

FACTORS INFLUENCING ENROLLMENT IN VIRGINIA'S
PROTESTANT CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

by

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ABSTRACT

Protestant Christian schools have become a noticeable educational entity. The factors influencing parents to enroll their children in these schools are of interest to the Protestant Christian schools themselves and to the public and nonpublic sectors. A study examining enrollment in Virginia's Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) schools indicates that certain factors that tend to lead parents to initially enroll their children in Protestant Christian schools and then to maintain enrollment in Protestant Christian schools. The study also gives a demographic landscape of the principals and parents who are part of ACSI in Virginia.

Parents cite certain factors as being specifically important as they initially enroll. When they re-enroll their children in Protestant Christian schools, those factors may remain constant or change. This study looks at the reasons parents state as the initial factors leading them to place their children in Protestant Christian schools and the factors that lead them to continue to enroll their children in Protestant Christian schools.

The study also includes perceptions of principals of Protestant Christian Schools of reasons parents enroll their children in these schools. From their experience and position, principals can offer their perspectives of why families enroll their children in Christian schools and keep their children enrolled in the Protestant Christian schools.

Parents and principals were asked to rank what they perceived to be the top five factors leading to enrollment of students in Protestant Christian schools. Ranking the various factors isolated the most prevalent factors determining parents' decisions. Isolating the most-often chosen of the various factors aids the Protestant Christian, other nonpublic, and public schools better to evaluate how each attracts, maintains, and services their respective clientele.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Assumptions abound when people attempt to explain student enrollment in Protestant Christian schools. People who are connected with Protestant Christian schools may have one set of assumptions, while people who are not connected with Protestant Christian schools may possess a different set of assumptions. Enrollment changes engender additional assumptions as those with different views try to explain why students are enrolled in this alternative to public and other nonpublic schools. Those who are outside the Protestant Christian school question what the people, both the principals and the parents, who enroll children in these schools are like. They also question what is distinctive about Protestant Christian schools that make them a preferred alternative.

This study focuses on the factors that motivate parents initially to enroll their children in the Protestant Christian schools in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The study does not compare this type of private religious schooling to the public schools or to any other nonpublic school of any category, nor does it attempt to explain why parents opt for enrolling their children in Protestant Christian schools rather than public or other nonpublic schools. The study was conducted to isolate perceptions of parents and principals of factors that influence enrollment in the Protestant Christian schools in Virginia and to give a demographic overview to the principals and parents associated with Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) schools in Virginia. The specific Protestant Christian schools chosen to be studied were those that were listed members of ACSI for the 1999-2000 school year. To better understand these Protestant Christian schools, an explanation of some of the specifics of private and public schools is helpful.

The Protestant Christian School as a Private School and as a Member of the Association of Christian Schools International

Public and private schools have one simple distinction: funding. Public schooling is supported primarily through public taxation. Private schooling is funded primarily through non-public funds, primarily by money from tuition and other specialized fees charged to their students. Private schooling includes several categories of schools: Catholic schools (three types—parochial, diocesan, and private order), religious schools of non-Catholic orientations (conservative [Protestant] Christian, nationally affiliated, and unaffiliated), and nonsectarian schools (special education, special emphasis, and regular) (National Center for Education Statistics, 1997).

Of the various types of private schools, “the largest category of private schools other than Catholic schools consists of the conservative [Protestant] Christian school” (National Center for Education Statistics, 1997, p. 28). The Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) is the organization that houses approximately 50% of all Christian schools (National Center for Education Statistics, 1998). The Association of Christian Schools International defines itself as

“a ministry with the goal of being an ‘enabler’ for the evangelical Christian community of preschools, elementary and secondary schools and post-secondary schools” (Association of Christian Schools International, 1998b, p. 1). James Carper (1984), of the University of South Carolina, has studied and written much about Protestant Christian schools and recognizes ACSI as being the “only reliable source of data” for information about Protestant Christian schools (p. 113). For the 1999-2000 school year in the Commonwealth of Virginia, there were 133 schools, including four colleges, which were members of ACSI. The remaining 129 schools include schools that are preschools only, preschool/kindergarten combinations, and combinations ranging from P-12 (Association of Christian Schools International, 2000).

Protestant Christian school enrollment has increased since 1980 (Wagner, 1990). This increase in enrollment indicates that Protestant Christian schooling is a distinct movement whose enrollment has definable causes (Carper, 1984). The number of these Christian schools also represents a large segment of nonpublic schools:

In 1993-94, the 4,664 conservative Christian schools represented nearly 40 percent of all non-Catholic religiously oriented schools in the United States, and one-fifth of all private schools in the nation, enrolling 641,828 students and employing the equivalent of 44,841 full-time teachers. (National Center for Education Statistics, 1998b, p. 1)

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) projects a 5% increase in private school enrollments by the year 2008, a percentage that compares positively with projections of a six percent increase in student enrollment in public schools (National Center for Education Statistics, 1998a). NCES includes Protestant Christian schools in the category of private schools. Protestant Christian schools in ACSI have grown in both number and enrollment in the last 20 years (see Table 1.1 and Figure 1.1) and show the promise of continued growth in the next century. The number of schools and the size of enrollments in Virginia ACSI schools also have increased (see Table 1.2 and Figure 1.2).

Statement of the Problem

This study was designed to focus on principals’ and parents’ perceptions of why parents enroll their children in Protestant Christian schools. As Protestant Christian schools continue to represent a notable segment in the arena of nonpublic schools, it is important to investigate why Protestant Christian schools attract their clientele. It is important to ask which various factors lead to parents opting to enroll their children in Protestant Christian schools. Principal and parent perceptions of these factors indicate what appear to be important elements to their decision-making. A picture of the educational background and experience of principals gives a broad view of these people whose perceptions are reported in the study. Demographic information from the families who enroll their children in the ACSI Protestant Christian schools in Virginia adds a people dimension regarding their income levels, family status, and length of association with these schools.

Table 1.1

Growth of Association of Christian Schools International from 1979-1998

| Year | Member Schools | Increase/ Decrease Over Prior Year | % of School Increase Over Prior Year | Student Enrollment | Increase/ Decrease Over Prior Year | % of Student Increase Over Prior Year |
|---------|----------------|---|--|-----------------------|---|---|
| 1979-80 | 1,294 | -- | -- | 220,001 | -- | -- |
| 1980-81 | 1,482 | 188 | 14.5% | 289,001 | 69,000 | 31.4% |
| 1981-82 | 1,728 | 246 | 16.6% | 320,950 | 31,949 | 11.1% |
| 1982-83 | 1,933 | 205 | 11.9% | 337,554 | 16,604 | 5.2% |
| 1983-84 | 2,148 | 215 | 11.1% | 364,070 | 25,516 | 7.9% |
| 1984-85 | 2,273 | 125 | 5.8% | 390,285 | 26,215 | 7.2% |
| 1985-86 | 2,468 | 195 | 8.6% | 416,061 | 25,776 | 6.6% |
| 1986-87 | 2,398 | (70) | (2.8%) | 405,617 | (10,444) | (2.5%) |
| 1987-88 | 2,471 | 73 | 3.0% | 454,382 | 18,235 | 4.5% |
| 1988-89 | 2,619 | 148 | 6.0% | 474,260 | 19,878 | 4.4% |
| 1989-90 | 2,716 | 97 | 3.7% | 499,483 | 25,223 | 5.3% |
| 1990-91 | 2,778 | 62 | 2.3% | 523,302 | 23,819 | 4.8% |
| 1991-92 | 2,766 | (12) | (0.4%) | 526,649 | 3,347 | 0.6% |
| 1992-93 | 2,948 | 182 | 6.6% | 566,410 | 39,761 | 7.5% |
| 1993-94 | 3,174 | 226 | 7.7% | 662,350 | 95,940 | 16.9% |
| 1994-95 | 3,401 | 227 | 7.2% | 732,436 | 70,086 | 10.6% |
| 1995-96 | 3,575 | 174 | 5.1% | 780,943 | 48,507 | 6.6% |
| 1996-97 | 3,770 | 195 | 5.5% | 796,867 | 15,924 | 2.0% |
| 1997-98 | 3,986 | 216 | 5.7% | 844,526 | 47,659 | 6.0% |

(Source: Association of Christian Schools International, March 30, 1999)

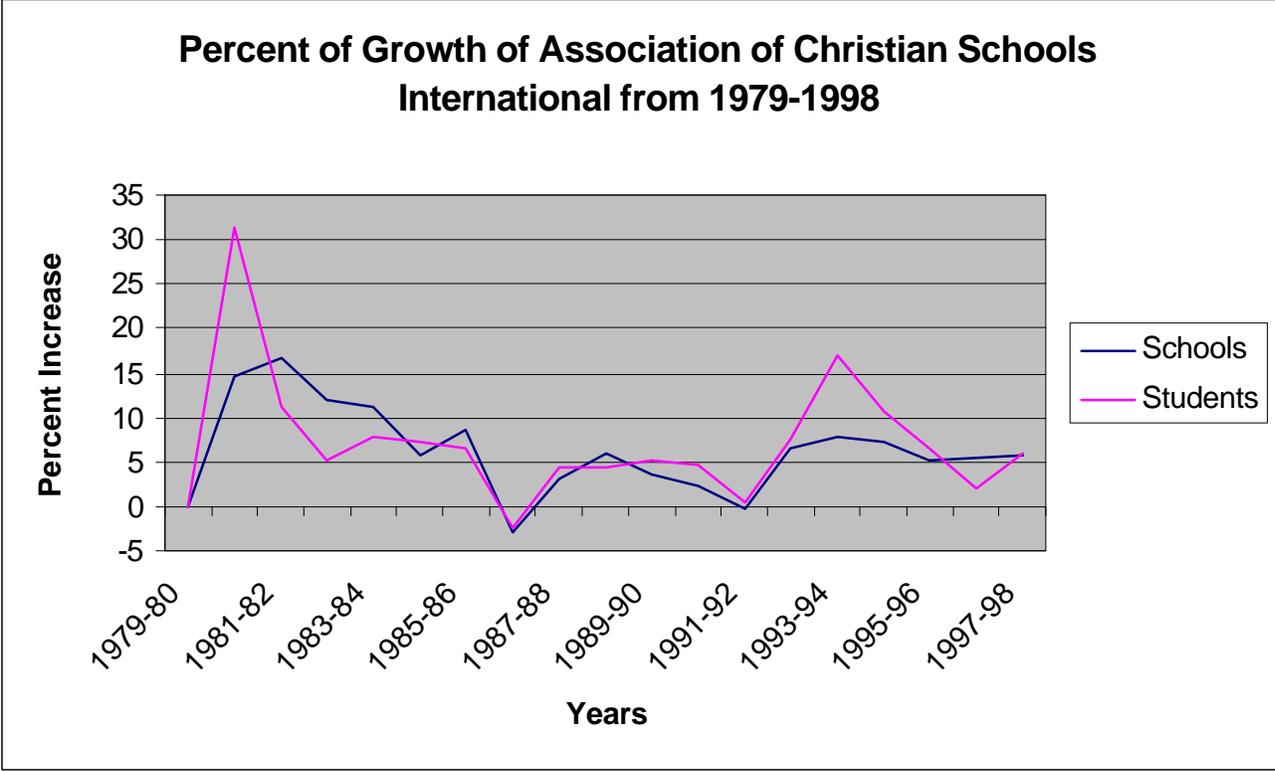


Figure 1.1. Graph illustrating growth of the numbers of Association of Christian Schools International schools and students enrolled in ACSI schools from 1979 to 1998.

Table 1.2

Association of Christian Schools International Virginia Schools Statistics

| Year | # of Schools | # of Students |
|------|--------------|---------------|
| 1979 | 14 | 2,472 |
| 1980 | 11 | 3,456 |
| 1981 | 15 | 3,851 |
| 1982 | 23 | 5,342 |
| 1983 | 25 | 5,589 |
| 1984 | 30 | 6,648 |
| 1985 | 33 | 7,027 |
| 1986 | 39 | 8,242 |
| 1987 | 45 | 8,642 |
| 1988 | 48 | 8,955 |
| 1989 | 52 | 10,402 |
| 1990 | 48 | 9,429 |
| 1991 | 57 | 9,532 |
| 1992 | 61 | 9,494 |
| 1993 | 63 | 10,562 |
| 1994 | 69 | 12,525 |
| 1995 | 78 | 13,507 |
| 1996 | 89 | 14,996 |
| 1997 | 94 | 16,166 |
| 1998 | 104 | 17,154 |
| 1999 | 123 | 17,615 |
| 2000 | 129 | 19,259 |

(Source: Association of Christian Schools International, April 6, 2000)

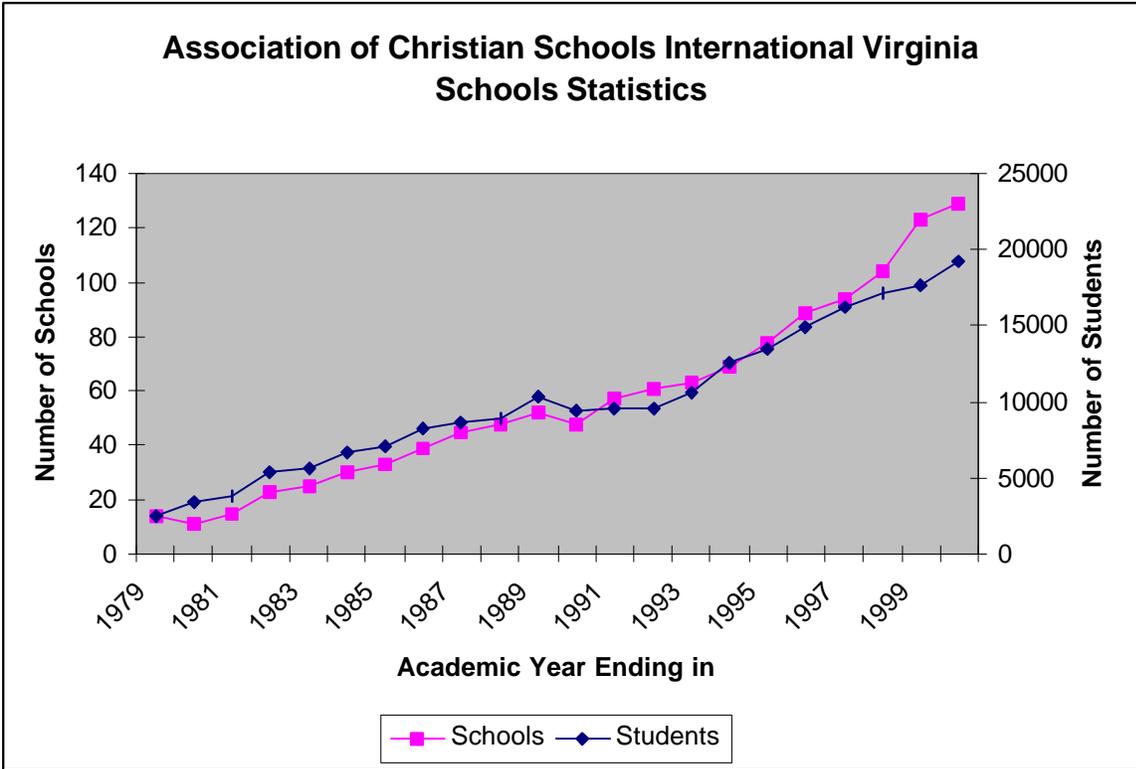


Figure 1.2 Association of Christian Schools International Virginia Schools Statistics

Principals regularly interview parents and form perceptions of the reasons that some parents enroll their children in the Protestant Christian schools. For the same or other reasons as the principals perceive, parents initiate their children's enrollment in these Christian schools. And, for the same reasons or for perhaps other reasons, parents reenroll their children in Protestant Christian schools. The purpose or basic problem of this study was to isolate the most prevalent principal and parent perceptions and rationale for enrolling children in Protestant Christian schools. The study was not designed to compare factors of Protestant Christian School enrollments to public school enrollments.

Protestant Christian School Culture

Protestant Christian schools exist to foster the Protestant Christian point of view through the school setting and to provide an alternative to the public schools and other private schools (Rose, 1998). Administrators and teachers in the Protestant Christian schools have stated that the Protestant perspective cannot be maintained within the public school system (Wagner, 1990). Both the plurality inherent to today's society and the legal system block the public schools from integrating religion significantly into the school setting. Present day society is composed of greater numbers of people who possess attitudes and convictions that differ from the Protestant Christian attitudes and convictions that once permeated the public schools (Menendez, 1994). The Protestant Christian school, therefore, uniquely meets the needs of Protestant parents and students, if they are seeking a Protestant religious component in the academic venture of education. The Protestant Christian school establishes and maintains the culture inherent in the Protestant Christian setting.

While religion is said to be the major reason families elect to enroll children in Protestant Christian schools (Smith & Meier, 1995), religion is not the only factor. Religion in the case of the Protestant Christian school refers to incorporating Biblical teachings and possibly denominational doctrine or catechism into the curriculum. In addition to religion, other considerations may influence parent decisions to have their children attend Protestant Christian schools rather than public or other nonpublic schools. These perceptions may parallel or even take precedence over religious beliefs. These considerations, then, have influence over the enrollments of the Protestant Christian school.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the factors that influence initial and continued enrollment in Protestant Christian schools. The study included principals' perceptions of parents' reasons for enrollment and the actual responses from parents why they enroll and continue to enroll their children in Protestant Christian schools.

The study contains data collected from parents. These data focus on two questions, using the same 24 items in a forced response survey from the Weinig study (Weinig, 1993). Both principals and parents were asked to rank the top five reasons principals and parents perceive parents enroll their children in Christian schools (see Table 1.3). The study also contains various questions concerning principals and families in order to provide demographic profiles of the two groups. The study focuses on two primary questions:

Table 1.3

Factors Influencing Enrollment in Protestant Christian Schools

1. Class atmosphere/behavior standard
 2. Favorable class size
 3. Academic standards/challenge level
 4. Learning facilities
 5. Teachers' academic qualifications
 6. Teacher/parent communication
 7. Co-curriculars
 8. Athletics
 9. Administration monitors teacher performance
 10. Dress code
 11. Administrative responsiveness
 12. Location convenience
 13. Teachers caring/committed
 14. Values
 15. Improvement of self-esteem
 16. Reputation/prestige
 17. Ethnic diversity
 18. Preparation for financial success
 19. Arts appreciation
 20. Opportunity for parental involvement
 21. Affordable tuition
 22. Financial aid
 23. School philosophy
 24. Preparation for success
 25. Other (please specify)
-

(Items 1-24 used by permission of Dr. Kenneth Weinig)

Why do parents initially enroll their children in Protestant Christian schools?
Why do parents maintain their children's enrollment in Protestant Christian schools?

