The Ten Dimensions of Inclusion

Non-Catholic Students in Catholic Schools

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This book is dedicated to my girls, Kaitlyn and Shayne. It was because of them that I became interested in the phenomenon of inclusion and twelve years later they continue to inspire and bless me in so many ways. It is also dedicated to my friend and mentor Dr. Keith Walker, a professor at the University of Saskatchewan, a man of conscience and wisdom who prepared me to write my dissertation and thus this book. He is a Man for All Seasons.
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This book has been in development since 1998 when I first experienced the phenomenon of non-Catholic students in Catholic schools in the Canadian province of Saskatchewan. My daughters were attending a Catholic high school and it struck me that I had not noticed their friends attending Sunday Mass. Upon inquiry, I discovered that many of their friends were not Catholics and that in my youngest daughter’s words “It really doesn’t make a difference Dad. They are my friends.” Well that was fine except I suspected that the demographics of Catholic schools which I had attended had changed. I wondered if my understanding was correct and further, if so, what were the effects of such a demographic change in the religion of some of the student body in Catholic schools? It was with those thoughts in mind that in 2000 I chose the topic “Catholic Education and the Inclusion of Non-Catholic Students: Qualitative Findings and Implications” for my doctoral dissertation. Since that time I have been researching, reading, and writing on the topic of the inclusion of non-Catholic students in Catholic schools. It has been a fascinating study into the various aspects of Catholic schools which have been touched by the phenomenon of non-Catholic inclusion which I refer to in this book as inclusion.

After several years of research, it became very clear that there were many aspects of inclusion which were symbiotic and inter-related. Indeed, ten dimensions of the phenomenon emerged from the readings, research, and writing which I have experienced during my years of research. I first wrote on that finding in an article published in Catholic Education: A Journal of Inquiry and Practice. It was the writing of that article, along with subsequent research which produced further academic articles, which brought me to the writing of this book. This book is an amalgam of the findings from my research.

The significance of inclusion is clear. The Canadian Catholic Schools Trustees’ Association (2006) notes that inclusion has become a major issue in Saskatchewan as public school districts seek financial compensation for non-Catholic students attending Catholic schools. In Alberta, litigation has commenced involving the financial loss to the Public school district due to non-Catholic students attending an expanded Catholic school district (Board of Trustees of Aspen View Regional Division No. 19, n.d.). In Ontario, the Ontario Catholic School Trustees Association (2000) identified what they believed to be one of the “Major Issues Facing Catholic Education . . . the increasing number of non-Catholic students who are present in the secondary schools . . .” (p. 17). Dixon (2003) noted that in six dioceses in Ontario, the non-Catholic student population varied from 10% to 50%.
In the United States the average number of non-Catholic students in Catholic schools is approximately 13.5 percent. I presented a paper on the topic of inclusion at the 2003 National Catholic Educational Association’s Convention in St. Louis and was advised that the topic is of increasing concern to Catholic schools in America.

In 1980 it was noticed in the United States that the evangelization of non-Catholic students in Catholic schools (Schillo, 1980) was an issue and, in Canada in 1999, Mulligan raised the issue of inclusion stating that it “is a concern common to Catholic educators in Ontario, Saskatchewan and Alberta” (p. 182). He reiterates some of the concerns of others (Dixon, 2003) in offering four reasons for this difficulty: a) the mission of the Catholic school is to evangelize Catholic students, not to persuade non-Catholic students to join the Faith; b) school policies require non-Catholic students to accept all Catholic dimensions of the school programs in order to discourage attendance by non-Catholics for mere reasons of convenience; c) evangelization is not school-wide nor all inclusive as non-Catholic students can not receive the sacraments; and d) religion teachers are hindered in their religious mission as,

How can a teacher, in the same religion class, help students who have an active faith to grow in knowledge and deepen in commitment; try to help the unchurched Catholic students to discover new meaning in the church and faith they have definite but tenuous ties to; and respect a significant number of students for whom Catholic faith is a foreign language that they have no, or next to no, interest in learning about (p. 183)?

With respect to the evangelization of non-Catholic students a brief aside comment is warranted. Throughout this book the position taken is that the evangelization of non-Catholic students is not a goal of the Catholic school. However, the General Directory for Catechesis (Congregation for the Clergy, 1997) seems to suggest that non-Catholic students may be evangelized at least by implication as a result of being present within the wider group of Catholic students in the Catholic school. The Congregation says,

When most students attending a Catholic school belong to families who associate themselves with the school because of its Catholic character, the ministry of the word can be exercised in it in multiple forms: primary proclamation, scholastic religious instruction, catechesis, homily. Two of these forms, however, have a particular importance in the Catholic school: religious instruction in the school and catechesis whose respective characteristics have already been discussed. (271) When students and their families become associated with Catholic schools because of the quality of education offered in the school, or for other possible reasons, catechetical activity is necessarily limited and even religious education—when possible— accentuates its cultural character. The contribution of such schools is always "a service of great value to men", (272) as well as an internal element of evangelization of the Church. Given the plurality of socio-cultural and
religious contexts in which the work of Catholic schools is carried on in
different nations, it is opportune that the Bishops and the Episcopal
Conferences specify the kind of catechetical activity to be implemented in
Catholic schools. (para. 260)

Jelinski (1994) found similar concerns among the Canadian province of Saskat-
chewan’s Catholic school administrators. He examined the procedures, practices,
and policies for admission into Saskatchewan’s Catholic schools and noted the
comments of in-school administrators regarding the perceived difficulties associated
with the admission of non-Catholic students. Among those comments: if the
number of non-Catholic students is too great, the reason for existing as a Catholic
school is destroyed; the addition of non-Catholic students to non-practicing
Catholic students put a heavy burden on Catholic teachers; the watering down of
Catholic teachings to accommodate others weakens the Catholic schools’ reason
for existing; once non-Catholic students are admitted they never get reevaluated to
determine if they should remain in the system; younger children don’t feel part of
the sacramental preparation process and it can be traumatic for them (pp. 50–54).

In the United Kingdom there has been recent concern over a Ministerial
suggestion that faith based schools, which includes Catholic schools, should –
under a Schools Admissions Code – be required to have a minimum of 25% of
their students from outside of the school’s faith group (Bogle, 2007; see also
School Admissions Code of Practice, February 2003, section 3.10).

In Ireland, the government has determined the necessity of funding non-Catholic
schools for immigrants (International Herald Tribune: Europe, Dec. 13, 2007) and
policy for 2 parochial schools, reserving one-third of the available seats for non-

In Australia, the issue of inclusion remains a current issue in Catholic schools
(Catholic News, April 8, 2005). In 2007, the Catholic School Enrollments Trend
indicated that there were “170,000 non-Catholic students enrolled in Australian
Catholic schools, which represented 25% of all students. . . [and] that the
proportion of non-Catholic enrolments ranged from 20% in NSW to 44% in
Tasmania” (National Catholic Education Commission, 2008). Inclusion remains a
concern (Bishops of New South Wales and the ACT, 2007; Harkness, n.d.).

As an aside, the presence of non-Catholic students in Catholic schools in
Canada has also triggered a desire on the part of some non-Catholic parents to
become members of the Catholic school boards in at least one Canadian Catholic
school system. The Supreme Court of the North West Territories (Yellowknife
Catholic Schools v. Euchner, 2007) has recently affirmed the right of non-Catholic
citizens to sit as Catholic school Trustees. Although this decision seems restricted
to those provinces which do not have constitutionally protected Catholic schools,
as in the Provinces of Ontario, Alberta, and Saskatchewan, it is still a concern for
the future of Canada’s Catholic schools in other provinces and territories and what
that may portend for the public’s acceptance of Catholic school boards in the three
aforesaid provinces.
Preface

In sum, the inclusion of non-Catholic students in Catholic schools is a topic whose time has come in Canada and as Francis (1986) suggested in the United Kingdom, “the place of non-Catholic pupils in Catholic secondary schools is a proper subject for educational research” (p. 1).

Book Outline of Chapters

This book draws upon my understanding and findings from four qualitative studies conducted by me within two Canadian provinces as well as an amalgam of relevant documents of the Catholic Church, the academic writings of others, and media reports. It is from those sources that I have attempted to shed some light on the phenomenon of the inclusion of non-Catholic students within 10 dimensions: social/cultural, political, financial, legal, racial, administrative, pedagogical, psychological, spiritual, and philosophical. The data from these four studies is from constitutionally protected and funded Catholic high schools. The other sources of data are both national (Canadian) and international. Therefore, this book should be read with those delimitations in mind. I will be among the first to acknowledge that there may be more dimensions to be yet identified, but I leave that to others in the field.

This book is composed of a Preface, Introduction, and eleven Chapters. The Preface briefly describes the significance of the phenomenon to Catholics in Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia. The Introduction provides the foundations for the book with a review of the Catholic Church’s view of inclusion as stated in Vatican documents, the data provided by scholars, statements on the topic within the media, and the methodology and methods which I employed in examining the phenomenon in four studies.

