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Counter Narratives: A Phenomenological Study of Inner-City Catholic School Teachers

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Inner-City Catholic School Teachers

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Abstract

Educational experiences of children can have positive or negative impacts on their future. This study used a method, counter narratives, identified by Critical Race theorists to document the shared experiences of inner-city Catholic school educators during one of the most important time periods of education in our country, post Brown v Board of Education (1954). Using a qualitative and phenomenological approach, the researcher interviewed educators from an inner-city Catholic school to investigate their experiences during the post-restructuring phase, which essentially segregated a select group of schools from the larger archdiocese school system. These targeted schools were renamed, provided an alternate governing body, and more importantly, primarily served students of color. Subsequently, the phenomenon under study was systemic racism. The semi-structured interviews were structured around these three questions: 1) What did teachers perceive as the reason for restructuring within the archdiocese? 2) What was the impact of restructuring on the experiences of teachers? 3) During the post-restructuring phase, how did the archdiocese leaders address the educational needs within the inner-city schools? Themes emerged and created a narrative that represented the educators who experienced the phenomenon. The findings of this study were aligned to urban and religious schools research. Based on the results of the thematic analysis, the researcher concluded that there were benefits in employing and retaining teachers of color for all students and segregation marginalized educational outcomes for students of color. Subsequently, researchers should aim to include marginalized groups for increased

validity. This study also added to the body of research for Critical Race theory and urban

schools.

Dedication

I dedicate my dissertation work to my loving mother. She passed away when this work started and without her nurturing and teachings, I would not have survived this journey. As a single parent, she taught me the value of grit and I am forever grateful for her unconditional love. I miss her terribly and I always strive to make her proud.

I also want to dedicate this work to my entire family. I wanted to represent our family in a positive way. I want to be an inspiration to my younger cousins and our children. I am hopeful this work is a model of what we are capable of as students and learners. We can do all things through Christ who strengthens us.

I also want to dedicate this work to the children and families I serve. The study of Critical Race Theory is relevant and should become a resource for educating all children. If our hope is to promote a democratic society and provide historical facts and voices from all groups, this research is necessary. An unfair system has been established and has to be disrupted. Let us all be a vessel for dismantling the walls of oppression.

Acknowledgements

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Chapter 1

Introduction

This study examined the lived experiences of educators from an elementary

Catholic school previously located in a large Midwest inner-city of the United States,

which primarily served students of color. The experiences shared by these educators will

provide a glimpse into the internal governance of select schools of an archdiocese. These

schools have an interesting history and characteristics that parallel our current urban

school settings. Therefore, it was important to share the lived experiences of the

educators who were recruited to teach in these select inner-city parochial schools and

served students of color. Their stories are important because they contributed a counter

narrative to the history of urban, parochial schools that served students of color. These

stories would most likely be lost without the deliberate intent of the researcher to provide

the opportunity to individuals who have experienced marginalization to be invited to the

platform. One tenet of Critical Race Theory seeks action and is grounded in the premise

that stories, or counter narratives, are shared and support the recall of select events in

history, which in some cases interrupt the current research, specifically when it involves

people of color (Ladson-Billings, 1995). It is the opinion of this author, based in research

and archival documents, that structural racism is fixed within the policies and procedures

of the past within the archdiocese and may support critical race theorists' positions.

The specific focus of this research study is an educational institution located

within the archdiocese. The narratives of the educators will reveal their professional

experiences, as well as the experiences of their students during a select time period. In

addition to these stories, there are research and artifacts that suggest during a period of

time, the Archdiocese identified and separated a select group of schools, creating a separate organization of schools, within the larger archdiocese. These separate schools enrolled a majority of Black students and was located in an inner city, separate from schools that enrolled primarily white students.

Catholic schools are situated within the larger system of education and therefore were analyzed from a critical race lens in order to change practices that may potentially cause harm to populations who are consistently marginalized in society. It is critical that educators understand how systemic racism had impacted the lives of people of color and how the institution itself had caused minimization. It is the act of seeking formal training associated with closely analyzing and reviewing policy through the lens of structural racism within all educational systems (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Feagin, 2006) that can interrupt the current inequitable circumstances for people of color. This research study did not did not take into consideration counter stories or narratives because none of these accounts used the lens of elementary educators of the Catholic school system. Given the depth of sacrifice and the significant number of Black families, both non-religious and religious, who have this belief that religious schools are best for their children and make financial investments and sacrifices for the opportunity, this is concerning and worthy of study.

The first chapter will explain the background of the study, which contextualized the study to be rooted in purpose and value for the educational community, the intended audience. Subsequently, the researcher explained the problem and purpose of the study. Finally, the researcher integrated the research within the context of the theoretical framework.

To provide additional context for the reader, it was important to share how this research topic developed and how the researcher's position was disclosed. During the initial phase of the study, the researcher was interested in her own educational experiences as a person of color and how these experiences shaped her professional career and opportunities. The researcher remembered that her elementary educational experiences were traditional yet different from the experiences of many of her White colleagues. Specifically, the researcher compared her educational experiences to those of her White colleagues to determine if her educational setting and opportunities were adequate or marginalized. The outcome of this comparison, based in the researcher's current knowledge of educational practices revealed that the researcher's school setting was deficient in some areas. The areas of deficiency included economics, curriculum and access to educational experiences that were offered to similarly situated students.

This structure, as described by the researcher, raised several questions regarding the specific ways in which the schools were structured and supported within the district. Subsequently, this became the beginning of the research. Next, the researcher reviewed the archival documents related to the inner-city schools, searching for information about the inner-city Catholic school (ICCS) under study specifically. Several documents revealed information regarding the inner-city schools located in the large Midwestern city. One document dated November 1965 provided a report that was completed by the Elementary School Department of the School Office of the archdiocese of this Midwestern city. This document evidenced the separation of select inner-city schools with a relatively high ratio of Negro pupils. This same report identified the same 13

inner-city schools contained in the news articles. The same report identified the same 13 inner-city schools from the archdiocese, and a map of the inner-city schools in relative location, thus making the separation clearer. The gap in academic achievement scores between these two groups of students was noted in the data. Inner-city students' average scores were one year or lower than students from the archdiocese. This report was completed by the archdiocese within the Midwest during a time period of much debate within the country regarding the segregation of schools. Approximately ten years prior to this written report, in a letter dated June 22, 1954, the Archbishop of this community wrote a letter to the Catholic community announcing the recent decision of the public school district Board of Education to end segregation in all public schools beginning in the fall. The Archbishop encouraged the audience to comply with the law and embrace the opportunity to unite as a country. However, many White Catholics were not happy and organized to protest. These efforts ended abruptly when communication delivered to parishes by the Archbishop threatened ex-communication (Klee, 2021). A third document confirmed that there were different sets of policies and expectations for inner-city schools. In a letter from the Superintendent of Schools of the archdiocese dated September 27, 1984 the norms and purpose for all inner-city schools is shared and then later confirms there are 19 schools impacted by the restructuring plan. This letter supports the collaboration of persons involved and also implies that there is a need for purpose and norms for inner-city schools, different from the larger school district of the archdiocese. Similarly, in a letter

dated December 11, 1986, Auxiliary Bishop stated, "I feel strongly that we can

no longer afford to be gathering input concerning the problems in the North

City Deanery, referring to the 19 schools impacted by the restructuring. We

know what the problems are! We want the solutions!" This letter was addressed

to the Associate Superintendent of Catholic Schools and former principal of one

ICCS, thus familiar with the north city schools and their problems. Another

document that was retrieved included an article in the local newspaper, dated

September 3, 1989, also named north city schools previously restructured and

now experiencing consolidation and was now named given a new name

identifying their separation and reorganization as a result of the district

restructuring.

In addition to the archival document search, retrieval, and review, the researcher

also had a conversation with other alumni of this elementary school. This conversation

revealed similarities in information recall and opinions began to emerge, which

engendered more curiosity and questions regarding the institution's history and impact

related to its students' educational experiences. During a second meeting with the

dissertation committee chairperson from the university, a decision was made to formalize

the study by reviewing relevant literature and the subsequent interview of teachers to

document their experiences as it related to the institution and the impact of educational

experiences for students enrolled during that time period.

During the initial stages of the study, the researcher retrieved historical documents

from the archdiocese. After careful reflection of the information disclosed in the archival

documents and layered with her personal reflections from her past educational

experiences, the question that looms is why, during the ensuing years, would the leaders of the archdiocese select and separate specific inner-city schools? The archival documents revealed these select schools would also serve primarily students of color and once again be segregated from the schools that served majority white students. Leveraging the use of interviews, Critical Race Theory (CRT) literature, and archival documents, the researcher will analyze the data to understand why select schools were separated and how this separation impacted the experiences of the teachers and students following the restructure.

This study used Critical Race Theory (CRT) to examine the actions of the archdiocese as it pertains to their decision to isolate and restructure the inner-city schools, as well as evaluate the data based on a select group of tenets. To position the reader to understand the research, a review of the following topics will also be provided: Black Catholics, Catholic school education, and select court cases relative to the time period of the study. These topics are relevant in order to understand the circumstances presented in the interviews. In addition to reviewing the topics mentioned, I will also provide background for the elementary school selected for the study. The elementary school under study was identified in the historical documents as one of the inner-city schools, separated from the larger district. Likewise, the participants interviewed for this study were educators for this elementary school during the time period framed for this investigation.

Background of the Study

Recent research evidences several factors contributing to the academic achievement gap between white students and students of color. Particularly in the US,

these factors are layered and deeply connected to race and racism. For example, West (2007) explains how poverty negatively impacts academic achievement. Schmidt (2015) also found that students who have a lower socioeconomic status have fewer opportunities to learn. Goldhaber (2015) found that teacher quality is also a factor for students of color. Multiple health-related studies also show a relationship between race and health-related issues, which also impact the lifestyles of people of color (Ross, 1999). Too often, the same conditions that result in an achievement gap also have a strong correlation to race. Therefore, we can associate race as a factor that contributes to the Black/White Achievement Gap. Academic achievement leads to the pursuit of higher education attainment, which yields improved employment opportunities and higher-paying jobs (Ross, 1999). Therefore, given the gap, students of color often experience a constant cycle of reduced educational access and opportunity and frequently a lifetime of lower socio-economic, educational and political attainment, leading to a cycle of oppression.

We find similar trends to be prevalent in Catholic schools in America. Data from Wodon's (2020) Global Catholic Education Report demonstrates a decline in student enrollment and the number of schools in the United States between 1975 and 2017. The total number of students enrolled in Catholic schools in the US decreased from 3.4 million to 1.8 million. Although the number of schools increased slightly, it was due to preschool data from 1980 to 2017. However, there was a huge decline in the number of primary schools from 1975 (8.4 million) to 2017 (5.1 million). The data from the annual report for Catholic schools also shows a significant difference in the academic achievement of students of color as compared to the academic achievement of White students (Simms, 2012).

Regardless of the type of school, all students should have the same educational access and opportunity. Unsurprisingly, the expectation and obligation is amplified when parents make financial sacrifices and pay tuition. Often, there is an assumption that families of color who choose to enroll their children in private or Catholic schools are often stereotyped to be disassociated with the economic or stereotypical struggles of public school families of color because they pay tuition. While both racism and religious education have been investigated and stories have been shared that identify unfair, unequal opportunities for students of color within the educational institutions of this country, it seems plausible that this same despair exists within Catholic schools since it is a smaller ecosystem of the larger educational system.

The data collected from participants of this study is significant because it gives voice to teachers who once served in an inner-city Midwestern Catholic school. These voices are important primarily because they are able to articulate experiences during a time period that is considered one of reform and movement--the early 1970s through early 1990s. Based upon historical documents, the Catholic elementary school that was selected for this study was labeled as an inner-city school of the archdiocese, it served primarily students of color, and provided a separate set of policies and procedures and special educational programming, all for the purpose of raising the level of educational experiences for the students enrolled. As a researcher and a former student of this elementary school, I believe that these stories should be shared and may offer a counter-narrative for educators. These stories may also support the actions solicited by Critical Race Theorists that interrupt the status quo in education for students of color, specifically Black students, in both Catholic and public-school settings (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Purpose of the Study

This study was based in qualitative research using a phenomenological approach. The purpose of this study was to collect the shared stories and counter-narratives of educators from an inner-city Catholic elementary school during a select time period to determine if there were any barriers created for the students of color or staff. Based on the experiences of these educators, information was gathered to understand why inner-city schools were separated from the larger district, how they were structured during that time period, and the impact of this major decision as it related to the educational experiences of the students who was separated from the larger system. Were these executive decisions based primarily or solely on race? And subsequently, what were the educational outcomes for the students? Based on Critical Race Theory, did these decisions create marginalization for students of color? These specific stories are based on teachers' narratives of observed and lived experiences while employed at this elementary school for one year or more after separation from the larger district. The purpose of this study is to analyze the stories of these educators to discover the underpinnings of the experiences of teachers and students in a specific Black Catholic school located in an urban setting (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000).

Statement of the Problem

In the United States, an educational institution is committed to the mission of producing citizens who will positively contribute to society. Therefore, countries are only as progressive as the contributions of those same citizens. Therefore, all educational institutions serve an important role to uphold our societal progression and values. (Levine, 2003). To meet the demands of the country, schools are most often measured by

annual achievement scores. These scores are often disaggregated to identify trends and

patterns, compare scores of subgroups, identify possible strengths or weaknesses, and

identify concerns. One such measurement is the achievement gap, which exists between

White and Black students, as it identifies a distinct problem in this country (Rowley,

2020; Jencks and Phillips, 1998, Pearman, 2020). For students of color, educational

experiences continue to be inequitable, unfair, biased and do not provide a critical

examination of practices and curriculum structures; consequently, the problems will

continue to exist in American schools (Pearman, 2020). The problem is that without

equal access to and position within the educational system, the marginalized group will

also encounter inequitable opportunities to obtain healthcare, jobs, housing, and as a

result will recreate the same systems of despair with the advent of a new generation. The

achievement gap, although narrowing in some spaces, is still unbalanced and perpetuates

a circular cycle for students of color. It is an urgent matter that must be resolved, rather

than minimized or excused. Research literature related to critical race identifies barriers

and solutions to this circumstance.

An academic achievement gap persists between students of color and White

students in America. According to the Nation's Annual Report Card in 2019, Black

students in grades four and eight for both reading and math scored significantly lower--25

points lower, to be exact--than white students. In the United States, the academic

achievement gap that exists between white students and students of color is evidence of

the considerable differences in the quality of instruction between the two groups and

supports research related to structural racism (Vaught & Castagno, 2008).

Similarly, before the civil rights movement of the 1940s, race still played a major role in predicting the daily outcomes of people of color, therefore, perpetuating a tiered society defined by one simple factor--the color of our skin. Many scholars from the sciences have repeatedly shared that there is no genetic difference between humans of any color (Ladson-Billings, 2013). Despite this empirical finding, the racial demarcation that had been established perpetuates different circumstances and opportunities for African American citizens to create barriers and accept the majority as the power brokers (Smedley & Smedley, 2005), so there is a benefit for one group to sustain this normalized way of thinking (Delgado & Stelfancic, 2000). Equally, despite the voluminous data reports related to racial disparities that have been identified in both qualitative and quantitative studies, race had been normalized and is continually reestablished (Bonilla-Silva, 1997).

Systems continue to function using a racial lens as the foundation for decision structures, therefore sustaining a natural progression of marginalization of people of color. Critical Race Theorists call out the actions of the oppressors and describe how the structures are maintained and policies are reinstated in favor of the majority, therefore perpetuating the marginalization of people of color. For example, hiring practices for educational institutions are subject to the availability of college graduates. In an urban school system, which is often characterized by a higher amount of behavior challenges and students of color, it is challenging to recruit high-quality teachers among those who want to serve in urban areas. Both results are due to system failures based on race. Therefore, an unintended consequence for students of color, primarily in urban areas, are less equitable educational experiences. This is an example of a system of oppression that

is continually reestablished and, in fact, ignored. Given this problem, the focus of critical

scholars towards a more progressive attitude of change is highlighted in the research

(Chang, 2002; Bell, 1992).

This study that was conducted by the researcher focused on race within one sector

of education, the Catholic sector, the counter-narratives of teachers, and an examination

of the intentions of the Catholic Church regarding the establishment of a system of

oppression within the archdiocese in a city in the United States.

Based on the literature reviewed for this study, it is evident that the same racial

divide which impairs educational opportunities for minority groups in public education

also permeates parochial institutions (Horvat & Antonio, 1999) although the mission of

Catholic schools is to instill faith and love (National Catholic Education Association,

n.d.).

This research study seeks to understand the experiences of the educators during

the time period of structural change and physical separation and beyond. The shared

experiences of these educators are important because they may be able to explain how

and why leaders made specific decisions and also how these decisions impacted the

experiences of both teachers and students.