The answer to the first question provided information that was compared to the perceptions of the principals of the Christian schools studied. The answers to each of the questions provided information that was compared to the perceptions parents had why they initially enrolled and then re-enrolled their children in a Protestant Christian school. These two questions formed the basis for the research questions governing the study.

Research Questions

The study examined principal and parent responses to a forced response survey to isolate perceptions of the factors that influence parents to opt to enroll their children in Protestant Christian schools. Following are the essences of the research questions guiding the study:

- (1) To provide demographics to give added dimension and background of the principals and families associated with ACSI schools in Virginia.
- (2) To determine the perceived importance that Protestant Christian school principals placed on various factors concerning why parents enroll their children in Protestant Christian schools.
- (3) To determine the perceived importance that parents placed on various factors why they initially enrolled children in Protestant Christian school.
- (4) To determine the perceived importance that parents placed on various factors why they re-enrolled children in Protestant Christian school.
- (5) To compare the variables principals perceived to be the reasons that parents enroll children in Protestant Christian school with the variables parents perceived to be the reasons they initially enrolled children in Protestant Christian school.
- (6) To compare the variables parents perceived to be the reasons they initially enrolled children in Protestant Christian with the variables parents perceived to be the reasons they re-enrolled children in Protestant Christian school.

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

This study examined the extent to which the certain variables explain enrollment in Protestant Christian schools in Virginia. The four broad categories of the variables follow the review by Bauch and Small (1986) of the conceptual and empirical review of literature of parents' reasons for school choice. The order of the listing of the categories holds no significance.

1. Academic and curricular
2. Discipline and safety
3. Religion and social values
4. Proximity and convenience

The four broad categories initiated the eight specific categories of this study. The eight categories represent the factors identified in further review of literature and form the independent variables of the study that help to explain the motives of parents in choosing Protestant Christian schools. The eight factors hold no significance in the order of listing.

1. Academic
2. Curricular
3. Access
4. Accountability
5. Religion
6. Extra-curricular
7. Discipline
8. Social values

The variables are defined in terms of the meaning given them from the review of literature to follow in Chapter 2. (See Table 1.4.)

The results of this study should inform leaders of Protestant Christian schools of the respective perceptions that principals and parents hold related to the enrollment of their children in Virginia ACSI Christian schools. The study also has the potential to explain the perceptions that lead parents initially to enroll their children in Protestant Christian schools and to continue enrollment.

Public school officials could benefit from this study as they seek to explain student enrollment in Protestant Christian schools rather than in the public schools. The study does not, however, include nor is it intended to include why parents do not choose public schools or why they may transfer their children from public schools to Protestant Christian schools. The purpose of the study is to report the factors which Protestant Christian school principals and parents perceive to be reasons for enrolling their children in Protestant Christian schools.

Illustrated in Figure 1.3 is the theoretical base for the inquiry into the factors affecting Protestant Christian school enrollment. Figure 1.4 illustrates the expanded theoretical base for the inquiry into the factors affecting Protestant Christian school enrollment. Results of this study may serve to inform leaders of Protestant Christian schools of perceptions that principals and parents hold regarding enrollment.

Significance of the Study

The study results will suggest explanations for those parents who have opted to enroll their children in Protestant Christian schools. These results may inform school leaders in the public and private spheres regarding perceptions that principals and parents possess related to enrollment in Protestant Christian schools in general and in Virginia ACSI schools in particular. The study will not serve as a thermometer for enrollment in public or other non-public schools, but it will serve to isolate various factors that parents entertain as they enroll their children in the Protestant Christian schools in Virginia.

Table 1.4

Constitutive and Operational Definitions of Variables

| Variable | Constitutive Definition | Operational Definition |
|------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| Academic | Standard of communication of curriculum to students: number of students in classrooms small enough to allow meeting of individual needs: students held accountable for performing at a rigorous level established by their unique capabilities; character values of right and wrong behavior taught as part of the curriculum and practiced throughout the school; preparation of students for the next competitive step in their formal education | Items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 9, 14, 18, 19 24 |
| Curricular | Courses of study; academic excellence or rigor associated with courses of study | Items 3, 5, 7, 18, 19, 24 |
| Discipline | Training, correcting, molding, strengthening, or perfecting human behavior; principles of right and wrong behavior taught as part of the curriculum and practiced throughout the school | Items 1, 2, 3 |
| Religion | Systems of faith or worship taught as part of the curriculum and practiced throughout the school; spirituality; school climate of student-centeredness or empathy for feelings of students; responsiveness to their needs | Items 7, 13, 17, 20, 23 |

(table continues)

Table 1.4 (continued)

| Variable | Constitutive Definition | Operational Definition |
|-------------------|--|---|
| Social Values | Class size accommodates individual learning needs; parental input solicited and valued; well-defined mission and sense of purpose and sources aligned to accomplish them; teachers inspiring and holding students accountable for achievement and character development; principles of right and wrong behavior taught as part of the curriculum and practiced throughout the school; inclusion of peers who form an informal norm or culture that reinforces academic performance; school climate of student-centeredness | Items 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 13, 14, 15, 17, 23 |
| Access | Parental input solicited and valued; school as close, if not closer, to child's residence as public school; school conveniently close to parent work place; tuition affordable or aid to pay tuition available | Items 6, 12, 21, 22 |
| Extra Curriculars | Opportunities available for participation in activities other than academic learning | Items 7, 8 |
| Accountability | Commitment of teachers; responsibility for inspiring and holding students accountable; preparation for desired colleges; parental input solicited and valued; good reputation in community; school climate of student-centeredness | Items 9, 11, 13, 16, 18, 20, 24 |

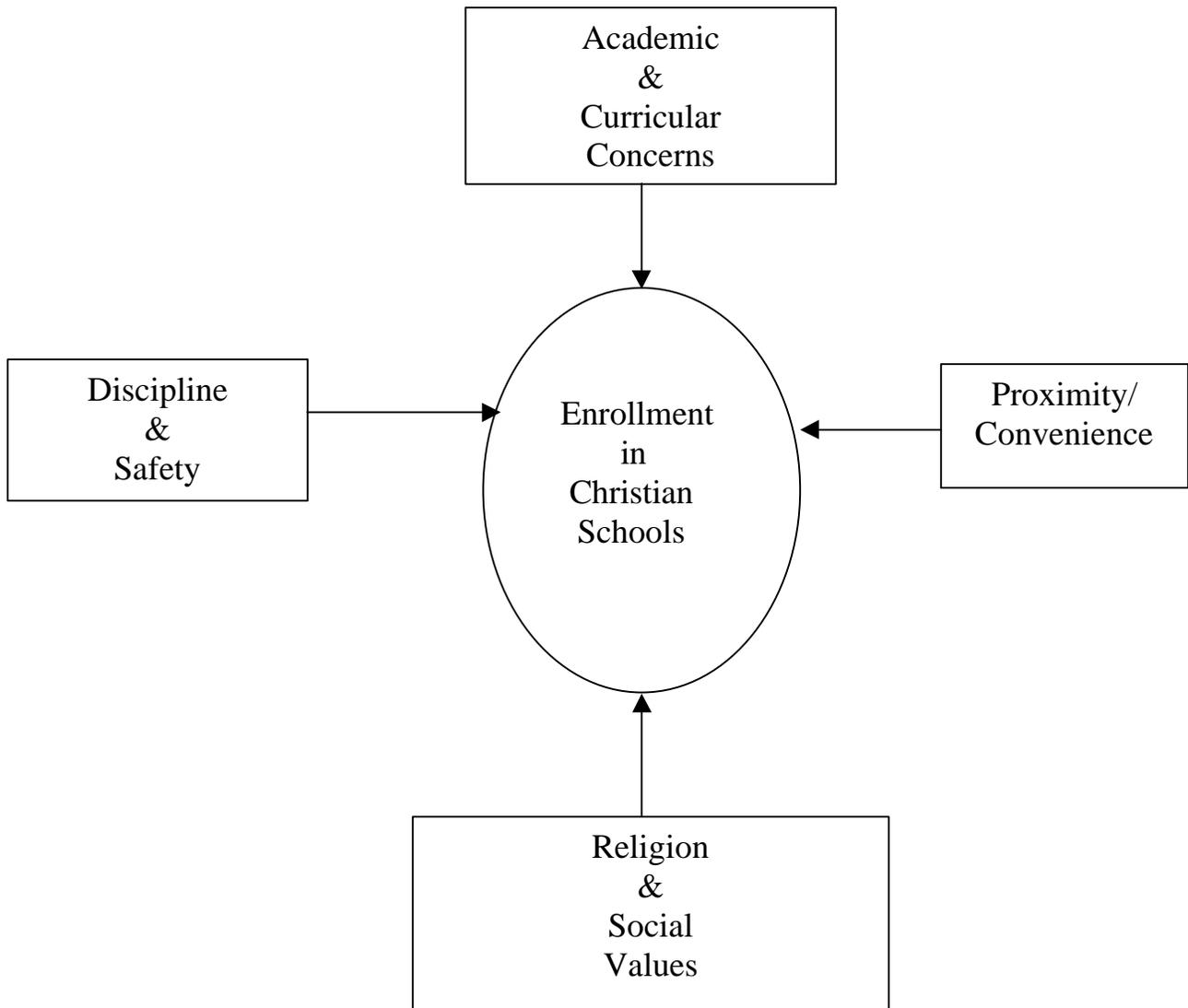


Figure 1.3. The constructs That Explain Factors That Influence Protestant Christian School Enrollment

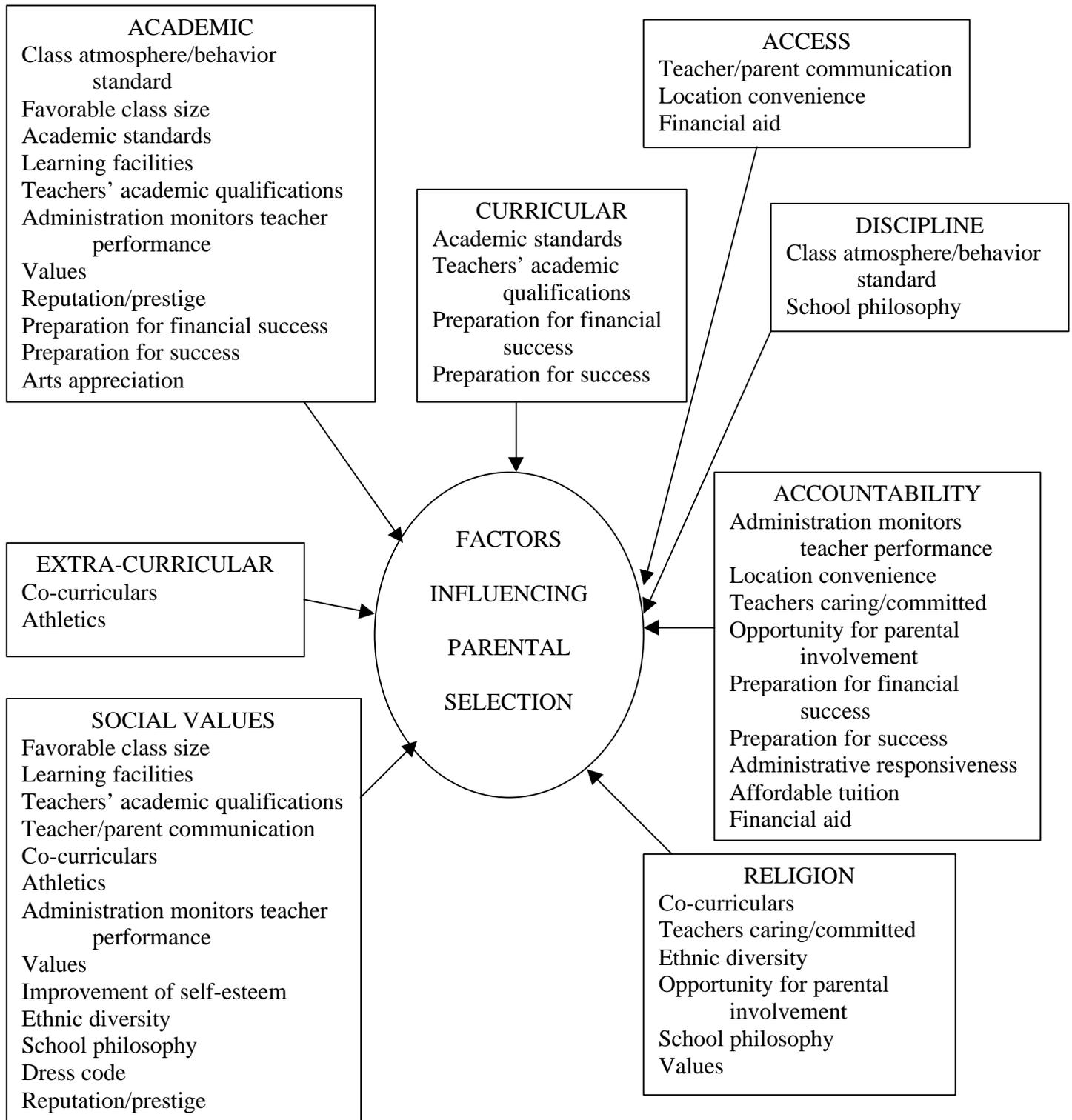


Figure 1.4. Proposed Model of Factors Influencing Protestant Christian School Enrollment.

No similar study had been conducted in Virginia. Likewise, no similar study has been conducted using only ACSI schools in any other state. The value of such a study can only help Protestant Christian schools and ACSI visualize what factors attract clientele and what factors they must maintain and improve to keep clientele interested and committed.

Assumptions

The basic assumptions of this study include:

The responses from the survey would accurately reflect parental perceptions regarding the factors lead them to select their child's school. Additionally, it is assumed that in the event that it would be impossible to survey a true random sample of parents, the principals' perceptions of the factors for selection of the child's school would serve as a proxy.

1. The ACSI schools would be a representative sample of ACSI schools in Virginia.
2. The factors influencing parents to enroll their children in Protestant Christian school are identifiable.

Research Design

The study was designed to contact all listed, registered ACSI schools in Virginia for the 1999-2000 school year. The list was acquired from the ACSI web pages. Each principal of the 129 schools was sent a cover letter explaining the purpose of the forced opinion survey and the demographic questions. Included in the cover letter was a request for parent names and addresses as a complement to the principals' portion of the study. Accompanying each survey was a second letter, one from Mr. Tom McClure, Southeast Director of ACSI, requesting that the principals participate in this study. (See Appendix D.) The purpose of the forced opinion survey was to rank the top five factors that principals perceived to be the leading reasons parents enrolled their children in Protestant Christian schools. Parents were requested to respond to the same survey in order to rank what they perceived to be their top five reasons that they initially enrolled and then re-enrolled their children in Protestant Christian schools. The ranking of the reasons served the purpose of isolating the variables most often chosen by principals and parents. Data were expected to be non-parametric, thus the Chi-square statistic was applied.

Delimitations

This study contains the following limitations.

1. The study does not intend to examine why parents do not choose public or other non-public schools or why they may remove their children from public or other non-public schools to attend Protestant Christian schools.
2. The study was limited to principals and participant parents of ACSI member schools in Virginia. As a result, the generalizability of this study beyond the target population is limited.

3. The study was limited to ACSI schools in Virginia. As a result, the generalizability of this study beyond that targeted association is limited.

Limitations

The study contains the following delimitations.

1. The results of the study of principals' perceptions were dependent upon the willingness of the principals to participate.
2. The results of the study of parents' perceptions were dependent upon the willingness of principals or the schools in which the principals served to share parent lists and addresses.
3. The results of the study of parents' perceptions were dependent upon the willingness of the parents to participate.
4. The accuracy of perceptions of the principals and the parents is dependent upon their personal candor in answering the survey and questions.

Definitions of Terms Used in This Study

For the purposes of this study, particular terms will be defined in the following manner. Protestant Christian school: Christian schools refer to schools generally associated with Protestant beliefs. Some schools are church sponsored; others are parent board sponsored. All are Protestant in foundation. Catholic schools are not Protestant in doctrine and are therefore distinguished from Christian schools in this study. By virtue of the literature reviewed for this study, Catholic schools are determined to have different reasons for origin and growth than do the Protestant-based conservative Christian schools. Catholic schools historically are credited for origin and growth as a result of the Protestant nature of early American public schools. Protestant conservative schools are credited for origin and growth as a result of Protestant concerns that Protestant perceived Biblical elements were being removed from the American public school system.

Academics: The term refers to curriculum and standardized testing and the concerns that parents and the Protestant religious community have addressed as the lowering of the standards for academic performance and the results of the perceived lowering of those standards.

Values: The term refers to Protestant religious concepts ranging from religious Biblical teaching and prayer to social manners and respect, including the teaching of sex education, creationism, evolution, and other moral and social issues.

Organization of the Study

The study is organized into five chapters. Chapter One, the current chapter, presents an introduction to the factors influencing parental selection of Protestant Christian schools. Specifically, it addresses the research questions, their theoretical bases, and the methodology employed in this study. Chapter Two presents a more thorough review of the theoretical bases in the review of literature related to the study, the historical background of the Protestant Christian school, and parental decision-making processes. It presents a discussion of the theoretical underpinnings of these concepts and their present limitations. Chapter Three delineates the research methodology and the rationale for its use. Chapter Four discusses and analyzes the results of this study. Finally, Chapter Five presents the study's conclusions, applicability to educators and other researchers, limitations, recommendations, reflections, and implications for further research.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter is presented in four major sections. The first section is an overview of Protestant Christian school as it is defined from within and without. The second section gives a historical perspective of Protestant Christian school. The third section is a review of literature that gives a broad picture of the relevance of Protestant Christian school in present times. The literature reviewed does not reflect parental choice of Protestant Christian school only. Some literature references parental choice of other types of public or private schools. Not many studies exist that focus only on Protestant Christian school. More studies are focused on the factors that any parents consider important to be present or available in or part of their children's education. The fourth section focuses on the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) because the Association was instrumental in encouraging the availability and gathering of data for the study.

