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Social Justice Leadership in Catholic Secondary Schools: A Critical Examination of Social Justice Orientation and Praxis

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by

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"God provides the wind; man must raise the sail."—attributed to St. Augustine, 354 – 430.

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"Be strong and take heart, all you who hope in the Lord."—Psalm 31:24, New International Version

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ABSTRACT

Social Justice Leadership in Catholic Secondary Schools:

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This study sought to understand the impact of a leader's social justice orientation on their praxis of social justice. The study also sought to discover the successes and challenges associated with enacting social justice. Nine Catholic secondary school leaders in the California Archdiocese participated in the study. Semi-structured interviews and document analysis were used to understand how social justice orientation affects social justice praxis. The data analysis indicates that the social justice outcomes of a school site are greatly impacted by the school leader's justice-orientation. Findings revealed that justice-orientation is dependent on two factors: the self-efficacy of the leader and the social justice impact of the leader's actions. These two factors determine a leader's position on the justice orientation continuum. The implications of these findings are discussed.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Schools possess immense power to transform students and their communities when they become places that enact social justice. Horace Mann (as cited in Spring, 2018) called public education the "great balance wheel of society" (p. 5) and envisioned a society in which opportunity is offered to all. As time passed, society, cultural norms, and expectations shifted in the United States, which also changed the goals of public education. From Mann's (as cited in Spring, 2018) original vision of education that taught morals to reduce crime to preparing a workforce for global competition, education has always been a vehicle for social improvement in the United States.

Catholic schools are especially responsible to the poor and marginalized and have been historically committed to fostering a climate and culture of social justice and enacting social justice. Forming an educational system that matches varying definitions and understandings of social justice remains a problem. John Rawls (1971) argued justice could only be achieved when each individual in society made it their personal responsibility to help others achieve the same compatible rights to the next person. Paolo Freire (2000) viewed social justice as a result of genuine transformation of both the oppressed and the oppressor, who work together in dialogue. Teachers of Catholic social teaching also place the responsibility of building a just society and community on the individual. When everyone is committed to the care of others, a just community is formed.

Catholic schools were historically educational institutions of social justice by serving the oppressed Catholic community and the poor (Grace, 2016; Walch, 2016). Today, Catholic school enrollment has been decreasing, and tuition has been increasing, which create competitive and

exclusive schools in opposition to the original mission of Catholic education. Catholic schools must decide if they will stand firm in their mission of educating those on the margins or "instead become increasingly incorporated to serve the interests of a globalized and materially 'successful' elite" (Grace, 2016, p. 79).

At the helm of Catholic schools is the president, head of school, and/or principal who serves the Catholic Church in an important ministerial role of carrying out the mission of Catholic education for social justice (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1982). Researchers have shown effective leadership in schools is necessary for vision, direction of social justice, and student success (Belmonte & Cranston, 2009; Boyle et al., 2016; DeMatthews, 2018; Lambert et al., 2016; Northouse, 2019). Therefore, effective leadership is integral in achieving social justice through education. As the landscape of Catholic school leadership shifts from religious persons to lay persons, there is an added challenge of becoming spiritual leaders (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1982, 2002). Often, lay person leaders are underprepared and not provided with effective formation to fulfill the duties of this critical role in schools (Belmonte & Cranston, 2009).

The school leader holds a serious responsibility in determining the direction of a school and its impact on social justice. I sought to understand how the school leader's social justice orientation impacts their praxis of social justice leadership and the challenges associated with leading for social justice in a Catholic secondary school.

Background of the Problem

Historically, leaders of private Catholic schools in the United States sought to serve all members of the Catholic Church, especially the poor and marginalized (Grace, 2016; Walch, 2016). As public schools became places of teaching students under the Protestant religion,

Catholic families urgently sought out educational institutions that would maintain their Catholic identity and provide quality education (Caruso, 2012; Walch, 2016). Catholic schools were created in response to an aggressive anti-Catholic climate and rhetoric that often blamed Catholic immigrants for a surge in crime and a shortage of jobs (Caruso, 2012). Despite many cultural and societal odds stacked against the Catholic Church and its schools, the Catholic Church still committed itself to teaching the children of those families who wished to maintain their Catholic faith.

The cost of operating a Catholic school increased, while funding decreased, which made it difficult for Catholic schools to serve the poor. Religious congregations and brotherhoods previously supported Catholic schools' operating expenses, which helped with financial stability. As the financial contribution waned, no support from federal funding and low tuition revenue received, Catholic schools struggled financially, and many schools closed their doors (Grace, 2016; Walch, 2016). Furthermore, as religious congregations and brothers left the schools, lay people replaced the faculty and staff, which increased the overall cost of operating a Catholic school (Grace, 2016). In other instances, private Catholic schools used the tuition paid by upper-class families to help create free schools for lower-class families who could not afford any tuition. These free Catholic schools became Parish schools or parochial schools (Hallinan, 2002). Archbishop Dennis Dougherty of Philadelphia was committed to Catholic education in the early 1900s and offered free Catholic schooling to all boys and girls in his archdiocese by using money paid by pastors to fund the schools (Walch, 2016). Catholic schools have focused their mission on educating moral and disciplined students regardless of background (Hamilton, 2008).

Today, there is a major shift in the Catholic educational landscape. Catholic schools with affordable tuition and who serve urban communities have been shutting down rapidly (Hamilton,

2008; Meyer, 2007). Furthermore, there is a rapid decrease in the enrollment of low-income families due to tuition increase. As a result of school closures and rising tuition costs, there is evident segregation between low-income families and high-income families in Catholic schools (Murnane & Reardon, 2018).

Statement of the Problem

Researchers argue that Catholic secondary school leaders are unprepared to lead for social justice (Belmonte & Cranston, 2009; Boyle et al., 2016; Morten & Lawler, 2016). Researchers also contend that Catholic schools worldwide struggle with the mission of serving the poor in education due to the changing landscape of Catholic schools (Caruso, 2012; Grace, 2016; Scanlan, 2005; Walch, 2016). The traditional tuition-based financial model of Catholic schools is often a barrier to serving poor communities. This financial model creates a problem where school leaders must decide between serving the poor or keeping a school open (Baker & Riordan, 1998). According to the National Catholic Educational Association, Catholic school enrollment in the United States declined 6.4% in 2020 which is the greatest decline in nearly 50 years. Black families, Title I students, urban communities, and non-Catholics were twice as likely to have their school closed compared to all school closures and all communities served (2021).

