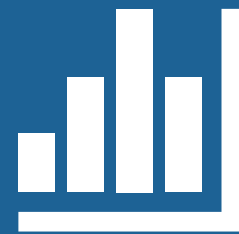


WILLINGNESS TO CONSIDER CATHOLIC SCHOOLS AND FAVORABLE RATINGS

*This note was written for NCEA (United States)
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Analytics series

KEY MESSAGES:

- While almost two thirds of the population has a favorable perception of Catholic schools, one fourth does not. One in four parents would be very willing to consider Catholic schools for their children. This is a much larger share than the current market share of Catholic schools at below five percent.
- The characteristics of respondents with the largest effects on how Catholic schools are perceived and whether parents would be willing to consider Catholic schools for their children are related, not surprisingly, to their faith affiliation and their own experience as children with Catholic schools.

Introduction

What is the perception of the population and parents about different types of schools, and which schools are parents willing to consider for their children? This question is fundamental for Catholic schools today in the United States. The number of students enrolled in Catholic schools has been steadily declining for the last 50 years. Understanding parental views about different schools is essential to find ways to stem the decline in enrollment. While there is no magic bullet to do so, market research can help to understand the strengths and vulnerabilities of Catholic schools.

This note is part of a larger set looking at the potential demand for Catholic education in the United States among households. The analysis is based on a market research survey implemented in 2017. The note considers two questions: (1) How favorable are perceptions of Catholic schools in comparison to other types of schools (public, charter, magnet, private secular, and non-Catholic religious schools)?; and (2) How willing are parents to consider various types of schools for their children?

Box 1: Knowledge Notes

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Which topics are covered in the Knowledge Notes Series? The series explores achievements and challenges for Catholic schools globally, including in terms of enrollment, reach to the poor, academic performance, parental priorities, costs and affordability, and religious education. Interesting innovations are also featured.

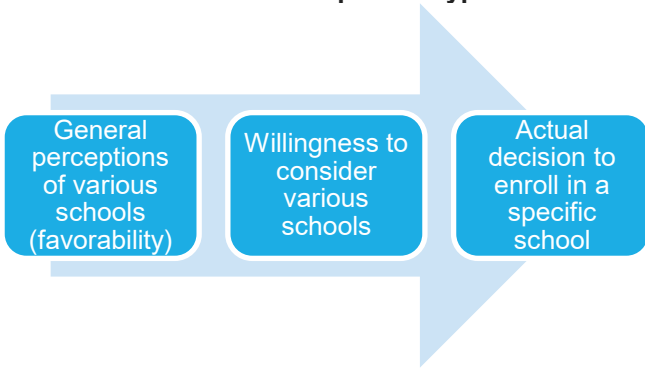
What is the focus of this note? Two questions are asked: How favorable are perceptions of Catholic schools in comparison to other types of schools, and how willing are parents to consider Catholic schools for their children? The analysis is based on a national 2017 survey with a total of 1,403 respondents. Both statistical and regression analyses are used.

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Framework

Conceptually, the issue of how favorably the population sees Catholic and other schools, and whether parents are willing to consider various types of schools for enrolling their children can be considered as the first two steps in a process where the third step is the actual decision to enroll their children in a specific type of school. This is because parents who do not see a specific type of schools favorably are not likely to consider this type of schools for their children, which in turn would not lead to actual enrollment.

Figure 1: Thought Process for the Decision to Enroll One’s Children in a Specific Type of School



Source: Author.

This particular note focuses on favorability ratings and the willingness of parents to consider various types of schools for their children. Separate notes in this series consider factors that lead to or prevent actual enrollment.

Favorability Ratings

The analysis is based on a national 2017 market research survey funded by the Catholic Education Philanthropy Working Group with support from FADICA and the Philanthropy Roundtable (see the appendix for details). The survey asked a wide range of questions to respondents to assess the perceptions of Catholic schools. Findings from those questions are discussed in several notes in this series, but the most general question was as follows: *“Below is a list of the different types of schools that students might attend in this country for grades K-12. Please indicate how favorable you feel toward each.”* Respondents rated the various types of schools on a four-point scale from very favorable to very unfavorable, with an additional modality if they never heard about the schools or did not feel that they knew enough to comment.