Overview of Protestant Christian School

The Protestant Christian school has been an object of interest and research among researchers and educators for the past four decades. The rise in the number of the schools and the legal challenges they presented roused the interest of those outside the Protestant Christian schools as well as those associated within them. Various studies have been designed to focus on the history, founding, and basis for existence of these schools.

Defining Protestant Christian School by Its Own Proponents

In order to study the enrollment of Protestant Christian schools and what these data suggest, the distinctive aspects of the Protestant Christian school must be considered. Charles Schneider of the Southern Baptist Convention attributes to the late Rev. Gene Garrick, the Senior Pastor of the Tabernacle Church of Norfolk, Virginia, and long time member of the National Board of the Association of Christian Schools International, one of the most succinct definitions of the Protestant Christian school:

The *raison d'être* of the Christian school is to give completely God-centered orientation to the life of the student, to develop a thoroughly Christian and Biblical world view, to create, under God, a Christian mind. (Schneider, personal communication, December 10, 1998)

Keeping the above definition in mind, the following definitions express a similar perspective from other leaders of Protestant Christian school. Each definition maintains distinctive elements that it unique.

Deuink and Herbster (1986) distinguished between the concept of Christian education and the actual school:

Christian education and the Christian school are not the same. Christian education is the process of helping our students become conformed to the image of Christ. The Christian school is a place designed to give students a large part of their Christian education....Most Christian day schools begin at kindergarten and stop at the twelfth grade. (p. 12)

Gabelein (1995) emphasized the importance of the philosophy of the Christian school as integral in its meaning, as well as the voluntary support of the students enrolled:

[W]e go on to consider what a Christian educational institution is. This may be set forth under six criteria: (1) A Christian educational institution must be built upon a thoroughgoing Christian philosophy of education. (2) It must have a faculty thoroughly committed to its distinctive philosophy. (3) The entire curriculum must be Christ centered. (4) It must have a student body that will actively support its body and aims. (5) It must recognize the two aspects of Christian education—the required and the voluntary. (6) It must actually do the truth through applying the Christian ethic in all its relationships. (pp. 66-67)

Deuink (1991) further defined the Christian school by what he sees as its main objective:

The primary goal of Christian schools is to aid parents with their God-given responsibility to rear their children to fear [respect] God, to love Him, [and] to desire to conform their lives to His Son Jesus Christ.... To be worthy of the name of Christ, Christian schools must maintain a unique spiritual distinctness in the character of their student body, faculty, academic program, behavioral standards, and general objectives for their students. (p. 4)

In essence, the Protestant Christian school defines itself by its philosophy and how the remaining elements of the school support and enhance that philosophy. The Bible and its teachings of the concept of God as the Father and Creator and Christ His Son as Redeemer are central to the philosophy. This philosophy is called a Biblical worldview as opposed to a secular view of the world. The secular worldview holds man and his own personal good as the center of its philosophy (Gabelein, 1995).

Secular and Legal Definitions

Beyond the definitions assigned to Protestant Christian school by those who are participants of the belief underlying the school are other definitions. These definitions arise from various studies and from the legal world. These definitions give balance and additional boundaries to the definitions from within the Protestant viewpoint. The definitions from within and without identify Protestant Christian school via function and philosophy.

Carper and Dagnault (1993) offered one of the simplest definitions of Protestant Christian school: “Protestant-sponsored weekday schooling” (p. 315). In another article about Protestant Christian day schools, Carper (1984) referred to “Protestant-sponsored weekday education” (p. 111). He (1984) further defined the term Christian day school as that which has

been used to describe the “weekday educational institutions founded since the mid-1960s by either individual [Protestant] evangelical churches or local [Protestant] Christian school societies” (p. 113). In either case, Protestant Christian schools are associated with Protestant denominations, exclusive of the Catholic schools whose base and founding are from a different perspective. Rose (1988), in her study Keeping Them Out of the Hands of Satan, defined the Christian school in terms of the purpose for establishing the schools that she attributes to evangelicals.

They called their schools the “Christian” schools. In contrast to other religious schools (the established Catholic, Lutheran, Episcopal, Quaker, Amish, and other parochial schools), the term “Christian” represents the distinction contemporary evangelicals draw between themselves as “saved” and others who are “unsaved.” By dividing the world into two camps of Christian and non-Christian, of sacred versus secular, evangelicals attempt to clarify their own identity. Social classification is based on inclusion versus exclusion; yet success for evangelicals is dependent upon winning over the “unsaved.” (p. 30)

The law is also a source for the definition of Protestant Christian school. For example, in the 9th Circuit Court case, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (E.E.O.C.) v. Kamehameha Schools/Bishop Estate (1993), the court discounted the claim of the Kamehameha Schools that it could refuse to hire a teacher because she was not Protestant, a requirement for employment at the school. The court compared the religious elements of the school with its secular elements and concluded that the school was not exempt as a religious school under Section 703 of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C.A. 200e-2. The court defined a religious school as a school having been founded upon concepts that closely resemble or correspond with the above Protestant Christian school proponents’ definitions of the Protestant Christian school. Without the Biblical, fundamentalist background and foundations upon which Christian schools are primarily based, Kamehameha Schools could not deny employment to the teacher for the reasons it claimed.

In its examination of the Kamehameha Schools, the court considered various characteristics that help distinguish a religious school from a school that operates under a historical tradition that includes Protestantism, but whose primary purpose is secular rather than religious. The first area of clarification is ownership and affiliation. Kamehameha Schools has never been controlled, supported, or affiliated with any established denomination or association of Protestant Christian/religious schools. Secondly, the purpose of the school is secular rather than sectarian, as its advertisement for the teaching position in question had indicated. The court found that over the years the school's focus had become more concerned with instilling ethics and moral principles in the lives of students than with advocating or teaching religion. Third, while the will that established the Kamehameha Schools upon the death of the school's beneficiary required that its teachers be Protestant, the school did not maintain any other religious requirements of its teachers. Faculty members had only to clarify their membership in the Protestant church, but they did not have to be active members. Fourth, the student body did not have to demonstrate any religious affiliation. Fifth, several student activities at the school were religious in nature but no more so than could be found at similar public or private schools throughout the nation. Sixth, the curriculum of the school had religious elements, such as religious instruction in the elementary grades and a comparative religion course in the upper

grades, but there was no stated purpose or effort to indoctrinate students in the Protestant religion.

Protestant Christian school, therefore, must evidence and put into practice a close relationship between its philosophy and its function. If the two are not closely bound, the definition of Protestant Christian school does not hold up among its own proponents or in the legal system. The criteria must be present to satisfy the meaning placed upon it by its own and the secular world.

Historical Perspective

This section explains the historical perspective of Protestant Christian school. It is important to understand the evolution of this kind of school and how it has come to be what it is currently. It is important to see from where and why the concept and philosophy originated.

Protestant Christian schools hold a firm place in American tradition, some in that particular school movement believing that Protestant Christian schools predated state-funded government public schools by 207 years (ACSI home web page, 1998b). Students of public school history, however, would question such a statement without qualification. That the Bible was an integral element of education from the very beginnings of America, in Virginia and Massachusetts in particular, is undeniable. Schools were publicly funded, with the monies going to private entities that established and ran institutions of learning. Included in those receiving funding were those groups who represented definitive Protestant perspectives (Cremin, 1951; Butts & Cremin, 1953). The Protestant concept of universal education was situated in two pervasive camps. The concept of philanthropy

asserted the right and duty of individual families to provide through private means for the education of their children. The community was responsible only for the poor and indigent. Education was a private function, becoming public only in the case of persons who could not afford to provide it for themselves. (Cremin, p. 84)

This tradition was prevalent in the Virginia and other southern states. The concept of collectivism,

on the other hand, provided for a group responsibility involving, indirectly, all members of the community. Education was a public function; and the facilities established were available to all. The way was always open, of course, for those who desired to send their children to schools other than the public ones; but this in no way relieved them of their share in maintaining the latter. And there was no class of children denied an education because of any stigma of "pauperism" attached to public facilities. (Cremin, p.85)

This tradition was prevalent in Massachusetts and other New England states. The schools of colonial times were not synonymous with the Protestant Christian school of today in origin or basic function. The Protestant purpose was to provide individuals with education enough to read and interpret the Bible for themselves (Cremin, 1951).

Protestant Christian schools are not necessarily an outgrowth of a particular denomination or church or geographical sector. Protestant Christian schools are, rather, a Protestant endeavor to integrate Biblical principles as the essential elements of knowledge and truth in all academic areas by supporting the teaching of those principles with a doctrinal statement and requiring personnel to be like-minded. The prevailing thought and belief are that there is not truth outside of that of the Bible. That truth, then, must be presented as an integral and necessary element of knowledge. The Bible is the test and measure of all truth by its principles (Byrne, 1977). It is this perceived truth that was considered to be the focus of the early public schools that many who support Protestant Christian schools wish to maintain.

The contemporary Christian school is partly a backlash to the emphasis in the mid-nineteenth century for state-supported schools, an emphasis led by Horace Mann who wanted to see education more available to greater numbers of children (Schindler & Pyle, 1979). Mann envisioned taxpayers' provision of public schooling to be a cure for some of the ills of society essential to democracy. He said, "If the American taxpayers could collectively provide education for every child in America, within a short period of time the effect of the public school system would empty all the jails and prisons in the country" (Schindler & Pyle, 1979, p. 16). Mann shared his vision with legislators, believing that taxpayers would indeed save money through support of the public schools because the schools would serve the common good more effectively. Mann also indicated that the schools would teach facts and the home and church would teach faith and values. The Protestant Christian school proponents would say that faith and values belonged in the school as well as the home and church because faith and values cannot be separated from any aspect of life (Kienel, 1972).

Catholic schools came into being and strongly flourished following the establishment of the public school system. The early public schools implemented Protestantism as a companion to education; however, elements of the Protestant belief were clearly anti-Catholic. A study of the New York City schools of the 19th Century gives evidence of the strong Protestant hold over schools in that city. The Free School Society aimed to provide free non-sectarian education to the poor; but in doing so the Society created a Protestant culture within the schools by providing the Protestant Bible for instruction in morality and textbooks that were offensive to the Catholic faith. The Society further alienated Catholics by opposing and blocking their request for funds to initiate schools that would provide the same level of education for Catholic youth. In addition, the obvious labeling of the poor who attended these schools as opposed to the label attached to those who attended private schools served as further humiliation to the poor Catholic immigrants who had come to America seeking a way to better themselves (Ravitch, 1974). The crux of the problem lay in the politics of the times. Had the balance of power been reversed, the Protestants may have found themselves the offended faction. The Catholic Church opposed the sectarian nature of the public schools, just as the Protestants would oppose the nonsectarian stance the public schools would take in the 20th Century (Kraushaar, 1972).

Most evangelical Protestants have supported public schooling since its inception. They approved of early public education because it selected the Protestant belief-value system of the society and was viewed as an integral part of the crusade to establish a Christian America. (Carper, 1984, p.112)

In essence, Protestants had their own schools provided at public expense, particularly in the South, until the government applied the concept of separation of church and state to public schools. The government took the position that allowing Protestantism to be part of the public school system violated separation of church and state because Protestantism in the public school system could be considered the establishment of a state religion or church. Throughout the nineteenth century, Protestant Christian schools had been considered an alternative to public schooling; the movement was not widely successful or deemed of great necessity with religious tenets being supported and integrated into the public schools. This status quo remained until 1960, when the American point of view became less God-centered when prayer was removed from the public schools (Carper, 1984). As public schools began to eliminate sectarian doctrine from their curricula, Protestants felt the urge to establish their own schools, as Catholics had done so previously, in order to reinforce the religious standards of their church in the education of their young (Kraushaar, 1972).

The Protestant Christian school can be distinguished from the parochial school in several ways. The term parochial school specifically refers to a school that is supported by and generally an integral part of a geographical church parish. In 1868, the Standing Committee on Christian Education of the Episcopalian denomination defined parochial in this way: "By Parochial schools we mean those parish schools where free education is given to the children of the poorer classes" (Curran, 1954, p. 30). The present common usage of the term is more denominational in nature, applying primarily to Catholic schools that incorporate Catholic doctrine into their philosophy and curriculum. The Roman Catholic school system has as one of its historical origins the Catholic conviction that the tax-supported public school systems were Protestant in nature (Schindler & Pyle, 1979), Protestantism being the result of the direct revolt against Romanism during the Renaissance and Reformation (Byrne, 1977).

Protestant Christian schools are not new to this country, having been an entity in the early history of the original thirteen colonies and dating as far back as the early seventeenth century. Parents believed that their children should learn to read so that they could read the Bible. The Bible was, therefore, the first textbook, with later texts being heavily filled with Scripture and/or Scriptural references. As the country developed toward the democracy it was to become, the emphasis for education became the desire to have an enlightened citizenry who would have enough and appropriate learning to maintain the country. Even with this view of citizenship in mind, the Christian/religious perspective was maintained in the schools (Randall, 1997).

Thomas Jefferson, himself being far from a fundamentalist, said: "I always have said and always will say, that the studious perusal of the sacred volume will make better citizens, better fathers, and better husbands" (Schindler & Pyle, 1979, p. 15). Whether or not Jefferson was in favor of the Bible in schools, his statement illustrates his understanding of its value in the life of individuals. However, Jefferson was also wary of the part the church might play in the government of the country, and he stressed that there remain a wall of separation between the church and state (Alexander & Alexander, 1998).

The 1963 Supreme Court opinion in School District of Abington Township v. Schempp and Murray v. Curlett reduced Protestant Christian influence in the public schools by eliminating prayer in public school classrooms. The Court held that prayer in the classroom forced upon

individuals a standard or practice to which they may be opposed. “In effect, the ruling was that because of the pluralism of our society, the classroom must remain neutral” (Schindler & Pyle, 1979, p. 17). Protestant Christians held that there may be a separation of church and state, but not one of religion and education. From the Protestant Christian perspective, since they believe that all truth and knowledge are based on Scripture, all answers to all questions of education and life, for that matter, are religious in nature (Schindler & Pyle, 1979).

Because education is concerned with both the good of society and the individual, proponents of Protestant Christian schools view that influence as the primary means to produce good citizens, as well as tithe-giving members, with a strong base of knowledge from which to operate in society. Education is a moral endeavor (Goodlad, 1997), with the religious point of view holding that a moral endeavor cannot be achieved apart from Biblical truth. The secular side of education says that the primary moral is to provide students with schooling that will give them a base from which to make informed choices. After fulfilling that obligation, it is hoped that the individuals’ choices will be good ones that mutually benefit self and society, yet knowing that some learners will choose what is not beneficial (Goodlad, 1997). In contrast, it is the Protestant Christian perspective that good decisions cannot be made without children receiving an education that is inculcated with Biblical commandments as recorded in the King James Bible in Deuteronomy 4: 9 and 6: 6-9:

Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons’ sons....

And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart; And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up, And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and and on thy gates.

The above verses, in conjunction with Proverbs 22:6, "Train up a child in the way he should go and, when he is old, he will not depart from it," were an admonishment to parents. They also drove the mindset of individuals who perceived that they could no longer support the public school system following the court cases and related legislation that restricted their Protestant Christian influence. The Protestant Christian school movement began in earnest at this time. In the 1970s, Protestant Christian schooling became so popular that two new Protestant Christian schools were opening each day (Carper, 1984; Schindler & Pyle, 1979). The 1980s and the Reagan presidency, with its conservative bent and opportunities to fill vacant U. S. Supreme Court seats with conservative jurists, showed favor to the religious school perspective. Protestant Christian schools experienced little growth, with many schools forming organizations for support and strength. These organizations were initially small but later grew to unite entire regions, leading to national and international groups as the movement gained in both size and influence.

The history behind Protestant Christian school is long and complicated. The modern Protestant Christian school began as a reaction to what Protestant practitioners viewed as

encroachment by government. Had the Protestant status quo remained in the public schools, there is a possibility the current Protestant Christian school would not exist.

Literature Review

This section is a discussion of the literature that describes the climate, culture, and perceptions associated with Protestant Christian school. First are references to studies conducted by researchers who attempted to delve into the very fiber of Protestant Christian school at the time it was receiving notice, whether because of its own notoriety or that of the era in which it burst into full bloom. The concept of Protestant non-public schools evolved from a desire of Protestants to maintain a Protestant perspective that was being removed from public schools.

The Big Picture

Protestant Christian schools gained attention as they rapidly increased in numbers during the 1960s and 1970s. Some researchers studied the Protestant Christian school to determine its focus and explain its momentum. Probably the most thorough and still most cited study is Peshkin's God's Choice (Peshkin, 1986), which details the eighteen months that Peshkin immersed himself in the culture of Bethany Baptist Church and Bethany Baptist Academy (BBA) in Hartney, Illinois. The study gives insight into the fervor and desire of particular individuals to create a place for learning based on specific Protestant Biblical beliefs and ideals of patriotism and societal standards.

Peshkin found that the pastor and principal were the keys to learning the school's purpose for existence, to create a culture reminiscent of the early days of public schooling in which the Protestant mindset tempered the academics and social atmosphere of the schools. According to the pastor and principal, Bethany Christian School was not unlike other Protestant Christian schools during the late 1980s. Protestant Christian schools were established to provide education apart from what the public schools were offering, education with no values based on Biblical principles, education with no values with which Protestant Christian people could relate or live. In addition, the administrators and the parents of Bethany Christian School were convinced that the academic subject matter of the public schools did not meet high standards and could not since the public school curricula were not infused with Biblical content. They believed that Biblical content was most important in preparing young people for their life ministry.

While academic subjects were important to parents, more important was the desire to prepare young people through the Christian school to be Biblically-informed influences on others following high school and to view other people as prospects for conversion. Students involved in Protestant Christian schools were being taught the three Rs fairly successfully, if one were to compare their students' standardized test scores to the same test scores of students enrolled in public schools. The pastor stated to Peshkin that Protestant Christian school students were not expected to attend state or prestigious private universities. Instead, they were expected to attend Christian colleges to train for specific ministry areas such as the pastorate, missionary assignment, or Christian schoolteacher. If students did not attend college, they were expected to take jobs and to give a good day's work to their employers as testimony to others of the Christian work ethic.