It is unknown whether or not Catholic secondary schools are still prioritizing the values and commitments of social justice as historically practiced (Grace, 2016). There is scarce research to understand how the Catholic secondary school leader enacts social justice at their school site and what affects that action. These gaps in research in understanding the cause and solution of these major problems for Catholic education resulted in a call for "stronger scholarly, research-based and policy-related approach to Catholic education" (Grace, 2016, p. 115).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to understand what leaders of secondary Catholic schools perceive as social justice, and how those perceptions of social justice affected the praxis of social justice in their secondary Catholic school sites. Researchers have maintained an educational leader for social justice possesses a disposition and sets values toward social justice (DeMatthews, 2016; Flood, 2019; Jean-Marie, 2008; Lewis, 2016; Theoharis, 2007; Wasonga, 2009), integrates social justice into the curriculum (Carrithers & Peterson, 2010; DeMatthews, 2016; Dobzanski, 2001; Eifler et al., 2008; Kraft, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Westheimer, 2008; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004a, 2004b), integrates social justice into service-learning and other extracurricular activities (Dobzanski, 2001; Eifler et al., 2008; Proehl & Suzuki, 2009; Westheimer & Kahne, 1994, 2004b), and integrates social justice through their own community involvement (DeMatthews, 2018; Johnson, 2006; Kraft, 2007; Lambert et al., 2016). I examined Catholic secondary school leaders' responses with a critical social lens. The responses were examined using the various values listed above. The expectations set forth by Church documents, the principles of Catholic social teaching and the National Standards and Benchmarks for Effective Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools were also considered when examining responses. The findings of this research revealed best practices for creating and remaining steadfast to the commitment of a climate and culture of social justice in Catholic secondary schools and the successes and challenges that affect the school leader.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. How does a school leader's social justice orientation impact their praxis of social justice at their school site?

2. What are the successes and challenges associated with the praxis of social justice?

Significance of the Study

Catholic schools have historically served the oppressed and marginalized and have been proponents of social justice (Caruso, 2012; Grace, 2016; Walch, 2016). Secondary Catholic schools, however, may struggle meeting expectations of the Catholic school mission as the landscape of Catholic schools shift as: (a) leadership models in schools have moved from religious leaders to lay leaders (Caruso, 2012; Walch, 2016), (b) Catholic school enrollment continues to decrease, and (c) Catholic schools continue to consolidate and close (National Catholic Educational Association, 2020). This study has revealed the best practices of educational social justice leaders and has offered recommendations of how to remain steadfast in the Catholic schools' commitment to social justice.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework provided the necessary structure of a dissertation (Merriam & Grenier, 2019) and clarified the researcher's perspective (Maxwell, 2005). This study was first grounded in critical social theory. Critical social theory provided a lens that assisted in uncovering discrepancies between the values and actions of Catholic secondary school leadership. Using this framework, I primarily focused on "the function of criticism and its ability to advance research on the nature of oppression and emancipation" (Leonardo, 2004, p. 11). Critical social theory stems from critical theory. Critical theory comes from Karl Marx and his critique of a materialistic society (Leezenberg, 2018). Marx (as cited in Leezenberg, 2018) believed "behind all struggle, conflict, and setbacks, one may discern an immanent and ever-closer goal, if only one looks carefully enough" (p. 212). Marx contended if society is critical of itself and its systems, a better world could exist.

In addition to Marx, the Frankfurt School is also credited with critical theory (Leezenberg, 2018). The Frankfurt School popularized the three simultaneous steps of critical theory. The first step is interpreting society in a historical perspective. The second step is anticipating future change. These two steps highlight the gap between the actual functioning state of the society and what it claims to value and embody. A lens of criticism is used to analyze and understand this discrepancy. The third step of critical theory is to always remain practical. The criticisms that come from this practice are only as good as they are applicable. These steps are "emancipatory in character" (Leezenberg, 2018, p. 225). Through critical theory, I explored the historical foundational principles of Catholic education and the marginalized groups they intended to serve. I considered the historical and current context of Catholic education to anticipate the forthcoming status of Catholic education. I make practical recommendations following the analysis of what Catholic education historically intended and its future trajectory. In the same way, I used critical theory to determine how to practically bring justice in a society that may fall short of its stated value. I sought to highlight how Catholic schools enact social justice and made practical recommendations for the future of Catholic education.

Similar to how critical theory reveals shortcomings, critical social theory "pushes ideas and frameworks to their limits, usually by highlighting their contradictions" (Leonardo, 2004, p. 12). Paolo Freire (2000) has been credited with strengthening and popularizing critical social theory. Freire stressed the importance of reflection from the oppressed and the oppressor— followed by action that is done with and together, rather than for. Through reflection and action, all involved are transformed:

> In problem-posing education, people develop their power to perceive critically *the way they exist* in the world *with which* and *in which* they find themselves; they come to see

the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation [italics in

original]. (Freire, 2000, p. 83)

Freire provided education with a language and means of addressing inequities and social

injustices. Rather than simply stating the issues that exist, however, Freire moved educational

systems closer to their values.

It is especially important to note the critique of critical social theory is not simply for

refusal or approval of actions or systems; rather, the criticism is a prerequisite for intellectual

dialogue and problem solving. Leonardo (2004) conveyed:

That said, in [critical social theory] criticism is not valued in and of itself but as part of an

overall project that aims sat material or institutional changes, a process which begins with

a language that penetrates the core of relations of domination. (2004, p. 13)

Critical social theory does not provide clear, direct solutions. It poses questions, presents issues,

and helps discover how solutions can be found by addressing the root problem. Finally, because

critical social theory considers historical and current context, it is a never-ending process in

liberation as historical and current contexts are constantly changing (Leonardo, 2004).

This study was also grounded in transformative leadership theory. Transformative

leadership theory assisted in demonstrating the necessity of effective leadership in leading

Catholic schools for social justice. In 1978, James MacGregor Burns (as cited in Bass & Riggio,

2006) theorized two forms of leadership: transactional and transformational. Transactional

leadership primarily focuses on the exchange between leaders and followers (i.e., compensation

for work done or rewards for productivity; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Northouse, 2019). Although all

forms of leadership possess an exchange of some sort, transformational leaders go beyond the

transaction. Transformational leaders focus on developing relationships: "In contrast to

transactional leadership, transformational leadership is the process whereby a person engages with others and creates a connection that raises the level of motivation and morality in both the leader and the follower" (Northouse, 2019, p. 164). Transformational leaders attend to and align the needs of the organization, the leader, and the followers, which results in empowerment (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Transformative leaders are concerned with the full person they encounter and their emotions, values, ethics, standards, and the long-term goals (Northouse, 2019). In the focus on developing relationships, transformative leadership can be very effective.

Transformational leadership though broad can take form in general ways. Transformational leaders inspire and empower followers to set aside their own self-interests for the sake of others (Northouse, 2019). Through the leader's own charisma and confidence, the transformative leader can increase followers' self-concept, self-efficacy, and encourage them to identify with the organization's goals and objectives (Bass & Riggio, 2006). The leader also models the change they wish to see in their followers. They exemplify and articulate strong ideals and encourage followers to identify similarly (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Northouse, 2019). Should followers oppose the ideas of the leader, the transformative leader listens and works in a spirit of cooperation (Northouse, 2019). The transformative leader creates a vision that is collective of individuals' interests and articulates this vision clearly. The followers are able to develop a "belief in the higher purposes of the work which builds follower commitment, effort, and performance" (Bass & Riggio, 2006, p. 52). Through this close work with followers, the transformative leader becomes a social architect, establishing the culture and norms of the organization and therefore, are very effective at working with people (Northouse, 2019). These defining characteristics help to clarify and identify transformative leaders.