Chapter 1 looks to the first dimension of inclusion, the social/cultural aspects of the phenomenon. In particular, the chapter draws upon the research and looks at inclusion from the perspectives of Catholic teachers, Catholic students, and non-Catholic students. It then moves onto the theoretical aspects of how the common good is addressed by inclusion from the perspectives of Liberalism and Communitarianism.

Chapter 2 provides the second dimension: the political ramifications of the phenomenon. The social contract between Catholics and the public is seen under pressure due to the political debates in Ontario and Saskatchewan regarding the reasons for Catholic schools.

Chapter 3 states the financial aspects of inclusion in Ontario, Saskatchewan, and Alberta. In particular, the issue of the cost of the public funding of Catholic schools as well as the difficulties facing some public school boards where non-Catholic students attend Catholic schools – allegedly enticed to do so by those schools.

Chapter 4 examines the legal aspects of inclusion. This rather lengthy chapter sets out the constitutional foundation for Catholic schools in Ontario, Saskatchewan, and Alberta and moves onto the implications for non-Catholic students’ rights under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Further, consideration is
given to the legal conundrum facing Catholic school districts in Alberta who wish to expand their school districts into what has been public school districts.

Chapter 5 offers the fifth dimension, racial; and it notes the rise in the number of Islamic students in Ontario’s urban Catholic schools and the increase in First Nations students in Saskatchewan’s schools. Further, mention is made of how race has played a role in the Catholic school’s approach to inclusion as viewed from the literature.

Chapter 6 provides research into the administrative aspects of inclusion and notes, amongst other things, the importance of the Catholic school principal’s initial interview with non-Catholic parents and their children when the latter seek admission to the Catholic school.

Chapter 7 looks to the pedagogical aspects of inclusion. In particular, Chapter 7 examines the difficulty of providing catechesis to non-Catholic students and the relationship between non-Catholic students and Catholic teachers. Further, the issue of balancing orthodoxy and orthopraxis in the schools with respect to all of the students is addressed.

Chapter 8 delves into the psychology of inclusion, as that term is defined in this book. Specifically, it looks at the psychological impact of inclusion as understood by Catholic teachers, Catholic students, and non-Catholic students.

Chapter 9 proffers a glimpse into the spiritual aspect of inclusion insofar as Catholic spirituality differs markedly from secular spirituality and why that distinction is significant for inclusion.

Chapter 10 moves to perhaps the most difficult dimension of inclusion – the philosophical dimension. It is quite complex as it deals with the philosophical implications of inclusion, in particular the impact of that phenomenon on Catholic teachers, Catholic students, and non-Catholic students. It further considers the difficulty involved with the Catholic Church’s understanding of conscience and how that arguably impacts the relationships of teachers and school administrators with non-Catholic students.

Chapter 11 provides some final thoughts on the future of inclusion within Canada’s constitutionally protected Catholic schools and how that might be best achieved, not only for those students and for Catholic education, but the common good in Canadian society.
It is important to acknowledge that this book is a compilation and crystallization of my work done in the area of the inclusion of non-Catholic students into Catholic schools which has been underway since 1998. In that respect, the following journals have kindly allowed for the re-publication of much of the text of my past papers in this book.


INTRODUCTION

THE FOUNDATIONS

This Introduction looks at inclusion from the position of the Catholic Church as stated in Vatican documents, as viewed by academic researchers, and through the statements of some Catholic organizations. Lastly, it provides an explanation of the methodology and methods I used in researching inclusion in the Canadian provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta.

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND INCLUSION

The Church Fathers of Vatican II gave the invitation to non-Catholics, Christian and non-Christian alike, to send their children to Catholic schools. In *Gravissium Educationis* (Vatican II, 1965b) the Church stated,

> the Church considers very dear to her heart those Catholic schools . . . which are attended also by students who are not Catholics . . . This Sacred Council of the Church earnestly entreats pastors and all the faithful to spare no sacrifice in helping Catholic schools fulfill this function . . . especially in caring for the needs of those . . . who are strangers to the gift of faith (para. 9).

In *Dignitatis Humanae* (Vatican II, 1965a), the Fathers spoke of “the right of man to religious freedom” and that “no one therefore is to be forced to embrace the Christian faith against his own will” and further that “in matters religious every manner of coercion on the part of men should be excluded” (paras. 2 & 9). Indeed, it appears as though the Church had “accepted religious pluralism as integral to human freedom” (McDonald, 2004, p. 209).

The Congregation For Catholic Education (Congregation, 1977) stated in *The Catholic School*, “the Catholic school offers itself to all, non-Christians included, with all its distinctive aims and means, acknowledging, preserving and promoting the spiritual and moral qualities, the social and cultural values, which characterize different civilizations” (para 85).

In 1979, John Paul II in his Apostolic Exhortation, *Catechesi Tradendae* (John Paul II, 1979), spoke of the “ecumenical dimension” of catechetics, which would apply to adults and Catholic school religious instruction, stating that,

> a correct and fair presentation of the other Churches and ecclesial communities that the Spirit of Christ does not refrain from using as means of salvation . . . [as] the Church herself, can exist outside the visible boundaries of the Catholic Church . . . [would in effect] help non-Catholics to have a better knowledge and appreciation of the Catholic Church and her conviction of being the universal help toward salvation (para 32).
In 1982, the same Congregation in *Lay Catholics In Schools: Witnesses To Faith* stated,

> every person has a right to an integral education, an education which responds to all of the needs of the human person (para. 3) . . . [and that] at times there are students in Catholic schools who do not profess the Catholic faith, or perhaps are without any religious faith at all. Faith does not admit of violence; it is a free response of the human person to God as He reveals Himself. Therefore, while Catholic educators will teach doctrine in conformity with their own religious convictions and in accord with the identity of the school, they must at the same time have the greatest respect for those students who are not Catholics. They should be open at all times to authentic dialogue, convinced that in these circumstances the best testimony that they can give of their own faith is a warm and sincere appreciation for anyone who is honestly seeking God according to his or her own conscience (para. 42).

By 1988, however, the Congregation in *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School* had changed its tone, somewhat, on the topic of inclusion. It reiterated the invitation and that “[t]he religious freedom and the personal conscience of individual students and their families must be respected” but went on to say,

> On the other hand, a Catholic school cannot relinquish its own freedom to proclaim the Gospel and to offer a formation based on the values to be found in a Christian education; this is its right and its duty. To proclaim or to offer is not to impose, however; the latter suggests a moral violence which is strictly forbidden, both by the Gospel and by Church law (para. 6).

The invitation was again extended in 1997 by the Congregation (1997) in *The Catholic School On The Threshold Of The Third Millennium* in saying that, among many other important things, in particular, the institution “is not reserved to Catholics only, but is open to all those who appreciate and share its qualified educational project” (para. 16).

The Catechism of the Catholic Church (*Catechism*, n.d.) reiterated the above saying that everyone has the right to act in conscience and in freedom so as personally to make moral decisions. It states that “[t]he individual . . . must not be forced to act contrary to his [or her] conscience. Nor must he [or she] be prevented from acting according to his [or her] conscience, especially in religious matters” (para. 1782).

To encapsulate, the Catholic Church invites all who sincerely wish to share and participate in the objectives of Catholic education to enter the Catholic school community. The promise is of a Christian based education within a faith community where knowledge of the Catholic faith is taught, lived, and shared with non-Catholics. They are sincerely invited to dialogue with others about their faith and beliefs in an atmosphere of both freedom of conscience and religion. It was through these documents that “the Vatican congregation with jurisdiction over the
ed
to Catholic schools at the pre-university level” (Nuzzi, 2004a, p. 17).

Although Rome had spoken, each country was to interpret the above documents in their implementation. In the United States, reference may be made to four documents, “To Teach as Jesus Did” (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1972), “Teach Them” (National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1976), “Sharing the Light of Faith” (National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1979), “Renewing Our Commitment to Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools in the Third Millennium” (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005). However, in Canada, the voice of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops has not produced similar guidance.

There are only a few scholarly treatments in the United States and Canada dealing either directly or indirectly with the inclusion of non-Catholic students in Catholic schools. In general, it is fair to say that non-Catholic parents in the United States rank academic program, teaching of moral and spiritual values, discipline, religious atmosphere, and safety, in that order, as the primary reasons they send their children to Catholic school (Hickey, 1983; Penn, 1985). In Canada’s publicly supported Catholic schools, where no financial sacrifice is required on the part of parents who send their children to Catholic schools, mere convenience is also a factor for sending their children to Catholic schools (McKay, 2002; Jelinski, 1994).

Seeley (2000) states that being non-Catholic “did not play a significant role in their feelings that they were part of the school community” (p. 84), that “friends were the essential core of the school community for the participants” (p. 82), and that “most of the participants’ responses to questions about Catholicism as a formal religion were either negative or neutral” (p. 85).

My research into inclusion involved, amongst other things, four qualitative studies conducted in two Western Canadian provinces. The first study was concerned with Catholic high school students and Catholic teachers. The second involved six Catholic school administrators. The third was concerned with ten non-Catholic students who had recently graduated from a Catholic high school. The fourth sought understanding from twelve non-Catholic high school students.