Six types of schools are considered (see Box 2 for a brief description of each type of schools). Table 1 provides the shares of respondents rating the various types of schools by degree of favorability. Public schools have higher proportions of very favorable ratings (33.5 percent of the sample) and a large share as well of favorable ratings (37.6 percent). They also have lower proportions of respondents

stating that they do not know enough to rate the schools. All five other types of schools have somewhat similar high favorability ratings, with just above one fifth or respondents perceiving the schools very favorably, and two fifths perceiving them favorably, although that specific proportion is higher for private non-religious schools (50.0 percent).

Two thirds of the population has a favorable perception of Catholic schools, but one fourth does not. Catholic schools have higher unfavorable ratings than other schools.

However, Catholic schools have a higher proportion of very unfavorable ratings (11.8 percent) and somewhat unfavorable ratings (17.1 percent) as well as a smaller proportion of respondents not expressing a view than is the case for the four other types of non-public schools. Similar results are observed for other religious schools, suggesting that some unfavorable ratings may not be specific to Catholic schools, but applicable to many religious schools.

Table 1: Favorability Ratings by Type of School (%)

	Public schools		
	Public	Charter	Magnet
Very favorable	33.4	22.5	21.3
Somewhat favorable	37.6	44.0	37.9
Somewhat unfavorable	19.3	14.1	11.0
Very unfavorable	8.8	6.1	6.1
Never heard/don't know	0.9	13.3	23.7
	Private Schools		
	Private	Catholic	Other Rel.
Very favorable	24.7	22.1	20.2
Somewhat favorable	50.0	40.5	39.8
Somewhat unfavorable	11.2	17.1	17.7
Very unfavorable	4.8	11.8	10.6
Never heard/don't know	9.4	8.5	11.7

Source: Author’s estimation with FADICA 2017 survey.

Box 2: Types of Schools

The FADICA survey identifies six different types of schools. The first three types are public schools. Traditional public schools are owned, operated, and funded by government agencies, typically at the state level. Charter schools are owned and funded by the state, but operated by private entities under a contract with the government entity. Magnet schools are typically public schools that aim to attract highly talented students, often with a focus on technology, science or the arts.

The next three types of schools are schools that are owned and operated by private entities, typically with no or only limited funding from local, state, or federal governments. The first modality in the survey corresponds to secular (non-religious) private schools. The other two modalities correspond to Catholic schools and other (non-Catholic) religious schools.

Just under two thirds (62.6 percent) of respondents have a favorable or very favorable perception of Catholic schools, but more than a fourth (28.9 percent) has a somewhat or very unfavorable view of the schools. Table 2 and Figure 2 provide the odds of a favorable versus non-favorable perception of the various types of schools. This is done by dividing the share of respondents with a very or somewhat favorable perception by the share of those with a very or somewhat unfavorable perception.

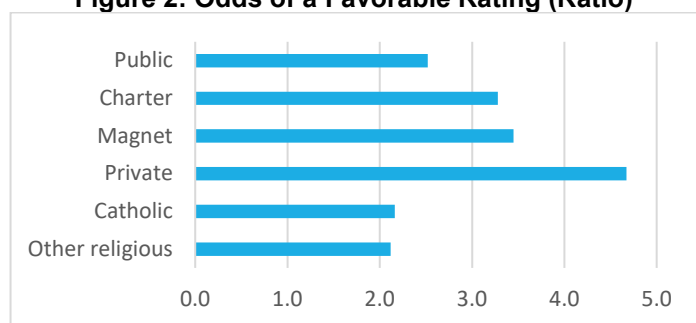
For Catholic and other religious schools, the odds of a favorable perception are respectively at 2.2 and 2.1. For all other types of schools the odds are higher, with the highest odds observed for private non-religious schools, followed by charter and magnet schools. Public schools fare slightly better than Catholic and non-religious schools, but less well than private non-religious, charter, and magnet schools.

