.** Even if students are academically unable to attend one of the most selective colleges, parents select Catholic high schools for their students because the schools create a college-going culture in which attending and graduating from a higher educational institution is deemed increasingly important to have success as a professional (Aldana, 2013, p. 132). The results of this study suggest that by sending their students to a Catholic high school, parents are expecting the school to support their student in the college application process, with the college application preparation process starting as early as 9th grade, and expect the school to prepare their students for college coursework, as seen in Figure 12.



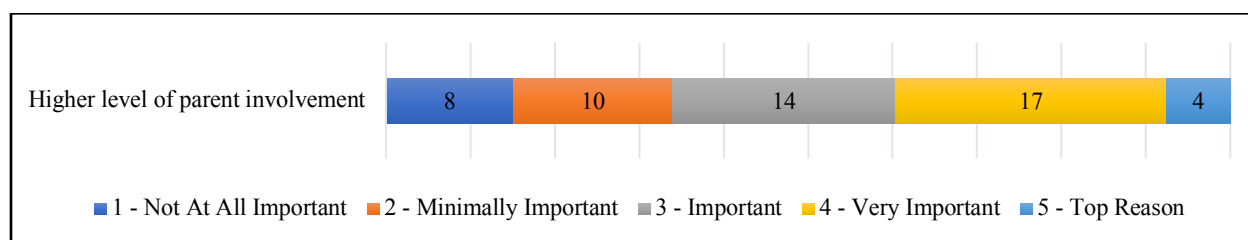
*Figure 12.* Survey Results: College Placement. The importance of attendance at more selective colleges, support in college applications and admissions, and being prepared for college coursework on the decision to attend Catholic high school.

The college support and placement a Catholic high school offers are extremely important to its families. Ninety-eight percent of families selected prepared for college coursework as important, very important, or the top reason to attend. Families noted that the dedicated teachers and staff play a very important role by not only challenging the students in the classroom but also helping students become responsible young adults who manage their time well and who care about their studies. The survey results also showed the importance of Catholic high schools



having outstanding college counseling departments; 92% of families selected support in college applications and admissions and 85% of families selected attendance at more selective colleges as important, very important, or the top reason to attend the Catholic high school. Through interviews, families reported they expected students to not only be prepared for college coursework, but also well rounded and prepared for college life, including maintaining their own schedules, being responsible for all aspects of their lives, and having the confidence to go to college and be successful. The expectation for personalized attention is high, particularly in college counseling and the college application process.

**Parent involvement.** By enrolling at a Catholic high school, the student is not only joining a new family — the parents are as well. Although there is historically a higher level of parental involvement in Catholic schools, with parents in interviews noting extensive volunteering in the classroom, at school events, and with extracurricular activities, Figure 13 shows that only 66% of families who participated in the survey stated this was an important, very important, or top reason in the decision to attend a Catholic high school.



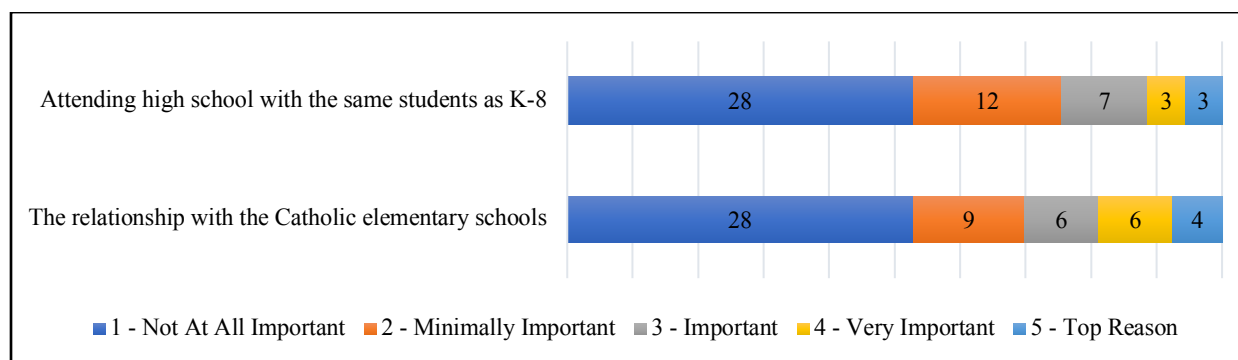
*Figure 13.* Survey Results: Parent Involvement. The importance of a higher level of parent involvement on the decision to attend a Catholic high school.

Although not many families may select a higher level of parent involvement as a reason in the decision to attend a Catholic high school, families may experience the benefit of the greater parental involvement once enrolled in the school, giving parents the opportunity to attend events and make friends with other parents, participate in their student's educational experience, and join in the student's faith formation (Heida, n.d.).

## Results That Contradict Assumptions from Literature

Although the survey and interview results almost completely match what prior literature has established as reasons why families select Catholic high schools nationwide, two reasons why are not seen as significant in the data collection in the San Francisco Bay Area compared to Catholic high schools nationwide. Those two reasons include the benefits of long-term enrollment and the idea of students being more civically-engaged in Catholic high schools, compared to public high schools.

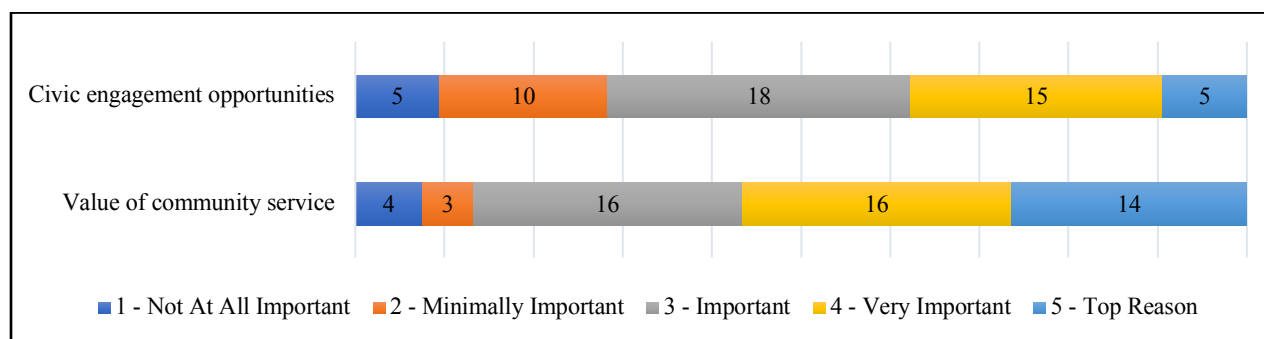
**Long-term enrollment.** Literature suggests that a student who experiences a stable enrollment in which most of the students stay with the same group of students from kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade, will have a better educational experience. The leadership supports forming long-term friendships, offers a stable and secure environment, and creates a feeling of a family at the school (Heida, n.d.). Although these classroom experiences may lead a family to enroll at a Catholic primary school, these beliefs about long-term enrollment were not found in the survey results. The survey results, expressed in Figure 14, stated that 53% of families believed that attending high school with the same students as those in primary school and the relationship with the Catholic elementary schools are not at all important in the decision to attend Catholic high school.