All four studies utilized Grounded Theory as a methodology, documentary analysis, and either or both of video-taped focus group research or audio recorded or video-taped personal interviews.

Presented hereafter is a general discussion of the chosen methodology followed by a statement for each of the four studies. The research questions, contexts, procedures, reason for the choice of a particular procedure, and an explanation of the analysis which was used, are provided.
INTRODUCTION


The methodology I chose for my research into inclusion was objectivist grounded theory. Charmaz (2000) describes grounded theory methodology as being split into two schools: objectivist and constructionist (p. 150).

The objectivist school is divided into two camps, typified by the works of Glaser (1998) and Strauss and Corbin (1998). Both accept that there is a reality independent of the researcher, and thus, Charmaz (2000) designates their methodological schools as proffering an objectivist grounded theory.

Glaser’s (1998) position often comes close to traditional positivism, with its assumptions of an objective, external reality, a neutral observer who discovers data, reductionist inquiry of manageable research problems, and objectivist rendering of data. Strauss and Corbin’s (1998) stance assumes an objective external reality, aims toward unbiased data collection, proposes a set of technical procedures, and espouses verification (p. 510). Glaser holds that rigidity is inherent in the quantitative paradigm due to its dependence on an a priori research question, strict and prescriptive operating procedures, and its stress on validity and verification of the emerging theory and hypothesis. That is why he and his former acolyte, Strauss, developed grounded theory. Thus, he eschews this methodology which he refers to as an entirely new methodology which he calls “full conceptual description” (p. 2). He argues for his version which stresses that the research question emerges from the data a posteriori and that there must be great flexibility in the process of researching wherein the researcher receives guidance from the participants. It is this consonance with basic qualitative “flexibility of method” and indeed conceptualizing that leads to the discovery of understandings and beliefs within the context of the participants’ life world. He holds this to be of utmost importance for both research and to the development of theory. He further argues that to focus on process methodology rather than the development of theory from the data is wrong-headed and in fact not “true” grounded theory (p. 6). In effect, it is suggested that his position is reminiscent of the advice to the caterpillar that it ought not to focus on its number of legs or how they move in sequence but on the experience of walking. Glaser (1998) holds that this focus on procedures and method forces data into categories. This “forcing is a normative projection, a learned preconception, a paradigmatic projection, a cultural organization . . . As the intolerance of confusion increases so does forcing” (pp. 81-82). His contention is that “all is data” is lost when one focuses upon the process of coding and creating categories.

In prematurely focusing on a theoretical code, such as pacing, or a unit, the researcher becomes lost in description instead of generation of theory with theoretical completeness . . . . Focusing only on one unit fosters (1) the quantitative canons of evidentiary research linked with time and place, such as verification, not generation, and (2) making a false distinction between quantitative and qualitative research. (p. 85)

The research field methodology employed in all four of the studies by this author was Grounded Theory as espoused by Glaser (1992, 1998).
THE FOUR STUDIES

Study #1: Researching Catholic Students, Catholic Teachers, and Inclusion

The first study was conducted in 2001-2002 as I was pursuing a doctorate in educational administration at the University of Saskatchewan. I sought to research inclusion in four urban Catholic high schools in that province, involving four points of investigation: the documents of the Church, academic papers, readings from various non-academic authors, and focus group research in those schools.

The Research Questions

- What are the real life experiences of Catholic students and teachers in their relationships with non-Catholic students in Catholic schools?
- Moreover, what, if any, meanings do those Catholic students and teachers attach to their experiences in terms of the sense of their own faith both personally and within the Catholic school faith community?

The context of the participating schools. The doctoral study dealt with the collection of both visual, audio, and through transcription, written data derived from focus group meetings. Each of four Catholic High Schools in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan were represented with ten students from each of Grades 10, 11, and 12. These students were purposefully selected and balanced between the genders in each focus group (see Table 1). Each school also provided one focus group pool of ten Catholic teachers, again, purposefully selected as volunteers by the Christian Ethics teachers from their respective schools.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Grade 10</th>
<th>Grade 11</th>
<th>Grade 12</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
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<td>8 (4m, 4f)</td>
<td>9 (5m, 4f)</td>
<td>8 (4m, 4f)</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>6 (3m, 3f)</td>
<td>5 (4m, 1f)</td>
<td>5 (2m, 3f)</td>
<td>7 (2m, 5f)</td>
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<td>C</td>
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<td>8 (2m, 6f)</td>
<td>8 (3m, 5f)</td>
<td>4 (3m, 1f)</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>2 (1m, 1f)</td>
<td>3 (2m, 1f)</td>
<td>5 (4m, 1f)</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The procedure. The focus group meetings were video-taped and lasted up to two hours in length. Thereafter, they were transcribed for both audio and visual cues. The focus group questions were derived from the idea that the Catholic school is a place where values are crucial as they are derived from faith and where they are “communicated through the interpersonal and sincere relationships of its members” (Congregation, 1977, para. 32). In particular, questions aimed collectively at revealing Foster’s (1982) “spontaneous moments of community” through the experiences of Catholic and non-Catholic students in relationship. For the purposes of this study, there appeared to be no better research tool to peel off the complex layers of meaning which comprised mixtures of faith and other understandings.
which underlie the participants’ individual experiences. Indeed, the communal aspect of the focus group seemed ideally suited to address this study’s research questions. The following comments on focus group research bear out that conclusion.

*Why choose focus group research?* In this first study on inclusion, which involved my doctoral dissertation, I noted that the Congregation for Catholic Education (1988) states, “What makes the Catholic school distinctive is its attempt to generate a community climate in the school that is permeated by the Gospel spirit of freedom and love” (para. 1). With that statement in mind, it seemed consistent to seek the expression of Catholic students’ and teachers’ experiences within a group. In other words, it seemed intuitively correct to seek the experiences and meanings of Catholic students and teachers within a group setting. Isolated interviews might have produced individual experiences and meanings. However, those same experiences and meanings, when expressed in a group setting, could reasonably be expected to spark the memories of others in recalling their experiences and how they viewed them. Therefore, focus group research became the chosen method for the first study which was the foundation for my doctoral work.

Beck, Trombetta, and Share (1986) provided an operative definition of focus group research as, “an informal discussion among selected individuals about specific topics relevant to the situation at hand” (p. 73). The process has an overriding assumption that when correct procedures in sampling and process are completed, individuals will express their ideas, beliefs, feelings, attitudes, and understandings of the phenomenon under discussion. It is in the plurality of interaction that focus groups have their greatest benefit to the researcher as this dynamic process reveals the subjective understandings of the individual in dynamic relationship with the group. The perceived experiences and their meanings to both the individual and the group, inter-relating in dynamic relationship, reveals the commonalities of opinion which is clearly within the qualitative paradigm. Vaughn (1996) suggests that it is this which best reflects the phenomenological nature of social reality (p. 16). However, the process of interpretation of participants’ perceptions and the framing of questions by the researcher raises the issue of unwitting bias in leading or moderating the focus group.

Qualitative research warns of the dangers of researcher bias resulting from a conscious or unconscious acceptance of *a priori* assumptions. These assumptions frame questions with implicit answers and blur the interpretation of data. Yet, in focus group research, the moderator has little control over activity generated because the participants interact among themselves, posing questions, responding, clarifying, and even changing positions. In other words, focus groups have a life of their own which reduces the presence, and thus the potential for contamination, of the researcher. The group’s cohesiveness in purpose and ostensible, if not actual, philosophical homogeneity produces a self-validating empowerment of the individual, encouraging him or her to voice personal opinions, feelings, and understandings of the issue without the anxiety of being right or wrong vis-à-vis an authority figure. This self-disclosure within a community of disclosure provides a safe environment
for participants to explore not only their own but also other participants’ feelings, beliefs, perceptions, and understandings in a non-threatening manner.

Vaughn (1996) suggests that there are five good reasons to use focus groups: synergism, snowballing, stimulation, security, and spontaneity. Synergism is created as the group dynamic produces more quality data than individual interviews. Snowballing develops as participants who express their opinions set off chain reactions of dialogue among other participants. Stimulation is generated as comments invite agreement or disagreement from others. Security is created as the participants have been purposely selected with homogeneity in mind to ensure security and foster disclosure. Spontaneity is produced as participants are free to speak when and how they want without any pressure to respond “in order” or in a certain manner (p. 14). These five reasons, along with a few open-ended questions from the researcher, set the stage for focus groups to uncover participants’ perceptions.

I should note that a survey method was considered in this study to methodologically triangulate possible findings, but as Morgan (1997) says, “The key defining feature of self-contained focus groups is . . . not the absence of other methods but rather the ability to report data from the focus groups as a sufficient body of knowledge” (p. 21). He says as well that, “the distinguishing feature of a self-contained focus group is that the results of the research can stand on their own” (p. 18). It is true that focus group research can be used to supplement other sources and to be part of a multi-method study, but in this study, the purpose was to explore the unexplored. The singularity of a self-contained focus group study seemed appropriate.