Parents agreed to the above function of the Christian school and to the stated future of their children. One has to understand, however, that many of the students were children of members of the church sponsoring the school. Therefore, most of those parents were of the same mindset as the pastor and the headmaster. As would be expected, values were given as the primary reason for enrollment by parents whose children attended the Bethany Christian School.

Peshkin emphasized that he found himself very welcome in the Protestant Christian school setting and that he believed he received a valid view of the school and associated people. He also became a candidate for conversion. While he did not agree with the Protestant Christian viewpoint, he did appreciate the genuine personal interest shown him as an individual that he perceived could serve to attract other parents to enroll their children. He also noted that the leadership within the Christian school and within the association to which Bethany belonged, the American Association of Christian Schools (AACS), did not recognize that the very culture from which they were retreating guaranteed their existence through the Constitution. Peshkin did not see evidence that they understood that the very freedom to educate as private Protestant Christians derived from American culture's characteristic of pluralism.

Pluralism has been a noteworthy aspect of American life. Pluralism, for the purposes of this study and as Parsons (1987) explains the term, can be defined as the presence of multiple points of view and beliefs existing and cooperating within one culture or social setting. Because this country has recognized and valued the diversity of backgrounds and viewpoints that have contributed to its history, people of all beliefs have been free to exercise those beliefs. According to Peshkin and others (Parsons, 1987; Rose, 1988), once the public system of education no longer held to Protestant-only views and began removing the distinctive Protestant elements from schools, the Protestant Christian population began their own rebellion. Numerous Protestant Christian schools were established throughout the country in order to maintain or reintroduce students to the fundamental Protestant Christian principles that heretofore had been integral in the early public school systems. Peshkin indicated that pluralism forced the public school systems to eliminate sectarian influence while simultaneously guaranteeing Christian schools their right to exist and parents the right to choose other alternatives.

Parsons (1987), an editor with the Associated Press, became intrigued with the Protestant Christian school movement and was afforded the opportunity to conduct a long-range study. Although Parsons initially intended to conduct a four-month study, his study evolved into a four-year research project that took him to 30 states and approximately 60 Christian schools.

Parsons validated Peshkin's conclusions and determined that the primary reason Christian schools existed and the primary reason parents enrolled their children were centered on the principle of values. Parsons defined values as what people held dear in their religious beliefs, as well as what society viewed to be acceptable and appropriate behavior, morals, dress, entertainment, and other aspects of daily life. He measured values in schools in relation to the strictness of the school environment and how that environment reflected the social values evidenced by people in the various regions he visited. Parsons discovered that the range of commitment to those values varied according to the individual schools. Many of the schools in the South evidenced very strong convictions about values and student discipline, shown by the

strict dress codes, extensive codes of conduct, severe punishment, rigorous Biblical instruction, and control of students' lives away from school as well as at school. Several schools, most of which were located in areas other than the South, fell at the other end of the spectrum and were much more relaxed, typically not requiring a dress code and allowing free discussion in classrooms, hallways, and cafeterias. School administrators and lay leaders of these more relaxed schools showed more tolerance to childish behaviors. Several schools did not provide formal Bible instruction and only used the Bible during class discussions, while accepting certain student activity in the "world" outside school as natural. Parsons saw these factors as reflective of what school officials and parents held as important or acceptable as values.

Parsons saw a greater emphasis on academic subjects than did Peshkin, which one might expect considering the wider sample with which Parsons worked. Peshkin was exposed to one school and its nuances, while Parsons had the scope of approximately 60 schools. In fact, Parsons indicated that most parents and schools intended to provide an academic superior curriculum so that their children would have the greater opportunity to attend more colleges than Bethany Christian's students had. Parents expressed the desire that their children should have the skills and qualifications that would permit them to engage in high level careers. In addition to ministry vocations, both parents and students indicated that graduates of Christian schools should be able to pursue careers in medicine, law, higher education, and other areas. Parents believed that this goal could be accomplished while maintaining a Christian environment without formal Bible training in a Christian college.

Peshkin indicated that the Christian community's dissatisfaction with the public schools was based more on values than academics. In contrast, Parsons found more parents who had opted for Protestant Christian schools cited that their perceptions of the failure of public schools to provide sufficiently high enough academic standards were a major consideration. Additionally, Parsons suggested that many parents who have opted for Protestant Christian schools believe the public schools have assumed numerous roles beyond those of regular academics, so much so that,

[P]hysical education, driver education, special education, and sex education now get more attention than regular education. But their despair over public education goes deeper, far deeper, than these externals. They are convinced that public schooling does not teach values like it used to, discipline like it used to, or instill old-fashioned morality like it used to. The portrait they paint is almost unrelenting: chaos in the classroom, loss of authority, an absence of standards, and lack of learning. (p. 158)

Parsons indicated that for more than any other reason, parents appeared to want a return to what they perceived education used to be.

Rose's work (1988) closely coincided with that of Peshkin and Parson. Rose conducted a study of two Christian schools located 30 miles apart in upstate New York. Each school had been established in 1974, one having a fundamental Baptist orientation, Covenant School, and the other having a charismatic Pentecostal orientation, Lakehaven: The Academy. The study took two years. Rose became involved in studying the Christian school movement as she was researching domestic violence and families in America. Her curiosity was aroused at ideas of the

Evangelical Movement and the New Religious Right as they at the same time proclaimed themselves to be pro-life yet opposed to mandatory reporting of child abuse, to shelters for abused women, and to declarations such as the International Year of the Child. The Evangelical Movement is composed primarily of Protestant church members and clergy whose philosophical stance lends itself to strict Biblical interpretation of social ideals, including Bible-saturated education for children and dominant male leadership in the home, school, and church. The New Religious Right is a political movement sponsored by Protestant factions holding to perceived conservative, traditional ideals, often associated with Republican Party politics. Rose was interested in how those in the Protestant Christian community could take such contradictory positions.

Rose perceived the principle of values to be of utmost importance to parents and to be the primary reason for the schools' founding. Academics were perceived to be important as a means of securing a more solid future for children, especially as parents realized that even lower entry-level jobs often require college degrees. Her ethnographies revealed similar findings expressed by Peshkin and Parsons although she noted that the emphasis on academics had continually increased.

Rose also described the culture or society that the Protestant Christian school builds. She suggested that the parents who opted for enrollment in Protestant Christian schools, as well as the Protestant Christian schools themselves, rebelled against modern day society and its education system, not just the public system but the private system as well. Rose indicated that the Protestant Christian school represented a step midway between the former Protestant-oriented America and the Protestant/religion-free America of the post-World War II years. She purported that the Protestant Christian school attempts to teach Biblical principles, while at the same time it picks and chooses elements of modern culture that are not offensive to the fundamental Christian point of view but that also keep the Christian culture up-to-date. She verbalized what Peshkin and Parsons hinted. Protestant Christian schools and parents who support them cannot totally block out what is secular. Society is reflected in modes of dress, levels and intensity of sports competitions, choices of entertainment, and daily life activities. The Protestant Christian school, therefore, in some ways reproduces modern society and its culture rather than creating its own distinctive society and culture.

Rose described the two schools as places that concentrate on creating citizens who are civil-minded and willing to be more than good workers in the workplaces of America. As good honest workers they would then represent and spread to others their spiritual grounding to influence others to be like them by following their God.

Wagner (1990) studied a number of Virginia Protestant Christian schools. Wegner studied seven schools in what she termed the "Southeastern Valley" and two schools in what she termed the "City." The research consisted of full-time observation conducted for thirteen months. The schools were located in varied environments populated with churches representing numerous denominations. Some of the churches sponsored individual schools and many of the students who attended those Protestant Christian schools were children of members of the sponsoring churches. At the time of her research and writing, Wagner found that parents who had opted for Protestant Christian schools were primarily concerned with the family life

education curriculum and program, i.e. sex education, of the public schools. With the exception of the sex education issue, most parents had no quarrel with the public schools. The public schools, in fact, were noted for their strong academic programs and “showing” and were what parents saw as not “bad” (p. 10). Values played a major reason that the parents enrolled their children in the area Protestant Christian schools.

Wagner specifically noted that in many areas the schools she studied were not significantly different from most public or other private schools in certain aspects. For example, the Protestant Christian schools were as competitive in sports and other opportunities for rivalry. Schools that enrolled middle school or junior high or high school students often found that some of these young people were more concerned with materialistic values such as name brand clothing than they were with spiritual values. Individuals were as competitive to receive honors and recognition as individuals outside the Protestant Christian setting. The Protestant Christian schools often incorporated identical educational strategies employed by the public schools. In short, Wagner found clients of Protestant Christian schools were no different in some of their activities and material concerns than clients of the public sector despite the Biblical objectives upon which the Protestant Christian schools were based.

Weinig (1993) in his dissertation indicated that values are still perceived important to parents as they choose alternative schools for their children, but that other factors hold importance as well. Weinig studied four private schools in Delaware: (1) a nonsectarian private school, (2) a Catholic school, (3) a Protestant Christian school, and (4) a home school organization.

In addition to values, Weinig found parents were concerned with safety, academic challenge, and discipline. Parents perceived that public school teachers have to contend more and more with problem students than they should be required. Weinig studied schools other than Protestant Christian schools and concluded that parents who chose nonsectarian private schools were interested primarily in academic levels. However, parents who chose sectarian schools, both Catholic and Protestant, regarded the principle of values as important or more important than academics. Some parents found the willingness of the private schools, sectarian and nonsectarian, to fund classrooms with fewer numbers of students as appealing as several other considerations.

Hu (1996) studied parents of students in two public middle schools in Williamsburg-James City County, Virginia, to investigate how parents would seek information if they could choose their children’s schools and what factors would be important as they chose. From the two schools, Hu randomly selected 40 parents whom he interviewed by phone or in person seeking answers to pre-designed hypothetical questions including: (1) What factors would influence the decision of a parent if he is allowed to choose between two public schools in his residential area? and (2) What would be some of the selection criteria upon which the parent would base his decision?

Parents in the Williamsburg-James County school district cannot choose schools yet. The ones Hu interviewed expressed not only their desire to be able to choose, but also the criteria by which they would make their choice. The top 10 factors parents indicated as being important

were teachers, discipline, curriculum content, school and class size, learning environment, quality of education, instructional style, extracurricular program, students in general, facilities/equipment, and security. Hu concluded that parents would choose schools based on criteria meaningful to themselves consisting of human, physical, academic, and atmospheric factors.

Stormer (1998) documented evidence of what he perceived to be public education reform's role in undermining academic standards and traditional values. The author takes the Protestant Christian school point of view via his former positions as a pastor and Protestant Christian school superintendent in Missouri, following his career as an editor and general manager of an electrical magazine prior to his conversion to Protestant Christianity. The primary concerns Stormer addressed in his compilation, None Dare Call It Education, were the approach taken by public education to address the sex education of students from a secular, non-Biblical approach and the lowering of academic standards. Stormer concluded that parents were not being informed adequately of the content of the information their children were being taught in sex education classes nor were parents afforded the opportunity to be the primary teachers of sex education to their own children. Stormer took to task the inferior quality of textbooks and instructional programs in public schools throughout the United States, citing numerous historical errors and omissions and deviation from standard, traditional teaching methods. In Stormer's opinion, public schools were producing an inferior product under the jurisdiction of the local school boards as well as under state and national mandates.

Stormer purported that the solution to improving the public school system lay in the hands of parents if they would choose to become politically and educationally active. He encouraged participation in local school issues and individual addressing of concerns with state and federal representatives in government. While he supported the worldview taught in the Protestant Christian school, he sought to encourage a return to the Protestant-oriented public system of the past.

Koenigsknecht (1998) identified the reasons given by parents for selecting nonresidential public schools through a school choice program by conducting interviews with parents who represented 20 families. He concluded that parents perceived that the public schools were negligent in the areas of academics, safety, and values. He identified a number of parents who opted to send their children to other public schools that they perceived better met their personal standards.

Vassallo (1999) conducted a comparative study measuring three choice initiatives "against educational indicators suggested by Odden (1990) and Goals 2000 to determine whether vouchers, private management of schools, or charter schools offered to a select group of students can provide for all students improved access to educational opportunities by stimulating marketplace pressures in public education" (p. i). The three initiatives were The Milwaukee Parental Choice Program, The UMBC Evaluation of the Tesseract Program in Baltimore City, and the 1997 Colorado Charter Schools Evaluation Study: The Characteristics, Status, and Student Achievement Data of Colorado Charter Schools. In comparing the three initiatives, Vassallo included parent responses to what is important to them as they choose schools for their children and the levels of satisfaction with their choices. Included as important to the success of

the three programs was the factor that each one engendered increased parental participation in the education of their children.

Rose and Gallup (1999) in the 1999 Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll interviewed by telephone 1,102 adults in May and June of 1999 to ask what factors were most important to them in choosing any school, public, private, or either. The top considerations were the quality of the teaching staff, maintenance of discipline, curriculum, size of classes, extra curricular activities, proximity to home, size of the school, reputation of the school, and the athletic program. The respondents answered that they saw the biggest problems in public schools to be the lack of discipline, the need for more control of students, and the incidents of fighting, violence, and gang activity. They expressed the desire for a greater emphasis on values and supported the concept of neighborhood schools. Also, 55 % of the respondents were opposed to the public funding of school choice initiatives that included private schools. Concurrently, concern for values and the request for a good academic program headed the list of preferences as people considered school choice, public or private.

Other Literature and Other Factors Influencing Enrollment

Additional literature review further indicates that the above and other factors influence choices parents make as they enroll their children in school, public or private. Parents share certain concepts and concerns simply because they are parents. The welfare of their children is, of course, an area about which most parents care deeply, including the schooling of their young.

Parents generally desire high academic quality and strong curricular programs for their children when deciding where to enroll their children in school. Parents often perceive that academic quality is generally measured by curricular offerings and resulting standardized test scores. Therefore, for the purpose of this study academic quality and curriculum refer to the standards and levels of academic achievement and curricular subjects schools offer.

While many schools other than private schools provide adequate academic opportunities, parents may perceive that their children will receive a higher quality education in a private or private-like setting. Studies indicate that parent perception of academic quality is an important factor when parents enroll their children in school (Gallup & Clark, 1987; Uchitelle & Nault, 1977). Parents seek high achievement levels and academic standards that are associated with specialized curriculum and instruction, similar to what is offered in the private sector or magnet schools (Rossell, 1985). A study of Midwestern suburban schools also indicated that grades and test results stand as top contenders for parents' concern and desire to choose their children's school (Wilson et al., 1993). Parents of students of all ages apparently consider grades to serve as the indicator or standard for parents to judge the success of a school or school system regardless of the accuracy of grades (Office of Educational Research and Improvement, 1992). The NCES 1993 study of parent and student perceptions of learning environments indicated that academic achievement is perceived to be of higher quality and more obtainable at lower grade levels (Chandler, Nolin & Zill). In other words, as students rise in grade level, academic achievement drops, as perceived by some parents. There also exists the perception that Catholic schools are schools of choice to both Catholic and non-Catholic parents because of their standards for high academic achievement, stronger overall program, and better funding (Maddaus, 1988).

Currently, most Catholic school students are Catholic, but the non-Catholic population in Catholic schools has increased from 2.7% in 1970 to 11.2% in 1980 to 13.6% today. Catholic schools also offer a 16:1 pupil/teacher ratio. Forty-four per cent of all Catholic schools in America have a waiting list for admission. In addition, Catholic school students consistently score high on achievement tests, reinforcing reasons for confidence in the academic program and organization (National Catholic Educational Association, 2001).

Parents also have a concern about discipline and safety in their children's school. For the purposes of this study, discipline refers to expectations of classroom behavior standards and enforcement of those standards. If the students in the classroom are not expected to maintain self-discipline, parents may perceive that learning cannot take place. Likewise, if parents or students fear for students' physical safety because of the uncontrolled actions or words of fellow students, parents perceive learning to be difficult to achieve or maintain.

Parents may couple their concern for academic achievement with issues of safety. For their children to reach the academic levels parents want, they believe the school must provide an atmosphere in which disruptions are few and fears of weapons and drugs are absent (Smrekar & Goldring, 1999). Parents may desire to support local public schools but concerns over their or their children's perceptions of or experiences with unruly classes and drugs have led a number of parents to choose private education (Bourgoin, 1992).

Some parents also consider proximity and convenience when they enroll children in school. Proximity in the context of this study refers to the physical distance between the home and the school. Convenience refers to how easily parents are able to drop off and pick up their children in relation to the proximity of the school to the home and how easily parents can drop off or pick up children in relation to the parents' time and work schedules.

Where children attend school often entails parent consideration of the proximity of the school to the home or the workplace or to both places (Smrekar & Goldring, 1999). If the school where their children attend is private, the parents may have to consider transportation costs in addition to tuition, not to mention the inconvenience of the school possibly not providing transportation. Sometimes the issues of proximity and convenience to the school outweigh or strongly vie with academic considerations, especially in rural settings (Wilson, et al, 1993). Private schooling affects the economics of a family in several ways. The greater the cost involved may mean greater sacrifice and, therefore, greater value to the family. Location may be perceived to indicate the quality of a school (Maddaus, 1990; Rossell, 1990).

Of primary importance to many families seeking private schooling is the matter of religion and the values taught and modeled alongside the teaching. Religion in the matter of Protestant Christian schools refers to Bible-based teaching, prayer, and perhaps denominational preference as inherent aspects of education. Social values indicates education that is aligned with religion and perceived Bible standards of daily life, including convictions concerning social issues such as sex education, creation, evolution, as well as socially acceptable behavior and perceived morally appropriate daily living.

Parents may seek schools for their children because of their desire to have their children's education reinforce their personal religious beliefs. Parents may perceive that sectarian schools will afford them the opportunity to incorporate their beliefs into their children's daily schooling. They may also seek a setting where they believe their children will interact with other children whose social standing and values are more like their own than they might encounter in another school. They may perceive that their children will be in the presence of those whose beliefs, standards of social behavior, and economic level will be similar. Racial concerns are also evident in parents' perceptions because these parents may consider that an increase in crime and factors points to deterioration or lowering of property values and overall educational achievement due to continuing desegregation of neighborhoods (Smrekar & Goldring, 1999).