*Figure 14.* Survey Results: Long-term Enrollment. The importance of attending high school with the same students as in kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade and the relationship with the Catholic elementary schools on the decision to attend a Catholic high school.

Of those who completed an interview, a majority selected attending high school with the same students as kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade was the least influential of the reasons when deciding to attend Catholic high school. Interview participants disclosed that students were interested in attending a different high school than their peers, to create new friendships and have new opportunities. One mother mentioned that her student attended kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade with the same core 30 students, and it was time for the student to diversify and grow their circle of friends when selecting a high school. In addition, another parent mentioned that their goal was to expose their children to students with differing backgrounds to get them out of their primary school bubble.

**Civically engaged students.** While literature suggests that nationwide Catholic school students are more politically tolerant, more supportive of civil liberties, and have higher levels of civic engagement and knowledge than public school students, this is not as noticeable through the survey results, as seen in Figure 15.



*Figure 15.* Survey Results: Civically Engaged Students. The importance of civic engagement opportunities and the value of community service on the decision to attend a Catholic high school

The liberal ideology of the San Francisco Bay Area leads to public and private high school students being more left-leaning and less likely to be religious than in other metros. The San Francisco metropolitan area was found to be the 2<sup>nd</sup> most religiously unaffiliated metro (33%

of people), tied with Seattle, with only Portland, Oregon having a higher percent of religiously unaffiliated people at 42% of the adult population (nationally it is 22%) (CBS Bay Area, 2015). The lack of religious affiliation in the San Francisco Bay Area may lead to more religious families flocking to Catholic high schools, which have a student body representation that is much more Catholic than the surrounding San Francisco Bay Area (66% of St. Francis High School students are Catholic) (St. Francis High School, 2018). In addition to the idea that public school students may be as civically engaged as those in Catholic schools, families did not seek Catholic high schools for their civic engagement opportunities in particular. One family noted that civic engagement opportunities was the factor that mattered the least in the decision to attend Catholic high school because they knew that their son would find those opportunities elsewhere if needed.

### **Summary**

Over the years, significant research has been conducted on the reasons why families select high-achieving Catholic schools over poorly rated public schools. There is a lack of research on why families select Catholic high schools in neighborhoods with free, well-ranked public schools; this study analyzed factors contributing to parent decisions to send their students to Catholic high schools in the San Francisco Bay Area. Surveys from 53 different families representing 14 Catholic high schools were accounted for, with the majority being white, Catholic, 2-parent households with 88.7% of household incomes greater than \$150,000, and 35.8% of household incomes greater than \$400,000. In addition, 10 interviews were completed, representing seven of the 14 Catholic high schools.

With the ability to afford the tuition comes the freedom to select a school based on its overall offerings, including the teaching of strong moral values, better peer-group quality, more supportive and dedicated teachers and staff, and better preparation for college, among other

things. In addition, due to the cost of attendance compared to public schools, families appreciate having higher expectations of the school, the school's teachers, the school's administrators, and the school's facilities. The major expectations of the school, as discovered through the interviews, revolved around the preparation for college, exceptional academic and college counseling, experienced teachers, and teachers to have higher expectations of students. Families not only wanted students to become prepared for college, but also wanted them to become well-rounded by being responsible for all aspects of their lives and gaining the confidence needed to go to college and be successful. Regarding the classroom, families expect teachers to have good communication and be more accessible, the classroom sizes to be smaller, and for teachers to give more personal attention to each student. Families expected the facilities to be clean and for technology to be as modern as possible. One parent noted that cost gives a parent the feeling of expecting a return on investment in their child's education; since the parent buys in, the parent should be part of the team and be easily able to communicate with the team (staff, faculty, and administration).

Families enroll their students in Catholic high schools because they meet all these expectations. The literature suggested that, nationwide, families select Catholic high schools over the local public high schools due to the Catholic high school's importance of strong moral values, long-term enrollment, classroom experiences, faculty dedication, higher level of parent involvement, greater student achievement, more civically engaged students, and more selective college placement. The survey and interview results confirmed that the college admissions support and the dedication and support by faculty and staff were among the top reasons in the decision to attend a Catholic school in the San Francisco Bay Area. Also, a majority of families selected the following as important in their decision to attend Catholic high school: the teaching

of strong moral values (but not the Catholic religion in particular), the classroom experiences (extracurricular activities offered, size of school, technology use, peer-group quality), the greater focus on student achievement, and the robust opportunities for parents to participate in school activities. On the other hand, although literature suggested that long-term enrollment and more civically engaged students were both important reasons in the decision to attend Catholic high school, San Francisco Bay Area families thought otherwise. Most families believed that they would rather have their students meet new friends and have new classmates than stick with the same group of students as in their primary school. Also, although community service and civic engagement is valued in Catholic schools, it is not seen as a reason to attend, and is instead something the student is expected to become involved in, no matter what school they attend. Overall, San Francisco Bay Area families use similar reasoning to families nationwide, as the literature states, in their decision to send their students to Catholic high school.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION

Public schools in the San Francisco Bay Area are well funded, highly regarded, and free to attend. This leads to the question of why a family would send a student to a Catholic high school with high tuition and sometimes lower ratings than local public schools when there are so many other options available. The goal of this research was to understand why families choose Catholic high schools. The study is significant due to the recent increase in the number of Catholic school closures, decreasing school enrollments, and decreasing parish subsidies. This leads to the necessity of discovering and implementing new strategies in the admissions office and school to better recruit and retain students.

#### **Interpretation of Findings**

The top five reasons a family selects a Catholic high school in the San Francisco Bay Area are: college coursework preparation, the level of support offered by teachers, the dedicated faculty and staff, the teaching of strong moral values, and the level of support offered by non-teaching staff. Although some public schools may be more academically strenuous, Catholic high schools pride themselves on having lower teacher- and counselor-to-student ratios, in order to provide the students with as much support as possible. In addition, Catholic high school students are expected to go onto higher education and receive support in that process, compared to in public schools, in which only the students who seek the assistance will receive it. While not all attendees of Catholic high schools are Catholic, most families believed the teaching of strong moral values is important for their student's educational experience. The dedicated and supportive teachers and staff who instill strong moral values in their students are very important

to the Catholic high school experience, and the teachers and staff are passionate about helping their students find success and providing personal attention to each student.

Two reasons that were not at all important in the decision to attend a Catholic high school in the San Francisco Bay Area were the relationship with the Catholic elementary schools and attending high school with the same students as kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Although being with the same students in a classroom from kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade may be beneficial, as stated in the literature, most families want their students to create new friendships and have new opportunities when moving into a high school.

### **Implications**

Catholic high schools in the San Francisco Bay Area enroll thousands of students yearly, giving these students and families an educational experience that they see as superior, compared to the highly-ranked public schools in their communities. While these Catholic high schools might not be as academically strenuous as some of the local public schools, Catholic high schools have many key aspects that lead families to choose to attend these educational institutions. The findings of this research, confirming and denying studies in the literature that suggest why families select Catholic high schools nationwide, is a particularly important resource to Catholic high school admissions offices, while prospective families and all members of Catholic high schools can also find the study useful.