Table 2: Odds of a Favorable Rating (Ratio)

	Public schools		
	Public	Charter	Magnet
Favorable vs. not	2.5	3.3	3.4
	Private Schools		
	Private	Catholic	Other Rel.
	Favorable vs. not	4.7	2.2

Source: Author's estimation with FADICA 2017 survey.

Figure 2: Odds of a Favorable Rating (Ratio)



Source: Author's estimation with FADICA 2017 survey.

Statistical analysis by faith affiliation suggests a correlation between religious beliefs for respondents and how favorably they perceive Catholic schools, but there is also a lot of variability in ratings within respondents from any given faith affiliation. For example, among Catholic respondents, only 4.0 percent rate Catholic schools very unfavorably. This proportion increases to 8.2 percent among other Christians, 13.3 percent among believers in other religions, and 27.6 percent among non-affiliated individuals (this atheist, agnostics, and those not identifying with a religion). At the same time, even among non-affiliated individuals, 8.7 percent view Catholic schools very favorably, and 29.7 percent view the schools favorably.

Correlates of Favorability Ratings

Regression analysis can be used to assess in more details the factors that appear to be associated with favorable or unfavorable perceptions of Catholic and other types of schools (see Box 3 on regression analysis). The idea is to identify marginal effects controlling for other variables. For example, assume that Hispanic or African American respondents are less favorable towards one type of school than another. This could be related to race, but it could also be related to other factors correlated with race such as income or education level. Regression analysis typically helps in disentangling these various potential effects.

Box 3: Regression Analysis

The objective of the regression analysis is to look at associations between various characteristics of respondents and their perception of various types of schools while controlling for the potential effect on these perceptions of the respondents' other characteristics. To keep the analysis as simple as possible, probits are used as opposed to ordered models. The outcome is whether respondents have a favorable view of the various types of schools or not. The regression analysis is tentative in that alternative model specifications could yield different results. For ease of interpretation, marginal effects (dF/dX) are reported at the mean of the sample. These effects should not be interpreted as implying causality. They are simply indicative of a potential association between specific characteristics of respondents and their perceptions.

To keep the analysis as simple as possible, the outcome (dependent variable) is binary, with the positive category corresponding to very favorable or somewhat favorable ratings, and the comparison category combining the three other three potential responses (somewhat unfavorable, very unfavorable, or does not know/does not have enough knowledge). The following individual characteristics are used as independent variables in the regressions:

- **Gender:** Male or female.
- **Age:** Baby boomer or born earlier (born in or before 1964), Generation X (born between 1965 and 1976), or Generation Y (born after 1977).
- **Race:** White, Hispanic or Latino, African American, or other races/biracial or multiracial/other.
- **Location:** Urban, suburban, or rural.
- **Parental Status:** Parent or not a parent of a child.
- **Political affiliation:** Republican, Democrat, or independent/something else/not registered.
- **Household yearly income:** Low (below \$50,000), middle (between \$50,000 and \$100,000), high (above \$100,000), or no response.

- **Education level:** High school or below (some high school, high school graduate, vocational/technical school, or other), undergraduate, or graduate.
- **Employment:** Working full-time or part time, or not working (full-time student, unemployed, stay-at-home parent or retired).
- **Religious affiliation:** Catholic, Other Christian (Protestant or other non-Catholic Christian), Other religious affiliations (Mormonism, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, other), or no religious affiliation (atheist, agnostic, or not identifying with any religion).
- **Importance of religion:** for those with a religious faith, whether they consider their faith as extremely or very important in shaping their daily life.
- **Practice of religion:** for those with a religious faith, whether they attend services regularly (almost every week or more often).
- **Active Catholic:** for those who are Catholic, whether they consider themselves to be a somewhat active or very active Catholic.
- **Experience with Catholic schools as a child:** Whether the respondent went to Catholic school at any level as a child and whether he/she had a poor experience while in Catholic school (only a small minority of adults who went to Catholic schools as children had a poor experience).

The results from the regression analysis are tentative and should not be interpreted as implying causality.