In this study, the Catholic inner-city schools of this Midwestern city were

identified and separated from the larger system. The group of schools were renamed and

reorganized under a new board. Since Catholic schools exist within the larger educational

sector, it is assumed that they have similar experiences with race, curriculum, staffing,

and policies. Similar to students in public schools, students of color in the archdiocese

have also been educated by the middle class and exposed to the white lens of implicit

biases, which had augmented the disproportionate numbers of Black students who have

survived the inequities placed upon them during the time that they was enrolled in the

Black Catholic schools. It is also the intent of this study to create awareness and promote

motivation for educators in public and private schools to take further action to eliminate

these practices through real action. Application of the lens of CRT is also a call to action

from these leaders to disrupt the current practices and elevate the voices of people of

color within these educational institutions. Although under current threat of reduction,

Catholic schools have a positive impact on the success of our country and make a

difference in communities of high poverty, therefore creating space for growth and

improved outcomes will serve the overall mission of the country in education (Rodriquez

& Briscoe, 2019).

Research Questions

This study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. *What did teachers perceive as the reason for restructuring within the archdiocese?*
2. *What was the impact of restructuring on the experiences of teachers?*
3. *Post restructuring how did the archdiocese leaders address the educational needs within the inner-city schools?*

Significance of the Study

This study contributes to scholarly research in the field of education, specifically

Catholic school education, and also to Critical Race scholarship. An examination of the

shared experiences of teachers employed by the archdiocese will yield common themes

relative to race and the similarities and differences for Black Catholic schools within the

inner-city of the United States during the time period of 1970-1990. The identification of

barriers or opportunities will contribute to the existing educational and CRT research,

which supports improving outcomes for students of color in America. This investigation was relevant to the current systemic challenges that have been pervasive for Black students and their parents, even in the private and religious sectors of education. This study may contribute to the history of Catholic schools in this particular city and archdiocese.

The actions of the Catholic Church, although seemingly intended to provide improved educational spaces for Black students, had a strong correlation to racial capitalism. Rather than to have as a focus the provision of the same educational outcomes for Black and White students, enrollment numbers were the focus. It is important to explain the events from the perspectives of the teachers and learn if the actions of past leaders advanced the inequities and separation that still exists today between White and Black students enrolled in parochial schools.

Limitations and Delimitations

This study, like many qualitative studies, had limitations related to data collection. Access to participants and gathering data from past events can often be challenging, although trustworthy and transparent. Teachers interviewed for this study no longer work in the school setting. They have all retired or are employed in different places, therefore, observations of teaching in action was not possible. Consequently, this study had boundaries that are important to recognize. Participants for this study have been purposively selected but may not be available for the study when approval is granted for the researcher to conduct the interviews. Additionally, other information ascertained from the literature or historical documents may be in direct conflict with the perceptions of the participants.

In addition to the limited number of participants, the researcher was also a student enrolled in the elementary school under study. Therefore, the researcher had a personal connection to some or all of the participants. As a result, bracketing was important. Several approaches to bracketing were utilized and discussed in the methodology chapter in the study. The purpose of these discussions was to increase trustworthiness and transparency for the reader. Although bracketing was difficult, it was pronounced and identified to minimize the impact on the data collection process, interviews, and analysis (Gearing, 2004).

The delimitations of the study do not flaw or negate the data collected and analyzed to support or deny the conceptual framework, however, it allows this research to be fully contextualized and understood (Glatthorn & Joyner, 1988). Therefore, the participants are limited to teachers who taught at the elementary school from 1960 through the early 1990s. These teachers have also been selected by the researcher based on familiarity and prior relationships in the form of teacher and student. Others willing to participate in the study were recommended by the first group, and their acceptance to be in this study was based on their access, availability, and cognitive ability to engage in the interviews depending on health and age. The participants are not limited to race, but are all women, as they were available, as no men was considered or recommended. The participants met the simple criteria of having taught at the elementary school of focus in the Midwestern city during the same time period. The setting of the research is limited to the inner-city Black Catholic schools within the archdiocese, and those schools were segregated due to select criteria introduced in this study. The sample size and the number of interviews may range. Due to the unique standing of the participants, attributes of the

school, time period, location, size, enrollment, and significant impacts of the public

education system and housing patterns associated with this elementary school, this study

may not be easily generalizable or replicated.

Definitions of Terms

Parochial school: A private school (often used interchangeably with Catholic

school) or any religious school affiliated with a church.

Private school: A school supported by a private organization or private

individuals rather than by the government.

Catholic school: A school in which Catholicism is taught, but not necessarily

affiliated with a church although many are.

Black Catholic Education: A Catholic education-focused and differentiated to

address the needs of students of color, however, holding true to the mission of

religious education as the primary goal for students.

 Black Catholic Students: - Students attending inner-city Catholic schools or with

majority Black student enrollment, school or other Black Catholic schools, but not

necessarily Catholic students.

North City: The inner-city and urban area of the setting of this study.

Diocese: A geographical division made up of several Parishes with a bishop as its

canonical authority.

Archdiocese: A diocese with greater size or historical significance than a typical

diocese. The bishop of an archdiocese is called an archbishop.

Organization of the Study

Using the theoretical framework of Critical Race Theory, a qualitative study uncovered the shared experiences of educators from a single elementary school. These data were analyzed, coded, and used to further reflect on the tenets of CRT. These findings offered insights regarding the educational needs of students of color.

The remainder of this narrative is organized into five chapters, a reference section, and appendices in the following manner. Chapter Two presents a review of the related literature dealing with a brief history of Black Catholics, education for children of color, specifically, the large cities of the United States, and the research related to structural racism. Chapter Three discusses the research design and methodology of the study. It will describe the process for selecting qualitative methods and the best type of methods for answering the research questions identified, but not refined, and the reasons related to constructing selected interview questions, and the process for collecting the responses of the participants. Then, after the analysis and review of the relevant literature and interview data, the findings are reported in Chapter Four. Chapter Five will then contain the summary, conclusions, and future recommendations of the study. The study ends with a bibliography and appendices.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

The purpose of this study was to determine why leaders of the archdiocese decided to restructure their schools, thus separating the Catholic inner-city schools from the larger system. Toward this end, an investigation and analysis of the shared experiences of educators in one of the inner-city schools established for the researcher an understanding of whether these decisions were primarily related to race. Therefore, a full review of the literature related to Critical Race Theory (CRT) was provided. In addition to CRT, an overview of Catholic schools and Blacks in the Catholic Church served to provide context for the purpose of this study.

History of Catholic Schools

Catholic schools provide benefits to the country. These schools often serve lower-income families in poor neighborhoods, support faith-based communities which lead to stronger and more stable environments for families, teach students to value citizenship and in general, Catholic schools are perceived as good (Wodon, 2020). Throughout history, several religious communities began to educate their members without the support of the state. (Perkins, 2006). Later, with the advent of the industrial age, job skills that were required for the country's success changed the focus from religion to reading, writing, and arithmetic (Quang, 2019). These institutions were still grounded in a religious focus, thus dismissing the idea that the control of educational institutions were derived from governmental oversight. The foundation of higher education institutions had also been attributed to religious groups, as evidenced by Ivy League institutions such as Harvard. Therefore, it was not a surprise that current day educational institutions are

returning to some form of character education, or what can be termed as soft religion. Schools were created as a result of the establishment of a philosophy that emphasized a strong educational foundation and for the majority, they have been successful. The authorization of the Higher Education Act of 1965 granted financial assistance to students, colleges became more accessible to more students in America, therefore creating more public control over education and largely impacting religious schools' popularity negatively (Quang, 2019). However, religious schools are still heavily woven into the tapestry of our American educational system and comprise a significant component of our national educational data reports.

With regards to the academic achievement gap between Black and White students, research says this gap narrows in religious schools (Jeynes, 2007) for both Black and poor students. However, Jeynes (2007) also reports that there are numerous factors that should be considered by public educators prior to seeking to emulate this trend. Religious students also have a higher functioning family, experience fewer distractions in school, and emphasize an increased focus on character, which also might add to the results reported for the gap. Still, the research supports that Black students enrolled in religious schools score higher on standardized assessments than their public school counterparts (Jeynes, 2007; National Catholic Education Association (2018).

Reality of Catholic schools 2020-2023

Although religious schools are a significant part of the educational system in America, enrollment has declined by roughly 2,740,000 since 1970 according to the most recent National Catholic Education Association data report (McDonald & Schultz, 2020). A study published in 2016 shares evidence that Catholic schools are preparing minority

students for college and have also outperformed their peers in public education (Setari &

Setari, 2016). Setari & Setari (2016) also explain there is a declining enrollment for

Catholic schools when White Catholics began to relocate and move from their urban

parishes. As a result, the schools began closing leaving less opportunity for Catholic

schooling for the minority students still seeking enrollment (Brinig & Garnett, 2012).

Today's Catholic school leaders are concerned with school closures, specifically

in communities with residents from a lower socioeconomic background. School closures,

specifically in elementary schools, have been a clear concern for religious leaders from

1966 through 2014, with a 50 percent decline in enrollment, according to Shirley (2019),

and efforts to shift control from the Catholic Church to other organizations like charter

schools have been a necessary step to maintain robust enrollments in Catholic schools

open throughout the country. However, the support from non-religious companies or

funding from the public sector, reverses the priorities of the Catholic schools' top two

priorities, moving academics to first place and faith building to second (Shirley, 2019).

Catholic school leaders have had to decide which is more important and make

hard decisions regarding school operations. Some schools have created after-school,

faith-based programs rather than to integrate religion during the school day, therefore

allowing for government funding which led to an increase in enrollment. Shirley (2019)

shares the story of two different states, New York and Memphis, both experiencing

struggles that prompted their diocese leaders to seek support from financial partners or

simply close. In the case of Memphis, the sudden closure of schools heightened the

awareness and advocacy of Catholic school leaders desiring public funding for religious

schools, which had been consistently denied during litigation in dozens of court cases.

The initial court cases pertained to the purchase of textbooks, translators for students, and teacher salaries. The Lemon Test, resulting from the landmark case Lemon v. Kurtzman (1971), upholds that using tax dollars for religious education is unconstitutional. This landmark case and others are still being argued to overturn the rulings to deny parochial schools public funding. There have been two cases that have been won. One case, Emerson v. Board of Education, ruled in favor of public funding for transportation of students to parochial schools. The second ruling, Zelma v. Simmons Harris, allowed for select voucher programs to receive public funding. The denial of public funding adds substantially to the challenge to maintain enrollment and sustain Catholic schools.

According to the National Catholic Education Association, from 2004 to 2014, nearly 2,000 Catholic schools in the United States were closed or consolidated. The number of Catholic elementary schools in the 12 largest cities declined 29.5 percent over that period (McDonald & Schultz, 2020). High operating costs associated with the decline of religious orders have led to tuition hikes, affecting enrollment figures in cities like New Orleans where poor Black families rely on small state vouchers. Inner-city Catholic schools, particularly those serving predominantly students of color, have been closing at more rapid rates than those in White, Catholic communities, suggesting that the archdiocese minimized the investment of resources for non-Catholic students who have not historically converted to Catholicism after attending parish schools (Wilson, 2015).

Researchers conclude that the neighborhood Catholic school closures is a significant concern and should be discussed among educational institutions. The school closures show evidence of diminishing social cohesion, collective efficacy, and a rise in crime. A body of research supports that Catholic schools in inner cities are valuable.

Parochial schools in large urban centers have a deep and lasting impact on the community where they are present. This impact is greater than the sum of its parts: parochial schools tend to have higher graduation rates, better school attendance, better educational outcomes, and more content parents and students when compared to their local public schools (Brinig & Garnett, 2012). These impacts on individual students translate into communities that are more cohesive, have lower levels of violence and property crime, and are more stable (Brinig & Garnett, 2012).

These private schools provide their students with a democratic education, and they also support healthy neighborhoods for both families who have or have not enrolled students in these schools. Brinig & Garnett (2012) also claim that parochial schools in urban and working-class neighborhoods increase the community's social capital. This, they assert, is unique to communities with parochial schools present. "Our findings suggest that urban Catholic elementary schools are one kind of neighborhood institution that acts organically to generate neighborhood social capital (Brinig & Garnett, 2012 p. 89)."

A document presented in November 2020 by the International Office of Catholic Education and the Global Pedagogical Network was submitted to government agencies regarding the need, benefit, and advantages of Christian education. The document discusses the aim of Christian schools relative to public education. It also identifies contributions of Christian schools to the public school and the greater service to the world. It documents data related to evidence that Christian schools serve the world and are not compensated for their service to education and social justice. Brinig & Garnett (2012) discuss the absence of Catholic schools in urban communities of Chicago. Their

article addresses three topics: the history of Catholic schools and parishes in Chicago, the impact of disorder in neighborhoods resulting in the flight of residents based on fear, and finally, the impact of the loss of residents leading to school closures and a negative impact within Chicago neighborhoods. This research reveals the causal effects of Catholic school closures and the consequential reduction in social capital and collective efficacy in Chicago neighborhoods.

This research is significant to this study, since the setting is identified is similar to the setting of this research study, a large city. This study identifies St. Louis and Chicago, both large cities with high crime, and similar stories regarding Catholic school closures and the negative impacts on those communities. Researchers conclude that Catholic school closures within neighborhoods are a significant concern and should be discussed among educational institutions. Not only do these private schools of choice provide a positive curriculum that teaches the democratic principles to students, but they also increase the stability of communities. These qualities positively impact both students enrolled, but they also support healthy neighborhoods for both families who enroll their students in Catholic schools and those who do not enroll their children in these schools. The school closures show evidence of diminishing social cohesion, collective efficacy, and a rise in crime.

Blacks in the Catholic Church

In 1829, The Oblate Sisters of Providence and in 1837 the Sisters of the Holy Family both cared for or educated Black, poor children. In Gerdes (1988), the author captures the history of the Oblate Sisters and their contributions to the education and care of Black children, orphans, and women. The Oblate Sisters have a long history of

leadership and mission to educate Black children. While battling the struggles of racism, financial hardships, lack of support, violence, and war, they were successful in the establishment of elite schools in several cities (Gerdes, 1988).

The first official Catholic school enrolling Black students was founded in Washington, D.C., in 1827 by Sister Maria Becraft as a school for free Black girls at the Holy Trinity Church in Georgetown. The Oblate Sisters of Providence, the first order of Black Nuns in the U.S., opened the St. Frances Academy for Colored Girls in Baltimore in June 1828, with offshoots soon appearing in Philadelphia and New Orleans (Wilson, 2015).

In 1958, after consistent efforts from Black Catholics and some White Catholic leaders, the U.S. Catholic Bishops opened all schools to Blacks. However, being Black, although Catholic, did not prevent the poor treatment of Black students. The resistance to fair treatment was the center of the work among Black Catholic leaders and had also been highlighted in the research from Tate (1994) and Irvine & Foster (1996). Blacks wished for inclusion within the Catholic Church for varied reasons. These reasons include increasing the percent of literate community members to strengthen their communities, disrupt the status of social and economic disparities, add positively to the Catholic faith through their unique cultural backgrounds and experiences, and educate their children, therefore, improving a future that had been largely negative. Black Catholic schools in inner cities, although limited in resources, are still considered a better educational experience (Greene, 2010).

Race and the Catholic Church

To provide context for the reader of this research, it is important to have a common understanding of the history of race and the Catholic Church of America. Brady (2021) explains the application of the term "dignity" within the Catholic Church. There are four definitions of "dignity" in this text. Definition one defines "dignity" as a person's value in relation to other persons, their social class, definition two refers to a person's behavior or attitude, definition three is the recognition of the intrinsic value of a person and, definition four, in relation to definition three, is when social conditions violate a person's intrinsic dignity" (Brady, 2021, p.2) The Catholic Church used this term to determine a person's status. Brady (2021) used a past to present interpretation of "dignity" and how it is represented throughout the years in the Catholic Church.

Brady (2021) begins with the earliest description of "dignity" in theology from St. Thomas Aquinas. Thomas Aquinas defined "dignity" as a form of declaring social status, an authority such as a parent or master of slaves. Those with dignity had certain rights and privileges and they was fluid, therefore, it can be lost or diminished, as well as grow. He defined slavery as a result of punishment for sin, and that some people need to be directed by others. Those slaves were created for the benefit of human life. He said slaves were instruments to be used by their masters. Therefore, masters must allow slaves to eat, sleep and marry, which was for the good of the body. However, marriage did not prevent a slave from being sold or separated from other family members. A child born to slaves would belong to the master of the mother. Aquinas said that some people have more dignity than others.

