Perceptions of Catholic identity and the role of leadership in a parish elementary school: A case study

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PERCEPTIONS OF CATHOLIC IDENTITY AND THE ROLE OF LEADERSHIP IN A
PARISH ELEMENTARY SCHOOL: A CASE

by
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PERCEPTIONS OF CATHOLIC IDENTITY AND THE ROLE OF LEADERSHIP IN A
PARISH ELEMENTARY SCHOOL: A CASE STUDY

By

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Abstract

This qualitative case study explored stakeholders' perceptions of Catholic identity in one suburban parish school in Massachusetts. Over a three-month period, data was collected from semi-structured interviews with the pastor, principal and five teachers, an online parent survey, document analysis, and observations of school events. Five major themes emerged from the data about Catholic identity: the role of service, the connection between the parish and the school community, the role of prayer and spiritual formation, the focus on academic excellence and its tension with inclusivity, and the principal-pastor relationship. All participants also voiced concerns about how the school's Catholic identity would be affected by the transfer of the pastor and the formation of a new parish collaborative. While the responses of participants reflected many of the characteristics of Catholic identity identified in the literature, service to others and the spiritual leadership of the principal were most closely identified with a strong Catholic identity. The presence of the pastor was also linked to Catholic identity, although participants desired more involvement of the pastor in the school. Finally, no one associated this Catholic school with the evangelizing arm of the Church. Recommendations for further research include the effect of the parish collaboratives on parish schools, the role of the Catholic school in the "New Evangelization," and the role of special education and service in Catholic identity.

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Dedication

To my parents, Mike and Irene Collins, who gave me life, love and faith.

To my aunts, Marguerite and Rita, who through their kindness and generosity, nurtured

me in faith.

And to Michael, Matthew and Conor, proof of God's love, and to whom I pass on the

faith that is so precious to me.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

According to statistics from the National Catholic Educational Association, the Catholic school population across the United States has declined since 1969, currently educating only 2.1 million students compared to the 5.2 million fifty years ago (McDonald & Schultz, 2013). These students are being educated in 7,685 schools compared to 13,000 a half-century ago (McDonald & Shultz, 2013). In the 2012-2013 academic year, 148 Catholic schools nationwide have closed. The most severely impacted with closures have been elementary schools, with enrollment declining by over 38%. Catholic schools are less available now than they were fifty years ago, and fewer Catholics are sending their children to them because they are conflicted about their own faith, the schools' value, expense, or even the need for a Catholic education. The future of Catholic elementary schools in the United States is, and has been, at a critical juncture for several years.

In the 2011-2012 academic year, 10% of all students in the United States attended a private school. Of this number 42.9% were enrolled in Catholic schools (CAPE, 2013). Research on faith in the United States asserts that one third of U. S. adults (31.4%) report they were raised as Catholics. However, of this group only 23.9% are still affiliated with the Church, and only 37% of the Post-Vatican II Generation (born between 1961 and 1981) and 23% of the Millennial Generation (born 1982 or later) attended a Catholic elementary school themselves (Pew Research, 2011). Unlike their Pre-Vatican II parents, these Catholics opt to send their children to public schools, private schools, charter schools or to home school them. They no longer need to send their children to Catholic

school to avoid the influences of a Protestant theology, nor do bishops demand that children be enrolled in a parish school. Without religious working in many of these parish elementary schools, it becomes a necessity to hire qualified lay people, whose salaries and health care benefits are passed on to parents through the rising cost of tuition. The financial burden of gifting one's family with a Catholic education becomes another important factor in Catholic parental decisions regarding schooling (Lockwood, 2014).

The benefits of a Catholic education have been studied and its students have demonstrated higher academic achievement than their public school counterparts, particularly students from lower socio economic backgrounds (Bryk, Lee, & Holland, 1993; Greeley, 1982). Although these studies are thirty years old, more current data also appears to support higher achievement in Catholic elementary schools. *The National Center of Educational Statistics* (NAEP, 2013) reported that students attending Catholic elementary schools in Grade 4 and Grade 8 scored higher than their public school counterparts in Reading and in Math. Statistics from the Archdiocese of Boston demonstrate that for the last five years Catholic school students in Grades 2 – 8 have performed well above the national average in standardized testing (RCAB, 2014).

Some researchers believe that those who attended Catholic schools regularly practice their faith, are more civic minded, tolerant of others, and have been a source of leadership in the Church and society. It seems that Catholic schools may help to preserve a Catholic culture, and, at both the primary and secondary levels, provide an excellent vehicle for promoting Catholicism and evangelization. Some report that Catholic schools have also been the source of the majority of religious vocations (Greeley & Rossi, 1966; Convey, 1992; CARA, 2012).

CARA's survey for young men, age fourteen and over, who have considered priesthood illustrates that one in four of those who have attended a Catholic school have considered becoming a priest or brother. Only about one in ten of those who did not attend a Catholic educational institution indicate that they felt a call to religious life. This data appears to demonstrate that Catholic schools have an impact on the majority of religious vocations (Greeley & Rossi, 1966; Convey, 1992; CARA, 2012). Religious men and women have contributed to society in the areas of service, specifically education, health care services, and other areas of social services for the poor and the most vulnerable of our society.

> One of the major challenges for some Bishops' Conferences will be to urgently
> redefine their relations with the laity, in order to cater to the Gospel's
> proclamation. Bishops must urgently rediscover how, among different modes of
> evangelization, an important place must be given to the religious formation of
> new generations, and schools are a precious instrument for this service.
> (CCE, 2014)

Finally, Catholic schools also appear to have an impact on the practice of the faith as adults. An estimated eight in ten Americans raised Catholic and educated in Catholic schools, elementary or secondary, identified themselves as Catholics in adulthood (Pew Research Center, 2011). Although this does not necessarily mean they are practicing weekly, they still affiliate their faith with Catholicism. The Church community working with the wider community must do everything possible to make Catholic education accessible to all people, so that no child is denied the opportunity for an education in Faith, which in turn "nurtures the soul of a nation" (Pope Benedict VI, 2008).

Although Catholic schools appear to produce excellent outcomes, and seem to impact the Catholic Church itself in a positive way, they are closing for a number of reasons, including finances, demographic shifts, rising operational costs, the failure to recognize the value of Catholic education, perception of Catholic identity and the lack of strong leadership (DeFiore, Convey, & Schuttloffel, 2009; DeFiore, 2011; Baxter, 2011)

With the future of Catholic elementary education in the United States uncertain, and the issues surrounding this future complex, administrators in Catholic schools seek to understand what steps can be taken to insure their viability. Decades of research and study by scholars into declining enrollments in Catholic schools in the United States point to a loss in Catholic identity in both Catholic elementary and secondary schools as one contributing factor related to this decline (McLaughlin, O'Keefe, & O'Keeffe, 1996; Youniss ,Convey & McLellan, 2005; Convey, 2011). This continuing downward trend threatens the future existence of Catholic education in this country, affecting not only students and families, but also society and the future of the Catholic Church. In February of 2014, Pope Francis described Catholic education as one of the most important challenges to the Church with regard to evangelization. He expressed the importance of dialogue in Catholic schools.

> Effectively, Catholic schools and universities are attended by many students who are not Christian or do not believe. Catholic educational institutions offer to all an approach to education that has as its aim the full development of the person, which responds to the right of every person to access knowledge. ... The profound changes that have led to the ever wider diffusion of multicultural societies require those who work in the school or university sector to be involved in educational

itineraries involving comparison and dialogue, with a courageous and innovative fidelity that enables Catholic identity to encounter the various 'souls' of multicultural society (Pope Francis, 2014).

The heart and soul of Catholic education is this Catholic identity to which Pope Francis refers. It is rooted in the Gospel and transmitted as part of the culture of the school. Understanding Catholic identity and how it is perceived can be understood first and foremost in its historical context.

Historical Context of Parish Schools

In the Gospel according to St. Matthew (28:19), Jesus gave His followers the directive to teach all nations. For over 2,000 years, Catholic education has been a priority of the Church. It supports and continues the Church's evangelizing mission. Understanding the history of Catholic schools in the United States provides a backdrop for studying the phenomenon of Catholic identity, and the transition from religious leadership to lay leadership.

As Catholic immigrants began to populate the United States during the 19th century, it became clear that nurturing and maintaining the faith for future generations would be a challenge in a country that was Protestant and intolerant of Catholics and their perceived allegiance to a foreign entity, Rome. The Third Plenary Council of Baltimore in 1884 adopted as its motto, "Every Catholic Child in a Catholic School." Unprecedented growth led to its highest recorded enrollment in 1965. Although many Catholic children did not attend Catholic schools, at its height, 12% of all students in the United States were educated in Catholic schools (McDonald and Schultz, 2013).

However, it should be noted that never more than 50% of Catholic children attended Catholic schools.

The American Catholic Church embraced the parish school and Catholic education. The rapid growth of these schools and a strong foundation of faith was the result of the efforts of the clergy to establish schools, the commitment of religious orders of men and women to staff them, and parents who embraced the teachings of the Church and the goals of a faith-filled education.

Catholic education was tremendously impacted by the changes experienced after Vatican II, most notably a shift to the laity in leadership and in the classroom. In fact, a decline in the number of religious prompted many schools to close their doors (Kealey & Kealey, 2003). The cost of hiring lay teachers to replace the religious brothers and sisters impacted parents with a rising cost of tuition to cover salaries and benefits. In addition, the presence of religious brothers and sisters within the parish community contributed to its vibrancy. The celibate lifestyle also allowed for religious to be present for all parish and school activities and functions. This presence is currently a challenge for married lay people with families, who do not reside on the school and parish property. Some have also pointed to a loss of Catholic identity and a deficiency of catechesis in some Catholic schools due to a loss of religious men and women who were formed in the faith.

Catholic identity was once taken for granted by virtue of the presence of men and women religious. During the 1960s a decline in vocations forced the Church to rely on lay people to both teach and eventually assume leadership roles in Catholic schools. Questions regarding Catholic identity in Catholic schools surfaced, and public discourse

has included the opinions of the church hierarchy, theologians, philosophers, and lay people.

What is Catholic Identity?

According to the teachings of the Church, the Catholic identity of a school is determined by its ability to provide a sound education rooted in the Gospel message of Jesus Christ. It must also provide an education that allows all children to reach their God-given potential and to think critically, so that they will contribute in a positive way to their Church, their community, their country, and their world (USCCB, 2005).

As recently as 2008, Pope Benedict XVI met with Catholic educators in Washington, D.C. to define Catholic identity in Catholic schools, and to challenge Catholic school leaders to ensure Catholicity in their schools. He noted that the Catholic faith should be tangible in our institutions, given expression through liturgy and the sacraments, through prayer, acts of charity and concern for justice and respect for God's creation. As Pope Benedict noted, "Only in this way do we really bear witness to the meaning of who we are and what we uphold" (Pope Benedict XVI, 2008, p. 1).

Within this context, young men and women will then have the foundation to live morally in a complex world, basing their lives on the Gospel message, the Person of Christ, and the rich traditions and liturgical practices of our faith. According to the bishops, it is this "Catholic identity" that makes the schools serve the dignity of the human person and prepares them for their future lives as members of the Church and society (USCCB, 2005).

Last year, the Catholic Church celebrated the 50th Anniversary of the beginning of Vatican II. Emphasis placed on the role of the laity in the Church and on the power of the

Holy Spirit to guide and direct the Church indicates that the voices of lay educators, researchers and philosophers should also be heard with regard to questions surrounding Catholic identity in Catholic schools.

The work of researchers, theologians, and lay philosophers reveal striking similarities with the Church hierarchy in identifying the characteristics of Catholic identity in Catholic schools. Common themes emerge from their writings, which include the dignity of the human person created in the image and likeness of God, which results in the integral formation of mind, body, spirit, and the religious and moral formation of the child (Bryk et al., 1996; McLaughlin et al., 1996; Kealey, 1994; Grace, 2002). In addition, curriculum reflects this belief in God and the integration of knowledge and faith (Groome, 1998; O'Keefe, 1998). Still others have described Catholic schools as "functional communities" with value consistencies and close relationships (Coleman, Hoffer, & Kilgore, 1982).

Both ecclesiastical authorities and lay scholars consider relationships to be at the heart of Catholic education, and subsequently at the heart of its identity (CCE, 1997; Cook & Simonds, 2011). It is out of these life-giving relationships that the mission priorities of the school emerge. Relationships with God, others, learning, local and world communities then become the pillars of Catholic identity (Hunt, Joseph, & Nuzzi, 2004; DeFiore et al., 2009; Cook & Simonds, 2011).

Recently, the *National Standards and Benchmarks for Effective Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools* (Ozar & Weitzel- O'Neill, 2012) was published as the result of collaborative work between the Andrew M. Greeley Center for Catholic Education (formerly the Center for Catholic School Effectiveness), School of Education

at Loyola University, Chicago and the Roche Center for Catholic Education, Lynch School of Education, Boston College. This document delineates the components of Catholic identity based on characteristics, which mirror the bishops' statement on *Catholic Schools in the Threshold of the Third* Millennium and other critical Church documents. This work summarizes the nine defining characteristics found in the literature and delineates them as follows: 1) centered in the person of Jesus Christ; 2) contributing to the evangelizing mission of the Church; 3) distinguished by excellence; 4) committed to educate the whole child; 5) steeped in a Catholic worldview; 6) sustained by Catholic witness; 7) shaped by communion and community; 8) accessible to all students; and 9) established by the expressed authority of the bishop.

The Role of Catholic School Principals in Promoting Catholic Identity

Some empirical studies have suggested that Catholic identity is represented not only by signs and symbols but is also manifested in the relationships among various constituencies (Murphy, 2001; Whisman, 2008) and that there exists a relationship between Catholic identity, school leadership and vitality (Hobbie, Convey, Schuttloffel, 2010).

Prior to Vatican II, vowed religious dedicated their lives to the Church, specifically to educating children. Their religious formation was carried into the daily life of the school, and became almost synonymous with Catholic identity. Ideally, lay leaders recognize their responsibilities to pass on the faith and build community. They also recognize the need for spiritual support, and the tensions that arise as a result of their personal and professional lives (Arthur, 2012). Without the philosophical and theological

training that is part of the formation of religious sisters, brothers and priests, many lay leaders have struggled in their efforts to foster their school's Catholic identity.

The bishops point to leadership and educators as role models for affecting the climate and the Catholic identity of the educational institution. In the Church document *Sharing the Light of Faith* (USCCB, 1977), the role of the principal as a faith leader responsible for transmitting Catholic identity is explained. The Catholic school principal plays a critical role in realizing the goals of Catholic education. While specifics of this role vary according to circumstances, certain functions relating to catechesis are basic. Principals foster community among faculty and students. They understand the Catholic school as part of larger communities, religious and secular (USCCB, 1977).

Many experts in the field of Catholic education agree that strong lay leadership is needed to promote strong Catholic identity (DeFiore et al., 2009; O'Keefe cited in Hunt, Oldenski & Wallace, 2000, p. 178). Lay people now represent 96% of all staff in Catholic schools (McDonald & Schultz, 2013). Heft (1991) notes that the sharp increase in the number of lay principals has created the need to prepare leaders "who are capable of institutionalizing Catholic traditions and doctrinal emphasis" (p. 5).

Research exploring Catholic school culture stresses the importance of the formation and development of those who will serve as spiritual/faith leaders (Arthur, 2012; Coughlan, 2009). It confirms the need for Catholic school administrators to not only be adept in areas associated with education and management, but have a foundation in an added spiritual dimension of leadership that requires them to preserve Catholic identity, develop Catholic culture, foster faith development, build community, and assure

the philosophy of Catholic education is implemented (Bryk et al., 1993; Hunt et al., 2000; Schuttloffel, 1999; Sergiovanni, 2005).

Many researchers have provided a contrast between the role of Catholic school principals and public school principals. Although both value academic excellence and achievement, Catholic school principals must be concerned about this spiritual dimension in leadership. Spirituality manifests itself in the mission, the values, language, curriculum and relationships within the community.

Bryk et al. (1993) conducted initial studies of academic achievement in Catholic high schools. They associated four elements with academic achievement in these schools including a delimited technical core, a communal organization, a decentralized governance, and an inspirational theology. Manno's (1985) findings supported the work of Bryk et al. with regard to governance and autonomy, and further asserted that academic achievement was strongly connected to the social environment of the school, fostering social intimacy and support for students. He also noted that Catholic educators view their profession as a vocation, a service to God and others. Muccigrosso (1996) wrote extensively on the spiritual leadership of Catholic school principals. Collectively, their contributions speak to the environment of a Catholic school in part produced by the spiritual leadership of the principal, the vocation of its teachers, and the relationships among members of the community.

The Role of the Pastor in Parish-Based Catholic Schools

Although the principal is the academic leader, by Canon law the Catholic parochial school is a ministry of the parish and as such is under the leadership of the canonical leader, who is appointed by the (Arch) Bishop and is often the pastor of the

parish which hosts the school. Belmonte and Cranston (2009) indicate that principals and pastors must see each other as equal partners with regard to school leadership. The support and presence of the pastor is needed to uphold and support the Catholic identity of the school. A committed pastor is the key to a successful parish school. He sends a signal to the entire parish community that the school is an important mission of the Church and parish. His attitude and involvement affects the morale of the principal and staff (DeFiore et al., 2009).

Together, pastor and principal are responsible for the spiritual growth of the young people in their care. Their positive working relationship directly affects the education and formation of the students (Arthur, 2012). Working in collaboration, they promote the Catholic identity of the school.

Lack of support from the pastor, issues surrounding trust and role clarification between pastor and principal, and finally, in some cases, the complete non-involvement of the pastor have been identified as issues in leadership within Catholic schools (Brock & Fraser, 2001). These issues in leadership are then perceived as contributing to a weak Catholic identity. Conversely, some pastors have noted that there is no point in supporting a school with a weak Catholic identity (Nuzzi, Frabutt, & Holter, 2009).

Creating an environment and culture that expresses the unique Catholic identity of a Catholic parish elementary school is the responsibility of pastors and predominately lay principals. Faith formation of principals at one time was assured due to the spiritual formation of the sisters, brothers, and priests in leadership roles. In past generations, Catholic elementary schools have been part of the foundation, which fostered vocations to the priesthood and religious life. Half of all priests ordained in 2014 attended a

Catholic elementary school (CARA, 2014). One third of them began discerning a vocation in elementary school and were encouraged by a parish priest (CARA, 2014). With a decline in enrollment in Catholic elementary schools, fostering future vocations may become more of a challenge. Researching the role of leadership teams and their contributions to perceptions of Catholic identity is valuable to the understanding of the viability of Catholic education.

Statement of the Research Problem and Questions

This study explored how various stakeholders perceive Catholic identity, and the role leadership plays in fostering that identity in one parish school. It examined how programs or actions on the part of leadership, including the principal and the pastor, have influenced Catholic identity. Finally, it attempted to determine how (if at all) leadership is perceived to be shared between the pastor and principal and the influence of that relationship on Catholic identity in the school community.

