RECRUITMENT RHETORIC
IN THE PROMOTION OF
PRIVATE AMERICAN HIGH SCHOOLS:
A MARKETING APPROACH

by

Gregory R. Meece

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Approved:  
George A. Borden, Ph.D.
Professor in charge of thesis on behalf of
the Advisory Committee

Approved:  
John A. Courtright, Ph.D.
Chairman of the Department of Communication

Approved:  
Richard B. Murray, Ph.D.
Associate Provost for Graduate Studies
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the research was to analyze, within a marketing perspective, the textual content of brochures promoting private American high schools. The research was undertaken during a time of low high school student enrollment caused by a shrinking student population. In the highly competitive environment now facing them, many educational administrators have adopted a business-based marketing perspective toward student recruitment.

This research provided a synthesis of the available literature concerning marketing, marketing communication, and its application to nonprofit organizations, including schools. The research analyzed the content of 100 private high school brochures obtained using a stratified random sampling procedure. Four research questions were addressed: 1) What aspects of the schools were most emphasized in the brochures?; 2) How were the marketing components of Product, Place and Price emphasized in the brochures?; 3) How did the brochures' content vary
according to the size, age, cost, geographic region and
religious affiliation of the schools?; and 4) How was
persuasive language used to present the content categories
in the brochures? The responses to these questions were
used to examine the marketing strategies and assumptions
of educational administrators.

It was found that the brochures emphasized academics
most followed by student activities. Twenty-six other
content categories were identified and ranked according to
frequency means. Product references dominated the content
of the brochures, followed by Price and Place references.
Very few significant differences among the brochures were
found when the different types of schools were compared.
The amount of persuasive language used to communicate the
content categories did not correspond to the frequencies
of messages for content categories. Persuasive language
was found to be associated most often with intangible
product categories. Its usage suggests that school
administrators use persuasive language to distinguish
their schools from alternatives.
CHAPTER 1

RESEARCH PROBLEM

The importance of student recruitment in secondary schools has increased dramatically in the last five years. The birthrate of 1957, an all-time high, slipped to an all-time yearly low in 1975 (Abramowitz, 1979, p. 3). Those children born in 1975 represent 1989's entering freshman class in American high schools. The number of high school graduates peaked at 3.2 million in 1977. By 1983 the number of graduates had steadily declined to 2.8 million, a trend that is expected to continue through 1990 (Kotler & Fox, 1985, p. 8). With the declining birthrate as the primary cause of enrollment declines nationwide, schools are forced to compete, as never before, for their slice of a small and shrinking pie.

A. The Problem

Declining enrollment was ranked as the second greatest concern of school board members (Underwood,
Fortune, & Meyer, 1983, p. 22). Projecting this trend into the future, declining enrollment was listed most often by 500 university presidents as the key issue for their institutions over the next decade (Higgins, 1983, p. 25).

The problems associated with declining enrollments do not just concern the economic survival of individual schools. Declining enrollments can also affect the quality of instructional programs. It has been shown that declining enrollment is positively correlated with an increase in the dropout rate, a reduction in the teaching of academic core courses, and a decrease in the number of highly specialized courses. School systems with declining enrollments are more likely to report an overall reduction in the quality of educational programs (Dembowski, 1980). Declining enrollments tend to heighten latent political tensions within schools, within school districts and systems, and within the community (Iannaccone, 1979, pp. 418-430; Bishop, 1979, pp. 285-295).

Almost ten percent of the elementary and secondary schools in America are private schools. These 20,000 schools account for approximately 5 million students. The declining pool of school-age students has focused
attention on the problems of low enrollment in private schools:

Two issues have recently brought private education into the public limelight. First, declining enrollments are causing the education sector to contract; and, since there are fewer students to go around, their distribution between the public and private sector is becoming more important. Like public school enrollments, private school enrollments have been declining, due in large part to the decline in Catholic school enrollments, which account for three-fourths of the nonpublic school enrollments. (Abramowitz & Stackhouse, 1980, p. 1)

Concern over declining enrollments is often more pronounced in private high schools because they are typically smaller than public schools, and because they do not have a guaranteed number of students, nor the ease in projecting revenue as do their public school counterparts. More importantly, private high schools are said to more closely resemble the competitive, "free market economy" of the business community. This unique distinction underlies the basic assumption made by private high school administrators as they attempt to solve their enrollment problems. The relationship between private schools and parents resembles the relationship between businesses in the free market economy and consumers:
Because parents exercise choice in selecting a private school for their child, and because private schools do not have the relatively assured revenue of public schools, some observers assume that private schools operate the way firms do in a competitive market. In short, it is assumed that the demand and supply interaction matches parental desires and school offerings more closely and efficiently than it does in the Government owned and operated public schools....The pure competition model of schooling supposes that there are a large number of schools and that parents are free to choose any they like. The model assumes that parents have a good understanding of what they want and what each school provides, leading us to expect a close match between parental preferences and school offerings...Schools that do not keep their clients satisfied would lose clientele to other schools. Likewise, schools that overcharge would lose enrollment to lower priced schools of similar quality. (1980, p. 72)

These assumptions upon which the pure competition model is based are oversimplified. However, that they are believed to be true is evidenced by the ways educational administrators have chosen to cope with declining enrollments. Faced with a rapidly declining birth rate since the baby boom of the 1940s and 1950s, schools have entered the competitive, free market economy with the intent of soliciting enrollments through marketing strategies.

For many school administrators, the concept of marketing is unfamiliar:
Planning for decline may call on skills that managers have yet to develop. The adverse effects of decline are compounded by the unfamiliarity of Americans in general and the education industry in particular with it. American experience up to now has been with growth. During periods of growth, mistakes in management go virtually unnoticed. During decline the margin of error is reduced and problems are exacerbated because most managers have not been trained to deal with retrenchment. (Abramowitz, 1979, p. 11)

Marketing-related issues, strategies, and plans were adapted or adopted from the business community. Educators, generally, are neither trained nor experienced in the marketing principles of business. They are education-oriented rather than marketing-oriented: "Too many principals, teachers, school board members, professional support personnel, and central office administrators have felt for too long that all they needed to do was teach students well. Achieve that, they reasoned, and education would continue to rest at the pinnacle of public opinion" (Armistead, 1982, pp. 1-2).

The transition is even more difficult because educators are used to thinking of students as individuals whose unique characteristics, needs, and abilities should be addressed once they are in the classroom: "I suggest teachers are not customer focused. I suggest they are biology focused. I suggest they are English focused. I
suggest they are modern math focused" (Beveridge, 1985, p. 72). The marketing shift requires educators to also begin thinking of students and their parents as "customers" and their educational offerings as "products."

Even at the level of higher education, the conceptualization of marketing for admissions has been described as "myopic": "To date, marketers have not appreciated fully the nature of the 'products and services' of higher education, the 'consumers' of higher education, the 'firms', nor the 'market'" (Litten, 1980, p. 152).

B. The Components of Marketing For Private Schools

Private schools differ from public schools in at least three important ways which are relevant to the marketing concept. First, private schools charge tuition in exchange for educational services. Second, parents are not limited by state and federal laws in their selection of a private school (e.g., desegregation and district zoning are not factors). Third, private schools are free to espouse religious and moral philosophies. Often, religious instruction is a vital part of these schools' missions. On the other hand, the Supreme Court has forced
public schools to omit prayer and religious teaching from their classrooms.

These key differences are related to the major variables which make up the "marketing mix." Called the "four Ps" of marketing (McCarthy, 1975, pp. 75-80), these variables are Product, Price, Place, and Promotion. For example, marketers must assess the effect of charging $5,000 per year (price) for a high school education when public schools are "free." Or, what happens to enrollment when another private school, a few miles farther driving distance (place), charges only $2,500? If a student has been brought up in a traditional Catholic family, what difference is made by the availability of a Catholic secondary school which provides students with religious education and the opportunity for daily church service (product)?

The fourth variable in the marketing mix, Promotion, is defined as "any method that communicates to the target market about the right product to be sold in the right place at the right price" (1975, p. 77). Private high schools today are spending a great deal of time and money on promotional activities designed to recruit and retain
students. Typically, these schools’ promotional activities include many of the following:

**Written Material**
- brochures
- catalogues
- newsletters
- direct mail
- flyers
- posters

**Audiovisual Material**
- audio cassettes
- video presentations
- slide presentations

**Events**
- open house
- high school night
- grandparents’ day
- bring-a-friend to school day
- mini-class day for grade school students at high school
- coffees for parents
- use of building and facilities by other agencies/community
- free tickets to sporting/cultural events at high school
- presentations to students in feeder schools
- faculty speakers’ bureau

**Media**
- regular TV coverage, newspaper articles
- print, radio, and TV advertising
- school news in parish bulletins

C. Statement of Purpose

The focus of the proposed study is the promotional communication of private secondary schools, specifically, recruitment rhetoric as it relates to the marketing variables of Product, Place, and Price. The study will answer the question: What are the semantic inducements made in private high schools' promotional recruitment literature, and how are they related to the marketing components of Product, Place, and Price?

The second aim of this study will be to find out how the findings above differ according to the age, size, cost, religious affiliation and geographic region of the sample schools from which data is collected.

The third aim of this study is to analyze the language used to communicate inducements for enrolling in a private secondary school. Specifically, the research will examine how persuasive language is used for different content categories in schools' promotional brochures.

The analysis of data collected in response to these research questions will provide a better understanding of the marketing orientations of educational administrators.
Ultimately, the findings of this research would form the basis for learning whether the semantic inducements made in the promotional recruitment literature of private high schools match the wants and needs of parents of prospective students. Although it is beyond the scope of this research, such a comparative study would get at the heart of the marketing questions by discovering whether the marketing strategies of educational administrators in private high schools are seller-oriented (educator-oriented) or client-oriented (parent-oriented). If these marketing strategies are client-oriented they will reflect the true goal of marketing, which is to establish mutually satisfactory exchange relationships between persons with diverse wants and needs and persons that can satisfy these wants and needs (Nickels, 1976, p. 10).

D. Research Problem’s Significance to the Study of Communication

Educational administrators generally think of marketing for student recruitment as a combination of selling, advertising, and public relations (Kotler & Fox, 1985, p. 6). More accurately, marketing is based on the concept of exchange: "The modern institution relies mainly on offering and exchanging values with different parties to elicit their cooperation and thus to achieve the
institution's goals (p. 7). The professional marketer, therefore, is said to be skilled at understanding, planning, and managing exchanges in a way that is mutually beneficial to both parties involved in the exchange: "The marketer knows how to research and understand the needs of the other party, to design a valued offering to meet these needs, to communicate the offer effectively; and to present it at the right time and place" (p. 7).

According to Nickels (1976), "Marketing communications are two-way exchanges of information and persuasion which enable the marketing process to function more effectively and efficiently" (p. 5). The systems approach to marketing communication identifies three communication transactions in marketing information systems: the gathering of information from outside the firm; the internal flow of information within the firm; and the one-way flow of information and persuasion from the organization to customers, potential customers, and other relevant persons or groups. This third communication flow is known as promotion. McCarthy states: "'Promotion' tells the target customers about the availability of the product that has been designed for them" (McCarthy, 1975, p. 80). Philip Kotler has defined
it as a "special form of communication," one that "encompasses all the tools in the marketing mix whose major role is persuasive communication" (Kotler, 1975, p. 201). Promotional activities may include advertising, brochures, newsletters, personal contact, formal presentations, correspondance, multi-media presentations, and special events. Advertising is one part of promotion and promotion is one part of a comprehensive marketing communication effort. The total communication effort, based on two-way exchanges of information and persuasion, is described as "a dialogue involving a communication system which enables consumers and producers to significantly influence each others' goal attainment" (Kotler, p. 5). The concept of marketing communication is based on the transactional view of communication.

This research is concerned with the promotional communication of marketing. The research questions specifically address the information and the persuasion which is directed from the school to potential customers (parents and students). Though much has been written about marketing in nonprofit organizations in general and schools in particular it has been from a practical
perspective. Very little communication research has been devoted to this topic. This research is significant to the study of communication because it will provide a quantitative analysis of the promotional communication of private high schools. Most importantly, it will increase understanding of the promotional marketing efforts of schools at a time when, because of increased competition and shrinking enrollments, their very survival is most threatened. In such a crisis environment, marketing techniques are sometimes applied to help schools before complete training and understanding of marketing principles have taken place.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The following is a review of the relevant literature on the topic of marketing for student recruitment. It incorporates the different perspectives of authors from the fields of business, education, and communication.

A. The Marketing Perspective

Faced with declining enrollments due to a decrease in the birth rate, both public and nonpublic American high schools have adopted a marketing posture toward enrollment management, better known as student recruitment. Because of its relatively new status at the secondary school level, the role of marketing in education is inconsistent from school to school. In addition, many educational administrators have been reluctant to make the marketing shift. Often, this is based on educators' feelings that marketing, as a tool of business, is incompatible with the goals of education and the image of their schools.
Marketing for student recruitment is primarily a communication function. Whether it is considered a part of schools’ more traditional promotional programs, such as public relations and advertising, or the other way around, the chief difference is on the level of desired ends:

Historically, public relations programs have worked to create a positive environment for an institution in ways that cannot always be measured. Marketing’s goal is to produce action that will affect the bottom line. (Barnes & Roche, p.2)

The "bottom line" for schools involved in marketing for student recruitment is to increase the number and/or quality of applicants or to increase the institution’s market share of students. Often, retaining current students is a marketing objective as well.

Promotion management involves presenting a consistent and favorable image of the organization to the target audience in order to influence future behavior. It is necessary to distinguish between advertising, promotion and marketing. Advertising, like public relations, is a part of promotion. Promotion is one part of marketing. Rather than concentrating on only one facet of communication (e.g., advertising), effective promotion management is a coordinated, comprehensive communication effort on the part of the organization. It includes
product design, packaging, pricing, publicity, advertising and selling.

B. Marketing Information Systems

Communication is a primary marketing function:
"Marketing is the process whereby wants and needs are communicated, product offerings are developed to satisfy those wants and needs, and the availability of those offers is made known to interested parties" (Nickels, 1976, pp. 17-18). Marketing communication is, therefore, a transactional process which relies on the exchange of symbols by a message sender and message receiver.

A systems approach to marketing recognizes three communication flows in both profit making and nonprofit organizations. The "marketing information system" is said to be comprised of: (1) the gathering of information, or intelligence, from outside the organization; (2) the internal flow of data between and among personnel in the organization; and (3) the flow of information from the organization to customers, potential customers, and other relevant persons or groups (1976, p. 7). The interrelation of these information flows is shown in Figure 1. It is this third level of communication flow that involves
(1) Information Gathering
- market research
- demographic & psychographic data
- product testing
[Identifying Wants & Needs]

Consumers & Potential Consumers
[Wants & Needs]

(3) Promotion (information & persuasion)
- advertising
- public relations
- selling
[Communicating Availability of Product to Satisfy Wants & Needs]

The Organization

(2) Information Sharing (internal)
- analysis
- planning
- product development
[Developing a Product to Satisfy Wants & Needs]

The Organization

Figure 1 Basic Marketing Information Systems
persuasion and is, therefore, known as promotion management. For schools, this persuasion is directed toward prospective students and their parents. The "bottom line," or desired action response, is to persuade members of this target audience to apply to a given school.

C. The Business-Based Marketing Perspective

The principle marketing paradigm assumed by educational administrators involved in student recruitment is a business-based marketing perspective. This perspective is based on the assumption that schools are, essentially, business-like in that they are organizations that rely upon mutually beneficial exchanges between the organization and the public in order to sustain operations (although business also wishes to make a profit).