Tables 3 and 4 provide a synthesis of the results from the regressions first for public schools and then for private schools. An effect marked as NS indicates that the effect is not statistically significant (at the 10 percent level). The interpretation of marginal effects that are statistically significant is as follows: a value of 0.050 indicates that controlling for other factors, the variable is associated with an increase of 5.0 percentage points in the likelihood of perceiving a type of school favorably.

For example, the value of 0.078 for men for charter schools suggests that controlling for other factors, men are 7.8 percentage points more likely to have a favorable view of charter schools than women (the reference category for that variable). It is important to note that the results from the analysis are tentative and that they need not imply causality.

The following comments can be made on the results.

- **Gender:** Men tend to have more favorable perceptions of charter (+7.8 percentage points) and private schools (+4.6 points) than women.
- **Age:** Younger respondents tend to have less favorable perceptions of Catholic schools (-7.5 points for Gen X and -10.0 points for Gen Y), and

more favorable perceptions of public schools (+8.3 points for Gen Y) than older respondents.

- **Race:** In comparison to whites, respondents from all or most other races tend to have more favorable perceptions of charter and magnet schools (gains of 10.8 to 13.0 points), but the effects are not statistically significant for private, Catholic, and other religious schools.
- **Location:** Versus suburban respondents, urban respondents have more favorable perceptions of all three types of public schools (gains of 7.1 to 13.8 points), while rural respondents perceive magnet schools less favorably (-8.6 points). The corresponding effects for private schools are again not statistically significant.
- **Parental status:** Being a parent does not seem to have an effect on any of the perceptions controlling for other variables in the regressions.
- **Political affiliation:** In comparison to Democrats, Republicans tend to have a less favorable perception of public schools (-13.1 points), and a more favorable perception of non-Catholic religious schools (+7.7 points). Independents also have less favorable perceptions of public schools (-11.0 points) and charter schools (-6.1 points).
- **Income levels:** In comparison to individuals with low incomes, those with medium or high incomes view all three types of public schools more favorably (gains ranging from 6.1 points to 15.7 points), but most of the effects for private schools are not statistically significant except for non-Catholic religious schools (+7.9 points for high income respondents).
- **Education levels:** When effects are statistically significant, better educated individuals tend to have more favorable perceptions of magnet, private, and Catholic schools.
- **Employment:** Employed individuals tend to view private and Catholic schools more favorably (gains of respectively 5.0 and 5.9 points).
- **Faith affiliation:** In comparison to respondents not affiliated with a religion, Christian respondents and those affiliated with other religions view charter schools more favorably (gains of 8.4 and 11.1 points). Catholics and Christians have much more favorable perceptions of Catholic schools (gains of 25.0 and 17.6 points, respectively). Respondents affiliated with a religion tend to view other religious schools more favorably than those without a faith affiliation (gains of 9.6 to 19.0 points).
- **Importance and practice of faith:** By and large, respondents whose faith is important in their daily life, who attend services regularly, and who describe themselves as active Catholics (among those who are Catholic) tend to have more favorable views of Catholic and other religious schools, and also of charter and magnet schools.

- **Experience with Catholic schools as a child:** Respondents who attended Catholic schools as children tend to view public schools less favorably (-7.0 points) and all three types of private schools more favorably (gains ranging from 7.8 points to 24.0 points). However, the reverse is observed for respondents who attended Catholic schools and had a poor experience in those schools, with the largest effect in the whose regression being observed towards Catholic schools for that specific (small) group (-38.8 points).