Johnson (1996) surveyed and received responses from 1,259 of 1,736 parents contacted who had enrolled at least one child in a private school during the 1996-97 school year to find what variables those parents perceived to be the factors leading to enrolling them to enroll in private school. She found 5 factors to be prevalent: (1) effectiveness of instruction; (2) effectiveness of discipline, safety, and school environment; (3) parent involvement and values consistent with the home; (4) issues of diversity; and (5) educational opportunities. Her study was based in San Diego County, California, and she gained her sample of one each from Catholic, Jewish, Lutheran/Episcopalian, Christian, and Independent schools in the area.

Buttrum (1994) surveyed parents who had enrolled children in Arkansas private schools for some time during the three years prior to his study. He sought to determine if there were significant relationships between demographic factors and the selection of private schools. In addition, Buttrum sought to ascertain the perceived effects of enrollment in private school in comparison to public schools. His results showed that time spent studying, self-confidence, satisfaction with learning, satisfaction with teachers, and motivation for learning were listed most often as being areas of most improvement in children's schooling as a result of their enrollment in private school. Parent perceived student safety and more independence as the greatest advantage and lack of diversity as the greatest disadvantage of private schooling.

Gibson (1993) studied parents' perceptions of factors motivating them to enroll children in private elementary schools in Milwaukee. The children were enrolled in what he classified Catholic, Jewish, Independent, and Lutheran (what he refers to synonymously throughout his study as Protestant Christian or Christian) schools. He conducted his study in two phases. He first mailed surveys to 390 families in three districts who had enrolled students in grades 1 through 8 in private schools. His response rate was 217. Of the 217, Gibson then conducted 103 phone interviews with families who agreed to participate.

Gibson concluded that 15 factors could be identified in literature as reasons why parents may choose to enroll children in private school. The following are the factors he isolated: (1) quality of instruction; (2) quality of curriculum; (3) commitment of teachers; (4) emphasis on religion; (5) emphasis on moral values; (6) high achievement standards; (7) peer pressure that encourages high achievement; (8) disciplined environment; (9) warmth of school climate; (10) small class size; (11) grouping of students based upon abilities/needs; (12) responsiveness to expectations of parents; (13) well-defined mission and sense of purpose; (14) proximity and convenience of school location; and (15) preparation for desired secondary schools and colleges.

He also concluded that parents who enrolled in any private school perceived high academic standards to be foremost in their choice. Parents who enrolled in private religious school, however, held religion to be as important or one degree more important than academic standards, depending on the type of religious school chosen.

The scope of the above studies encompasses many schools of many orientations, not the Protestant Christian school only. In each study the two major factors that appeared to be of greatest interest to parents as they enrolled their children in schools, public or private, sectarian or nonsectarian, were the values and academic standards inherent in the schools.

Association of Christian Schools International

One of the most widely recognized organizations in the Protestant Christian school movement is the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI). It is important to discuss this particular league of Protestant Christian schools, as it is the vehicle or facilitator through which the data of the study emerged.

ACSI originated in 1978 when three major Christian school associations merged. Joining forces were the National Christian School Education Association (NCSEA), formerly a part of the National Association of Christian Schools; the Ohio Association of Christian Schools (OACS), and the Western Association of Christian Schools (WACS), which itself had been formed in 1975 when the Arizona Association of Christian Schools merged with the California Association of Christian Schools. Over the next several years, ACSI grew to include other Protestant Christian school organizations such as the Southeast Association of Christian Schools, the Association of Teachers of Christian Schools, the Great Plains Association of Christian Schools, and the Texas Association of Christian Schools (ACSI history web page, 1998).

The goal or purpose of ACSI is to serve as an “enabler” for the evangelical community of Protestant Christian schools and educators by providing information, services, and products. Worldwide, by 1998, students in ACSI-associated schools numbered more than 870,000 students in more than 4,000 schools. In the United States, since 1978, ACSI’s number of member schools and colleges has increased from 1,051 to 3,770 and student enrollments have increased from 185,687 to 796,867 (ACSI home web page, 1998).

Each school associated with ACSI is one of two types of school: evangelistic or discipleship. An evangelistic school is one that enrolls most children, regardless of their church or denomination affiliation or lack thereof. The student in an evangelistic school is viewed as an opportunity for recruitment into Protestant Christianity, with that recruitment being one of the primary goals of the school, in addition to any social or academic goals the school may have. As long as students and their parents agree to adhere to the standards of the school and are willing participants in the religious and Biblical teaching, students’ spiritual background is not a determining factor in their enrollment.

A discipleship school enrolls only students who satisfy church or denomination standards set by the individual school. Generally the standards require proof that the student’s family have at least one parent that is a professing Protestant Christian and that the family, by virtue of at

least that one parent, be active members of a church of like practice. While both types of schools exist, questions abound within their ranks about the wisdom of each type of school. There are those who argue that the Protestant Christian school has a responsibility to enroll students of nominal or non-Christian background. In addition, maintaining a larger pool of prospective students helps maintain enrollment numbers. Those who hold to the discipleship perspective of Protestant Christian school argue that the real business of the Protestant Christian school is to serve as partners with Protestant Christian parents as they train their children; therefore, students who themselves or their family are not members of a church do not fit the purpose of the school (Baker, 1979).

Schools that are members of ACSI hold to a common statement of faith, as do members of other Christian school associations (Wagner, 1990). The statement does not necessarily represent a denominational stand, other than what can be termed Protestant. The statement of faith does, however, limit the membership (see Appendix A). Any school ascribing to the statement of faith can become a member of ACSI.

Membership does not, however, guarantee certification. Before a school is certified by ACSI, it must conduct a self-study and undergo a certification process much like that which public schools experience under the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). As an example, several Virginia ACSI schools have held dual accreditation with ACSI and SACS, although at the present time SACS no longer grants dual accreditation. ACSI schools must hold to specific standards and levels of academics. The Virginia Council for Private Education (VCPE), recognized by the Commonwealth of Virginia as a valid accrediting agency, recognizes ACSI accreditation. Teachers in ACSI schools must be certified through ACSI, and they may also hold state teaching certificates, which many do in order to further validate their teaching credentials.

ACSI, Southeast Region

The Association of Christian Schools International, United States division, consists of nine regions. The Commonwealth of Virginia is included in the Southeast Region, which ranks as the second largest division just behind the Southern California Region. The ACSI Directory, published by ACSI, has listed the student enrollment on a yearly basis from 1988 to the present. The figures from the Southeast Region alone show the growth that has occurred in the last 11 years. The Region includes the states of Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia. Until 1997, the region also included Florida; but the numbers of Christian schools and Christian school students in Florida alone justified the formation of a singular Florida Region (see Table 2.1).

Table 2.1

ACSI Enrollment Figures for the Southeast Region

| Year | Enrollment |
|---------|------------|
| 1987-88 | 39,989 |
| 1988-89 | 45,222 |
| 1989-90 | 50,522 |
| 1990-91 | 54,114 |
| 1991-92 | 56,038 |
| 1992-93 | 66,445 |
| 1993-94 | 89,407 |
| 1994-95 | 101,301 |
| 1995-96 | 119,115 |
| 1996-97 | 117,553 |
| 1997-98 | 93,934* |

*Indicates the removal of the state of Florida from the enrollment count
(Source: Association of Christian Schools International, April 12, 1999)

Virginia

The Commonwealth of Virginia has 133 Protestant Christian schools, including 4 colleges, which are members of ACSI. Schools range in size, with large schools being classified as those with 500 or more students and small schools as those schools with 499 or fewer students. Most Virginia schools evidenced steady growth in enrollment over the last few years, although some schools limit their size due to budgetary and/or facilities restrictions.

Summary

The review of literature provides a background to an understanding of the foundations of Protestant Christian schools from an historical perspective. The review also gives evidence of varying reasons parents choose private school options for their children, including Protestant Christian schools. The introduction to the Association of Christian Schools International provides a look into the base organization of 129 Protestant Christian schools in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to isolate variables that influence initial and maintenance enrollment in Protestant Christian schools as perceived by principals and parents. The study involved non-probability sampling in purposive research via finding a proportional quota. Weinig's (1993) forced response survey was used to collect data. Information was classified, analyzed, and compared by use of frequency distribution and Chi-square testing.

Population and Sample

The population in this study was Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) member schools in Virginia and 311 of 1,223 families whose names were supplied by the 88 participating principals. The study was an attempt to cover all 129 Preschool-12 schools included in the ACSI 1999-2000 school year membership roll. Seventy-one schools were actually participants in the study.

Principals' names were listed on an SPSS spreadsheet. The order of the principals' names followed the alphabetical listing of the schools in which they served as principal. The number of principals in the 129 schools totaled 146. Of the 146, 90 responded with 88 responses being usable.

Ten principal respondents supplied total parent name and address lists. The desire to maintain confidentiality and the typically closed attitude of Protestant Christian schools when asked to participate in a secular-based study prevented more principals from supplying lists. One principal supplied a random sampling he had prepared from his school's list of clientele. That list was not used for the study. Six principals offered to supply the families of their school with a questionnaire. The offer was not accepted to maintain continuity of methodology throughout the study. One principal verbally responded his discomfort at supplying his school's list of families, but he stated that he respected the value of such a study, leading him to provide the list.

The number of schools whose principals supplied names and addresses totaled less than 10% of the number of ACSI schools in Virginia. The schools, however, were a representative group by geography and by number. The schools were located in urban, suburban, and rural areas throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia. The schools ranged in size from approximately 100 students to approximately more than 1000 students.

Survey Instrument and Design

The researcher surveyed principals and school families using a forced opinion survey (Weinig, 1993) (See Table 3.1). Weinig's instrument purported to indicate parent rankings of perceived reasons for initially enrolling their children in private or other-than-public schools and the perceived reasons they maintained enrollment in these schools. For the purposes of this study, the 24-item survey that Weinig developed was administered to both principals and parents. (See Table 3.1.)

Table 3.1

Parent Reasons for Choosing and Continuing to Enroll Children in Protestant Christian Schools

| ITEM |
|--|
| 1. Class atmosphere/behavior standard |
| 2. Favorable class size |
| 3. Academic standards/challenge level |
| 4. Learning facilities |
| 5. Teachers' academic qualifications |
| 6. Teacher-parent communication |
| 7. Co-curriculars |
| 8. Athletics |
| 9. Administration monitors teacher performance |
| 10. Dress code |
| 11. Administrative responsiveness |
| 12. Location convenience |
| 13. Teachers caring/committed |
| 14. Values |
| 15. Improvement of self-esteem |
| 16. Reputation/prestige |
| 17. Ethnic diversity |
| 18. Preparation for financial success |
| 19. Arts appreciation |
| 20. Opportunity for parental involvement |
| 21. Affordable tuition |
| 22. Financial aid |
| 23. School philosophy |
| 24. Preparation for academic success |
| 25. Other (please specify below) |

(Items 1-24 used by permission of Dr. Kenneth M. Weinig.)

Principals in each ACSI school enrolling students in any combination of preschool to grade 12 were asked to rank the five reasons they perceived were most often given by parents for enrolling their children in Protestant Christian school. Each principal was also asked to supply demographic information included with the forced opinion survey.

The study replicated a portion of Weinig's study by asking parents both why they perceived they initially enrolled their children in Protestant Christian school and why they have maintained enrollment. Parents were asked to rank the top five reasons for each of the above considerations, using the same 24 item forced opinion survey that was sent to the principals. Parents were also asked to supply demographic information in addition to the above information.

Principals and parents were asked to rank the top five variables they perceived to be the primary factors leading parents to enroll and re-enroll children in Protestant Christian school. A Likert scale was not used because it would allow numerous factors to hold the same value. The purpose of this study was to isolate and rank the top five variables and distinguish those five from the rest of the 24 available on the survey for principals and parents to choose.

Principals were requested to supply parent names and addresses to establish contact. To facilitate the request for participation in the study and parents' names and addresses, a letter from Mr. Tom McClure, the Director of the Southeast Region of the Association of Christian Schools International, was mailed with the questionnaires. The letter served to ask help from the principals of Virginia ACSI schools in isolating reasons families enroll their children in Christian schools (See Appendix C). The researcher asked principals to provide the list of school parents.

Content Validity

Validity of the instrument for principals was established by circulating the survey among a group of Protestant Christian school principals who were asked to comment individually on the appropriateness of the information being requested. These principals were not part of the surveyed sample of the study. Ten weeks later the same group was again asked to comment on the appropriateness of the questionnaire. In each case, there were no objections to any portion of the survey.

Validity for parents was established by circulating the survey among a group of parents of students enrolled in Protestant Christian school. These parents were not part of the surveyed sample of the study. The parents were asked to comment on the appropriateness of the survey at the time of the initial contact and again 10 weeks later. No objections were made to any portion of the survey.

Data Collection

The principals' survey was mailed to each of the 129 Virginia ACSI schools. Some schools have one principal for the total school; others have one for each division of the school. Each principal of each segment of each school was mailed a questionnaire. The questionnaire was printed on an 8 ½ x 11" paper folded in half. The front of the questionnaire was a cover letter explaining its purpose. The cover letter specified the date of mailing and the request for the

questionnaire's return within the following two weeks. A copy of the letter supporting the study by the Southeast Director of ACSI on a full 8 ½ x 11" ACSI letterhead was included in the mailing. The initial mailing also included a self-addressed stamped envelope for the return mailing from each principal.

Three timed contacts followed the initial contact (Dillman, 2000). One week after the initial surveys were mailed, a reminder postcard was sent. Those who did not respond within the three weeks' limit received another letter and duplicate of the survey via the postal service. As necessary, a last letter and questionnaire was mailed to those principals who had not yet replied.

Principals were asked to supply parent names and addresses from which a random number could be chosen to participate in the parent questionnaire. Ten schools responded with complete parent lists. The number of families' names totaled 1,223. From that number the percentage of the total that each school represented was figured. The sample size was then based upon the percentage each school represented, using the websites <http://progresstelecom.com/audits/statsamp.htm> and www.stat.ucla.edu/testbook/introduction/sampling to calculate sample size and sample error. In an attempt to minimize the sampling error, the sample size was decided to be 25% of the 1,223 names received. After figuring the number of families to contact from each school, the rounding error brought the number of families to 311.

The name of each family was listed in Excel in one column. In the next column each name was assigned a random number between 0 and 1, after applying the formula =Rand() to all cells. The data were then sorted by the second column and the appropriate number of names was chosen.

The format of the parent surveys was identical to those sent the principals. The cover letter was specific to the request to the parents. The letter from the ACSI director was also included. The same schedule of mailings was conducted for parents as was for the principals.

Data Analysis

The data collected from the principals and parents were recorded and analyzed to answer the research questions from Chapter 1. Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The analysis employed frequency distribution, cross tabulations, and the Chi-square test of association. Frequency distributions were used to describe the following:

- (1) principals' perceptions of the highest ranked reasons parents enroll children in Protestant Christian school,
- (2) parents' perceptions of the highest ranked reasons they initially enrolled children in Protestant Christian school, and
- (3) parents' perceptions of the highest ranked reasons they re-enrolled children in Protestant Christian school.

Demographic information was used to describe the educational and experiential aspects of principals of Virginia ACSI schools. Demographic information from parents was used to describe aspects of their income level and family status.

Chi-square analyses were used to determine if relationships existed among the variables chosen by principals and parents. The Chi-square test is based upon the concept of independence, meaning that one variable is not affected by or related to another.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

The purpose of the study was to describe demographically the current landscape of ACSI schools in Virginia and the families who enroll their children in those schools and to identify the factors that influence the families to enroll. The focus of the study was to rank and isolate factors that principals and parents perceived to be the top five reasons why children are enrolled in ACSI Protestant Christian schools in Virginia. Parents were also asked to rank the top five factors leading them to re-enroll their children in these schools.

This chapter is presented in three sections. The first section reports the demographic information reported by principals and parents. The second section reports the perceptions of principals and parents about why children are enrolled in ACSI Protestant Christian schools in Virginia. The third section reports the analysis of data using the Chi-square test of association. The data were analyzed using SPSS to determine frequency distributions, cross tabulations, and Chi-square results.

The data were collected in two phases. The first phase, the mailing of the forced opinion survey to the 146 principals of the 129 ACSI schools in Virginia, yielded 90 responses. The four colleges were not included in the study. Two responses were not included in the analysis. One principal responded that the school with which he had been associated had closed. Another principal responded that his school had merged with another ACSI school in the area and the head principal of the merged school would reply. The 88 responses represent a 60% return rate. Among the 88 responses in the analysis, the total number of participating schools was 71 or 55%.

The second phase yielded responses from the convenience sample of families whose names and address were supplied by the principals of 10 schools. The sample consisted of 311 families, 25% of the 1,223 names supplied. One hundred thirty-seven families responded, representing a 44% return rate. All respondent families ranked the five factors they perceived to be the reasons they initially enrolled their children in a Protestant Christian school. One family, however, did not respond to the portion of the survey regarding re-enrollment. That family wrote a statement on the survey indicating their decision not to re-enroll in a Protestant Christian school because they did not perceive their child was receiving appropriate instruction regarding his special learning needs.

Demographic Information

Demographic information was requested of principals and parents. The responses give a picture of the people who serve as principals of the ACSI schools in Virginia and of the parents who enroll their children in ACSI schools in Virginia. Principals reported their personal education level and background, scholarship information about their school, and the category of their school. Parents reported information concerning the children living in their home and the schooling of those children, the number of years their children have been enrolled in Protestant Christian school, family income levels, family status and employment, and scholarship

information related to their children. The principal responses are discussed first, followed by the parent responses.

Principal Demographic Information

Each principal was asked specific demographic information. Certain information, such as the tuition for each school, was much too disparate to report nor did it appear to have any connection with regard to tuition rates among the schools. For the 1999-2000 school year, tuition ranged from \$990 per year for preschool to \$6, 365 for high school. Tuition was tiered at some schools, the same rate for all grade levels at other schools. Schools reported weekly, monthly, and yearly rates, depending upon individual school practice. The principal of the school that had closed did not supply personal demographic information.