In Westheimer and Kahne's (2004b) study of social justice orientations in students, they offered three performative identities: the personally responsible citizen, the participatory citizen, and the justice-oriented citizen. These three performative identities of citizens are based on their core assumptions about how to solve societal problems. The personally responsible citizen believes that citizens must uphold the values of honesty and personal responsibility and be law-abiding for social justice to occur. Moral character is at the root to solving societal issues. The participatory citizen attempts to solve problems within society by assuming roles of leadership within already established structures within the community. Personal action is required to solve societal issues. The justice-oriented citizen aims to solve the problems of society through questioning, debating, and changing established systems that further injustice overtime. Understanding the root cause of the social issue is key to solving society's issues.

Finally, this study was also grounded in Catholic social teaching as it is an essential component of the Catholic faith (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops [USCCB], 1998). The seven principles of Catholic social teaching are the guiding blocks that not only inform Catholics on how to live with others, but also for helping institutions determine their own social justice practices. Catholic social teaching is foundational in the understanding of human life, human dignity, and humanity's interconnectedness; and therefore, is at the heart of Catholic faith and belief. The seven principles are urgent calls to action (USCCB, 1998). The principles are: (a) life and dignity of the human person; (b) call to family, community, and participation; (c) rights and responsibilities; (d) option for the poor and vulnerable; (e) the dignity and rights of workers; (f) solidarity; and (g) care for God's creation (USCCB, 2005). This study used Catholic social teaching as a framework to assess Catholic secondary school leaders' social justice orientation and practice of social justice.

In this study, I determined what Catholic secondary school leadership perceived was social justice in a Catholic school. I also examined how those perceptions were ultimately integrated and how their social justice orientation affected the social justice praxis in a school site. I also sought to understand the successes and challenges of Catholic secondary school leadership in enacting the values of social justice. Using critical social theory as a lens, I assessed transformative leadership as compared to Catholic social teaching to uncover differences between the perceptions and praxes of Catholic secondary school leadership for social justice.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework I designed was based on emerging themes from the literature review (see Figure 1). The framework began with the Catholic secondary school leader and their social justice orientation, adapted from Westheimer and Kahne (2004a): (a) personally responsible leader, (b) participatory leader, or (c) justice-oriented leader (the far-left rectangle). Social justice orientation was determined by impact and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). When applied to school leaders, these social justice orientations ultimately affect the praxis of social justice (the middle rectangle). The social justice leader is someone who:

- previously holds specific values and beliefs in social justice (DeMatthews, 2016; Flood, 2019; Jean-Marie, 2008; Lewis, 2016; Theoharis, 2007; Wasonga, 2009);

- integrates social justice into the curriculum (Carrithers & Peterson, 2010; DeMatthews, 2016; Dobzanski, 2001; Eifler et al., 2008; Kraft, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Westheimer, 2008; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004a, 2004b);

- integrates social justice into service-learning and extracurricular activities (Dobzanski, 2001; Eifler et al., 2008; Proehl & Suzuki, 2009; Westheimer & Kahne, 1994, 2004b); and

- is involved in the community (DeMatthews, 2018; Johnson, 2006; Kraft, 2007; Lambert et al., 2016).

These characteristics and actions of a social justice leader are illustrated in the middle rectangle. The social justice outcomes of Catholic secondary schools become clearer when there is an understanding of the leader's social justice orientation and praxis of social justice (the far right rectangle). Both successes and challenges (DeMatthews, 2016) leaders face when enacting social justice affect the leader themselves which, in turn, can affect the social justice orientation of the leader (the outer lines of the framework). The result of this conceptual framework is a feedback loop in which the output of the educational social justice leader becomes an input into how the educational social justice leader thinks and operates.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework

Relationship between Catholic Secondary School Leaders and Social Justice Outcomes
Linda Nguyen (2020)
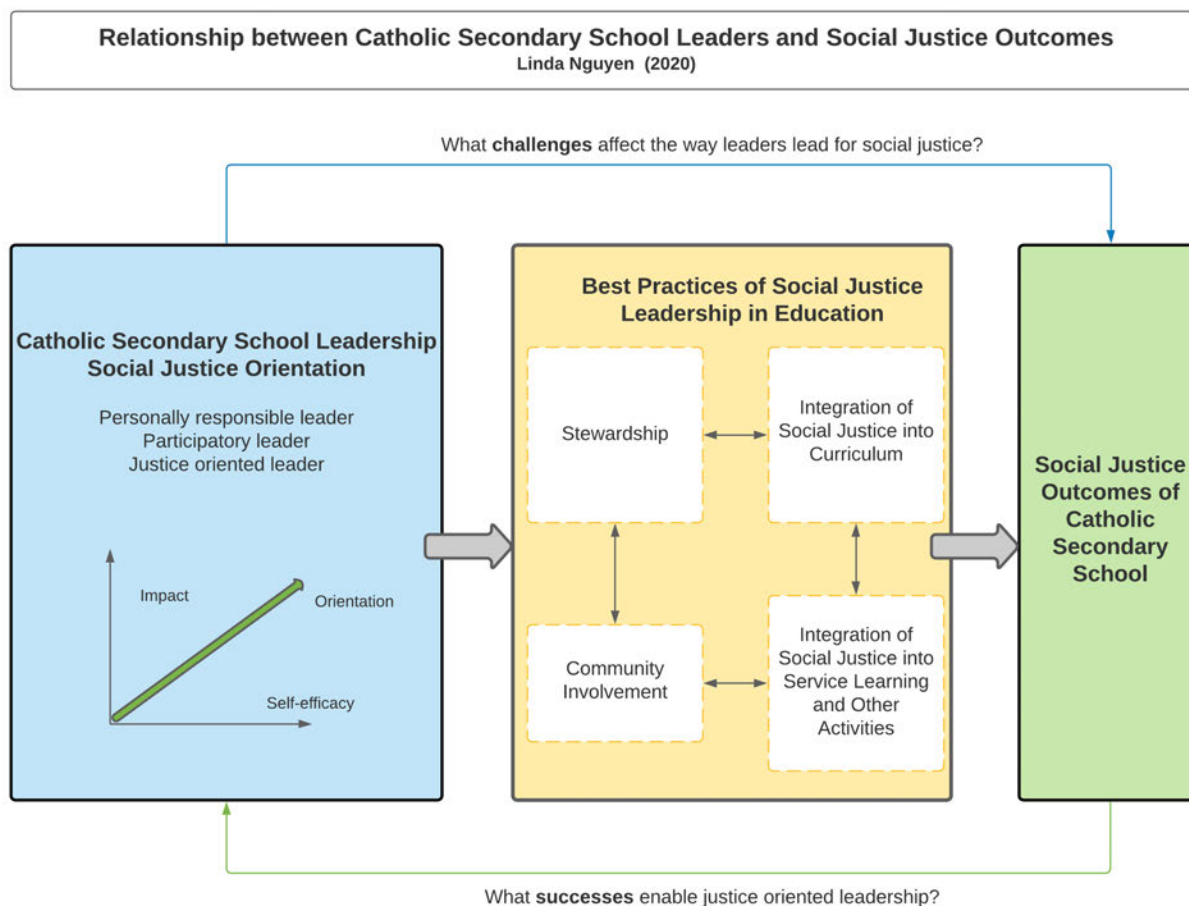
Research Design and Methodology

This study explored Catholic secondary school leaders' perceptions of social justice and how the perceptions affect the praxis of social justice integration in a school site. This study used qualitative research methods. Participants included the school leader or leaders (i.e., either president or principal or both) from various Catholic secondary schools from multiple school sites in a single large urban area.