To use the findings appropriately, leaders in the Catholic high school admissions field must focus on the bigger picture of the benefits of Catholic high schools as perceived by the families who make the decision to send their students there, especially for the growing non-Catholic student body. The best leaders are the best learners, and admissions professionals need to understand the reasons why all types of families are enrolling at their schools and use this



information to improve marketing strategies and enroll future students at a larger scale.

### **Recommendations for Action**

As discovered through the survey results, families with Catholic high school students and/or graduates believe college coursework preparation, the level of support offered by teachers, the dedicated faculty and staff, the teaching of strong moral values, and the level of support offered by non-teaching staff are the most important factors in the decision to attend a Catholic high school. Through understanding what families find as most important when selecting a Catholic high school for a student to attend, admissions strategies can be created to better market these key aspects of Catholic high schools.

Catholic high schools are declining in enrollment and closing at an alarming rate. In the San Francisco Bay Area alone, one Catholic high school (St. Lawrence Academy) has closed in the last 5 years (closed in 2016), and many other Catholic high schools have seen stagnant or declining enrollment levels. Catholic high schools must innovate admissions strategies in order to see positive change in enrollment.

### **Marketing Strategies**

Admission offices, in conjunction with the school's marketing team, can use the key reasons why a family selects a Catholic high school for their student to attend to innovate current marketing and recruitment strategies. Admission offices can adapt advertising and create marketing to better showcase the opportunities at their school by focusing on numerous advantages expressed by this study's participants.

First, because the dedication of faculty and staff is very important to families in the decision to attend a Catholic high school, marketing can focus more on the faculty and staff of the school. This marketing can include the experiences of the teachers, their degrees, their tenure

at the specific school, their professional development experiences, the extracurricular activities they mentor, and their hobbies. Second, because the preparation for college coursework, college application support, and college placement are very important to families in the decision to attend a Catholic high school, marketing should emphasize the students' learning experiences that are preparing them for college, the offerings of the academic and college counseling departments, the colleges alumni are attending, and professions of alumni post-college graduation. Lastly, because the classroom experiences are very important to families in the decision to attend a Catholic high school, marketing should focus on the highlights of the Catholic high school's student experience. These can include the many options for extracurricular activities, the school's facilities, how technology is used in the classroom, and the peer-group quality offered at a Catholic high school.

### **Admissions Departments**

By innovating marketing and recruitment strategies, including all advertising, word-of-mouth, and admissions events, Catholic high schools can better bring to light the strengths of the school which then match to the aspects the prospective families believe are important in their family's Catholic high school experience. By improving marketing strategies, admissions offices can increase interest in the high school to two pools of families: those who know about the school but may be more interested in another Catholic or private independent high school, and those who can afford a private school education, but never researched further, because the public school's educational experience was satisfactory. With an increased pool of interested families, the school would likely receive more applications, and the admissions department would have the ability to accept more students, increasing the enrollment, or accept the same number of students, creating a more admissions-selective high school.

The results of this study can be disseminated to administration at each Catholic high school in the area, so admissions offices can consider the implications for their schools. In addition, the research can be submitted to national organizations such as the Association of Independent School Admissions Professionals and the National Association of Independent Schools.

### **Recommendations for Further Study**

This study's geographic area of focus was the San Francisco Bay Area, which encompasses nine counties. These nine counties are much different than most metros in the nation, due to the amount of high-quality public schools, the average price of a home, and what is distinguished as low-income for the area. In addition, this study only focused on Catholic high schools, not private schools in general, which have much higher tuition rates, leading to different kinds of educational experiences.

To expand on this research, other metropolitan areas that are similar to the San Francisco Bay Area could be studied, which could include Boston, Massachusetts; New York City, New York; or Seattle, Washington. In addition, the same study could be used with private independent schools, to understand if families decide to have their students attend those schools for the same reasons they attend Catholic high schools.

### **Conclusion**

Catholic high schools in the San Francisco Bay Area are declining in enrollment at a rapid rate because not only public schools are well-funded and academically strenuous, but also there are many different high schools and educational experiences to choose from, many at a lower price, including private independent, public, charter, online, homeschool, one-on-one, lab schools, etc. Literature cited here explains the benefits of Catholic high schools, and research in

the San Francisco Bay Area shows that most of the benefits described in the literature are accurate. Admissions leadership can benefit from the results of this study to innovate their own admissions strategies and to better connect the opportunities offered at the school to what families are looking for when selecting a Catholic high school. By modernizing admissions strategies, through innovating marketing, events, and what is being said through word-of-mouth, admissions offices can better connect with prospective families leading to an increased amount of inquiries, a larger applicant pool, and enrollment of a larger class of students.

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## APPENDIX A

### CATHOLIC SCHOOLS DIRECTORY

School name, principal (or head of school) name, city, county and additional information for each high school located in the following counties that make up the “San Francisco Bay Area”: Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Napa, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Solano, and Sonoma.

All information was found on each school’s public website.

High School Name	Principal Name	Email	City	County	Addl. Info.	School Population	Type
Carondelet High School	Bonnie Cotter	bcotter@carondeleths.org	Concord	Contra Costa	Female only	800	9-12
De La Salle High School	Mark DeMarco	demarcom@dlschs.org	Concord	Contra Costa	Male only	1050	9-12
Salesian High School	Marylou Flannery	mflannery@salesian.com	Richmond	Contra Costa	Co-ed	417	9-12
St. Joseph Notre Dame High School	Ken Jennings	kjennings@sjnd.org	Alameda	Alameda	Co-ed	406	9-12
St. Mary’s College High School	Dr. Peter Imperial	pimperial@stmchs.org	Berkeley	Alameda	Co-ed	630	9-12
Moreau Catholic High School	Elizabeth Guneratne	eguneratne@moreaucatholic.org	Hayward	Alameda	Co-ed	924	9-12
Bishop O’Dowd High School	James Childs	jchilds@bishopodowd.org	Oakland	Alameda	Co-ed	1174	9-12
Holy Names High School	Kendra Carr	kcarr@hnhsoakland.org.	Oakland	Alameda	Female Only	121	9-12
Cristo Rey De La Salle East Bay St. Elizabeth campus	Ana M. Hernandez	ahernandez@cristoreydelasalle.org	Oakland	Alameda	Co-ed	154	8-12
Marin Catholic High School	Chris Valdez	cvaldez@marincatholic.org	Kentfield	Marin	Co-ed	760	9-12
Woodside Priory School	Tim J. Molak	tmolak@prioryca.org	Menlo Park	San Mateo	Co-ed	375	6-12
Sacred Heart Schools Atherton	Jennie Whitcomb	jwhitcomb@shschools.org	Atherton	San Mateo	Co-ed	605	9-12
Notre Dame High School – Belmont	Maryann Osmond	mosmond@ndhsb.org	Belmont	San Mateo	Female only	440	9-12
Junipero Serra High School	Barry Thornton, Ed.D.	bthornton@serrahs.com	San Mateo	San Mateo	Male only	837	9-12
Mercy High School - Burlingame	Karen Hanrahan	khanrahan@mercyhsb.com	Burlingame	San Mateo	Female Only	362	9-12
Mercy High School – San Francisco	Sr. Carolyn Krohn	headofschool@mercyhs.org	San Francisco	San Francisco	Female Only	395	9-12
Archbishop Riordan High School	Timothy Reardon	treardon@riordanhhs.org	San Francisco	San Francisco	Male Only	680	9-12
Immaculate Conception Academy	Lisa Graham	lgraham@icacademy.org	San Francisco	San Francisco	Female Only	324	9-12
Sacred Heart Cathedral Preparatory	Gary Cannon	gcannon@shcp.edu	San Francisco	San Francisco	Co-ed	1325	9-12
Stuart Hall High School	Tony Farrell	tony.farrell@sacredsf.org	San Francisco	San Francisco	Male Only	205	9-12