Brady (2021) then continues to describe the evolution of the term dignity. Contemporary Catholic moral theology takes the position that dignity defines a person's value and social status. They defined dignity as all humans share a fundamental equal dignity, regardless of social class or social condition. This became the new way of thinking after the Bishop's Conference in the United States.

In the contemporary Catholic Church, the term dignity changes and the new meaning is introduced as "human life is sacred and that the dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society" (Brady, 2021, p.7). Likewise, Leo XIII used the Bible teachings of Jesus as a rich and later, poor man, to say in God's sight poverty was not a disgrace and that earning by labor was nothing of which to feel ashamed of. Leo XIII also links slavery to the fall of humans and the forgetfulness of common nature, human dignity, and the likeness of God stamped on us all. With such shifts, this places a greater demand for those in power to recognize the poor and to unite. John XXIII used dignity to discuss the human rights and responsibilities that should guide relationships between states and global relations. The Second Vatican Council solidified the new definition of dignity. The Pacem in Terris, personal dignity, is something one owns, not something earned or given. The dignity of a person is derived from their conscious decisions. In summary, dignity and fair treatment should be the privilege of all Christians, as are human rights (Brady, 2021).

In a recent article from Brady (2021), he compares the interpretations of the Catholic Church regarding the term dignity to the Black Lives Matter movement currently underpinning many of the current societal issues by the media. He also discusses the progression of the meaning of dignity within the Catholic Church that

aligns with the beliefs currently being advanced by CR theorists. Like CRT, the Catholic

Church had joined the rejection of false claims of race as acceptable in society.

Critical Race Theory as Theoretical Framework

Given the nature and method of this study and, how race and educators both

impact the academic achievement of students in the United States, Critical Race Theory

(CRT) was employed. As the researcher gathered the shared experiences of the

participants of this study, the tenets of Critical Race Theory were included to understand

and explain the themes that emerged from the data collection. Using counter narratives, a

strategy of CRT, to invite the voice of the marginalized, themes emerged from the

interviews that showed race was a factor in the decisions and lived educational

experiences of the educators and the students they served within the system. A necessary

component for CRT research is to create steps towards action. It seeks to change the

current practices existing in our educational systems. Therefore, the stories of the

educators was viewed through the lens of CRT and determined race was a factor in the

system leader's decisions and how these decisions impacted the experiences of the

students, who are people of color.

Using counter narratives also supported the researcher's efforts to answer the

research questions. The research questions were crafted to understand and gather

information related to a specific event, the restructuring of the schools within the

archdiocese, which led to the separation of the inner-city schools, serving the majority of

students of color. CRT supports an interruption to the status quo, in this case, the stories

of the educators of the students. The perspectives of the people impacted by the

leadership's decisions are relevant to the research, specifically regarding race. It is the

belief of this researcher that race played a significant role in the decisions to restructure the schools within this system and these decisions set up a system which minimized the opportunities for staff and students. These decisions and events were analyzed from the positions of the participants of this study.

The theory of Critical Race provides a set of criteria that allowed the researcher to connect the lived experiences of teachers through their stories to these same tenets. In a smaller way, the concepts of structural racism were described, which refers to a system in which decisions within an organization deny equal access to members of color, therefore, continuing a pattern of inequity that leads to fewer privileges in life, such as job opportunity, education, property, and access. The primary theory for this research, CRT, was supported by systemic racism, because it is an investigation involving an educational system. Although relevant, systemic race theory was not fully reviewed or utilized for this study, but CRT was.

In an article presented at the National Council for Black Studies International Conference, Tate (1994) shares his experiences as a Black male student in an inner-city Catholic school. His experiences include a conflict with a teacher and the teacher's use of the word coon and the multiple meanings of this word that his teacher refused to acknowledge. He also recalled the staff's actions to dismiss recognition of Dr. Martin Luther King's picture as a substitution for a saint, and the mathematics curriculum was inferior to that of other educational institutions (Tate, 1994).

Although Tate (1994) had some negative experiences, he shares that his story and others can add to the body of knowledge regarding successful math curricula approaches for children of color. Tate (1994) agrees with critical race theorists that stories from

students of color are relevant and even more important than stories from European

cultures regarding students of color. Tate (1994) contends that every student of color who

completes the necessary requirements for entry into the field of mathematics education

research had an important story.

Tate's story is important to this literature review because his elementary

experiences are derived from a Catholic elementary school in an inner-city with a high

crime rate and low socio-economic status. However, this particular elementary school

had an impressive successful college graduation rate (Tate, 1994). Tate (1994) believes

this was the result of school leadership and instruction which was rooted in the

integration of two thematic precepts: centricity and conflict as a means toward cultural

and economic independence (Tate, 1994). Tate (1994) also believes that his Catholic

school wanted to prepare students to view and understand the world from an Afrocentric

perspective. Therefore, the Catholic school leaders allowed students the opportunity to

study the world from an African worldview. This is important to note as we look at

structural racism and how it doesn't support students of color. Based on Tate's story, it is

possible to take measures to rewrite policy and provide systems that support students of

color (Tate, 1994).

The United States is at a turning point, and the education system is going to be

impacted largely in the same traditional, conformist manner, which renders our students

unprepared for college and careers when educated in urban areas which are often

impacted by systemic racism (Howard, 2019). The history of Catholic education parallels

post-desegregation events, therefore, it was important to highlight these events to

understand this study. In addition to this overview of concepts related to the study, it ws also important to review literature related to the theory that frames this study, CRT.

CRT can be used to clarify and analyze systemic racism in America. Critical Race Theorists are clear regarding their positions on race and the necessity to raise awareness and cause disruption to the current trends in society which allow the dismissal of color within the institutions of both law and education. A perpetuation of systemic racism promotes Whiteness and thus oppresses the future rights of people of color (Howard, 2019; Ladson-Billings, 2013; Matsuda, 1993; Tate, 2003; Lawrence, et al., 2004; Jones, 2002; Bell, 1997). Lawrence et al. (2004) explain that systemic racism promotes the stories that typically give advantage to White citizens and disadvantages people of color. According to Critical Race Theorists, if we don't take action, highlight and bring forth the historical patterns and behaviors that simulate oppression within institutions, especially schools, we run the risk of incremental change for our children, both people of color and White people (Bell, 1997; Ladson-Billings, 1997).

There are multiple studies that document concerns related to the convenient use and misuse of race and the consequential inequity that manifests in the lives of people of color. The racial disparity that had been disclosed in legal studies research included data relevant to poverty rates, median household incomes, high school graduation rates, and annual earnings by educational attainment. These data identify typical indicators of racial disparities such as the highest poverty rate, which is characteristic of Black and Hispanic families, as well as the number of Black graduates who are recipients of college degrees and have consistently lagged behind those of White students (Lawrence et al., 2004).

Likewise, scientific studies conclude that race has no biological meaning or significance, however, it has social and political significance. This is considered a "social construct" in social science, as it was given meaning by human beings. In the United States, two primary categories are recognized: White/Europeans and others, or non-white. People, not biology, continue to create and recreate this difference between groups (Lawrence et al., 2004).

This same study discusses White privilege and the inherent advantages based on this social construct. These historical advantages are highlighted in the data provided in the details of this study. Systemic racism creates wealth, power, education, and community advantages for White families and individuals (Decuir & Dixson, 2004). Decuir & Dixson (2004) also claim that given the way race is positioned in educational institutions, it is appropriate to attend to the way educational staff treat students of color or either support or refute race within the system.

The archdiocese is an organization, a power structure, within the United States; therefore, the policies, procedures, and practices are aligned to those of the country and the historical dehumanization of people of color. Because this study focused on the policies and structures within an educational institution, research related to CRT in education was shared.   The close analysis of the stories shared by a group of educators from a specific time period relative to their experiences as educators in a Black Catholic elementary school was used to determine the factors that contributed to the educational experiences of the students of color.

Critical Race Theory allowed the researcher to base the findings of this study in the tenets of CRT. Derrick Bell has been named by several Critical Race Theorists as the

founder of CRT (Delgado & Stelphanic, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 2013; Khalifa, et al, 2013; Gorzo & Ono, 2016). Bell was a scholar of legal studies, frustrated with the law of maintaining White Supremacy (Taylor, 1998). Additionally, other well-known CRT scholars such as Kimberly Crenshaw, Richard Delgado, Mari Matsuda, William Tate, and Gloria Ladson-Billings also joined the movement to compel progress when the civil rights movement failed to produce solid reform (Taylor, 1998). Ladson-Billings (1998) explains that Critical Race Theory (CRT) is a separate and new movement from an earlier effort, which was Critical Legal Studies (CLS). CRT, according to Delgado (1995), was identified in the mid-1970s with the early work of Derrick Bell (African American) and Alan Freeman (White), scholars who were dissatisfied with the incremental changes that was suggested as part of the legal studies framework.

Within a short period of time, other legal scholars began to uncover issues in legal scholarship centered on race (Crenshaw, 1988). These same researchers began to identify the blatant ways that the legal community supported the formation of the current structure of classes (Crenshaw, 1988). Most of the work of the critical legal scholars' ideology emanates from the work of Gramsci (1971) and depends on the Gramscian notion of hegemony to describe the continued legitimacy of oppressive structures in American society. Although critical legal scholars attempted to debunk the common practices of law, they did not include racism as a reason for the change (West, 1993).

Therefore, according to Ladson-Billings (1995), an impetus toward public acknowledgement of CRT is a necessary next step to address the need for improved legal practices, among other systems. Both Bell (1976) and Freeman (1977) are credited with passionate advocacy for CRT to resuscitate the efforts of the civil rights Movement,

which failed to forge a more progressive movement towards fair and equitable support

for minorities. Critical Race Theory serves as action towards change and a more

permanent paradigm shift. CRT scholars want to move race from the outskirts of legal,

educational, social, and political dialogue to the forefront (Griffin, 2010). Therefore, CRT

scholars believe it is better and more progressive to identify and develop new avenues

toward finding justice rather than to rely upon a system that was created to maintain the

status quo to deliver fair and equal treatment to minorities (Garza & Ono, 2016).

Several Critical Race Theorists agree on similar tenets of CRT. Delgado and

Stelfancic (2001), Orbe & Allen (2008), Olson (2004), and Ono (2010) agree upon these

tenets: 1) race is normal, the common, everyday experience of most people of color in

this country; 2) only when change benefits the dominant group, thus the marginalized -

interest convergence (Bell, 1980); 3) race is not science, but a social construct (Winant,

2001), therefore, the differences in opportunities for people of color are based on this

premise, which is simply false; 4) people who look alike or have the same characteristics

don't necessarily think the same things or share the same perspectives on issues or life

experiences; and 5) telling a different story from the lens of the oppressed (Ladson-

Billings, 2013).

There is an agreement between Ladson-Billings & Tate (1995), Solorzano and

Bernal (2001), and Solorzano and Yosso (2001) regarding CRT. According to Ladson-

Billings (2013), race had been unjustly defined as a set of unique characteristics that have

been combined with other groups who are typically oppressed, but in addition to this

convergence, these same scholars present an upward push toward the application of the

tentacles of critical race by insisting that educational leaders of policy and curriculum

take responsibility for solving the underlying issue that exists rather than ignoring the huge, historical factors that perpetuate the achievement gap between white and Black students. It simply isn't due to the color of a person's skin nor their lack of ability. In other words, policies must support the problem rather than to maintain the status quo. The efforts to eliminate racism for marginalized groups must be fully activated and more aggressive than the efforts of the civil rights era, which researchers posit had been part of the problem in destabilizing White Supremacy as a power structure rather than just a hate group (Crenshaw, et al. 1995; Harris, 1995, 2012).

And finally, these researchers promote the inclusion of experiences from people of color and the recognition of race as one of many forms of oppression. This study, as well as CRT as a construct that is applied in the educational arena, encompasses race and other forms of oppression in history. Each must be considered within historical investigations and conversations.

Moreover, several race theorists have explored individual tenets of CRT in order to advance the research relevant to CRT. For example, Woodson (2016) used two student narratives to explore the CRT tenant, master narratives. In her study, she interviewed two participants and found four discussion points. These discussion points provide a deeper and more compelling understanding of counter narratives as a way to challenge the master stories from media and curriculum. The four discussion points that were highlighted are as follows: the master stories essentialize the Black experiences, validate racism as unintentional, portray Black civil rights leaders as either heroes or sacrificial lambs, and the civil rights movement led to the end of racism. The methodology supported race theorists' positions that people of color should have a voice and the

narratives of the oppressed have been disregarded (Delgado, 1989) and therefore must be used when writing counter narratives that shed light on the current stories. Bell (1980) also used this form of writing to highlight racial disparities.

Bonilla-Silva (2006) isolated color blindness, another tenet of CRT, and shared his analysis of interviews of college students and adult subjects regarding color blind racism. His analysis identified four types of color blind racism. These four types are "abstract liberalism, naturalization, cultural racism, and minimization of racism" (Bonilla-Silva, 2006, p.30). The author also describes how the participants of his study respond to various questions related to topics such as affirmative action, school and community segregation, equal opportunity, and reparations. The comments of the participants is singular and layered with the four types of color blindness described by the author. The results revealed that although during the landmark court case Plessy vs. Ferguson, Judge Harlan argued that our constitution is color-blind, in fact it is not (Annamma, Jackson & Morrison, 2016). Both the legal and educational systems have begun to utilize the color blind argument and ignore the injustices of the past (Gotanda, 1991).

Likewise, Ladson-Billings (1995) discusses whiteness as property and how it is connected to the concerns existing in schools. Whiteness is considered pure, opposite of Black, and therefore better. When schools are identified as Black or urban, they are perceived as subordinate institutions. The inferior status is perpetuated, but in subtle ways that can also feel isolating. For example, gifted programs, tracking or affirmative action can all be considered methods by which students are separated or experience othering. Even attempts to increase advocacy for multicultural education have been minimized to

simple celebrations that are orated or designated for one month of intercom announcements. Similar to legal institutions race is still a prevalent factor in educational systems as it pertains to equal access and disciplinary outcomes.

Critical Race Theory in Education

Yosso (2005) states that CRT has been anchored as a construct of use in educational institutions in order to leverage an understanding of how race and racism affect institutions, discourse, and educational practices. CRT provides an opportunity for educators to describe the ways in which educational inequity persists within our institutions. According to Ladson-Billings (1995), racism is normalized in educational settings, therefore ignored and never considered as a primary factor that contributes to the academic success of students of color, and this assimilation perpetuates the current structural impediments that favor White students. She also claims that even the Landmark decision of Brown v. Board of Education, which aimed to provide equal access to education for students of color, did not meet the desired goal. In fact, students of color continue to experience the same disadvantages in urban school districts. Students in inner-city schools receive less resources, are often subjected to school closings, a lack of required materials, lower staffing quality, and are subsequently considered academically deficient (Duncan, 2005). This trend continues in most of our schools in America. In order to combat the perpetuation of negative stereotypes regarding students of color, minority groups should be assigned a voice in stories that can shift the stereotypical views placed on marginalized groups, break the cycle of oppression and empower them to tell their own story, and empower them to boycott the suppression of the voices of those impacted (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

To address the diversity in current classrooms, Crichlow (2015) defines the three

major tenets of CRT: interest convergence, rejecting colorblindness, and interrupting

white supremacy. 1) Interest convergence is the process whereby the white power

structure will tolerate or encourage racial advances for Blacks only when they also

promote white self-interest due to insufficient convergence of interests between white

elites and people of color; 2) rejecting color blindness and race neutrality promotes a lens

through which the existence of race can be denied and the privileges of Whiteness can be

maintained without any personal accountability; and 3) refutes and critiques claims of

meritocracy that sustain normative White supremacy (Crichlow, 2015, p. 188). This type

of supports the belief that people are advanced and rewarded based on talent and ability,

as if those in the elite group have received the advancement solely on talent and ability,

rather than class and privilege.

Crichlow (2015) continues to evidence why storytelling in education can destroy

the myths related to policies and history in classrooms. Additionally, Crichlow (2015)

synthesizes CRT, explaining that race is a social construct that exists for the purposes of

separation and stratification by the dominant group, thus the master script written by the

master perpetuates the status quo. Educational institutions must consistently examine

instruction and advocate for the visibility of the voices and stories of people of color, as

this is the best approach and use of the CRT tools in order to dismantle racism. CRT

claims that any story, void of the subordinates of which it speaks, is incomplete (Ladson-

Billings, 2005; Delgado & Stelfancic, 2001). T

Therefore, storytelling is another way to break the predictable customs of

teaching. Oral stories are even more important, as there may be a shame or reluctance to

write for people of color, which limits their ability to add to the narrative. These stories should be told in the first person in most cases. CRT seeks to deconstruct whiteness, which is a system that is rooted in social, economic, political, and cultural history that has established institutional structures that privilege White people (Delgado & Stelfancic, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1998).