The following research questions guided the study:

1. How is Catholic identity perceived in a parish elementary school by various stakeholder groups (e.g. teachers, staff, parents, the principal, the pastor, and/or the school board)?

2. What activities and initiatives in this school are perceived to have contributed to the development of Catholic identity?

3. What is the relationship between the school principal and the pastor and their role in the development of Catholic identity?

Significance of the Study

A study of stakeholder perceptions of Catholic identity and leadership by the principal and pastor in these efforts is significant for several reasons. Strong Catholic identity has been linked to Catholic school viability. Examining the perceptions of the participants will be of interest to all parties interested in sustainability of these schools. Secondly, identifying those elements of school culture that might contribute to a strong Catholic identity will improve understanding of how Catholic identity is expressed. Finally, with the shift from religious-led to lay-led schools, learning how the relationship of the pastor and principal may contribute to a strong Catholic identity should be of interest to both researchers and practitioners in Catholic education.

Overview of the Dissertation

Chapter 1 includes a description of the focus of the study and the research questions used to investigate Catholic identity in a parish elementary school. This chapter also contains a rationale for the study and its significance. Chapter 2 presents a review of the literature including the history of Catholic schools, definitions of Catholic identity, and research on the role of leadership by pastor and principal in a parish school. Chapter 3 discusses the research methodology, the design of the study, data gathering and analysis procedures, and the limitations of the study. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study, and Chapter 5 includes a discussion of the findings, implications for practice, and recommendations for future study.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

"Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations…teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you."
(Matthew 28:19-20)

Catholic education has been a priority of the Church since given this directive by Jesus Christ. It supports the evangelizing mission of the Church and ideally requires the full commitment and support of popes, bishops, pastors, and the faithful. Catholic identity is the heart and soul of all Catholic educational institutions. This review of the literature examines definitions of Catholic identity from the perspective of Church teaching and also as it has been interpreted by scholars and researchers for the purpose of its educational ministry. Current research examining Catholic identity, how it is perceived, and how it is maintained and transmitted to the community by the school's leadership was also reviewed.

What characteristics, markers, and distinctions make a school Catholic? What permeates the culture of a Catholic school, and what is it's lived reality? The debate and need for clarification on this issue of identity have been raging since Vatican II. Catholic schools have faced many challenges since then, and exploring the research and literature pertaining to Catholic identity is timely. It is also essential for those concerned with the viability of Catholic elementary schools. Examining how Catholic identity is perceived in one parish elementary school may assist in framing best practices for other Catholic schools.

Finally, the role of leadership in Catholic education is a key component, for it is the principal and the pastor in a parish school who are charged with insuring that Catholic

identity is present in a parish elementary school. The strength of Catholic identity relies and depends upon the strength and example of leadership and so is worthy of research, study, and discussion. This review of the literature begins with an historical overview of the development of Catholic education to provide a framework to understand the challenges that leaders have faced historically in promoting and strengthening Catholic identity in these schools.

Catholic Education: A History in the United States

Catholic education in North America dates back to at least 1606, when the Franciscans opened a school in St. Augustine, Florida with the intent to teach children Christian faith, reading and writing. A short time later, the Jesuits began instructing Native Americans in New York and Montreal (Ciriello, 1993).

English colonists had begun their own publicly supported schools. However, since the colonies were overwhelmingly Protestant, the rudimentary education had a heavily fundamentalist, anti-Catholic curriculum. The first parochial school, St. Mary's, began in 1782 in Philadelphia. Ten years later, the nation's first bishop, John Carroll of Baltimore, wrote his first pastoral letter stating that it was necessary for the young to receive a Catholic education in order that they would grow in the faith (Walch, 2003).

In 1802 a group of parents approached the pastor of St. Peter Church in New York City and requested a parish school be opened for their children. A lay board of trustees, who governed the parish, determined that the parish would be able to handle the additional financial cost of a school. St. Peter School opened with a predominately lay faculty. It was the money contributed every Sunday by lay people in the offertory

collections, which built the present-day system of Catholic schools (Ciriello, 1993; Walch, 2003).

The Sisters of Charity, founded by Elizabeth Ann Seton, became the first religious community founded in the United States. With the guidance of Bishop Carroll, these women opened a school in Baltimore in 1808. With the funds they earned from this school they opened a free school. Many religious communities followed this template of using tuition collected from a boarding school as a source of funds to open and operate a free school for the poor and the children of European immigrants (Ciriello, 1993; Walch, 2003).

During the middle of the 19th century, Catholic interest in education grew along with the increasing Catholic immigration. Unable to reform American public schools because of their anti-Catholic bias, Catholics began to open their own schools. Various religious orders of women came from Ireland and other Catholic countries to educate the children of recent immigrants (Hunt et al., 2004).

The First Plenary Council of Baltimore in 1852 and the Second Council in 1866 urged every Catholic parish in the nation to establish a school. Finally, the Third Council in 1884 demanded that all Catholic parishes open schools within two years. The bishops stated that any pastor negligent in doing so would be removed from his parish. All Catholic parents were bound by the bishops to send their children to Catholic school. Between 1830 and 1859, thirty-nine religious communities were established to staff schools in the United States (Hunt et al., 2004).

From their inception, Catholic parish schools were established in conjunction with parishes and controlled by the parish priest. They were a means of preserving religious

culture between parish, school, and home, and a means of protecting the faithful from outside influences (Ciriello, 1993). By 1900, an estimated 3,500 parochial schools existed in the United States. By 1920, there were 6,551 elementary schools, enrolling almost 2 million students, who were taught by over 40,000 teachers.

In 1929 Pope Pius XI authored his encyclical, "The Christian Education of Youth." Communism and fascism were asserting control over education in Europe. The Pope declared that although parents were the primary educators of their children, this education must be given with respect to the teachings of the Church. He also held that although the state had rights in schooling of the youth, these rights were subservient to the more fundamental rights of parents and the Church (Buetow, 1985; Hunt et al., 2004). He declared that the goal of education was the eternal destiny of all, and that ideally "all Catholic children should be educated in a Catholic school." "There can be no true education which is not wholly directed towards man's last end," and "There can be no ideally perfect education which is not Christian education." (Pope Pius XI, 1929, pg. 6).

Between the years of 1940 and 1959, Catholic schools became overcrowded and dioceses could not keep up with the demand to provide a Catholic education for all Catholic children (Hunt et al., 2004; Walch, 2003). By the 1960s, 4.5 million elementary school pupils were being taught in Catholic schools across the country. The convening of the Second Vatican Council (Vatican II) brought continued support for Catholic education by the hierarchy. Catholic school enrollment reached an all-time high of 5.6 million pupils in 1965 (Hunt et al., 2004; Walch, 2003).

As the Second Vatican Council concluded, however, diverse interpretations of the Council's documents provoked a crisis within the Church, and subsequently a crisis for

Catholic schools. There was a rapid exodus of priests and religious from their vocations. In 1966, there were 181,421 sisters in the United States. Today, their numbers are below 50,000 (CARA, 2014). These religious had provided leadership, and a strong base for Catholic identity in the schools due to their religious formation.

In 1961, the Supreme Court ruled that religion must be removed from public schools, specifically the recitation of any prayer, even non-denominational prayer. During the 1960s challenges to the viability and stability of Catholic schools resulted from developments in four key areas: declining student enrollment, fewer teaching religious, lack of availability for all Catholic families, and the reduced financial contributions of the laity. Cultural changes in the Church and America combined with shifting demographics to create a "perfect storm" that left Church leadership overwhelmed, bewildered, and ill-equipped to respond effectively (DeFiore, 2011).

During times of institutional change and confusion, literature about identity flourishes (Hunt et al., 2004). The years following Vatican II created such an environment. Religious had left their orders, affluent Catholics had moved to the suburbs where they sent their children to good public schools, and Catholic schools in the inner cities had begun educating an increasing number of non-Catholic students. Catholic culture, which had been established through lifelong habits, practices, rituals, and a "womb-to-tomb" experience of faith was changing (O'Keefe et al., 2004).

These developments fueled a discussion about the nature of a Catholic school. Beginning in the late 1960s and 1970s concern about Catholic identity in Catholic colleges and universities initiated programs in Catholic school leadership for lay administration. The work of theologians, philosophers and sociologists including the

Congregation of Catholic Education (1977), Bryk, Lee & Holland (1993), and Coleman (1987) helped focus attention on the question of Catholic identity and its very definition. These writers concluded that Catholic identity is the culture within the school that provides a faith community.

A second-wave of school closures began as the new millennium dawned. The economic recession of the early 2000s, combined with the clergy sexual abuse scandal, caused great harm to this already fragile structure. Negative perceptions of the Church influenced enrollments and school and Church finances. Declining enrollments and rising tuitions resulted in more closures (DeFiore, 2011).

In recent years, research has been aimed at determining what factors contribute to declining enrollment and subsequent closures of Catholic schools. De Fiore et al. (2009) identified several factors for the closures including: a) changing demographics; b) Catholic immigrant populations; c) weak leadership and weak Catholic identity in perception or reality; d) poor academics in perception or reality; e) reduced family finances due to a weak economy, which makes affording a Catholic school tuition impossible; f) strong competition from public and charter schools, which do not charge tuition; and g) the devaluing of Catholic education by parents, who are basically unchurched, and did not attend a Catholic school themselves.

Defining Catholic Identity

Examining how parish schools maintain Catholic identity with lay people in leadership positions and in the classroom could provide valuable information for those who see these schools through the lens of evangelization, sociology or education. With lay people in leadership positions, and without the mentoring of religious overseeing the

spirituality and lived reality of Catholicism within the school, how can Catholic identity be insured? Since the intentional and unintentional changes brought about by Vatican II, public, international discussions have raged over this question. Concisely defining Catholic identity has become a challenge, and examining it in a school setting equally as challenging.

How Church Documents Discuss Catholic Education

Since 1965, eight influential documents have been written addressing Catholic education by the Congregation for Catholic Education or the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. In an attempt to clarify the contours of Catholic identity, Catholic church leaders have stressed that Catholic identity not only rests on catechesis and formation, but also requires intellectual work and cultural engagement that helps explain how the church leaders came to this conclusion (Hunt et al., 2004). Each church document that related to Catholic Education has expanded upon or clarified the previous one.

The first document to be discussed, *The Declaration on Christian Education* (Pope Paul VI, 1965), was one of sixteen documents emanating from the Second Vatican Council. The hierarchy of the Catholic Church reminded parents of their duty to take advantage of the assistance provided by Catholic schools in the education of their children. The document also reiterated that within each Catholic school an atmosphere must permeate the educational setting that is reflective of the Gospel spirit of freedom and charity.

The decline in religious vocations and doubts over identity and mission that caused Catholic enrollment to plummet in the late 1960s and into the 1970s prompted the

Catholic bishops to respond with their pastoral document *To Teach As Jesus Did* (NCCB, 1972). In this second document, the bishops clearly cited three characteristics of Catholic education: gospel message, community, and service. They presented a rationale for Catholic schools, and described how Catholic identity is interpreted and lived through community.

The third document, *The Catholic School* (CCE, 1977), identified the Catholic school as, "fundamentally a synthesis of culture and faith, and a synthesis of faith and life, integrating all the different aspects of human knowledge through the subjects taught, in the light of the Gospel, and the virtues characteristic of the Christian" (#37). This document served to again isolate and distinguish the essential components separating a Catholic school from all others, in essence its identity. "It is precisely in the Gospel of Christ taking root in the minds and the hearts of the faithful, that the Catholic school finds its definition…" (Sec. 9) Inviting young people to form a relationship with Jesus Christ, and assisting them in discovering the role of faith in one's life and the lens through which they view knowledge and life was identified as the teaching mission of the Church.

The fourth document, *Sharing the Light of Faith: National Catechetical Directory for Catholics of the United States* (USCCB, 1977), expanded the purpose of Christian education beyond the three previous dimensions to include a fourth, worship. "It is widely recognized that Catholic schools are to be communities of faith in which the Christian message, the experience of community, worship, and social concern are integrated into the total experience of students, their parents, and members of the faculty" (Sec. 9).

Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith (CCE, 1982), the fifth document, reinforced the notion of an integrated education of faith and knowledge. "It promotes human dignity and genuine human relationships, and prepares the way for opening oneself to the truth that is Christ." (#55). This document was the first to explicitly note the role of lay teachers and administrators in a Catholic school.

The sixth document, *In Support of Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools* (USCCB, 1990), asserted that a Catholic education gives students the foundation to live morally in a complex world, basing their lives on the Gospel message, the Person of Christ, and the rich traditions and liturgical practices of our faith. The bishops reaffirmed their belief that "These schools afford the fullest and best opportunity to realize the fourfold purpose of Christian education, namely to provide an atmosphere in which the Gospel message is proclaimed, community in Christ is experienced, service to our sisters and brothers is the norm, and thanksgiving and worship of our God is cultivated." (p. 2)

The seventh document, *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium,* which was issued by the Congregation for Catholic Education in 1997, gathered the knowledge to date about Catholic identity. It proved to be very influential for Catholic schools, and supported the contributions they make to the overall educational mission of the Church. They share in the mission of evangelization, and where they exist, the Church exists. The document concludes by stating that "the work of the school is irreplaceable, and the investment of human and material resources in the school becomes a prophetic choice." (CCE, 1997, #21)

In addition, the document underscores that Christianity is about relationships, whether personal relationships with God or relationships with each other. In a Catholic

school ideally these relationships are nurtured, and students are brought to an understanding of how these relationships intersect with faith, culture, learning and life. Finally, this document states that Catholics are members of a global church that transcends national boundaries and requires us to live in solidarity and justice with the peoples of the world (CCE, 1997).

One final document, *In Renewing Our Commitment to Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools in the Third Millennium* (USCCB, 2005), reiterated the bishops' support of Catholic schools, and their importance in evangelization. "Catholic schools afford the fullest and best opportunity to realize the fourfold purpose of Christian education, namely, to provide an atmosphere in which the Gospel message is proclaimed, community in Christ is experienced, service to our sisters and brothers is the norm, and thanksgiving and worship of God is cultivated." (p. 2)

Together these Church documents illustrate the importance of Catholic schools first and foremost as a means of evangelization through which the Gospel message is carried to believers and to non-believers. Primarily these schools are Catholic in the formation of the whole child, emphasizing the spiritual dimension of one's relationship with God and others, supported by a community of believers, and a curriculum that is authentically Catholic in both its methodology and content. This, then, is the identity of the Catholic school through the eyes of the Church. Finally, it is the responsibility of teachers and administrators to ensure the Catholic climate, environment, or identity of the school. They are "called" to this work as a vocation, not simply a profession.

Early Studies on Catholic Schools and Catholic Identity

In their seminal book *Catholic Schools and the Common Good*, Bryk et al. (1993) suggested factors that explained the success of Catholic high schools: the belief that all students were capable of learning, high expectations and equal opportunities for all, and simultaneously providing needed support to meet the curriculum demands. They concluded that Catholic schools are different from public schools because of their commitment to Christian personalism, which permeates the culture of the Catholic school and contributes to its identity.

Kealey (1994) defined identity as a community of believers witnessing to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, recognizing the living Christ in each individual, and challenging him or her to grow spiritually, academically and emotionally. The characteristics that form the identity of the Catholic school have been based on embracing the meaning of the human person and of human life, the integral formation of mind, body and spirit, and the religious and moral formation of each child (McLaughlin et al., 1996; Flynn, 1985).

Catholic identity in a school mirrors the faith and practice of Catholicism. Haldane asserts that it is the passing of doctrine and faith to the young (as cited in McLaughlin et al., 1996, p. 135). O'Keefe (1998) offers seven Catholic values that should be reflected in a Catholic education: Lex orandi, lex credenda (The law of praying is the law of believing); the school is a community of memory; et verbum caro factum est (And the Word became flesh); the best decisions are made on the local level; everyone is my brother or sister; the Catholic Church is catholic; and always keep in mind the end for which something is created. Archbishop J. Michael Miller, Secretary of the Congregation of Catholic Education (Miller, 2006) describes the five characteristics of Catholic identity

as inspired by a supernatural vision, founded on Catholic anthropology, animated by communion and community, imbued with a Catholic worldview through its curriculum, and sustained by Gospel witness. More recent research on the views of pastors (Convey, 1999) suggests that clergy see the main purpose of a Catholic school as the creation of a faith community where teachings and practices are taught and modeled.

The early research of Greeley and Rossi (1966) speculated that religious impact of Catholic education is limited to those who come from religious families. In their sociological study, *The Education of American Catholics,* the researchers interviewed and surveyed a representative national sample of 2,753 American Catholics and sent an additional 1,000 questionnaires to the homes of other American Catholics. The respondents had attended school between 1910 and 1960. Their findings would seem to suggest that Catholic identity in schools does not matter as much as the religious views of parents and the socioeconomic class to which the families belonged. This conclusion was widely disputed by Catholic educators and critics.

A later study conducted by Greeley, McCready, and McCourt (1976), published as *Catholic Schools in a Declining Church,* reached a different conclusion. Lengthy interviews with a large national sample of 927 adult Catholics indicated that religious schooling was more important in the practice of the faith than parental support and practice in predicting adult religious. This research conducted at the conclusion of Vatican II suggested that Catholic schools are significant to the mission of the Catholic Church by keeping the faith alive. They found that although Catholic schools were experiencing declining enrollments, Catholics had a high regard for parish schools. In an

afterword, Greeley assigned the responsibility for the decline in Catholic education to a failure of leadership in the Church.

Providing for the needs, particularly the educational needs, of the inner-city poor, diverse ethnic groups, and vulnerable students in our society spawned research beginning in 1977 with a study commissioned by the United States Catholic Conference (Vitullo-Martin, 1979). The research demonstrated that as a result of changing demographics in the major cities of the United States, Catholic schools were now serving a large number of African-Americans and non-Catholics. The argument was made that although Catholic schools were not educating Catholics in large numbers, they were indeed providing a service to society. It spoke to the Church's mission of evangelization and service to those in need.

The research of O'Keefe and Evans (2004) and O'Keefe et al. (2004) illuminated the fact that support of inner-city Catholic schools is consistent with the teachings of the Church in solidarity with the poor and disadvantaged. Both McLaren and Oldeneski, influenced by the work of Paulo Freire (as cited in Grace, 2002), asserted that liberation theology has an important place in inner-city Catholic schools. In essence, Catholic schools form faith communities with an emphasis on making the world more humane, just and caring.

In a large survey study of student achievement in 1,015 public, private, and Catholic schools, Coleman et al. (1982) attributed the success of Catholic school students to structured curriculum, high expectations, strong discipline, and a safe environment. In a similar study, Raudenbush and Bryk (1986) found that this "Catholic School effect"

was more influential when comparing economically disadvantaged students from Catholic schools with economically disadvantaged students from public schools.

In a second study that involved the original schools, Coleman and Hoffer (1987) administered follow-up surveys and questionnaires to graduates and current seniors. They concluded that Catholic schools had more positive academic outcomes than the public and private schools, particularly in reading, vocabulary, math and writing. Coleman and Hoffer also determined that students in Catholic schools had lower drop-out rates and more students who completed higher-education courses.