A logical outcome of this perspective is the assumption that schools' promotional management activities should be the same as those techniques used in the business community:

Think of advertising and promotion as techniques. The various principles that are involved in making it work are the same whether advertising is used for commercial or nonprofit purposes. It doesn't matter whether we advertise a candy bar, a new car, or a museum
tour, the same processes involving research, planning, strategy, and intensive creative input are necessary if in the end, the simple folder or major multimedia ad campaign is to communicate the message properly. (Ellick, 1978, p. 56)

also,

But the same general principles [of marketing] can be applied directly to nonprofit organizations. All that must be changed are the objectives against which alternative plans are measured. The Red Cross, art museums, and governmental agencies are all seeking to satisfy some consumer groups, and most of the ideas and principles are directly applicable. (McCarthy, 1975, p. 29)

D. The Four Ps of the Marketing Mix

The business-based marketing perspective also assumes that the components of marketing are similar for both profit and nonprofit organizations. Regardless of whether organizations offer customers a tangible product, such as automobiles, or an intangible service, such as intellectual development, the "marketing mix" is said to be concerned with the same basic components. Known as the "four Ps" of marketing, they are Product, Place, Price, and Promotion (1975, pp. 74-86).

Product, "something which will satisfy some customer's needs" (p. 75), may refer to a tangible product or, in the case of schools, to a service. A service is
defined as "any activity or benefit that one party can offer to another that is essentially intangible and does not result in the ownership of anything" (Kotler & Fox, 1985, p. 223). Service products, like tangible products, can be analyzed on three levels: the core level, the tangible level, and the augmented level.

The core product represents that which the consumer is really seeking. It may, therefore, mean something different to every customer. In the field of education, for example, "quality high school education" may mean sound preparation for college to one parent, hope for future social prestige or wealth to another parent, and satisfaction of parental obligations to a third parent.

The tangible product level is the physical embodiment of some intangible core product. The tangible product has five characteristics: styling, features, quality, packaging, and branding (1985, pp. 224-226). The manipulation of these characteristics is central to the promotion of the product component of marketing.

Styling refers to the look or "feel" of the product. For example, a school's physical facility and its campus convey a certain impression. A photograph of students
seated in front of computers in the classroom also evokes meanings. In the business world, much of the competition in sales takes place on the tangible level of styling. In education, too, styling can be controlled and communicated in order to establish a competitive advantage.

According to Kotler and Fox, "Features are individual components of the tangible product that could be easily added or subtracted without changing the service's style or quality" (1985, pp. 224-225). A feature of a high school curriculum might include the availability of advanced placement courses for which college credit can be earned. Or it might take the form of a new Olympic-size indoor swimming pool.

Quality, a nebulous concept to begin with, is a tangible product characteristic referred to frequently in schools' promotional literature. Quality refers to "the perceived level of performance in a service" (p. 225). Quality determinations are, therefore, a subjective. An example is the number of professional degrees achieved by faculty. Two conditions must be present, from a marketing perspective, for this to be an effective determinant of quality: the target audience must have access to information regarding a specific quality dimension and the
target audience must value or associate the dimension with quality. In the example above, parents must be told what the faculty’s degrees are and they must attach to the dimension, "degrees earned," the meaning, "quality."

Frequently, high schools have many criteria for defining "quality":

Quality in Catholic schools means a number of things: testing scores; ability of students to enter college successfully; national rankings; merit scholarship winners; scholarship awards in general; special programs for the slow learner, disadvantaged student or the academically superior student; student activities, accessibility; and teacher interest in the lives of the students...If the message of such quality is heard loud and clear, the school has taken the most important step in the recruitment process. The quality of the program will do more than anything else to attract students and parents. (Jarc, 1985, p. 51-52)

Packaging, in the business community, carries a very specific meaning. It is the wrapper on the candy bar, the book’s cover. For schools, packaging is "the contribution of the larger context in which the service is obtained" (Kotler & Fox, 1985 p. 225). For schools, packaging is a campus containing full-grown Dutch Elm trees and ivy-covered brick buildings. Compare this to the environment of the inner-city school. As with tangible products such as perfume or liquor, packaging can add perceived value to a school’s service product.
Branding refers to the names and other symbols identified with a product. "Ivy League," in the example above, may bestow added value to a school. Other examples include "The Fightin' Irish," "individualized instruction," and a logo such as a school seal.

The third level of Product is the augmented level. This level refers to those product offerings or benefits which go beyond the core and tangible product levels. An example is membership in a school's alumni association upon graduation.

Place, the second of the four Ps on the marketing mix, refers to the channels of distribution in a marketing exchange. Place is "concerned with all of the problems, functions, and institutions involved in getting the right product to the target market" (McCarthy, 1975, p. 77). Specific to the field of education, Place answers the question, "How can we make our programs and services available and accessible to our target consumers?" (Kotler & Fox, 1985, p. 260). Place, in the marketing context, has many dimensions: spatial, temporal, symbolic, political, and aesthetic. The spatial dimension includes location, distance, and proximity. But a school may be located within what a student considers a reasonable traveling
distance and still not be considered "accessible" due to the temporal dimension. If classes are offered only during the day, most working adults will not have access to the courses being offered. Place dimensions may also refer to the physical or social environment in which the school is located. Students and their parents may be reluctant to choose a school that is located in what is regarded as dangerous neighborhood. There are also symbolic and political dimensions attached to the Place component. The "neighborhood school," the "regional school," and the "state school" are all labels which evoke symbolic and political meanings which may not be shared uniformly.

The channels of distribution in education are being expanded due to rapidly changing technologies and the emerging role of the media in education. Telecourses are now being offered via television. Tutorial courses are "self-taught" via computer assisted instruction. Separation of Church and State rulings have led some religiously affiliated schools to provide state-funded programs, such as driver education, in mobile classrooms—specially-designed vans parked outside the school facility. One university instituted a "Learn & Shop"
program whereby credit courses were offered in shopping centers and department stores (Duerden, 1986). Kotler (1978, pp. 239-243) suggests that, in the future, it may be possible for schools to use holography, the transmission of three-dimensional images of teachers, to cope with the economic circumstances created by rising costs and uneven teaching quality.

Place also has an aesthetic dimension. Kotler (1973-74, pp. 48-64) uses the term "atmospherics" to describe "the conscious designing of space to create certain effects in buyers." These effects may include feelings of well-being, safety, intimacy, or awe. Atmospherics is based on the notion that the "look" of physical facilities can affect consumer attitudes and behavior. The atmosphere of the place, Kotler believes, may even be more important to consumers than the product itself in some instances.

Price, the third component of the marketing mix, also has many dimensions. At its most basic level, Price refers to the exchange of money for some tangible product or service: "Any transaction in our modern economy can be thought of as an exchange of money - the money being the price - for Something" (McCarthy, 1975, p. 79). The
transaction is based on the assumption that both the company and the customer will be mutually satisfied as a result of the transaction.

Schools depend upon tuition and other revenues for survival. Some schools are profit making, which means that, in addition to sustaining their operations, they are looking to have a surplus of revenues over expenses. But price includes dimensions beyond tuition. Price includes discounts, scholarship and financial aid, method and timetable of payment, and auxiliary fees and expenses such as room and board, books, parking, uniforms, activities fees, and travel expenses.

Price may include non-monetary dimensions as well. Price may include effort costs, psychic costs, and time costs. (Kotler & Fox, 1985, p. 242). Schools that require students seeking admission to write an essay or attend an interview are adding "cost" to the enrollment decision. The fear of being rejected also adds "cost" to the process of applying for admission.

Price also has symbolic dimensions. The price of a product is often an indicator of its perceived quality.
Consumers tend to perceive expensive private schools as prestigious, exclusive, and of superior quality.

Price may be related to Place in cases where the travel distance to school may be equated with additional fuel costs. Or it may be equated with the amount of effort required by the daily drive to and from school.

Promotion, the fourth component of the marketing mix, "is concerned with any method that communicates to the target market about the right product to be sold in the right place at the right price" (McCarthy, 1975, p. 77). Without this communication, marketing strategies involving the components of Product, Place, and Price are ineffective. Information about these three components must be communicated to the target audience in a persuasive manner in order to affect the "bottom line" (increased enrollment).

As stated previously, promotion management involves the third level of communication flow in marketing: that which flows from the organization to the customer or potential customer. This flow of information and persuasion takes many forms: advertising, catalogues,
newsletters, personal selling, sales promotion, publicity,
and public relations to name just a few.

At the same time, promotion involves a multidirectional communication flow or "marketing dialogue":

Promotion is one element of a comprehensive marketing communications program. Marketing communications establish a dialogue between the various participants in marketing transactions. Promotional messages are those elements in the dialogue designed to inform and persuade others of the merits of establishing and maintaining marketing relationships....The ideal marketing communication process is a functioning dialogue involving a communication system which enables consumers and producers to significantly influence each others' goal attainment. The objective of a marketing communications system is to establish and maintain such a dialogue....All parties in a marketing relationship must communicate what they want from each other...Society must make its wants and needs known, and social institutions must communicate their willingness to satisfy these desires. In addition, participants in potential market relationships try to persuade the other members that a market relationship will be satisfactory. The marketing communication function thus involves flows of information and persuasion. (Nickels, 1976, pp. 3-23)

This promotion may be purposeful, as in the case of a student recruitment brochure, or unintended: "Colleges, schools, and other educational institutions communicate about themselves by their very existence, whether or not they have a formal communications program" (Kotler & Fox,
receptionist, comments made by faculty members at cocktail parties, the attractiveness of the school's campus all communicate something to the target audience.

Product, Place, Price, and Promotion are interdependent and coequal components in marketing. Sequentially, these four Ps have a logical order:

We develop a Product that we feel will satisfy the target customers. Then we find a way (Place) to reach our customers. Promotion tells the target customers about the availability of the product that has been designed for them. Then the Price is established in the light of expected customer reaction to the total offering. (McCarthy, 1975, p. 80)

E. The Concept of Exchange

As suggested by its emphasis on multidirectional communication flow, or dialogue, marketing is driven by the concept of exchange:

Marketing is a process in a society that, subject to constraints, attempts to establish mutually satisfactory product exchange relationships between persons with diverse wants and needs and persons (or machines) that can partially satisfy these wants and needs. (Nickels, 1976, p. 10)

Marketing is more than a single act of exchange. It is a process in which a friendly relationship between both parties involved in the exchange is established and
developed through multidirectional communication flows. This exchange should be perceived by both parties as mutually satisfactory in order for the transaction to occur and to be maintained. If one or both of the parties involved in the exchange begins to feel that they are no longer better off for having participated in the exchange the relationship will be terminated. In the case of student recruitment, it would benefit a school little if it successfully persuaded a student to enroll only to have the student transfer out of the school within the first year due to dissatisfaction. Hence, the process involving the interdependent components of Product, Place, Price and Promotion is an ongoing one.

F. The Educational Perspective

In spite of the trend toward developing a marketing posture toward student recruitment, many educational administrators are reluctant to embrace the marketing concept fully. Behind these ambivalent feelings are two main criticisms of marketing. First, marketing is incompatible with the educational mission:

Some administrators, trustees, faculty, and alumni believe that marketing is for profit-making businesses, and that educational institutions should be "above" marketing. They feel that educational values and techniques are
direct opposites to the values and techniques of business and that the two worlds cannot and should not be brought closer together. In their view, the purpose of education is to impart knowledge, analytical skills, and habits of reflection and rationality, whereas the purpose of marketing - and of business in general - is simply to make money. They view marketing as "hard selling" and believe it cheapens education and the educational institutions that use it. (Kotler & Fox, 1985, pp. 13-14)

Philip Kotler believes that this image of marketing is undeserved. Marketing and "hard selling" are, in fact, opposites:

Actually, marketing started out as a contrast to the idea of pure selling...the idea arose that we should make a product that doesn't require hard selling because it sells itself. If we figure out what people really want, then there will be a natural market for the product and selling would be easy...So, marketing and sales are opposites in some ways. A good job of marketing can make hard selling redundant. (Harper, 1986, p. 16)

The second criticism of marketing by educational administrators is that marketing should not be needed. Education is good, they reason, and people should "know what is good for them."

In the end, educational administrators appear to be willing to adopt the principles of marketing as a "necessary evil." A college professor writes that "in the 1980s, if you're not prepared to market, you cannot expect to remain competitive...The battle over whether or not to
use marketing has already been decided. For most institutions it comes down to a choice between getting on the train or fading into oblivion back in the station" (Grossman, 1987, p. 15). Educational institutions are, after all, business-like in that they rely on customers to sustain operations. Another educational administrator confesses:

I used to hate advertising....I thought our advertising made education look cheap. And I doubted that it really worked....Advertising seems blatant, self-serving, commercial, competitive, overstated, glib, embarrassing, and potentially misleading. Many of them [faculty members] think that a campus that stoops to advertise is desperate for students and probably educationally unsound....I still don't like advertising, but I've found that it can be an effective part of an institution's image-building and student recruitment efforts. Why? Because it works...Businesses and industry around the world spend staggering amounts of money on ad campaigns. Businesses stay afloat because their ads work. Our campuses need to stay in business, and we have something to sell. (Goldstein, 1986, pp. 92-93)

Despite the similarities between business and schools and the cognitive shift among educators toward adopting a marketing posture toward student recruitment, there are recognized differences between the business-based economic model of pure competition and the marketing realities of private schools. There are four disparate factors (Abramowitz & Stackhouse, 1980, pp. 72-75). First, the
business-based model assumes that behavior of firms is motivated by profit potential. Most private schools are nonprofit. Often, in spite of long waiting lists, private schools do not, as a matter of course, raise their tuitions in order to maximize profits. A school's philosophy, for example, may include a goal of avoiding serving only the financial elite. Second, schools do not produce homogeneous goods. That is, unlike commodities produced and distributed in the competitive marketplace, the educational "product" is ambiguous and inconsistently perceived by consumers. It is possible for two consumers to have vastly different opinions about what the school product is. Therefore, the consumer-oriented, business-based marketing concepts could not easily be applied to school situations. Third, imperfect competition exists among private schools. A business firm will have some control over the price of its product if it distinguishes itself, if only slightly, from similar products produced by competitors. Because the educational product is ambiguous, it is often easier for schools to appear to be different (whether it is intentional or not) from their competitors and establish a marketing niche. Fourth, the business-based marketing model assumes that consumers base their choices on complete and accurate
information which is made available to them at no cost.

In schools, *imperfect information* occurs on three levels:

On the first level, information is costly and/or slow, but possible, for the consumer to obtain. On the second level is the natural asymmetry in information between the producer and the consumer; e.g., the doctor knows more than the patient. The consumer does not necessarily know the value of what he or she has purchased until after the purchase has been made. But it is the third level that describes best the imperfect information condition in education: neither the producer nor the consumer has much understanding about what is produced. Professional educators (producers) know more than parents (consumers) about what goes on in school, but the former are usually unable to predict either the effect of their efforts or the best way to proceed with production. Even after the professionals have finished their work, they are unable to isolate what difference their efforts might have made. Therefore, both consumers and the producers possess only very limited relevant information about the process of education. If consumers do not fully understand what they are buying and producers do not fully understand what they are producing, the exercise of choice by consumers and competition by producers still might not lead to an efficient market. (1980, p. 75)

Whether or not private schools and businesses are really similar or different, and while marketing has its adversaries and advocates in the field of education, it appears that the latter outnumber the former and that this trend is growing. While educators are willing to adopt this business practice, it is unclear whether they fully understand it. A survey of college administrators whose
35

schools were faced with declining enrollments revealed that 61% viewed marketing as a combination of selling, advertising, and public relations. Another 28% said that it was only one of these three activities. Very few believed that marketing had something to do with needs assessment, marketing research, product development, pricing, and distribution (Kotler & Fox, 1985, p. 6). As stated above, the tendency among educators is to view marketing as selling, and "hard selling" at that, rather than the management of mutually satisfactory exchange relationships.