It is important to understand how race and racism are viewed within the context of institutions, law, and education in order to understand how individuals may be prevented from advancement. Smith (2019) wants to widen the lens of students in K-12 institutions by inviting undergraduate students of teacher education programs to use CRT as a means to educate more students about racism, rather than using a multicultural approach centered on students' backgrounds. Additionally, postsecondary education programs should engage future teachers in self-education and embed useful media and text to engage students in conversations related to social justice. The overarching goal is to dismantle the systems of oppression by educating students and helping them to understand that it is a system which condones the marginalization of people of color.

Counter Narratives as a Tool

One of the tenets of CRT is storytelling, a means to oppose the master script and allow a revision to the history from the perspectives of the people of color, who have been left out of the stories (Delgado & Stelfancic, 2001). Crichlow (2015), presents dialogue explaining how storytelling can be used as a method to plan lessons in classrooms to focus on race and injustices. (Crichlow (2015) also defines the three major tenets of CRT: Recognize interest convergence - interest convergence is the process whereby the White power structure tolerates or encourages racial advances for Blacks

only when they also promote White self-interest, due to insufficient convergence of interests between White elites and people of color, 2) rejecting color blindness and race neutrality that liberalism promotes, creates a lens through which the existence of race can be denied and the privileges of Whiteness maintained without any personal accountability and 3) refutes and critiques claims of meritocracy that sustain normative white supremacy. A system in which the talented are chosen based on talent and ability as if those in the elite group have received the advancement based on talent and ability instead of class and privilege.

The author continues to evidence why storytelling in education can destroy the myths related to policies and history in classrooms. Additionally, Crichlow (2015) highlights that race is a social construct that exists for the purpose of separation and stratification by the dominant group, thus the master script, written by the master, which perpetuates the status quo. Constantly examining how we teach and allowing for the voices and stories of people of color is the best approach and use of the CRT tools for dismantling racism. CRT claims that any story void of the subordinates in which it speaks is incomplete. Therefore, storytelling is another way to break the predictable manner of teaching. Oral stories are even more important as there may be a shame or reluctance to write for people of color which limits their ability to add to the narrative. These stories should be told in the first person in most cases based on CRT storytelling in education. CRT deconstructs Whiteness, which is a system that is rooted in social, economic, political, and cultural history that has established institutional structures that privilege white people in relation to white supremacist domination over Aboriginal and racial others.

Yosso (2005) references Solorzano (1997, 1998) for the identified five tenets of CRT: intercentricity of race and racism with other forms of subordination challenges to the dominant ideology, commitment to social justice, the centrality of experiential knowledge, and transdisciplinary perspective. CRT emphasizes that race and racism are a fundamental part of defining and explaining how US society functions. CRT acknowledges the subordination based on phenotype (Crenshaw, 1989, 1993; Valdes et al., 2002). Similarly, CRT challenges the dominant ideology and argues that colorblindness gives privilege to the dominant groups in US society (Bell, 1987; Calmore, 1992; Solorzano, 1997). Last, CRT is committed to social justice and calls for a shift and works towards the elimination of racism, as well as the empowerment of People of Color (Freire, 1970, 1973; Solorzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001).

Opposition to Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory became part of the conversations regarding race in the early 1970s and has now become one of the most politicized debates between the Trump and Biden terms. There are opposing arguments to CRT. For example, Rufo (2021) opposes the views of CRT. He claims they fail to evidence how success can be attained, regardless of race. He says that race does not have a greater influence on the success rates of people of color in comparison to marriage, education, and full-time employment. He says theorists of critical race fail to acknowledge how these factors consistently override race and improve societal outcomes. He provides examples of new research regarding these opportunities to shift the wealth and class gap. He concludes that CRT could also increase the racial tension and raise the necessity for government assistance for people of

color. He argues that CRT has not provided solutions to the problem but is adding to the racial divide in the country.

Also, a recent editorial by Patrick (2021) promises to his readers of the Canadian Medical Journal that he will continue to look for research grounded in data to determine if people who experience racism have issues with health. This is important as CRT also includes studies on the many layers and concerns related to the effects of racism, one being health.

Structural Race Theory

The term structural racism refers to a system in which public policies, institutional practices, cultural representations, and other norms work in various, often reinforcing ways to perpetuate racial group inequity. It identifies dimensions of our history and culture that have allowed privileges associated with Whiteness and disadvantages associated with color to endure and adapt over time (Lawrence et al., 2004). The theory of structural racism is more than simply separation, rather a legacy that continues and has been solely based on a social construct, not a biological one. The structural racism lens allows us to see how the processes and policies maintain and cultivate the racial disparities and inequalities (Lawrence et al., 2004). Bonilla-Silva (1997) shares that in all racialized social systems the placement of people in racial categories involves some form of hierarchy that produces definite social relations between the races. The race placed in the superior position tends to receive greater economic remuneration and access to better occupations and/or prospects in the labor market, occupying a primary position. This term refers to societies in which economic, political, social, and ideological levels are partially structured by the placement of actors in racial categories or races. Races

typically are identified by their phenotype, but the selection of certain human traits to designate a racial group is always socially rather than biologically based (Bonilla-Silva, 1997). White privilege refers to Whites' historical and contemporary advantage in all of the principal opportunity domains, including education, employment, housing, health care, political representation, media influence, and so on (Lawrence et al., 2004).

Chapter 3

Methodology

There have been thousands of studies conducted in education. However, based upon the literature review, far fewer studies have been conducted regarding the experiences of educators from Catholic inner-city schools. It is important to unveil the shared experiences of these educators in particular. This investigation was also significant as it relates to race and the perspectives of educators who have served students of color, a historically marginalized group, even in Catholic schools (Tate, 1994).

Since the primary goal of the researcher was to collect the perspectives of the participants' experiences, a methodology that supports the collection of qualitative data (Creswell, 2006) was necessary. A qualitative research approach was selected for this study because the research problem commanded an interpretation based upon participants' accounts of their own lived experiences and feelings (Denzin and Lincoln 2011).

The purpose of this study was to explore the perspectives of educators from a time period and setting between 1960 and 1990. Based in historical data collected from the research site, the participants of this study were able to share relevant experiences related to the phenomenon known as racism. The researcher chose to use a select time period for the study for two reasons. The first reason is that the researcher was a former student of the school site from 1974 to 1982. The second reason pertained to the events that signify a set of policies, decisions, and shifts within the archdiocese during this same time that may have impacted the educational experiences of the Black students enrolled, in an unfair way, knowingly or unintentionally. Therefore, a qualitative research approach was

selected to fully examine, understand, and define the experiences of the participants in the context of policy decisions made by the Archdiocese.

As noted, there are a limited number of studies that investigate the lived experiences of educators from urban Catholic schools that primarily serve students of color. In this chapter, the methodology of the study is discussed, as well as the ethical considerations, limitations, trustworthiness, and ethical considerations.

Qualitative Research Methods

A qualitative research methodology was most appropriate for the purpose of this research in order to investigate the lived experiences of participants based on the phenomenon, structural racism. A qualitative methodology provided space for the use of open narratives to capture and analyze the participants' experiences. Also, a qualitative approach was selected to investigate the research questions for this study because this approach was more flexible and the data was unrestricted (Merriam & Merriam, 2009). Given the research questions, a qualitative approach, by definition, is the most efficient way to mitigate the most accurate portrait of the lived experiences of the participants of this study. In education, as with other disciplines, what is observed in isolation can leave gaps and wonderings, therefore, interviews were overlapped with the research literature in order to identify themes that emerged from the investigation. Additionally, this study does not provide an argument. The specific type of qualitative research design that was selected is phenomenological. This study is best described as a qualitative, phenomenological study examining structural race theory.

Filtering the phenomenological findings through Critical Race Theory helped to frame the results for future research implications. The purpose of phenomenology is to

discover and describe the meaning or essence of participants' lived experiences or knowledge as it manifests within their consciousness. It is the understanding of individual and collective human experiences and how we actively think about the experience (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006: Patton, 2002; Wertz, 2005). Based on the interview data from teachers previously employed at a select school in the district and inner city, themes were captured that either supported or discounted the position that the students received an unequal education due to leadership decisions based in race that existed in the district during 1960-1990. These interviews were analyzed from the lens of Critical Race Theory.

Additionally, learning more about the participants' experiences, relationships, career structures, and processes within the Black Catholic educational system following the civil rights movement provided a deeper understanding of how the archdiocese unintentionally added to the separate and unequal experiences of students enrolled in the inner-city Catholic schools. The participants were particularly unique in that they taught at the elementary school under study. Since these stories begin in the early 1960s and are rooted in the memories of the educators, there was a strong likelihood that the recollections would provide a stronger understanding of the circumstances and further demonstrate how the past events have led to the current conditions of students of color enrolled in Catholic schools today.

Phenomenology

Phenomenology is a term born from philosophy. Phenomenology as a tool for research was created by a German philosopher Edmond Husserl (Dowling, 2007). Husserl, considered the father of phenomenology, claimed phenomenological inquiry is intended to understand human thought and experience through a rigorous and unbiased

study of things as they appear (Dowling, 2007). Husserl also believed in

phenomenological reduction, which is the practice of eliminating the bias of a

researcher's understanding of a phenomenon. Heidegger disagreed, adding the

hermeneutic circle, which encompasses the thought that a researcher has a prior

understanding of a phenomenon and therefore cannot be excluded from the research.

Thus "bracketing", removing the researcher's understanding, is unlikely (Dowling,

2007). Husserl lays a strong foundation regarding the research as interpretive in nature

and inclusive of the experiences of the researcher. Dowling (2007) also shares that

Galdamer agrees with Heidegger, claiming ontological position indicates that researchers

are deeply influenced by the traditions of their culture and as such, act on that way of

being in the world (Dowling, 2007). The major difference between Husserl and

Heidegger is the belief that a researcher's perspective can be separated. Regardless,

phenomenology stands as a common method in qualitative research, either describing or

interpreting the experiences, or both share the goal of presenting the lived experiences

based on a specific phenomenon (Dowling, 2007, Moustakas, 1994, Max van Manen,

1990). In the end, the readers of the research should have a better understanding of the

phenomena from the perspectives of the participants.

Hermeneutic Phenomenology

Dowling (2007) shares that the conflicts that exist between Husserl and Heidegger

were relevant for this study. Both philosophers offer a solid methodology to support

qualitative research efforts to gather data to answer questions identified by the researcher.

However, for this particular study, hermeneutics or interpretive phenomenology, best

suited the goal of the study. This study sought to examine the experiences of educators

from a time period in which their lifeworld helped to form their choices. The social and

political forces of the time, the 1960s-1990s, a time of great debate relative to civil rights,

also merged with the experiences of the participants. These forces are relevant to the

phenomenon, race, reviewed for this study (Lopez, 2004). To be clear, this study sought

to set aside the beliefs and knowledge of the researcher and included only the shared

experiences of the participants (Patton, 2002). However, the researcher had a significant

connection to the study, therefore, a less strict form of bracketing was selected to increase

trustworthiness. A detailed description of the specific approaches to bracketing was

discussed at length.

Epoche' and Bracketing

The researcher of this study employed limited methods of epoche' and bracketing.

Bracketing and epoche' was attempted to some degree while recognizing the researcher

had experienced the phenomenon and also had prior experiences with the participants and

setting of the study. The research literature described the differences between epoche'

and bracketing as such: epoche' is the consistent practice of setting one's preconceptions

to the side throughout the entire study, while bracketing is setting boundaries around the

researcher's knowledge during specific processes of the study (Yuksel & Yildrim, 2015).

Bracketing has been divided into three phases within the research: "abstract formulation,

research praxis, and reintegration. The research also identified six different types of

bracketing. The type of bracketing employed for a research study was determined by the

researcher's position and focus" (Gearing, 2004, p. 1433). Since the researcher is

connected to the participants and setting, a "reflexive bracketing" approach was selected

to improve the validity and trustworthiness of the study. This particular type of

bracketing has features that fit with the specifics of the study as it related to the researcher's position and skill. This form of bracketing allowed the researcher to suspend experiences yet include multiple perspectives on the phenomenon.

This study's particular characteristics aligned highly with Heidegger's position that it is near impossible to fully set aside the understandings of this particular phenomenon, as it is deeply rooted in the world, race, and racism (Ladson-Billings, 1997; Dowling, 2007). Gearing (2004) does support that a researcher can make evident positions related to the phenomenon of the study, therefore removing potential impact on the results of the investigation. Reflexive bracketing is also a valued method within educational settings (Gearing, 2004). Reflexive bracketing provides an opportunity for the researcher to create transparency with regard to personal experiences or knowledge relative to the phenomenon. The articulation of this type of bracketing increases the trustworthiness, in that it makes clear the position of the researcher and includes the acknowledgment of the challenges related to setting aside these prior understandings (Gearing, 2004). The freedom to ask in-depth questions, obtain a deeper narrative from participants, and disclose the inability to fully bracket the researcher's placement within the research and interpretive phenomenological design is the approach that the researcher selected in order to answer the research questions. This method also employed a critical lens based on the research of the phenomenon, race.

Critical Interpretive Hermeneutics

This study sought to gather data focused on the lived experiences of educators within the social and political context of their employment as well as interpret their experiences based on the phenomenon. Both CRT and critical hermeneutics describe the

value of the voices of marginalized groups in research. Likewise, these two concepts

provided an opportunity for the discussion of social and political issues that also

underpinned the experiences of the participants. These themes were identified and

analyzed within the shared experiences (Lopez, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Research Design

Interviews

The interview has been one of the most widely used forms of collecting data for a

phenomenological study. It is important to record the stories of the individuals who have

experienced the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). Phenomenological interviews have

several essential characteristics that are ideal to fully investigate a phenomenon. These

interviews are typically longer and provide opportunities for the participants to fully

describe their experiences. The interviewer or researcher must set the norms for quick

trust-building using a set of questions that are created to gain details regarding the

participants' experiences. Therefore, a successful start to these types of interviews can be

determining factors in the level of useful data collected (Moustakas, 1994). Since the

purpose of this study was to learn about the experiences of educators from an inner-city

Catholic school, semi-structured interviews were used to collect data.

A semi-structured interview was selected because it aligned with the goals of the

investigation. First, the interviewer can ask probing questions, it acknowledges some

understanding of the phenomenon of focus, and frames questions but it also provides a

more open-ended approach (Burnard, 1991). These qualities yielded appropriate data and

provided answers to the research questions presented in this study. And when participants

needed further clarification, the researcher asked additional probing questions based on

the interest of the study. Although this type of interview was not quick and easy, it was selected and evidenced as the best structure for collecting thoughts and feelings of participants related to their personal and collective experiences and the phenomenon (Adams, 2015).

A phenomenological researcher is interested in describing a person's experience in the way he or she experiences it rather than from a theoretical standpoint (Bevan, 2014). Semi-structured in-depth interviews are the most widely used interviewing format for qualitative research and can occur either with an individual or in groups (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree, 2006). The individual in-depth interview provides the interviewer the opportunity to delve deeply into social and personal matters, whereas the group interview provides interviewers the opportunity to focus on a larger time frame of experience, but because of the public nature of the process, it prevents the researcher from delving as deeply into the individual experience as may be needed. Although semi-structured, in order for the interview to remain focused on the phenomenon under investigation, structural racism, there must be some structure (Bevan, 2014). This structure did not minimize the phenomenological tenets. What to ask was not the direction; rather it was how to manage the process of questioning.

Creswell (2007) says that interview designs can be used to gather deep information from participants. Likewise, this information can be gathered effectively if the researcher uses an interview guide rather than a casual approach to dialogue (Turner, 2010). Qualitative researchers also describe differences and similarities between the designs of the types of interviews. While there are different types of interviews, such as open-ended to more structured approaches, the important role of the researcher is

overstated (Creswell, 2007). The researcher has roles prior, during, and after the interview which all add to the validity and trustworthiness of the research (Adams, 2015; Creswell, 2007; Turner, 2010, and Kvale, 2007). Duffy & Chenail (2005), and Adams (2015) further provide a roadmap for preparing to conduct interviews which can lead to positive results for a novice researcher.