Table 3: Correlates of Favorable Perceptions for Public, Charter, and Magnet Schools (dF/dX)

	Private	Catholic	Other Rel.
Gender (Ref. Female)			
Male	NS	0.078	NS
Age (Ref. Older)			
Generation X	NS	NS	NS
Generation Y	0.083	NS	NS
Race (Ref. White)			
Hispanic/Latino	NS	0.108	0.090
African American	NS	0.117	0.123
Other races	NS	0.130	NS
Location (Ref. Suburban)			
Urban	0.071	0.105	0.138
Rural	NS	NS	-0.086
Parent (Ref. Not a parent)			
Parent	NS	NS	NS
Political aff. (Ref. Dem.)			
Republican	-0.131	NS	NS
Independent	-0.110	-0.061	NS
Income (Ref. Low income)			
Medium income	0.071	0.061	0.087
High income	0.064	0.083	0.157
Income not declared	NS	NS	NS
Education (Ref. HS/below)			
College - Undergraduate	NS	NS	NS
College - Graduate	NS	NS	0.087
Work (Ref. Not employed)			
Employed	NS	NS	NS
Faith (Ref. Not affiliated)			
Catholic	NS	NS	NS
Christian	NS	0.084	NS
Other religion	NS	0.111	NS
Importance of religion			
Faith important	NS	NS	NS
Attending services regularly	NS	0.082	0.091
Active Catholic	NS	0.075	0.117
School in childhood			
Attended Catholic school	-0.070	NS	NS
Poor exp. in Catholic school	0.126	NS	NS

Source: Author's estimation with FADICA 2017 survey.
 Note: NS = Not statistically significant.

The characteristics of respondents that appear to have the largest effects on how Catholic schools are perceived are related, not surprisingly, to their faith affiliation or practice and their own experience as children with Catholic schools.

Table 4: Correlates of Favorable Perceptions for Private, Catholic, and other Religious Schools (dF/dX)

	Private	Catholic	Other Rel.
Gender (Ref. Female)			
Male	0.046	NS	NS
Age (Ref. Older)			
Generation X	NS	-0.075	NS
Generation Y	NS	-0.100	-0.069
Race (Ref. White)			
Hispanic/Latino	NS	NS	NS
African American	NS	NS	NS
Other races	NS	NS	NS
Location (Ref. Suburban)			
Urban	NS	NS	NS
Rural	NS	NS	NS
Parent (Ref. Not a parent)			
Parent	NS	NS	NS
Political aff. (Ref. Dem.)			
Republican	NS	NS	0.077
Independent	NS	NS	NS
Income (Ref. Low income)			
Medium income	NS	NS	NS
High income	NS	NS	0.079
Income not declared	NS	NS	NS
Education (Ref. HS/below)			
College - Undergraduate	0.070	NS	NS
College - Graduate	NS	0.096	NS
Work (Ref. Not employed)			
Employed	0.050	0.059	NS
Faith (Ref. Not affiliated)			
Catholic	NS	0.250	0.096
Christian	NS	0.176	0.190
Other religion	NS	NS	0.127
Importance of religion			
Faith important	NS	0.099	0.218
Attending services regularly	NS	NS	0.105
Active Catholic	NS	0.171	NS
School in childhood			
Attended Catholic school	0.078	0.240	0.086
Poor exp. in Catholic school	NS	-0.388	-0.199

Source: Author's estimation with FADICA 2017 survey.
 Note: NS = Not statistically significant.

Willingness to Consider Enrolling One's Children

The survey also asked respondents whether they would consider enrolling their children in the various types of schools, as follows: "How willing, if at all, are you to consider sending your child to one of the following types of school for grades K-12 in your area in the future?" The question is asked to the subset of respondents who have children. Respondents may respond that they are very willing, somewhat willing, somewhat unwilling, or very unwilling to send their children to various types of schools, with an additional modality if they never heard about the schools or did not feel that they knew enough to comment.

Table 5 provides the shares of respondents by category. Public schools have higher proportions of respondents very willing (43.7 percent) or somewhat willing (34.9 percent) to enroll their children in the schools, and lower proportions of

respondents stating that they do not know enough to answer the question. Religious schools, whether Catholic or not, again score lowest. The responses indicating willingness for private, charter, and magnet schools are broadly similar, but private schools have a lower share of respondents declaring not knowing enough to respond.