In their second study, Coleman and Hoffer (1987) also identified Catholic schools as "functional communities" that share common values and exposure to a particular environment. They recognized that close relationships exist between students, and those whom they know and to whom they relate. The values children learn at school are the values of the adults within the community (Coleman & Hoffer, 1987).

These researchers explain that the strong relationships created in a Catholic school community create "social capital" which appears to contribute to academic achievement. The data from these studies give the impression that the empowerment of individuals develops as a result of the close relationships between people. The uniqueness of the Catholic school is that it is possibly a faith community within a learning community.

An authentic understanding of Catholic identity implies a lived experience of the word "catholic" within the school. The Church's document on Catholic schools, *The Declaration on Christian Education* (Pope Paul VI, 1965), articulated a new approach to the principle of openness in Catholic schools. In particular, it pointed out the need for

Catholic schools to respond to the poor, those without help and affection of family, and those who do not have faith.

Traditionally, Catholic schooling had always been concerned with the poor and indigent (Buteow, 1988; O'Keefe, 1998). Student diversity has increased dramatically in American Catholic schools during the last 40 years. In 2013 racially diverse students constitute 19.6% of the Catholic school enrollment with an additional student population (14.3%) who are Hispanic/Latino (McDonald & Schultz, 2013). A study of 60 diverse Catholic schools in England (Grace, 2002) determined that external racism did not affect the internal culture of the schools or the relationships within them. Both students and teachers overwhelmingly noted a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural harmony in the schools.

Cibulka, O'Brien, and Zewe (1982) evaluated 54 Catholic Title I schools with over a 70% minority population. Data from 4,000 parents, 300 teachers and 50 principals found that the schools were not selective and enrolled a large percentage from low-income and single – parent families, 50% of whom were non-Catholic. Parents chose these schools for their superior education and their responsiveness to student needs. Subsequent documents by the Church have also emphasized social justice issues. The bishops have stated their commitment for all to access Catholic life and to integrate students with disabilities (USCCB, 1978; USCCB, 1997; USCCB, 2005). A dissertation study of Catholic schools in Kansas, which sought to examine services to disabled students, found that 97.2% of the 115 Catholic schools in Kansas enrolled students with disabilities including those on the Autism Spectrum, and students with Down's Syndrome (Huppe, 2011). However, there is a gap in the literature regarding how well Catholic schools service students with disabilities and students from non-traditional homes.

Recent Empirical Studies on Catholic Identity

More recently, researchers have set out to investigate Catholic identity itself. In a qualitative case study similar to the present study, Murphy (2001) sought to examine how Catholic identity evidenced itself in a 21st century Catholic school. Through semi-structured interviews with various stakeholders, including the pastor, the principal, the vice-principal, and four lay teachers, Catholic identity was studied through the role of lay leadership.

The visible indicators of Catholicism, particularly Mass and prayer, were viewed through the relationships between the pastor, principal, teachers, parish and school. The findings of this case study illustrate that Catholic identity at St. Rita's School was defined not only by signs and symbols, but also through the relationships of faculty, staff and leadership to students and families, and was expressed in community, particularly at Eucharistic celebrations.

A survey conducted by NCEA in 2011, in conjunction with a national conference on Catholic identity in Catholic elementary and secondary schools, asked 3,300 Catholic administrators and teachers about their understanding of the meaning of Catholic identity. The results of the study concluded that teachers and administrators felt that the most important indicators of Catholic identity in a Catholic school were first and foremost its faith community or culture (Convey, 2012).

Sultmann and Brown (2011) sought to identify Catholic identity by interviewing and surveying 73 participants in eight schools, including teachers and parents. Participants were asked to state which programs or events made their school life different from a public school. Five pillars of identity (i.e. faith, learning, leadership, formation

and community) were gleaned from Church documents on Catholic education to develop the questionnaire and interview questions. These researchers concluded from their findings that Catholic identity was dynamic and connected in a "circle of understanding." From their research they identified a sixth pillar entitled "Integration" which signified how the five pillars interacted together.

Hobbie et al. (2010) administered a survey based on Ciriello's framework, which identifies three types of leadership including managerial, spiritual and educational and discovered a relationship between Catholic identity, leadership and a prediction of the school's vitality. The participants in this study were a random sampling of 1,225 teachers from 142 Catholic elementary schools across the country. The 29-item instrument used to measure Catholic identity included such items as institutional integrity, collegial leadership, and principal mindfulness, or consciously making decisions based on the Gospel. Teachers who perceived that their schools had a strong Catholic identity and a principal that safeguarded the mission also felt that the school had a high level of vitality. Implications for practice indicated that members of the Catholic school community must ensure Catholic identity for the vitality of their school.

The work of DeFiore et al. (2009) discuss viability and its relationship to leadership, Catholic school identity, a strong academic program, financial stability, healthy enrollment and strategic planning. Dialogue concerning the importance of a strong Catholic identity, as well as its importance for determining a school's viability, have prompted several attempts to develop frameworks to assess Catholic identity in elementary schools.

Frameworks and Standards for Measuring Catholic Identity

Baeke and Bouwens have developed a framework as part of the Australian research project, "Measuring and Enhancing Catholic School Identity." This project has been ongoing since 2006 at the Centre for Academic Teacher Training at the Leuven Faculty of Theology located in Belgium (Pollefeyt & Bouwens, 2010). Three theoretical models were developed (i.e. the Post-Critical Belief Scale, the Melbourne Scale and the Victoria Scale) as research instruments in an attempt to quantify the Catholic identity of Australian Catholic schools.

These scales provide a composite picture for school leaders to provide a short and long term strategy to develop Catholic identity in their schools. The Melbourne Scale maps the options a school can take to respond to a detraditionalized and pluralized cultural context. The Victoria Scale is a questionnaire for teachers and administrators constructed out of two dimensions, Catholic Identity and Solidarity. Because so few students in Catholic schools in Australia identify as practicing Catholics the Post-Critical Scale maps attitudes of students toward religious belief in general. These instruments suggest that Catholic identity is based on dialogue with plurality and a symbolic understanding of religion. This rather complex framework is now being field-tested in both elementary and secondary schools in Australia. Currently no empirical data exists based on this model.

In the United States, The Catholic School Standards Project recently developed the *National Standards and Benchmarks for Effective Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools* (Ozar & Weitzel-O'Neill, 2012). One of the major stated goals was to spark research related to Catholic school effectiveness. Section One of this document

defines the characteristics of Catholic Schools based on the Holy See's teaching on Catholic schools as compiled by Archbishop J. Michael Miller, CSB and statements by Pope Benedict XVI and the American bishops.

These standards suggest that Catholic schools have certain characteristics: 1) they are centered in the person of Jesus Christ; 2) contribute to the evangelizing mission of the Catholic Church; 3) distinguished by excellence; 4) committed to educate the whole child; 5) steeped in a Catholic worldview; 6) sustained by Gospel witness; 7) shaped by Communion and community; 8) are accessible to all students; and 9) established by the expressed authority of the Bishop. The document continues by stating that there are four standards by which we measure the Catholic identity of Catholic schools. First, these schools are guided by a clear mission. Secondly, they must provide an excellent academic program. Thirdly, they provide opportunities for student faith formation, liturgical and communal prayer and Christian service outside of class time. Finally, they provide opportunities for adult faith formation.

Toward A Framework for Understanding Catholic Identity

To provide a potential framework for this research study, common elements of Catholic identity were identified and aligned through three lenses, which include the perspectives of Church documents and the writings of a lay theologian and two Catholic educators. Specifically the themes from *Catholic Schools on the Threshold of the Third Millenium* (1997) were aligned with Groome's eight characteristics of a Catholic approach to learning and Cook and Simonds' (2011) framework of relationships to evaluate and study the Catholic identity or charism in a Catholic school. To fully understand how these three approaches relate, they will first be examined separately.

Catholic Identity and The Church

Catholic Schools on the Threshold of the Third Millenium (1997) examines Catholic identity through six themes as described by the Bishops: 1) For the human person; 2) At the heart of the Church; 3) At the service to society; 4) Where faith and knowledge meet; 5) Catholic school as community; and 6) Catholic for all.

In the first theme, "For the human person," the needs of the individual are at the core of the Gospel message, and a truly authentic education is one that examines the "why" of the human condition. Catholic education is concerned for each individual as each one is created in God's image, and was made by God. The second theme, "At the heart of the Church," describes the relationship of the Catholic school to the wider Church. It shares in the evangelizing mission of the Church, and so it becomes a genuine experience of a Church community. Third, in a Catholic school there is no separation between time for learning, and formation, or acquiring knowledge and growing in wisdom. It is an atmosphere characterized by a search for truth. Fourth, it should be a school where all are welcomed, particularly the poor and weakest in society, and it not only provides an education to Catholics but to all seeking truth. Fifth, it is a school concerned with respect for the dignity of the human person. The social justice concerns of the Catholic Church are the concerns of the Catholic school by extension of mission. Finally, a Catholic school is an educational community, which is not just sociological, but theological in nature. This community is a place of complete formation for its students through relationships. Teachers and administrators create community and provide opportunities for community service.

Catholic Identity and The Views of Thomas Groome

Thomas Groome, lay theologian and lay educator, was one of the first to attempt to identify the unique characteristics of a Catholic school education. He theorized that there are eight characteristics that reflect the Catholic identity or culture in Catholic schools. His identification of these eight characteristics arose from his experience visiting Catholic schools in Pakistan, where he discovered that although most of the student populations were predominantly Muslim, unique characteristics were present indicating that the school was Catholic. In his book *Educating for Life* (1998), Groome lists these eight markers of Catholic identity.

First, human beings made in the image and likeness of God have inalienable rights and responsibilities. Secondly, this Catholic approach to life calls each individual to approach life as a gift, to live with faith and embrace it with hope. Thirdly, human beings are made to be in relationship to one another, welcoming, preaching, worshipping, caring, witnessing and celebrating God's covenant. The fourth characteristic is remaining open to the wisdom, knowledge and aesthetics gathered into the humanities, sciences, arts, scripture and tradition. The fifth characteristic suggests engaging the whole person and all people, to know, reflect on and value their own perspective, but also be open to the perspective of others. This wisdom calls us to accept responsibility and to make ethical decisions. The sixth characteristic is the life long journey of following Christ sustained by prayer. The seventh characteristic is to honor the sacredness and dignity, rights and responsibilities of the human person, care for the common good, justice and peace. The eighth and final characteristic is being open to truth wherever it may be found and seeing a universality of God's love and God's saving will. Groome labels these

characteristics as: 1) A good people; 2) See God in all things; 3) A community for life; 4) Tradition to inherit; 5) Reasonable wisdom: 6) Spirituality for everyone; 7) Faith that does justice; and 8) A Catholic openness.

Catholic Identity and Cook and Simonds

Cook and Simonds (2011) present the charism or the "spirit" of the Catholic school as the theory for organizing their study of Catholic identity through the lens of relationships. They argue that maintaining the viability of a Catholic school may be related to the ability to clarify what sets them apart from other schools, and to re-focus efforts on educating students to think critically and build relationships.

First, they characterize the Catholic school as an environment where individuals feel safe to discover their own personhood, including their unique gifts and talents. Made in the image and likeness of God, the growth and formation of the whole person is the emphasis of the Catholic school. Second, a Catholic school assists students in their knowledge and experience of God. Third, the support and encouragement of faculty and staff enables students to live their faith and share it with others. Fourth, a Catholic school assists students to develop a relationship with local and world communities, serving all in Christ's Name. Finally, learning and life are not compartmentalized. Cook and Simonds label these five themes as: 1) Relationship with self; 2) Relationship with God; 3) Relationship with others; 4) Relationship with local and world communities; and 5) Relationship with learning.

Figure 1 aligns the terms used to describe Catholic identity across these three approaches.

Figure 1

Three Approaches to Catholic Identity

Congregation for Catholic Education	T. Groome	Cook and Simonds
For the Human Person	**A Good People**	**Relationship with Self**
At the Heart of the Church	**A Gracious World** **A Tradition to Inherit** **Spirituality for Everyone**	**Relationship with God**
At the Service to Society	**Faith that Does Justice**	**Relationship with Others**
Where Faith and Knowledge Meet	**A Reasonable Wisdom**	**Relationship with Learning**
Catholic School as Community	**A Community for Life**	**Relationship with Local Community**
Catholic for All	**A Catholic Openness**	**Relationship with world community beyond just "us." "All" are welcomed in community**

Figure 2 synthesizes these three approaches into seven overarching characteristics that can be used to study Catholic school identity as expressed in a parish school. These indicators can be traced back to their roots in influential Church documents and are described below.

Figure 2: Seven Characteristics of Catholic School Identity

1. Belief and respect for the dignity of the human person
2. Practice of Catholic faith and tradition
3. Academic program where faith, knowledge, and tradition intersect
4. Community where gospel values are shared and lived
5. Commitment to social justice and community service in Christ's Name
6. Community where all are included and welcomed in Christ's Name
7. Positive relationships with self, God, knowledge, others and community

Characteristics of Catholic School Identity

Belief and Respect for the Dignity of the Human Person

The Congregation for Catholic Education (CCE, 1997) speaks of a school for the human person. In every human person, there is a basic experience of God, which is intrinsic to our make-up. It can be repressed but it cannot be destroyed. Groome (1998) sees this as basic goodness, more like a divine reflection, which may become tarnished with sin, but nonetheless an orientation toward God and good. Cook and Simonds (2001) theorize that in order to form positive relationships with others, one must have a positive relationship with oneself. Each individual is created with gifts and talents uniquely their own, to be identified and developed to serve God and others. Building confidence and self-esteem transforms an individual to see his innate goodness and to reflect God in his/her being.

Practice of Catholic Faith and Tradition

The Congregation then speaks of Catholic schools as being at "the heart of the Church." The evangelizing mission of the Catholic school is seen as one with the Church and a genuine experience of Church. But so too is its role in bringing faith, culture and life together. At the heart of the Church is word and sacrament. Groome (1998) calls this phenomenon " sacramentality," or "seeing God in all things." God reveals Himself in the

ordinary; this is consistent with seeing Christ in bread and wine. Groome also views the lived tradition of our Catholic ancestors as the practice of the faith that supports spiritual growth and development, or what he terms an inclusive "spirituality for everyone." Cook and Simonds (2001) describe this characteristic as relationship with God. In the Catholic school the search for meaning is spiritual in nature. Learning about Jesus Christ, His message, and consequent discipleship are the primary goals of a Catholic education.

Academic Program Where Faith, Knowledge and Tradition Intersect

The CCE acknowledges that there is no separation between time for learning and time for formation, between acquiring knowledge and growing in wisdom. Knowledge is attained, values are acquired, and truth is discovered. Groome (1998) describes "rationality" as a gift from God, which brings both understanding and moral responsibility. In seeking truth and using the gift of rationality we become fully human. In Groome's view Catholic education should not tell people what to think, but prepare and provide practice for students to think for themselves. Cook and Simonds view this "rationality" as teaching students to become discerning thinkers, who are able to think critically and examine how the Catholic Church teachings are integrated across various disciplines. Catholic identity implies the relationship that students form between the intersection of faith and learning.

Community Where Gospel Values Are Shared and Lived

The CCE addresses educators, or what they term the "educating community." While respecting individual roles, the community aspect should be fostered since it is one of the most enriching developments for the contemporary school. The educating community is called to assist everyone to see the school as a place of complete formation

through interpersonal relations. For Groome, "community" is not simply an ideal that is taught, but rather a value to be realized and lived. It is an atmosphere of openness where both students and teachers feel free to become their own selves and to pursue knowledge and truth. Cook and Simonds describe this as a "relationship with the local community." Relationships with the members of the school community give the students and staff daily opportunities to serve others.

Commitment to Social Justice and Community Service in Christ's Name

The Congregation for Catholic Education declares that a Catholic school is a "school at the service of society." It promotes and integrates Catholic social teaching across the curriculum and promotes an understanding of and action for justice and peace. A Catholic education instills an awareness of injustice in society and the wider world, and summons its students to act for the oppressed and the voiceless. Groome notes that if we believe that each individual is made in the image and likeness of God then we are compelled to work for justice and to emphasize the value of human life. Cook and Simonds describe this characteristic as being in relationship with others. We have a commitment to their wellbeing and to insure that all are treated equally and with justice.

Community Where All Are Included and Welcomed in Christ's Name

The Congregation cites a "community for all" as the need to welcome all for the sake of our own salvation but to offer this education to the poor and the disadvantaged, and open to all who appreciate and share its educational mission. Groome calls this "catholicity," or a place of inclusion. In a Catholic school all are welcome, and the school educates its students to believe that "neighbor" has no limits. Cook and Simonds describe a relationship with the local and world communities through service opportunities,

integration of current events, and opportunities to meet and serve with people who are different from themselves.

Positive Relationships with Self, God, Knowledge, Others and Community

Throughout the document, the CCE (1997) discusses the importance of relationships, including the development of the whole person in order to form a relationship with Christ and to be of service to others. It is through a collaboration of parents, teachers, faculty, staff and the relationships that exist in the community that determine the success of a Catholic school. Groome discusses human beings as being relational. God has designed us so that our highest human calling is to be in relationship with ourselves, with God, with one another, and the community. He believes it is the positive relationships that are formed with the individual, God, learning and others, which characterize the strong Catholic identity of a school. The theoretical framework of Cook and Simonds calls upon the strength of relationships to be the overarching theme when determining the strength of a school's Catholic identity. They argue that a school is most authentically Catholic when the culture fosters relationships that are both human and divine.

There have been few studies on Catholic school identity and how it is perceived in Catholic elementary schools, and so these characteristics have been culled from the theological, theoretical and philosophical literature. They are perhaps goals, more than characteristics, of what actually exists. However, these seven characteristics do provide a framework to analyze the elements of Catholic identity that might be present in a Catholic school, and they have informed the development of interview and observation protocols in the present study.

Catholic School Leadership and Catholic Identity

Chief among the priorities of those studying Catholic identity and Catholic schools is the study of leadership in those schools. The success of any organization, including Catholic schools, is effective leadership (Bolman & Deal, 2008). For Catholic elementary parish schools it is the pastor and principal that personify this relationship (Baxter, 2011). In many cases where these two positions are effective, there are healthy enrollments and stronger parishes. Those schools who maintain strong leadership in the form of pastor and principal collaboration survive, and those without, eventually close (DeFiore, 2011; DeFiore et al., 2009).

The professional development of elementary Catholic school leadership can be traced to the 1950s when the Sister Formation Conference began to professionalize the educational formation of young religious first as classroom teachers and then administrators. As these sisters moved through the system, a religious superior appointed them as administrators. Again, they were mentored and supervised by experienced principals within the community about budget, curriculum, facilities, and supervision of personnel. Their prayer life, liturgical celebrations, and spiritual formation were managed through the community (Hunt et al., 2004). The intention of Vatican II was to create dialogue and unity with the beliefs of Catholicism and other faiths. It was to approach thinking and learning in a more holistic way, and to allow greater participation of the laity in liturgy and leadership of the Church.