Interview Questions

Semi-structured interview (SSI) questions are written in a particular style aligned to the goals of the investigation type. For this style of research, SSI questions must be crafted to encourage participant sharing, and often probing. The questions, although planned and structured, are not confirmed if the interview responses may require a different sequence or additional participant probes. The order of the questions should be natural and create a smooth transition from easy to uncomfortable, to simple and subsequently become more in-depth (Kvale, 2007). Semi-structured interviews also contain both closed and open-ended questions (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). After the first interview, the researcher should consider modifications if appropriate. Frequent review of the interview guide is acceptable (Adams, 2015). To employ the methods suggested by Kvale (2007) and ensure that the interview is conversational, the researcher must focus on underpinnings of the world using critical, hermeneutic phenomenological approaches (Gloria Ladson-Billings, 1995; Lopez and Willis, 2009) and respond appropriately as the interviewer (Patton, 2002). A three-part approach described by Bearman (2019) was selected to structure the interview guide. Thus, the interview guide was divided into three sections; the first section was designed to build rapport and comfort with the participant, the second section focused on the phenomenon and the last

section was designed to encourage reflection (Bearman, 2019). In reference to the

specific researched-based recommendations identified above, provided below is the first

interview guide:

1. Could you give an overview of your professional experience?
2. What years were you employed as a teacher at the ICCS or another inner-city Catholic school in this city?
3. How did you come to teach at the ICCS?
4. Do you remember when or even know that some inner-city schools were separated from the larger district and a separate governing body and policies were formed? (Share map and publish date of the inner-city schools map from archives) Can you share your memories of the restructuring? How and why restructuring was decided?
5. Since you are unfamiliar with the restructuring, what are your recollections of the governing structure for the ICCS and other inner-city Catholic schools of this city? Probe: How did you know?
6. Tell me about your experiences as an educator at the ICCS?
7. Tell me what you remember about the school setting, demographics or enrollment?
8. What were the hiring practices for this particular elementary school?
9. What were your experiences like as a teacher at this particular elementary school? Tell me more about that particular experience.
10. What was your observations of students' experiences at school?
11. Do you have any understandings related to why select schools were separated from the larger district, the archdiocese?
12. Do you think the restructuring benefitted students in the archdiocese? Probe: If so, how and which students?
13. Do you think race was a factor in the leadership's decision to restructure and then in daily decision-making? Probe: How do you know?
14. How were the educational programs of these inner-city schools in comparison to schools in the larger system? Probe: What do you remember specifically?
15. What do you remember were your colleagues' experiences as employees, parents, or patrons of the school? Probe: Can you give some examples?
16. Thinking back to your time at the ICCS, what, if any were some experiences related to race?

Participants

The educators' stories are important to the history, conversations, and

understanding of both Catholic and public education, particularly for students of color.

The researcher chose to conduct interviews to reveal the story from the perspectives of

the teachers. These data tell a story of a greater concern that still exists and upholds the

norms of marginalization in education, specifically religious educational institutions in

this city.

After receiving the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, the researcher

contacted the potential participants via email. Each potential participant was emailed a

letter that included a consent form. Participants who agreed to be interviewed were also

required to complete a google form/survey (**Appendix**) which inquired about

demographic information, their preferred time of day for the interview (morning,

afternoon, or evening), and their interview location preference (in-person or Zoom).

Participants who completed the Google form were contacted in alphabetical order, and

times and locations for the interviews were set and confirmed. If participants did not

respond to the email message within seven days, a follow-up email message was sent to

solicit their participation and submission of the google form. If the participant pool does

not meet the desired sampling requirements, the researcher will call the confirmed

participants to request additional participant information after the interviews are

concluded to avoid interference with the sampling efforts and trust level of the first set of

participants (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2003).

Using the phenomenological approach, the aim of sample selection was to choose

participants who were employed as full-time teachers in one of the inner-city Catholic

schools that was separated from the larger system and was also willing to share their

lived experiences. The researcher also aimed to determine a sample size appropriate for

answering the research questions based on the phenomenon. It was predicted that four to

six participants were adequate to address the research questions if the data were

substantial and effective in interpreting the phenomenon. Participants were selected using purposive, snowball sampling approaches. Since the setting was pre-established by the researcher, purposive sampling seemed appropriate. Since the researcher formerly attended one of the inner-city Catholic schools of the archdiocese, there were already a small group of four participants who are conveniently accessible. However, the additional participant was gained through the snowball sampling process. Snowball sampling is used to provide the initial participants an opportunity to recommend or refer to additional members of the group who satisfy the sampling criteria (Polit-O'Hara and Beck, 2004).

The snowball sampling method not only takes little time but also provides the researcher with the opportunity to communicate better with the sample participants, as they are acquaintances of the first sample. Snowball sampling was a convenient sampling method. This method is applied when it is difficult to access subjects who possess the target characteristics. During this process, the existing study subjects recruit future subjects among their acquaintances. Sampling continues until data saturation has been achieved, as stated by Polit-O'Hara and Beck (2004). It was the researcher's intent to invite additional participants based upon recommendations from the first four participants. The first four participants have first-hand knowledge of the whereabouts and possible willingness of additional participants who satisfy the same criteria. Both purposive and snowball sampling were appropriate for the nature of this study.

Data Collection

The researcher followed the recommendations of a collective group of qualitative researchers regarding interview preparation to obtain reliable results (Moustakas, 1994: Sanders2003; Creswell, 1998; Kvale, 1996). Additionally, the researcher conducted the

interviews of the five participants using a previously planned set of steps developed prior

to conducting the interviews. The minimum time established for each interview was 60-

90 minutes and accounted for a longer time period if needed. Face-to-face interviews

were requested and encouraged, however, Zoom or telephone interviews were acceptable

if participants were unwilling or unable to meet in person. In-person interviews often

yield both verbal and non-verbal data that may be relevant to the research, as the focus of

the study is sensitive in nature. Therefore, it is equally important to establish trust and a

rapport during the first portion of the interview (Anderson & Kilpatrick, 2015). Given the

limited number of participants, individual data was significant. The researcher must

practice active listening. Through active listening the interviewer can then ask probing

questions to "fill in gaps" (Anderson & Kilpatrick, 2015, p. 632). Thus, to increase the

comfort of participants, the location of in-person interviews was determined by the

participants due to possible limitations related to physical abilities and transportation

availability (Rabionet, 2011).

Data collection included semi-structured interviews with the participant teachers.

Data collection occurred over a period of one month. The interview questions were

designed to elicit information regarding the participants' lived experiences during a select

time period and in a specific school setting. Therefore, these experiences were based on

memories, which were often blurred or difficult to recall. Therefore, to collect interview

data, an interview protocol was created to guide the conversation. The interview

questions allowed time for recall and additional interpretations by the participants. Prior

to the interview, participants were provided three different time slots for the interview,

three different dates, an option for in-person or zoom conference based upon their

comfort level given the current conditions related to COVID-19 and the Delta variant.

     A protocol/checklist for the interviews was provided which included a quiet

space, a table for the recorder or camera, computer and uninterrupted and comfortable

seating to set the tone for relaxed and open dialogue (Moustakas, 1994). If the Zoom

meeting preference was selected, the session, interview, transcription, and chat, if used,

was recorded and subsequently saved to the cloud and accessed later by the researcher.

The interviews were scheduled for 60-90 minutes and was timed. If more time was

needed, it was granted and/or determined by the participant's availability or willingness.

If the interviews were conducted in person at a location convenient to the participant, the

interviews were recorded, transcribed, and reviewed for accuracy by each participant.

Interviews were based on questions listed in the Interview Guide. Interview questions

were designed to encourage participants to answer freely and depart from the script if

they are comfortable (Adams, 2015). This method can advance saturation (Mapp, 2008).

The interviews were recorded using an iPhone and the Zoom platform and they were

subsequently transcribed using either of these tools. The transcriptions were subsequently

reviewed and revised. The revised transcriptions were emailed to the participants for

proofreading and confirmation. Once confirmed for accuracy, the transcriptions were

used for data analysis (Anderson & Kilpatrick, 2015).

Data Analysis

     Interpretive phenomenology requires the selection of a data analysis method,

which allows the participants to confirm their views based on their experiences (Smith et

al., 1999). Once the researcher transcribed the interviews, a process for analysis was

employed (Smith, et.al, 1999). Using an approach described by Smith et al. (1999), the interviews were analyzed.

After confirming the accuracy of the interview transcriptions, the researcher reread the transcriptions several times. Feelings and thoughts were identified as it relates to the phenomenon. Next, important statements were identified and saved to determine the meanings of each. The interpreted meanings became themes that were grouped and later reduced based upon repetitions. Lastly, this coding system was reviewed and findings were captured. This particular data analysis method was selected for two reasons. The research literature shared that this was the best method for a qualitative researcher and it was also appropriate for interpretive phenomenology (Smith, et al., 2015). In addition to the researcher's manual coding, a spreadsheet was used to increase theme identification and accuracy if needed.

Trustworthiness

To ensure trustworthiness, the researcher will pursue several action steps. An interview guide was developed, the interviews were recorded, transcribed, and subsequently shared with the interviewees to check for accuracy (Adams, 2015). Additionally, the researcher used a form of bracketing that included transparency relative to the beliefs and understandings of the researcher with regard to this phenomenon. Bracketing was minimal and remained part of the interpretation of the data. (Moustakas, 1994). This was presented at the onset of the study for the reader. The data analysis process was also checked by the research chairperson for rigor and appropriateness since the researcher is inexperienced.

As with many new researchers, to increase trustworthiness, according to Lincoln and Guba (1985), a study must also include:

- Credibility - confidence in the 'truth' of the findings.

- Transferability - showing that the findings have applicability in other contexts.

- Dependability - showing that the findings are consistent and could be repeated.

- Confirmability - a degree of neutrality or the extent to which the findings of a study are shaped by the respondents and not researcher bias, motivation, or interest.

Based on the nature of this study, the researcher honed interviewing skills and the process used for the analysis of the interview data to build confidence in the findings. A thick description within the methodology chapter, specifically, the design and analysis sections, maintained clear and concise processes for how the data was collected, analyzed, and coded for interpretation. To increase the validity of the study, the researcher explained the relationship between the research questions, the theoretical framework, and the interview responses based on themes that emerged from the data. The researcher also ensured that the results were comprehensive and well-developed (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Ethical Considerations

It was the overall goal of this study to gather the lived experiences of educators and relate these data to the phenomenon of race. The benefit of participation in this study is that participants shared their stories related to their experiences as teachers and anchored their voices as a component of the historical and cultural tapestry of Catholic education. This study added perspectives from the voices of a marginalized population

who were also impacted by the decisions of the leaders of this system. Based on Critical Race Theory, an interruption of the status quo through the scholarly presentation of participant narratives is important to change the current systems of oppression (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

The educational community, specifically Catholic, may find these stories relevant to professional development and training programs for future and current educators. The phenomenological approach can yielded the depth and richness of the data that the researcher wanted to articulate regarding race and racism. One of the advantages of interpretive phenomenology is to promote experiences of the participants within a given setting and system that can be analyzed and appropriately placed within the studied phenomenon (Smith, et al., 2015). Critical Race Theory provided a lens to critique experiences of the past and present in order that all perspectives can be identified. Without all views, the current stories are skewed and cannot provide a factual lens (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Particularly in a qualitative research study, it is the responsibility of the researcher to protect the participants from harm and to secure the identity of people, institutions, and communities in which the investigations occurred. Additionally, details of events and people are protected and are assigned pseudonyms. Pseudonyms are used to identify places and spaces, and all contributors are only known to the researcher. Likewise, the transcriptions concealed the identity of people discussed during the interviews. Subsequently, comments included in the findings were collected and interpreted from the interview transcriptions. The identities of respondents were protected. Therefore, no transcriptions are included in the results. The recordings containing reflections for the

study were also secured from unauthorized access. At the end of the study, all recordings were destroyed to protect the confidentiality of people and places (Khan, 2014).

Additionally, the researcher ensured that participants knew their participation in this study was voluntary and they could terminate their participation at any time. Throughout the interview process, the protocol included verbal and written reminders that participation was completely voluntary and there would not be any compensation for their participation (Khan, 2014).

The researcher also understood that any conclusions were based on the interview data and that the goal was to add to the body of research related to structural racism and education. The most significant purpose was to minimize the marginalization of children within educational systems, therefore reporting information accurately and ethically was magnified if the researcher desired that the reader accepts and values the findings, thus more likely to eliminate the negative experiences for children within their educational systems or communities (Khan, 2014).

Limitations

At this early stage of the research project, the limitations appeared to connect mainly to the participant size, historical aspect, and the role of the researcher. Participant size was limited by the access and the availability of the educators who met the criteria. Although the snowball method was used to improve the participant size, it was unknown how many participants will agree and feel comfortable discussing race within the Catholic school district. Some may still be employed in the district.

Since the study involved participants who recollected their professional experiences from a time period that is more than 30 years ago, the researcher relied on

the memories of the participants as well as the layers of experiences that influenced their

memories and underpinned or influenced the accuracy of their stories. However, the

institutional memories of the participants lacked detailed information, and therefore,

flaws in human recollection exist within the interview data. Likewise, if the experiences

were articulated, this implied that they were significant and have meaning. Given the

participants' ages range from 60-80 years of age their memories regarding their

experiences were the source of the data. Hadhtroudi et. al (1990) conclude older adults in

comparison to younger adults remember more thoughts and feelings. This implies that

these shared experiences have left an imprint in the lives of the participants that led to the

themes and thus, answer the research questions of this study (Hadhtroudi et.al, 1990)

Additionally, the researcher was familiar with the setting and participants. Since

the interview itself was the primary data collection tool, it was important that the

researcher followed the interview guide based on a data collection method that aligned to

this particular type of study, phenomenology. Also, it was important that the researcher

used interpersonal skills to quickly build trust in order that the data collected was

accurate and rich. This contributed to improved and careful data analysis. Therefore, it

was imperative that the researcher solicited feedback on the interview guide and made

adjustments if needed prior to beginning the interviews (Duffy & Chenail, 2005).

The researcher was also be able to bracket appropriately during the investigation

process. Although the researcher revealed his/her connections to the participants and the

understandings of the phenomenon, it was still be necessary to consistently convey these

boundaries during the study. It was important to increase reliability and trust (Moustakas,

1994).

These limitations were shared in order to provide the reader with the necessary

background information to apply the findings to their work and areas of expertise

appropriately. Additional limitations were found and shared once the study was

conducted and results are shared. The researcher did not have control over certain aspects

of the study (Roberts, 2015).

Chapter 4

Results and Findings

The purpose of this study was to examine in detail the perspectives and experiences of educators from an inner-city Catholic elementary school located in the Midwest of the United States, during an initial time period of the early 1960s through the 1990s. Upon review of the historical documents, it is still undetermined why the archdiocese chose to separate these specific schools. The impact of this transition on the educational experiences of the teachers and students enrolled in this specific school may or may not be based solely on race. This school was one of several that were separated from the larger district. The goal of this study was to investigate the lived experiences of the educators employed by this school, to provide a clearer understanding and evidence of the separation, as well as the impact on those employed or enrolled.

The study yielded some findings in the context of education and also provided information with regard to leadership within the educational system. A familiarization with perspectives and voices of the educators demonstrated the progression and compounding factors toward racial injustices that currently exist. These perspectives informed the history of racial disparities which have resulted in inequalities in wealth, education, and opportunities between White students and students of color.

The analysis that was conducted was consistent with the phenomenological approach selected for this study, critical hermeneutics. Further discussion elaborated on the detailed process of coding and the findings that were derived from the strict thematic analysis. Additionally, this chapter included demographics, charts and tables to support the summary.

Summary of Results

Table 1

Demographic Data for Participants

Participant	Interview Location	Years of Service as Teacher at ICCS	Taught at other Catholic Schools	Catholic or non-religious	Race	Gender
Lydia	In Person	7-10	Yes	Catholic	Black	Female
Priscilla	Zoom	7-10	Yes	Catholic	Black	Female
Phoebe	Zoom	4-7	No	Non-Religious	Black	Female
Anna	Phone	10+	Yes	Catholic	White	Female
Joanna	Phone	0-3	Yes	Catholic	Black	Female

Demographic Data and Sampling Technique

Five participants were interviewed for this study. Table 1 represents demographic data for the participants. Participants were provided a survey to collect this information. The two criteria were that participants were employed as full-time teachers in an ICCS and served during the time period of early 1960s to 1980s. All five participants were employed at an ICCS during the selected time period of 1960-1990. These participants are all women, one White and four Black. These participants all know each other, and in some cases, worked together at the ICCS or in other schools. The sample was purposeful, however, the snowball method was employed, which yielded the fifth and final participant who was selected. No other participants were accessible for this study. Years of service at the ICCS ranged from 0-3 or 10+ years based on the initial survey provided

to collect demographic data (**Appendix**).

Thematic Analysis

Reflexive thematic analysis was used to analyze the data, and it consisted of six

phases. These six phases were outlined clearly by Terry and Hayfield (2021) and guided

the researcher's analysis process. First, the researcher intimately reviewed the interview

data several times and revised the transcripts. This process also included confirming the

accuracy of the information in the transcript recordings and the audio recordings (Braun

and Clark, 2006). An online tool named Happy Scribe was used to analyze

(www.happyscribe.com), and transcribe the computer audio recordings for four of the

five participants. For the final interview, only the IPhone recording was saved. The

laptop did not have sound and therefore, the second copy of the interview recording was

unavailable and could not be downloaded to the Happy Scribe online tool. The final

interview was subsequently transcribed by the researcher. This interview was 23:26

minutes.