Principals’ education level and background. Principals were asked what level of education they had received, represented in Table 4.1. Two respondents (2%) were pursuing a Master’s degree and two (2%) were pursuing a Doctoral degree. ACSI has specific requirements for principal certification. To obtain a temporary certificate, principals must have earned a Bachelor’s degree from an accredited college, meaning a college approved by the U.S. Department of Education. A temporary certificate is valid for two years and can be renewed, but a principal must evidence progress toward a standard certificate. To obtain a standard level certificate, principals must also have 33 semester hours of student teaching and have taken and successfully passed at least 6 semester hours each of graduate level courses in Education Administration and Biblical studies. To obtain a professional level certificate, principals must have a Master’s degree, an additional 6 semester hours of graduate level courses in Education Administration, and the equivalent of 10 semester hours of Biblical studies. Holders of standard and professional certificates must also satisfy a philosophy of Christian education as defined by ACSI (ACSI, 2001).

Table 4.1

Education Level of the 88 Principals

| Bachelor’s degree | Master’s degree | Doctoral degree |
|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| 32 (36%) | 48 (55%) | 8 (9%) |

Principals were asked their personal education background at any academic level, specifically whether they were Christian college educated or secular college educated, represented in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2

Type of College Attended for Any Degree

| Christian college only | Secular college only | Both Christian and secular college |
|------------------------|----------------------|------------------------------------|
| 24 (27%) | 32 (36%) | 26 (29%) |

Principals were asked their personal experience as professionals in education. This information gives perspective to the range of background of the various principals. (See Table 4.3.)

The greatest number of principals (25% and 22 %, respectively) reported having had 16-20 years' experience or 21-25 years' experience. Forty-two principals (48%) reported having been a principal from 1-5 years. Fifty-three principals (60%) reported they had been in their present position 1-5 years. Principals' years of experience in Christian education was somewhat evenly distributed across the board. Fifty-five principals (63%) reported also having had experience in schools other than Christian.

Scholarship information from principals. Principals were asked whether students in their school were offered scholarships and whether the scholarships were full or partial. Availability of financial aid could possibly influence parents to enroll children in the Protestant Christian school. One principal responded that his school had 1 student only on full scholarship. One principal responded 30% of her school's students attended on partial scholarships. Of the remaining responses, 36 principals (40%) responded that their school offers partial scholarships. Fifteen principals (17%) responded that their school offers both full and partial scholarships, one school through the Virginia First Foundation. Various schools offer scholarships based upon tiered tuition for siblings or teacher discounts.

The terms for scholarship availability varied. Twenty-five principals (28%) said their school offers scholarships to any student who exhibited need. Twenty-seven principals (30%) stated that their school offers scholarships under certain criteria, including to students of staff and church members.

Category of school. Principals were asked to categorize their school as college preparatory, general academic or both. The general academic category refers to courses of study that prepare students who are not college bound to enter the work field with basic abilities. The schools that were categorized as both college preparatory and general academic were high schools. The categories represent close to a one-third, one-third, one-third division, as shown in Table 4.4.

Table 4.3

Principals' Years of Experience in Education

| Number of years | 1-5 | 6-10 | 11-15 | 16-20 | 21-25 | 26-30 | 31-35 | 36-40 | |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-----------|-----------|---------------|
| | | | | | | | | | Totals |
| Number of Principals with Respective Years in Education | 6 (7%) | 12 (14%) | 9 (10%) | 22 (25%) | 19 (22%) | 11 (13%) | 7 (8%) | 2 (2%) | 88 |
| Number of Principals with Respective Years as a Principal | 42 (48%) | 18 (20%) | 14 (16%) | 6 (7%) | 7 (8%) | 1 (1%) | 0 | 0 | 88 |
| Number of Principals with Respective Years in Present Position | 53 (60%) | 19 (22%) | 9 (10%) | 5 (6%) | 2 (2%) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 88 |
| Number of Principals with Respective Years in Christian Education | 17 (19%) | 16 (18%) | 13 (15%) | 18 (20%) | 14 (16%) | 9 (10%) | 1 (1%) | 0 | 88 |
| Number of Principals with Respective Years in Education Classified as Other than Christian | 23 (26%) | 21 (24%) | 5 (6%) | 3 (3%) | 2 (2%) | 1 (1%) | 0 | 0 | 88 |

Table 4.4

Number of Principals (Percentage) by Category of School

| College Preparatory | General Academic | Both College Preparatory and General Academic | Unknown | Total |
|---------------------|------------------|---|---------|-----------|
| 27 (31%) | 31 (35%) | 24 (27%) | 6 (7%) | 88 (100%) |

The demographic information from principals exhibits no startling revelations. The education levels of the principals, however, may appear counterintuitive to those who may perceive the Protestant Christian school as no more than a grass roots reaction to public schooling. If indeed that mindset motivated the origin or the purpose of the Protestant Christian school at some point in time, ACSI requirements appear today to evidence the attempt by that organization to improve and maintain the qualifications of principals.

Family Demographic Information

Families were asked certain demographic questions to provide information showing in some way a bigger picture of the “who” the people are that enroll children in the Protestant Christian school. Each family that enrolls has to meet certain academic and spiritual criteria the school has established, but that criteria may not portray the family’s financial level or marital or employment status, all of which may contribute to the decision to enroll in the Protestant Christian school.

Family information about children living in the home. Families were asked to supply information concerning the number of children living in the home and their status as students in either Christian school or schools other than Christian. (See Table 4.5.) Twenty-three families (17%) indicated that they had children enrolled in schools classified as other than Christian. Three of those families noted that their children were enrolled in preschools because their children were not yet old enough to be enrolled in the Protestant Christian school where their other children attended. Thirty-six families (27%) indicated they had had children graduate from schools classified as other than Christian, while 11 (8%) had children who had graduated from Christian school.

Families’ years of enrollment in Protestant Christian school. Families were also asked the total number of years in which they had enrolled children in Protestant Christian schools and in schools other than Protestant Christian schools. The years of enrollment give a picture of the length of time families have been involved in this type of school. Families were also asked the number of years they had children enrolled in schools other than Christian schools. The responses are found in Table 4.6.

Table 4.5

Family Demographics: Number of Children per Family Living in the Home / Schooling Status

| Item | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|---|----------|----------|----------|---------|--------|--------|--------|
| Children living in the home | 25 (18%) | 67 (49%) | 30 (22%) | 10 (7%) | 3 (2%) | 1 (1%) | 1 (1%) |
| Children enrolled in Christian school | 74 (54%) | 43 (31%) | 17 (12%) | 2 (1%) | 1 (1%) | 0 | 0 |
| Children enrolled in school classified as other than Christian | 14 (10%) | 7 (5%) | 1 (1%) | 1 (1%) | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Children who graduated from Christian school | 6 (4%) | 4 (3%) | 1 (1%) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Children who graduated from school classified as other than Christian | 19 (14%) | 16 (12%) | 1 (1%) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Table 4.6

Family Demographics: Total Number of Years Families Have Had Children Enrolled in School

| Type of school | 1-3 | 4-6 | 7-9 | 10-13+ |
|-----------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Christian school | 62 (45%) | 39 (28%) | 16 (12%) | 20 (15%) |
| School other than Christian | 19 (14%) | 16 (12%) | 12 (9%) | 21 (15%) |

Family income levels. Families were asked their personal income level. While answering questions such as this one was optional, 134 families (98%) did select a category concerning their family income. (See Table 4.7) Eighty-seven families (65%) reported income of \$50,000 or greater. The remainder 47 families (35%) reported incomes of less than \$50,000. The levels of self-reported income indicate that almost twice as many families in the \$50,000 or greater range chose to enroll their children in the Protestant Christian school.

Table 4.7

Family Income Levels (Self-Reported)

| Income Levels | Number of Responses |
|------------------|---------------------|
| \$15,000 or less | 2 (1%) |
| \$15,001-20,000 | 1 (1%) |
| \$20,001-30,000 | 11 (8%) |
| \$30,001-40,000 | 14 (10%) |
| \$40,001-50,000 | 19 (14%) |
| \$50,001-60,000 | 21 (15%) |
| \$60,001-70,000 | 23 (17%) |
| \$70,001-80,000 | 9 (6%) |
| \$80,001-90,000 | 13 (9%) |
| \$90,001-100,000 | 7 (5%) |
| Over \$100,000 | 14 (10%) |

Family status and employment. Families were asked their status as either single parent or two parent families. Parents were also asked if one or both parents in the home were employed. One family reported that the wage earner was retired and did not report any particular source of additional income other than retirement funds. (See Tables 4.8 and 4.9.) Of the 93 families with two parents employed, 7 reported that one of the two parents in the home was a stepparent and

that a third source of income came from the divorced parent not living with the child who contributed to the child’s welfare. The “extra” parent accounts for the responses in this section totaling 144, a departure from the 137 upon which the analysis is based.

Table 4.8

Family Status

| Single parent families | Two parent families |
|------------------------|---------------------|
| 16 (12%) | 121 (88%) |

Table 4.9

Employment

| One parent employed | Two parents employed | Retired |
|---------------------|----------------------|---------|
| 50 | 93 | 1 |

Parent-reported scholarship information. Parents were asked if they had children enrolled in the Protestant Christian school who were recipients of any scholarship. Availability of funds to help pay tuition may facilitate the decision of certain families to enroll. Of the 137 families, 123 responded that they had at least one child who received a scholarship to attend the Protestant Christian school. Five children received full scholarships based on either need or a parent being a staff or faculty member. Twelve children had partial scholarships based a parent being a staff or faculty member.

Principal and Parent Perceptions of Why
Parents Enroll Their Children in Protestant Christian Schools

This section of Chapter 4 presents the principal and parent data from the portion of the survey asking what they perceived to be the reasons children are enrolled in Protestant Christian schools. Principals were asked to rank the top five variables they perceived to be the factors or reasons why parents enroll children in Protestant Christian schools. Parents were asked to rank both the top five variables they perceived to be the factors or reasons why they initially enrolled their children in the Protestant Christian school and why they re-enrolled their children.

Frequency of Responses

The results of the principal and parent surveys follow in Tables 4.10, 4.11, and 4.12. Each table lists the variables in the order in which they appeared on the survey and displays the total number of respondents per variable as well as the number of responses per rank per variable.

Highest Ranking Variables

Based on the above findings, principals and parents perceived the top factors to be the same factors, only in different order. (See Tables 4.13, 4.14, and 4.15.) The five highest-ranked variables are recorded with the number of responses and the frequency of number of responses per ranking. Two factors received the equal number of responses for the number 5 ranking among principal perceptions and for the number 4 ranking among parents' reasons for initially enrolling their children.

Principals' highest ranking variables. Principals perceived class atmosphere/behavior level, teachers/caring committed, academic standards/challenge level, and values to be the top four factors, respectively. School philosophy and favorable class size tied as fifth.

Parents' highest ranking variables for initial enrollment. Parents perceived the order of the top three factors for initially enrolling to be values, class atmosphere/behavior, and academic standards/challenge level. Tied for fourth were school philosophy and teachers caring/committed. Favorable class size was chosen as fifth, as it had been by principals.

Parents' highest ranking variables for re-enrolling. Parents perceived the same factors they had chosen as reasons for initially enrolling to be the same factors for re-enrolling, minus favorable class size, and in somewhat different order of rank. The third-ranked factor became teachers caring/committed. The fourth-ranked factor became academic standards/challenge level.

While certain factors changed from one part of the parent survey to the other, a glance at the total number of responses per factor indicates little change in the parent perception of its importance. Academic standards/challenge level received one more response in the second part of the parent survey than it did in the first part, even though it dropped to one lower ranking in the second part. School philosophy dropped one ranking from the fourth to the fifth with four fewer responses.

Frequencies within Rankings

Frequencies within the rankings give a picture of how heavily the top variables weighed at each rank. Frequencies within the principal and parent rankings are indicated in Tables 4.16, 4.17, and 4.18. The frequencies illustrate the levels within the rankings of the importance principals and parents placed on the factors.

Table 4.10

Principal Survey Response Set: Frequency Ranks Given Perceptions of Parent Reasons for Enrollment

| Name | Respondents | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--------------------------------------|-------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Class atmosphere/behavior | 76 | 17 | 17 | 18 | 13 | 11 |
| Favorable class size | 46 | 3 | 11 | 15 | 7 | 10 |
| Academic standards/challenge | 54 | 11 | 14 | 13 | 10 | 6 |
| Learning facilities | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 3 |
| Teachers' academic qualifications | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 1 |
| Teacher/parent communication | 14 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 6 |
| Co-curriculars | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Athletics | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 |
| Administrative monitoring | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Dress code | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Administrative responsiveness | 5 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| Location convenience | 6 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| Teachers caring/committed | 60 | 8 | 11 | 15 | 15 | 11 |
| Values | 49 | 13 | 17 | 8 | 6 | 5 |
| Improvement of self-esteem | 4 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 |
| Reputation/prestige | 14 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 4 |
| Ethnic diversity | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Preparation for financial success | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Arts appreciation | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Opportunity for parental involvement | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Affordable tuition | 12 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 4 |
| Financial aid | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| School philosophy | 46 | 21 | 7 | 6 | 6 | 6 |
| Preparation for academic success | 26 | 6 | 4 | 3 | 7 | 6 |
| Other | 9 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 2 |
| Total | | 88 | 88 | 88 | 88 | 88 |

Table 4.11

Parent Survey Response Set: Frequency Ranks Given Initial Reasons for Enrolling Children in Protestant Christian Schools

| Name | Respondents | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|-------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Class atmosphere/behavior | 100 | 19 | 28 | 20 | 16 | 17 |
| Favorable class size | 63 | 6 | 16 | 14 | 16 | 11 |
| Academic standards/challenge | 82 | 9 | 18 | 29 | 14 | 12 |
| Learning facilities | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 4 |
| Teachers' qualifications | 17 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 6 | 4 |
| Teacher/parent communication | 27 | 1 | 3 | 5 | 9 | 9 |
| Co-curriculars | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Athletics | 7 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 3 |
| Administrative monitoring | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Dress code | 13 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 8 |
| Administrative responsiveness | 5 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| Location convenience | 13 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 7 |
| Teachers caring/committed | 74 | 6 | 11 | 23 | 15 | 19 |
| Values | 107 | 49 | 24 | 10 | 16 | 8 |
| Improvement of self-esteem | 9 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| Reputation/prestige | 7 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 1 |
| Ethnic diversity | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Preparation for financial success | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Arts appreciation | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Opportunity for parental Involvement | 15 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 5 | 4 |
| Affordable tuition | 11 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 4 |
| Financial aid | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| School philosophy | 74 | 32 | 20 | 8 | 9 | 5 |
| Preparation for academic success | 33 | 4 | 4 | 8 | 11 | 6 |
| Other | 13 | 6 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 5 |
| Total | | 137 | 137 | 137 | 137 | 137 |

Table 4.12

Parent Survey Response Set: Frequency Ranks Given Reasons for Re-enrolling Children in Protestant Christian Schools

| Name | Respondents | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--------------------------------------|-------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Class atmosphere/behavior | 92 | 16 | 25 | 20 | 19 | 12 |
| Favorable class size | 55 | 6 | 9 | 18 | 10 | 12 |
| Academic standards/challenge | 83 | 12 | 21 | 22 | 21 | 7 |
| Learning facilities | 5 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 |
| Teachers' academic qualifications | 14 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 4 |
| Teacher/parent communication | 26 | 1 | 5 | 2 | 10 | 8 |
| Co-curriculars | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Athletics | 12 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 4 |
| Administrative monitoring | 5 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| Dress code | 13 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 8 |
| Administrative responsiveness | 8 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| Location convenience | 14 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 8 |
| Teachers caring/committed | 84 | 8 | 17 | 25 | 16 | 18 |
| Values | 106 | 43 | 25 | 16 | 13 | 9 |
| Improvement of self-esteem | 9 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 |
| Reputation/prestige | 9 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 4 | 3 |
| Ethnic diversity | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Preparation for financial success | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Arts appreciation | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Opportunity for parental involvement | 14 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 5 | 5 |
| Affordable tuition | 16 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 6 | 6 |
| Financial aid | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 |
| School philosophy | 70 | 34 | 13 | 10 | 8 | 5 |
| Preparation for academic success | 30 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 9 | 10 |
| Other | 7 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 |
| Totals | | 136 | 136 | 136 | 136 | 136 |

Table 4.13

Highest Ranking Variables Principals Perceived to be the Reasons Parents Enroll Children In Protestant Christian Schools

| Variables (Listed in Order of Rank) | Total Number of Responses |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Class atmosphere/behavior | 76 (17%) |
| Teachers caring/committed | 60 (14%) |
| Academic standards/challenge level | 54 (12%) |
| Values | 49 (11%) |
| School philosophy | 46 (10%) |
| Favorable class size | 46 (10%) |

Table 4.14

Highest Ranking Variables Parents Perceived to be Reasons They Initially Enroll Children In Protestant Christian Schools

| Variables (Listed in Order of Rank) | Total Number of Responses |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Values | 107 (16%) |
| Class atmosphere/behavior | 100 (15%) |
| Academic standards/challenge level | 82 (12%) |
| School philosophy | 74 (11%) |
| Teachers caring/committed | 74 (11%) |
| Favorable class size | 63 (9%) |

Table 4.15

Highest Ranking Variables Parents Perceived to be the Reasons They Re-enroll Children In Protestant Christian Schools

| Variables (Listed in Order of Rank) | Total Number of Responses |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Values | 106 (16%) |
| Class atmosphere/behavior | 92 (14%) |
| Teachers caring/committed | 84 (12%) |
| Academic standards/challenge level | 83 (12%) |
| School philosophy | 70 (10%) |

Table 4.16

Frequencies within Rankings of Highest Ranking Variables Principals Perceive to be Reasons Parents Enroll Their Children in Protestant Christian Schools

| Variable | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|------------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Class atmosphere/behavior | 17 (22%) | 17 (22%) | 18 (24%) | 13 (17%) | 11 (14%) |
| Teachers caring/committed | 8 (13%) | 11 (18%) | 15 (25%) | 15 (25%) | 11 (18%) |
| Academic standards/challenge level | 11 (20%) | 14 (26%) | 13 (24%) | 10 (19%) | 6 (11%) |
| Values | 13 (27%) | 17 (35%) | 8 (16%) | 6 (12%) | 5 (10%) |
| School philosophy | 21 (46%) | 7 (15%) | 6 (13%) | 6 (13%) | 6 (13%) |
| Favorable class size | 3 (7%) | 11 (24%) | 15 (33%) | 7 (15%) | 10 (22%) |

Table 4.17

Frequencies within Rankings of Highest Ranking Variables Parents Perceive to be Reasons They Initially Enroll Their Children in Protestant Christian Schools

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|------------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Variable | | | | | |
| Values | 49 (45%) | 24 (22%) | 10 (9%) | 16 (15%) | 8 (7%) |
| Class atmosphere/behavior | 9 (19%) | 28 (28%) | 20 (20%) | 16 (16%) | 17 (17%) |
| Academic standards/challenge level | 9 (11%) | 18 (22%) | 29 (35%) | 14 (17%) | 12 (15%) |
| School philosophy | 32 (43%) | 20 (27%) | 8 (11%) | 9 (12%) | 5 (7%) |
| Teachers caring/committed | 6 (8%) | 11 (15%) | 23 (31%) | 15 (20%) | 19 (26%) |
| Favorable class size | 6 (10%) | 16 (25%) | 14 (22%) | 16 (25%) | 11 (17%) |

Table 4.18

Frequencies within Rankings of Five Highest Ranking Variables Parents Perceive to be Reasons They Re-enroll Their Children in Protestant Christian Schools

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|------------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Variable | | | | | |
| Values | 43 (41%) | 25 (24%) | 16 (15%) | 13 (12%) | 9 (8%) |
| Class atmosphere/behavior | 16 (17%) | 25 (27%) | 20 (22%) | 19 (21%) | 12 (13%) |
| Teachers caring/committed | 8 (10%) | 17 (20%) | 25 (30%) | 16 (19%) | 18 (21%) |
| Academic standards/challenge level | 12 (43%) | 21 (25%) | 22 (27%) | 21 (25%) | 7 (8%) |
| School philosophy | 34 (49%) | 13 (19%) | 10 (14%) | 8 (11%) | 5 (7%) |

Principals: Frequencies within rankings. Four more principals perceived school philosophy to be ranked first than they did class atmosphere/behavior, which received the overall first ranking. Favorable class size, which was tied with school philosophy as fifth, received only three responses for first ranking. Class atmosphere/behavior and values received the same number of responses for second, though they ranked first and fourth, respectively. First-ranked class atmosphere/behavior received the most responses in the third ranking, while second-ranked teachers caring/committed received the most responses in the fourth ranking. Both class atmosphere/behavior and teachers caring/committed tied with the most responses for the fifth ranking.