The first phase of research involved a one-on-one, 45-minute interview with Catholic secondary school leaders. This interview provided an understanding of what participants

perceived is social justice as leaders of Catholic schools. During this interview, I also asked questions that helped determine how these values of social justice are integrated into the school site. The second phase of research consisted of document analysis of external and internal records to gather additional data in how Catholic social justice values are integrated into the school site. These two phases of research together illustrated how the secondary Catholic school leaders' perception of social justice affected the praxis of social justice.

Limitations, Delimitations, and Assumptions

The limitations of this study were factors of the research study that were beyond the researcher's control. This study was limited first by its scope and size. Participants were selected by convenience sampling, which limited the generalizability of this research. limitation of convenience sampling led to an added limitation of voluntary participants. This study was only as effective as the willingness of participants to be honest in their beliefs about their perceptions and praxis of social justice leadership. The second limitation was the nature of qualitative research. As the primary instrument of research, the researcher could have been bias in the collection and analysis of the data; however, triangulation of data was used through multiple interviews and document analysis. The delimitations of the research study were limitations in the researcher's control. I determined the criteria for selecting each unit of analysis and the category in which each unit of analysis was classified. Another limitation in my control was selection of the archdioceses in which each unit of study was a part. Given these limitations and delimitations, the findings from this research may not be generalizable.

My positionality was also a limitation to this research study. I am a daughter of Vietnamese refugees and the first in my family to pursue a doctoral degree. I am also a devout Catholic, having attended Catholic schools from pre-school through doctoral education. Growing

up, my family was lower middle-class. My two older sisters and I greatly benefitted from affordable Catholic school tuition from pre-school through secondary school. I have worked as a Campus Minister and Theology teacher both at the secondary and post-secondary school level. I have worked in schools that serve diverse communities of need as well as homogenous communities of great wealth. Because of these facets of my life, I believe that Catholic schools must equitably serve students of all backgrounds and abilities, with the guidance of Catholic social teaching. I work towards building educational experiences where students are encouraged to grow, explore, and thrive within a diverse community and are challenged to question the status quo and what is normally accepted. I believe that Catholic schools should create paths towards more opportunity and access.

Definition of Social Justice Leadership

Social justice leaders are reflective, proactive leaders whose personal values are aligned to preserving human dignity, whose work advances the lives of the poor and vulnerable, and whose actions are driven by a personal commitment to the common good. Social justice leaders act in line with the tenants of Catholic Social Teaching which focuses especially on the poor and the vulnerable and encourages a life that is led by the values of the common good, solidarity, and subsidiarity. Fr. Pedro Arrupe (1973) described the social justice leader as someone who preserves the human dignity of each individual. Social justice leaders seek ways to dismantle unjust structures of privilege and power and counteract all forms of injustice within their communities. Social justice leaders are also proactive in creating and maintaining justice. In the context of educational institutions, these leaders exercise social justice in specific areas. First, these leaders are reflective in their actions and values. Social justice leaders possess a disposition that reveals behaviors, characteristics, values, and beliefs that are in line with preserving the

dignity of all students, families, and other stakeholders. Second, social justice leaders incorporate social justice across the curriculum and extra-curricular activities. Third, social justice leaders are active participants within the community beyond the school site, understanding both immediate and long-term needs of those they serve. Fourth, social justice leaders practice responsible stewardship. Their fiscal management is aimed primarily at student achievement, is transparent, and involves various stakeholders. Social justice leaders lead by example and constantly educate and re-educate themselves in understanding what is the greatest need and who needs it the most (Arrupe, 1973). It is through this constant reflective education and re-education that they are able to lead with justice.

Organization of the Dissertation Chapters

This research study explored how perceptions of educational social justice leaders affected their praxis of social justice leadership and the associated challenges and successes of achieving social justice outcomes. Chapter 1 provided an overview of the history of the mission of Catholic schools and the problems of the current landscape of Catholic schools. The review of literature in Chapter 2 will cover the foundations of social justice in education, the foundations of social justice in Catholic education, and the current context of social justice in education with a special focus on social justice leadership praxis. Chapter 3 will explain the methodology of the research. Chapter 4 will report the findings of the research in accordance with the research questions. Chapter 5 will investigate and analyze the findings of the study, will discuss implications of the research results, and propose directions for future research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Schools possess immense power to transform students and their communities when they become places that enact social justice. Catholic schools are especially responsible and have been historically committed to fostering a climate and culture of social justice and enacting social justice. Therefore, effective leadership in schools—and especially Catholic schools—is essential in determining a school's vision and direction for social justice (Belmonte & Cranston, 2009; Boyle et al., 2016; DeMatthews, 2018; Lambert et al., 2016; Northouse, 2019). Amid the challenges school leaders face in management and academics, Catholic school leaders face a particular added challenge in executing the Vatican directives for Catholic schools (Grace, 2016 Congregation of Catholic Education, 1977). This study sought to understand how the school leader's perception of social justice impacted their praxis of social justice leadership and the challenges associated with leading for social justice in a Catholic secondary school.

This literature review begins with a historical exploration of social justice in education. The review focuses on how educational institutions have evolved to first address and then lead social justice change. Next, the literature review dives specifically into the foundation of social justice in Catholic education and explores ways Catholic schools have also addressed and led social justice change. Catholic social teaching will be considered in context of Catholic schools and Church documents will be dissected to explain expectations and standards of Catholic education. The review also considers Catholic schools in the current context by explaining the National Standards and Benchmarks for Effective Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools as an essential component of examining Catholic schools. Finally, this review presents literature on how effective school leadership leads for social justice. Specifically, this section highlights

dispositions and actions of social justice leaders in education. The review concludes with an examination of why leaders should be invested in social justice.

This literature review will provide necessary background information to articulate and uphold the historical Catholic school mission of providing quality education to all families, not excluding those in need, the marginalized, or the oppressed. This literature review will also emphasize the importance of effective Catholic school leadership in ensuring Catholic schools continue to lead for social justice.

Foundations of Social Justice in Education

Secondary school institutions can act as drivers of social justice; however, the definition of social justice, how it is practiced, and the methods of achieving any particular iteration of social justice are often vague and unspecific (DeMatthews, 2018). The following section traces the history of social justice in education from a general historical perspective.