St. Ignatius High School	Patrick Ruff	pruff@siprep.org	San Francisco	San Francisco	Co-ed	1476	9-12
Convent of the Sacred Heart High School	Rachel Simpson	rachel.simpson@sacredsf.org	San Francisco	San Francisco	Female Only	222	9-12
Archbishop Mitty High School	Kate Caputo	kcaputo@mitty.com	San Jose	Santa Clara	Co-ed	1735	9-12
Bellarmino College Preparatory	Kristina Luscher	kluscher@bcp.org	San Jose	Santa Clara	Male Only	1643	9-12
Cristo Rey San Jose High School	Joe Albers	Joe.albers @cristoreysj.org	San Jose	Santa Clara	Co-ed	250	9-12
Notre Dame High School – San Jose	Mary Beth Riley	mriley@ndsj.org	San Jose	Santa Clara	Female Only	639	9-12
Presentation High School	Katherine Georgiev	kgeorgiev@presentationhs.org	San Jose	Santa Clara	Female Only	750	9-12
St. Francis High School	Katie Teekell	katieteekell@sfhs.com	Mountain View	Santa Clara	Co-ed	1761	9-12
Justin-Siena High School	David Holquin	dholquin@justin-siena.org	Napa	Napa	Co-ed	580	9-12
Kolbe Academy & Trinity Preparatory School	J. Bertolini	jbortolini@kolbetrinity.org	Napa	Napa	Co-ed	104	PK-12
St. Vincent de Paul High School	Patrick Daly	pdaly@svhs-pet.org	Petaluma	Sonoma	Co-ed	288	9-12
Cardinal Newman High School	Laura Held	held@cardinalnewman.org	Santa Rosa	Sonoma	Co-ed	630	9-12
St. Patrick-St. Vincent High School	Coleen Martin	c.martin@spsv.org	Vallejo	Solano	Co-ed	476	9-12

## APPENDIX B

### SURVEY

<https://goo.gl/forms/9zPDq0rrkTU3ZZn23>

2/11/2019

Dissertation Questionnaire - Catholic High School Attendance

### Dissertation Questionnaire - Catholic High School Attendance

Please only complete this survey if you are a parent/guardian of a current student/alumni of a Catholic high school in the San Francisco Bay Area

Schools included:

Archbishop Mitty High School (San Jose)  
 Archbishop Riordan High School (San Francisco)  
 Bellarmine College Preparatory (San Jose)  
 Bishop O'Dowd High School (Oakland)  
 Cardinal Newman High School (Santa Rosa)  
 Carondelet High School (Concord)  
 Convent of the Sacred Heart High School (San Francisco)  
 Cristo Rey De La Salle East Bay - St. Elizabeth Campus (Oakland)  
 Cristo Rey San Jose High School (San Jose)  
 De La Salle High School (Concord)  
 Holly Names High School (Oakland)  
 Immaculate Conception Academy (San Francisco)  
 Junipero Serra High School (San Mateo)  
 Justin-Siena High School (Napa)  
 Kolbe Academy & Trinity Preparatory School (Napa)  
 Marin Catholic High School (Kentfield)  
 Mercy High School (Burlingame)  
 Mercy High School (San Francisco)  
 Moreau Catholic High School (Hayward)  
 Notre Dame High School (Belmont)  
 Notre Dame High School (San Jose)  
 Presentation High School (San Jose)  
 Sacred Heart Cathedral Preparatory (San Francisco)  
 Sacred Heart Schools (Atherton)  
 Salesian High School (Richmond)  
 St. Francis High School (Mountain View)  
 St. Lawrence Academy (Santa Clara, closed in 2016)  
 St. Ignatius High School (San Francisco)  
 St. Joseph of Notre Dame High School (Alameda)  
 St. Mary's College High School (Berkeley)  
 St. Patrick-St. Vincent High School (Vallejo)  
 St. Vincent de Paul High School (Petaluma)  
 Stuart Hall High School (San Francisco)  
 Woodside Priory School (Menlo Park)

\* Required

**University of New England**

**CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH**

**Project Title:** *Dissertation Questionnaire - Catholic High School Attendance*

**Principal Investigator(s):** *Rachel Shanley, Doctor of Education candidate, University of New England; Dr. Marilyn Newell, faculty advisor, University of New England*

**Introduction:**

- This survey will collect family demographic data, family member school attendance history, and reasons why families select Catholic high schools for their student(s).
- Please read this form. Your participation is voluntary.

**Why is this study being done?**

- The purpose of the study is to discover why families send their students to Catholic high schools when they have access to free, highly-rated, public high schools.

**Who will be in this study?**

- Any parent/guardian of a current student or graduate of the 33 Catholic high schools in the Bay Area is an invited participant.
- Parents/guardians who complete the survey but live in a neighborhood with a public school that is not rated a 9 or a 10 out of 10 will be removed from the data set.
- Over 100 participants will be involved.

**What will I be asked to do?**

- Parents will complete the survey based on their experience with the Catholic school(s) their child(ren) attend/attended.
- The survey will take no longer than 10 minutes to complete.
- Survey questions focused on the decision to attend Catholic school use a Likert scale
- You have the freedom to decline to answer any question.

**What are the possible risks of taking part in this study?**

- There are no foreseeable risks and/or discomforts that may result from participation.

**What are the possible benefits of taking part in this study?**

- There is no direct benefit to completing the survey.
- The indirect benefit of taking the survey is that the results will be used to enhance admissions strategies.

**What will it cost me?**

- No costs will be incurred as a result of participation in the research.

**How will my privacy be protected?**

- This survey is designed to be anonymous, unless the optional interview is selected. If the survey taker offers personal information for the optional interview, all information will remain confidential, and only the researcher will have the information.
  - Data will be stored in a password protected electronic format
  - The Google Form will not collect identifying information such as your name, email address, or IP address
  - Your responses will remain confidential.



- For participants who offer personal information for the interview:
  - If you provide contact information such as your phone number or email address, your survey responses may no longer be anonymous to the researcher
  - No names or identifying information will be included in any publications or presentations based on this data
  - Your responses to this survey will remain confidential.
- Please note that the Institutional Review Board may review the research records.
- Results of this survey will be shared via the dissertation paper.

**What are my rights as a research participant?**

- Your participation is voluntary. If you choose not to participate, it will not affect your current or future relations with the University
- You may skip or refuse to answer any question for any reason.
- You are free to withdraw from this research study at any time, for any reason. If you choose to withdraw from the research there will be no penalty to you and you will not lose any benefits that you are otherwise entitled to receive.