If educational administrators do not understand that marketing involves two-way exchanges of information in order to satisfy wants and needs, then it is unlikely that they will be successful in establishing and maintaining mutually satisfactory relationships. Needs usually refer to necessities whereas wants usually refer to desires. Marketing is not, or should not be, concerned with changing society's wants and needs. Rather, marketing is concerned with satisfying wants and needs (Nickels, 1976, p. 13). Because of its emphasis on consumers' wants and needs, marketing is said to be client-oriented, not seller-oriented (Kotler & Fox, 1985, p. 8):
A marketing orientation holds that the main task of the institution is to determine the needs and wants of target markets and to satisfy them through the design, communication, pricing, and delivery of appropriate and competitively viable programs and services. An institution with a marketing orientation concentrates on satisfying the needs of its constituencies. (1985, p. 10)

However, because of tradition, institutional culture, isolation, and an insufficient understanding of what marketing is, educational institutions often become preoccupied with seller-oriented approaches to marketing. These include "product orientations" which presume that the school must offer programs it believes to be good for its clients regardless of what they actually believe. One educator likens this outlook to Emerson's famous statement: "If a man can build a better mousetrap than his neighbor, the world will make a beaten path to his door" (Grossman, 1987, p. 15).

A "production orientation" presumes that the major task of a school is to produce and distribute its programs and services as efficiently as possible. For example, it may be more economical to offer courses only between the hours of eight in the morning and three in the afternoon, but this precludes students who may desire the option of taking some courses in the evening because of employment obligations.
A "selling orientation" assumes that the institution should stimulate the interest of potential consumers in existing programs and services. Under this assumption, educational administrators are apt to increase spending on advertising their current programs in order to "push" consumers into choosing them (Kotler & Fox, 1985, pp. 11-12).

When educational institutions' self perceptions and perceptions of the wants and needs of parents and students are in conflict with each other, marketing strategies can produce results which are the opposite of those intended:

A nonprofit institution can have a self-image that conflicts with the needs of its audience. What the nonprofit group perceives as dignity and intelligence, the audience can perceive as boring and arid. The job of advertising and promotion is to bridge this gap in perceptions. (Ellick, 1978, p. 56)

In "Recruitment rhetoric in brochures advertising the all volunteer force," Shyles & Ross (1984) showed how content analysis of recruitment rhetoric in brochures can be used to reveal conflict between promotional intent and semantic content. The study analyzed the inducements offered and demands made of potential volunteers in brochures advertising the military's all volunteer force. The results were that the major incentives offered to
potential volunteers consisted of instrumental rewards for joining the Army. These instrumental rewards included monetary offers to pay for education, opportunities to gain job training for the civilian sector, and offers of other economic gains in exchange for military service. Few persuasive appeals addressed intrinsic rewards such as adventure, camaraderie, and self-actualization. Hence, the brochures cast the military in the role of a stepping stone to other non-military goals. This is one possible explanation, the authors believe, for the military’s difficulty in retaining recruits. This study clearly reveals the difference between a true definition of marketing and one based upon a cursory association of marketing with its more visible components (e.g., advertising) in order to bring about a quick fix to a recruitment problem. While the brochures advertising the military’s all-volunteer force did effect an exchange relationship, it was not a lasting one. Nor was it mutually satisfactory because, in the end, the military was unable to retain its new recruits after spending a disproportionate amount of time and money training them.
G. Persuasion in Marketing

While it is true that marketing involves a client-oriented exchange relationship, the responsibility for marketing belongs to the seller. There is evidence to suggest that declining enrollment is of relatively little concern to consumers. A 1982 survey revealed that "declining enrollment" was the second greatest concern of American school board members. "Lack of financial support" ranked first. The same year, a Gallup Poll of the public's attitudes toward education, showed that, while ranking "lack of financial support" second, the public ranked "declining enrollment" last in their list of 13 concerns (Underwood, Fortune, & Meyer, 1983 p. 22).

The marketing process, therefore, depends heavily on the role of persuasion:

Our thesis is that the huge amount of inefficiency in marketing is traceable to failure to come to grips with the true nature and function of persuasion. Persuasion is-or rather should be-the central force that pulses through the entire process, the end toward which all planning and every single action between the production of a good product and its purchase and use by consumers should contribute. (Schwerin & Newell, 1981, pp. 4-5)

Marketing, in this context, is more than developing a product that meets consumers' wants and needs and then
communicating its existence. Marketing persuasion is said to involve a process that begins with identification of a consumer-perceived problem (1981, pp. 12-18). The problem may be perceived by consumers either consciously or subconsciously. Second, a solution to the problem is created to fill the gap. The solution and the problem must "mesh." That is, the solution must be targeted to provide a relevant answer to the problem. Once communicated, this meshing of problem and solution effects a reaction in consumers' minds. However, most consumers do not act on impulse and are simultaneously bombarded with other distractions including other possible solutions to their problem. The newly created "sales in the mind" is eroded by time. The seller then restimulates the "sales in the mind" through a purposeful and sequential repetition of the idea. This leads to attitude change and, eventually, behavioral change. Finally, the seller realizes incremental sales gains: the concrete result of individual behavior changes.

The point of departure for educational administrators attempting marketing persuasion should be, therefore, the identification of consumer-perceived problems and the wants and needs upon which they are based. But without
conducting structured market research, educators, in many cases, are forced to rely upon their own assumptions about what parents want and need.

Studies of high school principals have shown how the educational goals of administrators can differ from the administrators' perceived goals of parents. For example, Catholic high school principals rank "building community among faculty, students, and parents" as their number one goal while ranking this goal eleventh as their perception of parent views (The Catholic High School: A National Portrait, 1985, p. 117-119). Naturally, these educators would be likely to downplay the role of "building community" in their attempts to persuade parents to choose their schools. If the educators' assumptions are wrong, there would be little chance of them achieving the intended result.

H. Summary of the Problem

In summary, the relevant literature demonstrates that private American high schools trying to cope with the problems of enrollment declines have adopted a business-based marketing perspective in order to bolster student recruitment.
Marketing involves an integrated system of communication transactions between the organization and its clientele. Marketing communication is transactional, or dialogical, in that its function is to establish and maintain a mutually satisfying exchange relationship between the organization and its clientele. The concept of exchange is predicated on the idea that the organization first must understand the wants and needs of potential clients. Then it must develop a product offering to satisfy those wants and needs.

The organization must make its product, which can be tangible or, in the case of schools, an intangible service, accessible to the public and at a price that is perceived to be beneficial by each party involved in the exchange.

Product, Place, Price and Promotion comprise the four essential and interdependent components of the marketing mix. Promotion refers to the one-way transmission of information and persuasion from the organization to potential customers.

Disparities exist between the business-based marketing model of pure competition and the realities of
parent-school relationships. One of the most important disparate factors concerns imperfect information. While the business-based marketing model assumes that consumers base their choices on complete and accurate information, imperfect information in educational marketing refers to the notion that the educational "product" is ambiguous and inconsistently defined both by sellers (school administrators) and customers (parents of prospective students).

Based upon evidence that educational administrators do not fully understand the marketing concept, that they have ambivalent feelings toward adopting a marketing posture, and that promotion in education is forced to rely on the exchange of imperfect information, it is prudent to collect and analyze data from private high schools' recruitment literature in order to see how it reflects the marketing principles upon which it is based. That is, what are the assumptions made by educational administrators in private high schools relative to the perceived wants and needs of parents? Do different types of schools market themselves differently? How is persuasion used to promote schools? Is this recruitment rhetoric client-oriented, as the business-based marketing
model indicates it should be, or is it seller-oriented? Answers to these questions would be useful to private high schools that are spending increasing amounts of time and money marketing for student recruitment in order to ensure the very survival of their institutions. In the broader sense, these answers would be useful to all nonprofit organizations involved in member or client recruitment. These organizations include the military, churches, volunteer associations, political and civic groups, colleges and universities, and elementary schools.

I. Research Questions

The specific research questions to be explored in this study are:

1. What are the content categories, and their relative emphases, presented in the recruitment rhetoric of brochures promoting private high schools?

2. What are the relative emphases given to the marketing components of Product, Place and Price presented in the recruitment rhetoric of brochures promoting private high schools?

3. How do the relative emphases given to the content categories in brochures promoting private high schools vary according to the size, cost, age, geographic region and religious affiliation of the schools?
4. How do the content categories presented in brochures promoting private high schools differ according to the persuasiveness of language used?

The following chapter provides an operationalization of the terms used in these research questions, including "content categories," "brochure," "private high school," "Product," "Place," "Price," "size," "cost," "age," "geographic region," "religious affiliation," and "persuasive language." A dictionary of content categories appears in Appendix C.
CHAPTER 3

PROCEDURES

In this study, references to Product, Place and Price will be based on the definitions of these components of the marketing mix as put forth by Philip Kotler (refer to Chapter 2 of this study, pp. 19-29).

"Private high school" will refer to any secondary school which is not a public school and not solely a boarding school. However, schools which provide on-campus living opportunities but which also have students who commute (i.e., "day students") will be included. The school must charge a tuition. The school must provide education for grades nine through twelve as a minimum requirement although additional grade levels may be offered. The school must be located in the United States and listed in the 1987 edition of Private Independent Schools published by Bunting and Lyon, Inc. Known as the "Blue Book," this reference lists and describes 1,187
private schools including 372 boarding schools and 815 day schools. All of the schools listed are accredited by recognized school and college associations. This reference will serve as the sampling frame for the proposed study.

The schools will be analyzed according to five dimensions: Size, Cost, Age, Geographic Region and Religious Affiliation. Size of school will refer to the total enrollment. Cost will refer to the school’s normal tuition for day students. Age will refer to the number of years the school has been in continuous operation. Geographic Region will refer to the area in which the school is located (e.g., Southern). Religious Affiliation will concern whether or not a school is affiliated with a religious faith. Analysis will not concern denominational differences for religiously affiliated schools.

A. Sampling

There were 1,189 schools listed in the sampling frame. Of these, 554 schools met the operational definition of "private high school" (i.e., coeducational, not solely boarding, offering grades 9 through 12). A stratified random sampling method was employed. Selecting
every fifth school from an alphabetical listing of schools by the states in which they were located created a geographically stratified random sample. This sub-sample consisted of 110 target schools representing 35 states.

Delaware schools were excluded from the sampling frame because of potentially biasing factors. It should be noted that this researcher works in a private high school in Delaware. Schools from four states (Idaho, Kansas, Nebraska and Nevada) were also excluded because only one school meeting the operational definition was found in each state. It was felt that these schools would not reflect the normal competitive environment associated with schools in most states having a larger private school choice selection.

B. Instrument

Several data-gathering instruments were considered for this study: questionnaire, phone calls with caller posing as prospective parent, etc. A letter of inquiry was selected as the most economical and efficient instrument for obtaining the desired material for analysis: a brochure and a cover letter.
Using a word processor and laser printer, individualized letters were prepared for each of the 110 schools (see Appendix A). Each letter was personally addressed to the school's head. Typically, this person was either the headmaster/mistress, principal or director. Each letter was originally signed to further establish the impression of a valid request for information from a prospective parent moving to the state in which the target school was located. A woman's signature was used because, based on this researcher's professional experience, most requests of this type are made by the mother rather than the father.

C. Content Analysis

Content analysis is an unobtrusive research method useful in the examination of written documents: it is particularly well suited to the study of communications and to answering the classic question of communications research: "Who says what, to whom, why, how, and with what effect?" As a mode of observation, content analysis requires a considerable handling of the what, and the analysis of data collected in this mode, as in others, addresses the why and with what effect. (Babble, 1973, p. 268)

The proposed research relied on the general literature available on content analysis methodology and
applied it specifically to the topic under study. *Content Analysis of Communication* (Budd, Thorp & Donahue, 1967) and *Content Analysis for the Social Sciences and Humanities* (Holsti, 1969) provided a sufficient background in the theory and application of content analysis for the proposed research. *The Practice of Social Research* (Babbie, 1973) was used to provide an overview of the logic and the skills of social scientific research.

D. The Brochures

Determinations were made as to what constituted a school's brochure, since other promotional materials were often included in the mailings. Determinations were also made as to whether every word or sentence in the brochures should be considered in the content analysis or whether some parts of the brochures should be excluded. Emphasis was placed on including as much of the written text of the brochures as possible in the content analysis. Captions were counted, as were quotations set off from the rest of the text. Headings were not counted, nor were incomplete statements such as "Coeducational - Grades 9-12."

Some brochures included a course catalogue as well. These sections of such brochures could be as much as 10-20
pages in length and were clearly separated from the rest of the brochure. Frequently, these sections were printed on a different paper stock and included no photographs, for example. Because physically separate course catalogues were not considered in this analysis, sections of brochures functioning as course catalogues also were not considered.

The target of this study was the secondary school (grades 9-12). However, some of the schools in the sample also had lower and middle schools (grades K-8). Sections of brochures which clearly pertained to the lower and middle schools only were excluded from this analysis.

E. Units of Analysis

A unit of analysis was generally defined as a complete sentence. Lists, such as lists of colleges attended by graduates, were treated as one unit of analysis if stated in the form of a complete sentence.

Each complete sentence was counted in the most appropriate category on the data collection sheet (see Appendix B). However, one sentence may have included clearly distinct references, or "messages," pertaining to more than one category. Therefore, the specific unit of
analysis was each message. In cases with more than one message per sentence, each message was counted separately. Therefore, it was possible for one sentence to have been represented by more than one tally mark on the data collection sheet. For example, the following sentence might be represented by three tally marks (i.e., one each for History/Tradition, Campus/Facilities, and Directions/Transportation):

Founded in 1969, the school occupies a nine-acre campus in Mullica Hill, eighteen miles from the Walt Whitman Bridge.

Each distinct reference was tallied either as a message (m) or as a persuasive message (pm). These classifications refer to the type of language used (semantics) rather than the message content. Persuasive messages were defined as messages using language that explicitly mentions a benefit, advantage or certain desired quality or desired outcome that may be favored by a prospective parent or student. The following statement is exaggerated in order to distinguish between an explicit persuasive message and one that merely implies a benefit, advantage or desired outcome:
Our 200-acre campus contains 14 tennis courts, an 18-hole golf course and a nine-story library.

The content, or things mentioned in this statement, seem to imply a benefit (e.g., a beautiful, spacious and well-equipped campus and school). Such a campus may be highly valued by parents and students. However, the language is not persuasive. The following statement is an example of a persuasive message (i.e., one that explicitly mentions a benefit, advantage or desirably outcome):

Our school provides students with the best possible resources needed to ensure optimum educational development.

It must be noted that, in a sense, all things mentioned in promotional brochures are meant to persuade: otherwise they would not be included in literature intended to recruit students. However, for the purpose of this research, the distinction between messages and persuasive messages refers only to the semantics. Any reference to one of the 28 categories not fitting the operational definition of a persuasive message (pm) was counted as a message (m). In cases where more than one category was referred to in a single sentence, each separate reference was judged independently as to whether it was a message or a persuasive message.
A sampling of five brochures was analyzed in order to identify content categories. This process yielded 38 categories. Similar content categories were then combined. The resulting categories were then tested and refined by analyzing five additional brochures. In the process of identifying content categories, a dictionary was created (see Appendix C). This dictionary of categories was used both by this researcher and by the individual judges involved in reliability testing. The dictionary included explanations of each category along with illustrative examples from the brochures.

Finally, 28 mutually exclusive and exhaustive content categories were identified, operationalized and listed on the data collection sheets. The categories were grouped according to the components of the marketing mix (i.e., Product, Place and Price) and one category group called "Other." Each category listing allowed messages to be tallied as either a message (m) or as a persuasive message (pm).
Each school's data sheet also had spaces for coding the five dimensions to be studied (i.e., Age, Cost, Size, Geographic Region and Religious Affiliation).