Documents acknowledged freedom of conscience, religious pluralism, and the duty of the laity. The Catholic Church became a church in transition, and consequently so did its schools. As women departed the religious life, schools were left without leadership and

staff. Women lay teachers began to assume the role of principal. Without formal spiritual formation, how could Catholic identity in Catholic schools be assured?

Research indicates that Catholic school administrators must not only possess skills associated with education and management, but also an added dimension that enables them to preserve Catholic identity, build community, foster faith development and insure that the philosophy of Catholic education is maintained (Bryk et al., 1993; Hunt et al., 2000). In other words, a leadership style that is purely managerial is insufficient for effective Catholic school leadership. It must be visionary, philosophic and cultural as well (Sergiovanni, 2005).

The Church's View of Catholic School Leadership

The bishops also addressed leadership and concluded that the principal plays a critical role in realizing the goals of Catholic education. They foster community among faculty and students. They understand the Catholic school as part of larger communities both religious and secular (USCCB, 1977, p. 131). The bishops speak to the formation of administrators and teachers and its importance in maintaining the Catholic identity of Catholic schools. Catholic school leaders must be grounded in their faith and in Catholic culture, and witness this through words and actions (USCCB, 2005).

In 2006, the Notre Dame Task Force on Catholic Education released its final report, *Making God Known, Loved and Served: The Future of Catholic Primary and Secondary Schools in the United States.* One of the action points was related to the effectiveness of parish school leadership teams. As they described it, "Now more than ever we see the importance of collaborative leadership among pastors, principals and school boards to ensure a vibrant parish school." (p. 12). Simultaneously, parish mergers,

collaboratives, parish schools co-owned by a parish and a college or university, and a variety of governance models call into examination the role of the pastor and his leadership with regard to a parish school.

Educators' Views on the Role of the Catholic School Principal

Experts in the field of Catholic education advocate for strong lay leadership, which is needed to promote strong Catholic identity (O'Keefe, 1998; Ciriello, 1998a; Ciriello, 1998b; Manno, 1985). A Catholic school principal is seen as the school's moral gatekeeper (Muccigrosso, 1996), and must possess a leadership style reflective of Christ's servant leadership of love, care and concern (Sergiovanni, 2005). Leaders must not only be competent and knowledgeable, but the vocation requires skills to continue the evangelization and faith development focus of the Catholic school (Canavan, 2001).

Ciriello (1993) used a structural framework to describe these competencies necessary for Catholic school leaders in their roles as "educational leaders," "managerial leaders," and "spiritual leaders." She asserted that it is incumbent upon the Catholic school principal to foster the religious mission of the school, as well as overseeing the spiritual formation of students and faculty. The school's Catholic identity and the ability of the principal to be an effective faith leader will determine how well the mission of the school is defined and lived by members of the community. Helm (1989) extended Cirello's work by asserting that the principal should provide leadership by establishing culture and choosing staff to support the mission and vision.

Although Catholic school principals have similar managerial and academic job responsibilities to their public school counterparts, their role in a Catholic school has an additional spiritual dimension. It manifests itself in the language of community that

principals use to describe their schools and the actions taken to achieve their goals (Bryk et al., 1993). The Catholic school leader must convey to faculty, students, families and the wider community the vision and mission of the institution.

Like their public school counterparts, the Catholic school principal is also responsible for curriculum development, the allocation and administration of resources, staffing, the supervision and evaluation of staff, and effective discipline. These functions then must interact with the principal's mandate to attend to the spiritual development of members of the school community (Convey, 1992).

A principal who safeguards the school's mission leads with mindful, spiritual leadership and fosters Catholic rational thinking. The principal who is open to new information, promotes wisdom, demonstrates flexibility and consults and communicates is also perceived to strengthen the Catholic identity of a school (Hobbie et al., 2010). Conversely, faith leadership fosters Catholic identity by institutionalizing Catholic doctrine and traditions.

Empirical Studies of Catholic School Principals and Catholic Identity

The greatest challenge of lay principals is preserving and enhancing the school's Catholic character and culture. Belmonte and Cranston (2009) studied six lay principals in New South Wales through a qualitative approach that involved open-ended questioning, field notes, journals, direct observations and document analysis. They found that Catholic culture is not automatic, but that a deliberate and conscious approach to integrate the religious and academic purposes in every dimension of the school is what is required of its leaders. These principals were in a constant struggle to refocus energies of the school community on a set of values consistent with the mission. The spiritual

dimension of the school was marginalized due to pressure for academic success, probably due to a pluralism of beliefs of the students. The findings from this study also highlighted the need for support of Catholic schools by the words, presence and actions of the parish priest.

In a similar qualitative study of six Catholic principals from the United States, Arthur (2012) found that Catholic identity involved both a spiritual sense and moral code. These principals characterized Catholic identity as a Catholic culture that imbues the school more than any concrete or external aspects. Their lived experience revealed that Catholic identity was maintained in all the school's aspects.

Grace (2002) interviewed sixty headteachers in England and found that these leaders drew upon their own spiritual capital to maintain the mission and identity of their schools. He defines the term "spiritual capital" as "resources of faith and values derived from commitment to a religious tradition" (p. 236). He views the education of leaders with regard to spiritual capital as an urgent priority. In Grace's view, these leaders must not only be educated in the faith, values and tradition of the Catholic Church, but they must also be witnesses. He noted that those school leaders who conceived of their work as a vocation were actually responsible for the mission of spirituality, Catholicity, morality and justice. Grace's (2002) study revealed that high academic achievement exists, particularly in urban settings, due in part to the academic leadership of headteachers and to a philosophy of Catholic education that demands and focuses on academic programs.

Convey (1992) and Schuttlofel (1999, 2008) noted the relationship between Catholic school leaders and the promotion of Catholic identity. They both reported strong

spiritual leadership within a vibrant faith community is essential for a strong perception of Catholic identity. The leadership skills of the principal were seen as vital to the school's mission to find and serve God in all things. In addition, Catholic school leaders must challenge and motivate others to do their best and to help them all realize that they are loved and are part of a wider community, to whom they have responsibilities. Simultaneously, these principals must have the ability to be introspective and contemplative (Cook, 2001; Schuttloffel, 1999).

Convey (2012), in a survey of superintendents in archdioceses across the United States, found that providing students with the opportunities to put their faith into action was linked to the Catholic identity of a school. The importance of serving others was identified by 89% of the respondents as reflective of a Catholic education and the school's Catholic identity.

Some authors argue that continually raising the community's awareness of social justice issues is the responsibility of the Catholic school principal (Queensland Education Commission, 2008). This obligation includes integrating students with special needs into Catholic schools and parish education programs (Long & Schuttloffel, 2006).

In a survey study of 224 principals in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, Quinn (2010) revealed that Catholic elementary school principals considered themselves inclusive leaders who understood that it is the school leadership who initiates openness, change, collaboration and implementation of new programs for disabled students. However, the study also found the need for ongoing support from the Archdiocese for these principals. Inclusiveness extends to all faiths, races, genders, intellectual abilities, and sexual orientations.

There exists an innate conflict and tension, however, between church doctrine, and inclusiveness of gay and lesbian students and same sex parents, particularly in parish Catholic schools. There exists little research in this area, and none pertaining to elementary schools. Maher (2007), however, in a qualitative study of 25 alumni (12 female and 13 male) of Catholic high schools found that gay and lesbian students felt disconnected from their parents and the school institution. Students felt that some teachers were homophobic, while others were closeted homosexuals.

Both Catholic bishops and Vatican congregations have emphasized integration in all areas of one's life. The results of this study proved just the opposite for these students. Although no studies were found regarding the views of children of gay and lesbian couples in Catholic schools, they may also experience alienation.

Principal and Pastor Collaboration

The Parish Catholic school is a community within a wider community. It exists within the context of the parish. By Canon Law, a parish is a certain community of Christ's faithful, whose pastoral care under the authority of the Bishop is given to a parish priest as its Pastor. It is maintained by the relationships of family, school and parish. In some cases, the principal functions as a member of the pastoral team under the leadership of the pastor, and serves as a means of communication to the wider parish community. Fostering collaboration with other members of the parish team is essential for the Catholic identity of the school and parish. From their daily encounters with members of the school and parish communities, principals gather enormous data about the school, the parish community and outside community. They have access to multiple sources of information. All of this information must be evaluated, sorted, and viewed

through the lens of faith, the mission, philosophy and identity of the Catholic school, as well as the leadership role of principal in this environment. Buetow (1985) describes the Catholic school principal, "like a trusted counselor who facilitates the marriage of God and His people." (p. 260).

Little research has been conducted regarding the importance of the pastor's role in maintaining Catholic identity in a parish school. As key stakeholders in these schools, and given the importance of parish life and Canon Law, pastors have a unique role in the life of the Catholic school community. The key to a successful parish school is a committed pastor, and the relationship between the principal and the pastor is a key factor in the effectiveness of the school within the wider parish community (Thomas & Davis, 1989). The pastor works in collaboration with the principal to sustain a school and to communicate the importance of the school's mission to the wider community. His support affects the morale of the school (DeFiore et al., 2009).

Belmonte and Cranston (2009) state that a collaborative partnership with the pastor is required to affirm, encourage and support the lay principal in the role of leadership in the school. Stepping away from hierarchical beliefs and working toward an equal partnership with regard to the school fostered trust, community, shared decision making and thus a more successful promotion of Catholic identity.

In one of the few qualitative studies that analyzed the roles and interactions of pastors and principals, Brock and Fraser (2001) found that pastors should be directly involved in the religious and spiritual aspects of the school. Surveys and interviews conducted with 32 principals and 16 pastors in New South Wales and Nebraska revealed common themes about the roles and interactions of collaborative leadership in Catholic

schools. These indicated that the relationship between the principal and pastor was important and their interactions required communication, trust and an understanding of each other's roles for a successful Catholic school.

Nuzzi et al. (2009) collected survey data from over 1,000 pastors in the United States. Using a mixed methods approach, attitudes and views regarding the pastors' perceptions of Catholic schools revealed that a lack of Catholic identity and concern over finances were the two most important needs facing Catholic schools. These pastors "indicated that Catholic identity is…the primary mechanism for transmission of the Catholic faith" (p. 34). Recommendations of the study indicated the importance of the principal's role in strengthening Catholic identity through the integration of the school community into the life of the parish and spiritual renewal of teachers and administrators, as well as the engagement of the clergy in support of Catholic education.

Arthur's (2012) qualitative case study of the lived experiences of six Catholic school principals revealed that school leaders overwhelmingly acknowledged that priests and pastors are largely responsible for ensuring Catholic identity, and that positive relationships with the priest assigned to the school depended on communication, mutual respect and trust. Participants also stressed the importance of assigning only those priests who desired to be in parishes with schools.

Summary

This literature review has examined three interrelated themes with regard to issues of Catholic identity and the role of the principal and pastor. The historical context of Catholic education in the United States set the stage for lay leadership and the ongoing dialogue about Catholic identity. Catholic education in the United States originated with

the work of priests and religious to educate the children of marginalized immigrant families. At the conclusion of Vatican II, a "perfect storm" of sorts developed, which caused lay people to succeed religious in leadership positions, and subsequently raised the question of Catholic identity in Catholic schools. With the absence of consecrated religious in the classroom, it was no longer assumed that a strong Catholic identity existed.

The second section discussed the Church documents and philosophical literature concerning Catholic identity. The focus was on defining and reaching a common understanding of the meaning of Catholic identity for the purpose of this study. Groome's liberal theology provides a sharp contrast to the more conservative approach of the bishops, and yet his characteristics of Catholic identity are shaped by Church documents. Cook and Simonds emphasize the relationships at the heart of the Catholic school as a means to study Catholic identity. Yet, both Church documents and Groome's work points to the ways in which relationships manifest themselves as an indicator of Catholic school culture.

As we celebrate the 50th anniversary of Vatican II, examining the understanding of the laity as it pertains to Catholic identity bears examination. The hope of the Council was that a new generation of Catholics would arise prepared to lead with the bishops, the priests and religious to build the Kingdom of God on earth. The work of Groome and Cook and Simonds heed this call of the bishops to contribute to the field of education, and also more specifically to Catholic education (CCE, 1982).

Empirical studies of Catholic identity and school leadership revealed that Catholic identity is not automatic but an integration of faith and knowledge in every dimension of

the life of the school (Belmonte & Cranston, 2009; Arthur, 2012). This faith must be put into action by service to others (Convey, 2012). There is a link between the actions of school principals and a strong Catholic identity in the literature (Convey, 1992; Schuttloffel, 1999). Catholic school principals are responsible for the mission, spirituality and Catholic identity of their schools, and through their own spirituality they are able to maintain the culture in their schools (Grace, 2002). The principal illuminates social justice issues for the community including the obligation to serve all students, thus leading the school to be inclusive regardless of finances, race, gender, ability, religious affiliation or sexual orientation (Quinn, 2010; Maher, 2007; Ciriello, 1993).

Although few studies exist regarding the pastor's role and his relationship with the principal in strengthening and promoting a strong Catholic identity, limited findings indicate the importance of this relationship to ensure Catholic identity in Catholic schools (Arthur, 2012; Brock & Fraser, 2001; Nuzzi et al., 2009). The purpose of the current study is to assist in filling the gap in the research surrounding the perceptions of various constituencies about Catholic identity in a parish school, and how the relationship between the principal and pastor might support this identity.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This qualitative case study investigated Catholic identity in one parish elementary school as viewed from the perspective of various stakeholders, including the pastor, principal, faculty and parents. In addition, it also explored the role of the pastor and principal in developing and maintaining the Catholic identity within the school. In this chapter, I provide a rationale for choosing a qualitative research design and methodology, and outline the research procedures, data collection and analysis methods, validity and reliability factors, and the ethical role of the researcher.

Research Design

Utilizing a qualitative case study design, which focused on a single K-8 Catholic traditional parish school, the researcher employed an inductive approach to observe, collect and analyze data. The data was gathered through the distribution of a parent survey; personal semi-structured interviews of teachers, the principal, and the parish priest; document analysis; and observation. This approach attempts to provide a "thick" description of the perceptions of Catholic identity in one Catholic elementary school.

Although there are several variations and understandings of this research methodology, I used Merriam's (1997) method of basic qualitative case study research. According to Merriam (1997), qualitative research includes "description, interpretation, understanding, identifies recurrent patterns in the form of themes or categories and may delineate a process" (p. 12). She writes, "A qualitative case study is an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit" (Merriam, 1997, p. 27). Qualitative researchers are concerned with (a) how people interpret their

experiences; (b) how they construct their worlds; and (c) what meaning they attribute to their experiences. The overall purpose is to understand how people make sense of their lives and experiences.

Common understanding about case study methods is that what is being studied is "intrinsically bounded" (Merriam, 1997) and therefore the case study is both the process of learning about the case and the product of our learning (Stake, 1995). Yin (2009) describes case study as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context" (p. 18). Case study methodology was chosen because as the researcher I am interested in insight, discovery and interpretation (Merriam, 1997) about how key stakeholders perceive Catholic identity in the context of a parish elementary school. In this study, the case was bounded by the individual school.

The research questions were outlined in Chapter 1 and include the following:

1.   How is Catholic identity perceived in a parish elementary school by various stakeholder groups, (e.g. teachers, staff, parents, the principal, the pastor, and/or the school board)?

2.   What activities and initiatives in this school do participants perceive have contributed to the development of Catholic identity?

3.   What are the role of the school principal and the pastor in the development and support of Catholic identity?

Selection of the Study Site and Participants

The selected research site was chosen from a list of parish elementary schools (K - 8) with the reputation for positive pastor/principal leadership teams and a strong Catholic identity. This list was developed based on recommendations from a panel which

included one Assistant Superintendent of Schools from the Archdiocese and two college faculty familiar with the local parish schools. This panel was asked to nominate three schools each, and I contacted the school that was nominated by at least two panel members to explain the study and elicit their voluntary participation.

The participants for the study consisted of the pastor and principal of the parish elementary school and five of the teachers in the school from various grade levels (early childhood, primary, elementary, middle school) who represented a variety of years of experience in Catholic schools, including at least some teachers who attended Catholic schools as students. A Theology Teacher or Youth Minister was also one of the teachers interviewed. Although originally one or two members of the school board were going to be interviewed, because there was significant overlap between the staff and the make-up of the school board it was decided that not much data would be added by these interviews. Permission to conduct the study involved several people: first, the permission of the pastor, secondly, the Catholic Schools Office of the Archdiocese, and finally the principal. I attended a teacher's meeting and introduced myself prior to interviewing or making any observations. All participants received a letter inviting them to participate and informing them of their right to confidentiality. All parents in the school were invited to complete an anonymous parent survey on-line.

Research Procedures

Interviewing, observing, reading and writing are all essential parts of the qualitative research process. In this study I have included in-depth interviews, observations and document analysis of school materials such as handbooks, liturgy or

para-liturgical programs, and artifacts such as newsletters to parents from the administration or pastor.

Interviews. Merriam (1997) recommends weeding out poor questions before you actually conduct an interview. She recommends that this review followed by a pilot interview will go a "long way to ensure that you are asking good questions." (p. 79). In anticipation of this study, the interview questions were informally reviewed in March 2013 at a local parish elementary school. The comments of the reviewers indicated that the questions were clearly stated and understood. However, this review made it apparent that the number of years spent in Catholic education as either a student or a teacher might produce more in-depth answers to the questions. In addition, the respondents indicated the questions should be broken into more manageable parts and the interviewer should provide more wait time after a response. When a pastor and principal in a parish school also reviewed the interview questions, the pastor asked if the word "mission" was left out intentionally. With that feedback, a question regarding mission was formulated and added to the interview protocol. When asked about appropriateness of the interview questions, they both used words like "comprehensive," as well as "open-ended and "opportune for conversation."

Semi-structured individual interviews were conducted with the teachers, principal, and pastor on the school site at a mutually convenient time and lasted about an hour. These were digitally recorded. The interview protocols, which are included in Appendices A, B, and C, were developed based on the characteristics of Catholic identity theorized through church documents and the work of Groome and Cook and Simonds described in Chapter 2.

At the beginning of each interview, I ensured that the consent form was signed, stated the purpose of the interview, explained the transcription process, and how the data would be analyzed. Participants were asked to elaborate on their answers as much as they felt necessary. As a member check, an electronic file of the transcribed interviews was sent to participants so that any corrections or clarifications could be made. These checks helped provide credibility.

Parent Survey

The second method of gathering data for this study was a parent survey that was distributed to all parents in the school. The survey instrument consisted of 17 items. (See a copy of the survey in Appendix D). The survey was developed by the Center for Catholic School Effectiveness, School of Education, Loyola University Chicago in partnership with the Roche Center for Catholic Education, Lynch School of Education Boston College (Ozar & Weitzel-O'Neill, 2012). It is a parent and community survey designed to measure Catholic identity. A formal validity and reliability study was performed on this instrument in the Spring of 2012 which confirmed that schools are able to confidently use it to study perceptions of their Catholic identity. The major cautionary statement was that ideally 150-200 schools would have yielded better representation and therefore, broader and more generalized results. This survey includes statements using a Likert Scale, which have a frequency range of 1-6 (e.g. from Strongly Agree-Strongly Disagree including Don't Know in the middle of the scale). The survey questions broadly reflect the seven principles of Catholic identity outlined in Chapter 2.