In sum, using focus groups fitted the qualitative research paradigm, the research into inclusion, and provided the benefits of synergism, stimulation, security, and spontaneity to this first study.

Analysis of the focus group data. Once having completed the video-taping, each tape was viewed twice before any writing. Thereafter, the video recordings were transcribed by the researcher, stopping and starting the tapes to grasp what was being said, how it was being said, noting the facial expressions and body language of the participants, and making marginal editorial comments as the process progressed. Words and gestures of the participants were noted in an attempt to understand what was being said not only verbally but also emotively by the participants. Choosing particularly significant moments and text, the researcher focused upon the following questions. Were the expressions repeated frequently by the participants? Were the usages of expressions consistent or were multiple meanings expressed? Were expressions spoken of with emotional intensity and if so, was it consistent with appropriate body language and text? Which ideas were expressed articulately? Were some ideas avoided by the participants: evidenced by their demeanor? Was agreement or disagreement visually evident amongst the participants when a single participant expressed an idea? The above questions represented the criteria for determining the meaningful and significant events in the video-taped sessions.
Following the above process, a professional transcriber was retained to type out the audio portion of the video tapes. Thereafter the texts of those transcripts were compared with the researcher’s earlier notes. It was clear that the transcriber’s text alone would not have been sufficient to gain an understanding of the participants’ ideas in the focus group sessions. The visual cues expressed by non-verbal participants in response to verbal participants’ ideas, at times during the sessions, were very valuable in discerning the group’s understandings. The initial analysis of the data by the researcher and further analysis using the transcriber’s text represented the micro-analysis stage of the analysis.

Following the above analysis, simple tentative categories of participants’ ideas were created which related significant and meaningful ideas expressed in the transcripts for which the visual data provided concurrence. Negative concurrence was noted. This axial coding took into account the contingencies of time and space as well as continua along which a word was used and produced a “thickness” to those categories.

Selective coding followed the above, which related the categories to each other: i.e., Category “A” Community, Category “B” Faith, “Unified Category” Faith Community. A further review of the video tapes provided depth of data to those categories after which followed a linking of the various unified categories into broader concepts which in turn were inter-related where it appeared to be reasonable to do so. Samples of the process using actual text from the focus group sessions were provided in the final document (Donlevy, 2003a).

It was from the above analytical process, as well as data from other sources as stated hereafter, that ten major categories emerged in relation to inclusion. Other matters were evident in the data, but none had the same significance or clarity as the ten dimensions.

The study, from which the title of this book was derived, was not seeking to discover or examine the various dimensions of inclusion. Rather, it sought to understand the participant Catholic teachers’ and Catholic students’ experiences with inclusion. With that objective in mind it was expected that pedagogical, social, psychological, spiritual, and philosophical themes would emerge from the focus group sessions. However, secondary themes dealing with race, culture, politics, finance, and the law, fortuitously become apparent from data supplied by central office administrators, school principals, various pieces of correspondence from third party sources, as well as a reading of the enabling educational statute. These secondary themes, although ostensibly tangential to the basic study, were clearly of great importance to a broader understanding of the phenomenon.

This first study was the foundational piece for all my future research into inclusion and its findings are referred to throughout this book.

Study #2: Catholic School Administrators and Inclusion

The second study involved an exploration of the administrative aspects of inclusion with consideration of the available relevant school board policies and through telephone interviews with six Catholic high school principals.
INTRODUCTION

The Research Questions

– What Catholic school board and Catholic high school policies are in place which govern the admission of non-Catholic students?
– In the opinion of the participating Catholic high school principals, what are the stated objectives and reasons for those policies?
– In the opinion of the participating Catholic high school principals, do those policies achieve their objectives?
– In the opinion of the participating Catholic high school principals what might be changed or amended in those policies to better achieve the objectives?

Context of the schools. This study involved six urban schools from one school division in a Western Canadian province. The school district stretches over a very wide area incorporating several small urban communities, with thirteen schools, but only six schools have students from Grades 7 to 12 (see Table 2). The six Catholic school principals from those six schools made up the pool of participants for this study.

Table 2. Relevant Data from Each School in the Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School*</th>
<th>Number of Grade 7-12 students</th>
<th>Percentage of non-Catholic students**</th>
<th>Race in Grades 7-12</th>
<th>Rural &amp; Urban</th>
<th>Socio-Economic Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>673</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Upper-Middle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B***</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>All Caucasian except 5</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Upper-Middle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>15-20%</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>Middle to Upper-Middle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>Middle to Middle-Lower</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>438</td>
<td>35-40%</td>
<td>All Caucasian except 6</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>Middle to Middle-Lower</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Middle</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Only one school principal in this study was female.
** Almost all non-Catholic students were noted as being Caucasian and Christian: Lutheran, United Church, and Pentecostal.
*** In School B, the official school records indicate that the Catholic student population is 80% but self-identification as Catholic by students in this school resulted in that percentage dropping to 58% of the student body.

The religion program in that district is The Canadian Catechetical Series “We are Strong Together” produced by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (n.d.) as the principal resource for Grades 7 to 9. At the 10, 11, and 12 grade levels, three locally developed courses are employed which were approved by the relevant Canadian province: Moral Decision Making, Justice, and Peace; A History of the
INTRODUCTION

Catholic Church and Comparative Study of Religion; and Vocational Lifestyle Choices.

Documentary analysis. The pertinent school board regulation (Appendix A) states the importance of “the concept of ecumenism” and that the school district appreciates “the giftedness of other religious experiences.” Further, it is the school principal that makes the decision regarding admission of a non-Catholic student in consideration of the available space, program suitability to the student, special facilities availability if required by the student, and the student and parents’ respect and acceptance of the Catholic nature of the school. As part of that process the principal utilizes an interview sheet, which may be adapted by each principal, during the interview with the non-Catholic parents and their children at the time of the initial interview for admission (Appendix B).

Procedure (Method). As earlier stated, this research involved tape-recorded telephone interviews of each of the six participants which were guided in part by a series of questions (Appendix C). Each conversation lasted approximately one hour and was transcribed. Once having completed the telephone interviews, each audio-tape was listened to twice by the researcher before any writing. Thereafter notes on each interview were made by the researcher.

Why choose telephone interviews? Telephone interviews were chosen as the Catholic high schools in this study were in different geographical areas of the relevant province. Due to time limitations this research had to be completed in the winter. Many hours would have been required to drive to and from each school when temperatures would plummet to 30 to 40 degrees below zero Fahrenheit making driving conditions at times dangerous. Although I would have preferred face-to-face conversations in order to assess body language and to get a sense of the school’s surroundings and atmosphere, limitations such as distance, weather, cost, and time made, in my opinion, this type of research reasonably acceptable.

Analysis of the data. The telephone interviews focused me on the voice intonation of the participants in an attempt to understand what was being said not only verbally but also emotively. Choosing particularly significant moments in the recorded interview and text, I focused on the following questions: Were the expressions repeated frequently by the participants? Were the usages of expressions consistent or were multiple meanings expressed? Were expressions spoken of with emotional intensity and if so, was it consistent with the text? Which ideas were expressed articulately? Were some ideas avoided by the participants: evidenced by their reluctance to respond? Was agreement or disagreement evident amongst the participants’ audio recordings? These questions represented the criteria for determining the meaningful and significant events in the audio-taped interviews.
INTRODUCTION

Thereafter, the texts of the transcripts were compared with my earlier notes. It was clear that the transcriber’s text alone would not have been sufficient to gain an understanding of the participants’ ideas in the interviews. My initial analysis of the data and further analysis using the transcriber’s text represented the micro-analysis stage of the analysis. Following the above analysis simple tentative categories of participants’ ideas were created which related significant and meaningful ideas expressed in the transcripts. As in Study #1, negative concurrence was noted and the axial coding took into account the contingencies of time and space as well as continua along which a word was used and produced a “thickness” to those categories. Selective coding followed the above, which related the categories to each another.

It was from the above analytical process that four major themes emerged in relation to inclusion. Other matters were evident in the data but none had the same significance or clarity as the four themes: Theme A: the school administrators’ expectations, Theme B: the significance of the preliminary interview, Theme C: the ongoing relationship of the non-Catholic parent and child to the Catholic school community, Theme D: points of confrontation with the Catholic school administration. Thereafter, those themes were reflected upon by the researcher with consideration given to the documents of the Catholic Church and the work of previous researchers. The details of the findings from this study have been incorporated into the various dimensions of this book.

Study #3: Non-Catholic Student Graduates from a Catholic High School

This third study involved seeking out former non-Catholic students from one of the Catholic high schools in Saskatchewan which had been involved with Study #1. Ten former non-Catholic students comprised the pool of participants. The first non-Catholic student, who had been approached by me, found the other nine participants from those of his acquaintance who had attended the same high school.