G. Reliability Testing

Reliability testing was done both for the classification of semantic content into the 28 categories and classification of semantic content according to the persuasiveness of language used. Two coders, an elementary and a secondary school teacher, were trained in the coding process. Using the content category dictionary (see Appendix C) each judge was instructed to independently classify the semantic content of three randomly selected brochures. The coders' responses were compared against the researcher's coding of the messages in these same brochures. The results are presented in Table 1.
Table 1

Results of Reliability Testing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category Classification Phase</th>
<th># in Agreement</th>
<th>Proportion</th>
<th>% of</th>
<th>Coder 1</th>
<th>Coder 2</th>
<th>in Agreement</th>
<th>Agreement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brochure 1</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>120/140</td>
<td>85.71%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brochure 2</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>155/190</td>
<td>81.57%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brochure 3</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>225/241</td>
<td>93.36%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>259</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>500/571</td>
<td>87.56%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Persuasiveness of Language Classification Phase</th>
<th># in Agreement</th>
<th>Proportion</th>
<th>% of</th>
<th>Coder 1</th>
<th>Coder 2</th>
<th>in Agreement</th>
<th>Agreement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brochure 1</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>109/129</td>
<td>84.49%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brochure 2</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>146/180</td>
<td>81.11%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brochure 3</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>211/236</td>
<td>89.40%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>237</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>466/545</td>
<td>85.50%</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The category identification phase of the research was slightly more reliable than was the persuasiveness of language phase. A rate of agreement of 87.56% for category classification and 85.50% for persuasiveness of language classification was achieved. This rate of agreement was deemed acceptable and indicates that the researcher’s content analysis of the brochures was
reliable. Using the same data, the reliability of the coding of categories according to the marketing components of Product, Place, Price, and Other was tested. There was a 96.14% rate of agreement in the coding of marketing components. Of the 22 marketing component codings found to be in disagreement, 10 were between Product and Other, 6 between Product and Price, 5 between Price and Other, and 1 between Product and Place.

H. Analysis of Data

Because the brochures varied in size, length and format, descriptive statistics concerning the content of brochures was based on frequency per 100 messages using mean scores across all brochures. Using SPSS-X computer software, data were analyzed on four levels which correspond to the four research questions. First, the data were analyzed according to the frequency means of the 28 content categories. Second, the data were collapsed and analyzed according to the category groupings corresponding to the components of the marketing mix (i.e., Product, Place and Price) as well as one additional grouping called "Other" for categories not fitting one of the marketing component groups. Third, the data were analyzed according to the five dimensions of the schools
(i.e., Size, Age, Cost, Geographic Region and Religious Affiliation). Finally, the data were analyzed according to the persuasiveness of language used (i.e., messages and persuasive messages). Throughout, standard error scores and 95% confidence levels were the basis for comparing means.

It was hoped that the letters of response accompanying the brochures would address probes for information in the letter of solicitation. This content analysis would be performed separately but would follow the same general analysis procedure used for the brochures. Two things were expected to be accomplished by analyzing the brochures and letters separately. First, the letters of response should have represented greater validity than the brochures since they are direct, rather than indirect, measures of school administrators’ orientations. Having two sets of data to compare would have helped cross-validate findings. However, while some of the respondents did send a cover letter addressing the information probes in the letter of solicitation, there was not a sufficient number to analyze as intended. Furthermore, it was apparent that most of the letters sent were form letters. They could not be considered valid
responses to the information probes in the letter of solicitation. The proposed content analysis of these letters, therefore, had to be excluded from this study.

I. Defense of This Approach

This general research approach has been used to analyze the inducements and demands made of potential volunteers in brochures advertising the military’s all volunteer force (Shyles & Ross, 1984). The Shyles and Ross study is similar to the present study both in terms of units of analysis and the concept of recruitment rhetoric. One problem with the Shyles and Ross study concerns the question of representativeness. A convenience sample was drawn from available materials. The present study, however, utilizes a comprehensive directory of private schools as a sampling frame and a stratified random sampling method.

There appears to be a high degree of validity between the orientations of school personnel toward the benefits of their school and the frequency of mentions of content categories in the brochures. According to Hugh Rank’s model of persuasion (cited in Larson, 1983) the authors of promotional literature would be likely to intensify
through repetition those things perceived to be their school's best selling points (that which favorably distinguishes their school from alternative choices) while downplaying, through omission or infrequent repetition, certain perceived negative aspects of their schools.

This study also includes an analysis of the persuasiveness of language used to communicate the content categories. Together with the category frequency analysis, this will expand on the understanding of the orientations of school personnel as reflected in the brochures.

This research method poses a question of ethics. Is it ethical to intentionally deceive school administrators in order to obtain recruitment brochures and letters of response? The brochures, postage, and time used to write a letter all cost the target school money. School administrators, like all marketers, do understand that a large proportion of their dollars spent on advertising and recruitment efforts will not actually result in a "sale." However, in the case of this research, there is no hope of a sale. This researcher weighed the ethical aspects of this methodology very carefully. Having an actual parent of a high school-age student sign the letters of
solicitation was considered. However, because the target schools are located in many different states, it still would be almost impossible for the target school to have a real chance of gaining a student. Having this researcher send an anonymous $2.00 donation to each school after receiving the requested materials was also considered. This approach has not been ruled out but it is likely to prove too expensive. Finally, it was concluded that equally valid research findings could not be obtained through other conventional approaches, such as a mailed questionnaire or a straightforward request for information. The knowledge to be obtained through this type of research outweighs the relatively small cost to the target schools involved. It was hoped this could be accomplished either by the publication of an article based on this research or by sending each school in the sample a copy of an abstract of this research.

The following chapter presents the results and discussion of the content analysis of brochures promoting private American high schools. The analysis of data is presented in the form of responses to each of four research questions.
CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

The letters were mailed October 15, 1987. A temporary post office box was used as the return address rather than a permanent address so additional mailings would not be received after the research period ended. One month later, responses were received from 102 of the schools contacted (92.7% response rate). Two schools responded but sent no brochure, leaving 100 schools in the sub-sample.

Both the high response rate and an expeditious response time are significant. They validate this study's premises: 1) that private high schools in America have been forced into a highly competitive situation; 2) that, because of this competition, schools will aggressively market themselves to potential customers; and 3) that promotional literature is an important part of this marketing effort. Furthermore, the high response rate
validated the chosen data gathering method and research instrument as convincing and effective.

It is also important that, in many instances, schools sent much more than the requested brochures. Also sent were open house invitations, newsletters, student newspapers, course catalogues, application materials, photocopies of articles and even promotional materials about cities in which the schools were located. One school forwarded this researcher's name and address to a realtor who, under separate cover, mailed an extensive listing of houses for sale in the area.

The content analysis included 100 brochures: one brochure per school. There was considerable variation among brochures. Their sizes ranged from two pages in length to 40 or more pages. They were of many different shapes and formats. Some used photographs sparingly while, in other brochures, pictures dominated the pages.

Of the 100 brochures that were analyzed, the number of categorized messages ranged from a low of 22 to a high of 535. The mean number of messages per brochure was 143, the mode was 66, and the median was 117. The total number of messages that were categorized was 14,328.
A. Research Question #1

What are the content categories, and their relative emphases, presented in the recruitment rhetoric of brochures promoting private high schools?

Twenty-eight content categories were identified by analyzing a sub-sample of five brochures and then retesting and refining the categories using five additional brochures. A complete listing of the 28 categories with operationalized definitions and examples from the brochures is presented in Appendix C.

Because there was considerable variation in the size, length, and format of the brochures, descriptive statistics were converted to standard scores based upon rate of mentions per 100 messages. Composite frequency means and standard error scores were computed for each content category across all 100 brochures. T-tests were used to determine significant differences between all possible pairs of content categories (28 content categories; 378 pairings) using two-tailed probabilities at the 95% confidence level (p<.05). The 28 content categories were rank-ordered from highest frequency to lowest. Exceptions were noted where specific pairings of
means failed to meet the two-tailed probability criteria at \( p < .05 \). The results are presented in Table 2.

Frequency means for closely ranked content categories often failed to meet the criteria for significant differences. For example, the category Graduates (rank = 16) had a frequency mean of 2.07/100 messages and Honors & Achievements (rank = 17) had a frequency mean of 2.06/100 messages. For this pairing, \( p < .966 \). The rank-ordering of the 28 content categories is best interpreted in a general way. That is, categories fall into the general pattern described in Table 2. Of the 378 possible pairings, only 79 failed to meet the criteria for significant difference at \( p < .05 \).

Frequencies ranged from a high of 15.82/100 messages for Academics/Curriculum to a low of .55/100 messages for School Governance. Clearly, the two categories mentioned most often in the brochures were Academics/Curriculum and Activities/Extracurriculars (11.15/100 messages). Both categories' frequencies were significantly higher than all of the other 26 categories. Together, they accounted for more than one-fourth of the content of all brochures. These two Product categories are roughly equivalent to the
## Table 2

### Category Frequencies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank/Code</th>
<th>Content Category</th>
<th>Marketing Component</th>
<th>Frequency Mean (rate per 100 messages)</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
<th>Pairings Not Significantly Different at the p&lt;.05 Level, Two-tailed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Academics/Curriculum</td>
<td>Product</td>
<td>15.82</td>
<td>.861</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Activities/Extracurriculars</td>
<td>Product</td>
<td>11.15</td>
<td>.681</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Admissions/Application</td>
<td>Price</td>
<td>6.47</td>
<td>.497</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Campus/Facilities</td>
<td>Product</td>
<td>5.21</td>
<td>.466</td>
<td>3.5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5.19</td>
<td>.522</td>
<td>3.4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Philosophy/School Goals</td>
<td>Product</td>
<td>4.78</td>
<td>.405</td>
<td>4.5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>History/Tradition</td>
<td>Product</td>
<td>4.63</td>
<td>.520</td>
<td>4.5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Student Services</td>
<td>Product</td>
<td>4.61</td>
<td>.408</td>
<td>4.5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Faculty &amp; Staff</td>
<td>Product</td>
<td>4.36</td>
<td>.330</td>
<td>4.5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Costs/Financial Aid</td>
<td>Price</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>.410</td>
<td>4.5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Testimonials &amp; Quotations</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>.825</td>
<td>4.5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Extra Features</td>
<td>Product</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>.365</td>
<td>7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Directions/Transportation</td>
<td>Place</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td>.554</td>
<td>10, 11, 12, 14-21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Students</td>
<td>Product</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>.232</td>
<td>11, 13, 15-20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Atmosphere</td>
<td>Product</td>
<td>2.18</td>
<td>.171</td>
<td>13, 14, 16-21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Graduates</td>
<td>Product</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>.208</td>
<td>13, 14, 15, 17-21</td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Honors &amp; Achievements</td>
<td>Product</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>.399</td>
<td>13, 14, 15, 16, 18-21, 23, 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>School Size/Class Size</td>
<td>Product</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>.169</td>
<td>13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Standards of Conduct/Rules</td>
<td>Product</td>
<td>1.95</td>
<td>.502</td>
<td>13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20-24, 26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Practical Information</td>
<td>Product</td>
<td>1.89</td>
<td>.227</td>
<td>13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 21, 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Parental Involvement</td>
<td>Product</td>
<td>1.74</td>
<td>.265</td>
<td>13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 23, 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>General School Descriptors</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>.143</td>
<td>19, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Attitudes</td>
<td>Product</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>.165</td>
<td>17, 19, 20, 21, 22, 24, 25, 26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Physical Environment</td>
<td>Product</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>.182</td>
<td>17, 19, 21, 22, 23, 25, 26, 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Student-Teacher Relationship</td>
<td>Product</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>.120</td>
<td>19, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>School Credentials</td>
<td>Product</td>
<td>.95</td>
<td>.171</td>
<td>19, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Head of School</td>
<td>Product</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td>.197</td>
<td>22, 24, 25, 26, 28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>School Governance</td>
<td>Product</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.144</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
combined frequencies of the next five highest ranked categories.

The third highest ranked category was Admissions/Application (6.47/100 messages). This Price category is important because the purpose of the brochures is to induce parents of prospective students to apply for admission. However, the other Price category, Costs/Financial Aid, ranked 10th (4.07/100 messages).

Of the six categories associated with groups of people who are involved in high schools (i.e., students, faculty, graduates, parents, head of school and governing boards) faculty were mentioned significantly most often (4.36/100 messages). Student-Teacher Relationship (1.06/100 messages) represented a separate category. Through these two categories, the brochures emphasized the quality of the school's faculty as well as their caring for students. Students, on the other hand, were usually referred to in terms of their gender, ethnic, and geographic composition. Next to the faculty, students and graduates were mentioned with about the same frequencies (2.45/100 messages and 2.07/100 messages respectively). Parents, through their involvement in the school, ranked low (1.74/100 messages) as did the school head (.78/100 messages).
messages) and the governing board (.55/100 messages) which ranked last among all 28 categories.

While Faculty ranked highest among the "people categories," it ranked lower than Campus/Facilities which ranked fourth (4.21/100 messages). After Academics/Curriculum and Activities/Extracurriculars, this was the next highest rated Product category. It is interesting that Campus/Facilities was emphasized more than the faculty or students. Physical Environment, the physical and cultural environment in which the school is located, ranked 24th (1.28/100 messages).

The results suggest that school administrators focus primarily on academics in attempting to appeal to educational consumers. But they also believe the parents and students want more than just classroom experiences. They believe activities taking place outside the classroom -- plays, athletics, clubs, etc. -- are important to parents and students. These are the two greatest ingredients comprising the Product component of the marketing mix.

Beyond their core curricular and extracurricular offerings, private high schools present potential customers with a large number of additional Product
offerings. Among the most frequently mentioned inducements are the tangible product of the school's campus and facilities and the intangible school philosophy.

While faculty represent the most important "people category," references to other people who compose the school community, such as students, alumni, parents, school head and governing boards, are relatively downplayed in the brochures.

The two Price categories, Admissions/Application and Costs/Financial Aid, ranked among the top ten categories. The only Place category, Directions/Transportation, ranked in the middle. In this category extensive directions to find the school, often encompassing different routes, were contained in the messages.

B. Research Question #2

What are the relative emphases given to the marketing components of Product, Place, and Price, presented in the recruitment rhetoric of brochures promoting private high schools?

All 28 content categories were collapsed into category groups representing the marketing components of Product, Place and Price as well as one additional
category group named Other. T-tests were used to compute significant differences among the six resulting category group pairings. Only one pairing, Price and Other ($p<.255$), failed to meet the criteria for significance at the $p<.001$ level. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank/Code</th>
<th>Category Group</th>
<th>Frequency to $p&lt;.001$ Rank</th>
<th>Category Mean (rate/100 messages)</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
<th>Exceptions Two-Tailed Probability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Product</td>
<td>74.66</td>
<td>1.063</td>
<td></td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Price</td>
<td>10.54</td>
<td>.780</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Place</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td>.554</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>12.14</td>
<td>.963</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Product categories were mentioned seven times more often than Price categories and 28 times more often than Place categories. Only one out of four messages in the brochures dealt with something other than Product references. These Product categories may represent tangible or intangible aspects of the schools. While a school's chief product is essentially an intangible
service, the service product can be analyzed on the core level, tangible level and augmented level.

The core product is that which each consumer is really seeking to fill some subjective psychological, social or emotional need (e.g., prestige). School administrators cannot easily know what these subjective needs are. Often, the consumer himself or herself may not be able to identify such needs. The core product for one parent might be different for another parent. Yet the brochures seemed to address what might be considered core product needs through such Product categories as Honors & Achievements, Graduates, and History/Tradition. Long-standing traditions rooted in a school history spanning two centuries, students who win academic and athletic competitions, alumni who get into Ivy League universities--such references convey a message to parents about the psychological, social, and emotional benefits which can be derived from being part of such a school.

The tangible product level is the physical embodiment of some intangible core product. Its five characteristics (styling, features, quality, packaging and branding) are given considerable emphasis in the brochures.
Product categories such as Atmosphere, Attitudes and Student-Teacher Relationship are presented in a way that portrays a certain "feel" to the school (e.g., warmth, friendship). Testimonials quoted from students and parents are used to create a desired "style."

"Feature" characteristics are represented by categories such as Extra Features, Activities/Extracurriculars, and Campus/Facilities. Many of these features, such as foreign exchange programs and indoor tennis courts, could be taken away without sacrificing essential educational experiences. However, these product features are presented in the brochures as added inducements. Offerings which go beyond typical classroom experiences help distinguish one private school from another and, more importantly, from other public schools.