The use of Happy Scribe was a simple and accessible way to transcribe the first

four interviews which ranged from 32:01 minutes to 1:12:23 minutes. There was a fee

assessed for each transcription. Happy Scribe provided a transcript that could be copied

and saved to google docs for revision. One interview was recorded in three places: Zoom,

IPhone and the laptop. Prior to revision, the researcher emailed the Zoom and iPhone

recordings to protect the data from loss or damage. During the revision phase, the

researcher listened to the IPhone recordings to repair the transcription errors from Happy

Scribe. The recordings were transcribed in a way to ensure accuracy and clarity of

comments. Often times, speakers used awkward language or mumbled, making it difficult

for the researcher to transcribe. However, these data were mostly accurate and could be analyzed without any comprehension barriers. The interview data was rich and could be analyzed fully, although imperfect.

Phase 1 required deep engagement with the data. First, to become familiar with the data, the researcher read and listened to the recordings simultaneously to repair and check for accuracy of the transcription. There were many errors and some inaudible parts; therefore, it was necessary that the researcher rewound and fast forwarded the audio often to listen repeatedly to the interview and use language modification strategies to include appropriate punctuation that was not detected by the tool used for transcription. In addition to the revision of word misspellings, entire words and utterances, the researcher had to correctly identify the speakers. Sometimes the online transcription tool would reverse the order of the speakers and inaccurately identify the participant and the researcher.

Phase 2 involved the coding process. The identification of segments of data by label or name is the goal of coding (Terry & Hayfield, 2021). A deductive approach was used once the phenomenon had been identified. This style approach allowed the coding of the text to be driven by the theory. The theory of this study is race. Upon further review of the research questions and the phenomenon of the study, the researcher evaluated and identified codes and patterns. The coding phase began as the researcher slowly read each piece of the data and annotated the information using the hard copies of the interview transcripts. The researcher also wrote simple phrases on Post-it notes in order to code the meanings of those phrases, which was later organized into categories. These initial categories were considered prototype themes, or the initial themes that were

constructed during the coding process. These prototypes were subsequently dismissed or

"promoted to candidate themes" (Terry & Hayield, 2021, p. 48). Some of the phrases on

the post-it notes were brief summaries of the meaning of the text. For example, if a

participant stated, "Kids knew it was a special place," this was simplified on a post-it

note as "students liked the school" and later added to the "culture" prototype theme.

These prototype themes were identified based on the notes or ideas that emerged

from the data. These prototype themes were written on large index cards to ensure that

they were not compromised during the coding process. These prototype themes were

identified as emerging themes that evolved into final themes that were selected at a later

time depending upon the final theming structure that supported the research questions.

The researcher was careful and avoided focusing on the questions and emphasized the

responses of the participants. It was important to allow the data to emerge and avoid the

temptation to focus on the interview questions that were posed. The research that

supports thematic analysis encourages researchers to "retain accounts that depart from the

dominant story" (Braun &Clark, 2006, p. 89).

The specificity of the interview questions caused a natural emergence of

prototype themes which were an assumption of the researcher. For example, if the

question was related to demographics, a prototype theme was titled "demographics" and

was written on Post-it notes and subsequently attached to a larger index card titled

"demographics." Likewise, the following categories were: parents, teachers, leaders, race,

nuns, why restructuring, enrollment patterns, hiring practices, budget, students, and

benefits of separation, teacher quality, culture, relationships, and special programs. When

coordinating post-it notes with prototype themes, for example, the post-it note for

"teachers purchased things for classrooms" was placed in two prototype themes: "budget issues" and "teacher quality." The process of reading, annotating, writing notes on post-it notes and revising categories was completed for the five interview transcriptions. This appeared to be the most effective process to employ to ensure that the researcher repeated familiarization and began to code for understanding, as suggested by the thematic analysis process selected for this study (Braun & Clark, 2006; Terry & Hayfield, 2021). In this way, meaning was ascribed to phrases or short segments of text provided by the participants. The researcher did not limit the number of codes identified during the text analysis.

At the beginning of phase 3, the researcher verified that all handwritten annotations included in the transcript was placed on post-it notes. This provided an opportunity for the researcher to interact with the text during several iterations to become more familiar with the data and exhaust any additional coding options that had been taken under consideration. This resulted in an overwhelming volume of codes that was displayed on post-it notes, and it was necessary to organize those using common ideas or patterns. The text on the Post-it notes were placed in a Google spreadsheet. The codes were later modified to minimize variations in how the data were depicted. Some codes were direct quotes that were extracted from text, and others were based upon meanings derived from phrases of the text. For comparison purposes, it was important to use the same method across the varying code designations. The researcher had not yet determined whether summarizing an idea or using direct quotes was the appropriate procedure to adopt. Examples from the research for thematic analysis explained that coding is the act of identifying meaning from text which later supports a theme (Terry &

Hayfield, 2021). As a result, all Post-it notes were subsequently double coded and statements were written to correspond with the meaning of the phrases to ensure accurate coding.

Once the coding process was revisited and meanings were constructed from the segments of text, the process of clustering began. To cluster the codes successfully, the researcher created a google spreadsheet to organize the codes into possible themes. The initial codes and prototypes that emerged were as follows: teachers, students, parents, materials/budget/enrollment, culture, leadership, race issues, hiring, benefits of restructuring, relationships, nuns, relationships, special programs, and why restructuring. These themes were dictated by the codes. The themes were reassigned titles using phrases that were supported by the assigned codes. For example, "parents" became "parent engagement." The coding was principally related to how, why or when parents engaged with school staff or their children. For example, parents supported teachers when they contacted those regarding concerns, or they helped with fundraising efforts. These codes both identified how parents engaged with the institution and staff. Qualitative researchers support the idea that the development of themes is not a one step process. Instead, themes transition from early to fully developed or initial to prototype, and subsequently to candidate (Braun & Clark, 2006). The goal is to tell the story by answering the research questions. Developing themes is not a linear process, but a recursive one, allowing the researcher to continually engage with the data (Braun & Clark, 2006).

Phase 4 began with the review and development of themes. During this phase, themes and interview data began to connect with the research questions. The goal of this phase was to evaluate the current themes and alignment of the research questions to find

deeper meaning among the codes and themes. At this time, there were eight prototype

themes. These prototype themes evolved into candidate themes.

The research questions for this study are:

1. *What did teachers perceive as the reason for restructuring within the archdiocese?*
2. *What was the impact of restructuring related to the experiences of staff?*
3. *During the post-restructuring phase, how did the archdiocese leaders address the educational needs within the inner-city schools?*

This study's research questions were addressed. Although the interview data was based

on the memories and recollection of participants' lived experiences decades prior,

common themes were identified. There were many redundancies in perceptions among

the participants that can be reduced to a smaller number of themes. Since the interview

protocol was created to support the research questions, the themes emerged in a naturally

acceptable pattern. The themes are related to the research questions. Research question

one is related to teacher perceptions regarding the reason for restructuring. Although

responses varied among the participants, the question was answered. A similar pattern

followed for the final two research questions, although one or two questions resulted in a

larger quantity of data than another.

Consistent with qualitative thematic analysis, six levels of analysis were

completed (Terry and Hayfield, 2021). Over 100 codes emerged from open coding.

After an exhaustive, reiterative process, eight themes emerged. The eight themes

resulting from this study share perspectives related to the participants' lived experiences

during the post-restructuring phase of the archdiocese. This restructure segregated

schools serving students of color. The eight themes are: (a) Teachers had varying

perspectives related to the reasons for decision to restructure, (b) Students was safe and

the educational experiences contributed to their sense of sameness, (c) Parents was

positive partners post-restructuring, (d) Teacher quality had a positive impact on students'

educational experiences, (e) The culture at the ICCS was uniquely positive, (f) Post-

restructuring the budget did not meet the educational needs of the students, and (g)

Leadership was supportive at the ICCS.

Table 2 displays the themes that emerged and the participant agreement to

articulation of the same themes.

Table 2

Shared Themes from Participants Aligned to Interview Data

Themes	Lydia	Priscilla	Phoebe	Anna	Joanna
Reasons for restructuring implied race was a factor, but was not explicitly stated.	X	X	X	X	
Educational experiences contributed to students' feelings of sameness	X	X	X	X	X
Culture at the ICCS uniquely positive	X	X	X	X	X
Teacher investment had a positive impact on students' experiences	X	X	X	X	X
Post-Restructuring the budget did not meet the needs of students	X	X	X	X	X
Leadership was supportive at BH	X	X	X	X	X

Teacher Memories Regarding Reasons for Restructuring

Why restructure? According to teachers from this study, various reasons were identified. Race was both implied and explicitly stated. Four of the five participants spoke openly about race, however, the last participant did not. Participants shared experiences in their lives that led them to believe race was a factor in restructuring, but they did not describe any direct evidence that connected race as a factor to the decisions of the archdiocesan leadership to restructure. In response to the questions regarding race as a factor in restructuring, Participant 3 said, "But, I mean, the only schools that were impacted by that decision were North Side, inner-city schools. Now, that being said, of course, that's where the financial issues were but it wasn't. It (financial struggles) was happening in the South city schools, but they were not forced to get together to consolidate. A lot of people said it was race related." Another participant shared this belief: "Well racism was alive and well. And I think they (archdiocese leaders) being whoever was in charge of school, felt that, I often felt that they did not believe that we (inner-city school staff and students) were as deserving, need, gave us the best education as some of the other schools. And that was just my personal feeling." Both of these participants shared their feelings regarding race as a factor for the restructure, but one provided information regarding evidence when comparing north to south city and the other expressed personal feelings of marginalization.

Participant 4 responded with this recollection, "I really don't and I can only speak for the ICCS. We did not have that many White families within the school" and "at the ICCS we had a few White students within our school, but we were basically starting to turn Black because the neighborhood was changing." Although the participant did not

relate this reason to race, when you consider White flight as a result of race relationships,

the research suggests that White flight has a negative impact on schools and communities

(Logan et al., 2017). Participant 3, when asked the race question, said, "There were some

White teachers, and some of the newer White teachers may have had a difficult time

being in an inner-city classroom. But the classrooms were still small-sized and I just

don't remember them talking about well, they probably would not have talked to me

anyway. But having a difficult time with race." This comment identified the discomfort

of White teachers working in inner-city schools serving students of color. This same

participant also shared, "Yes, because we understood Black kids." This was her response

to a question regarding the benefits for students of color who had a Black teacher. Race

was implied as a possible factor, but not clearly confirmed from the interview data.

However, three of the five believed that it was a possibility based on the time period and

the failure of the archdiocesan leaders to restructure schools in south city with similar

financial and enrollment challenges. When asked questions regarding the governing

structure at the time of restructuring and why they believed the restructure took place,

participants responded in similar ways. The response of Participant 4 to the question is

as follows: "No, because as far as I know of, the White families had just started moving

out west anyway" and "...we had a few White students within our school, but we were

basically starting to turn Black because the neighborhood was changing." Participant 5

agreed with participant 4, stating, "That's pretty much you know the enrollment. I think

we have always been driven by enrollment." The responses from both of these

participants evidenced an awareness of the shift in the ICCS neighborhoods with regards

to the migration of White families moving out and the attempt of the district to maintain

enrollment in the select schools. Therefore, teachers recalled that restructuring was necessary for many different reasons. The underlying theme can be interpreted as common challenges related to "urban" communities, which aligns to CRT.

Reasons provided by the participants for restructuring also included a decrease in finances at select schools, the centralization of Catholic schools in the inner north city, an increase in the number of students who received Catholic education, and an overall lack of knowledge of the north city or White families who migrated to the county from north city. When asked if they remembered restructuring, Participant 1 stated, "I don't know when it happened. I know that it did happen…but I know that there was something called Focus Schools." Focus Schools was the acronym given for the schools during the post restructuring phase. It is an acronym for Federation of Catholic Urban Schools. Urban is an interchangeable term with inner-city, specifically when discussing schools with predominantly students of color. A second participant stated, "Catholic schools serving the north side, and there was a desire to fine tune that so that, first of all monies was not being wasted, which I think was possibly the case" and "So really the reason, as I understood, was efficiency, stewardship, and I do believe, and it's not keeping it secret, but there was a desire, there was a division within the archdiocese at that time that said, why are we educating non-Catholic children?" Non-Catholic children in this study, coincidentally are also students of color. These responses also identify reasons for restructuring may have been for improving the financial state of the district or select schools.

Students Felt Valued

There were happy students and they didn't feel different from their White

counterparts who did not experience restructuring although there were rumors of similar

financial burdens and decreasing enrollment at south city Catholic schools, serving

mostly White students. Teachers from the ICCS who participated in this study expressed

positive outcomes when sharing their memories of their students' educational experiences

during the post-restructuring period. Participant 4 indicated that students had positive

experiences in this statement: "Ooh our students were very positive, from 8th grade to

kindergarten. I mean, at the ICCS our students were really excited about learning."

Parents were Engaged

The ICCS, unlike many private or public schools, had parents who were fully

engaged and supported teacher efforts in educating their children, according to

participants. All participants agreed that parents valued faith-based education and was

engaged in beneficial ways. Participants considered the following acts as parent

engagement: fundraising, responding to phone calls regarding behavior concerns,

attending parent activities such as mass, and helping students facilitate birthday parties

for teachers. According to one participant, one parent spoke out against issues related to

race. Participant 1 stated, "Parents were very supportive and cooperative, and when you

ask them for help, they would be there to help." Participant 2 discussed a parent

expressing concerns regarding racism in this statement, "I'm trying to remember her last

name, but she went to a couple of those meetings that we had among the parents and

really got in the face of the priests". Participant 3 also shared her memories of teacher

perceptions of parents in this statement: "I know that the teachers that I worked with had

a very good rapport with the parents. The parents was extremely supportive." The ICCS

parents was positively engaged and felt strongly about supporting the school to ensure

their children were educated in a faith-based environment.

Teacher Investment in Students was Impactful

Participants felt that teacher quality at the ICCS made a difference. These teachers wanted to work in a faith-based environment. They sacrificed higher paying careers and all felt valued as staff members at the ICCS. Their collegial spirit supported their efforts in times of challenge and thus created a culture of oneness. Participants shared the following feelings regarding their tenure as teachers at BH. Participant 1 described the ICCS as "a Camelot", participant 4 explained, "…the best teaching experience I could have had," participant 3 said, "I was the queen of my classroom," and "I wanted to be among Black students." Likewise, they felt supported by each other. All participants shared this sentiment. Participant 3 stated, "…and I've got friends that will always be my friends, including my students. And I don't know if other teachers can say that." Participant 5 shared, "We got together and we were able to support and lift each other up". These shared beliefs from teachers identified a feeling of togetherness as a staff and helped staff maintain a cohesiveness that positively impacted students' educational experiences. Students received consistency in teacher quality with low turnover because teachers wanted to be there because of their sense of belonging and value from colleagues.

A Positive School Culture Supported Students and Staff

The teachers expressed feelings of warmth and joy when they were asked to describe their experiences as employees at ICCS. Participant 1 enthusiastically stated, "Let me tell you how I described the ICCS. It was Camelot. It was such a special place." Participant 2 shared, "I think there was so much joy in that community, and I guess I

want to say I felt accepted." Participant 3 said, " I didn't realize that it (ICCS) was a

unique bubble until I got to the public schools" and "It's just that and I didn't leave the

ICCS because of any other reason except I wasn't getting paid very much money."

Participant 4 agreed and shared these sentiments, "That I loved my coworkers and things.

I enjoyed it. That's all I can keep telling you, is that I truly enjoyed it." The final

participant also shared that there was only one class during her tenure at the ICCS that

was a challenge. This was her final class before moving to a high school in the

archdiocese. However, in spite of this challenge, the participant still shared, "I just loved

the experience…the opportunity to be an educator came at the right moment for me.

Because it just allowed me to celebrate my faith." Participants for this study all agreed

that serving at the ICCS was a positive experience.

Budget Concerns Persisted Post-Restructuring

One of the factors shared by a few participants was that restructuring of the inner-

city schools serving students primarily of color, was in part related to financial challenges

in the archdiocese. When asked about budget concerns post-restructuring specifically, or

in other responses, participants shared several comments that indicated that this was a

consistent challenge within the ICCS. Participant 1 mentioned concerns with salaries.

She said, "And even though they (teachers) didn't have the biggest salaries, they would

take dollars from their pockets to make sure that the kids had all the things they needed to

be successful." Participant 2's response to the budget question was, "Well, yes, there

were, because everything in my classroom, I had to purchase myself."