The Research Questions

- Is the religion or faith of the non-Catholic student affected by attending a Catholic high school?
- Does the non-Catholic student experience a sense of being the Other within the Catholic high school community?
- Does the non-Catholic student experience the school community as a faith community?
- How do the actions of the Catholic high school teacher affect the perception of the non-Catholic student to the Catholic faith?
- What is of the greatest significance to non-Catholic students in the Catholic high school?

Context. At the time of the students’ attendance at their high school, it was the youngest of the city of Saskatoon, one of Saskatchewan’s four mainline Catholic
high schools. It was opened in 1995. The student population was approximately 900. The students in this study estimated the number of non-Catholics in the school at approximately fifty percent.

There is no data available from the city on this school. However, it should be noted that there is no public high school in that area which caused many teachers to suggest to me that the number of non-Catholic students is quite high due to convenience of attendance. The best information available is from a school administrator who related that although the school draws from a number of areas, it was fair to suggest that the school’s student population was from an upper-middle socio-economic area.

While visiting the school on several occasions over several years, as my children attended that school, I have only seen two Afro-Canadian students. Anecdotal evidence from one of the school administrators indicates there are approximately twenty to twenty-five First Nations students and twenty-five international students which includes Asian, Mexican, and South American students in attendance. Interestingly, the Student Representative Council Male President was a non-Catholic (Evangelical) student. The general feeling I had over the years while visiting the school, was that it was a very business-like place where rules and kids were of great importance.

All ten students in this study were Caucasian: eight males and two females. None were married although two were engaged. All had attended the school, and Christian Ethics classes through grades nine to twelve inclusive, graduating from 2004 through 2006. The school used the Grade 9, “We Are Strong Together” series (Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, n.d.) while Grades 10, 11, and 12 used three themes, respectively, the Christian Story, Community Called Church, and Christian Lifestyles. No particular texts were used in those courses although a religious coordinator for the school district provided guidance on topic and materials. The religious background of the students follows.

The participants in this study come from eclectic religious backgrounds: Mennonite, Lutheran, Evangelical, agnostic, and atheist. Although the number of participants is small it seems reasonable to categorize their families based upon the data: Category A, committed Christian families; Category B, non-committed Christian families, Category C, non-religious families. It would have been helpful to have had a fourth category of participants, committed non-Christian families (i.e., Islamic families), but unfortunately no such student participants were available for this study.

Students who came from committed Christian families, Category A, had all attended at least some years of Catholic elementary school before entering the Catholic high school. They felt comfortable using the sign of the cross and the language used at school liturgies, at school Mass, and in Christian Ethic’s classes. As one student said “We know the lingo.” Their families had oriented them towards an acceptance and respect for matters of faith and hence they felt comfortable when those issues were raised in the school. There were positive reasons for their attending Catholic high school: continuity with elementary school friends, a level
of comfort with knowing what to expect in terms of a religious atmosphere, and support from their parents in that decision.

Category B students came from families which were nominally Christian where matters of religion and faith were not normally discussed in their homes and hence the students saw religion and faith as having importance – at best – on the periphery of their lives only at times of crisis or celebration. Although several students had attended a Catholic elementary school, they professed little sense of religion or faith other than at a superficial level. Their parents, as related by the participants, motivating force in sending their children to the Catholic high school was its proximity to their homes.

Category C students’ families, as related by the participants, were indifferent to matters of faith and religion as were their children who attended the Catholic high school. These students were a mix of those who had attended a Catholic elementary school and those who had not. Their choice to attend a Catholic high school resulted from merely the closeness of the school to their homes.

These emergent categories became important in the interpretation of the data and the themes and have been incorporated into the various dimensions of this book.

Procedure (Method). This research involved tape-recorded telephone interviews of each of the ten participants which were guided in part by a series of questions (Appendix D) which, as aforesaid, were closely aligned to those used by the researcher four years earlier during interviews with Catholic students at the same school. Each conversation lasted approximately one hour and was transcribed. Thereafter, transcripts of the conversations were mailed to each participant for their perusal and further commentary. Concurrent with the above, once having completed the telephone interviews, each audio-tape was heard twice before any writing. Thereafter, notes on each interview were made by the researcher.

Why choose telephone interviews. My original intention was to fly to the city of Saskatoon in the province of Saskatchewan to interview each student face-to-face. I did attend in that city for that purpose but was unable to arrange the necessary interviews. I was a bit naive to think that former students, each now with very active adult lives, would be necessarily available to be interviewed merely because a researcher had traveled to their city. Although I was able to have a face-to-face interview with one participant, the other nine participants were not available and I returned to my home city of Calgary, Alberta and arranged telephone interviews with them.

Analysis of the data. The procedure for the analysis of the data for the telephone interviews was exactly the same as was employed for Study #2.
INTRODUCTION

Study #4: Non-Catholic Students’ Attending Six Catholic High Schools

This study was intended as a major companion piece to my dissertation study which involved a large number of Catholic high school students. It was planned that non-Catholic students within six Catholic schools in Alberta which housed Grades 9 to 12 students would be interviewed in focus groups as was the case with Catholic students in the province of Saskatchewan. This seemed a promising research study as the Catholic school district which agreed to participate had a high number of non-Catholic students and both the Catholic school board and Chief Superintendent were supportive of the study.

Research Questions

(Identical to Study #3)
- Is the religion or faith of the non-Catholic student affected by attending a Catholic high school?
- Does the non-Catholic student experience a sense of being the Other within the Catholic high school community?
- Does the non-Catholic student experience the school community as a faith community?
- How do the actions of the Catholic high school teacher affect the perception of the non-Catholic student to the Catholic faith?

Context. This study involved six Catholic schools with students in Grades 9 to 12. Participants came from all but one of those schools. The administrators in the participating schools qualified their schools as serving an upper middle to lower middle (in one case) class. Four of the five schools were considered to serve an urban population while one served a mixed urban/rural population.

The total number of non-Catholic students in the six Catholic high schools within the school district was 233. Twelve students chose to participate. The total number of non-Catholic parents who could have chosen to participate in the fifth study was approximately 466. Twelve parents chose to participate. I first arranged focus group sessions after school hours and when it became apparent that this would not induce students to attend, I arranged for luncheon focus group sessions with food provided. Nevertheless, the overall student participation rate for the six high schools remained at one half of one percent. It was suggested by some of the Catholic school administrators in the participating schools that non-Catholic parents would be very cautious about having their children participate in any study which singled them out for their opinion on Catholic schools. The implication was that the non-Catholic families must feel vulnerable to school authorities or the Catholic community for any misunderstandings which might occur with possible comments made to a researcher. As one administrator stated “Those families would not want to disturb their children’s education.” Another school administrator suggested that the low participation rate might be due to the general apathy of high school students. However, given the rate of participation by Catholic students in
another research project, that argument seems weak. It should be mentioned that
the schools’ administrative teams seemed to be in support of this research and
indeed, in two cases the administration went to great lengths to stimulate student
participation – to no avail.

The result of the above highlights the difficulty in researching the issue of
non-Catholic students in Catholic schools at least in so far as such research has
been attempted in Alberta and Saskatchewan. Anecdotal evidence suggests that at
least some Catholic school districts are not overly supportive of such research as it
does involve acknowledging the Otherness of the non-Catholic students in the
school system and selecting them out of the student population when what is
sought is inclusion within the school’s faith community. Moreover, it may well be
that as earlier suggested, non-Catholic parents feel that if things are going well
there is little reason to potentially jeopardize their children’s position as a guest
within that faith community – even though such risk was carefully reduced to zero
by the researcher.

Procedure (Methods). The method chosen for this research project was focus
group research. However, due to the low response and participation rate, only one
school lent itself to that method. One interview was face-to-face and video
recorded for later analysis. The remainder of the interviews were conducted by
telephone and recorded for later transcription.

Analysis of the data. In the case of the video taped focus group session, the analysis
followed the pattern for Study #1. At the time of the writing of this book the data
gathering and analysis continues, but relevant findings have been incorporated into
the book where appropriate.

SUMMARY OF INTRODUCTION

There is every reason to believe that Catholic schools will continue to invite and
welcome non-Catholic students into Catholic schools. Indeed, as earlier noted, the
welcoming of non-Catholic students is de rigueur according to Vatican documents.
Moreover, the evidence suggests that many non-Catholic parents see benefits in
their children attending Catholic schools and hence the applications for entrance
will likely continue at least in the jurisdictions earlier canvassed. Given the pheno-
menon of the inclusion of non-Catholic students in Catholic schools, I have
suggested that research into it would be of value to Catholic schools and, as we
shall see later in Chapter One, the societies experiencing this phenomenon. It is to
the socio-cultural dimension of inclusion that I now turn.
CHAPTER ONE

THE FIRST DIMENSION OF INCLUSION: SOCIAL/CULTURAL

CULTURE
The social/cultural dimension of inclusion contains many elements. Culturally, non-Catholic students enter the Catholic school community often without having been acculturated into the rituals, symbols, and practices of the faith. The Catholic school seeks to evangelize Catholic students through faith witness and instruction, and hence to generate the love of God, faith, and all others in their lives all within a Catholic faith community. However, that is not the intention of the institution or the school community with regard to non-Catholic students. The non-Catholic student is to be welcomed and cherished as a member of the school community with respect given for her or her religious beliefs and is not to be discriminated against for such beliefs—all the while respecting the student’s freedom of conscience. Institutionally, the Catholic school requires from the non-Catholic student respect for the denominational norms within the school and adherence to school policies.