History and Development of Social Justice in Education

Historically, public education was a vehicle for social justice. Horace Mann created goals for social justice through public education in the United States as early as the 1820s (Spring, 2018). Under Mann's vision, public education would create equal opportunity for all. His vision of education included moral instruction to reduce crime and an attempt of breaking down barriers by mixing students of all economic and social backgrounds in a common classroom and school (Brick, 2005; Spring, 2018). Mann (as cited by Spring, 2018) believed equality for gaining greater opportunity and wealth could be accomplished through education by calling it "the great balance wheel of society" (p. 5). Increased industrialization, urbanization, and immigration in the United States during the 1920s shifted the focus of leaders of public education to include concerns on the students' entire schooling experience, moving beyond the focused scope of

curriculum content (Spring, 2018). The goals of social justice focused on race and culture, which became the focus of schools from the 1950s to the 1980s. The 1960s brought about concerns of preparing students for the workforce for nationwide economic growth and prosperity (Spring, 2018). While the specific goals of public education have shifted in focus over the decades, one component has remained consistent: Public education has always been a vehicle for social improvement in the United States.

Even though public education sought to create a just society, the need of clarifying and defining the meaning of social justice and how schools can achieve it still existed. John Rawls (1971) specified the responsibilities in a just society—namely, the individual and their responsibility. Rawls believed everyone possesses the same rights as compatible with another person. In other words, each individual deserves the same rights as another individual, and it is the responsibility of each person in a society to ensure all people maintain those rights. These rights include education: If each person should be an effective citizen in their society, then they should make use of every liberty offered, including education. Therefore, education should be equally distributed for each person to live their responsibility toward a socially just society (Beattie, 1982; Rawls, 1971).

Education must be a tool in which dialogue is promoted to achieve a socially just society. Paolo Freire (2000) contributed to the discussion of defining social justice by specifying the role of oppressed and oppressor in social injustice and emphasized the importance of humanization. Freire examined the issue of dehumanization which is "a *distortion* of the vocation of becoming more human" (p. 44). In this process of dehumanization, both the individual who is being dehumanized and the individual doing the act of dehumanization are negatively affected. Therefore, there is an importance and necessity of reflection on behalf of the oppressed and the

oppressor. After critical reflection, both groups must move toward action that is performed "with"; not "for"; not "against." It must be a cooperative action both groups decide together. There must be neither oppressed nor oppressor in the cooperative dialogue. Through reflection and action on behalf of all individuals, transformation is possible:

> In problem-posing education, people develop their power to perceive critically *the way they exist* in the world *with which* and *in which* they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation. (Freire, 2000, p. 83)

Genuine transformation occurs as a result of working "with." In this sense, Freire contended education must be a tool in which dialogue is promoted to achieve a socially just society.

The development of social justice theory is not without its critiques. In *Education for Social Justice: Drawing from Catholic Social Teaching*, Valadez and Mirci (2015) explored and outlined the background of social justice to understand its definition and how it should be implemented in schools. Valadez and Mirci discovered roots of social justice go as far back as the 19th century when Luigi Taparelli, an Italian Jesuit priest, tried to explain ways in which poverty and oppression could be reduced and fixed by government intervention or by societal cooperation. Valadez and Mirci also highlighted many critiques of Rawls's (1971) theory of justice emerged overtime by stating Rawls did not consider the sociopolitical context that systematically perpetuates injustice (Cochran-Smith, 2009; Lynch & Baker, 2005; Young, 1990). In response to these critiques, Lynch and Baker (2005) argued education should not only be focused on students' academic development through logical reasoning. A narrowly focused education does not consider the necessary interpersonal skills to build a community and a just society. North (2006) also critiqued Rawls stating because assuming an even-playing field in

society and in education for all individuals, Rawls not only ignores the systematic perpetuations of injustice but also encourages a society that ignores and undervalues the diversity of cultures that actually contribute to a society. These critiques of social justice theory in education reveal the understanding of social justice and its practice is constantly changing and evolving. These theories need to be reviewed and reconsidered in light of context.

The aforementioned theories of social justice in education are very much similar to those of the USCCB's (1996) *Catholic Framework for Economic Life* and Catholic social teaching. Both of the Church teachings teach against excessive individualism and emphasize the necessity of caring for others to create a community that fights against the systemic causes of oppression and social injustices (Valadez & Mirci, 2015). Like Rawls (1971), these two Church teachings place responsibility on the individual; however, the Church teachings go a step further to explain a just society can only exist and thrive if each individual takes the personal responsibility of caring for the other as a serious commitment.

Because educational institutions possess the ability to become centers of practicing social justice, Kersbergen (1995), Etzioni (2004), and Westheimer and Kahne (2004) envisioned education as a place of transformation, which furthered and clarified to Horace Mann's goals of education. This transformational education would teach students how to be active citizens by working in stewardship toward a more culturally pluralistic world. Scholars today are now focused on how transformational education can teach tolerance for, and the value of, all cultures and backgrounds (Banks, 2007; Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2001). If schools are places of transformation, then the individual is transformed to eradicate injustices in society (Valadez & Mirci, 2015).

Historically, educational leaders used educational institutions to achieve social justice. Even though the definition of social justice, the form it takes, and the methods of achieving any particular iteration of social justice are often vague and unspecific, this did not stop educational leaders and theorists from attempting to clarify and enacting those social justice goals.

Given the literature review of social justice in both public and Catholic education, educational institutions for social justice in the current context continue to be an instrument in which social justice is achieved. Schools are not only the great balance wheel of society in that they provide equal opportunity, but they also should provide equitable opportunity for traditionally marginalized student populations and constantly consider the school's and students' contexts. Schools for social justice are concerned with student development beyond rigorous academic curriculum and standards. Schools for social justice seek to educate students to be critical thinkers and active citizens in their communities. Educational institutions of social justice should be places that engage in critical reflection to become places of transformation and should also be places where critical reflection and logical reasoning are taught to students so students can become individuals who transform their communities. Schools that practice and promote social justice are active partners in their communities, and they share the responsibility of ensuring no one is oppressed or is the oppressor.

Foundations of Social Justice in Catholic Education

All educational institutions can practice social justice. In a very intentional way, Catholic schools have a history and longstanding tradition of serving the underserved, the marginalized, and the poor (Caruso, 2012; Grace, 2016; Walch, 2016). This section will consider the historical purpose and mission of social justice in Catholic schools and will discover how that same purpose and mission are practiced in Catholic schools today.

History and Development of Social Justice in Catholic Education

Historically, private Catholic schools sought to serve all members of the Catholic Church without excluding the poor and marginalized. The beginnings of Catholic education in the United States were humble and wrought with difficulty as Irish, Italian, Polish, German, and Hispanic immigrant Catholics sought to find their place and acceptance in society (Grace, 2016). In a Protestant majority country, Catholics faced great opposition which placed an added burden on the creation of Catholic schools (Caruso, 2012). Mass immigration, a shortage of jobs, and crime in the early 1800s were connoted with Catholicism especially on the East Coast of the United States. The Catholic Church was viewed as a national threat by Protestant educational leaders and the general public (Caruso, 2012; Walch, 2016). The general public viewed Catholic schools as places that could develop and perpetuate the feared national threat. Still, Catholic schools continued in their mission to educate Catholic families who were being oppressed for their religious beliefs.