Table 5: Willingness to Consider Enrolling Children by Type of School (%)

	Public schools		
	Public	Charter	Magnet
Very willing	43.7	27.1	27.3
Somewhat willing	34.9	38.3	31.2
Somewhat unwilling	9.1	14.3	12.3
Very unwilling	11.1	10.9	9.3
Never heard/don't know	1.2	9.5	19.9
	Private Schools		
	Private	Catholic	Other Rel.
Very willing	29.4	27.1	23.4
Somewhat willing	34.8	24.0	29.9
Somewhat unwilling	16.9	16.5	15.8
Very unwilling	13.0	25.5	22.5
Never heard/don't know	5.9	6.9	8.4

Source: Author's estimation with FADICA 2017 survey.

Parents are most willing to consider public schools for their children, and least willing to consider religious schools. However, many more parents are willing to consider Catholic schools than the school's current market share.

Box 3: Willingness to Consider Enrolling Children and Market Share

The fact that the willingness to consider Catholic and other religious schools is lower than for other schools is not surprising. While Catholic schools enroll children from many faiths, a majority of the children enrolled are Catholic. Most non-Catholic parents would not consider the schools for their children.

At the same time, the share of parents “very willing” to consider Catholic schools, at 27.1 percent, is much higher than the current market share of Catholic schools, at less than five percent nationally for primary (elementary) schools and less than three percent at the secondary level according to administrative data. Being willing to consider Catholic schools and actually enrolling one’s children in one of the schools are not the same thing. The actual decision to enroll depends on many consideration, including the out-of-pocket cost of schooling. These issues are discussed in other notes in this series.

As done for favorability ratings, Table 6 and Figure 3 provide summary odds for parents of being very or somewhat willing to send their children to a type of school versus being unwilling to do so. Catholic and other religious schools have the lowest odds, while public schools have the highest odds.

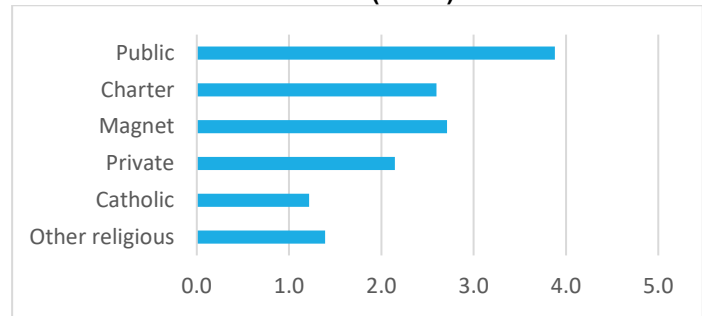
It is worth noting that while private non-religious schools had the highest favorability ratings, they do not have the highest odds of parents being willing to send their children to the schools. This may reflect the fact that private schools have substantial out-of-pocket costs for parents while public, charter, and magnet schools do not. Cost considerations are also likely to affect responses by parents for Catholic and other religious schools since religious schools tend not to benefit from state funding (with the exception of states with school choice legislation).

Table 6: Odds of Willingness to Consider Enrolling Children (Ratio)

	Public schools		
	Public	Charter	Magnet
Willing to consider vs. not	3.9	2.6	2.7
	Private Schools		
	Private	Catholic	Other Rel.
Willing to consider vs. not	2.1	1.2	1.4

Source: Author's estimation with FADICA 2017 survey.

Figure 3: Odds of Willingness to Consider Enrolling Children (Ratio)



Source: Author's estimation with FADICA 2017 survey.

As for favorability ratings, statistical analysis suggests a correlation between faith affiliation and whether parents are willing to consider Catholic schools for their children. The proportion of parents willing to consider Catholic schools is higher among Catholics, but many non-Catholics are also potentially interested in Catholic schools, and indeed nationally the proportion of non-Catholics actually enrolled in the schools has been increasing over time.

Correlates of Willingness to Consider Enrolling

Regression analysis can again be used to assess factors associated with the willingness or lack thereof of parents to consider specific types of schools. As for favorability ratings, to keep the analysis as simple as possible, the outcome is dichotomic. The positive category corresponds to being somewhat or very willing to send children to a type of school, while the comparison category combines the three other potential responses. The same set of individual characteristics are used as independent variables, except for the variables identifying parents since all respondents in the sample for this analysis are parents.