This parent survey was posted on *Survey Monkey* with a letter of introduction by the principal. In the letter, parents were notified by about how to access the survey.

Completion of the survey was anticipated to take 15-20 minutes. As a field test, the written parent survey was distributed to ten parents with children in local Catholic schools for their input. The parents found the questions easy to comprehend and were able to respond quickly.

Observations

The third method of collecting data involved observations which resulted in field notes of the school's practices, which might shed light on their expression of Catholic identity. For instance, symbols in a Catholic school can easily be observed by community members and outsiders. These elements might include architecture, published core values, mission statements, rituals and ceremonies. Daily operations and the spoken and unspoken rules of behavior reflect the values of the community and are at the core of the culture.

Six visits to the study site were scheduled to coincide with times in the school day that might shed light on the expressed Catholic identity of the school. Each visit lasted from 2-3 hours, and included a visit at the beginning of the day, during lunch/recess where opportunities for a variety of formal and informal interactions occur, and at dismissal time when many constituents find themselves interacting with one another. I observed the quality and level of these interactions and recorded field notes about my observations, which were later transcribed. Observations focused on relationships, informal conversations, practices, programs, and the culture and environment of the school. (See Observation Guide in Appendix E).

Document Analysis

In addition, documents that might shed light on Catholic identity such as mission statements, handbooks, newsletters and websites were collected and analyzed. In these documents, I looked to see how they characterized the school's lived Catholic mission. For example, in the handbooks and newsletters I looked for evidence of the principal and pastor's level of involvement, a discipline policy that reflected the Catholic identity of the school, references to liturgy, prayer, and possible Christian service projects. I examined them for evidence of religious curriculum, and the intersection of faith and knowledge. For instance, this might be demonstrated by the presence of Catholic social teaching such as respect for life, rights and responsibilities and option for the poor and vulnerable woven into the curriculum lessons in literature, science and social studies. In addition, newsletters and websites might reflect a wholistic and inclusive approach to teaching consistent with the Catholic view of the dignity of the individual.

Data Analysis

After completing the interviews, I listened to and transcribed the interviews, marking passages and words that I thought expressed how the participants make meaning of Catholic identity. Once I coded passages and developed themes, I re-read the passages looking for relationships. I also examined my field notes, looking for practices of Catholic identity in the school.

Qualitative data analysis involves making sense out of what people have said, looking for patterns. Printed transcripts of interviews together with field notes and summarizations were filed in binders and printed data were stored in file cabinets.

Eventually they were scanned and filed electronically for data analysis. The data was organized into common categories, themes and patterns.

As Miles and Huberman (1994) note, "Coding is analysis. To review a set of field notes, transcribed or synthesized, and to dissect them meaningfully, while keeping the relations between the parts intact, is the stuff of analysis." (p. 56). The data was coded and then examined for an emergent understanding of the participants. Codes are tags or labels for assigning units of meaning. They are attached to chunks of varying size: words, phrases, sentences or whole paragraphs (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Each phase of the data analysis required ongoing data consolidation and reduction to manage collected data and data interpretation to bring meaning and insight to participant information.

Reading and listening to the information collected from each participant enabled the researcher to select and isolate pieces of information from all the data, identifying patterns of belief, recurring themes and language that linked people and experiences together as expressions of Catholic identity.

Categories and codes that emerged from the interview data were also examined to see how they intersected with the "Seven Characteristics of Catholic School Identity" outlined in Chapter 2: 1) Dignity of the Human Person; 2) Practice of Faith and Tradition; 3) Intersection of Faith, Knowledge, and Reason; 4) A Community Where Gospel Values Are Shared and Lived; 5) Commitment to Social Justice and Community Service; 6) An Inclusive and Welcoming Community; and 7) Positive Relationships.

Participants' responses to the parent survey were recorded as descriptive statistics on a summary table, which recorded the percentage who agree and disagree with each of the six ratings. Open-ended responses were also described in a narrative form. The

researcher interpreted themes in the school documents as expressions of Catholic identity. A narrative was developed (see Chapter 4) to describe the way the participants narrate their lived experience of Catholic identity in this school.

Reliability and Validity

The manner and way in which data is collected and the careful attention to the study's conceptualization answer concerns of reliability and validity. The case study becomes scientific in the observer's critical presence in the context of occurrence of phenomena, observation, hypothesis-testing, and triangulation of participants' perceptions, interpretations and so on. (Merriam, 1997, p.199)

The term triangulation is used to convey the idea that to establish a fact, you need more than one source of data. Merriam's (1997) definition of triangulation states, "triangulation using multiple sources of data means comparing and cross-checking data collected through observations at different times or in different places, or interview data collected from people with different perspectives or from follow-up interviews with the same people" (p. 216). Collecting interview data from the pastor, principal, and teachers contributed to the triangulation. Multiple data sources, such as observations, document analysis, and the parent survey also provided triangulation.

The extent to which research findings can be replicated is reliability. It is based on the assumption that there is a single reality and studying it repeatedly will yield the same results (Merriam, 1997). However, qualitative data depends on human behavior. Guba and Lincoln (1994) suggest that in qualitative research the desire is for outsiders to concur that given the data collected, the results of the researcher are consistent and dependable. By explaining the assumptions and theory behind the study, and the basis for

selecting participants, as well as the social context from which the data was collected, the researcher supports the finding of dependable results. In addition, triangulation and describing in detail how data was collected through an audit trail strengthens the reliability and internal validity.

External validity is concerned with the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations (Merriam, 1997). Stake (1995) contends that generalization from a small sample is possible because people look for patterns to explain their own experience, and draw on knowledge, intuition and personal experience to do so. The reader can ask, "What is there in this study that I can apply to my own situation, and what does not apply? (Firestone, as cited in Merriam, 1997). Providing a thorough description of my research procedures so that readers will be able to determine how findings can be transferred enhanced the possibility that the results of this qualitative case study might be generalizable.

Role of the Researcher

All researchers bring to their study personal bias. Qualitative research relies on the understanding and perceptions of the researcher. The researcher must be trustworthy and scrupulous in collection of data and analysis. As principal of a Catholic parish elementary school in the Archdiocese, I am an insider in this study and so therefore must be aware of my personal views to maintain research objectivity. Having been educated in Catholic schools in this Archdiocese for twelve years, and as a teacher in the same Archdiocese for ten years, I endorse the values and mission of Catholic schools. I have chosen Catholic elementary education for my children, and am committed to the viability and future of Catholic schools.

A possible positive feature of being an insider is that familiarity with Catholic education helped enhance, rather than impede, the study. Understanding the culture of Catholic schools allowed me to focus more intently on the school's Catholic identity. "Speaking the language" of Catholic education gave me the ability to observe subtleties in the environment and probe more deeply for the indicators of Catholic identity that others might miss.

Guba and Lincoln (1994) note that an unethical case writer could select from available data so that virtually anything he wished could be illustrated. My insider status might also be considered a disadvantage. To avoid my own biases clouding the study, I maintained a journal with my reflections and observations about relationships and conversations to which I was privy. I already keep a reflective journal about my practice as a principal, and have found it valuable for identifying my own bias, motivations and perceptions of situations. In addition I enlisted a colleague who is not involved in Catholic education to review and code slices of interview data and we compared and discussed our codes. Finally, another limitation of the study might be that my presence may cause a disruption in the study school that could potentially cause me to collect invalid data. In order to insure that all participants were providing genuine data, I worked toward being unobtrusive when I conducted field observations within the setting.

The focus of the study is very narrow. Making the findings transferrable for other researchers will be a challenge. I logged and described procedures clearly, so that others could understand them, reconstruct them and subject them to scrutiny. This audit trail, which was first developed in a case study by Halpern (as cited in Guba & Lincoln, 1994), has proven to strengthen qualitative studies (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Summary

Chapter 3 describes the qualitative research design and procedures used to study the perceptions of Catholic identity in one Catholic elementary parish school through multiple perspectives. Three research questions framed the collection and analysis of data collected through semi-structured interviews, a parent survey, document analysis, and observation.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

This qualitative case study of Saint Luke School (SLS) (pseudonym) was undertaken to examine the perception of Catholic identity in one parish school by various stakeholders, and the role that the pastor/principal relationship plays in leading Catholic identity in the school. Through interviews, a parent survey, observations and analysis of school documents, the researcher investigated how Catholic identity was perceived and what characteristics contributed to forming this perception. Lastly, the researcher also investigated the relationship of the principal and pastor, how that relationship was perceived by the community, and its impact on Catholic identity in the school. The presentation of the data exists in several formats. Excerpts of published material, information from the website, a study of artifacts, direct passages extracted from the interviews, and commentary that the researcher made on school visitations during data collection and analysis informed the findings in this case study research.

Background and Description of the School Site

Saint Luke School (SLS) was recommended as a site for this study because of its reputation and the perception, by Catholic district leaders, that the school had a strong Catholic identity. It was also chosen because it is a parish school with a leadership team of pastor and principal. The school is located in an affluent suburb in Massachusetts. The average income of a family in the town is over $100,000. Although it is the only Catholic school in the town, its students come from 16 surrounding communities. The enrollment of the school is split with about 50% of the student body coming from the town and the other 50% from one of the other 16 towns. There are 410 students enrolled in this Pre K-

Grade 8 school, and the yearly tuition fee is $5,850. Over $50,000 in tuition assistance was awarded to families during the past school year. For the 2014-2015 academic year, the parish sponsored $650 per student if considered eligible. Eligibility requires active participation in one of the Church's ministries, and financial participation in the parish. Student racial demographics indicate the school is 97% white, 2% Asian and 1% African American.

The Catholic families of the area, who desired to educate their children in the Catholic faith, built SLS in less than six months in 1966. When it opened, it was staffed by the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia. Their legacy to instill in their students a desire to live like St. Francis, to be truthful, do their best and to live as peacemakers in the world appears to be visible even today. The sisters served as teachers and principals for thirty years. For the last eighteen years, principals of the school have been lay people, whose beliefs follow the faith and commitment of these founding sisters.

The governance structure of the school consists of a pastor, appointed by the Cardinal Archbishop, who is responsible for the parish and school. He is assisted in the governance of the school by the principal and a consultative school board, which cooperates in the policy-making by formulating but never enacting policy. The board provides counsel to the pastor and principal in the operations of the school and collaborates to plan for the future. In addition to the pastor, the membership of the school board consists of the principal, vice principal, an appointed finance chairperson, the current PTO liaison and additional members. Various committees are designed to promote the school's strategic initiatives, and parents are encouraged to serve on these committees.

Catholic Identity in the Mission Statement and Strategic Plan

The mission statement of SLS refers to many of the characteristics of Catholic identity outlined in the literature including a relationship with God, the education of the whole child, an education of faith and knowledge, community, and service to others. The SLS mission statement states that

> SLS is a Catholic, faith-based community dedicated to instilling a love of God and inspiring a commitment to lifelong learning. Our dynamic curriculum develops independent thinking, curiosity and social awareness both locally and globally. Our dedicated faculty and staff are committed to academic excellence and the education of the whole child in an atmosphere of Christian concern and service. The SLS community provides a safe and nurturing environment for students to grow spiritually, intellectually, socially, physically, and emotionally. We are an integral part of all our Collaborative parishes: SL Parish, SM Parish, and OLS Parish, and we welcome a diverse student body from a variety of parishes and towns. Together we strive to build the city of God on a foundation of faith and knowledge.

In addition to the mission statement, the school's commitment to Catholic identity is evident in their strategic plan. *Enhancing Spiritual Life* is one of the four key strategic priorities identified by the 2014 Strategic Planning Committee of SLS. Members of this committee included the pastor, principal, teachers, parents and alumni. This document specifically states, "We believe that one of our school's greatest current strengths is our ongoing commitment to fostering and maintaining a strong Catholic identity. We must continue to keep our school's mission rooted in this spiritual core by providing students,

teachers, and families with meaningful opportunities to grow in their faith and to put their faith into action through service to others."

Visible Symbols of Catholic Identity

Catholic identity also appears to be a priority to the school community based on the visible symbols of Catholicism that are displayed all around the school. Prior to entering the building for the first time I made note of the external facilities. Both the buildings and the grounds were neat, and although almost 50 years old, remarkably clean and well-kept. The presence of outdoor statues to the Blessed Mother, small gardens and the symbols of Catholicism, most notably the crucifix, were quite visible.

In the entryway of the school I noticed a hand-made quilt hanging in the hallway with the words "Faith, Knowledge and Service," and a video on a loop entitled "It's a great day to be at SLS," showed smiling children, technology classes, and students at prayer. From the crucifix to the statue of St. Francis in the hall, external signs of the Catholic faith were abundant. In addition to the bulletin boards, posters, and notices, which all portrayed an external sign of Catholicity, symbols and statues set the stage and provided a backdrop for a deeper understanding of Catholic identity at SLS.

I observed Morning Prayer twice at SLS. This seems to be a time for the entire student body to gather with teachers to pray as a community. Some parents lined the walls and chatted as the students eagerly did the same. I watched as students of all ages entered the gym and went to stand with their teacher and classmates. On the walls of the gym were displayed posters with virtues such as, "compassion," "integrity," "perseverance," "love," and "spirit." When the bell rang, a group of students and the principal walked on stage, and formal prayers began, which included the "Our Father,"

"Hail Mary," and "Prayer of Saint Francis." At the conclusion of prayer, the principal sent them forth for the day with the charge, "It's a great day to be alive!"

On another occasion, I had the opportunity to visit an assembly during the Catholic Schools' Week celebration called "Got God" which was held in the school gym. This event was introduced by the music teacher and the campus minister. The children from Pre-K to Grade 8, many wearing "Witness to Life" sweatshirts, were enthusiastic as they sang, "Yes, Lord." During a homily by a visiting priest (not the pastor) the students were encouraged to "discover their gifts from God, and do something important with your life because this is your gift to God." He called the children, "God's Masterpiece." The visiting priest then began a period of Adoration with the children. As he brought the Eucharist in, the children quietly and reverently went down on their knees. He then asked the students to "thank Jesus for 10 things about themselves."

Themes in the Participant Interviews

The leadership team in this parish school currently consists of Fr. K., the pastor and Mr. S., the principal. Fr. K. has been pastor of SLS for twenty-three years. He will be transferred and a new pastor will be coming to oversee the forming of the collaborative of three parishes as part of the new pastoral plan in June of 2014. More than half of Fr. K's priesthood has been spent at SLS. When he arrived in 1991, the principal of the school was still a member of a religious community. Currently, the principal of the school is a layman, Mr. S., with a wife and young family. He is finishing his fourth year as principal of SLS. His former position was Campus Minister at a Catholic all-boys high school. The five teachers interviewed had a wide variety of experiences with Catholic education. Two had been teaching less than five years, and one for more than twenty-five years. One was

non-Catholic and another had children who had also attended the participating school. Some had attended Catholic schools for some or all of their education, and one had never had any association with Catholic education prior to becoming employed at SLS.

Five themes emerged from the participants' discussion of their perceptions of Catholic identity in the school. First was the role of service and its relationship to the school's Catholic identity; second, the connection between the parish and the school community; third, the role of prayer and spiritual formation; fourth was a focus on academic excellence and its tension with inclusivity; and fifth, the relationship between the pastor and the principal, and their leadership in the school. Another unanticipated finding in this study was the uncertainty of how Catholic identity would be emphasized within the new parish collaborative and the transfer of the current pastor, who had been part of the community for over 20 years.

When identifying Catholic identity at SLS, the participants connected the teaching of the Catholic faith, the expression of the faith through tradition including the sacraments, and service to others. Participants also discussed prayer and relationships with God in their interviews. All interviewees felt there was a strong Catholic identity in the school, but described it in a variety of ways. For example, Fr. K., the pastor, stated:

> I think what makes the school Catholic is the fact that religion is a major part of it, as well as the service aspect of the school…there is a monthly virtue which the students are encouraged to achieve…we try to help the student become comfortable with themselves and with God and the Church…

Mrs. O'L, a first grade teacher, described what makes the school Catholic this way:

> In our mission statement we say that we are building the city of God on a foundation of faith and knowledge. I think that's what makes this a Catholic

school, those two pieces coming together so seamlessly…faith and knowledge… The principal, Mr. S., probably came closest to a comprehensive description of Catholic identity by noting:

> We're affiliated with a parish but there's a deeply rooted sense of values that are Catholic. There's a connection to the traditions of the Church. And there is a real willingness amongst the school to share and pass on the faith…to teach the tenets of the faith and to develop kids where the faith is meaningful to them.

When asked to rate the school's Catholic identity from 1-10, no participant rated the school less than a seven. One teacher participant, Mrs. P., pointed to a loss of Catholic identity brought about by the loss of the presence of religious sisters in the school. She agreed with Mrs. A., Spanish teacher and Grade 1 Aide, who gave the school a "7" because "Although we are very good at service, there is something lacking in our prayer life."

> However, several participants rated Catholic identity as high as "10," especially in the area of service. Mr. S, the principal, continued by explaining how he rated the Catholic identity of SLS:

> We're definitely high. I would put us at an 8 or a 9. We are a very mission- driven school…in terms of the opportunities to provide the kids with faith development…the integration of faith into the curriculum… Every day the students have the opportunity to learn about their faith, to pray together each morning. It's great that these students are leading prayers…and parents are welcome to join us. The professional development for our teachers doesn't just mean becoming a better teacher. Their spiritual formation has to be an important

part of their professional development. We're also trying to develop family

faith…from praying together…to sharing faith….to going to Mass and celebrating

the sacraments together.

Catholic Identity and Service

From the interviews of multiple stakeholders, it is clear that service is strongly

rooted in the SLS community's perception of Catholic identity. Both the pastor and the

principal characterized service as a "lived experience" and part of the culture at SLS. Fr.

K. described this as "faith in action," and gives the school a "10" when rating the school

with regard to the service aspect of Catholicism. Mr. S., the principal, elaborates, "Our

commitment to service takes many forms…. it's the kid who carries books for the other

kid who broke her collarbone, or who is on crutches. It's the kids who come in here and

say, 'We want to collect money for the Jimmy Fund.'"

Mrs. P., the theology teacher and youth formation minister, explained that

"Service is a huge component of our Catholic identity here…People see a need and just

step in." She quickly enumerated the many types of service that take place: "Rosie's

Place," "Breaking Bread," "Operation Christmas Child," "Mission Awareness Day" and

smaller collections for winter coats and food drives. All participants spoke extensively

about service at SLS and drew a correlation to its importance to Catholic identity.

However, Mr. S., the principal, added this insight:

> "We're really good at collecting money, food, clothes, or whatever it is. A lot
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> comes from the parents… If we do a dress-down day, the money is not coming
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> from the kids… that's coming from the parents. I want them to not just give
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> money to the poor but to serve them a meal. …When we collected for St. Francis

House I took some kids with me to drop the stuff off. There were a couple of kids who got to see it and report back to everyone what it was like. For our Middle School students the campus ministry program seems to be taking off…in terms of providing the students with more opportunities for service. They meet together once every week to pray together and do some service opportunities together."