**What other options do I have?**

- If you are no longer interested in participating, please exit out of this survey.

**Whom may I contact with questions?**

- The researcher conducting this study is Rachel Shanley. For questions or more information concerning this research you may contact her 408-679-9115 or rshanley1@une.edu
- If you choose to participate in this research study and believe you may have suffered a research related injury, please contact Marylin Newell, PhD at 207-345-3100 or menewell@une.edu
- If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, you may call Olgun Guvench, M.D. Ph.D., Chair of the UNE Institutional Review Board at (207) 221-4171 or [irb@une.edu](mailto:irb@une.edu).

**Will I receive a copy of this consent form?**

- You may print/keep a copy of this consent form.

**I understand the above description of the research and the risks and benefits associated with my participation as a research subject. I understand that by proceeding with this survey I agree to take part in this research and do so voluntarily.**

**1. I have read the consent to participate**

*Mark only one oval.*

- and I will proceed with the survey *After the last question in this section, start this form over.*
- and I will not proceed with the survey *After the last question in this section, stop filling out this form.*

## Section 1: Family Demographics

---

**2. What is the name of your assigned PUBLIC high school? If you do not know, you can provide your zip code. \***

\_\_\_\_\_

**3. Household status:**

*Mark only one oval.*

- Single Parent
- 2 parent household
- Other gaurdian(s)
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**4. What yearly income bracket is your family in?**

Mark only one oval.

- Under \$50,000
- \$50,001 to \$100,000
- \$100,001 to \$150,000
- \$150,001 to \$200,000
- \$200,001 to \$250,000
- \$250,001 to \$300,000
- \$300,001 to \$350,000
- \$350,001 to \$400,000
- Over \$400,001

**5. Family Ethnicity**

Mark only one oval.

- Asian
- African American
- Hispanic or Latino
- Mixed Race
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- White

**6. Family Religious Beliefs**

Mark only one oval.

- Agnostic
- Baptist
- Buddhist
- Catholic
- Christian
- Hindu
- Jewish
- Lutheran
- Methodist
- Mormon
- Non-religious
- Presbyterian
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**7. Relationship to Place of Worship**

Mark only one oval.

- Weekly (or more) attendance
- Monthly attendance
- Major holiday attendance only
- Do not attend

**8. Parent Alumni Status**

Mark only one oval.

- 1 parent/guardian attended Catholic high school (1 parent in household)
- 1 parent/guardian attended Catholic high school (2 parents in household)
- 2 parents/guardians attended Catholic high school
- No parents/guardians attended Catholic high school

**Section 2: School Information**

---

Please complete the chart below for all of your children who are attending or have attended ANY 9-12 school (private, public, charter).

**9. What high school does/did your child attend?**

Check all that apply.

	Child 1	Child 2	Child 3	Child 4	Child 5	Child 6
Not Applicable	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Attends public school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Attends other private school not listed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Archbishop Mitty High School	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Archbishop Riordan High School	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bellarmino College Preparatory	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bishop O'Dowd High School	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cardinal Newman High School	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Carondelet High School	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Convent of the Sacred Heart High School	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cristo Rey De La Salle East Bay - St. Elizabeth Campus	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cristo Rey San Jose High School	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
De La Salle High School	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Holly Names High School	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Immaculate Conception Academy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Junipero Serra High School	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Justin-Siena High School	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Kolbe Academy & Trinity Preparatory School	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Marin Catholic High School	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mercy High School (Burlingame)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mercy High School (San Francisco)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Moreau Catholic High School	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Notre Dame High School (Belmont)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Notre Dame High School (San Jose)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Presentation High School	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sacred Heart Cathedral Preparatory	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sacred Heart Schools	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Salesian High School	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
St. Francis High School	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
St. Ignatius High School	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
St. Lawrence Academy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
St. Joseph of Notre Dame High School	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
St. Mary's College High School	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
St. Patrick-St. Vincent High School	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
St. Vincent de Paul High School	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stuart Hall High School	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Woodside Priory School	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**10. If you selected "attends public, charter, or other private" for any of your children, please list school name(s) below**

\_\_\_\_\_

**11. Of your children who attend/attended high school mentioned above, what elementary school(s) did they attend?**

Mark only one oval per row.

	Public K-8	Catholic K-8	Other Religious K-8	Mix of Public and Catholic/Other Religious K-8
Child 1	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Child 2	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Child 3	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Child 4	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Child 5	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Child 6	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

### Section 3: The Decision to Attend Catholic High School

Each topic below is a reason why families select Catholic high schools over public schools. Please select the answer that shows how important each topic is to your family when deciding to attend Catholic high school.

**12. Please explain the primary reasons (no more than three) your family selected a Catholic high school for your student(s).**

13. \*

Mark only one oval per row.

	1 - not at all important in my family's decision to attend a Catholic high school	2 - minimally important in my family's decision to attend a Catholic high school	3 - important in my family's decision to attend a Catholic high school	4 - very important in my family's decision to attend a Catholic high school	5 - top reason to attend in my family's decision to attend a Catholic high school
The size of the Catholic high school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The competitiveness of athletics	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The importance of religious studies courses	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The teaching of strong moral values	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The level of support offered by teachers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The level of support offered by non-teaching staff	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Dedicated faculty and staff	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The amount of extracurricular activities offered	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The amount of AP/Honors courses offered	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The school's student body diversity (racially & culturally)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The school's student body diversity (financially)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pressure to perform at higher levels	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The importance of high achievement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The school's facilities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The relationship with the Catholic elementary schools	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The peer-group quality	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Attending high school with the same students as K-8	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Technology use in the classroom	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Higher level of parent involvement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	1 - not at all important in my family's decision to attend a Catholic high school	2 - minimally important in my family's decision to attend a Catholic high school	3 - important in my family's decision to attend a Catholic high school	4 - very important in my family's decision to attend a Catholic high school	5 - top reason to attend in my family's decision to attend a Catholic high school
Civic engagement opportunities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Value of community service	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Prepared for college coursework	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Support in college applications and admissions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Attendance at more selective colleges	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Standardized test school averages	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Higher level of self-motivation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

#### Section 4: Optional Interview

If you would like to provide your personal information for a potential interview, please complete the questions below. This interview will allow for the researcher to ask additional questions based survey answers, to take a deeper dive into the decision to attend Catholic high school.

**14. I would like to participate in an interview: \***

Mark only one oval.

Yes

No After the last question in this section, stop filling out this form.

**15. First and Last Name:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**16. Phone Number:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**17. Email:**

\_\_\_\_\_

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## APPENDIX C

### SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- You mentioned the primary reasons your family selected a Catholic high school for your student(s) were X, X, and X. Can you provide more detail on these reasons?
  - Which of the three reasons was the top reason to attend?
- You ranked X as 1 which was “not at all important in my family’s decision to attend a Catholic high school”. Can you provide the reasoning on selecting this ranking?
- Were there any reasons why your family selected a Catholic high school to attend that were not mentioned in the survey?
- Were there any reasons to attend mentioned in the survey that you believe are stronger in your local public high school?
- How important was the Catholic high school’s admissions events (Open House, Shadow Visit, 8<sup>th</sup> grade class visit, etc.) on your family’s decision to attend a specific Catholic high school, and/or a Catholic high school over the local public school?