As a result of the national tension against Catholicism, public schooling—although it was primarily Protestant—was sharply focused on the homogenization of students. The bishops greatly opposed the idea of homogenizing all students under a Protestant lens (Caruso, 2012). Catholic families feared their children would lose their Catholic identity in the common school. Bishops urged Catholic families to send their children to Catholic schools. Still, "only about half of all Catholic children ever attended Catholic school" (Walch, 2016, p. 20). Other schools in the country that began as missionaries initially collapsed due to poor administrative leadership or clashes and revolts with indigenous peoples. Many schools failed simply because there was no financial support: "But Catholic education in the colony remained informal throughout the eighteenth century because these small, rural Catholic communities could not afford to support

schools and churches. It was more a matter of economics than religious commitment" (Walch, 2016, p. 9). Despite these odds stacked against the Catholic Church and its schools, the Catholic Church still committed itself to teaching the children of those families who wished to maintain their Catholic identity.

One champion of social justice for Catholic schools was Archbishop John Hughes who was an Irish immigrant who fought for poor and oppressed Catholics of New York, which influenced Catholic schools to reinforce their own commitment. Through his political action, Hughes prevented arson and violence against Catholics in the United States. He also became particularly invested in Catholic education to advance the poor and vulnerable (Caruso, 2012). Because Catholic schools suffered greatly financially, Hughes proposed taxes should be distributed according to the taxpayer for their educational selection. In other words, wherever the taxpayer decided to attend school, that is where the money would follow. Ultimately Hughes's proposal failed, and the general public response was unkind. Bigotry and hostility toward Catholics increased both in the general public and politics. Republican Representative James G. Blaine attempted to create a Constitution amendment in which religious schools were banned from receiving federal aid. Because education is primarily a responsibility of the state, the amendment did not pass; however, 38 states did adapt the Blaine Amendment (Caruso, 2012). Despite financial and cultural setbacks against the Catholic Church, the Church still fought for Catholic education to support those oppressed for their religious beliefs.

Although government funding did not pass to support Catholic schools, Catholic schools tried to alleviate the burden of tuition on its poorest families. In its early history, private Catholic schools used the tuition paid by the upper-class families to help create free schools for the lower-class families who could not afford any tuition. These free Catholic schools became the Parish

schools or parochial schools (Hallinan, 2002). Archbishop Dennis Dougherty of Philadelphia was committed to Catholic education in the early 1900s and offered free Catholic schooling to all boys and girls in his archdiocese by using money paid by pastors to fund the schools (Walch, 2016). Catholic schools have focused on executing their mission of educating moral and disciplined students regardless of financial or social background (Hamilton, 2008).

Catholic Social Teaching

An integral part of Catholic schools is Catholic social teaching. The Catholic social teachings are "based on the life of Jesus, who identified with the poor and marginalized and who lived a life of service and justice, guided by and renewed through prayer" (Donaldson & Belanger, 2012, p. 120). These seven principles are the guiding blocks shared through Vatican documents that teach Catholics how to address various social concerns: (a) life and dignity of the human person; (b) call to family, community, and participation; (c) rights and responsibilities; (d) option for the poor and vulnerable; (e) the dignity and rights of workers; (f) solidarity; and (g) care for God's creation (USCCB, 2005). Catholic social teachings provide a lens to view the world and consider "human dignity, the common good, solidarity, and subsidiarity for all people, with particular attention to people who are poor and vulnerable" (Donaldson & Belanger, 2012, p. 124). Catholic social teaching promotes justice and can be especially effective in educational contexts to determine whether or not social justice is being practiced.

Vatican Vision for Catholic Education

Catholic schools have a longstanding tradition of providing education to all students, with a particular care to those who are the most vulnerable and weak. Catholic education is not intended to exclusively support students who are financially able (Miller, 2006). In *Gravissimum Educationis*, Pope Paul VI (1965) explained all children of God own the right to a Christian

education to become full participants as Christians in everyday life. To reach this goal, Catholic education does not only include various practical skills and competencies through academic rigor, but instead, educates the whole human person with a special attention to their dignity (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1997; Miller, 2006). Catholic schools teach students to seek, promote, and practice Catholic values of solidarity, care for the marginalized, and engage in responsible participation (Congregation for Catholic Education, 2002).

In *Gravissimum Educationis* (1965), Pope Paul VI discussed the importance of education as a right to all individuals. Specifically, Catholic schools are concerned with educating the whole person, which involves the intellectual and the spiritual—a student's judgment and their behavior, their call to faith and their call to action, and the student's call to bear witness to Gospel values (Paul VI, 1965). The Catholic school also maintains the responsibility to be a center in which the whole community can rely. It is a hub that encourages students and families to engage in cultural, civic, and religious life. The Catholic school fosters these various relationships and involves the entire community (Paul VI, 1965). The vulnerable and groups in most need are also highlighted in this Vatican document. Pope Paul VI emphasized Catholic schools should always consider its contemporary context and determine what the greatest need is and who is of the greatest need. This trend in seeking to educate all Catholic families without distinction has continued over time.

The Congregation for Catholic Education issued a document titled *The Catholic School* in 1977, which came as a result of Vatican II. The document expressed a commitment to widening Catholic education to be of service to the common good and society (Grace, 2016; Congregation of Catholic Education, 1977). The Sacred Congregation of Catholic Education asserted Catholic schools, in their service to the common good and society, effectively have major implications on

three areas: (a) the whole society, (b) the local community, and (c) the individual school (Grace, 2016). These resounding effects require Catholic schools to examine their practices and ensure those practices are reflective of the mission. One particular concern of the Sacred Congregation of Catholic Education was the new rise in individualism as a possible opposition to fulfilling the mission of Catholic schools. Grace (2016) contended this emphasis on individualism was to place the importance of "human dignity and worth of those students in education who did not, or could not, contribute strongly to the school's 'company results'" (p. 57). In other words, the Sacred Congregation of Catholic Education addressed the potentially deviating direction of Catholic schools and reminded schools of its original purpose and mission: to be in service to the common good and society.

In reflecting on the successes of Catholic schooling, the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education (1997) commended the school's ability to evangelize the mission of the Church, its service to the poor, and the pastoral care provided to families; however, the joys do not come without difficulties as anticipated in *The Catholic School*. The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education listed the following as difficulties of Catholic schooling: (a) the modern-day student who is neither religiously or morally formed and is apathetic, (b) large-scale poverty across the world, which causes a financial barrier to receiving a Catholic education, and (c) that financial burden causes Catholic schooling to become an exclusive privilege to those who can afford it (sections 6–7). This reflection prompted a renewal and clarification of the goals of Catholic schooling today and in the future.