Service at SLS is organic. Although service is an integral part of the mission and vision of SLS, it is undoubtedly a lived experience, modeled by teachers and administration, supported by all members of the community, and organic in nature. By that I mean, it appears to form an integral part of the whole in the community's perception of Catholic identity, but also to have a life of its own, mirrored in the actions of several constituencies. Although I saw no evidence that service projects were consistently connected to Catholic social teaching, or that the projects were connected to each other, the organic nature of service within the walls of SLS flowed from all parts of the school and in turn infused life into the community.

The responsibility to serve and care for others, at the heart of the Gospel, seems to rise from every nook and cranny of the building. During one visit, I witnessed an alumnus speak to a group of middle school students about a recent service trip to Nicaragua. Currently a student at BFHS, she shared a slide presentation and told the students about her experiences. The students listened intently and asked pertinent questions about the life of the villagers and faith experiences.

When asked how collections and events are scheduled, Mr. S., the principal, says, "There are some traditions we do every year. A food drive at this point…collect clothing

at this point…but so much is organized by the kids. Some are classroom oriented and some are school oriented.

Service is building the City of God. Three teachers interviewed with ten or more years in Catholic schools used phrases such as "building the City of God," and "outreach to those in need," which were directly related to the mission statement. One teacher, who had been an employee in the school for over ten years, spoke about the teachers having gone on mission trips to places like Ghana and Honduras in the past. Everyone interviewed commented on service as being student-driven, teacher-driven, and administration-driven. Most teachers referred to the "Power of One" as a slogan, which drives the service spirit of the SLS community. Several of the teachers who had less experience or were non-Catholic found it a little more challenging to articulate what made the school Catholic, although it was clear that they viewed it as different from other schools. Mrs. C., a fourth grade teacher with eighteen years experience, states,

> SLS is about stewardship and caring for others. The kids come up with ideas like *Locks for Love* or making cards for someone in a nursing home. They are always coming up with new ideas.

Mrs. O.'L. mentioned a service group in the school called, "Caring Connections." It is an opportunity for the students in Grades 1, 2 and 3 to attend Mass with the senior citizens who frequent daily Mass.

Both the pastor and the principal described service as a "lived experience" and part of the culture at SLS. Fr. K. spoke frequently of "faith in action" and gave the school a "10" when rating the school with regard to the service aspect of Catholicism. However, when parents were asked on the online survey if SLS were a school community that lives

the Gospel message through service to the poor and those in need, only 76% agreed. There seemed to be a disconnect between the role of service in Catholicism, and an overall understanding of what or who is motivating service in a Catholic school. Although the number of parents who agreed with the statement is still high, it seems to suggest that not everyone associated collections of food, clothing and money for various people in need to Jesus' teachings (Matthew 25:31-46).

School and Parish as One Community

At SLS, Catholic identity is also perceived through the relationship of parish and school, as one community of faith. For Fr. K., the school is an extension of the parish.

> The school is very much a part of the parish, and because of that when we celebrate First Communion, there are no per se "school celebrations"…the parents I interact with the most are the ones who are parishioners, particularly because the children are involved in a parish activity like altar serving, lecturing, or youth choir.

Fr. K. discussed that opportunities for members of the school community to practice their faith are mostly offered within the context of the parish, such as the Lenten Renewal Program within the parish collaborative and various ongoing prayer groups. In relation to the school, Fr. K. spoke about the traditional monthly liturgies, where various grades are responsible for preparing the readings and music. He also added that if teachers came up with any ideas for expressing or growing in faith both he and the principal would certainly support those ideas.

It is clear that meeting the students and the families where they are in their faith journey is important to Fr. K., and that "all would be welcomed and find a home at SL

parish and school." However, about 50% of the students in the school are not members of the SL Parish. Fr. K's opportunity to know these students and their families is limited because his relationships with the school families, by his own admission, were confined mostly with families who participated in the parish. Fr. K. also expressed the opinion that some parents and parishioners would perhaps like to "hold on" to the memorization of the catechism as a litmus test for what made the school Catholic, and that it was important for those people to understand that a Catholic school was not a private school.

Catholicism as characterized by Pope Francis is one way the pastor described both parish and school. This view is supported by previous research regarding pastors' views of Catholic identity and the connection that must be made to the parish. As Nuzzi et al. (2009) noted in their study, *Faith, Finances and the Future: The Notre Dame Study of U.S. Pastors,* "Pastors felt that a more fully developed Catholic identity strengthens the ministry of the school in its parish context" (pg. 12).

Mr. S., the principal, explained the connection between the parish and school this way:

> We (pastor and principal) have tried to promote a better relationship between the school and the parish. In this parish that always hasn't been the case. I think there was a time when people saw the school as a burden on the parish. I think there were some real misconceptions. We are an integral part of the parish community. But now we are no longer just part of this parish. We are part of a new collaborative (of several parishes).

Mrs. A.O'L, Grade 1 teacher, explains the parish-school relationship as

"a strong connection. It is interesting because the school where I grew up

(Vermont) was not associated with a parish in any way. I think it is so different to

have that real community involvement… It was a Sisters of Mercy School. We

didn't celebrate Mass together…maybe once a quarter."

Another teacher, Mrs. P., pointed to "the school's attachment to the parish" when

discussing Catholic identity at SLS. The importance of this connection between school

and parish appears to supported by the findings of one study involving lay Catholic

school principals (Arthur, 2012). As one principal in that study stated, "I think it critical

for the school to be a parish ministry…we are supporting the ministry needs of the

parish…the parish is our mother and we are here to help serve the needs of the parish."

(p. 91)

Another study on Lasallian culture in Catholic schools reported that the

participants noted that Catholic schools are linked to the diocese and local parishes and

engage in outreach programs to the parish community while promoting a sense of

community within their own schools (Watson, 2011). Although not one of the

characteristics used to ascertain Catholic identity in this study, the survey used suggested

that only 52% of parents agreed that SLS exists with the express approval and support of

the Bishop. This response suggests that the parents may not understand the connection

between the school and the parish, or the authority of the bishop with regard to Catholic

schools. Although an unintended finding, it does clarify the participants' perception of

their Catholic community, and relationship to the wider Church. It also may contextualize

what may be their attitude toward Church documents on Catholic schools. It is not

uncommon for parishioners to associate themselves with their parish, and this is

especially true for families whose children attend the parish school. Historically parents would be attending Mass weekly and a connection would be made through the prayers and the priest to the wider Church. With Catholics claiming to be "culturally Catholic" only, their attendance at Mass is "optional" and so that connection is not being reinforced.

Catholic Identity and Prayer

Several teachers and the principal and the pastor pointed to the virtues and values being taught at SLS as contributing to the school's Catholic identity. However, a non-Catholic teacher, Mrs. F., a special education teacher, spoke about prayer extensively in relation to Catholic identity. She mentioned the monthly Masses, prayer before class with some teachers, grace before meals, the calling out of intentions at morning assembly and the constant reminders surrounding them each day. A.L., a First-Grade teacher stated, "I became a teacher here because a foundation of faith and knowledge is seamless." She elaborated by saying that she had been in Catholic schools her entire life and that it "made sense" to her. Mrs. P., the theology teacher and YFM (youth formation minister) voiced a different opinion when it came to prayer. "In my opinion prayer is a weakness, here…Knowing Catholic prayers are not necessarily a priority…Teaching religion in every classroom is not a priority. It is the first thing to get dumped when they need more time for something else."

Although 86% of parents surveyed believe that the school is a community that prays together, two of the teacher participants interviewed voiced their desire to have more prayer as part of the experience at SLS. Mrs. C. commented by saying, "We lost weekly adoration because the chapel became a music room. However, there is still a

repository (place of prayer), where the tabernacle is present and parents, teachers and students may go in to pray." Mrs. P, the Youth Formation/Theology teacher remarked, "Fr. K. would like to be here more than he is able. We do some things together like "Penance Services, Stations of the Cross during Lent…but there are some spiritual holes." She went on to explain that the children were not being taught a variety of prayers throughout the year and that not every teacher was teaching Religion every day in their classroom.

Tensions Between Academic Excellence and Inclusivity

Academic excellence is a value included in the SLS mission statement. Over 90% of parents surveyed believe that the school upholds high standards of excellence in all it offers. However, only 80% of parents surveyed felt that the school did everything it could to eliminate obstacles that hinder or exclude students from receiving a Catholic education. During my visits it became obvious that there exists a tension between maintaining the high academic standards, for which it has been known, and providing for the needs of all students. Mr. S., the principal, supports inclusion and is diligent about educating others to what it means to be "catholic." He says, "This is a school for everybody. It can't be just for some." With regard to accessing the curriculum for all students, he adds, "I see Differentiated Instruction in terms of justice. What does the teaching in the classroom look like, so that I can reach all these kids?"

Fr. K. describes the school as a warm and welcoming community. "We have a variety of students. Some of them are not Catholic. Some of them are not Christian. They are always very welcomed. I understand there is a same sex family in the school, but I honestly don't know who they are. There are certain disabilities that we don't feel

equipped to handle, but we do have a Resource Room that assist some children with disabilities but not all."

In interviews with the staff, however, teachers had mixed views on maintaining academic excellence while serving some students with disabilities. They were trying to be inclusive in their classrooms but were honest in their responses about the reality. For example, Mrs. O'L, a Grade 1 teacher, spoke of the principal's initiatives to encourage academic excellence by providing technology-related goals in the school. However, in speaking about special education students, and specifically those who may be on the autism spectrum, she said, "I think this community does not have a lot of awareness of students with this disability. So it is a hard topic to broach. There is a lack of diversity in this area." Mrs. A., Spanish teacher and Grade 1 aide, expressed the opinion that the "School is accepting of all ability levels." Mrs. P., the theology teacher and campus minister, expressed the tension this way, "As a Catholic school we have a responsibility to ensure that the academic education is high, because that's why many students come here. At the same time, we have to balance that with including students with disabilities. It's difficult…These students are achievement-oriented and very focused on grades."

All the participants acknowledged there was little diversity in the school with regard to race, ethnicity and faith. Mrs. P., theology and campus minister, pointed to what she called a "a politically conservative community…mostly Republicans through and through." She elaborated by describing it as "a homogenized, insular community, who are struggling with aspects of Catholic justice issues including immigration, poverty and homosexuality. They really aren't dealing with diversity of any kind."

The Pastor/Principal Relationship

When I interviewed Fr. K., a priest in his late 60s, in the rectory of SLP, he was preparing to leave a parish that he had come to call home for the last twenty-three years. Fr. K., who was in the seminary at the start of Vatican II, said that everything he thought he knew at the time was challenged. "It made me come to terms with what I truly believed." Growing up north of Boston, he attended Catholic school through Grade 8. He then attended the local public high school, followed by Villanova University. He had a broad educational experience before entering the seminary.

During my six full day visits to the school, I only saw and spoke with Fr. K. once. He was not present in the school during my visits, at morning prayer, or at adoration during Catholic Schools Week. During his interview, when asked about relationships in the school community, and particularly about the faculty and administration, he prefaced his comments with the words, "From a birds eye view…"

The Pastor's View of Catholic Identity

Fr. K. first described the school's Catholic identity by saying, "It is faith in action that makes this school Catholic." His philosophy of "enabling the laity" is a reflection of Church teaching, which came from the Second Vatican Council. He elaborated by stating, "One reason I can be here by myself at this point in time is because I have a very capable lay staff as well as multiple volunteers that the lay staff has empowered." He further explained that it was profession of faith in the Catholic Church as well as service to others, and the study of the monthly virtue which all contribute to his understanding of what makes SLS Catholic. "Catholicism as revealed to us through the teachings of Christ and the practices of Christ. I think Catholicism as being defined or lived by Pope Francis,

is something we are striving for. He (Pope Francis) is affirming what we are doing in the school."

In response to probes about the budget, finances or community, he responded, "The school establishes its own priorities. I am not involved, and I don't interfere as long as they stay within their budget. Increases in tuition and renovations are run by me. I have always said "no" to loans."

Fr. K's approach to both his relationship with the school and his philosophy in general is best summed up in his statement, "I have always believed that you hire qualified people and you let them do what you hired them to do. It makes my life a lot easier. I intervene if I have to."

The Principal's View of Catholic Identity

Mr. S., principal for 4 years at SLS and former campus minister at a Catholic high school, gave the most comprehensive answer to what makes the school Catholic. He described it as being "deeply rooted in Catholic values, faith and tradition." Mr. S. views the mission of the school as being one with the mission of the Church, and characterizes the school as mission-driven. He elaborated by saying:

> There's a connection to the traditions of the Church. And there's a real
>
> willingness amongst the school to share and pass on the Faith. To teach the tenets
>
> of the faith and to develop kids where the Faith is meaningful to them. Kids who
>
> practice what is at the heart of our religion. There are these…um…core values
>
> that all Catholic schools share. We share the same commonality of Gospel values.

He continued by describing the parish and school as collaborators as they seek to educate the whole child with a foundation in Gospel values.

I think people see first and foremost… that there's a joy and spirit that should be part of any faith. People see it coming from the kids and from most of the teachers on most days. There is respect and kindness displayed with the teachers to each other and the teachers to the kids and the kids to the kids...It's how we treat one another…So, spirit, respect and commitment to service, and that takes many forms.

Mr. S. also described the challenges of being a parish school with one priest and the difficulty in arranging some sacramental experiences for the students, such as Reconciliation. However, due to his own education and experience, he is comfortable not only sharing his faith but urging others to do so and taking on that leadership role. For example, he was preparing to conduct an Ash Wednesday Service at which he would preside, because the pastor or another priest was unavailable to do so.

Several teachers alluded to the leadership of the principal as the driving force behind what made the school Catholic, citing his spirituality and his weekly meditation e-mails, his encouragement of the spiritual "professional development" for the teachers, and service opportunities, where the staff went together several times a year to locations such as "Rosie's Place" or "Breaking Bread"(a local food pantry). The parent survey supported the teachers' view of the school administration being a contributing factor to the school's strong Catholic identity with over 93% of those surveyed saying that the administrators of the school understand, accept and model the teachings of the Catholic Church.

Summary of Findings

The researcher examined three major questions in this study. The first question addressed the perception of Catholic identity by the constituents of SLS. The second question addressed the perception of what specific activities or characteristics of the school contributed to the perception of a strong Catholic identity. The third question addressed the role of leadership in presenting a strong Catholic identity.

The common response by the participants regarding their perception of Catholic identity, how it was reflective of the mission statement, and how Catholicism influenced the traditions and practices of the school was predominantly the role of service in the community. This service was directed to those in need both inside the school and parish community and in the wider community. In the parent survey 84% of the participants believed that the school instilled in students the responsibility to promote Gospel values and social justice in the world.

The responses of the participants were reflective of the literature which identified distinctive features or characteristics of a Catholic school including the teaching of the Catholic faith, expression of the faith through prayer, sacraments, symbols, service, community and relationships. No one in the study connected a Catholic school to the evangelizing arm of the Catholic Church.

This study also found that that the spiritual leadership of the principal contributed greatly to the overall perception of Catholic identity by the participants. It was the principal, more than the pastor or the teachers, who had the clearest and most thorough understanding of Catholic identity as described in the literature. It was also the principal who was most able to articulate the characteristics evident in SLS, which demonstrated

its Catholic identity. While not one individual described all the elements of Catholic identity, collectively all the characteristics were mentioned.

Another finding of this study was that the relationship between the pastor and the principal was characterized by mutual support, an element of trust, the pastor's "birds-eye-view" of what was going on in the school, and the perception of the pastor's presence. In addition, although the pastor was not involved in the day-to-day running of the school, his presence was linked to the perception of Catholic identity and both his leaving and the organization of the new collaborative was a source of uncertainty for the administration and staff of the school.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research study explored the perceptions of Catholic identity at Saint Luke School (SLS), a parish elementary school located in a suburb in Massachusetts. The researcher reviewed literature pertaining to Catholic identity, culture, history and empirical studies of Catholic identity in schools. Church documents and the contributions of experts in the field of Catholic identity were used to develop a conceptual framework. In turn, this framework was used to guide the development of interview questions and an observation format for the case study. The study explored three research questions regarding Catholic identity at SLS:

1. How is Catholic identity perceived in a parish elementary school by various stakeholder groups?

2. What activities and initiatives in this school do participants perceive have contributed to the perception of Catholic identity?

3. What is the role of the school principal and the pastor in the development and support of Catholic identity?

The researcher employed a qualitative case approach, which included one-on-one interviews, observations and the analysis of school documents. The participants who were interviewed included the pastor, the principal and five teachers. Parents participated in an on-line survey. The themes emerged through analysis of the interviews, field notes taken during visits to the school, and survey data. The goals of this study were to determine how the members of the SLS community perceived the school's Catholic

identity, and how the pastor/principal relationship contributed to this perception. This chapter provides a discussion of the findings and implications for further study.

The Pastor-Principal Relationship

The pastor/principal relationship at SLS, as a contributing factor to the school's Catholic identity, was even more complex than anticipated by the researcher. This relationship was rooted in both the respect that each of these leaders had for the other, while the acknowledgement by all, including the pastor himself, that he was not present in the school during the week. Although the pastor did not appear to be a regular presence in the school, the participants in the study associated him with the school's Catholic identity. It is difficult to determine why the pastor had this effect. It is possible that although his presence was infrequent, the understanding that he was present at all signaled to constituents that there exists a relationship between the school and the Church, and it did add to the Catholic culture. It is also possible that in hiring and placing his trust in a strong faith-filled leader, Mr. S., the perception of Catholic identity was again linked to the pastor by his strong commitment to the Catholic identity of the school. It is also plausible that given the characteristics used by the research to measure Catholic identity, the presence of the pastor is not necessary for a strong Catholic identity to be present.

In their study on lay leadership, Australian researchers, Belmonte and Cranston (2009) note that the presence of the pastor and his support is needed to support the principal, and participate in collaborative decision-making. Others note that the non-involvement of the pastor may create issues in leadership and a weakening of this Catholic identity (Brock & Fraser, 2001; Nuzzi et al., 2009). This case study of SLS

found that school's perception of Catholic identity was more influenced by the principal than the pastor. Stakeholders perceived the school as having a strong Catholic identity, even though the pastor played a limited role.

The literature which discusses the role of the principal in a Catholic school as spiritual leader points to the importance of this individual in providing a witness to the community and possessing the skills necessary to form and transmit Catholic culture, foster faith and build community. The principal must also foster the spirituality of the community (USCCB, 1977; (Bryk et al., 1993; Hunt et al., 2000; Schuttloffel, 1999; Ciriello, 1993; Helm, 1989). Yet the Catholic parish elementary school is a ministry of the parish and under the leadership of the pastor. Several authors conclude that the relationship between the principal and pastor should be supportive, trusting and collaborative. Together they promote the Catholic identity of the school and are responsible for the spiritual growth of the young people in their care (Arthur, 2012; (DeFiore et al., 2009; Brock & Fraser, 2001).