Beyond the above, the non-Catholic student’s previous peer culture might have been quite distinct from that of the Catholic school, or at least its espoused behavioral expectations. Further, related to the fifth dimension of race, the non-Catholic student’s cultural norms may differ widely from the other students in the school in dress, diet, norms in personal relationships, and the student’s understanding of authority and her or his relationship with institutional power structures. It is due to the above matters that inclusion may have a distinct cultural dimension which ought to be recognized by a prudent school administrator.

This administrative sensitivity was noted in one Catholic high school, in Study #1, with a significant number of Muslim students as the administrator stated, “We try to be sensitive to their [Islamic students’] religion’s holidays and to the fact that their dress is not in line with how the other kids dress. We point out in the classes that variety is acceptable and to be honored” (Donlevy, 2003a). Nuzzi’s (2004b) words, although spoken in the American context, ring true for Canadian Catholic schools,

every aspect of society is being touched in some way by the increasing cultural diversity of the . . . population, multicultural sensitivity will be a special challenge for religious educators in the beginning of the third millennium of Christianity. (p. 78)
The phenomenon of inclusion of non-Catholic students in Catholic schools arguably also has a wide social significance. It is to that issue that I now turn.

The Social dimension of inclusion, for the purposes of this book, centers upon that phenomenon and its connection to the common good. In particular, how the phenomenon of inclusion provides an example to the wider society of how – whether through a communitarian or liberal lens – the common good can be served in a pluralistic society. With the above in mind, this Chapter continues with an explanation of the history of the term, the common good, followed by an explanation of the modern conceptual approaches to that term in liberalism and communitarianism, ending with the relevance of inclusion to the same (Donlevy, 2008b).

The History of the Concept

The idea of the common good is not new but its meaning has varied throughout time. The ancients offered the idea that the common good resulted from a cultivation of the virtues and a legislatively good political order in the furtherance of the polis (Aristotle, 350 B.C.E) and that the individual owed service to the state which was not associated with mere self-aggrandizement (Cicero, 1913; Miller, 1996). Aquinas (1948) offered that “since all contraries agree in something common, it is necessary to search for the one common cause for them above their own contrary proper causes (I 49, 3; cf. I 2, 3; II-II, q. 58, 7 ad 2; Keys, 2006).

In later years, the rationale for the common good was formulated as the giving-up of freedoms one might have in a hypothetical state of nature in order to avoid the “nasty, brutish, and short” life of an animal in the wild (Hobbes, 1651). Later, the concept was articulated as the greatest good for the greatest number (Bentham, 1996; Mill, 1975) or as minimal state interference on the individual’s freedom of action enabling the operation of the “invisible hand” for the betterment of society (Smith, 1904), or the fostering of individual autonomy free from the strictures of an oppressive society (Rousseau, 1980).

In the modern word, the definition of the common good is divided between two competing views: liberalism and communitarianism. Some might argue that the modern debate is, or ought to be, an ontological rather than a procedural debate (Taylor, 1989), but a debate it certainly has become.

The Modern Discussion

Liberalism and the common good. How can a pluralist democracy in a globalized world achieve – if not social accord – at least the social toleration of differences? Surely, some might say, the twentieth century with its sacrifice of individual rights in the name of the Volk, or the dictatorship of the proletariat, or the best interests
of the collective have shown that “the concept of a common good, valid for all mankind, rests on a cardinal mistake” (Berlin, 1959, p. 43).

In response, Liberalism offers a refined definition of the common good as various shades of individual autonomy, universal freedoms and rights (Dworkin, 1985), and value self-determination, (Nozick, 1974) with its focus upon the means to freedom rather than the ends of freedom (Rawls, 1971). It is “[the] result of a process of combining preferences, all of which are counted equally (if consistent with the principles of justice)” (Kymlicka, 2002, p. 220; Rawls, 1988). Liberal neutrality, in terms of the state, “is simply the idea that there is no public ranking of the values of different (justice-respecting) ways of life” (Kymlicka, 2002, p. 218). However, while one strain of liberalism suggests that the state should remain neutral in the matter of an individual’s life choices (Ackernam, 1990), another offers that certain values such as rational deliberation, civility, racial and gender equity, equal opportunity, and justice as fairness are settled issues not open for discussion (Gutmann & Thompson, 1990). Indeed, the determination of such societal-wide values in a liberal state has been suggested by some liberals as best determined by a collective interpretation (Sullivan, 1990). Thus Liberalism attempts to define the common good in terms of the individual while acknowledging the social nature of being human.

Justification of this approach is offered by Rawls (1971) through his hypothetical Original Position thus warranting the framing of basic societal rules of fairness and a societal conception of the “right” which ensures universally accepted rights protecting individual freedom in a liberal society. If discord is evident one seeks an “overlapping consensus” (Dworkin, 1987) on at least some basic rights which, by consensus can produce fundamental agreement in a democratic society. If no consensus is possible Richardson (1990) suggests that a political accommodation – a modus Vivendi – may be possible among divergent communities within a society for reasons of practical accommodation. Whether or not the issue of value incommensurability amongst communities can be adequately addressed by the above is open to question. Indeed, perhaps Berlin (2002) is correct in saying that this conundrum is never to be totally resolved as it is the tension between the autonomous individual and social pluralism which is inherent to a free democracy. It is certainly true that those who are marginalized, especially historically, within a society will likely require recognition both politically and legally (Wolf, 1992).

In sum, liberalism offers that “the self is prior to the ends which are affirmed by it” (Rawls, 1971, p. 560) and posits the necessity of freedom of choice for those ends in order to develop the autonomous individual. It is the neutrality of the State upon such individually chosen ends that allows for the individual’s self determination and indeed the right to revise one’s choices. As Kymlicka (2002) states,

What is central to the liberal view is not that we can perceive a self prior to its ends, but that we understand ourselves to be prior to our own ends in the sense that no end or goal is exempt from possible re-examination. (p. 225)
As such, the individual can detach one’s self from communal values and exercise individual judgment – the primary pursuit being not the exercise of that freedom but the particularity of the value chosen.

There is another school of political thought which offers an alternative to the liberal concept of the common good: communitarianism.

COMMUNITARIANISM AND THE COMMON GOOD

“The common good is conceived of [by communitarianism] as a substantive conception of the good life which defines the community’s ‘way of life’” (Kymlicka, 2002, p. 220). It is a theory which offers that society exists prior to the individual and that it creates the individual’s social self. Indeed, because society pre-exists the individual, it provides continuity of the life-world, allowing individuals a place and time within which to function and exercise their capacities through interaction with others, resulting in interdependence. From this interdependence flows the “primordial sources of obligation and responsibility” (Selznick, 1986, p. 5). To be sure, the “me” exists as a separate entity from the collective, but the other part of the person, the “I,” exists as the agent of “reflective morality” (p. 3). In that sense, it moves beyond the “individual endorsement” of liberalism (Dworkin, 1987, pp. 16–17) as the communitarian self seeks “social confirmation” (Kymlicka, 2002, p. 278). In what seems in contradiction to liberalism, communitarianism holds that we “all approach our circumstances as bearers of a particular social identity . . . Hence what is good for me has to be the good for one who inhabits these roles” (MacIntyre, 1981, pp. 204–205; Kymlicka, 2002, p. 220). It is this sense of morality, or of what is good, held as a community value which transforms a community from a mere association or grouping of individuals from Gesellschaft to Gemeinschaft (Tonnies, 1955). It is the community’s values, the individual’s social context, which set the authoritative horizon which in turn set the parameters of the individual’s goals (Taylor, 1979, 157-159; Sandel, 1982, p. 183). The “thin social order” of liberalism gives way to the reality of the “thick social order” of the encumbered self which does not preclude that there is a process of transformation upon rational reflection and hence changing one’s goals, between the socially constituted self and the I (Sandel, 1982, p. 183).

It is this “feeling of commitment to a common public philosophy . . . [which] is a precondition to [a] free culture” (Kymlicka, 1990, pp. 122–123). Those in the community have a responsibility to defend the common values when under attack by others from within because failing to do so would result in the “debasement and decay” of the community’s values and ultimately of the community itself (Dworkin, 1985, p. 230).