"Quality" is a tangible product characteristic represented by categories such as Honors & Achievements, Faculty/Staff and Graduates. In many cases, the brochures attempt to portray the schools' quality through the credentials of the faculty and graduates. Virtually every reference to alumni, for example, mentioned the prestigious colleges and universities attended by graduates. References to faculty typically mentioned the
number of teachers possessing advanced degrees or certification in their teaching area.

"Packaging" was evidenced more in the photographic content and design of the brochures than in their text. However, packaging elements were found in History/Tradition category references. The history and traditions of the school provide a larger context which can add perceived value to the school's product.

"Branding" characteristics, the symbols identified with the school product, were represented throughout almost every category in the brochures. Frequently mentioned product symbols were "low student-teacher ratio," "individually-tailored curriculum" and the use of ubiquitous catchwords such as "excellence."

The product's augmented level includes offerings which go beyond the core and tangible product levels. The categories of Graduates and Parental Involvement include offers and inducements to both students and parents. Students are shown that they have options for continuing involvement after graduation through active alumni associations. Parents are given opportunities to participate in the school while their child is enrolled.
Of the two remaining category groups, Price references, including both monetary and nonmonetary dimensions, were considerably more frequent than were Place references. Price references pertained either to tuition and financial aid or to the admissions/application procedure. In both categories, messages provided practical, procedural information. It was interesting that, almost always, Price references were contained in the last pages of the brochures, often on the inside of the back cover. Price references apparently rank relatively high in terms of frequency of mentions primarily because they require more information to be communicated. The rather lengthy procedures for applying for financial aid, the criteria used to award financial aid and the procedure for making application dominated the content of Price categories. Their relegation to the back of the brochures suggests that they are not regarded as inducements. Rather, they appear to be directions to follow after the Product inducements have stimulated interest in the schools.

While none of the schools in this study were solely boarding schools, many did offer boarding opportunities. For students living on campus, Place references, in the
spatial dimension, would be important only in the aspect of traveling distance from home. The temporal dimension of Place also is largely irrelevant because most high schools, unlike colleges, provide a set schedule of day classes structured around an approximately 180-day school calendar. If students do have jobs, they are typically scheduled around school rather than the other way around. This would be a much more important consideration, for example, in an adult continuing education program.

Place also has an aesthetic dimension. One content category, Physical Environment, might have been included in the aesthetic dimension of the Place component. However, it was felt that such references were more closely aligned with the Product component of marketing, particularly in the sense of tangible product packaging. Place references were limited to the channels of distribution (e.g., directions for finding the school, bus transportation to and from school, etc.).
C. Research Question #3

How do the relative emphases given to the content categories in brochures promoting private high schools vary according to the size, cost, age, geographic region, and religious affiliation of the schools?

Size. Of the 100 schools in the sample, data concerning enrollment was available for 61 schools. These schools were placed into four groups: Very Small (1-125 students), Small (126-300 students), Medium (301-475 students) and Large (476-1,025 students). Enrollment figures were based on the total number of students in grades 9 through 12. The school size dimension is represented below:

Very Small \# = 17  
Small \# = 21  
Medium \# = 15  
Large \# = 8

It is reasonable to expect certain content categories in the brochures to be more or less emphasized depending on the school's enrollment. For example, schools with large enrollments might attempt to downplay the School Size/Class Size category. Because of their size, large schools are usually able to offer a larger selection of courses, activities and extra features. Perhaps the
frequency of messages in categories concerned with these areas would vary according to enrollment. Actually, few statistically significant differences were found at the p<.05 level when analysis of variance was conducted for all groups. The results appear in Table 4.

Surprisingly, no two groups were significantly different for the School Size/Class Size category. Small and Very Small schools appear to emphasize this category more often than Medium or Large schools but differences were not statistically significant.

Significant differences were not found for the category of Academics/Curriculum either. Although large schools generally enjoy larger curriculum offerings, the data actually suggest that smaller schools emphasize Academics/Curriculum more. While not statistically significant, the data did reflect decreasing frequencies in this category as the enrollment increased. A possible explanation for this apparent relationship could be that larger schools emphasize some other category or categories at the expense of Academics/Curriculum. A logical choice would be Activities/Extracurriculars. Schools with large enrollments also tend to offer more sports, more clubs and more artistic activities such as band, chorus, drama and
Table 4

Dimension = Size of School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Groups Significantly Different at P &lt; .05 Level</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Mean-Rate/100 Messages</th>
<th>(I)</th>
<th>(II)</th>
<th>(III)</th>
<th>(IV)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academics/Curriculum</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>17.72</td>
<td>17.54</td>
<td>16.03</td>
<td>14.27</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities/Extracurriculars</td>
<td>I &amp; III</td>
<td>7.44</td>
<td>10.76</td>
<td>15.24</td>
<td>10.84</td>
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<tr>
<td>Admissions/Application</td>
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<td>6.41</td>
<td>6.63</td>
<td>4.34</td>
<td>8.33</td>
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<tr>
<td>Campus/Facilities</td>
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<td>4.16</td>
<td>5.41</td>
<td>7.09</td>
<td>4.71</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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<td>3.26</td>
<td>6.42</td>
<td>4.88</td>
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<tr>
<td>Philosophy/School Goals</td>
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<td>4.43</td>
<td>4.60</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History/Tradition</td>
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<td>4.13</td>
<td>4.76</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>5.34</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Services</td>
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<td>5.11</td>
<td>5.24</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty &amp; Staff</td>
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<td>3.09</td>
<td>4.54</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>5.57</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costs/Financial Aid</td>
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<td>3.14</td>
<td>5.92</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Testimonials &amp; Quotations</td>
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<td>3.65</td>
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<td>1.96</td>
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<tr>
<td>Extra Features</td>
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<td>3.58</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directions/Transportation</td>
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<td>2.60</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>2.42</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atmosphere</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>1.61</td>
<td>2.49</td>
<td>1.67</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduates</td>
<td>I &amp; II; I &amp; III</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>2.80</td>
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<tr>
<td>Honors &amp; Achievements</td>
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<td>1.64</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>3.06</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Size/Class Size</td>
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<td>1.79</td>
<td>2.23</td>
<td>1.59</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standards of Conduct/Rules</td>
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<td>1.99</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>.97</td>
<td>1.15</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practical Information</td>
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<td>2.23</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Involvement</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td>.95</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General School Descriptors</td>
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<td>.39</td>
<td>1.42</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attitudes</td>
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<td>1.54</td>
<td>.95</td>
<td>.93</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Environment</td>
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<td>.82</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>2.02</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student-Teacher Relationship</td>
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<td>.99</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>1.68</td>
<td>.55</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Credentials</td>
<td>I &amp; II; I &amp; III</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>.42</td>
<td>.33</td>
<td>1.37</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of School</td>
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<td>.75</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>.42</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Governance</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>.68</td>
<td>.33</td>
<td>.33</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
79

creative writing. In fact, schools with Medium-sized enrollments did emphasize Activities/Extracurriculars twice as much as Very Small schools (p<.05). However, no other groups were significantly different.

Statistically significant differences were also found in the Graduates category. Very Small schools emphasized their alumni (3.17/100 messages) more than twice as much as Small schools (1.37/100 messages) and more than 2.5 times more than Medium-sized schools (1.23/100 messages). It is reasonable to expect that smaller schools tend to have fewer graduates than large schools (unless they are significantly older schools). Perhaps small schools attempt to compensate for this by providing the public with more information about their alumni. Or perhaps they are more in touch with information about their alumni since there are fewer of them. However, the emphasis on graduates was also high for Large schools (2.80/100 messages) although this group was not statistically significant.

Frequency in the category, School Credentials, was 3.6 times greater for Very Small schools (1.54/100 messages) as compared to Small schools (.42/100 messages) significant at p<.05 and 4.6 times greater than
Medium-sized schools (.33/100 messages) significant at p<.05. Large schools had a relatively high frequency for this category (1.37/100 messages) although this was not significantly different from any other group.

In general, school size is not a significant variable relating to the relative emphases given content categories in high school brochures. With few exceptions, schools tend to emphasize all content categories in their brochures about the same, regardless of school size.

Cost. Of the 100 schools analyzed, only one could not be identified with a specific tuition rate. The remaining 99 school brochures were placed into four groups according to their tuition level: Low Priced ($1,001-$3,500), Medium Priced ($3,501-$6,000), High Priced ($6,001-$8,500) and Very High Priced ($8,501 and up). The highest school tuition was over $12,500. The lowest was less than $1,500. When different tuition rates were given for boarding students and day students, the day student rate was used. Fees were not included in the tuitions. The cost dimension is represented below:
In the business community one expects expensive products to be marketed differently from inexpensive ones because differently priced products appeal to different target populations. Also, the products themselves are likely to be different. Mercedes Benz buyers are not the same people who purchase Yugos. Furthermore, whereas the Mercedes Benz is marketed for its luxury, comfort and prestige, Yugos are marketed for affordability and economy. Similar expectations can be made about marketing the educational product. One might expect schools with very high tuitions to appeal to one consumer group and schools having relatively low tuitions to appeal to another. This part of the research analyzed the relationship between school cost and the emphases given content categories in brochures promoting private high schools. The results are presented in Table 5.

The most significant differences occurred in the categories of Activities/Extracurriculars and Student
Table 5

Dimension = Cost of School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Groups Significantly Different at P &lt; .05 Level</th>
<th>Frequency Mean Rate/100 Messages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academics/Curriculum</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>13.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities/Extracurricular</td>
<td>I &amp; IV; II &amp; IV</td>
<td>12.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admissions/Application</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>5.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campus/Facilities/Resources</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>5.46</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>2.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philosophy/School Goals</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>6.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History/Tradition</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>5.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Services</td>
<td>I &amp; IV; II &amp; IV</td>
<td>3.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty &amp; Staff</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>4.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costs/Financial Aid</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>3.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Testimonials &amp; Quotations</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>5.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extra Features</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>4.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directions/Transportation</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>1.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>2.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atmosphere</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>2.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduates</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>2.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honors &amp; Achievements</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>3.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Size/Class Size</td>
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<td>1.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standards of Conduct/Rules</td>
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<td>2.74</td>
</tr>
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<td>Practical Information</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>2.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Involvement</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>1.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General School Descriptors</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>1.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>1.05</td>
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<tr>
<td>Physical Environment</td>
<td>none</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student-Teacher Relationship</td>
<td>I &amp; III</td>
<td>.45</td>
</tr>
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<td>School Credentials</td>
<td>I &amp; II; I &amp; III</td>
<td>2.05</td>
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<td>Head of School</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Governance</td>
<td>I &amp; II</td>
<td>1.33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As school costs increased, the emphasis on Activities/Extracurriculars decreased consistently. Frequencies for Low Priced schools and Medium Priced schools were significantly higher than frequencies for Very High Priced schools at $p<.05$. However, as school costs increased, the frequencies for Student Services increased consistently. Frequencies for Low and Medium Priced schools were significantly lower than frequencies for Very High Priced schools at $p<.05$. Higher Priced schools, therefore, tended to emphasize their student services, typically college counseling programs, while deemphasizing sports, clubs and other activities.

School Governance was also consistently deemphasized as school cost increased. Low Priced schools mentioned their governing boards three times more often than Medium Priced schools, at $p<.05$, or High Priced schools. Very High Priced schools failed to mention school governance even once in their brochures.

While differences were not statistically significant, more expensive schools consistently deemphasized Standards of Conduct/Rules as well as Physical Environment. Academics/Curriculum tended to be emphasized most by Very
High Priced schools (22.18/100 messages) and least by Low Priced schools (13.57/100 messages).

Surprisingly, there were no consistent or statistically significant differences of frequencies for the Costs/Financial Aid category. The variable of school cost does not appear to influence the relative emphasis given this topic in school brochures.

Other categories either had no statistically significant differences or were marked by fluctuating rather than consistent patterns.

In general, the data suggest that higher priced schools tend to place more emphasis on the academic program and, especially, on programs concerned with helping students gain admission to colleges of their choice. This is done at the expense of information about extracurricular activities, governing boards and student rules.

**AGE.** The ages of all 100 schools in the sample were able to be determined. The schools were placed in four groups: Young (1-20 years old), Middle Aged (21-60 years old), Old (61-100 years old) and Very Old (more than 100 years old). The oldest school in the sample was 299 years old; the
youngest was five years old. The schools' age
distribution is shown below:

Young # = 27
Middle-Aged # = 28
Old # = 23
Very Old # = 22

With such a wide distribution of school ages, it
seems that significant differences among the schools would
be found in the brochures. Actually, the data suggests
that schools of all ages present themselves similarly
through the brochures. The results are presented in Table 6.

Statistically significant differences were found only
in two of 28 content categories. Middle-Aged schools
emphasized Academics/Curriculum at a rate of 19.61/100
messages whereas Old schools emphasized this category only
13.37/100 messages at p<.05. However, Very Old, Old and
Young schools emphasized this category about the same.
Thus, it is difficult to draw any conclusions about this
category.

The History/Tradition category, however, reveals a
consistent trend: older schools emphasize their past more
Table 6

Dimension = Age of School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Groups Significant at P &lt; .05 Level</th>
<th>Frequency Mean-Rate/100 Messages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(I) Young</td>
<td>(II) Middle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academics/Curriculum</td>
<td>II &amp; III</td>
<td>14.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities/Extracurriculars</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>10.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admissions/Application</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>7.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campus/Facilities/Resources</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>4.46</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>7.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philosophy/School Goals</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>4.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History/Tradition</td>
<td>I &amp; IV</td>
<td>2.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Services</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>3.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty &amp; Staff</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>4.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costs/Financial Aid</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>4.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Testimonials &amp; Quotations</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>4.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extra Features</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>3.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directions/Transportation</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>4.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>1.89</td>
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<tr>
<td>Atmosphere</td>
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<tr>
<td>Graduates</td>
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<tr>
<td>Honors &amp; Achievements</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>2.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Size/Class Size</td>
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<td>2.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standards of Conduct/Rules</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practical Information</td>
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<td>1.20</td>
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<td>Parental Involvement</td>
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<td>2.25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attitudes</td>
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<td>1.66</td>
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<tr>
<td>Physical Environment</td>
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<td>Student-Teacher Relationship</td>
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<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Credentials</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>1.31</td>
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<tr>
<td>Head of School</td>
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<td>1.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Governance</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
than younger schools. Very Old schools emphasized History/Tradition 2.5 times more than Young schools at p<.05. This outcome is predictable and fairly self-explanatory. Older schools simply have longer histories. Nevertheless, this information does not have to be emphasized in promotional literature. It has been shown previously, for instance, that more expensive schools do not tend to emphasize costs and schools with larger enrollments do not emphasize their students or graduates. The data suggests that educational administrators in older schools believe school history is a unique feature which distinguishes their schools from other alternatives. Perhaps they reason, because their schools have endured, they have achieved a superior status. This status is communicated to the public through the brochures by emphasizing the History/Tradition category.

With the exception of the History/Tradition category, the data suggests very few differences in the way schools of all ages market themselves through the frequencies of content categories in their brochures.

Geographic Region. Perhaps regional differences are related to the differences among private high schools and among those who choose such schools. For instance, the
New England private school calls to mind a different constituency than the southern private school constituency. Do schools located in different geographical regions promote themselves differently? Turning to the content of school brochures to answer this question, all 100 schools were grouped into five geographic regions: West/Northwest, North Central, Southern, New England and Middle Atlantic. The geographic distribution of schools is shown below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>#</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>West/Northwest</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Central</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northeast</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Atlantic</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Actually, the data did not support the notion of regional variations among brochures. The results are presented in Table 7. Few statistically significant differences in category frequencies were found. There were two exceptions worthy of note. The Students category was found to be significantly less emphasized in Southern schools (1.66/100 messages) compared to Western Schools (3.98/100 messages) at p<.05. Also, the category of Student-Teacher Relationship had the lowest frequency for
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Frequency Mean Rate/100 Messages</th>
<th>(I)</th>
<th>(II)</th>
<th>(III)</th>
<th>(IV)</th>
<th>(V)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td></td>
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<td>14.00</td>
<td>16.79</td>
<td>18.15</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11.49</td>
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<td>5.93</td>
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<td>3.11</td>
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<td>.79</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.92</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.31</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.08</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Southern schools (.60/100 messages) which was significantly different from the frequency for North Central schools (1.80/100 messages) at p<.05.

