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**A GROUNDED THEORY: REALISING
FAMILY POTENTIAL THROUGH
CHOICE OF SCHOOLING**

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**This thesis is presented as part of the requirements of the award of the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy of the University of Notre Dame Australia**

December 2006

Declaration of Authorship

This thesis is the candidate's own work and contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any degree or diploma in any other institution.

To the best of the candidate's knowledge, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

Candidate's Name

Date

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my father, Peter Murray AOM, who had a deep passion about Catholic Education, from the 1960s when he fought vigorously for State Aid, until his death in 2005.

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ABSTRACT

This study was designed to develop a substantive theory that would explain the process through which a family makes educational choices in Western Australia. The grounded theory method was chosen for this research.

The participants in the study were mainly parents of children in Catholic schools who were invited to assist in the research through purposive sampling. Further theoretical sampling extended the parental informant group to include parents of children in the government sector as well as in non-government schools other than Catholic schools. The data were primarily obtained through formal interviews. The analysis of the data was conducted through the use of the constant comparative method, memo writing and drawing of schema to express the theoretical development (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). NUD*IST™ 6 and 7 were used initially to help manage the data until categories were firmly established. *Inspiration*® was used to draw schema to visualise category development.

The study showed that parents were challenged to choose outside the education provided by the government for three types of reasons: specific needs of the child, availability of schooling, and/or family imperatives. To resolve this concern they entered the process of realising their family potential. This process had two different phases. The initial phase was making the choice and involved three stages: refining family imperatives, framing their options and making a match. The second phase was managing the choice and involved two stages. The process in the first stage was reviewing and justifying the choice and in stage two was resolving the issues. The result of this part of the process was to change the choice or maintain the choice. If the choice was to change they returned to the first phase to make a further choice.

The study lies within a historical, political, sociological and theological context and is further informed by the review of different forms of decision-making models. Since no other substantive studies on this subject were discovered in the searches undertaken in Australia, the present study is considered to be an original contribution to the wider field of knowledge about school choice.

**... writing comes to represent
the footprints of our thoughts
as they progress over time
(Ely, Vinz, Downing & Anzul, 1999, p. 20).**