Given all Catholic schools exist in a larger cultural and societal context and can greatly change that context, Catholic schools cannot be neutral in their core values and mission. In other words, Catholic schools must take a stand guided by Catholic teaching in public life. In a more

immediate context, a Catholic education informs the whole person. Educating the whole person includes an academic foundation and a spiritual formation. Students do not only learn the "what," but also the "how" and the "why." In this way, a Catholic education not only provides students with skills to work and live in the world, but also skills to work and live by Gospel values which they will enact in society. The Catholic school is also a vehicle in which the Catholic Church maintains its identity among students and their families. The Catholic school must continue to be a model for the Catholic experience to mold students in a Christian community so those values and missions can be expressed in their greater communities and society.

In consistent messaging with previous Vatican documents, the Congregation for Catholic Education (1997) emphasized a Catholic school must maintain its identity as "a school for all, with special attention to the weakest" (section 15). The Catholic school is an active, participatory member in culture and society—it is not a secluded institution that is only concerned with its own well-being. The Catholic school plays a public, useful role in society in providing education to all members of the community. This role requires the Catholic school be in constant dialogue with state and civil authorities to defend the "fundamental rights of the human person, starting with respect for life and religious freedom" (sections 16–17). Catholic schools are essential in upholding social justice in communities and society.

There is a major shift in the current context of the Catholic educational landscape despite all the directives provided by the Vatican in regard to how Catholic schools should operate. Catholic schools with affordable tuition and who serve urban communities have been shutting down rapidly (Hamilton, 2008; Meyer, 2007). Furthermore, there is a rapid decrease in the enrollment of low-income families into Catholic schools due to tuition increase. As a result of

school closures and climbing tuition costs, there is evident segregation between low-income families and high-income families in Catholic schools (Murnane & Reardon, 2018). To understand the change in Catholic schooling, it is important to understand the role leadership plays in the Catholic school. The following sections explore how Catholic school leadership determines the direction of the school in regard to social justice.

Foundations of Social Justice Leadership in Catholic Education

Catholic schools were opened at alarming rates in the early 1940s. Catholic families wanted their children in Catholic schools. In the Archdiocese of Los Angeles alone, a new parish and accompanying school opened every 66 days to meet the rising needs and demands of Catholic families (Caruso, 2012). This extremely fast development of Catholic schools created the important necessity for school leadership and staff. Local bishops tried to quickly meet these demands and filled the roles by recruiting sisters from various religious orders in Europe (Caruso, 2012; Walch, 2016). These religious sisters, who became the first social justice leaders in Catholic education, were passionate about providing quality education to Catholic families who were oppressed and marginalized by society. Despite receiving very little money and making abundant sacrifices, these leaders were focused on social justice through education and were committed to the families and communities they served (Caruso, 2012; Walch, 2016). The rapid growth of the Catholic Church forced religious sisters to learn, adapt, and lead Catholic schools.

Spirituality of Religious Sisters

Social justice was at the core of the training and charism of religious sisters. Religious sisters who came to teach and lead in Catholic schools were not qualified to be educators. Their vocation was not to be teachers and administrators. Rather, they were trained and prepared to

live religious lives in community: "When young women entered religious life at the congregation's motherhouse, they began an intense period of discernment and preparation that generally lasted between two and three years, depending on the community and its governing constitutions" (Caruso, 2012, p. 35). Religious sisters were taught the Catholic faith, the history and charism of their religious community, and the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. The sisters learned to profoundly respect the dignity of the individual and enacted this respect in their everyday lives, and especially as educators (Caruso, 2012). The intense training for religious life undoubtedly prepared the sisters for their journey as educators and contributed to their unwavering commitment to social justice.

The sisters' religious training and spirituality equipped them to make great sacrifices as educational leaders and teachers (Caruso, 2012; Walch, 2016). The local bishops recruited the sisters to serve in Catholic schools, but were unable to pay sisters living wages—sisters made as little as $200 annually (Caruso, 2012). As a result, the sisters were often as poor as the communities they served, living lives of solidarity with the poor and marginalized (Walch, 2016). The sisters lived in communal housing, were poorly fed, and often fell ill and faced premature death (Caruso, 2012; Walch, 2016). The sisters depended on the generosity of other religious communities of sisters in Catholic hospitals who would offer their services at a discounted rate or a reduced fee. The sisters also depended on "food showers" where students would bring dried and canned foods to fill the convent (Caruso, 2012). The sisters made all these sacrifices to legitimately honor their vows of poverty and obedience, even if the sacrifice was severe and unhealthy. They accepted their challenges to fully embrace their call to discipleship and service to the poor and disadvantaged (Caruso 2012; Walch, 2016). The spirituality of the sisters fostered a lifestyle that promoted solidarity with the poor and vulnerable, preparing them

to be social justice leaders. The great sacrifices made by the religious sisters so the Catholic school site could thrive became a standard for all school leadership to follow.

Preparedness of Religious Sisters

While the sisters were trained to live as religious, they were not necessarily formally prepared to teach or lead in Catholic schools (Caruso, 2012; Walch, 2016). Novice teachers were mentored and trained by experienced teaching sisters and would work on their degrees on the weekend. Sisters essentially learned how to teach and lead on the job by adapting to the day-to-day needs of students and the greater community. They also learned by observing other sister-teachers from other schools and by being observed and implementing critical feedback. The benefit of living in community was sisters could plan lessons together at night and discuss the day's events, which allowed them to learn how to improve their own skills to immediately implement the next day (Caruso, 2012). The informal preparation was problematic, but worked for the schools in the early days; however, the lack of school leadership preparation continued overtime, which caused greater problems with school leadership, especially in responsible stewardship, a crucial area of social justice.

Those sister-teachers who became leaders of a school were typically teachers who received outstanding marks and were nominated to roles of leadership. Sisters who rose to leadership were respected, almost feared, by the sister-teachers: "What everyone shared in their recollections of these supervisors were the high standards they set and their ability to command respect and affection and a bit of intimidation, if not sheer terror, upon the visitations" (Caruso, 2012, p. 29). If a sister became a principal, she still had to report to the pastor of the parish who was ultimately responsible for the management of the school both in operations and finances. Unfortunately, priests were equally unprepared for this leadership role, much like the sisters

(Caruso, 2012). Sometimes this arrangement could be a difficult task as many assigned priests to schools did not necessarily want to work in an educational setting. Conversely, there were good pastors who had difficulty working and negotiating with religious sisters. This relationship, however, was extremely important in determining how many sisters would be supplied to teach in a given school (Caruso, 2012). The sister and pastor had to work harmoniously for the success of the school. This arrangement worked as a placeholder; however, the short-term solutions were not sustainable in effectively operating Catholic schools to their fullest potential or long-term capacity.