In communitarianism, individuals’ freedoms and rights are not denied but are circumscribed and flow from the peace, order, and good government of the community with enforcement – at its best – through persuasion and social opprobrium. Such an approach is possible because interrelationships are the grist to action within society. To be an outcast is so restrictive to individuals that they will, theoretically, stop the offending behavior (Etzioni, 1998, p. xii).
Thus, unlike liberalism simpliciter, which posits the primacy of autonomy and individual rights with few social restrictions – the thin social order – communitarianism offers that a necessary precondition to freedom and rights is a society that possesses common values which justify many reasonable restrictions on the individual to protect those values – the thick social order. Bellah (1998) states, 

A good community is one in which there is argument, even conflict, about the meaning of the shared values and goals, and certainly about how they will be actualized in everyday life. Community is not about silent consensus; it is a form of intelligent, reflective life, in which there is indeed consensus, but where the consensus can be challenged and changed – often gradually, sometimes radically – over time. (p. 16)

Communitarianism is about individuals living in community where they maintain their individual free will but where their personage is formed through a common language, values, and concepts that in turn frame reality and cause them to relate to that world and the people in it with the values of the community.

The common good described in the liberal and communitarian traditions are powerful displays of the human intellect as it attempts to resolve issues of great import to democratic societies which due to globalization in its economic, political, and cultural aspects seem at times to be fractured and divided amongst themselves.

_Inclusion and the Common Good_

_Liberalism and inclusion._ The inclusion of non-Catholic students into Catholic schools makes a contribution to a conception of the common good as it serves as an exemplar to a democratic society conflicted by the difficulty of embracing the good as expressed in both liberalism and communitarianism.

Catholic schools recognize the crucial significance of the individual’s conscience not only through Church documents which ensure the students’ right to freedom of conscience and freedom of religion but also in practice (Congregation, 1982, para. 42). A recent study of non-Catholic students in a Catholic high school (Donlevy, 2008a) found such freedom expressed in that ultimately, although the school provided the opportunity and prompting for an encounter with the religious or spiritual aspects of life, it was up to the student to choose to enter into that encounter. A non-Catholic student said, “I think it’s whether you want to take the opportunity of the Catholic high school or not.” Another non-Catholic students stated, “I opted not to immerse myself in it” (Study #3); and a third said:

Catholic high school helped me discover who I was. It helped me – like kind of being all by myself [as a non-Catholic in a classroom] it helped me deepen my strength and it helped me deepen my relationship with Christ and it helped me ask those questions that I’d never asked before but I wanted to ask . . . It really helped me to strengthen my relationship with Christ.

It is the “overlapping consensus” of the values of dignity, equality, fairness, justice, respect for others, which are found in all faiths which provide basic value cohesion
for all within a Catholic school. Catholic schools do not seek to evangelize the non-Catholic student but to invite the student to experience the Catholic reality within the school. The non-Catholic student may choose her or his faith and the liberal principal of revisability is honored within the Catholic school. It is a matter of respect for and exercises of the individual’s conscience which is sacrosanct.

The Congregation for Catholic Education (1982) stated that the Church has, the greatest respect for those students who are not Catholics . . . [and teachers] should be open at all times to authentic dialogue, convinced that in these circumstance the best testimony that they can give of their own faith is a warm and sincere appreciation for anyone who is seeking God according to his or her own conscience (para. 42).

Moreover, the idea of a symbiotic relationship and reciprocity in the meeting of faiths, as opposed to religions, between the Catholic and non-Catholic students was stated by a Grade 12 Catholic student.

You feed off each other, and if all your feeding [is from the] people . . . who are the same as you, that is good, but it can only offer you so much. But when you have people with different views – different beliefs, it heightens yours and it brings them up at the same time so everyone just grows . . . maybe not in the same direction of growth but you will grow to a better understanding and more mature life (Study #1 as cited in Donlevy 2003a).

In that encounter there is an opportunity for all students to grow spiritually. A Grade 10 Catholic student said,

Non-Catholic people help me grow my faith not so much that they share views . . . not that I’m going to convert, I’m still Roman Catholic, but they make me view something different in . . . [my] life. [I think] Oh yeah! That would be an interesting way to praise God (Study #1).

A Grade 12 Catholic student related, “It’s good to have someone to challenge our faith, and to have someone to help make us stronger” (Study #1).

It is the presence of non-Catholic students and thus the relationships which Catholic students have with their non-Catholic friends in the school which demands that the Catholic student listen and accept the “Other” for who they are as persons and thus live the ideals or beliefs of acceptance, understanding, and respect. To quote one Grade 11 Catholic student, “We need these people [the non-Catholics] to put into practice Jesus’ teachings” (Study #1). The above quotations give strength to Seeley’s (2000) finding that of the non-Catholic students she interviewed, “none felt excluded for their religious beliefs” (p. 82) and further as Maritain (1962) says, the Catholic school “invites not submission but dialogue and encounter” (p. 54).

The democratic values of respect, fairness, justice, and inclusion, are deepened and separated from the mundane of the day to day life of students and teachers through prayer, liturgies, and Mass in the school. As one Catholic student stated,
[Mass] puts or tries to put the emphasis on something else [rather than the secular]. I think that it gives people sort of something else to think about besides the normal stuff, bigger and more important than just . . . grades (Study #1).

The above quotations indicate that the Catholic school community through inclusion displays a rejection of sectarianism which is “a bigoted and intolerant exaltation of one’s own group that absolutizes the true and the good of its members, encouraging prejudice against anyone who has [an] alternative identity – especially immediate neighbors” and parochialism which “reflects a narrow-minded, self-sufficient, and insular mentality that closes up within itself, is intolerant to or oblivious of other perspectives, and conceited about its own” (Groome, 1998, pp. 42, 44).

It seems a paradox that for some non-Catholic students the Catholic school is a spiritually liberating experience. Yet, as a non-Catholic student participant stated with respect to prayer, liturgies, and Mass in the school:

there was a Christian influence there and its something important to me . . . you can talk about [God] without being afraid [of] political incorrectness . . . [of being] offensive to someone else . . . That’s an issue nowadays . . . what if there is someone in the room who isn’t a Catholic or Christian (Study #3).

Another related how she felt about Morning Prayer in the school,

the more that you’re exposed to that [the idea of God] the more you’re reminded [of God]. Whether it’s through morning prayer or Mass . . . I think that helps bring you back on to the right path, its a reminder about what’s important (Study #3).

A third non-Catholic student was asked by the researcher, “Did going to a Catholic high school effect your faith?” The student responded, “Yes, definitely. You’re taught in a way that you develop yourself spiritually” (Donlevy, 2008a).

In sum, the liberal values of basic rights and freedoms for individuals, the development of a critical sense and the individual’s autonomy, the revisability of one’s positions, as well as the enhancement of fairness, justice, respect for others, and the dignity of the individual are arguably sought to be fostered in the Catholic school and are exemplified by the inclusion of non-Catholic students within the Catholic school community. Moreover, the idea of an overlapping consensus of values is evident. This is what should be expected in Catholic schools as unlike other legitimate institutions the Catholic school is, as the Catholic Church says, “open to all.”

Beyond liberalism, the Catholic school demonstrates to the wider society its conception of the communitarian common good.
CHAPTER ONE

Communitarianism and Inclusion.

The Catholic Church, as with Communitarianism, sees the crucial importance of the experiences of past generations and their legacy of values (Vatican II, 1965a, para. 5). Within the school, the systematic formation of students takes place, and, in that process, students experience the meaning and truth of their personal experiences (Congregation, 1977, para. 27). It is the sharing of the same vision, the same values, and thus the same educational norms within the school community that makes the school Catholic (para. 3). The Catholic school, besides the ordinary pedagogical goals, transmits the values of faith and reason to its students.

The Church holds (Congregation, 1982) that teachers in Catholic schools (para. 6) “bring to life in the students the communitarian dimension of the human person . . . as every human being is called to live in a community, as a social being, and as a member of the People of God” (para. 22) [italics added]. Within the school community, the norms and values of students in the faith are formed by those who teach and interact with them, including fellow students. This transmission of faith is in concert with the transmission of culture and knowledge as seen through the faith. Thus the Catholic school is of the thick social order and, similar to communitarianism, “Christian faith, in fact, is born and grows inside a community” (Congregation, 1977, para. 30) [italics added].

The Catholic school seeks to produce students who have experienced the implicated self and, as Selznick (1986) noted, “The morality of the implicated self builds on the understanding that our deepest and most important obligations flow from identity and relatedness” (p. 7). Further, it is the anchored rationality of communitarianism, solidly fixed in concrete reason that is “in part, the funded experience of the political community” (Selznick, 1986, p. 14). The latter is comparable with the Church’s position that truth is not the result of consensus but rather a flow from “a consonance between intellect and objective reality” (John Paul II, 1998, para. 56).

This community is experienced by its members in three ways (Foster, 1982): (a) through rituals and symbols connecting to the community’s past that is acknowledged and shared (p. 56); (b) through bonding relationships with “institutional structures, customs, and kinship networks” (pp. 56-57) that guide through trust and mediate people in their relationships with others; and (c) through experiencing a spontaneous moment of egalitarian commonality with others, where “participants are not known to one another by their roles, jobs, or positions, but in the commonality of their submission to the power of the moment” (p. 58). In these spontaneous moments of community, members experience the spaciousness of time, the intimacy of the transcendent, and the transformation of the immediate (p. 58).