Parents and initial enrollment: Frequencies within rankings. When parents ranked their initial reason for enrolling, values, the top-ranked variable received the most responses for first. Second-ranked class atmosphere/behavior received the most responses for second. Third-ranked academic standards/challenge level received the most responses as third. The two highest-ranking variables, values and class atmosphere/behavior, were tied in the number of responses as fourth. Fourth-ranked teachers caring/committed received the most responses as fifth. The variables tied as fourth-ranked, school philosophy and teachers caring/committed, evidenced unique response frequencies. School philosophy was ranked as first and second choices by more parents. Teachers caring/committed was ranked as third, fourth, and fifth choices by more parents.

Parents and re-enrollment: Frequencies within rankings. When parents ranked their reasons for re-enrolling, first-ranked values received the most responses for first. Values and second-ranked class atmosphere/behavior tied for second. Third-ranked teachers caring/committed received the most responses for third and fifth. Academic standards/challenge level received the highest number of responses for fourth.

Findings

Three major research questions guided this study: (1) What factors do principals perceive influence parents to enroll children in Protestant Christian school? (2) What factors do parents perceive influence them initially to enroll children in Protestant Christian school? and (3) what factors do parents perceive influence them to re-enroll children in Protestant Christian school? The first two questions establish a relationship between what parents perceive to be their initial reasons for enrollment and what principals perceive to be those reasons. The rationale behind pairing principal perceptions to parent perceptions for initial enrollment is the role of the principal in initial enrollment as opposed to the principal's general lack of involvement in re-enrollment.

The Chi-square test of association was used in this study to determine if the choosing of the variables evidenced any relationship or dependence. The highest-ranking variables from the parent perceptions of reasons for initial enrollment were coupled for comparison with the highest-ranking variables from the principal perceptions of parent reasons for enrollment. The highest-ranking variables from the parent perceptions of reasons for initial enrollment were also

coupled for comparison with the highest-ranking variables from the parent perceptions of reasons for re-enrollment.

For the purpose of this study, the ranking of variables was used for the sole purpose of isolating the variables most often chosen to be factors or reasons parents perceived to be reasons for enrollment of children in Protestant Christian school. Ranking was also used in place of a Likert scale to flesh out the most often chosen variables of the 25 in the survey. The Likert scale would have allowed respondents to choose more than one variable as equal in importance, which was not the purpose of choosing variables for this study.

Parents' Perceptions Compared with Principals' Perceptions

The six most often chosen variables by principals and parents as reasons for enrollment were compared using the Chi-square test of association. The hypotheses for the Chi-square test were as follows:

H₀ : The variables are not independent.

H₁: The variables are independent.

None of the variables was significant at the .05 level. (See Table 4.19.) The relationship between any two like variables was not significant, meaning that the choosing of a variable by respondents of one group as a reason for enrollment was dependent on or related to the choosing of that same variable by respondents of the second group. The comparison of the variables failed to reject the null hypothesis (H₀), indicating that the choosing of variables by principals was related to or dependent on what they perceived motivated parents to enroll their children in Protestant Christian school.

Table 4.19

Chi-square Comparison of Frequencies of Parents' Perceptions of Reasons for Initially Enrolling and Principals' Perceptions of Parents' Reasons for Enrolling

| Variable | N | Pearson Chi-Square | df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) |
|------------------------------------|----|--------------------|----|-----------------------|
| Class atmosphere/behavior | 90 | 22.057* | 16 | .141 |
| Teachers Caring/committed | 54 | 17.651* | 16 | .345 |
| Academic standards/challenge level | 47 | 12.722* | 12 | .390 |
| Values | 64 | 8.996* | 12 | .703 |
| School philosophy | 64 | 10.946* | 8 | .205 |
| Favorable class size | 29 | 10.992* | 8 | .202 |

*Cells have expected count less than 5.

Parents' Perceptions of Initial Enrollment Compared with Parents' Perceptions of Re-Enrollment

The five most often chosen variables by parents as reasons for initial enrollment and re-enrollment were compared using the Chi-square test of association. The hypotheses for the Chi-square test were as follows:

H₀: The variables are not independent.

H₁: The variables are independent.

Favorable class size was not compared because parents did not choose it as one of the five most often chosen variables for re-enrollment. The results of the Chi-square test for two of the variables, academic standards/challenge level and values, indicated possible significance at the .05 level. (See Table 4.20.)

Table 4.20

Chi-square Comparison of Frequencies of Parents' Perceptions of Reasons for Initially Enrolling and Re-Enrolling Children in Protestant Christian School

| Variable | N | Pearson Chi-Square | df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) |
|------------------------------------|----|--------------------|----|-----------------------|
| Class atmosphere/behavior | 68 | 25.346* | 16 | .064 |
| Teachers caring/committed | 56 | 19.826* | 16 | .228 |
| Academic standards/challenge level | 52 | 45.141* | 16 | .000 |
| Values | 92 | 37.774 | 16 | .002 |
| School philosophy | 49 | 22.062* | 16 | .141 |

*Cells have expected count less than 5.

The comparison of 3 of the 5 variables failed to reject the null hypothesis (H₀). These results indicate that the choosing of variables by parents as reasons for re-enrolling their children in Protestant Christian school was related to or dependent on what they perceived to be their reasons to initially enroll. The apparent significance of values indicates that parents choosing of that variable for initial enrollment was not related to or dependent upon their choosing it when they initially enrolled their children in Protestant Christian school.

The significance of academic standards/challenge level and values must be accepted with caution because cell counts in the cross tabulations had less than 5 cases. If the relationship of the two variables chosen by one group and that of the corresponding variables chosen by the second group is significant, the choosing of one variable by one group is dependent on or related

to the choosing of that same variable by the other group. This comparison was a comparison based upon one group's choices, those of parents, made over a period of time.

While it is preferable to have counts greater than 5 in cells, the results of a study cannot always guarantee a sufficient number. A count of 5 or smaller can lead to a Type I error, but those errors rarely occur. The greatest difficulty a small sample size generally creates is the power to reject a false null hypothesis (Howell, 1997).

Summary

Chapter 4 presented the findings of the data and the analysis of the data. Principals and parents were asked to choose from 25 items or variables the five that they perceived most influenced parents to enroll or re-enroll children in Protestant Christian schools and to rank those five variables. After recording and analyzing data, the results showed that parents and principals chose the same variables as the ones they perceived to influence enrollment and re-enrollment. The variables were not chosen in the same rank order, but they were very clearly the most often perceived reasons for enrollment or re-enrollment.

The variables most often chosen were values, class atmosphere/behavior, teachers caring/committed, academic standards/challenge level, and school philosophy. Principals also chose favorable class size as a variable tied with school philosophy. Parents chose favorable class size as their fifth place variable in their perceptions of their reasons for initially enrolling, having school philosophy and teachers caring/committed tying for fourth. Favorable class size was dropped as a variable when parents chose their reasons for re-enrolling.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

The first section of Chapter 5 is a summary of the focus of the study. The second section summarizes the findings in terms of each of the six research questions from Chapter 1. The third section reviews the findings in terms of how they correlate with the literature review in Chapter 2. The fourth section highlights the limitations of the study and recommendations for further study and the implications for practice on the topic of what factors influence parents to enroll children in Protestant Christian schools in Virginia.

Focus of the Study

The purpose of the study was to rank and isolate five factors or variables that principals and parents perceived to be the most influential reasons parents enrolled and re-enrolled their children in Protestant Christian school. The focus of this study was Protestant Christian schools. The focus of the study was not related to any aspect of public schools or other types of private schools. Almost all families who responded to the questionnaire did not mention public school. One family commented that Protestant Christian school was the only alternative to what that family perceived was not a good public system where they lived. The family gave no indicators of what made the public system bad, therefore no conjectures can be made. Not enough evidence was presented to speculate, but the tone of the comment perhaps indicated that this family would possibly have considered and perhaps chosen some other non-public option had it been available. Another family expressed disappointment with both the public and the Protestant Christian schools because they perceived that neither had been effective in addressing the special learning needs of their child. This family stated they had decided not to re-enroll in the Protestant Christian school for the following year. They reported that they would homeschool their child until they found an appropriate school to meet the child's needs. One family expressed concern that the Protestant Christian school was too dogmatic and narrow in its approach to subject areas. The family complained that texts and class lectures and activities left no room for individual thinking. This family, however, did not state any intention to withdraw students from the Protestant Christian school.

The purpose of the study was to consider Protestant Christian school only. No other information or comment about other school options was solicited. Parents appeared to respond with similar intent. No reason exists to doubt their understanding and agreement to limit responses to the Protestant Christian school. The degree of candor with which they answered may present a question or a limitation in the view of some observers, but a surprising number of respondents (98%) were willing to report their income level. Income level is a very private matter to most people. That respondents were as willing to give such information may be indicative of their candor in responding to other areas of inquiry as well.

The study did not seek or invite comment about public school or other private school options. The findings show that the focus was maintained. The study could have been one that sought comments or rates of satisfaction with Protestant Christian school, public school, or other

private schools. The purpose was to find out why parents enrolled where they did. It could possibly be assumed that enrollment and re-enrollment indicated some degree of satisfaction unless otherwise stated.

Summary of the Findings and the Research Questions

This section discusses the findings in terms of the research questions. Six questions were of primary importance in maintaining the focus of the study and in analyzing the data.

Research Question 1

The first question sought to provide demographics to give added dimension and background of the principals and families associated with ACSI schools in Virginia. Getting a glimpse of who the people are that enroll their children in Protestant Christian school provided perspective to the study. Not every one who reads a study of this nature is familiar with Protestant Christian school and a reader may wonder about personal aspects of the people who participated.

Principals. One not familiar with ACSI and the organization's standards for schools and principals may be surprised that 63% held postgraduate degrees. Some Protestant Christian schools may employ principals who are not degreed. However, schools accredited through ACSI must employ principals who meet at least minimum requirements to achieve temporary certification and demonstrate sufficient progress toward standard certification to maintain accreditation. Should a principal not progress toward at least standard certification and achieve that level within a reasonable time, the school in which that principal is employed loses accreditation.

The principal responses indicated that the principals had varied educational backgrounds. Approximately two thirds had attended secular colleges at some time, representing perspectives not totally from within the Christian school mindset. A great number of principals had spent at least a year working in a school other than a Protestant Christian school, again giving some dimension to their experience.

Overall, the principals presented varied backgrounds that did not limit them to one perspective. The more experiences one has tend to broaden the viewpoint of the individual, even if that person may have had some negative experiences. All experiences tend to give broader bases from which to operate.

Parents. Parents also represented a broad view. At one time, very few families whose children attended Protestant Christian school were one-parent families. Today the numbers had increased greatly. Although this group reported only 16 families (12%) to be single parent families, the number represents a group of people who at one time were not found in Protestant Christian school.

The income levels of families labeled them as predominantly middle class. The seven families (5%) whose reported incomes were below \$20,000 annually were single parent families.

How much support, if any, came from the other parent or other family members, if any, was not indicated by any of these families. The reported tuition rates from the various schools encompassed a wide range. Evidently, the tuition was not prohibitive to any of the parents who responded to the questionnaire. None added comments about tuition and income being troublesome. The affordable tuition variable received so few responses that it was not perceived by principals or parents as a factor of great enough importance to merit a high ranking. Therefore, income levels gave a picture of the economic status of families, but they did not appear to have bearing on the affordability of private Protestant Christian schooling.

The families in the study reported having children in schools other than Protestant Christian schools. While having children too young to be enrolled in the Protestant Christian school in which siblings were enrolled was mentioned as one reason for those younger children being in another school setting, no family noted any other reasons for the situation. No assumptions can be made from the responses. Other families reported all children presently in the home having been enrolled in Protestant Christian school. Families as a whole represented a varied group in terms of association with Protestant Christian school.

Research Question 2

The second research question sought to determine the perceived importance that Protestant Christian school principals placed on various factors concerning why parents enroll their children in Protestant Christian school. The use of the forced opinion survey and the ranking of variables restricted the number of variables principals could choose. The analysis of the responses and finding the frequencies of those responses isolated the variables that principals perceived to be reasons that parents enroll children in Protestant Christian school. Those results are reported in Chapter 4.

Research Questions 3 and 4

The third and fourth research questions sought to determine the perceived importance that parents placed on various factors concerning why they initially enrolled and re-enrolled children in Protestant Christian school. The use of the forced opinion survey and the ranking of variables restricted the number of variables parents could choose. The analysis of the responses and finding the frequencies of those responses isolated the variables parents perceived to be the reasons they initially enrolled and re-enrolled children in Protestant Christian school.

Research Questions 5 and 6

The fifth research question sought to compare variables principals perceived to be reasons parents enroll children in Protestant Christian school with variables parents perceived to be reasons they initially enrolled children in Protestant Christian school. The sixth research question sought to compare variables parents perceived to be reasons they initially enrolled children in Protestant Christian school with reasons they perceived to be why they re-enrolled children in Protestant Christian school. The data from the first set of parent responses for initial enrollment were compared with the data from the principals' responses using cross tabulations and the Chi-square test of association. None of the variables evidenced any association or

dependence in the first comparison. The data from the first set of parent responses for initial enrollment were compared with the data from the second set of parent responses for re-enrollment. Two variables appeared to evidence dependence, but those results can be taken only with caution because of the small sample size and because the cell counts of those variables held less than 5 cases.

In this study, principals perceived that parents enrolled children in Protestant Christian schools for the same reasons as parents perceived. The order in which the reasons or variables ranked differed, but the rankings were employed only to isolate the variables most often chosen as reasons for enrollment. The fact that the same variables were chosen by the two groups indicates a cohesive perception between the two groups. Principals evidently have perceived the reasons parents represent to them for enrollment to be the same reasons as parents reported in the study.

One would expect values to be chosen as a reason to enroll in Protestant Christian school. Principals, likewise, would be desirous of enrolling people who perceived class atmosphere and behavior to be important and who would respond favorably to teachers who are caring and committed. Principals evidently see that families also want a good base of education for their students as they seek good academic standards. It is important that principals perceive that parents are truly seeking those factors as they enroll their children in school. A question could now be asked whether principals perceive that families continue to evidence the desire for the same factors through their support of the school's enforcement of values and academic plan. Do parents say they are seeking these factors in their children's education because they really do perceive they are important or do they perceive that principals want to hear them say they are important?

Principals perceived that the desire for small class size was a factor influencing families to enroll in Protestant Christian school and families perceived small class to be a factor influencing them initially to enroll, but it was not as important as they re-enrolled. The factor received responses in regard to re-enrollment, but not enough to be among the most often chosen variables. The importance of this factor in initial enrollment could indicate several considerations. Perhaps families had encountered what they perceived to be cumbersome numbers of students in classrooms in previous settings. Perhaps their personal view of education held that better learning takes place with smaller numbers in a classroom, affording more individual attention per student. No families commented one way or the other on this variable, therefore no clarification of the basis of its importance can be surmised.

Parents and the Literature Review

The perceptions of families in this study mirror the perceptions of parents who participated in studies cited in Chapter 2. They chose Protestant Christian school for reasons related to values, school philosophy, climate (classroom atmosphere/behavior and teachers caring/committed), and academics (standards and challenge level). One would expect values and school philosophy to be important to families choosing a religious school. Intertwined with these two factors are the concepts of Biblical teachings and Biblical integration, integration meaning

the point of view from which subject areas are approached evidences integral Biblical correlation.

The climate of the school encompasses the idea of a well-controlled classroom in which the teacher spends more time teaching than disciplining and the behavior level is such that students have freedom to learn, freedom from regular disruptions, and freedom from fear. Elements of academic and personal safety are perceived. The teachers in Protestant Christian school are perceived to have a personal interest and investment in their students and to evidence a commitment to teaching. None of this is to say that schools other than Protestant Christian schools do not provide such a climate. It is to say that parents perceive this climate to be important and they choose a school where they perceive they will find this climate.

Historically, the desire to maintain the Protestant influence, including Biblical teaching, in the education of children has been named as the primary motivating factor behind parents opting to enroll children in Protestant Christian schools. The last two decades show a growing motivator of enrollment to be academic standards/challenge level. Evidently, parents who express a desire for reinforcement of their religious beliefs in their children's education also want a sound academic program, one that challenges students.