The General School Descriptors category appeared almost six times more often in Western schools (2.07/100 messages) compared to New England schools (.35/100 messages) significantly different at p<.05.

In general, regional differences appear to have little influence on category frequencies. Private schools located in many different parts of the county emphasize the same things in their brochures.

Religious Affiliation All 100 brochures were classified as either from a Nonreligiously Affiliated school or from Religiously Affiliated school:

Nonaffiliated ____________________________ # = 63

Affiliated ________________________ # = 37

No distinction was made concerning the type of religious affiliation. However, for background information only, the 37 Religiously-Affiliated schools included Baptist (2), Episcopalian (9), Jewish (1),
non-denominational Christian (8), Presbyterian (2), Quaker (7), Roman Catholic (5) and Other (3).

Statistically significant differences at $p<.05$ were found in seven of the 28 categories. This data is presented in Table 8.

The largest differential frequency score was found in the Academic/Curriculum category. Nonaffiliated schools emphasized this category in 17.07/100 messages compared to Affiliated schools which emphasized it in 13.71/100 messages significantly different at $p<.05$. Nonaffiliated schools also emphasized Student Services more (5.32/100 messages as compared to 3.39/100 messages) significantly different at $p<.05$ as well as Costs/Financial Aid (4.67/100 messages compared to 3.05/100 messages) significantly different at $p<.05$.

Three categories were stressed more in Affiliated school brochures. Activities/Extracurriculars accounted for 12.99/100 messages compared to 10.88/100 messages for Nonaffiliated schools, significantly different at $p<.05$. Philosophy/School Goals received 6.40/100 messages compared to 3.82/100 messages for Nonaffiliated schools, significantly different at $p<.05$. Finally, Affiliated
## Table 8

**Dimension = Religious Affiliation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Groups Significantly Different at P &lt; .05 Level</th>
<th>Frequency Mean Rate/100 Messages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>(I) Not Religiously Affiliated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(II) Religiously Affiliated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academics/Curriculum</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>17.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>13.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities/Extracurriculars</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>10.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>12.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admissions/Application</td>
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<td>6.70</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campus/Facilities/Resources</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>5.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>5.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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</tr>
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<td>5.31</td>
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<td>Philosophy/School Goals</td>
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<td>3.82</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>6.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History/Tradition</td>
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<td>4.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.38</td>
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<tr>
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<td>5.32</td>
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<td>3.39</td>
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<td>Faculty &amp; Staff</td>
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<td>4.62</td>
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<td>3.90</td>
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<tr>
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<td>2.04</td>
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<td>Atmosphere</td>
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<td>1.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>2.70</td>
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<tr>
<td>Graduates</td>
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<td>Attitudes</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of School</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Governance</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
schools stressed Atmosphere (2.70/100 messages) compared to 1.88/100 messages for Nonaffiliated schools, significantly different at p<.05. These significant differences are summarized below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Nonreligiously-Affiliated</th>
<th>Religiously-Affiliated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academics/Curriculum</td>
<td>17.07*</td>
<td>13.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Services</td>
<td>5.32*</td>
<td>3.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costs/Financial Aid</td>
<td>4.67*</td>
<td>3.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of School</td>
<td>1.05*</td>
<td>.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities/Extracurriculars</td>
<td>10.08</td>
<td>12.99*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philosophy/School Goals</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>6.40*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atmosphere</td>
<td>1.88</td>
<td>2.70*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(An asterisk (*) denotes the group with the greater frequency.)

Together, these differences depict different marketing approaches. Schools whose missions are premised on religious principles promote themselves by emphasizing the unique religious aspect of their philosophies. This sets such schools apart from other private schools with no religious affiliation and, perhaps most importantly, from
public schools in which religious teaching is prohibited. A manifestation of Affiliated schools' core philosophies can be found in the information provided about Atmosphere. Atmosphere references were likely to focus on the psychological influences of mutual trust and caring among the school community. Affiliated schools portray a oneness of thought and spirit—a sense of belonging.

Affiliated schools emphasized Activities/Extracurriculars more than Nonaffiliated schools. A partial explanation is that many Affiliated schools appeared to offer more opportunities for service-oriented activities such as collecting money and food for the needy. Frequently, such activities were found to be requirements for graduation or for membership in certain clubs. References to attending religious services were counted in the Extra Features category rather than Activities/Extracurriculars, because in addition to service-oriented activities, Affiliated schools simply placed more emphasis on providing information about athletics, clubs and cultural activities.

Nonaffiliated schools, on the other hand, focused more on the basic educational product: academics and student services. The latter category was usually
described in terms of academic counseling (e.g., tutoring) and help in gaining admission to the college of one's choice.

Along with the emphasis on academics and student services, Nonaffiliated schools provided more information about costs and financial aid. As shown earlier, this category was not influenced by the Cost dimension (see Table 5). It is, therefore, not likely that any difference in tuition between Affiliated and Nonaffiliated schools could explain this result. On the other hand, perhaps Affiliated schools focus less on costs because costs are perceived as being relatively less important to their clientele. Perhaps the assumption of a common faith and religious values reduces the importance of cost. Or maybe discussion of costs is assumed to be in conflict with the philosophies upon which Affiliated schools exist.

Finally, the Head of School category was emphasized three times more in Nonaffiliated schools' brochures than in Religiously Affiliated schools' brochures (for which it was actually the least mentioned category). The head of an Affiliated school was typically a priest, brother, nun, rabbi or minister, whereas Nonaffiliated schools typically listed the head's credentials, including administrative
positions held in other schools, Affiliated school heads were more likely to be portrayed as part of the total religious community rather than as individuals with salable features.

D. **Research Question # 4**

How do the content categories presented in brochures promoting private high schools differ according to the persuasiveness of language used?

Each content message was initially coded as either a message (m) or persuasive message (pm). Message and persuasive message means and standard error scores were computed for each of the 28 content categories. T-Tests and two-tailed probabilities were used to compare pairs of means for each category. Twenty-four of the 28 category pairs were significantly different at the p<.05 or p<.01 level. Ratios of persuasive messages to messages (pm/m) were computed for each category. Ratios greater than 1.00, therefore, represented categories in which language was predominantly persuasive. Ratios less than 1.00 represented categories in which language was predominantly nonpersuasive. All categories were rank-ordered from most persuasive language to least persuasive language within
each content category group (i.e., Product, Price, Place and Other). The results are presented in Table 9.

In order to discuss the results of this portion of the research it is necessary to explore the assumptions underlying the usage of persuasive language in brochures promoting private high schools. First, since the primary purpose of the brochures is to attract or recruit students, it is assumed that everything in the brochures is included for persuasive intent. Negative things such as dropout rates, teacher turnover, a losing football season, or low test scores never appear in such brochures. Photos portray happy, hard-working students rather than haggard teachers correcting disorderly students. Testimonials and quotations from parents and students focus only on the positive. Because all messages in such brochures are meant to be persuasive, content categories must be analyzed relative to each other. This was accomplished using a content analysis of message frequencies (see Research Question #1) as well as a content analysis of the relative persuasiveness of language used to communicate each category (Research Question #4).
Table 9
Persuasiveness of Category Appeals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Frequency Mean Persuasive Messages (pm)</th>
<th>Frequency Mean Messages (m)</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
<th>Ratio (m/pm)</th>
<th>Two-Tailed Probability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(rate per 100 messages)</td>
<td>(rate per 100 messages)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Atmosphere</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>.169</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.034</td>
<td>23.30</td>
<td>P C .01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Attitudes</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>.160</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.040</td>
<td>13.00</td>
<td>P C .01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Student-Teacher Relationship</td>
<td>.95</td>
<td>.103</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.037</td>
<td>9.30</td>
<td>P C .01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Physical Environment</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>.166</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>.042</td>
<td>5.74</td>
<td>P C .01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Philosophy/School Goals</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>.348</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>.169</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>P C .01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Honors &amp; Achievements</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>.248</td>
<td>.62</td>
<td>.259</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>P C .05</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Faculty &amp; Staff</td>
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<td>.196</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>P C .01</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>School Size/Class Size</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>.118</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>.120</td>
<td>1.42</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Parental Involvement</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td>.160</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>.147</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Graduates</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>.153</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>.137</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Extra Features</td>
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<td>.213</td>
<td>.83</td>
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<td>Campus/Facilities</td>
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<td>.248</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>.333</td>
<td>.80</td>
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<td>.492</td>
<td>.67</td>
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<td>Student Services</td>
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<td>.320</td>
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<td>P C .01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Academics/Curriculum</td>
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<td>.673</td>
<td>.64</td>
<td>P C .01</td>
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<td>Students</td>
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<td>.145</td>
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<td>.176</td>
<td>.57</td>
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</tr>
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<td>.34</td>
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<td>.039</td>
<td>.41</td>
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<td>.34</td>
<td>P C .05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>.083</td>
<td>1.53</td>
<td>.476</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>P C .05</td>
</tr>
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<td>21</td>
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<td>.13</td>
<td>.071</td>
<td>.82</td>
<td>.158</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>P C .01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PRODUCT CATEGORIES**

**PRICE CATEGORIES**

**PLACE CATEGORIES**

**OTHER CATEGORIES**

*±* Differences for Persuasive Message means and Message means do not meet the criteria for statistical significance at the p .05 level.
The second assumption is that the chief reason for using persuasive language is to embellish information so as to present a more favorable impression. This favorable impression is usually created by linking the message with some advantage, benefit or desired outcome. In the operationalization of units of analysis, this was the criterion for determining whether or not a message included persuasive or nonpersuasive language.

Finally, it is assumed that the amount of persuasive language used to communicate a certain category of messages reflects the beliefs of school administrators about the wants and needs of their relevant publics. Persuasive language is used to describe categories believed to be important to target audiences. Categories high in persuasive language might not otherwise be judged as being as important or as need-satisfying without the use of persuasive language. Persuasive language helps educational administrators portray their schools as different from and/or better than other schools.

Nine categories predominantly used persuasive language. Fifteen categories used more nonpersuasive language. Four categories failed to meet the criteria for significant difference between persuasive and
nonpersuasive language at $p < .05$. Of the nine persuasive language categories, eight belonged to the Product category group and one (Testimonials & Quotations) belonged to the Other category group. Place and Price categories were associated with more nonpersuasive language.

The ranking of categories according to persuasiveness of language did not correspond to the ranking of categories according to message frequencies. For instance, of the top eight Product categories according to persuasiveness of language only two also ranked among the top eight Product categories according to message frequencies. From this it can be inferred that, at least in this case, the repetition of messages for persuasive effect is not related to the use of persuasive language.

The categories of Academics/Curriculum and Activities/Extracurriculars, which ranked first and second in message frequencies, were communicated using more nonpersuasive language. The information conveyed by these two categories was relatively straightforward (e.g., "Our school offers the following courses...", "Our school offers the following activities..."). The mere availability of history and English courses, for example,
does not easily distinguish one high school from another. Completely different schools may use the same textbooks and have similar teaching methodologies. Algebra in one school is not likely to be remarkably different from algebra in another school. Because of similarities in basic standards for accreditation, standardized testing, the transferral of credit from one institution to another, and colleges' similar expectations of high school graduates from different institutions, it is reasonable to infer that continuity in curricular content among different schools would exist. In fact, a Council for Basic Education report has found an "alignment" of textbooks: policies requiring textbooks to match curriculum guidelines and items on standardized tests (Sanford, 1988). Curricular content is, therefore, likely to have few major variations among schools.

The same is true of activities. Simply offering football or track as available athletic options does not distinguish one school from another offering these same sports. Whether a school's football team has won a state championship is different. This type of message, however, was counted in the Honors & Achievements category. As expected, most messages in this category, unlike the
Activities/Extracurriculars category, were associated with more persuasive language.

Categories such as Academics, Activities and Standards of Conduct represent a tangible product. Messages include references to tangible things. They can list and describe courses, sports, and rules of proper conduct, for example. This is quite different from the intangible Product categories such as Atmosphere, Attitudes and Student-Teacher Relationships.

The category associated with the most persuasive language was Atmosphere. Atmosphere messages were more than 23 times more likely to include persuasive language than nonpersuasive language! Ranking second, the Attitudes category was 13 times more likely to include persuasive language. The Student-Teacher Relationship category ranked third, using almost 10 times more persuasive language.

These top three categories are intangible Product categories with qualities that can not be tangibly described or easily quantified. Qualities such as caring and trust (Atmosphere), pride and loyalty (Attitudes) and mutual supportiveness (Student-Teacher Relationship)
cannot be easily described through tangible evidence. Yet school administrators apparently believe these are important qualities to parents and students. Rather than stressing these intangibles through repetition, the brochures stress the benefits to be derived from them through the use of persuasive language.

Philosophy/School Goals, which ranked fifth among the persuasive language categories, also represents qualities that are intangible. Physical Environment was the only tangible category among the top five persuasive language categories.

Another distinction between tangible and intangible Product categories involved the brochures' attempt to distinguish schools from one another. As stated previously, academics and activities often fail to distinguish one school from another, unless by the number of courses or available opportunities for extracurricular involvement. The substance of a math class is essentially similar in schools of all different types. School administrators highlight what they consider distinguishing aspects of their schools--those which make their schools different from alternative school choices. These areas of distinction were found to be associated with persuasive
Faculty & Staff was the only "people category" using more persuasive language. This category was previously shown to be the most frequently mentioned "people category" as well. No significant language differences were found for either Parents or Graduates categories. Students, Head of School and School Governance (Board members) used more nonpersuasive language. Head of School and School Governance, which were the two least frequently mentioned categories, were also the two "people categories" using the least persuasive language. Whereas faculty were mentioned often and in ways showing them to be beneficial, the school head and Board members were seldom mentioned and, when mentioned, the benefits to be derived from these groups were seldom communicated.

Again, this is related to the use of persuasive language to show distinguishing aspects of the schools. While courses and activities do not, by themselves, distinguish schools from each other, the characteristics of those who teach the courses and moderate or coach the activities can be important points of distinction. Math courses may be similar, but math teachers can make the
difference in the way math is taught and learned. Caring, supportive, qualified and experienced teachers are, therefore, described using persuasive language. The same is true of Student-Teacher Relationships, School Size/Class Size, Atmosphere, Attitudes, etc. While all of these categories were secondary to Academics and Activities in terms of message frequencies, they are the peripheral features which distinguish a "typical" educational program from an "exceptional" one. Students compete in sports in all schools. Students compete with pride in exceptional schools. The quality of a school's tangible academic and extracurricular programs is communicated through the persuasive language of peripheral content categories which often represent intangible aspects of the school.

Important results were found in the category groups of Price and Place. All three categories in these groups were associated with extremely low proportions of persuasive messages to nonpersuasive messages. Admission/Application, which ranked a high third in terms of message frequency, ranked last among all 28 categories in terms of persuasive language. Language used in this category was almost 10 times more likely to be
nonpersuasive. Similarly low ratios were found in the categories of Costs/Financial Aid and Transportation. These results suggest that school administrators believe the Price and Place components of the marketing mix are less likely than Product categories to distinguish their schools. Messages for Price and Place categories were constructed to provide information (e.g., "this is how much it costs to attend"; "this is how to apply"; "this is how one gets here"). Seldom was this type of information presented in ways which showed the benefits to be derived from aspects of the school relating to Price and Place. The brochures could have shown that the tuition was relatively low, a good bargain, and every effort is made to provide financial assistance where needed. Application could have been described as a simple procedure. The school's location could have been described as one that is easy to reach. Not only were these categories communicated using nonpersuasive language but, as stated previously, this information was usually relegated to the back of the brochures.