Leadership Made a Difference

All participants of this study reported that building leadership at the ICCS had a

positive impact on the school culture. All participants shared positive experiences when describing building leadership. Teachers said leadership was supportive when there were discipline issues, special requests from teachers, facilitating professional development, and also when hiring staff. There were various questions that led participants to share their experiences or feelings regarding their building or district leadership. Questions posed pertained to their professional experiences, hiring practices, or reasons for restructuring. Participants revealed that their building leaders used simple processes to hire them that consisted of retrieving an application from the archdiocese office, holding one interview and subsequently recommending them. During this interview, one participant conveyed that she interviewed with the principal at the time and said, "And when I interviewed with who was the principal at the time, he was so warm and caring. And so that's the one (district) I chose to go to, and that's where I learned all of the tools that I needed for teaching." A second participant said, "But the principal did the hiring." And another participant was encouraged by her principal to obtain a higher degree once hired. She stated, "And, my principal, I guess, encouraged me to go to Grad school, and then I went to Washington University and got a master's in education." Another participant also said, "The principal gathered all of his teachers that were not of African American descent and sent us to a program at a university. Which at the time was probably the premier educational institution to help work about or work around or understand what racism was and how we as a group of people was racist." This evidences that building administrators wanted to build positive relationships with his teachers and was also concerned about teacher conceptualizations regarding how to serve "students of color". This demonstrates caring and intentionality in addressing the needs

of both the teachers and the students.

Participant 2 responded to a question related to teacher turnover: "Not at the ICCS. Especially my first year or my first time." Participant 5 shared that she believed other teachers also had positive experiences because attendance was consistent among them. She said, "We were at work every day. Not one person was absent. We were consistently there. We participated in all the functions that the school had." Positive teacher attendance can also be attributed to a positive culture supported by leadership. Participant 3 also talked about the leader of the ICCS and expressed this sentiment about him, "You knew it was…and he (the principal) worked his best. He really did. You know, he was limited." This same participant said, "The principal was extremely supportive. If you did have a classroom, and you had to send somebody down to the principal. He was supportive. He didn't just send them (students) back," and "And the support that we got from our principal was very, very meaningful." Participant 1 also said, "We had a priest who was really good at demanding that we get what we needed. He also was very creative in helping us develop some programs that were very, very helpful." All participants shared similar experiences with their building leaders at the ICCS during their tenure. Therefore, the perception of teachers of this study is that building leaders were supportive, which created a culture that minimized teacher turnover. These leaders also had the desire to hire and build relationships with their teachers, which appeared to be with great intention based on participants' memories of them. Memories framed this idea that leaders encouraged teachers to seek higher education, supported professional development, and also managed student discipline effectively.

Table 3 provides a summary of the research questions with alignment to interview data.

Table 3

Research Questions Aligned with Interview Data

RQ1: What did teachers perceive as the reason for restructuring the archdiocese?	RQ2: What was the impact of restructuring on the experiences of staff?	RQ3: During the post restructuring phase, how did the archdiocese leaders address the educational needs of staff within the inner-city schools?
Leadership lacked knowledge of community	Parents was supportive and engaged	Supportive, local leadership was provided to the ICCS
White families moved away	Students was safe and benefitted from their experiences at ICCS	The budget continued to decline
Increase faith based education efforts	Hiring was a simple process	Consolidations was mandatory
Create a central school	The culture at the ICCS was uniquely positive	Hiring was completed by the local leadership
Decline in finances – tuition	Teachers interactions had a positive impact on student experiences	Nuns was assigned to the ICCS
	The special programs supported the educational experiences and maintained a sense of sameness	Special programs was allowed but not funded
	Teachers of color was a benefit	

RQ1 in the table identifies the reasons for restructuring. Reasons for restructuring within the archdiocese were shared by participants. These reasons was varied. Participants shared that reasons were related to low enrollment, inexplicitly race, housing shifts and to re-focus students and families on faith. Urban school research evidences similar reasons for restructuring in many studies. However, restructuring was the action step of the leaders which led to segregation. Restructuring within the archdiocese led to segregation between White and Black students. Therefore, the research regarding segregation should be compared for this study. (Martin & Varner, 2017; Oliveri, 2015).

RQ2 in the table identifies the impact of restructuring. The impact of restructuring on the experiences of staff was mostly positive with the exception of the budget and a lack of resources. The participants shared that parents was supportive, they enjoyed their years of service at the ICCS and that the culture was uniquely positive. The participants perspectives did not align to the research related to urban school settings. Urban school research evidences challenges related to discipline and safety and a lack of parent engagement. These factors contribute to the lower academic achievement patterns that exist in urban school settings (Jacob, 2007; Vaughan & Arbaci, 2011; Green & Gooden, 2014).

RQ3 in the table identifies how the educational needs were addressed by the leaders during the post-restructuring phase. During the post-restructuring phase, archdiocese leaders addressed the educational needs of the staff by promoting an independent governmental structure for the select group of inner-city schools. The inner-city schools' stakeholders created a new board with policies to address the specific needs

of their students, predominantly students of color. Many of the challenges addressed

were mobility, inadequate resources, and poverty. These same factors are present in

urban schools in the nation (Boutte, 2012). The archdiocese institution leaders also

provided local leadership for the ICCS. The local leadership, building principal or pastor,

had the responsibility of making decisions regarding the budget, building maintenance

and hiring.

Some of the common challenges shared by participants were resources were

inadequate, hiring practices was one-step and special programs were provided, but not

financed by the school budget. Participants also shared that their salaries were among the

lowest in education, however they enjoyed working at the ICCS, therefore, they remained

at the ICCS. Participants of this study described the special programs available for both

students and teachers. The special programs were supported by building leadership and

included fieldtrips, parent events, and camp for the students. While these programs were

not funded by the school budget, the parents would fundraise to provide for these

initiatives. The programs for teachers included professional development and mental

health days.

There were many similarities in the perspectives of the participants related to their

experiences as educators at the ICCS. The results show that the ICCS was a special place

for many teachers and students and this was partly due to students of color being

separated from White students. Teachers felt the students of color benefited from having

a smaller setting and a stronger sense of belonging. They did not have the pressures of

discrimination. Staff members felt valued, and received both parent and building leader

support. Opinions regarding the reasons for restructuring vary, but race, the challenges

with the budget and enrollment was confirmed by participants. Chapter V includes the

summary of the thematic analysis relative to the research questions.

Chapter 5

When Dr. Matthew Davis, my initial dissertation chairperson, asked about my life, I began discussing my educational experiences in the archdiocese. He found it interesting that I had this unique experience in which I attended an inner-city Catholic school that primarily served students of color. I remembered that the elementary school I attended served only students of color. While I did realize that my experiences were unique, I never thought about how or why. Therefore, we decided to investigate the idea of systemic race because the restructure of the inner-city Catholic schools resulted in segregation of select schools within the archdiocese.

The purpose of this qualitative study is to document the counter narratives of educators who were employed in an inner-city Catholic elementary school associated with the archdiocese of a large city in the United States. This final chapter of the dissertation restates the research problem and reviews the methods of this study. The majority of this chapter summarizes the results and discusses the implications.

A discussion of the results is provided in this chapter. Suggestions for future research will also be discussed. Additionally, the researcher will demonstrate the connection between the research questions, methodology and results to provide a clear conclusion for the reader.

Summary of Methodology

The researcher investigated how educators perceived their experiences while serving students of color in an inner-city Catholic school, post-restructuring by the archdiocese. The method aligned to this study was both phenomenological and

qualitative. Merriam (2002) says that this type of research can begin with a researcher's interest in a specific topic. In this study, the researcher is interested in "how participants experienced or made meaning of a situation or phenomenon" (Merriam & Grenier, 2019, p. 3). The phenomenon of the study is systemic race. Specifically, participants were asked about their experiences during the post-restructuring phase in the archdiocese. The post-restructuring segregated select schools from the larger district. This segregation placed select teachers in these schools, which principally served students of color. The stories of these educators were used to answer the researcher's questions.

Participant perspectives were demonstrated with the use of phenomenology. The interview questions were structured to identify participant recollections of their experiences as educators during the post restructuring phase within the archdiocese. Interviews were used to collect the stories of the educators serving in the inner-city Catholic schools who were impacted during the post-restructuring phase. Teachers who participated in this study shared memories of their experiences at the ICCS during the time period of the late 1960s to the early 1980s. This decision occurred five years after the landmark case Brown v. Board of Education (1954) and a few years before the court ruling of the Fair Housing Act of 1968. In Brown v. Board of Education (1954), the court ruled to end racial segregation in schools. The Fair Housing Act of 1968 promised to end racial discrimination in housing transactions. While both of these court rulings endeavored to end discriminatory practices, neither succeeded in ending segregation. Segregation continues and had added to the achievement gap and inequality in this country (Martin & Varner, 2017). Subsequently, outcomes from these court rulings failed to reverse the negative impacts of segregation in schools for students of color.

Although segregation was found to be unconstitutional, the practices of segregation still

exists in urban areas and school systems, students are divided by race which can create

enduring effects in the lives of students of color (Vaughan & Arbaci, 2011).

Residential segregation increases the divide between Whites and Blacks.

Residential segregation lessens the opportunities of students of color. Race, in our

country, has been a factor in determining where one lives (Martin & Varner, 2017).

These housing practices, coupled with the inability to end segregation, despite the law,

have created marginalized educational opportunities for students of color (Martin &

Varner, 2017). The school included in this study is located in a large city in the United

States. This city has experienced similar housing patterns that have caused racial

segregation (Oliveri, 2015). One participant from this study shared her thoughts

regarding White families who migrated from the neighborhoods that surrounded the

inner-city schools. The enrollment patterns showed an increased number of non-Catholic

students in those select inner-city schools. Researchers of Catholic education and

inclusion would also add that inclusion of non-Catholic students is complex and often

avoided by Catholic school leaders (Donlevy, 2007).

Selecting a methodology that supports the narratives of the participants, CRT

researchers claim several major tenets. One of those tenets is counter stories. According

to CRT (Delgado, 1989), stories that oppose the current narratives can be used to

challenge the stories told by institutional leaders. In this study, those leaders are the

leaders of the archdiocese. These counter narratives in this study are used to report the

untold stories of the marginalized population of teachers who shared this experience.

Semi-structured interviews were used in order to document the stories of the teachers

who served in the segregated schools during post-restructuring phase.

The research questions for this study that were used to interpret the data were as follows:

1. *What did teachers perceive as the reason for restructuring within the archdiocese?*
2. *What was the impact of restructuring on the experiences of staff?*
3. *During the post restructuring phase, how did the archdiocese leaders address the educational needs of staff within the inner-city schools?*

In Chapter 4 the researcher revisited the process and the final data from the extensive coding process. The data was both extracted and explained in detail in Chapter 4. As suggested by Terry and Hayfield (2021, pg.56), "pressure testing" is recommended. During this phase, the researcher studied the final themes and then returned to the coded data to check for distinctness or generality. The researcher questioned the thematic analysis process to gain clarity prior to providing an explanation of the findings.

The thematic analysis revealed conclusions that aligned with the research questions and other relevant perspectives based on the goals of this study. For example, research question 1 sought to gain the participants' perspectives on restructuring. Given the subject of the question, participants' responses aligned and thus, a theme related to the reasons for restructuring was a result. Similarly, research question 2 requested perspectives regarding participants' experiences as staff members of the ICCS. Subsequently, the interview data produced a theme aligned to experiences of the participants during the post-restructuring phase.

The Researcher's Story

As I began my reflection and research, I realized that my educational experiences

are relevant to the educational system and how students of color matriculate through the archdiocese. Here is my educational story:

I attended the ICCS, 1974-1982, during the first through eighth grades. My mother married a man, and his family was a member of the church associated with the ICCS. The marriage lasted approximately 2 years, but my mom and I continued to attend church and we both became faithful members. The church was associated with the ICCS. Therefore, I am an alumni of an inner-city Catholic school with a similar structure to the school of this study.

I graduated from middle school in May of 1982 and then attended a Catholic high school (CHS) under the archdiocese until 1986. My experiences at both schools had some similarities and differences. Similarities between my elementary and high schools were that both schools were located in the city; however, one was located in the northern region of the inner-city and the other was centrally located. Both schools were considered small in comparison to other elementary or secondary schools. My graduating class was approximately 87 students and the ICCS graduated less than 20 students. They were both tuition based and had sports programs.

There were also some differences between my ICCS and CHS. Staffing differences between my ICCS and CHS was distinct, and these differences, in my opinion, negatively impacted my educational experiences. At the ICCS, there were several Black teachers. At the CHS I attended, there were no teachers of color. Although both schools were small in size and enrollment, relationships with adults, based upon my personal memories, were non-existent in high school but life sustaining at ICCS.

Subsequently, I am still connected and frequently communicate with my former

elementary teachers. However, I have not communicated with any of my former teachers

at my CHS since I graduated from high school in 1986.

When I remember ICCS, I think of fun field trips, sports, special programs and

the faces of my teachers. When I remember CHS, I remember the rigorous curriculum in

English and Math, one hug from a priest, a boyfriend walking me home from school, a

working mother, quitting the basketball team because of the coach who I disliked and a

couple of visits to the guidance counselor's office which was dark and small. I felt loved

at the ICCS, but at CHS I felt lesser academically, as well as, in value. While some of

these feelings are naturally a part of the transition from elementary to high school, I

wonder why they still exist today?

School closures due to low enrollment continues to offer challenges within the

archdiocese. In October of 2022, the archdiocese announced the closing of a popular

CHS High School due to low enrollment (Clancy et al., 2022). I later attended college,

my first year at the University of Missouri-Columbia, and the next four years at Harris

Stowe State College. I am now an educator near retirement and I understand how my

experiences as a student at ICCS both benefitted and hindered my development. I realized

during this research that I don't trust my own intellectual abilities as a leader and a

student. However, I do believe in my cognitive ability, with exposure to any content, I

would be successful.

My earlier educational experiences in the ICCS, in comparison to my high school

peers, appeared to be lesser in the areas of academic rigor and exposure to special

programs. My educational experiences simply did not compare to other students from other elementary schools in the archdiocese. For example, both science and writing classes was challenging during my high school years. I was the student who ranked in the lower quartile at CHS, therefore my teachers and counselors devoted less attention to my academic needs. However, my high school was both Catholic and used a selective admissions process. Therefore, more time should have been offered to support my college transition efforts. I received minimal support to navigate the application process for college or to secure scholarships. I feel that college transition support was non-existent in comparison to students who scored in the top quartile. Students who scored in the top quartile were mainly graduates of elementary schools that served predominantly White students. This is my perception and I would wonder if other students of color who graduated from this same CHS would agree with my perception regarding college transition support from the staff. This feeling of inferiority has been layered with other negative life experiences and has been the foundation for how I navigate life and the workplace. Therefore, this research has helped me identify the source of many of my own underlying life issues.

Another example of how other life experiences impacted my educational trajectory was my earlier experiences in sports. At the ICCS, there was no volleyball team. In order to play volleyball, I joined the team at another elementary school in the archdiocese school system. This sports program did not compare to the volleyball programs offered in White schools or neighborhoods. Although I had average abilities as an athlete, I could not perform or compete at the same skill level of the volleyball players at CHS. Therefore, I was not selected to join the team at the CHS. Since I loved sports

and had been perceived as a good athlete at the ICCS, this was devastating. When dismissed from the team after try-outs, I was left with a negative feeling about my acceptance among my White peers. Again, I felt inferior when compared to White students from other schools.

The sports program at the ICCS can be compared to the circumstances presented when Historical Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) lose top athletes to predominantly White universities (LaNoue & Bennett, 2014). When top athletes are recruited by White universities due to the vast differences between the college campuses and access to televised games, the HBCU's never have the opportunity to benefit from the skill of top Black athletes, thus perpetuating the status quo for Black universities that may better serve Black athletes for various reasons (LaNoue, 2014). Without exposure to other elite athletes, it is difficult for Black athletes who enroll in HBCU's to compete in postsecondary athletics or gain access to professional teams.

The transition of students from the ICCS that primarily serve students of color to the CHS that serve predominantly White students had a similar pattern of marginalization for those students who transitioned from predominantly Black and urban high schools to larger White universities. This is another example of how the separation of these schools led to inequity in access and opportunities for students of color who seek college admission during their senior year of high school. My experiences as a child are relevant to telling the stories of the educators of the ICCS because they include the implications of systemic racism that create marginalization for students of color. Like many students enrolled in urban schools, I was a child from a single parent family household and my parent worked full-time and was subsequently unavailable to drive me to athletic events.

Without transportation to athletic events or a second parent to attend the events, I was unable to participate in these extracurricular activities, therefore lessening my school experiences. As a student at an ICCS, the lack of exposure to competitive science and sports programs created a marginalized experience for me as I entered a predominantly White CHS.