Again, the above is not to say that parents cannot find solid academic programs and challenges in schools other than Protestant Christian school. Obviously, they can. The importance that parents in this study placed on this particular variable indicates that it holds a position close to their preference for religious teaching and standards. Families perceived the parallel existence of values and philosophy of their religious beliefs with academic standards and challenge. Families expressed that both elements be major components of their children's education.

Placing such importance on the academic aspect of the Protestant Christian school may surprise some. A study of the academic plans and programs of Protestant Christian schools could possibly reveal some interesting and unexpected results. The types and levels of courses taught over the years and the rates and histories of graduates could show the scope of change and improvement of academic goals. ACSI schools are expected by the organization to establish sound academic studies to maintain accreditation. Comparing ACSI schools' academic programs with those of other Protestant Christian schools in Virginia would provide a standard by which to measure where ACSI schools stand among similar schools.

Limitations, Recommendations, Reflections, and Implications

A study is never complete. What appears to be the end is really only the end of its initial phase. More data can always be gathered. The data can be added to the original to supplement the original results or data can be gathered and interpreted in entirely different ways and for different outcomes. A study should also be of some use to someone else. Its results should enlighten in some way.

This study could also be continued. Its results could be expanded in different ways. Its original plan could have been somewhat different. If it were to be replicated in some way, its

new plan should be better than the first one. If the study had value, its results should be informative and useful to those who live and work in the world from which its data came.

Limitations

Every study has limitations that keep it maintained within certain perimeters. Those perimeters come from the design of the study and the scope of its data.

The population of this study limited the size of the sample. In a study of this nature, the researcher is at the mercy of the subject. Only ACSI schools in Virginia were studied. Immediately the number of contacts was limited to 129 schools and the principals of those schools. The number of principals willing or able to share parent names and addresses also limited the number of responses. While the number of principals who provided parent lists represented less than 10% of the total number of ACSI schools in Virginia, those schools were representative in geographical locations and size of ACSI schools in the Commonwealth. While its generalizability is restricted, the study accomplished the goal of finding the factors a representative number of principals and parents perceived to be important in enrollment in Protestant Christian school.

The purpose of the study was to collect perceptions of principals and parents regarding enrollment of children in Protestant Christian schools in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) was first the vehicle to locate and contact principals and later to contact families. After collecting and analyzing data, the question could be asked whether data in the study is also data specifically about ACSI schools, not Protestant Christian schools in Virginia in general. Protestant Christian schools in Virginia are of several types. Some are independent; others are members of associations, with ACSI and American Association of Christian Schools (AACS) being the largest. ACSI, therefore, is a representation of the total landscape of Protestant Christian schools in the Commonwealth.

Perhaps the study could have encompassed more than one group of schools, but ACSI schools were willing to cooperate, as was the association through support from its Southeast Director. (See letter in Appendix D.) AACS did not respond to several requests for information and participation in the study. Tracking down and involving independent schools would have been exceptionally time consuming and difficult. People within Protestant Christian school are not known to cooperate readily with people not directly associated with the individual school or association. As stated earlier in Chapter 1, Carper (1984) notes that ACSI is the most reliable Christian day school organization with which to work.

Recommendations

This study could perhaps have been changed to incorporate the following recommendations. These recommendations may have helped broaden the scope of the study and perhaps given better clarity in particular areas.

- (1) The variables of values and classroom atmosphere/behavior could be more specific. Values could be divided into religious values and moral values. While each variable

is related and can be under the same label, the division tends to lend more meaning to the variable. Class atmosphere/behavior needs better clarification. Perhaps adding variables labeled as safety and discipline would make class atmosphere/behavior less encompassing.

- (2) The data may have been more definitive had the questionnaire been administered differently. Perhaps asking for the 10 most important reasons for enrolling and re-enrolling would have been better. Then after finding the frequencies and isolating the 10, asking principals and parents to rank the top 5 from the 10 would have been a better procedure.
- (3) An ethnographic study of the 10 schools from which parents were contacted would lend more detail or depth to the study.
- (4) To insure more participation, an additional study could involve on-site observation in individual schools for enough time for the researcher to become familiar to the families in the school and to become more familiar with the individual nature of each school.
- (5) A follow-up study of families in three to five years to find if their children were still enrolled in Protestant Christian school would lend additional authenticity to their initial responses.
- (6) A follow-up study of why parents withdraw children from Protestant Christian schools would give a view of the other side of enrollment challenges.

Reflections

One interesting aspect of this study is the duplication by principals and parents in choosing the same variables as factors influencing enrollment in Protestant Christian school. The choice of any one or all of the factors presents no real surprise, especially to any student of Protestant Christian school in general and ACSI Protestant Christian schools in particular. The fact that both the principals and parents, independent of each other, settled on the same five of 25 possible choices is surprising. The order or ranking of the variables represented the means of isolating five factors only. The ranking, therefore, was not taken to necessarily represent degree of importance in the study. To expand the study to other ACSI schools in other states would be an interesting venture to see not only whether the same factors surface but also whether the principals and parents still agree so closely.

It was discouraging not to have been able to contact more parents from more schools. Confidentiality is a given in a study such as this one, so there should have been no fear of breach or betrayal. Those who are participants in Protestant Christian schooling need to be more open to allowing others to learn about the schools and their clientele, particularly when the researcher is part of the Protestant Christian school movement, as was the case when the data collection took place. Secrecy breeds suspicion. The Protestant Christian school has much to offer in revealing its organization and culture, just as its proponents have much they could learn from public

schools and other private schools. Education requires an exchange of ideas, even if the ideas may not always be agreeable to the investigators or learners. Knowledge comes from viewing more than one side of an issue or persuasion.

This study provided much interesting information. It could have provided more information and an even clearer vision of Protestant Christian schools in general and Virginia Protestant Christian schools in particular.

Implications

The purpose of the study was to isolate the factors or variables that are most indicative of why parents enroll and re-enroll their children in Protestant Christian school. The findings represent perceptions of principals of parents and of parents of themselves. The findings offer insight to Protestant Christian school officials to what parents perceive to be important elements in the school that their children attend. The variables perceived to be most important should be no surprise to administrators of Protestant Christian schools. The administrators should be cautioned, however, not to take for granted that their school offers these elements. Self-examination is imperative to maintain balance. Keeping an open ear and eye will help guard against allowing expectations of the clientele from slipping.

Administrators of public and other private schools can take heed to variables parents have perceived to be important to their children's educational experience. The narrow range of factors that proved to be important to parents provides an avenue of marketing both public and private schools. More than 19,000 students attend ACSI Protestant Christian schools in Virginia for reasons their parents perceive those schools provide particular aspects those parents desire. While leaders of public schools cannot interject the religious aspect these parents say they want, they can establish a values-based environment by maintaining good discipline and classroom control and encouraging teachers and students to respond appropriately to questionable situations.

Reviewing and revamping academic programs to meet the needs of the times and to provide for the demands of the future will assure parents of the quality of learning available to their children. All school systems must be up-to-date and on the cutting edge of the information necessary to help students succeed and to assure parents that their children are receiving the best that can be provided.

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APPENDIX A

Association of Christian Schools International

Statement of Faith

The seven elements to which ACSI ascribes are as follows.

1. We believe the Bible to be the inspired, the only infallible, authoritative, inerrant Word of God (II Timothy 3:15; II Peter 1:21).
2. We believe there is one God, eternally existent in three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Genesis 1:1; Matthew 28:19; John 10:30).
3. We believe in the deity of Christ (John 10:33); His virgin birth (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23; Luke 1:35); His sinless life (Hebrews 4:15; Hebrews 7:26); His miracles (John 2:11); His vicarious and atoning death (I Corinthians 15:3; Ephesians 1:7; Hebrews 2:9); His Resurrection (John 11:25; I Corinthians 15:4); His Ascension to the right hand of the Father (Mark 16:19); And His personal return in power and glory (Acts 1:11; Revelation 19:11).
4. We believe in the absolute necessity of regeneration by the Holy Spirit for salvation because of the exceeding sinfulness of human nature; and that people are justified on the single ground of faith in the shed blood of Christ and that only by God's grace and through faith alone are we saved (John 3:16-19; John 5:24; Romans 3:23; Romans 5:8-9; Ephesians 2:8-10; Titus 3:5).
5. We believe in the resurrection of both the saved and the lost; they that are saved unto the resurrection of life, and they that are lost unto the resurrection of damnation (John 5:28-29).
6. We believe in the spiritual unity of believers in our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 8:9; I Corinthians 12:12-13; Galatians 3:26-28).
7. We believe in the present ministry of the Holy Spirit, by whose indwelling the Christian is enabled to live a godly life (Romans 8:13-14; I Corinthians 3:16; I Corinthians 6:19-20; Ephesians 4:30; Ephesians 5:18). (ACSI Statement of Faith web site, 1998)

APPENDIX B

2300 Lubna Drive
Christiansburg, VA 24073
January 22, 2000

Dr. Kenneth M. Weinig
The Independence School
1300 Paper Mill Road
Newark, Delaware 19711

Dear Dr. Weinig:

Greetings to you from snowy Virginia! Thank you for talking with me a couple of months back concerning your dissertation and for giving me permission to use the forced opinion survey for my dissertation work. I enjoyed our conversation and I apologize for not thanking you formally sooner.

If you do not remember talking with me, I will refresh your memory. I am a student at Virginia Tech working on my dissertation, which focuses on factors affecting enrollment in Christian schools in Virginia.

The work on my prospectus is progressing well. In order to use your survey, however, I need written approval to include it in my paper. Please write a note of permission or send an e-mail to me (e-mail address to follow).

I hope this request is not too much trouble. Your survey dovetails perfectly with the areas of question in my principal's survey.

Again thank you for your help. Also, remember that you and your family are welcome to stop in our area should you come this way.

Sincerely,

Janice R. Shelton
jshelton@vt.edu

APPENDIX C



KENNETH M. WEING
Headmaster

1300 PAPER MILL ROAD / NEWARK, DELAWARE 19711 / (302) 239-0330

1/23/00

Dear Mrs. Shelton,

Nice to hear from you, and Happy New Year.
It is also "moving Delaware," but probably not
nearly as deep as The South.

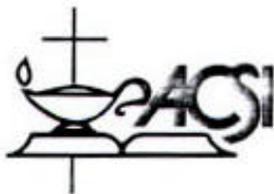
Please let this note serve as permission to
use any part of my dissertation, about nonpublic
schools in Delaware, for your research.

If you need a typed letter &/or any
other special wording, please let me know.

Most sincerely,

Kenneth M. Weing, Ed.D.

APPENDIX D



ASSOCIATION OF CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS INTERNATIONAL
SOUTHEAST REGION

"That in all things He might have preeminence" Colossians 1:18

Dear Christian School Administrator:

As we approach the new millennium, Christian education needs to be clearly defined in its mission and vision. It is imperative that we make certain that parents understand the direction of our schools as they make choices about where their child will be educated. To do this we must understand why parents choose Christian schools and what it will take to keep the students enrolled in the school of their choice.

Mrs. Janice Shelton of Roanoke Valley Christian School is doing her dissertation work for her Doctors degree on this very issue. I know this will take time on your part, but I would encourage you to be involved in this very important study. The results will be very beneficial to Christian education as a whole.

Thank you for being involved and if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact my office.

Yours in Christ,

Thomas A. McClure
Director: Southeast Region

APPENDIX E



Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
Educational Leadership and Policy Studies (0302)
Blacksburg, Virginia 24061

September 25, 2000

Dear Christian School Administrator:

As middle school principal at Roanoke Valley Christian Schools, Roanoke, Virginia, I have often wondered what reasons parents throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia give for enrolling their children in Christian school. As a result, I am conducting a study, Factors Influencing Enrollment in Virginia Christian Schools, through Virginia Tech and with the help of the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI). *(Please note the enclosed letter from Tom McClure, Southeast Director of ACSI.)*

Please take approximately 10 minutes to complete this questionnaire and return it to me in the self-addressed stamped envelope included for your convenience. I will keep all information confidential. I will use your answers for statistical purposes only.

Also, I intend to ask a random sample of Christian school parents to rank their initial reasons and their reason for continuing to enroll their children in Christian school. I need your help in this matter. Please send me your parent name and address list from which I may select parent to answer questions similar to the ones in this questionnaire. I will keep all information confidential, using answers for statistical purposes only.

Please return this questionnaire to me by October 6, 2000. Thank you for your help.

Sincerely,

Janice R. Shelton
Doctoral Student

Richard G. Salmon
Advisor

Lisa G. Driscoll
Advisor

From the following list, please rank the top five reasons parents give for enrolling their child in a Christian school.

- _____ Class atmosphere/behavior standard
- _____ Favorable class size
- _____ Academic standards/challenge level
- _____ Learning facilities
- _____ Teachers' academic qualifications
- _____ Teacher-parent communication
- _____ Co-curriculars
- _____ Athletics
- _____ Administration monitors teacher performance
- _____ Dress code
- _____ Administrative responsiveness
- _____ Location convenience
- _____ Teachers caring/committed
- _____ Values
- _____ Improvement of self-esteem
- _____ Reputation/prestige
- _____ Ethnic diversity
- _____ Preparation for financial success
- _____ Arts appreciation
- _____ Opportunity for parental involvement
- _____ Affordable tuition
- _____ Financial aid
- _____ School philosophy
- _____ Preparation for academic success
- _____ Other (please specify) _____

(Items 1-24 used by permission of Dr. Kenneth M. Weinig)

Demographic Information:

Highest level of education completed:

- Bachelor's Degree
- Master's Degree
- Doctoral Degree

Personal education background:

- Christian college educated
- Secular college educated

- Years in education
- Years as a principal
- Years in present position
- Years in Christian education
- Years in education classified as other than Christian

School tuition rate(s)

- All grades
- Pre-kindergarten only
- Kindergarten only
- Elementary (including Kindergarten, if the same)
- Elementary (excluding Kindergarten, if different)
- Middle School/Junior High
- High School

School scholarships

- Students with full scholarships
- Students with partial scholarships

Scholarships are available to:

- Any student
- Only certain students

Please list the top three factors making a student eligible for scholarship help:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Type of school:

- College prep
- General academic

APPENDIX F



Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
Educational Leadership and Policy Studies (0302)
Blacksburg, Virginia 24061

November 15, 2000

Dear Christian School Parent:

As middle school principal at Roanoke Valley Christian Schools, Roanoke, Virginia, I have often wondered what reasons parents throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia have for enrolling and continuing to enroll their children in Christian school. As a result of my questioning, I am conducting a study, Factors Influencing Enrollment In Virginia Christian Schools, through Virginia Tech and with the help of the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI). *(Please note the enclosed letter from Tom McClure, Southeast Director of ACSI.)*

I have chosen a random sampling of parents from your child's school and ACSI schools throughout Virginia. I appreciate your taking approximately 10 minutes to complete this questionnaire and return it to me in the self-addressed stamped envelope I have enclosed for your convenience.

Your answers will be kept confidential. I will use your information for statistical purposes only.

Please return this questionnaire to me by **December 1, 2000**. Thank you for your help.

Sincerely,

Janice R. Shelton
Doctoral Candidate

Richard G. Salmon
Advisor

Lisa G. Driscoll
Advisor

From the following list, please rank your top five choices for enrolling your child in a Christian school in the first blank. In the second blank, please rank your top five choices for continuing to enroll your child in a Christian school.

- _____ _____ Class atmosphere/behavior standard
- _____ _____ Favorable class size
- _____ _____ Academic standards/challenge level
- _____ _____ Learning facilities
- _____ _____ Teachers' academic qualifications
- _____ _____ Teacher-parent communication
- _____ _____ Co-curriculars
- _____ _____ Athletics
- _____ _____ Administration monitors teacher performance
- _____ _____ Dress code
- _____ _____ Administrative responsiveness
- _____ _____ Location convenience
- _____ _____ Teachers caring/committed
- _____ _____ Values
- _____ _____ Improvement of self-esteem
- _____ _____ Reputation/prestige
- _____ _____ Ethnic diversity
- _____ _____ Preparation for financial success
- _____ _____ Arts appreciation
- _____ _____ Opportunity for parental involvement
- _____ _____ Affordable tuition
- _____ _____ Financial aid
- _____ _____ School philosophy
- _____ _____ Preparation for academic success
- _____ _____ Other (please specify) _____

(Items 1-24 used by permission of Dr. Kenneth M. Weing)

Demographic Information:

- Number of children in home
- Number of children enrolled in Christian school
- Number of children enrolled in school other than Christian
- Number of children graduated from Christian school
- Number of children graduated from school other than Christian
- Number of years having children enrolled in Christian school
- Number of years having children enrolled in school other than Christian

Family status:

- Single parent (divorced, widowed, etc.)
- Two parent

Financial information:

- One parent employed
- Both parents employed

- Recipient of full tuition scholarship to Christian school (Please specify number of children receiving tuition.)
- Recipient of partial tuition scholarship to Christian school (Please specify number of children receiving partial tuition.)

Family income (Please check the amount that most closely approximates your family's income.)

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$15,000 or less | <input type="checkbox"/> \$45,001-50,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$15,001-20,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$50,001-60,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$20,001-25,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$60,001-70,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$25,001-30,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$70,001-80,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$30,001-35,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$80,001-90,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$35,001-40,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$90,001-100,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$40,001-45,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> Over \$100,001 |

VITA

Janice Shelton was born on April 20, 1951, in Trieste, Italy. After graduating from Christiansburg High School in Christiansburg, Virginia, she attended Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University from which she received a Bachelor of Arts Degree in the summer of 1972.

Janice began full time teaching in 1980, after beginning and rearing a family. She taught middle school and high school English for eight years at Berean Christian Academy in Salem, Virginia. From the summer of 1981 until the summer of 1982, she pursued and earned her Master's Degree in English from Radford University. From 1988 until 2001, she taught middle and high school English for four years and was middle school principal for nine years at Roanoke Valley Christian Schools in Roanoke, Virginia.

In May, 1999, Janice received the Certificate of Advanced Graduate Studies from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University and she completed the Doctor of Education Degree in December, 2001. Janice currently lives in Christiansburg, Virginia, with her husband, Richard, and she has three children, Ellen Rachel, Robert, and Aaron.