The same was true of the messages which fell into the Other category group, especially the Practical Information category. The exception was the Testimonials & Quotations
category in which predominantly persuasive language was used. Indeed, it is hard to conceive of testimonials which would not have indicated certain advantages.
CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This research sought to study the relationship between marketing principles and the recruitment strategies of private American high schools as reflected in the content of their promotional brochures. The research was conducted during a period of declining enrollments (defined as the fall of 1987) for high schools of all types due to a small and shrinking population of students at this age level. It was felt that these conditions resembled the conditions of a competitive free market economy and, therefore, the data obtained during this study would enhance understanding of the subject of marketing for student recruitment.

A. Background

A literature review was conducted to explore the emerging role of a marketing perspective in education. Marketing was defined as a transactional communication process that occurs between buyers and sellers in order to
accomplish mutually satisfying goals. Based upon the concept of exchange, marketing communication was described as a dialogue between organizations and consumers. A marketing information system was shown to involve three information transactions: information gathering to identify consumers' wants and needs, information sharing within the organization to develop a product that will satisfy consumers' needs, and promotion which communicates information and persuasion about the product from the organization to target consumers. The focus of this author's research was the promotional literature used by schools to inform and persuade parents for the purpose of student recruitment.

The educational marketing perspective is borrowed from the business community. The adaptation of business-based marketing principles to enrollment management in schools is based on the assumption that schools and businesses are essentially similar. It is argued that both rely on mutually beneficial exchange relationships and that the communication strategies of business-based marketing are applicable to schools and other nonprofit organizations.
The "marketing mix" for both businesses and schools was said to be concerned with four basic components: Product (something that will satisfy some consumer's needs); Place (the channel through which the product is made available to the consumer); Price (the monetary and nonmonetary costs the consumer must exchange for the product); and Promotion (information and persuasion concerning the product, its availability and its costs, directed from the organization to potential consumers). Each of these "four P's" of the marketing mix was shown to be multidimensional.

The educational perspective toward developing a marketing posture was examined. Two criticisms of marketing emerged. First, according to Kotler and Fox (1985), the image of marketing among educators is based on a misperception of marketing as hard selling. This has led to the view that marketing techniques are incompatible with the mission of education. The second criticism is that education should not need marketing. People should recognize education's intrinsic worth and "know what's good for them." Because of these criticisms, many authors believe that educational administrators reflect seller-oriented rather than client-oriented approaches to
marketing, the latter being the appropriate marketing perspective.

It was shown that most educators have accepted marketing as a necessary evil. However, despite their similarities, important differences between the business-based economic model of pure competition and the marketing realities of private schools were discussed. Most schools, unlike businesses, are not motivated by profit potential. The educational "product" is ambiguous and inconsistently perceived by consumers. Imperfect competition exists among private schools. Imperfect information results from a natural asymmetry in information between educational administrators and educational consumers (parents). Also, neither professional educators nor parents have a thorough understanding of educational causes and effects. Neither can isolate what difference educational effects have made. Therefore, information from both sides is often based on assumptions rather than on objective evidence.

In summation, at least four factors suggest that educational administrators involved in marketing for student recruitment may be ineffective or even counterproductive. First, educators do not fully
understand marketing. Second, educators are reluctant to use marketing principles, believing they conflict with their schools' missions and are unnecessary. Third, the business-based model of marketing, which schools have adopted, is based on an economic model of pure competition which is different in some ways from the marketing realities of private schools. And fourth, educational administrators appear to reflect seller-oriented rather than client-oriented approaches to marketing.

B. The Study

A research study was designed to analyze the content of schools' promotional brochures. A stratified random sample of 554 schools meeting the operationalized definition of "private high school" was obtained. Posing as a parent of a high school-age student moving to the state in which each of the schools in the sample were located, this author solicited a brochure from each school. A 92.7% response rate (102 schools) was obtained with 100 school brochures received. Determinations were made to define what constituted a brochure and which parts of the brochure would be included in the content analysis. The unit of analysis was each complete sentence. However, within each sentence, clearly distinct messages were
recorded separately. Using a content category dictionary, 28 exhaustive and mutually exclusive content categories were identified, defined and grouped according to the marketing components of Product, Place and Price. Each discrete message was tallied as either a message or a persuasive message. The latter term was operationalized as messages in which the language explicitly mentioned some benefit, advantage or desired outcome. A total of 14,328 discreet messages and persuasive messages were tallied on data collection sheets. Each school was coded according to five dimensions: size, age, cost, geographic region and religious affiliation.

Reliability testing was performed using two independent judges. The judges' content coding of three brochures was compared against this author's coding of the same brochures. The judges' classification of content categories had an 87.56% rate of agreement with the author. The judges' classification of persuasiveness of language had an 85.50% rate of agreement with the author. The judges' classification of the marketing components of Product, Place, Price, and Other had a 96.14% rate of agreement with the author. These results were deemed acceptable by this researcher.
C. Summary

The first research question asked which content categories were emphasized in schools' promotional brochures. The significance of this question is that it seeks to identify those topics which are included in schools' brochures and the relative importance assigned those topics by school administrators. It is believed that those topics emphasized most, through repetition, represent the aspects educational administrators consider the best "selling" points of their schools (i.e., those which match the wants and needs of educational consumers). This provides insight into how schools market themselves to parents and prospective students.

Twenty-eight content categories emerged, 21 of which pertained to the Product component of the marketing mix. There were two Price categories, one Place category and four categories in the group called Other.

By a wide margin, the schools emphasized most the categories of Academics/Curriculum and Activities/Extracurriculars (see Table 2). Frequencies for these categories were significantly higher than all other
categories and, together, accounted for one-fourth of the content of all brochures.

It is not surprising that these categories should have received so much emphasis. Academics comprise the bulk of the school day with extracurricular activities often making up most of students' after-school experiences. In fact, private schools are apparently correct in emphasizing the category of Academics. Research indicates the primary reasons parents send their children to any school is academic excellence (O'Brien, 1988, p. 3; Staff, "Ideas and Perspectives," April 18, 1988, p. 6). This, however, was not always the case with private schools. Between 1963 and 1974 Catholic schools, which constitute the majority of nonpublic schools, were chosen because they offered religious education:

In fact, studies show quite clearly that Catholic school parents were not interested in academic reasons for choosing Catholic schools, not even in a secondary way. If they wanted academic excellence, they chose the public schools. Today, however, the tables have turned. The research suggests that Catholic school parents are overwhelmingly interested in academic quality and college preparation, even at the elementary level, as reasons for choosing Catholic schools. (Bauch, 1987, p. 59)

The emphasis on extracurricular activities, however, appears to be less warranted as a marketing strategy.
Studies conducted by Independent School Management show that parents of students in private schools are relatively unconcerned with extracurriculars such as athletic teams, musical groups, dances and student government. However, these activities are very important to high school students. The brochures obtained for this study appear targeted primarily to parents. Students, no doubt, are a secondary target audience and may exert considerable influence with their parents.

While it seems doubtful that educational administrators are justified in according Activities/Extracurriculars such prominence in their brochures, it is even more significant that they appeared to totally ignore what studies show is the second most important priority of private school parents—Character Building:

Although it may be difficult to accept, a growing number of public schools today offer hard academics that are equivalent to those found even in the best private-independent schools...Discerning parents—those who go beyond image and reputation—make these comparisons. Your chance to persuade them that your institution is better, and worth the price, rests largely in the character development areas. (Staff, "Ideas & Perspectives," April 18, 1988, p. 7)

Character development includes discipline, religious and moral teachings, and teachers who serve as role models.
While Character Development did not represent a content category by itself, this aspect of schools was represented in categories such as Philosophy/School Goals, Standards of Conduct/Rules and Student-Teacher Relationship. Certainly, however, the importance of Character Development was underemphasized in the schools' brochures.

The second research question asked how the marketing components of Product, Place and Price were represented in the content of schools' brochures (see Table 3). As stated, 21 of the 28 content categories were associated with the Product component of the marketing mix. When all categories were collapsed into category groups the Product dimension was found represented in three-fourths of the brochures' content which was significantly different from all other category groups. The dominance of Product references suggests school administrators believe that what their schools have to offer is more important to parents than where it is offered or at what price. What constitutes a school's Product? The answer is the process of education as defined by the brochures' content: Academics, Activities, Campus/Facilities, Philosophy, History, Student Services, Faculty, Extra Features, Students, Atmosphere, Graduates, Honors & Achievements,
School Size/Class Size, Standards of Conduct, Parental Involvement, Attitudes, Physical Environment, Student-Teacher Relationship, School Credentials, Head of School and School Governance. Some of these categories represent tangible aspects of the process of education and can be assessed. Other aspects are intangible and are described abstractly.

Marketing theory states that the Product, Place, Price and Promotion components are interdependent and equal in importance. Sequentially, they have a logical order with Product coming first. However, there is little available research to indicate how much emphasis should be placed on the different components. If the components are considered equal in importance, perhaps they should be accorded equal frequencies in promotional literature. It does seem logical, however, that Product should be emphasized most because it is the one component most under schools’ control and most responsive to parents’ input concerning their wants and needs. Place, for example, can be communicated positively and persuasively (e.g., “Our campus is centrally located and a convenient driving distance from the airport...”) but there is really nothing a school can do to change its location. Price, too, can
be communicated in ways which show its benefits (e.g., "Our tuition is low relative to other private schools in the area..."). But there is not much that can be done to change costs in schools. Most schools are nonprofit to begin with, so, in most cases, a significant reduction in costs will affect a significant change in Product offerings (e.g., increasing student class size or doing away with athletic programs). Furthermore, research suggest that the Price dimension is less important to educational consumers than most school administrators believe, as indicated in this advice to private school administrators:

Do not deter from setting tuitions at the level necessary to run quality programs and pay salaries that attract and hold strong faculty...We find that parents select a school on its reputation and on the services offered. They only make decisions in favor of lower tuition when the schools are viewed as similar in both categories and when the price differences are very significant. Finally, don't confuse low enrollment produced by the demographic "trough" as a sign of having priced your school "out of the market." (Staff, "Ideas & Perspectives," November 30, 1987, p. 47)

According to this, Price is important to educational consumers only when it has an impact on Product. Schools should be concerned with Product first when making pricing decisions.
The brochures indicate that schools market the educational Product much the same way as businesses market their products. Schools, like businesses, describe Product in terms of its core, tangible and augmented levels. The marketing components of Price and Place are integral parts of schools' promotional literature.

The third research question asked how marketing strategies, evidenced in the brochures' content categories, differ according to the size, cost, age, geographic region and religious affiliation of schools. The results showed remarkably few significant differences (see Tables 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8). Most of these differences were obvious or relatively unimportant. For instance, older schools emphasize their history more than younger schools. It is much more important that so few differences emerged within the school dimensions. For example, school costs did not influence the emphasis schools placed on the Costs/Financial Aid category. School size did not influence the School Size/Class Size category. In spite of the fact that larger schools tend to have more available curricular and extracurricular offerings, school size had no impact on either of these categories. Likewise, school age and geographic region
made almost no difference in the frequencies of nearly all categories. The relative emphases given categories were remarkably consistent across very different types of schools.

A school's uniqueness should be an important part of its marketing effort:

The subject of any advertising campaign should have something to make it special. Schools are no exception. The function of a school system is to provide accessible education in the broadest sense—to provide basic cognitive materials plus a variety of "how to" experiences. How a school provides these opportunities defines its uniqueness. Whatever it is, it must be a well-understood quality so that it can be affirmatively described. (Pfeiffer & Dunlap, 1988, p. 15)

One would have to ask whether schools do market their uniqueness when, for instance, 200-year-old schools' brochures reveal the same pattern of content category emphases as 20-year-old schools; schools in California reveal the same emphases as schools in New England; schools charging $8,000 per year reveal the same emphases as schools charging $1,500 per year.

The content of the 100 brochures was so consistent that this part of the research suggests school administrators may pattern their brochures after each others. This could be due, in part, to the fact that many
of the school heads transfer from school to school. Some
of the school heads contacted, for example, mentioned in
their cover letters that they are former heads of private
schools in Delaware, this researcher's state. Also, it
was noted on some of the brochures that the brochures were
prepared by consulting firms. These firms serve several
different private schools throughout the country. In
fact, the "Blue Book," which was the sampling frame for
this study, advertises that schools can have this
directory's school listings reprinted as brochures.
Whatever the reasons, the similarity among brochures does
little to accomplish the schools' marketing objectives.
After reading such a large sample of brochures, this
researcher's impression was that all schools were alike.
If the typical parent has this same impression, it is
likely that he or she will turn to peripheral cues to
distinguish schools. For instance, the impression of the
brochures' design, appearance and photographic content may
influence parents more than the textual content. This
discussion seems to confirm the concept of "imperfect
information," set forth by Abramowitz and Stackhouse
(1980, p. 75):

But it is the third level that describes best
the imperfect information condition in
education: neither the producer nor the consumer
has much understanding about what is produced. Professional educators (producers) know more than parents (consumers) about what goes on in the school, but the former are usually unable to predict either the effect of their efforts or the best way to proceed with production...Therefore, both consumers and the producers possess only very limited relevant information about the process of education. If consumers do not fully understand what they are buying and producers do not fully understand what they are producing, the exercise of choice by consumers and competition by producers still might not lead to an efficient market.

There were at least two significant exceptions to the similarities among brochures. As school costs increased, the emphasis on Activities/Extracurriculars decreased consistently and the emphasis on Academics and Student Services (primarily college counseling and placement) increased. This situation makes sense in light of schools' marketing goals:

Most private-independent schools concentrate on a sequence of experiences that eventually result in college placement....Parents pay tuitions and fees for the programs (and services) that meet their quality expectations. ...parents in all types of schools give first priority to hard academics (with their eyes on college placement)...(Staff, "Ideas & Perspectives," April 18, 1988, pp. 6-7)

Schools that charge more must have something of value to offer parents. What parents value most is a school that prepares their child for college--perhaps even
helping their child obtain a scholarship to a prestigious college. This far outweighs the parents’ interest in clubs, sports and social activities.

The second important exception to the brochures’ similarities was in the area of religious affiliation. Significant differences were found in seven of the 28 categories. This occurred, in part, because whereas the other dimensions (age, cost, size, etc.) contained four or five different ranges, religious affiliation contained only two (i.e., Affiliated and Nonaffiliated). Also, whereas there was some missing data for the other dimensions (e.g., data concerning school size was available for only 61% of the schools) data was complete for the religious affiliation dimension. Statistically, categories for religious affiliation were more likely to reveal significant differences.

Nevertheless, significant category frequency patterns emerged. Affiliated schools market themselves differently from Nonaffiliated schools. Affiliated schools place more emphasis on Activities, Philosophy and Atmosphere. Nonaffiliated schools place more emphasis on Academics, Student Services, Costs/Financial Aid and Head of School. While, as noted above, parents in all types of schools
place highest priority on academics, they place second highest priority on character building. This is one distinguishing feature of religiously affiliated schools in particular. Many of these schools' brochures included information about activities oriented toward service programs. By emphasizing their philosophies, religiously affiliated schools stress their uniqueness and that which separates them from other private schools and, more importantly, that which separates them from their public school counterparts. A manifestation of religiously affiliated schools' core philosophies is found in the information they provide in the Atmosphere category. These messages were likely to focus on the psychological influences of mutual trust and caring among the school community. Affiliated schools portray a oneness of thought and spirit—a sense of belonging.

That Affiliated schools give less emphasis to Costs/Financial Aid and Head of School can also be explained given the differences between these and Nonaffiliated schools. Because Affiliated schools portray a oneness in thought and spirit within the entire school community, perhaps schools' costs seem less important. The assumption of common faith and religious values
reduces the importance of cost. Or maybe discussion of costs is assumed to be in conflict with the philosophies upon which religiously affiliated schools exist.