The participants from the SLS school community identified specific initiatives of the principal as contributing to the school's Catholic identity. Every participant mentioned the principal's faith and his ability to share that faith with the community. Particularly, the teachers interviewed all cited the content of his weekly e-mails as having a profound effect on his leadership linked to the school's Catholic identity. In contrast, there was no mention of communication with the pastor on a regular basis, with the exception of a monthly liturgy and a few other small and isolated interactions.

Research on Catholic school leadership has pointed to the added responsibility of the principal to possess the skills to maintain and to grow Catholic culture and identity.

(Bryk et al., 1993; Hunt et al., 2000). Some researchers, such as Hobbie et al. (2010), argue that the faith leadership of the principal not only institutionalizes Catholic doctrine and tradition, but strengthens the Catholic identity of the school by prayerful mindfulness and witness. This study supported the previous findings of this research.

The principal's leadership role in the school and his "spiritual capital" (Grace, 2002) and "moral code" (Arthur, 2012), were identified as necessary to maintain the Catholic identity of the school. During his interview, Mr. S. spoke openly and honestly about his faith and how his prayer life and his participation at Mass and reception of the sacraments supported and strengthened his vocation as principal. This "spiritual capital," combined with his education and his former position as a campus minister at XBHS, enabled him to organize, prepare and lead prayer services, including reconciliation services. "Given my background in campus ministry; it's a natural part of who I am and what I do. We want to make sure that our students are exploring the faith. It's important to me and essential to our identity." It also prompted him to provide outreach to the parish by attending the Sunday liturgy in the parish once a month with his family. As he noted, "Even though we are not a part of this parish, once a month we come so that people can see me with my family. People see me living my faith."

Mr. S. was also able to understand the importance of, reflect upon, and put into practice various actions that would lead to a strengthening of Catholic identity in the school. His ability to both inform and challenge others, while also maintaining the ability to reflect and contemplate on what was necessary to promote Catholic identity in the school (Cook, 2001; Schuttloffel, 1999; Convey, 1992) appears to be a major factor in the community's perception of its Catholic identity. His "moral code" and sense of justice

provided him with the framework to encourage inclusiveness, differentiated instruction and the pursuit of more meaningful service to others by students. One participant described Mr. S. as "a prayerful human being. His faith is an integral part of who he is. When he speaks to us, he uses the word, 'community.'"

Although the principal felt supported by the pastor, and participants mentioned that the pastor supported the school, my field notes noted that he was not present in the school at morning prayer, or at other times during the day during my six visits over a period of 3 months to the school. Mr. S., the principal, described his relationship with the pastor this way, "He trusts me to do the job. He doesn't try to micromanage me or the school. He supports me and trusts me to do the job." To underscore the pastor's "hands-off" approach, the school website does not contain any letter, pictures or communication from the pastor, and in turn, the parish bulletin makes few references to the school community.

In Arthur's (2012) qualitative study, *What is the Lived Experience of Laywomen Who Serve As Catholic Elementary School Principals in Their Role As Faith Leaders*, the six participants who were parish school elementary principals advocated strongly for the presence of the priest/pastor connection in the parish school. Five of the six principals in that study described how priests "serve as the primary link between the Church and the Catholic school. Priests who oversee a Catholic school provide assurance that the school is in communion with the Church, a tenant of Catholic identity." In fact, their absence in the schools was a cause of great concern.

In a similar Australian study, the words, actions and presence of the parish priest were essential to the support of the Catholic school and its Catholic identity (Belmonte

and Cranston, 2009). Fr. K's apparent lack of direct involvement was also in contradiction to the findings of Nuzzi et al. (2009), which recommended engagement of the clergy in parish schools. Although participants at SLS noted that the pastor was responsible for a large parish they nonetheless wish he were more actively engaged. The attitudes and feelings of the participants reflected the findings of a study by Brock and Fraser, *Catholic School Principal Job Satisfaction* (2001), which found that pastors should be directly involved in the spiritual and religious aspects of the school. Their presence in the lives of the students, faculty and parents brought a heightened sense of spirituality and thus Catholic identity to the school.

All participants noted that the principal and pastor had a good working relationship from what they could observe. Yet, there appeared to be varying degrees to which participants accepted this relationship was all that it could be. The teachers interviewed seemed to understand the time constraints and the "pulling away" of the pastor due to his upcoming transfer. However, they indicated their desire for him to be more present in the life of the school. As for the pastor, he places a great deal of trust and confidence in the principal to guide the school spiritually. He notes, "For J., spirituality is not an addendum, not an effort. It's part of who he is. There have been times in my history where my involvement in the school has been more extensive because it was required. Today, I am quite comfortable with the way it is being run… There's not a need for my intervention…I have always believed you hire qualified people, and you let them do what you hired them to do. It makes my life a lot easier."

The findings of this study would indicate that the strength of the lay principal at this school in many ways compensates for any loss of Catholic identity. Both Mr. S's

educational background, combined with his personal attributes of confidence and humility, seemed to have prepared him well for his role as spiritual leader at SLS. His spirituality, and his understanding and knowledge of faith was mentioned by all participants. In addition, his implementation of new programs both rooted in faith and academics led others on the staff to make a connection between academics, technology, special education, and the school's mission and its Catholic identity.

Fr. K. shared with the researcher the challenge of leaving this "family" after twenty-three years. He reminisced about having spent more than half of his priesthood here and watching the school grow. Fr. K. also spoke about the stress of being the only priest in the parish. Later in the interview, he volunteered, "Moving from here will be wrenching. I understand that. I know that. Fr. A., pastor of one of the parishes in the new collaborative, and I have worked for a number of years together and tried to prepare the people for what is inevitable. Some of them are not able to move beyond the fact that I am leaving at the present moment. With regard to the school, I hope that whoever comes in is able to recognize the giftedness of the staff before they implement whatever changes they want to make. The school, if allowed to continue the way it is, will be fine."

However, the question raised by the pastor was echoed in the concerns of the participants, "Would the school be fine?" All participants voiced apprehension and concern about how the parish collaborative and the departure of the pastor would affect the Catholic identity of SLS. The 288 parishes in the Archdiocese will be organized into 135 parish collaboratives, which will consist of two or three parishes with only one pastor assigned.

From the principal's perspective there may be more priests in the collaborative to give more time to the school, particularly in the form of Mass and the sacraments. However, he also voiced concerns about the unknown leadership style of the incoming pastor and his desire to be involved in the school. The theology teacher was hoping for the same, but admittedly did not know what the future would bring. The other teachers freely discussed their concerns about the risk to the school's Catholic identity depending upon the support and presence of a pastor after the formation of the collaborative. To date, there appears to be no research on new parish collaboratives and the role of the pastor in promoting and contributing to Catholic school identity when he must service several parishes simultaneously.

The Role of Service in Catholic Identity

Although others may cite faith community and culture as the most important indicators of Catholic identity (Convey, 2012), at SLS the faith community and culture of the school is intrinsically linked to service. Members perceive their school as having a strong Catholic identity, and identify service to others as its most important characteristic. The school's mission and commitment to the welfare of others supports the literature that explains that "service" is aimed at raising the awareness of the community to become more just and caring, and should provide opportunities for Christian service beyond the school day and the classroom (Paulo Freire as cited in Grace, 2002; Ozar & Weitzel-O'Neill, 2012).

According to the teaching of the Church, characteristics of Catholic identity include the gospel message, community and service, and where they exist, the Church exists (NCCB, 1972; CCE, 1997). The role of service with regard to Catholic identity

links Catholic social teaching, concern for the poor, marginalized, and those needing assistance with the mission of Catholic education. The school community of SLS and all Catholic schools are called to act on behalf of others, on behalf of justice and peace with a clear directive to speak out wherever there is injustice. (USCCB, 1977; USCCB, 1990; Groome, 1996; Cook and Simonds, 2011).

The culture at SLS overwhelmingly supports the characteristic of service cited in the literature on Catholic identity (USCCB, 1997, 1990; Groome, 1996). During the interviews conducted in this case study, every participant immediately linked the school's Catholic identity with both the various kinds of service and the amount of service performed by the members of the community.

For the individual participants, "service" appeared to take on a life form of it's own. There is a gap in the literature regarding how the role of service is integrated into the Catholic identity of a Catholic school (Sultman & Brown, 2011). In this case study it was, without comparison, the single characteristic that each participant could speak about extensively. Service at SLS has been institutionalized without losing its organic nature. And while being a pervasive characteristic of its identity, it was not clear that all members were able to make a connection between faith and service.

"Faith in Action," "outreach to those in need," "the power of one," and "building the city of God" were phrases which occurred frequently in the interviews with the faculty, principal and pastor. Participants spoke extensively about feeding the hungry, and collecting food and clothing. It became clear that all members of the community, students, faculty, administration and parents took leadership roles in raising the

consciousness of the community about various causes and needs, and then created opportunities for all to respond.

It is a teaching of the Catholic Church that service to others is linked to living out one's Baptismal promise, and therefore, a Catholic school, as an evangelizing arm of the Church, has a responsibility to assist the members of the community in making each person's faith alive and active. It would appear that prayer and theological reflection with regard to the Gospel and the teachings of Jesus should be essential components to these programs in Catholic schools. However, there was not a lot of evidence to support that staff, students, or parents of the SLS community could determine the difference between *Christian Service* and *Community Service*, which might be practiced in public high schools and institutions.

In contrast, it appeared that the spiritual leadership team of the pastor, principal and the campus minister framed commitment to service within the context of prayer and reflection as a related experience of faith. According to the pastor, students are given many opportunities to participate in Christian Service, which he called "faith in action."

Mr. S., the principal, noted the many food drives, bake sales and collections that took place at SLS, but also voiced the need to have more students perform actual Christian service. He discussed his desire to have students come back and share their experience of serving others with the wider community during an assembly or at morning prayer. He also mentioned that, with the addition of the campus minister, the middle school students are participating in a *Matthew 25* experience. This Gospel passage points out that serving and caring for others is the equivalent of serving Jesus. The core message is that those who follow Jesus, clothe, feed, and house those in need.

The campus minister related the experience that students had during the summer participating in a program entitled *Just Five Days,* a 5-day service program which included prayer liturgy and reflection designed for middle school students. Both connected service performed by members of the community to its roots in serving others in Christ's Name. She also discussed at length the group called "Christ in Action," an after-school club, where they begin with prayer and serve others by becoming Christ's hands. Although a student-run organization, it is supported by all members of the school community.

During "Operation Christmas Child" students visited each classroom and made a presentation using Powerpoint and music to engage all the students of the school. The theology teacher/campus minister noted during the interview that the connection between prayer and service may be a weakness in the school community as a whole, but that middle school students in her theology class do keep reflective journals. "In my opinion, the prayer is a weakness…if you are a person of faith, you are giving. That is essential to being a Christian."

Catholic Identity and the Parish-School Relationship

Another finding of this study was that the perception of Catholic identity among the participants was strengthened by the parish school relationship. However, it was not clear whether or not the participants understood the connection of the parish with the larger universal Catholic Church. The link between the parish and the school is supported by the literature, which identifies the school not only as a community unto itself, but as part of a larger community, the parish and the wider Church (Groome, 1996; Miller, 2006; Watson, 2011). Not unlike many Catholics, participants in this study linked the

school's identity to the parish, but only the pastor, principal and campus minister articulated the existence of a relationship the school has to the Catholic Church or authority of the Cardinal.

There is a gap in the literature regarding the relationship between parish and school and how that translates to the community's perception of Catholic identity. In this case study, members of SLS school community associated themselves with the school first and then the parish. However, this identification with the parish did not express itself in Sunday Mass attendance. The participants estimated that probably less than 30% of the students at SLS attended Mass on the weekends.

Fr. K., the pastor, knew the members of the school community who attended Mass on the weekends. However, it appears that few efforts were made to reach out to students or families who were not in the parish, but were members of the school community. He noted that, "The parish and school are not as connected as I would like, but we have certainly worked toward that." Later, he remarked, "Most of the parents I interact with are parishioners because their children are involved in altar serving, lecturing or youth choir." Although faculty, staff and parents were welcomed to participate in parish retreats, liturgies, Reconciliation Services and other faith experiences, providing these experiences in the school and viewing the school community as a source of evangelization did not appear to be a priority (Belmonte & Cranston, 2009; Brock & Fraser, 2001).

The principal identified the school as an essential component of the parish and had arranged with the pastor for a monthly Sunday Mass, which would bring together members of the school community and parish community. His efforts supported the

findings of a study of Catholic school principals (Arthur, 2012), where principals viewed the school as one with the mission of the parish. One principal in Arthur's study identified the parish as "mother" to describe nourishing and caring for the faithful, as a mother cares for her child.

Only Mr. S., the principal and the Campus Minister seemed to recognize the parish as "mother" and assumed the responsibility to assist her other various ministries. The principal described the school this way. "We're next to a Church, but it's so much more than that. We're affiliated with a parish but there's a deeply rooted sense of values that are Catholic. There's a connection to the traditions of the Church." As a practicing Catholic, and the leader of the school community, he elaborated by describing instances where the school was supporting the parish by participating in monthly joint parish/school liturgy on Sundays. The Campus Minister added that other ministries assisted by the school community included service and worship opportunities.

He also described the mission of the school as being one with the mission of the Church and characterized the parish and school as collaborators as they seek to educate the whole child. "We want to see a family parish connection and how the families connect…not just the school and families but the school, the parish and the family."

Mr. S. and all other participants admitted uncertainty with how the parish/school relationship would reveal itself when the school became attached to three parishes through the collaborative. It did not appear as if other members of the community perceived their Catholic identity as having a strong relationship with the bishop or the Church hierarchy (Miller, 2006). Unlike a similar study on Catholic culture (Watson,

2011), participants did not articulate a connection between the parish, the diocese or the bishop.

Catholic Identity and Prayer and Worship

Every participant described prayer and worship as connected to their perception of Catholic identity (USCCB, 1997; Groome, 1996; Miller 2006; Cook & Simonds, 2011). However, the spiritual component of Catholic identity was weighted differently by each of the individuals interviewed. Although all participants referred to a relationship with God expressed through prayer and liturgical celebrations, it appeared as if all did not view this characteristic of Catholic identity as the primary element of the school's Catholic identity.

All participants cited monthly liturgies and morning prayer as examples of the priority placed on prayer and worship by the Catholic community of SLS. This supports the literature, which describes Catholic schools as places where a relationship with God is fostered and where members of the community discover a place of faith in their life (USCCB, 1977; NCCB, 1977; USCCB, 1997; Groome, 1998; Cook & Simonds, 2011). Fr. K. explained, "To justify the money that went into the school, we had to be different. And God had to be the difference. The student graduates…hopefully with a relationship with God."

Several teachers mentioned the "prayer box" at the rear of the gym, where all members of the community placed their prayer intentions. Mr. S., the principal, explained that parents frequently joined the school community for morning prayer and once a week met to say the rosary in the school. He also cited the priority for prayer and worship evidenced by the hiring of a theology and Campus Minister. The campus minister voiced

some concerns with regard to prayer and teaching the students the traditional prayers of the Church. She also mentioned the relationship of prayer to service, and the challenge in making that connection for the students.

This researcher noted that it was the principal, pastor and campus minister who described their role in assisting students develop a relationship with God, supporting studies on Catholic identity by other researchers (Sultman & Brown, 2011). Participants who were classroom teachers expressed relationships with one another, students and the larger community, but did not articulate that they, themselves, played a role in guiding students in their relationship with God. This contradicted the Church literature, which illustrated the powerful responsibility of lay people to teach the faith (CCE, 1982). One of the teachers, a non-Catholic, who participated in the study, most strongly identified the Catholic identity of the school with prayer, Mass and the outward signs of Catholicism in the school (e.g. statues, crucifixes, and proximity to the Church). Both rituals and symbols support the Catholic school environment, which in turn support its Catholic identity (Convey, 1992).

Tensions between Academic Excellence and Inclusivity

There existed an obvious tension between academic excellence and inclusivity among all the participants interviewed. They agreed that high academic achievement was expected of all students, which supported the findings of other researchers and Church authorities, where overall achievement is higher and the climate, mission, and purpose positively impact student achievement (Coleman et al., 1982; Bryk et al., 1993; Ozar & Weitzell O'Neill, 2012; USCCB, 1997). One participant remarked, "People choose this school first of all because of the academic excellence."

Other teachers suggested that the school was viable and successful in part because parents viewed the school as a "private" school. As one teacher remarked, "Parents may be looking for an independent school. They have to adjust their thinking." The participants' perception was that parents viewed the curriculum as more challenging, and that their children would attend more exclusive Catholic or private high schools due to the education received at SLS. Finally by paying tuition, teachers perceived that parents were entitled to more individual attention. They feared that any loss of the school's identity with regard to exceptional academic work would result in a loss of viability.

On the whole, the teachers appeared conflicted about how to maintain academic excellence and simultaneously include students in the school community with learning disabilities. They seemed to recognize the ideal of servicing all students and yet acknowledged that they were at odds with accepting students who would not be capable of reaching a high level of academic achievement, and providing the resources for those students. As one teacher said, "We only have so many resources and only so much time."

Clearly, Mr. S., the principal, understood the tension and the professional development involved in supporting teachers and students in achieving academic excellence while simultaneously remaining true to the mission. Noting that in the last few years SLS has accepted more students on IEPs, he asserted, "This is a school for everybody. It can't be just for some." In addition, he appeared to understand that in his role as leader inclusivity begins with him, supporting a study on leadership in Catholic education and providing for students with disabilities (Huppe, 2011).

Mr. S. cited the addition of a special education teacher as a step toward changing the culture in the school community. "Sometimes people have had a rigid understanding

of Catholic education. We need to see special education and Differentiated Instruction in terms of justice." His decisions as both spiritual and academic leader supported the literature that cites a characteristic of Catholic identity as a place of inclusion where all are welcomed in Christ's Name (Groome, 1996; Long & Schuttloffel, 2006; Quinn, 2010). Mr. S. acknowledged the need to recognize the dignity of each child by also focusing on the academic achievement of all (Grace, 2002).

Mapping Interview Themes with Catholic School Identity Characteristics

Although not equally emphasized, all of the characteristics from the Catholic School Identity framework outlined in Chapter 3 were evident in SLS participants' responses. For example, the theme of prayer and spiritual formation connected with Characteristic #2 ("Catholic Faith and Tradition"), while academic excellence and its tension with inclusivity could find its roots in Characteristic #3 ("Academic Program Where Faith, Knowledge and Tradition Intersect") as well as Characteristic #6 ("Community Where All Are Included and Welcomed in Christ's Name"). Brief quotes from the participant interviews will be used to illustrate where themes from the interviews intersected with characteristics from the Catholic School Identity framework.

"Everyone is recognized and valued."

While the "dignity of the human person" (Characteristic #1) was not mentioned specifically by any participant, many interviewees referenced recognizing the gifts and talents of all, and celebrating the achievements of all. Participants used the word "respect" in responding to this question, which speaks to the dignity of each human person. The parent survey revealed that 86% of parents felt that SLS supports the social, emotional and spiritual growth of every student.

"Everyday we have the opportunity to pray together."