The Church’s belief is that the crucial communitarian element of the Catholic school is a sense of belonging due to the common experience of history, belief, and purpose experienced in the present. Flowing from that belief, the Catholic school has the task of transmitting to students, by various means, the specific norms, values, and beliefs of the Catholic Faith. That transmission seems to be effective
“not so much through formal religious instruction class but rather through the
closeness of the Catholic community that the experiences of attending Catholic
school generate” (Seeley, 2000, p. 167).

It appears that a communitarian understanding of community permeates the
group and is crystallized at least in expression at times of crisis, yet where
difference is accepted and allowed to flourish in a respectful social atmosphere. It
is this “communal emphasis regarding human and Christian existence” (Groome,
1996, p. 108) evidenced by inclusion which stresses the virtue of solidarity (John
Paul II, 1988, para. 9) among those in the school community.

The solidarity above is reflected in the democratic value of acceptance of the
Other as evidenced in the words of a Grade 10 and the words of a Grade 12
Catholic student.

If you have non-Catholics [in the school] you can benefit from that because . . .
then you wouldn’t want to be snobby to them saying they weren’t good
enough to be around . . . it gives you the opportunity to practice your faith in
accepting people (Study #1).

On our Grade 12 retreat we were there for a couple of days [and] you kinda
get to know these [non-Catholic] people . . . . It was really neat how we could
all connect. Some people came back really thinking about the faith and not so
much letting the Catholic rules getting in the way. Like the more important
stuff like seeing God in other people (Study #1).

Nuzzi (2004b) states that “every aspect of society is being touched in some way by
the increasing cultural diversity of the . . . population, multicultural sensitivity will
be a special challenge for religious educators in the beginning of the third
millennium of Christianity” (p. 78).

Catholic teachers may also be deeply affected through inclusion and thus by
such acceptance of diversity and plurality within their school as exhibited by the
following comment by a Catholic teacher. “When you have a non-Catholic kid,
who you know is non-Catholic, come to you and ask you to pray for her family,
you know you’ve done something beyond just Catholicism. There’s more to it than
just being Catholic” (Study #1).

Bryk, Lee, and Holland (1993) sum up a major aspect of communitarianism
within the Catholic school as evidenced by inclusion. They state,

schooling demands an impassioned rationality shaped by a vision of the
common good, a vision that itself is always open to challenge and clarification.
Such an education is accomplished through inspiration, not coercion, through
dialogue, not dogma. It involves not only classroom teaching but also
participation in a communal life that exemplifies its values. (p. 320)

In sum, the communitarian idea of the common good with its concepts of the
situated self, the importance of the community’s values and history, the importance
of relationships, social solidarity, the importance of Gemeinschaft, respect and
interaction with the other, and the need for the ethic of care expressed beyond
the self, are all evidenced in the Catholic school particularly through its practice of the inclusion of non-Catholic students. As with liberalism, the individual’s conscience is of prime importance but for the Catholic school, the person’s conscience resides not within the solitude of the individual but rather calls the person to his or her personal interior temple wherein natural law exists and where God resides as counselor (John Paul II, 1993).

One can conclude that as Bryk et al. (1993) state, “we discern nothing fundamentally undemocratic about Catholic school’s educational philosophy of person-in-community and their ethical stance of shaping the human conscience toward personal responsibility and social engagement” (p. 341). Moreover, as Langan (1990) states, “Catholicism provides one pattern of what the effort to combine communitarian and liberal values might look like” (p.113).

SUMMATION

In summation, it is fair to say that the cultural/social dimension of inclusion offers society an example of how multiculturalism and diversity may be nurtured and fostered within the Catholic school. That example is an exemplar for the combining of the liberal and communitarian concepts of the common good, exemplified in the Catholic school’s policy of the inclusion of children of other faiths. In particular, the liberal concepts of the development of personal autonomy through critical rational thought, freedom of conscience and religion, the principle of revisability, and the crucial importance of teaching the young about fairness, justice, equality, and respect for diversity – as democratic ideals – are evidenced in inclusion. Moreover, the communitarian ideals of the importance of the individual developing within a community’s historical context, values, and with an understanding of the importance and responsibility owed to others because of personal conscience was stated. To reiterate, the conclusion reached by this researcher is that inclusion exemplifies the common good both for liberals and communitarian ideals and could, therefore, serve as an exemplar for the wider democratic, pluralistic society.
CHAPTER TWO

THE SECOND DIMENSION OF INCLUSION:
POLITICAL

The political aspects of inclusion are complex. The political will of the Catholic laity that have in past generations vigorously defended constitutionally protected Catholic schools may be weakening. In the Canadian provinces of Newfoundland-Labrador and in Quebec, Catholic schools no longer have constitutional protection (Canadian Catholic School Trustees: St John’s Convention, 2006; Smith, Foster, & Donahue, 1999) and the constitutionally protected Catholic schools in Ontario, Saskatchewan, and Alberta are under threat.

In Ontario there has been a concerted attack on publicly funded Catholic education from a variety of sources (Canadian Civil Liberties Association, Sept. 24, 2007; Swan, 2007). That attack has been based in part upon a decision by the United Nations Human Rights Committee which found that the funding of Catholic schools by the Ontario Government, while the latter failed to fund other denominations’ religious schools, was discriminatory (Canadian Broadcasting Company, November 5, 1999).

In Saskatchewan there appears to be a growing, or at least a persistent, attack on the public funding of Catholic schools. The basic argument appears to be that Catholic schools are divisive and unduly duplicate the costs of public expenditures for education (Morgan, 2001). Moreover, in Alberta it is alleged that publicly funded and constitutionally protected Catholic schools have acted to entice and register non-Catholic students and have thereby deleteriously affected the financial viability of Public schools (Donlevy, 2006a).

A point should be made with respect to the above allegation which has been identified by Mulligan (1999, p. 185). It is one thing to accept those non-Catholics who willingly seek to attend Catholic schools. It is another to poach non-Catholic students to populate a Catholic school. The latter course is politically dangerous for Catholic schools as to do so provides grist to those who would be pleased to see the demise of constitutionally protected publicly funded Catholic school in Ontario, Alberta, and Saskatchewan. This point will be addressed further under the Financial Dimension of inclusion.

Given the above, it appears that the argument for the continued existence of Catholic schools as constitutionally protected and publicly funded institutions in Ontario, Alberta, and Saskatchewan ought best to be strengthened by the argument earlier stated under the First Dimension: the common good. Beyond the constitutional argument, it is helpful to say to the Canadian body politic that Catholic schools benefit all of society, as they contribute to the society’s common good because its focus is on the welfare of the community thus making “a potentially
unique contribution . . .” to the common good in society (Hollenbach, 1996, p. 100). Indeed, as inclusion serves many religious communities by providing them with a religious, albeit Catholic, alternative to public education, inclusion should have a positive effect on the acceptance of Catholic schools in the public square.

The above argument for Catholic schools and the acceptance of the phenomenon of inclusion seems in concert with the belief that in a multi-cultural democratic mosaic such as Canada, it is to the benefit of the body politic to have a religiously-based constitutionally protected school system to ensure that those of a religious view have a school where a deity is acknowledged. In counterpoint to the argument that such schools should be constitutionally protected, it might be argued that constitutional guarantees are not necessary for such schools to exist. Evidence for that proposition may be such seen in Alberta’s Edmonton Public School District as a school of Judaic faith exists in that system. However, such schools exist at the pleasure of the public school board and hence this arrangement does not offer secure protection for future funding.

Politically, constitutionally protected Catholic schools which seek to enroll non-Catholic students run the risk of antagonizing the wider body politic. That is a concern in the public square, but internally Catholic schools face parents of non-Catholic students wanting some say in the education of their children within the Catholic school. In response to such demands, it seems settled law that at least in Ontario, Alberta, and Saskatchewan the parents of non-Catholic students may not sit as Catholic school Trustees. Interestingly, that may not be the case in other Canadian jurisdictions where Catholic schools are not constitutionally protected. A recent case (Yellowknife Catholic Schools v. Euchner, 2007; see also Catholic Civil Rights League, 2007) held both at trial and on appeal that where there is no constitutional protection, a non-Catholic may run as the Catholic school Trustee. That case, which may be appealed, if upheld, would not bode well for Catholic schools where constitutional protection does not exist.

It thus appears that there is a political dimension to inclusion respecting the number of non-Catholic students allowed into Catholic schools. Moreover, on the school level, it is a political question respecting how much input many non-Catholic parents should have in the Catholic school’s “parents-advisory” councils. In one case, a diocesan priest attended such a meeting in Saskatchewan to find that none of the elected parent representatives for that school’s parent’s council were Catholic. Is this a concern? Yes, but the political concern is not that non-Catholic parents are involved in their children’s school, but rather that Catholic parents failed to become involved, let alone take a leadership role in the parent-advisory council. Politically, such news made public would have caused scandal in the school district. The diocesan priest quickly appointed Catholic parents to that council.

It seems clear that inclusion has a very active and dynamic political dimension.