At the ICCS, we had teachers and adults who valued positive relationships with the students, however, we did not have a budget to support other efforts and opportunities which would have increased my ability to compete in both science and sports programs at the predominantly White CHS. Subsequently, educational institutions are placing a greater emphasis on science, math and arts education programs currently (Wright, 2011). If K-12 educational institutions fail to increase science, math and arts programs in urban schools, many students will not be able to compete in science education programs in postsecondary institutions (Daugherty, et al. 2014).

My educational and life experiences, as well as my personal experiences converged with the interview data from the participants from this study, which supports systemic race research. Pak (2021) validates that students of color encounter different life experiences due to the institutional systems that deny access to students of color and thus maintain the status quo, which leads to marginalized results for these same students. Although participants in this study did not find that student access to curricular content was insufficient, they did recognize that the resources inadequate when compared to other schools in the archdiocese which primarily serve White students. Research in urban education posits that lack of acknowledgement or action to dismantle systemic racism ultimately maintains the status quo (Young, 2011).

Another example specifically related to race that changed the trajectory of my future was the college application process during my senior year at CHS. I was accepted into both the University of Missouri-Rolla and the University of Missouri-Columbia. I considered engineering as a major, but I feared that I would be the only student of color, and I did not feel that I could manage the rigors of the discipline of science at Rolla given its reputation as an engineering school. Without much attention from school counselors, I decided to attend the university in Columbia, and I enrolled in the accounting program. I felt more comfortable with this decision because more students of color were attending this university as opposed to relocating to Rolla, Missouri. Researchers support that children who experience segregation in school accept division later in life (Burgess et. al, 2004).

My elementary school experiences provided a smaller space in which to thrive and feel valued. These experiences no longer existed at the CHS. What if I had been exposed to only one teacher, Black or White, at the CHS who took a personal interest in my success? Instead, adult relationships was non-existent for me at the CHS. I was simply a student of color.

Discussion

This study used counter narratives as a method to retell the events during the post restructuring phase of the archdiocese. These stories are important when conducting studies, especially when marginalization of any group is under investigation. The voices of the marginalized should be included if we want to avoid fabrication or inaccuracies (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2005). This study also collected data to determine if separating a select group, students of color in inner-city Catholic elementary schools, created a

lesser experience for these students in comparison to White students who were not separated. This study sought to identify if experiences was marginal for students of color once separated. The perspectives shared from the participants, educators of the separated schools, provide a counter narrative based on their recollections of their experiences as it relates to separation and race. These stories are valuable to educational leaders currently engaging in structuring school systems to equitably serve both students of color and White students.

Currently, systemic racism exists in educational institutions. Systemic racism creates barriers for students of color, thus creating the current academic achievement gap that exists in our country (Ladson-Billings, 2005; Burt et al., 2021). It is important to break the notion that race is the reason for the academic achievement gap. Instead, it is in fact the system of oppression that exists for students of color (Ladson-Billings, 2006). Anti-racism is the act of fighting racism, specifically in educational institutions. To provide quality education, students must be provided the historical progression of racism in this country in order that they can dismantle this system in future societies. This should be the goal of democratic education with regards to understanding racism (Thompson, 1997). This study provides another perspective for educational leaders to use in order that they can begin to educate students using an anti-race lens.

Critical Race Theory provides an action plan for interrupting the status quo. One of the tenets of CRT is counter narratives (Ladson-Billings, 2005).

The research in urban education describes these same challenges as the barriers for teacher retention and student achievement. A group of researchers describe the struggles of an urban educator as more stressful due to a higher workload. Participants from this study shared that they had lower wages and had to pay for their own materials. These factors are substantiated in urban schools research (Gaikhorst et al., 2015). Other factors that contribute to the stress of an urban educator are dealing with students and parents from a different background. Participants stated that the nuns and White teachers had struggles relating to Black students. Urban school research indicates that this is a challenge for many beginning urban school teachers because they are not from the same background as their students and parents (Gaikhorst et al., 2015). The ICCS under study had these same challenges with hiring and staffing assignments from the archdiocese as reported by participants.

Another unique finding regarding the staffing at the ICCS was that it had a significant number of teachers of color. Urban school research identifies several factors that contribute to retention of teachers of color. These factors include supportive leadership, feelings of safety, teacher autonomy and relationships with students (Kokka, 2016). These same perspectives were shared by the participants of this study regarding their experiences while serving in the ICCS. Participants shared they felt supported by leadership, they felt safe and that discipline issues were handled appropriately by both leadership and parents, and they had long standing relationships with their colleagues. All participants expressed solidly that they enjoyed their teaching experiences at the ICCS for these reasons.

Implications

School leaders must examine their current practices and the research that exists related to providing equitable and differentiated programs for students of color. The results from this study lend to implications for practice, policy and theory in education.

1. Rosiek (2019) explains that our nation had the most segregated schools in the world. This author also explains that segregation is primarily the result of socioeconomic status, housing patterns or internal systems within the institution. Students of color separated and isolated in smaller educational institutions show a pattern of lower academic achievement, college enrollment and gifted programs (Rosiek, 2019). Therefore, segregation is not equitable.

2. Several researchers conclude that counter narratives an be a valuable contribution to fighting inequity within educational systems (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Delgado, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 2003). Using counter narratives is an acceptable method for the collection of data from people who are impacted by the experience. These stories can interrupt the current practices that misinform the institutional leaders. These same stories contradict the stories of the majority or privileged (Miller et al., 2020).

3. All students benefit from teachers of color (Vilson, 2015). Vilson (2015) suggests that both Black and White students benefit from interacting with a teacher of color. Black students can see themselves in a teacher of color and White students can see people of color in position of authority (Vilson, 2015). The support for teachers of color does not minimize the need for all teachers to become culturally competent. Teachers of color can provide more culturally relevant lessons, reduce

the bias among their colleagues regarding the academic abilities of students of color, and act as student advocates, thus lowering the number of disciplinary challenges for students of color. This same student group then had increased access to advanced courses and gifted programs (Partelow et al., 2017).

Relationship of the Current Study to Prior Research

Based on previous CRT research, specifically in urban education, the study results are significant. The stories of the educators who had these shared experiences with the phenomenon, systemic racism, is important to the current research. Teachers discussed how they dealt with the separation of students of color from White students that resulted post-restructuring. Like many urban education programs, after the restructuring phase, participants experienced challenges with the budget, low enrollment, school closings and low academic achievement. Teacher interviews identified a common theme related to having less access to academic materials and resources in their school. This was in part due to the unaffordable costs of tuition for the families. There was also mention of White flight which also impacted enrollment and the negative impacts for the school community. In these ways, the experiences of the educators parallel the experiences underlying urban education systems in this country (Clycq, 2022).

The data from this study aligns to the current research in the following ways: segregation is inequitable. Residential segregation contributes to lower educational opportunities for students of color. These same patterns of divide for students during their elementary school experiences are maintained throughout adulthood. These same students as adults live in residentially segregated neighborhoods which then repeats the cycle, thus maintaining a marginalized experience for people of color (Burgess et al.,

2004).

The participants in this study explained that their experiences serving at the ICCS was positive and racism was minimal. These teachers felt that students experienced positive experiences due to the support of their parents and teachers. Unlike other urban school challenges, these students experienced success and few discipline issues. However, resources were limited and teachers had to use their personal budgets to purchase materials. At the ICCS in this study, the budget was a concern and aligned to urban schools research (Jacob, 2007).

With regards to the academic experiences of the students at the ICCS, another benefit was students were able to learn from teachers of color. The research is clear that all students benefit from teachers of color. Students of color have the opportunity to engage with teachers that understand their culture, have positive beliefs about their abilities and also serve as role models for careers and college (Vilson, 2015).

The documented perspectives of the participants shared the advantages and disadvantages they remembered as both employees and protectors of children whom they served. The advantages that were identified varied. Participants discussed their love for the school through their stories regarding their leaders, collegial support, and parent engagement and student access to special programs. Some participants recollected their experiences with race, but mainly as a positive aspect of their employment. The lone White participant shared that she grew in her perspective matured regarding race because of her relationships with the Black teachers. Black teachers said they thought it was a benefit to their students that they had Black teachers to whom they was exposed. All

teachers indicated that their time at the ICCS was one of the highlights of their career and it served them in their life in a positive way. Some participants are still friends and enjoy connecting with each other and their students from the ICCS.

Both non-religious and Black families choose to enroll their children in parochial schools, pay tuition, affordable or not, and make huge sacrifices for seemingly higher quality educational experiences than public institutions for their children who enroll in Catholic schools (Thomas, et al, 2019; Rodriquez & Briscoe, 2019; Wilson, 2015). But still, their children may not have protection from micro aggressions or othering, even when the school mission is one of faith, love, and a higher calling. Cherry (2020) defines othering as a way of diminishing another person's identity. Thus, those who have been othered are seen as less than their White counterparts and are treated as such. Under these inequitable circumstances, students of color are not valued or are treated differently simply because of their race. Although religion is the larger focus of religious institutions, especially schools in which the belief systems are taught and nurtured, othering may still have been the norm.

Some of the disadvantages discussed by the participants were related to the budget, combining schools due to low enrollment, shifts in family structures, changing neighborhoods, relationships between nuns and students of color and low salaries in comparison to public school educators. Teachers remembered that they had to purchase their own school supplies. This was probably difficult given the low salaries of religious school teachers. Schools governed by the archdiocese were combined when enrollment declined. Therefore, combining groups of students from different neighborhoods or parishes was necessary. The consolidation of these different groups impacted school

culture, according to one participant. The participant stated, "I mean, we at ICCS A did

not like the kids at ICCS B and they did not like the kids at ICCS C. So as they (the

students) continued to evolve and migrate to other schools, it was harder to build

communities in those other schools because the kids didn't like each other." The

participant also shared, "But it also created a chasm. It created an ash, if you will,

between schools." She also stated, "And it got harder as the schools kept closing and

merging together. And I think there was a real sense of being the prodigal children of the

archdiocese." The participant was explaining that one group of students felt inferior to

another group of athletes within the ICCS sports program.

Racism, although not stated explicitly, was implied when a few participants

discussed nuns or White teachers who served as teachers at the ICCS. Participants

mentioned that they understood Black students which provided them with an advantage

over White teachers or the nuns. One participant mentioned that a nun made a derogatory

comment related to a student. The response from a Black teacher regarding this comment

was "consider the source." This implies that the White teacher, the nun, did not have high

expectations of students, and it was a normal behavior for this teacher. This notion aligns

to urban education research. The literature explains how White teachers can often

misunderstand their own bias and develop color-blind views regarding how they interact

with their students of color. This failure to accept one's own incapacity to recognize

differences, perpetuates the idea that students are from dysfunctional homes, lack

intelligence or parents are uneducated. The research in urban education identifies this as a

way the status quo is maintained for students of color (Miller & Harris, 2018). According

to the participants, this was not a common occurrence for the students because

relationships and communication with the Black teachers, who represented the majority

of the teacher workforce in this school, was positive. One participant stated that the

archdiocese may have unintentionally caused the schools to fail given the lack of access

to materials and the conditions of the facility, but the consistent efforts of the teachers

provided a positive experience for students. This participant was not sure if this was the

experience in all inner-city schools within this district, but did have this positive

experience at the ICCS. She felt that the resources were not the best, but love and respect

from teachers were the keys to student success.

Although this study was limited to one small, religious school setting with a small

participant sample, it gives merit to the current educational research related to CRT and

the challenges for urban school leaders. This study also supports the specific tenet of

CRT focused on utilizing counter narratives to interrupt the status quo. Using the voices

of those marginalized in educational systems will provide a deeper understanding for the

majority group and hopefully create an anti-race lens and framework. The action towards

recognizing the social injustices created by racism should be immediate and a daily

practice in classrooms in America (Gillborn, 2004).

Recommendations for Future Research

Additional research is needed in the Catholic or private school sector. A study to

collect counter narratives from students currently enrolled in these specific school

settings could expand the knowledge base for educational leaders. Students who are

impacted by the current structures or segregated spaces should be surveyed to determine

if there is a need for a full investigation of their experiences as the minority group. Will

students' experiences emulate the participants, educators, of this study?

Investigating the historical and current perspectives of the leaders or teachers of color currently serving in the archdiocese could also provide perspectives that may lend to positive outcomes for all students of these educational institutions. These stories could help to interrupt oppressive systems that create marginalized experiences for students of color or increase the opportunities for these same students in these educational institutions. All educational leaders should seek to improve the current trends that lead to lower academic achievement for any students enrolled in their school system.

Conclusion

This study increased the understanding and awareness of the need to rethink and restructure educational systems for Black students, even in private and parochial schools. This study demonstrates how all educators, specifically leaders, are change agents, and should consider more equitable opportunities for Black students, even non-Catholic, in order that these students can leverage the full advantage of private or parochial education. This study specifically encourages educators in private and parochial schools to create time and space to discuss these inequities and address them fully through the counter-narratives of the marginalized (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Equity, throughout the Catholic and public schools, regardless of their location, should be the ultimate goal of educational institutions.

Students of color across the United States deserve equitable opportunities, particularly in educational settings. As a person of color and educator who functions and has survived systems of oppression, I understand the urgency to dismantle systems that maintain the status quo. In these systems, the ones that are titled democratic, intentionally and unintentionally, continue to maintain a cycle of unfair policies. Educational leaders

are still unaware of their contributions to this system that fails to position students and staff of color as equals in intellect and ability. Our voices are still not included in history books. Subsequently, we are not seen as valued contributors to our own society. These inequities are visible in health, education, housing, and legal sectors. All of them are interrelated. Without an interruption, our voices and stories, this cycle will continue (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Decur & Dixson, 2004; Bell, 1992; Ladson-Billings, 1998).

My research focused on honoring the voices of educators from an inner-city Catholic elementary school to determine the impact of restructuring, re-establishing segregation. This research was an effort to determine if systemic racism was recreated and subsequently marginalized the experiences of students of color segregated from the White students. Systemic racism creates invisible challenges for people of color. The research states that when unequal opportunities are imbed in the structures of a system, inequity in life is the result. Black parents have sought desegregated opportunities in education because the assumption had been proven that these schools provide greater academic outcomes (Feagin & Barnett, 2005).

When the first court ruling dismissed segregation, these same legal leaders failed to ensure these laws was supported and monitored (Feagin & Barnett, 2005). The educators in this study discussed some failures of the school leaders to provide adequate resources, but still believed that the students were provided positive educational experiences. The outcome of this study also reveals that all students benefit from teachers of color. Greater efforts from K-12 and post-secondary institution leaders should be mandated to increase the number of students in post-secondary education programs and teachers of color serving in school systems.

As the researcher and a student of an ICCS, I have realized that my experiences were marginal in comparison to my White peers and colleagues. If my life circumstances were different and afforded me other opportunities, my educational and life experiences may have been improved. These are my opinions. Although life has been positive for me, I do believe it could have been significantly improved if my circumstances were different. These circumstances include attending a school with a more diverse student and staff population, being raised by a two-parent family and having a more academically rigorous program focused on math and science, as well as, receiving support from high school staff to take college opportunities more seriously.

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Appendix – Survey for Participants

Welcome!

This form is for those educators who are interested in the research regarding the experiences of inner-city Catholic school educators of the XXXXXX. This study was conducted by Staci Wadlington, doctoral student at the University of Missouri-St. Louis. If you are interested in sharing your experiences and would like to receive more information about the study and the consent paperwork, please fill out this Google survey form. Interviews will take place in March and April 2022 for eligible participants.

Question 1: Your name (optional)

Question 2: How many years have you taught in an inner-city Catholic school in XXXXX?

- o 0-3 years
- o 4-7 years
- o 7-10 years
- o 10+ years

Questions 3: Which inner-city Catholic school(s) in XXXXXX were you employed? (List them all.)

Question 4: Did you ever teacher at the school of study – XX? This is the ICCS.

Question 5: If you taught at XXXX, what specific years?

Question 6: What is your interview preference (type).

- o In-Person (Preferred by researcher)
- o Zoom

Question 7: What time of the day or week is your interview preference?

- o Weekday
- o Weekend

Question 8: What is your Interview preference time?

- o 8:00-10:00 a.m.
- o 1:00-3:00 p.m.
- o 5:00-7:00 p.m.

Question 8: I understand that if I am selected, I will have the opportunity to ask questions about the study prior to consent. After consent, I was able to end my participation at any time.

- o Yes, I understand I can decline participation before or after consent.
- o I decline participation at this time.

Question 9: Where can the investigator send the consent forms?

- o Email

o Home Address
o Both

Question 10: What is your communication preference?
  o Phone
  o Email
  o Mail

Question 11: Email Address if preference or N/A
Question 12: Mailing Address if preference or N/A
Question 13: Best Contact Number (Please include area code.) or N/A
Question 14: Please list any questions or concerns here.

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