Tables 7 and 8 provide the main results, which are again tentative and may not imply causality. The results are as expected very similar to those obtained for favorability since parents who do not see a type of school favorably are unlikely to consider that type of school for their children.

- **Gender:** Men are more likely to consider charter (+5.9 percentage points) and private schools (+8.8 points) for their children than women.
- **Age:** Gen Y respondents are more likely to consider public, private and Catholic schools than baby boomers and older individuals (gains ranging from 11.1 to 12.8 points). For Catholic schools, this differs from the finding related to favorability.
- **Race:** In comparison to whites, as was often the case for favorability, respondent from other races are more likely to consider public, charter and magnet schools (gains of 6.6 to 17.4 points), but the effects of race are not statistically significant for private, Catholic, and other religious schools.
- **Location:** Findings for location are again similar to those for favorability, with urban respondents more likely to consider charter (9.2 points) and magnet schools (11.9 points), while rural respondents are less likely to consider magnet schools (-11.2 points). The corresponding effects for private schools are again not statistically significant.
- **Political affiliation:** Independents are less likely than Democrats to consider charter schools (-7.4 points) and magnet schools (-6.7 points). Effects for Republicans are not statistically significant.
- **Income levels:** Respondents with medium or high incomes are systematically more likely to consider public, charter and magnet schools. Effects are occasionally statistically significant for private and non-Catholic religious schools, but income difference do not matter for Catholic schools.
- **Education levels:** Higher educational attainment does not affect the willingness to consider enrolling children in specific types of school except a positive effect for undergraduates in the case of private schools.
- **Employment:** Employed individuals are more likely to be considering public and private schools, but most effects are not statistically significant.
- **Faith affiliation:** In comparison to respondents not affiliated with a religion, Catholics are much more likely to consider Catholic schools (gains of 31.5 points) and less likely to consider charter schools (-9.9 points). Christian are more likely to consider non-Catholic religious schools (19.1 points).
- **Importance and practice of faith:** While some effects are observed for public schools, these are not systematic. By comparison, effects for Catholic schools are systematic and large, and the same is observed for non-Catholic religious schools (with

the exception of being an active Catholic which matters as expected only for Catholic schools).

- **Experience with Catholic schools as a child:** Respondents who attended Catholic schools as children are much more likely to consider Catholic schools (gain of 31.0 points), and slightly less likely to consider public schools (-5.9 points), but the effect of a poor experience as a child has an even larger negative effect (-43.8 points). Smaller effects from past experience with Catholic schools are observed for non-Catholic religious schools.

Table 7: Correlates of Willingness to Consider Public, Charter, and Magnet Schools (dF/dX)

	Public	Charter	Magnet
Gender (Ref. Female)			
Male	NS	0.059	0.088
Age (Ref. Older)			
Generation X	NS	NS	NS
Generation Y	0.115	NS	NS
Race (Ref. White)			
Hispanic/Latino	0.066	0.101	NS
African American	NS	0.108	0.132
Other races	NS	0.114	0.174
Location (Ref. Suburban)			
Urban	NS	0.092	0.119
Rural	NS	NS	-0.112
Political aff. (Ref. Dem.)			
Republican	NS	NS	NS
Independent	NS	-0.074	-0.067
Income (Ref. Low income)			
Medium income	0.057	0.138	0.132
High income	0.081	0.105	0.139
Income not declared	NS	NS	NS
Education (Ref. HS/below)			
College - Undergraduate	NS	NS	NS
College - Graduate	NS	NS	NS
Work (Ref. Not employed)			
Employed	0.062	NS	NS
Faith (Ref. Not affiliated)			
Catholic	NS	-0.099	NS
Christian	NS	NS	NS
Other religion	NS	NS	NS
Importance of religion			
Faith important	-0.075	NS	NS
Attending services regularly	NS	0.088	0.106
Active Catholic	NS	NS	NS
School in childhood			
Attended Catholic school	-0.059	NS	NS
Poor exp. in Catholic school	NS	NS	NS

Source: Author's estimation with FADICA 2017 survey.

Note: NS = Not statistically significant.