The Head of School category was emphasized three times less in Affiliated schools. The religious ministries of these schools' heads (nuns, priests, ministers, rabbis) could provide a probable explanation. These schools' heads are portrayed as part of the total school community rather than as individuals with salable features.

The fourth research question asked how the content categories were presented in terms of persuasive language. Nine categories used more persuasive language and 15 categories used more nonpersuasive language (see Table 9). Of the nine persuasive language categories, eight belonged to the Product category group. Place and Price categories were associated with more nonpersuasive language. The emphasis on the use of persuasive language in the Product category group is premised on the assumption that the school product is able to live up to the "billing":

In advertising terminology, the phrase "primacy of product" relates to the basic worth of whatever is being described to the public. Even highly-promoted consumer products such as automobiles or toothpastes cannot be
successfully marketed unless they are intrinsically good... And, by the same token, if a school system is to be described in glowing terms, the school had better glow! (Pfeiffer & Dunlap, 1988, p. 15)

It was significant that the ranking of categories according to persuasiveness of language did not correspond to the ranking of categories according to message frequencies. This suggests that something different is accomplished through the use of persuasive language as opposed to mere repetition of content messages.

The top three categories using more persuasive language were Atmosphere, Attitudes, and Student-Teacher Relationship. Such categories represent intangible qualities. Categories with high message frequencies but low in persuasive language, such as Academics and Activities, represent tangible aspects of the school product. Courses and activities are not likely to be significantly different from school to school. Offering Algebra and having a football team, for example, does not easily distinguish one school from another. Something else must be communicated in order to distinguish private schools from one another and from public schools. The data suggests that this difference is communicated through the use of persuasive language to describe intangible
things such as Attitudes and Atmosphere. For example, while courses and activities do not, by themselves, distinguish schools from each other, the characteristics of those who teach the courses and moderate or coach activities can be important points of distinction. Math courses may be similar, but math teachers can make the difference in the way math is taught and learned. The Faculty/Staff category, therefore, used more persuasive language whereas Academics and Activities used more nonpersuasive language.

D. Conclusion

The answers to each of the four research questions relate to the broader question of whether high school administrators market their schools effectively. At the heart of this question is the determination of whether school brochures reflect seller-centered or client-centered perspectives. While this determination is beyond the scope of the current study, the results obtained do suggest that there is reason to question the marketing assumptions made by school administrators. Certainly, additional research concerning the wants and needs of educational consumers would be useful in making this determination.
The analysis of content category frequencies suggests that schools do place a high emphasis on academics which corresponds to the top priority of private school parents. However, the schools appear to ignore the aspect of character development which is accorded second priority among parents and which is the one private school feature which most clearly distinguishes private schools from public schools which "are hobbled by legal restrictions regarding anything that smacks of 'religion,' and by fear they may infringe upon family mores or traditions" (Staff, "Ideas & Perspectives," April 18, 1988, p. 7).

The Product component of the marketing mix is emphasized much more than either the Price or Place dimensions in school brochures. This appears to be justified. The school product, unlike the product of businesses, does not enjoy flexibility in its channels of distribution. Therefore, the Place component really is important from the marketing perspective primarily when new schools are planned and constructed. Similarly, the Price component is not amenable to change since the basic educational product is not produced for profit. Furthermore, evidence suggests that parents are not
motivated by Price differences unless they are significant or if they have an effect on the product offerings.

The high degree of similarity among brochures of schools of many different sizes, ages, costs, geographic locations and religious affiliation is a danger signal from a marketing perspective. The relatively few significant category frequency differences suggest deficiencies in one or more of the three communication transactions in the marketing information system (see Figure 1). It suggests that schools do not adequately collect information about wants and needs from their publics. It also suggests insufficient internal communication to discuss the wants and needs of consumers and to develop a product offering that satisfies those wants and needs.

Finally, the analysis of the use of persuasive language suggests that, whereas repetition of content messages is the primary method for emphasizing things considered to be important to parents, private school administrators rely on persuasion to distinguish their schools from each other and from their public school counterparts. Whereas tangible Product categories such as Academics and Activities fail to distinguish schools,
intangible categories, such as Atmosphere and Attitudes, offer important points of distinction which are communicated through the use of persuasive language. Persuasive language explicitly depicts advantages and benefits to be derived from certain aspects of the schools.

In light of these conclusions, future research is recommended to further understanding of the marketing process as it applies to private high schools. Future research should attempt to test the correlation between school administrators' orientations and the orientations of parents and students. If school administrators are correct in borrowing business-based marketing strategies, it is essential that they also assess the degree to which the parent-school exchange relationship is a mutually satisfying one. Future research must go beyond this current research in answering the question: "How well do private high schools satisfy the wants and needs of educational consumers?"

If it is true that parents turn to peripheral cues (such as the appearance of the brochures) to select a private school, because of the similarities which exist in the textual content of brochures from many different types
of schools, then additional aspects of the brochures should be analyzed. The brochures' photographic content appeared to create a stronger impression than did the text. Much more information than just the brochures was included with the schools' response. This material should be analyzed as well.

The findings from this research recall the question voiced by many members of the educational community: "Is marketing incompatible with the nature and mission of education?" Authors such as Phillip Kotler have suggested this is an emotional response by educators who do not understand the concept of marketing. Others—notably Abramowitz and Stackhouse—have stated that disparate factors exist between the business-based model of pure competition and the marketing realities of private schools. These factors, including "imperfect information," belie the assumption that schools are essentially like businesses. Whereas this research focused on the similarities between business-based marketing and marketing for student recruitment, future research is needed to address their differences. The following, taken from a recent article on this topic, challenges the validity of our assumptions about the role
of marketing in nonprofit organizations and warns about its improper use:

Marketing is a buzz-word of today. We tend to respond to its use with an approving nod. Though it clearly has its place in the business world, it can be more misleading than helpful when applied to the nonprofit sector.... The idea that nonprofit organizations should adopt business ways to achieve efficiency has been around for a long time. That doesn't give it validity in all circumstances.... Nonprofits may learn some things from business. Promotion is probably one. But the rest of marketing is not usually applicable, even though similarities exist. Borrowing a comprehensive theory or practice such as marketing from the for-profit world can only distort and delude. (Howe, 1988, pp. 44-47)

Whether or not this view is correct depends upon one's definition of marketing. If marketing is defined as a deliberate strategy for meeting customer wants and needs, then it appears to have relevance in the nonprofit sector, including education. However, as the above quotation suggests, there is considerable pressure for educational administrators to jump on the marketing bandwagon. Because the pressure is increased by the crisis of a student shortage, school administrators may have become involved in marketing without proper training or preparation. Future research is needed to assess the results of schools which have marketed for student
recruitment. Since marketing success is measured by the "bottom line," (e.g., increased enrollment) it should be relatively simple to assess different performance levels between schools that are actively engaged in marketing and schools that are not.
REFERENCES


Dear (name of school head):

Because of my husband's expected job relocation, our family plans to move to (state of target school) sometime next summer.

We expect to be enrolling our child in 9th grade at a private high school there. However, we know virtually nothing about schools in your area.

Could you please send me one of your school's brochures?

My husband and I are very concerned about quality education. Also, we are concerned about the location and cost of schools there. We feel that the decision of what school to attend is a very important one and we would appreciate any answers you can provide.

Thank you very much. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,
APPENDIX B

DATA COLLECTION SHEET

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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>Geographic Region: __</td>
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<td>Extra Features</td>
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APPENDIX C

CONTENT CATEGORY DICTIONARY

PRODUCT REFERENCES

1) Philosophy/School Goals

This category includes statements about the broad mission or objectives of the school. These statements, therefore, typically take the form of "we believe that...," or "...is at the heart of the school," or "the school is committed to..."

Example: "We strive to develop happy, fair-minded human beings and all our programs are directed to this goal."

2) Academics/Curriculum

This category includes statements about classes, credit requirements for graduation, teaching and academic department philosophies and course offerings.

Examples: "Students may derive enjoyment from courses such as Health and First Aid."

"We offer a broad, college preparatory curriculum which stresses basic skills."

3) Honors & Achievements

This category includes statements about awards received by students, teachers, or school. It also includes judgements about the reputation of the school, its faculty, students, programs, teams, or facilities.
Examples: "Cushing received an award from Governor Dukakis for this work."

"Academy students strive to win--and they win more than their share."

"Our facilities have been widely recognized in architectural journals for their..."

4) **Attitudes**

Attitudes include statements which refer to expressed feelings of the school’s faculty, students, or parents.

Examples: "We are proud of our tradition of continued growth."

"Our families choose us because they believe that..."

5) **History/Tradition**

History/Tradition statements refer to the school’s founding and founder(s), the growth or major changes which have taken place, and the character and traditions of the institutions which have developed.

Examples: "For many years Cushing was the only high school serving Ashburnham."

"The facility is named for..."

"The boys and girls schools were consolidated in 1916."

6) **Campus/Facilities**

This category includes statements about the school grounds, buildings, and instructional resources such as computers and library books.

Examples: "The campus encompasses 32 beautiful acres..."

"...a spacious cafeteria where meals are served."
"...features extensive athletic facilities"

7) Students

Statements fitting this category refer to the social, geographic, economic, ethnic, intellectual, and cultural backgrounds or general characteristics of the student body.

Examples: "...their diverse social and ethnic backgrounds reflect that of the larger metropolitan community."

"The Oak Knoll boy or girl wears a uniform, totes a heavy bookbag, does lots of homework..."

8) Faculty/Staff

Faculty/Staff statements refer to the description, composition, or characteristics of teachers and other staff persons (with the exception of the school head) as well as their credentials such as college degrees, years of experience, and teaching certification.

Examples: "Cushing's art teachers are versatile professionals whose work in various media have been recognized."

"Our talented and supportive faculty..."

"The faculty comes from diverse backgrounds..."

9) Head of School

Statements about the headmaster, headmistress, or principal of school are included in this category.

Example: "Mr. Smith, headmaster since 1979, brings a special perspective to this position."

10) Graduates

Statements about the school's alumni may refer to colleges attended by graduates or college acceptances, employment trends, or alumni involvement in the school.
Examples: "Most graduates continue their success in college."

"Our students have been accepted in such highly selective institutions as Harvard, Yale, and Princeton."

11) **Student Services**

The Student Services category refers to personal and college counseling, tutorial services, health care, guidance, and academic advisement.

Example: "In order to help students make the appropriate choices, an organized system of college counseling is offered."

12) **Standards of Conduct/Rules**

Standards of Conduct/Rules includes references to discipline codes, acceptable and unacceptable behavior, dress codes, penalties for conduct violations, etc.

Examples: "Students are expected to be present and punctual for all appointments."

"One aspect of personal integrity is adherance by community members to the school's previously-agreed-upon standards of behavior."

13) **School Credentials**

This category includes references to the school's memberships in various associations and its accreditation status.

Example: "...is fully accredited by the Middle States Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools."

14) **Extra Features**

This category refers to statements about programs that go beyond the typical academic and extracurricular high school experiences. Extra features include descriptions of the students' boarding or residential life, chapel
services, foreign exchange programs, day care, summer camp, and unique activities such as survival training.

Examples: "Quiet time for prayer and reflection is provided on a daily basis."

"A summer session and day camp are offered each year."

15) **Activities/Extracurriculars**

Activities/Extracurriculars includes such things as student clubs, athletics, music and drama productions, community service projects, student government, student publications, and social activities such as dances.

Example: "A wide variety of extracurricular offerings supplement the formal curriculum."

16) **Physical Environment**

This category refers to the physical or cultural setting in which the school is located. This setting may include the town, city, state, or region. It does not include the school's location in the sense of directions for finding the school. Nor does it include references primarily about the school's campus.

Examples: "Its 300 acre campus is located near the historical mining town of..."

"The school is located in north central Massachusetts in a rural area of rolling hills dotted with lakes."

"On weekends, our students take advantage of the many theatres and museums located in nearby Boston."

17) **Atmosphere**

This category includes references to the ambiance—the distinctive atmosphere within the school. It refers to intangible feelings such as friendliness, caring, mutual trust and respect.
Examples: "Our family atmosphere and community spirit..."
"We provide a supportive, yet challenging environment."
"The atmosphere of the school is relaxed and informal."

18) **Size of School/Class Size**

This category includes references to the size of the student body, average class size and the student-to-teacher ratio.

Examples: "Our classes are small, from 10 to 20 students."
"Our school is large enough to provide a diversity of programs and activities yet, the low student-teacher ratio ensures personal attention."

19) **Student-Teacher Relationship**

Student-Teacher Relationship refers to the relationships between students and teachers and the respective roles assumed by students and teachers through their interaction in a variety of settings (e.g., student-teacher, athlete-coach, teenager-adult).

Examples: "...where the close interaction between teacher and student fosters mutual respect and trust."
"At Cushing, you get to know your teachers as human beings."

20) **School Governance**

This category includes references to school governing bodies such as the board of directors. It does not refer to the school administration.

Examples: "The school functions under one board and one president."
"The Convention elects Academy Trustees."
provides financial support and sets the general policy by which the school is governed."

21) **Parental Involvement**

Parental Involvement includes references to parents' associations, home-school associations, meetings between school personnel and parents and parent-focused special events.

Examples: 

"...is fortunate to have an active Parent-Teacher League."

"Parents are encouraged to take an active part in the life of the school."

**PLACE REFERENCES**

22) **Directions/Transportation**

This category refers to the location of the school in terms of directions (how to get there, where it is located) as well as the various means by which students and parents get to and from the school (e.g., bus, carpools, etc.).

Examples: 

"We are in easy walking distance of downtown Summit and within convenient commuting distance to New York."

"Students travel by bus and by car..."

"From San Francisco: cross Bay Bridge--take 580 toward Oakland-change to 24 toward Walnut Creek..."
23) Costs/Financial Aid

This category includes statements about tuition, terms of payment, scholarship and financial aid, fees, living expenses, expected donations, etc.

Examples: "Because tuition covers only part of the cost of educating students, and financial aid is available, our school is able to accommodate a diverse student population."

"There is a $45 non-refundable application fee due at the time of application."

24) Admissions/Application

This category includes statements concerning how to make application, how students are selected for admission, deadlines for making application, admissions testing and placement, and school visits or interviews related to applying or being admitted to the school.

Examples: "Early application is encouraged."

"...has a nondiscriminatory policy and is open to all students regardless of race, color, religion, or national and ethnic origin."

"Special consideration is given to children of alumni."

OTHER REFERENCES

25 Testimonials & Quotations

This "Other" category includes statements which are presented in the brochures as quotations. These quotations, which may or may not be attributed to a source, are often presented as testimonials about the school. The quoted sources may be students, graduates, teachers, parents, or newspaper articles.
Example: "'My two children are very different...Both have grown into capable, confident adults.'"

26) General School Descriptors

This "Other" category includes statements which describe the type of school in very broad terms.

Examples: "Oak Knoll School is an independent elementary and secondary school, serving students in grades K through 12."

"The school consists of two divisions--Lower school, grades K-6, and Upper School, grades 7-12."

"...is a coeducational, non-sectarian school for both boarding and day students."

27) Other Practical Information

This category includes statements containing information of a practical nature that do not fit any of the other categories. For example, this category includes references to meals, times when school begins and ends, homework, and study periods, etc.

Examples: "Other meals are served cafeteria style."

"The school year begins early in September."

28) Other

This final category includes all statements that cannot be fitted into any of the other 27 categories. Typically, this category contains introductory, transitional, and closing statements that, by themselves, do not describe the school directly. They may also include the author's general thoughts on education or on life. These statements, too, do not directly describe the school.

Examples: "For instance, watching a play is great fun: it's more enjoyable if you have been a part of a stage company yourself."

"Selecting the right school can be an exciting
experience, but it does require thought and planning."

"There has never been a greater need to provide a sound academic education for our youth."