## APPENDIX D

### PUBLIC (INCLUDING CHARTER) SCHOOLS IN BAY AREA

Note: Adult/continuation schools have been removed

Note: Unranked schools have been removed (6 total)

School Name	Student Body	Score	County	School District
Acalanes High School	1403	10	Contra Costa	Acalanes Union High School District
Albany High School	1208	10	Alameda	Albany USD
Ruth Asawa San Francisco School of the Arts	614	10	San Francisco	San Francisco Public Schools
Burlingame High School	1339	10	San Mateo	San Mateo UHSD
California High School	2667	10	Contra Costa	San Ramon Valley Unified School District
Campolindo High School	1300	10	Contra Costa	Acalanes Union High School District
Cupertino High School	2233	10	Santa Clara	Fremont UHSD
Dougherty Valley High School	2759	10	Contra Costa	San Ramon Valley Unified School District
Dr. TJ Owens Gilroy Early College Academy	255	10	Santa Clara	Gilroy USD
Evergreen Valley High School	2809	10	Santa Clara	East Side UHSD
Foothill High School	2085	10	Alameda	Pleasanton USD
Leland High School	1807	10	Santa Clara	San Jose USD
Los Gatos High School	1975	10	Santa Clara	Los Gatos - Saratoga Joint UHSD
Lowell High School	2685	10	San Francisco	San Francisco Public Schools
Lynbrook High School	1766	10	Santa Clara	Fremont UHSD
Mills High School	1198	10	San Mateo	San Mateo UHSD
Miramonte High School	1232	10	Contra Costa	Acalanes Union High School District
Mission San Jose High School	2069	10	Alameda	Fremont USD
Monta Vista High School	2322	10	Santa Clara	Fremont UHSD
Monte Vista High School	2348	10	Contra Costa	San Ramon Valley Unified School District
Palo Alto High School	1993	10	Santa Clara	Palo Alto USD
Piedmont High School	800	10	Alameda	Piedmont USD
Piedmont Hills High School	2178	10	Santa Clara	East Side UHSD
Saratoga High School	1305	10	Santa Clara	Los Gatos - Saratoga Joint UHSD
Technology High School	342	10	Sonoma	Cotati-Rohnert Park Unified School District
Alameda High School	1682	9	Alameda	Alameda USD
Alameda Science and Technology Institute	175	9	Alameda	Alameda USD

Amador Valley High School	2628	9	Alameda	Pleasanton USD
American High School	2093	9	Alameda	Fremont USD
American Indian Public High School	229	9	Alameda	Oakland USD
Analy High School	1273	9	Sonoma	West Sonoma County High School District
Aragon High School	1473	9	San Mateo	San Mateo UHSD
Benicia High School	1662	9	Solano	Benicia USD
Carlmont High School	2147	9	San Mateo	Sequoia UHSD
Dublin High School	2252	9	Alameda	Dublin USD
Granada High School	2035	9	Alameda	Livermore SD
Henry M. Gunn High School	1918	9	Santa Clara	Palo Alto USD
Heritage High School	2561	9	Contra Costa	Liberty Union High School District
Homestead High School	2367	9	Santa Clara	Fremont UHSD
Irvington High School	2253	9	Alameda	Fremont USD
KIPP King Collegiate High School	559	9	Alameda	San Lorenzo USD
KIPP San Jose Collegiate	484	9	Santa Clara	East Side UHSD
KIPP Summit Academy	416	9	Alameda	San Lorenzo USD
Las Lomas High School	1528	9	Contra Costa	Acalanes Union High School District
Leigh High School	1654	9	Santa Clara	Campbell UHSD
Los Altos High School	2039	9	Santa Clara	Mountain View-Los Altos UHSD
Mountain View High School	1857	9	Santa Clara	Mountain View-Los Altos UHSD
Northgate High School	1599	9	Contra Costa	Mt. Diablo Unified School District
Oakland Charter High	403	9	Alameda	Oakland USD
Redwood High School	1770	9	Marin	Tamalpais UHSD
San Ramon Valley High School	2064	9	Contra Costa	San Ramon Valley Unified School District
Sir Francis Drake	1077	9	Marin	Tamalpais UHSD
Summit Preparatory Charter School	412	9	San Mateo	Sequoia UHSD
Tamalpais High School	1419	9	Marin	Tamalpais UHSD
University Preparatory Academy	593	9	Santa Clara	Santa Clara County Office of Education
Abraham Lincoln High School	2046	8	San Francisco	San Francisco Public Schools
Adrian C. Wilcox High School	1977	8	Santa Clara	Santa Clara USD
Alhambra High School	1179	8	Contra Costa	Martinez Unified School District
Ann Sobrato High School	1477	8	Santa Clara	Morgan Hill USD
Berkeley High School	3113	8	Alameda	Berkeley Public Schools



Branham High School	1514	8	Santa Clara	Campbell UHSD
Buckingham Charter	454	8	Solano	Vacaville USD
Casa Grande High School	1683	8	Sonoma	Petaluma Joint Union High School District
Castro Valley High School	2917	8	Alameda	Castro Valley USD
Clayton Valley Charter High School	1984	8	Contra Costa	Mt. Diablo Unified School District
College Park High School	2013	8	Contra Costa	Mt. Diablo Unified School District
Credo High School	175	8	Sonoma	Cotati-Rohnert Park Unified School District
Dozier-Libbey Medical High School	685	8	Contra Costa	Antioch Unified School District
El Camino High School	1387	8	San Mateo	South San Francisco USD
El Molino High School	585	8	Sonoma	West Sonoma County High School District
Gateway High School	482	8	San Francisco	San Francisco Public Schools
George Washington High School	2054	8	San Francisco	San Francisco Public Schools
Half Moon Bay High School	1020	8	San Mateo	Cabrillo USD
Hillsdale High School	1375	8	San Mateo	San Mateo UHSD
James Logan High School	3793	8	Alameda	New Haven USD
KIPP SF College Prep	251	8	San Francisco	San Francisco Public Schools
Leadership Public Schools, Hayward	533	8	Alameda	Hayward Union School District
Livermore High School	1794	8	Alameda	Livermore SD
Livermore Valley Charter Preparatory	424	8	Alameda	Livermore School District
Maria Carrillo High School	1603	8	Sonoma	Santa Rosa City High School District
Menlo-Atherton High School	2275	8	San Mateo	Sequoia UHSD
Milpitas High School	3134	8	Santa Clara	Milpitas USD
Novato High School	1296	8	Marin	Novato USD
Oceana High School	622	8	San Mateo	Jefferson UHSD
Petaluma High School	1354	8	Sonoma	Petaluma Joint Union High School District
Pioneer High School	1574	8	Santa Clara	San Jose USD
Raoul Wallenberg High School	636	8	San Francisco	San Francisco Public Schools
San Marin High School	1076	8	Marin	Novato USD
San Mateo High School	1615	8	San Mateo	San Mateo UHSD
Santa Clara High School	1971	8	Santa Clara	Santa Clara USD
Santa Teresa High School	2227	8	Santa Clara	East Side UHSD
Silver Creek High School	2458	8	Santa Clara	East Side UHSD
St. Helena	475	8	Napa	St. Helena USD