As for favorability ratings, parents' characteristics related to their faith and experience as children with Catholic schools have the largest effects on whether they are willing to consider Catholic schools for their children.

Table 8: Correlates of Willingness to Consider Private, Catholic, and other Religious Schools (dF/dX)

	Private	Catholic	Other Rel.
Gender (Ref. Female)			
Male	NS	NS	NS
Age (Ref. Older)			
Generation X	NS	NS	NS
Generation Y	0.111	0.128	NS
Race (Ref. White)			
Hispanic/Latino	NS	NS	NS
African American	NS	NS	NS
Other races	NS	NS	NS
Location (Ref. Suburban)			
Urban	0.079	NS	0.100
Rural	NS	NS	NS
Political aff. (Ref. Dem.)			
Republican	NS	NS	NS
Independent	NS	-0.072	-0.093
Income (Ref. Low income)			
Medium income	0.081	NS	NS
High income	NS	NS	0.094
Income not declared	NS	NS	NS
Education (Ref. HS/below)			
College – Undergraduate	0.070	NS	NS
College – Graduate	NS	NS	NS
Work (Ref. Not employed)			
Employed	0.072	NS	NS
Faith (Ref. Not affiliated)			
Catholic	NS	0.315	NS
Christian	NS	NS	0.191
Other religion	NS	NS	NS
Importance of religion			
Faith important	NS	0.181	0.191
Attending services regularly	NS	0.107	0.178
Active Catholic	NS	0.116	NS
School in childhood			
Attended Catholic school	NS	0.310	0.116
Poor exp. in Catholic school	-0.159	-0.438	-0.168

Source: Author's estimation with FADICA 2017 survey.

Note: NS = Not statistically significant.

As mentioned in Box 3, being willing to consider Catholic schools and actually enrolling one's children in one of the schools are not the same thing. Analysis of the decision to actually enroll children in schools and some of the factors that parents consider in doing so is provided in another note in this series. But the analysis of favorability ratings and the willingness to consider Catholic schools provides interesting pointers as to some of the target groups that Catholic schools could target to stem the long-term decline in enrollment that they have suffered from. How this could be done will also be discussed in other notes in this series.

Conclusion

Two questions were asked in this note: (1) How favorable are perceptions of Catholic schools in comparison to other types of schools?; and (2) How willing are parents to consider Catholic schools for their children? The analysis was based on a national 2017 survey funded by FADICA with a total of 1,403 respondents. Both statistical and regression analyses were used to answer the questions.

Two findings stand out. First, while almost two thirds of the population has a favorable perception of Catholic schools, one fourth does not. In addition, one in four parents would be very willing to consider Catholic schools for their children. This is a much larger share than the current market share of Catholic schools at below five percent. Second, the characteristics of respondents with the largest effects on how Catholic schools are perceived and whether parents would be willing to consider Catholic schools for their children are related, not surprisingly, to their faith affiliation and their own experience as children with Catholic schools. Other notes in this series explore more in depth some of the factors that lead parents to enroll their children in Catholic and other schools, as well as parental priorities for what their children should learn at school.

Appendix: Data Source

This note relies on market research data collected in 2017 by Mayhill Strategies LLC with funding from the Catholic Education Philanthropy Working Group and support from FADICA (Foundations and Donors interested in Catholic Activities) and the Philanthropy Roundtable. The market research led to the publication in 2018 by NCEA and FADICA of a report available online entitled *The Catholic School Choice: Understanding the Perspectives of Parents and Opportunities for More Engagement*. The report team adopted a mixed research methodology with quantitative as well as qualitative data collection and analysis. This note conducts more detailed analysis of the data, relying specifically on the quantitative component.

The quantitative data were collected via an online survey of 1,403 adult Americans between March 31 and April 11, 2017. As several target groups were oversampled (including Hispanic parents), sample weights based on the U.S. Census and findings from the Pew Research Foundation were used to adjust population shares to reflect the demographic profile of the adult American population. More details on the sample are available in the report. A more detailed version of the analysis summarized in this note is available from the author.

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