Practicing "Catholic Faith and Tradition"(Characteristic #2) was identified by frequent references to liturgy, sacramental experiences, the study of the faith, prayer and the development of a relationship with God. The study revealed that community members felt that they had numerous opportunities to practice their faith. Through prayer, Eucharistic celebrations, service, religion classes, retreats, and Catholic tradition the members of the SLS community connect to their spiritual life.

"Here, faith and knowledge are seamless."

Characteristic #3, "An Academic Program Where Faith, Knowledge and Tradition Intersect," appeared to be somewhat linked to the participants' perceptions of Catholic identity. However, two teachers confessed to conflicting feelings about excellence in education as part of the school's Catholic identity, and providing for the needs of all students, especially those with a learning disability. It was the principal, Mr. S., who had the most comprehensive view of how the academic program is formed by faith, and how that program is then translated into teaching that services all students.

"There's a joy and a spirit here….It's how we treat each other."

A community where Gospel values are lived and shared (Characteristic #4) seemed to be synonymous in the minds of the participants with creating positive relationships. One teacher remarked, "To be part of this (school) family, brings my faith back alive for me." In general, participants identified Gospel values as the positive relationships that exist among members of the school community and the environment where all are accepted and encouraged to live for others. As Mr. S. described the atmosphere in the school, "There's respect and kindness displayed with the teachers to

each other and the teachers to the kids, and the kids to the kids, from the pastor, and it starts with me."

"We're inclusive but honest."

Creating a community that is inclusive (Characteristic #6) was evidenced by the participants' description of SLS as a welcoming community. As this researcher explored their interpretation, however, this characteristic had limits in the minds of some. One participant said, "We're inclusive, but honest… we have to be honest about what we can provide…A public school is much more diverse." The principal also voiced concerns with regard to this characteristic of Catholic identity, and he presented it as an opportunity for growth in the school community. In fact, Mr. S. had the most comprehensive view of how the academic program is formed by faith, and how that program is then translated into teaching that services all students.

<center>**Recommendations for Further Research**</center>

The data presented in this case study suggests several recommendations for future research. The researcher hopes that more readers will see the need for examining Catholic schools and their response to Catholic identity in order to add to the body of literature and to fill in the gaps. What follows are some recommendations.

Although not planned as part of the selection process, this case study presented a parish and parish school in transition to a collaborative. A decrease in vocations, a decline in Mass attendance and participation in parish life and a decrease in the number of parishes able to sustain themselves financially, have resulted in a pastoral plan, which calls for joining several parishes under the direction of a pastor and a pastoral team. For example, in the Archdiocese represented in this study, 288 parishes have been organized

into 135 collaboratives. These are a means for fostering common action, combining resources and setting a common vision. Further research is needed on the effect that collaboratives will have on parish schools, and the role of the pastor with regard to the governance structure of these schools. How will these changes affect the Catholic identity of schools in the Archdiocese? How should the Catholic Schools Office and the Priest Personnel Board cooperate to assign chaplains or pastors, who see the evangelization opportunities present in Catholic schools?

This inquiry details how the principal affects the Catholic identity of the school. With lack of vocations and fewer priests, a pastoral presence in Catholic schools will be even more of a challenge. Catholic school principals have found their roles expanded. What education, qualities and personal characteristics should be required of those seeking leadership in Catholic schools? How will the Church provide leaders for Catholic schools? Both quantitative and qualitative studies on the lived experiences of Catholic school principals may assist in identifying those qualities, and preparing young people for leadership roles. This includes research to determine what criteria are currently used to hire principals, the outcomes of that hiring, and how the outcomes are associated with the criteria and characteristics of Catholic identity. Organizational research has done a great deal of work in this area and perhaps should help inform such research.

Mass attendance has dropped dramatically in recent years, and many Catholics now identify themselves as "culturally" Catholic. In this period of "The New Evangelization," future studies could focus on how the Catholic school has replaced the Catholic Church in the eyes of some. These studies could perhaps identify what outreach

or programs by the Church may lead parents and families back to Catholic worship and community.

Another valuable source of research would be the role of special education in Catholic education. Qualitative studies of Catholic schools, which have successfully responded to the needs of all learners while maintaining a standard of academic excellence, would be beneficial for all schools. How have they provided for special education in terms of budget, professional development and scheduling? This issue merits closer examination as it is consistent with the mission of Catholic education.

This study demonstrated that the SLS community perceived service to others as the characteristic which most contributed to the Catholic identity of the school. It would be illuminating to conduct more qualitative and quantitative studies to determine the importance of service as a perception of Catholic identity, and also the perception of service itself. Do members of the community link service to others to the Gospel and the directives of Jesus Christ, or is service seen as a separate activity? Do students differentiate between Christian service and community service? What are best practices in assisting school communities to relate service to an expression of faith and prayer?

Recommendations for Future Practice

The following section presents the researcher's recommendations for future practices that would promote and strengthen Catholic identity. These practices are divided into three categories. The first focuses on recommendations for principals and pastors. The second focuses on recommendations for future practices of the faculty. Finally, the third focuses on recommendations for combined practice for the Catholic Schools Office and Clergy Personnel.

Recommendations for Principals and Pastors

The participants in this particular study linked the pastor to the perception of strong Catholic identity. The pastor of the new collaborative, which includes SL parish and school, should make an effort to be present to the principal, faculty and staff. His presence and engagement would not only support the principal in spiritually shepherding the school, but also offer opportunities for the students, faculty and staff for reception of the sacraments.

Generalizations should not be made based on a singular case study. However, the results of this one study would suggest that pastors would be well advised to view the school community as a sub-set of the parish community. It would also be consistent with Church teaching to consider it an independent, fertile field of evangelization. Being present to the members of the school community, getting to know the students, families and teachers as an independent congregation would provide benefits to both school and parish. At SLS and other parish schools in the Archdiocese, many members of the school community are not members of the parish community. This community within a community provides opportunities for parents to learn more about the Catholic faith, to pray and to worship together as adults and also as families. Pastors with parish schools might embrace this opportunity to serve families.

This study also pointed to the importance of the "spiritual capital" of the principal and how that capital influenced the stakeholders' perception of Catholic identity. Through prayer, sacrament and worship, Mr. S. was able to feed the school community with his own spirituality. It is vital for the spiritual growth of the SLS community that Mr. S. continue to take the time for prayer, reflection, and reception of the sacraments.

Other principals should be provided with the professional opportunities to address their faith life.

At SLS, the pastor/principal leadership team and its importance in the perception of Catholic identity appears to be assisted by the presence of a campus minister/theology teacher. The team should continue to provide for this role in the budget, and should be responsible for providing continued opportunities for spiritual growth of the faculty and staff through prayer, retreats and courses in the Catholic faith. These experiences should be expanded to include Church teachings and documents on Catholic education and culture. In addition, the leadership team should ensure that a link exists between faith, prayer, and service to others. Other Catholic parish schools should make a similar commitment in order to support the Catholic identity of its community.

The role of campus minister is important to not only the students, but also to the faculty and staff and as support for the principal and pastor. The person in this leadership role may be able to organize professional development for teachers, prayer services and other para-liturgical experiences, as well as reinforce the Catholic identity of the school by both their presence, and their relationships with students, parents, teachers, principal and pastor.

Mr. S., in his role as academic leader, understands the need for Catholic schools to be inclusive. In addition to ensuring on-site special education teachers, he is providing the needed professional development for faculty and staff. Although the school is not racially or economically diverse, and has not encountered in its community some of the societal issues confronting other Catholic parish schools, Mr. S. speaks quite candidly about how those issues impact his notion of Catholic identity. The leadership teams in

other Catholic parish schools should recognize their responsibility to provide for the needs of all students, whose parents wish them to have a Catholic education. Principals and pastors must confront the "private school" mentality that suggests only high academic achievers may attend a Catholic school. In addition, providing tuition assistance and being open to receiving students from a variety of family backgrounds is essential for Catholic schools to be schools for everyone, thus strengthening the school's Catholic identity. Educating the whole school community, including parents, parishioners, faculty, staff and students, becomes the work of the leadership team if there is to be a truly inclusive "catholic" community.

Recommendations for Faculty and Staff

The faculty and staff members of SLS should continue their efforts to grow in faith by focusing on their prayer life, opportunities for spiritual direction, worship and continued reception of the sacraments. In addition, courses explaining the Catholic school as part of the evangelizing arm of the Church, and the witness each teacher provides for students and families would be beneficial. Also, providing opportunities for the faculty and staff to read Church documents, which pertain to Catholic schools, and the role of service as an expression of faith could provide a foundation for school community discussion.

Faculty and staff members of other parish Catholic schools should meet regularly to share their faith and understanding of Catholic culture, philosophy, principles and practices of Catholic education. Reading portions of documents outlining the importance of Catholic education to the faith would assist faculty and staff in articulating and living all the characteristics of Catholic identity. Praying and serving others as a community

would support and contribute to the spiritual development of the staff. Professional development providing for the needs of all students and linking and analyzing how this practice supports an inclusive Catholic identity will support positive changes in an effort to align mission, philosophy and practice.

Recommendations for the Catholic School Office and Clergy Personnel

Diocesan offices should create a collaborative process for selection of both pastors and principals for parishes with schools. Although Fr. K. appreciated the school in some capacity, and supported its existence, it was not clear to the researcher that he understood how vital his role was to the school community, and in doing so missed opportunities to evangelize and enter into the sacredness of the lives of the individuals in the community. Assigning chaplains to schools who understand school communities and how the presence of a priest has the ability to strengthen the Catholic culture of the school, as well as evangelize members of that community, would be an important step.

There is a perceived disconnect between the role and the importance of the pastor as canonical leader of a Catholic school, and those who decide these assignments. Research to determine what education, training and support pastors are given in their leadership roles in strengthening Catholic identity in Catholic schools would be helpful. This need for pastor education is essential for parish schools, where the pastor is the ultimate authority. Assigning pastors who understand the spiritual and temporal needs of a school community to parishes with schools offer these schools the best opportunity for living their mission and for their ultimate survival.

Conclusion

It was an honor and a privilege to be invited into the SLS school community to discuss with the pastor, principal and teachers their perceptions of Catholic identity. Their efforts at maintaining a parish school with a strong Catholic identity should be commended. Although they face many of the same challenges of other Catholic schools in this Archdiocese, they are fortunate to have a strong, committed spiritual leader in Mr. S., the principal. The results of this study reflected many of the same findings of other researchers with regards to the characteristics of Catholic identity identified by Church documents, theologians and scholars.

Catholic identity is essential to the future of Catholic schools. A clear understanding, direction and commitment on the part of archdiocesan leaders, and a collaborative effort on the part of pastors and principals, could lead to stronger Catholic identity for parish elementary schools. If these schools do not assist students in developing a relationship with Christ, and simultaneously give witness to a worldview grounded in the Gospel and Church teachings, then it will be impossible to distinguish them from private schools or charter schools. It is my prayer that this research may assist others as they work to strengthen the Catholic identity in Catholic elementary schools. It is also my fervent hope and prayer that small, Catholic parish elementary schools will be provided with the financial and human resources needed to strengthen their Catholic identity and continue their important work of evangelization and education.

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Interview Protocol - Teachers and Board Members

1) In your opinion what makes your school Catholic?
Do other people hold different views of the school's Catholic identity? What are they? How does the mission statement reflect this particular Catholic school?

2) On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the least and 10 being the most, to what extent does Catholicism influence the practices at the school? Please explain the reasoning for choosing this number. (Probe: Are there other things that should be happening?)

3.) In what ways, if any, does the school support students and others in the community as they seek to develop their talents and gifts?
Probe: How are they encouraged to reach their highest potential?
Probe: How are individual differences in ability, or culture, or language, or faith experience respected?

4) What opportunities, if any, are there for teachers, students and parents to express their faith? What role do the principal and pastor play in creating and supporting these opportunities?

5.) How would you describe the relationships within the school community?

6.) In what ways, if any, do members of the school community have opportunities to serve others? Can you give an example?

7.) In what ways, if any, is your school inclusive and welcoming? Give examples.
Probes: What about same sex families? Students with disabilities? ELL students and families? Students of other faith?

8.) How is Catholic faith and tradition reflected across the academic program and the curriculum?

9.) Are there specific initiatives that the principal has implemented over the years? Describe them. How do these relate, if at all, to the school's Catholic identity?

10.) In what ways, if any, do the pastor and principal work together in the school? (Probe for budget, faith experiences, community building)

11.) What do Gospel values mean to you? How, if at all, does this school make a connection between everyday experiences and Gospel values? Can you give any examples?

Interview Protocol -Principal

1) In your opinion what makes your school Catholic?
Do other people hold different views of the school's Catholic identity? What are they? Does the language in the mission statement refer to your Catholic identity?

2) On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the least and 10 being the most, to what extent does Catholicism influence the practices at the school? Please explain the reasoning for choosing this number. (Probe: Are there other things that should be happening?)

3) What opportunities, if any, are there for teachers, students and parents to express their faith? What role does the principal and pastor play in creating and supporting these opportunities?

4) How would you describe the relationships within the school community?

5) In what ways, if any, do members of the school community have opportunities to serve others? Can you give an example?

6) In what ways, if any, is your school inclusive and welcoming? Give examples.

7) How is Catholic faith and tradition reflected across the academic program and the curriculum?

8) Are there specific initiatives that the principal has implemented over the years? Describe them. How do these relate, if at all, to the school's Catholic identity?

9) How does your working relationship with the pastor affect the life of the school? (Probe for budget, faith experiences, community building)

APPENDIX C

Interview Protocol – Pastor

1) In your opinion what makes your school Catholic?
Do other people hold different views of the school's Catholic identity? What are they?

2) On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the least and 10 being the most, to what extent does Catholicism influence the practices at the school? Please explain the reasoning for choosing this number. (Probe: Are there other things that should be happening?)

3) What opportunities, if any, are there for teachers, students and parents to express their faith? What role does the principal and pastor play in creating and supporting these opportunities?

4) How would you describe the relationships within the school community?

5) In what ways, if any, do members of the school community have opportunities to serve others? Can you give an example?

6) In what ways, if any, is your school inclusive and welcoming? Give examples.

7) How is Catholic faith and tradition reflected across the academic program and the curriculum?

8) Are there specific initiatives that the principal has implemented over the years? Describe them. How do these relate, if at all, to the school's Catholic identity?

9) How does your working relationship with the principal affect the life of the school? (Probe for budget, faith experiences, community building)

APPENDIX D

Catholic Identity Defining Characteristics Parents/ Community Survey

Defining Characteristics of Catholic Schools: Survey for Parents / Community Stakeholders
Instructions:

The purpose of this survey is to find out your opinions about your school. Read each statement and choose the response that most closely matches your opinion. Please answer each question honestly. Your response will be completely confidential.

Gender:	☐ Male
	☐ Female
Race:	☐ American Indian or Alaska Native
	☐ Asian
	☐ Black or African American
	☐ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
	☐ White
	☐ Two or more races
Ethnicity:	☐ Hispanic
	☐ Not Hispanic or Latino
Religious Affiliation:	☐ Catholic
	☐ Non-Catholic
Adults Relation to School:	☐ Parent
	☐ Community Member
	☐ Other
Oldest Child's Grade in this School:	☐ 4th grade or below
	☐ 5th grade
	☐ 6th grade
	☐ 7th grade
	☐ 8th grade
	☐ 9th grade
	☐ 10th grade
	☐ 11th grade
	☐ 12th grade

Developed by the Center for Catholic School Effectiveness, School of Education, Loyola University Chicago
In partnership with the Roche Center for Catholic Education, Lynch School of Education, Boston College (2012)

Catholic Identity Defining Characteristics Parents/ Community Survey

Defining Characteristics of Catholic Schools: Survey for Parents / Community Stakeholders

Please rate the following statements from Strongly Agree (5) to Strongly Disagree (1)	Strongly Agree (5)	4	3	2	Strongly Disagree (1)	Don't Know
1. Students in our school are encouraged, through all aspects of their school experience, to develop a closer relationship with Jesus Christ.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. Our school is a community that prays together.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. Our school is a community that lives the Gospel message through service to the poor and those in need.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. Our school makes Jesus and the teachings of the Catholic Church known to all students.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. Symbols of the Catholic faith are displayed throughout our school.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. Our school upholds high standards of excellence in all it offers.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7. In addition to academics and faith formation, our school offers experiences in the arts, athletics, and other extracurricular and service opportunities that contribute to the education of the whole child.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8. Our school supports the social, emotional, and spiritual growth of every student.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9. The program of instruction in our school leads students to seek wisdom and truth, with a clear understanding of right and wrong.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10. The learning environment in our school fosters self-discipline so that students can become more independent learners.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11. Our school instills in students the responsibility to promote Gospel values and social justice in the world.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
12. Administrators in our school understand, accept and model the teachings of the Catholic Church.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
13. The teachers in our school understand, promote, demonstrate and teach Catholic values and beliefs.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
14. Our school helps parents/guardians fulfill their roles as the primary teachers of the faith to their children.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

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Catholic Identity Defining Characteristics Parents/ Community Survey

Defining Characteristics of Catholic Schools: Survey for Parents / Community Stakeholders

15. Everyone connected with our school works together and respects each other's gifts, for the sake of building a strong, faith-filled learning community.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
16. Our school does everything it can to eliminate obstacles that hinder or exclude students from receiving a Catholic education.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
17. Our school operates with the expressed approval and support of our Bishop.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Appendix E

OBSERVATION GUIDE FOR SEVEN PRINCIPLES OF CATHOLIC IDENTITY

PRINCIPLE	SAMPLE	EVIDENCE	NOTES
Human Person			
Faith/Knowledge/Tradition			
Academic Program			
Lived Gospel Values			
Community Service			
Inclusive Community			
Relationships			

Human Person	Awards honoring students for achievements in all area
	Lesson planned with the uniqueness of individuals in mind
	Nurses, SPED teachers and counselors employed by school
	Program for intellectually gifted students
Faith/Tradition	Symbols of Catholicism
	Art, music and architecture reflecting Catholic Faith
	Prayer
	Liturgical Celebration
	Eucharistic Adoration
	Calendar demonstrates time for Penance, retreats,
	Religion Curriculum
	Faculty prayer
Faith/Knowledge/Tradition	Lesson plans reflect Catholic Faith
	Differentiated Instruction
	Creative learning opportunities for students
	Written Curriculum
	Standardized testing
Lived Gospel Values	Classroom Environment
	School Culture
	Positive Personal Interactions
Community Service	Organized efforts for:
	Food Pantry, Homeless Shelter,
	Nursing Homes, hospitals, toy drives
	Witness by those who served
	Reflections from students connecting Service to the Gospel
Inclusive Community	Policy for Financial Assistance
	Diverse Community /culture, lang.
	SPED Program
	Acceptance of students from non-traditional families
Relationships	Parish priest actively involved in life of school;
	Priest and principal conduits between parish and school
	Students, staff and families are involved in school and parish activities
	Student achievements are celebrated publically with pastor, principal, teachers and parents
	Peer tutoring, after school programs where teachers and students interact more informally
	Principal attends Parent Organization Meetings
	Parents volunteer in the school
	Collaborative working relationships among staff, Parents, students, and parish