Summit Public Schools - Tahoma	275	8	Santa Clara	Santa Clara County Office of Education
Terra Nova High School	1012	8	San Mateo	Jefferson UHSD
Vacaville	1987	8	Solano	Vacaville USD
Washington High School	1822	8	Alameda	Fremont USD
Westmont High School	1541	8	Santa Clara	Campbell UHSD
Woodside High School	1781	8	San Mateo	Sequoia UHSD
Abraham Lincoln High School		7	Santa Clara	San Jose USD
American Canyon		7	Napa	Napa Valley USD
Arroyo High School		7	Alameda	San Lorenzo USD
Balboa High School		7	San Francisco	San Francisco Public Schools
Capuchino High School		7	San Mateo	San Mateo UHSD
Christopher High School		7	Santa Clara	Gilroy USD
City Arts and Tech High School		7	San Francisco	San Francisco Public Schools
East Bay Innovation Academy		7	Alameda	Oakland USD
Fremont High School		7	Santa Clara	Fremont UHSD
Galileo High School		7	San Francisco	San Francisco Public Schools
Hercules High School		7	Contra Costa	West Contra Costa Unified School District
Independence High School		7	Santa Clara	East Side UHSD
Liberty High School		7	Contra Costa	Liberty Union High School District
Live Oak High School		7	Santa Clara	Morgan Hill USD
MIT Academy		7	Solano	Vallejo City USD
Napa		7	Napa	Napa Valley USD
Oakland School for the Arts		7	Alameda	Oakland USD
Oakland Technical		7	Alameda	Oakland USD
Orchard View School		7	Sonoma	Twin Hills Union School District
Prospect High School		7	Santa Clara	Campbell UHSD
Rodriguez		7	Solano	Fairfield-Suisun USD
Sequoia High School		7	San Mateo	Sequoia UHSD
Sonoma Valley High School		7	Sonoma	Sonoma Valley Unified School District
Summit Public School - Shasta		7	San Mateo	Jefferson UHSD
Summit Public Schools - Denali		7	Santa Clara	Santa Clara County Office of Education
Summit Public Schools – Rainier		7	Santa Clara	East Side UHSD
Terra Linda		7	Marin	San Rafael City Schools

Tomales		7	Marin	Shoreline USD
Vanden		7	Solano	Travis USD
Vintage		7	Napa	Napa Valley USD
Westmoor High School		7	San Mateo	Jefferson UHSD
Windsor High School		7	Sonoma	Windsor Unified School District
Andrew Hill High School		6	Santa Clara	East Side UHSD
Armijo		6	Solano	Fairfield-Suisun USD
Aspire Lionel Wilson College Preparatory Academy		6	Alameda	Oakland USD
Calistoga		6	Napa	Calistoga Joint USD
Concord High School		6	Contra Costa	Mt. Diablo Unified School District
Deer Valley High School		6	Contra Costa	Antioch Unified School District
Del Mar High School		6	Santa Clara	Campbell UHSD
Design Tech High School		6	San Mateo	San Mateo UHSD
Dixon		6	Solano	Dixon USD
Encinal High School		6	Alameda	Alameda USD
Freedom High School		6	Contra Costa	Liberty Union High School District
Healdsburg High School		6	Sonoma	Healdsburg Unified School District
John F. Kennedy High School		6	Alameda	Fremont USD
John Swett High School		6	Contra Costa	John Swett Unified School District
Leadership Public Schools, Oakland		6	Alameda	Oakland USD
Lighthouse Community Charter High School		6	Alameda	Oakland USD
Montgomery High School		6	Sonoma	Santa Rosa City High School District
New Technology		6	Napa	Napa Valley USD
Newark Memorial High School		6	Alameda	Newark Unified School District
Oak Grove High School		6	Santa Clara	East Side UHSD
Pescadero High School		6	San Mateo	La Honda-Pescadero USD
Rancho Cotate High School		6	Sonoma	Cotati-Rohnert Park Unified School District
Roseland Collegiate Prep		6	Sonoma	Roseland School District
Roseland University Prep		6	Sonoma	Roseland School District
Santa Rosa High School		6	Sonoma	Santa Rosa City High School District
Will C Wood		6	Solano	Vacaville USD
Willow Glen High School		6	Santa Clara	San Jose USD
Arise High School		5	Alameda	Oakland USD

Bay Area Technology School		5	Alameda	Oakland USD
El Cerrito High School		5	Contra Costa	West Contra Costa Unified School District
Gilroy High School		5	Santa Clara	Gilroy USD
Gunderson High School		5	Santa Clara	San Jose USD
Jefferson High School		5	San Mateo	Jefferson UHSD
Latino College Preparatory Academy		5	Santa Clara	East Side UHSD
Latino College Preparatory		5	Santa Clara	East Side UHSD
Mount Eden High School		5	Alameda	Hayward USD
Mt. Pleasant High School		5	Santa Clara	East Side UHSD
Oakland Unity High		5	Alameda	Oakland USD
Phillip and Sala Burton High School		5	San Francisco	San Francisco Public Schools
San Rafael		5	Marin	San Rafael City Schools
South San Francisco High School		5	San Mateo	South San Francisco USD
The Academy - San Francisco		5	San Francisco	San Francisco Public Schools
Yerba Buena High School		5	Santa Clara	East Side UHSD
ACE Charter San Jose		4	Santa Clara	East Side UHSD
Bethel		4	Solano	Vallejo City USD
California Virtual Academy @ San Mateo		4	San Mateo	Jefferson ESD
Cloverdale High School		4	Sonoma	Cloverdale Unified School District
Coliseum College Prep Academy		4	Alameda	Oakland USD
Downtown College Prep - El Primero		4	Santa Clara	San Jose USD
Fairfield		4	Solano	Fairfield-Suisun USD
Hayward High School		4	Alameda	Hayward USD
James Lick High School		4	Santa Clara	East Side UHSD
Leadership High School		4	San Francisco	San Francisco Public Schools
Life Academy		4	Alameda	Oakland USD
Mission High School		4	San Francisco	San Francisco Public Schools
Northwest Prep at Piner-Olivet		4	Sonoma	Piner-Olivet Union School District
Oakland High		4	Alameda	Oakland USD
Oakland Military Institute College Preparatory Academy		4	Alameda	Oakland USD
Pathways Charter School		4	Sonoma	Harmony Union School District
Piner High School		4	Sonoma	Santa Rosa City High School District
Pinole Valley High School		4	Contra Costa	West Contra Costa Unified School District

Pittsburg High School		4	Contra Costa	Pittsburg Unified School District
Skyline High School		4	Alameda	Oakland USD
Tennyson High School		4	Alameda	Hayward USD
William C Overfelt High School		4	Santa Clara	East Side UHSD
Antioch High School		3	Contra Costa	Antioch Unified School District
California Virtual Academy @ Sonoma		3	Sonoma	Liberty School District
DeAnza High School		3	Contra Costa	West Contra Costa Unified School District
Downtown College Prep - Alum Rock		3	Santa Clara	Santa Clara County Office of Education
Elsie Allen High School		3	Sonoma	Santa Rosa City High School District
Geyserville New Tech Academy		3	Sonoma	Geyserville Unified School District
Independence High School		3	San Francisco	San Francisco Public Schools
John O'Connell High School		3	San Francisco	San Francisco Public Schools
June Jordan School for Equity		3	San Francisco	San Francisco Public Schools
Kennedy High School		3	Contra Costa	West Contra Costa Unified School District
Madison park Business and Art Academy		3	Alameda	Oakland USD
Matt Garcia Career & College Academy		3	Solano	Fairfield-Suisun USD
Mcclymonds High School		3	Alameda	Oakland USD
Mount Diablo High School		3	Contra Costa	Mt. Diablo Unified School District
San Jose High Academy		3	Santa Clara	San Jose USD
San Leandro High School		3	Alameda	San Leandro USD
San Lorenzo High School		3	Alameda	San Lorenzo USD
Thurgood Marshall High School		3	San Francisco	San Francisco Public Schools
Vallejo		3	Solano	Vallejo City USD
Ygnacio Valley High School		3	Contra Costa	Mt. Diablo Unified School District
Castlemont High School		2	Alameda	Oakland USD
East Bay Arts High School		2	Alameda	San Lorenzo USD
East Palo Alto Academy		2	San Mateo	Sequoia UHSD
Luis Valdez Leadership Academy		2	Santa Clara	East Side UHSD
Metwest High School		2	Alameda	Oakland USD
Oakland International		2	Alameda	Oakland USD
Pivot Charter School North Bay		2	Sonoma	Oak Grove Union School District
Richmond High School		2	Contra Costa	West Contra Costa Unified School District
S.F. International High School		2	San Francisco	San Francisco Public Schools

Berkeley Technology Academy		1	Alameda	Berkeley Public Schools
Gateway to College Academy		1	Sonoma	Petaluma Joint Union High School District
Legacy		1	Napa	Napa Valley USD
Ralph Bunche Academy		1	Alameda	Oakland USD

## APPENDIX E

### University of New England

#### CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH

**Project Title:** *Dissertation Questionnaire - Catholic High School Attendance*

**Principal Investigator(s):** *Rachel Shanley, Doctor of Education candidate, University of New England; Dr. Marylin Newell, faculty advisor, University of New England*

#### **Introduction:**

- This survey will collect family demographic data, family member school attendance history, and reasons why families select Catholic high schools for their student(s).
- Please read this form. Your participation is voluntary.

#### **Why is this study being done?**

- The purpose of the study is to discover why families send their students to Catholic high schools when they have access to free, highly-rated, public high schools.

#### **Who will be in this study?**

- Any parent/guardian of a current student or graduate of the 33 Catholic high schools in the Bay Area is an invited participant.
- Parents/guardians who complete the survey but live in a neighborhood with a public school that is not rated a 9 or a 10 out of 10 will be removed from the data set.
- Over 100 participants will be involved.

#### **What will I be asked to do?**

- Parents will complete the survey based on their experience with the Catholic school(s) their child(ren) attend/attended.
- The survey will take no longer than 10 minutes to complete.
- Survey questions focused on the decision to attend Catholic school use a Likert scale
- You have the freedom to decline to answer any question.

#### **What are the possible risks of taking part in this study?**

- There are no foreseeable risks and/or discomforts that may result from participation.

#### **What are the possible benefits of taking part in this study?**

- There is no direct benefit to completing the survey.
- The indirect benefit of taking the survey is that the results will be used to enhance admissions strategies.

#### **What will it cost me?**

- No costs will be incurred as a result of participation in the research.

#### **How will my privacy be protected?**

- This survey is designed to be anonymous, unless the optional interview is selected. If the survey taker offers personal information for the optional interview, all information will remain confidential, and only the researcher will have the information.
  - Data will be stored in a password protected electronic format
  - The Google Form will not collect identifying information such as your name, email address, or IP address
  - Your responses will remain confidential.
- For participants who offer personal information for the interview:
  - If you provide contact information such as your phone number or email address, your survey responses may no longer be anonymous to the researcher
  - No names or identifying information will be included in any publications or presentations based on this data
  - Your responses to this survey will remain confidential.
- Please note that the Institutional Review Board may review the research records.
- Results of this survey will be shared via the dissertation paper.

#### **What are my rights as a research participant?**

- Your participation is voluntary. If you choose not to participate, it will not affect your current or future relations with the University
- You may skip or refuse to answer any question for any reason.
- You are free to withdraw from this research study at any time, for any reason. If you choose to withdraw from the research there will be no penalty to you and you will not lose any benefits that you are otherwise entitled to receive.

#### **What other options do I have?**

- If you are no longer interested in participating, please exit out of this survey.

#### **Whom may I contact with questions?**

- The researcher conducting this study is Rachel Shanley. For questions or more information concerning this research you may contact her 408-679-9115 or [rshanley1@une.edu](mailto:rshanley1@une.edu)
- If you choose to participate in this research study and believe you may have suffered a research related injury, please contact Marilyn Newell, PhD at 207-345-3100 or [menewell@une.edu](mailto:menewell@une.edu)
- If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, you may call Olgun Guvench, M.D. Ph.D., Chair of the UNE Institutional Review Board at (207) 221-4171 or [irb@une.edu](mailto:irb@une.edu).

#### **Will I receive a copy of this consent form?**

- You may print/keep a copy of this consent form.

**I understand the above description of the research and the risks and benefits associated with my participation as a research subject. I understand that by proceeding with this survey I agree to take part in this research and do so voluntarily.**



## APPENDIX F

### INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

Dissertation Research Support – Why Families Attend Catholic Schools

Dear Catholic High School Administrator,

My name is Rachel Shanley, and I am a Doctor of Education candidate at the University of New England. My dissertation topic is “Why Families Attend Catholic High Schools in Neighborhoods with Highly-Ranked Public Schools”. My interest in this topic is the result of over two years of experience in the admissions office at Notre Dame High School in Belmont, California, and I hope that your schools can consider helping me with my research process. The research process has been approved by the University of New England’s Institutional Review Board, and more information about this can be provided if needed.

The data will be collected through online surveys, which will be completed through a Google Form and can be found here <https://goo.gl/forms/9zPDq0rrkTU3ZZn23>. The survey collects demographic information and then dives into questions about why families are selecting Catholic High Schools for their students to attend, over well-ranked public schools in the local communities.

To collect as many survey responses as possible, I am requesting that your school consider assisting me in recruiting participants by sending the invitation (below) to participate to all current (and past if possible) parents or including it in your next parent newsletter.

Thank you for taking the time to read this message, and I hope you can consider helping me collect data for this very timely topic in our field. If you have any questions, feel free to connect with me by responding to this email, or by calling (408) 679-9115.

Invitation:

Parents, please assist a Doctoral student with her dissertation on “Why Families Attend Catholic High Schools in Neighborhoods with Highly-Ranked Public Schools” by completing the following survey <https://goo.gl/forms/9zPDq0rrkTU3ZZn23>. The survey should take no longer than 10 minutes. For more information about the study, click on the survey link. After learning about the study, you may choose to continue with the survey or exit and not participate. Thank you for your assistance with my dissertation.