As the context of the Catholic school shifted, so did the school staff. Young, educated laywomen began to work in Catholic schools alongside the sisters. These women were a valuable asset to the school, but also were a considerably high cost compared to the sisters as they did not take a vow of poverty. Parishes could not afford to pay sister-teachers their full salary; paying the salary of a laywoman who could make significantly more in a public school was challenging, if not impossible (Caruso, 2012). These financial changes shifted the landscape of Catholic schools. Still, these laywomen worked in the Catholic schools and were supported financially by their spouses. The laywomen could also become educational leaders in their own settings; however, the major decisions were still made by the religious sisters: the culture, the standards, the setting were all determined by the sisters in charge (Caruso, 2012). The first lay leaders of Catholic schools were heavily influenced by the religious sisters:

> Those first lay leaders were deeply imbued with the Catholic culture of the school, though perhaps not always as well versed in articulating it. The sisters were mentoring them for leadership roles—preparing them for the day when the sisters would say farewell. (Caruso, 2012, p. 50)

Eventually, the sisters would transition out of roles of leadership in Catholic education and the laity would lead (Caruso, 2012). It was evident, however, there existed a pattern of lacking official, meaningful, school leadership training—this would be especially concerning when considering social justice leadership. The expectations of leading Catholic schools for social justice under the Vatican guidelines still persisted, nevertheless. The following section considers the Vatican vision for Catholic school leadership as the transition from religious sister to laity continued.

Vatican Vision for Catholic School Leadership

Although leaders of all schools possess a very important duty and responsibility to the students, Catholic school leaders embrace an additional spiritual responsibility: "The inspiration of Jesus must be translated from the ideal into the real. The gospel spirit should be evident in a Christian way of thought and life which permeates all facets of the educational climate" (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988, section 25). In other words, Catholic school leaders understand Jesus as the standard, measure, and expectation of Catholicity. Catholic school leaders do not assume their role as a job or career, but rather, a vocation.

As outlined in "Consecrated Persons and Their Mission in Schools," the Congregation for Catholic Education (2002) described the profile of a consecrated person who is an educational leader:

- an individual who aims their mind, way of life, thinking and acting to be Christ-like and allows themself to be educated by Christ both at an individual and community level, and like Christ, who willingly becomes a gift for everyone (section 7–11);

- an individual who responds radically to the call of poverty and obedience and who willingly enters into dialogue with a culture and society that promotes the opposite values (section 12–14);

- an individual makes Communion active in the school and an individual who is also active in the Church community who helps in bringing the Kingdom of God through the school (section 16–21); and

- and finally, an individual who is authentic in their hope for the future, discernment and relationship with God, and living of the Gospel values (section 22–28).

This profile is complex and demanding because these are the demands of a *consecrated* Catholic educational leader; however, the Catholic educational leadership landscape has changed greatly and has shifted from consecrated individuals as leaders to the lay person:

> The efficacious work that so many different Religious Congregations have traditionally accomplished through teaching activities is greatly esteemed by the Church; and so she can do no less than regret the decline in Religious personnel which has had such a profound effect on Catholic schools. (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1982, section 3)

With the declining number of religious school leaders, Catholic schools had to look to the lay person to lead.

The lay person has a greater responsibility than ever before in Catholic schools, as a result of this shift in leadership. A lay person lives in an ever-changing society and culture, in a professional setting and in a family. Therefore, a lay educational leader has the opportunity, and ultimately, the responsibility, "to make Christ known to others, especially by the testimony of a life resplendent in faith, home, and charity" (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1982, section

7). The unique role and access lay educational leaders possess that consecrated individuals do not require the lay person to commit themselves to this endeavor. The Catholic school leader must own the responsibility to commit to the mission of Catholic schools (Grace, 2016).

Lay educators are not only expected to lead outstanding lives of faith but also are championed with the challenge of molding students to do the same. By living their own lives, lay educators inspire students to lead lives of civic and political responsibility. Becoming a Catholic school leader is an intentional choice, vocation, and commitment to the mission of Catholic schools (Congregation for Catholic Education, 2002, section 30). This vocation and mission of evangelization are executed in very specific ways through the school. In a qualitative study, Belmonte and Cranston (2009) discovered lay principals play critical roles in determining the culture and vision of their school sites. Lay principals understood their management and organizational responsibilities to be similar to those of a public school principal; however, there is an added challenge in that lay principals of Catholic schools are responsible for and committed to fostering a Catholic culture and climate of community and enact social justice, just as the religious sisters previously practiced. Belmonte and Cranston (2009) ultimately discovered that Catholic school principals are required to not only create community in their words and articulation of a vision, but also in action by living Catholic values in their own lives to lead by example.

Social Justice in Catholic Education Today

This section of the literature review considers the context of social justice in Catholic education today. The National Standards and Benchmarks for Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools (NSBECS) will be examined as the current standard to which Catholic schools are measured. This section will also assess the current landscape of Catholic education in

regard to student body. Last, elite schools will be considered in stressing what may occur should social justice values and priorities fall to the side of Catholic school leadership.

The National Standards and Benchmarks for Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools

The NSBECS were published in 2012 with the goal of providing a standard for the most effective Catholic schools (Ozar & Weitzel-O'Neill). The national standards were designed to guide Catholic schools in understanding their commitment to four specific areas: (a) mission and Catholic identity, (b) governance and leadership, (c) academic excellence, and (d) operational vitality (Sullivan & Peña, 2019).

Standards 1, 3, and 4 of the NSBECS under Mission and Catholic Identity all mention service and action: Standard 1 is "An excellent Catholic school is guided and driven by a clearly communicated mission that embraces a Catholic identity rooted in Gospel values, centered on the Eucharist, and committed to faith formation, academic excellence, and service" (Ozar & Weitzel-O'Neill, 2012, p. 5). Here, the standard lists service as a foundation of an excellent Catholic school. Standard 3 is "An excellent Catholic school adhering to mission provides opportunities outside the classroom for student faith formation, participation in liturgical and communal prayer, and action in service of social justice" (Ozar & Weitzel-O'Neill, 2012, p. 6). This standard states excellent Catholic schools will provide students activities and opportunities for actionable social justice. Standard 4 is particularly interesting: "An excellent Catholic school adhering to mission provides opportunities for adult faith formation and action in service of social justice" (Ozar & Weitzel-O'Neill, 2012, p. 6). The fourth standard is important to note because it mentions actionable social justice activities for adults—not students. These standards, in conjunction with the historical mission of Catholic schools, illustrate Catholic schools' desire to promote social justice among all in a Catholic school community.

Landscape of Catholic Education

The National Catholic Educational Association's (2019) report titled *United States Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools 2018–2019: The Annual Statistical Report on Schools, Enrollment, and Staffing* provided a snapshot of the landscape of Catholic schools in the United States. The total Catholic school student enrollment was 1,789,363 students (as compared to 5.2 million students in the 1960s). Non-Catholic students made up 18.7% of the overall enrollment. There was a total of 6,289 Catholic schools in operation in the United States: 5,092 elementary schools and 1,197 secondary schools; 93 schools consolidated or closed during the 2018–2019 school year. Across all the schools, 152,730 professional staff worked full-time. Of the full-time professional staff, 97.2% were lay people (74.8% women; 22.4% men) and 2.8% were religious or clergy (1.7% sisters; 0.5% brothers; 0.6% clergy).

The same annual report for the 2019–2020 school year revealed a trend that is congruent to the literature. The total Catholic school student enrollment decreased by 1%, or 52,066 students, for a total of 1,737,297 students. Non-Catholic students increased, which made up 19.1% of total enrollment. Ten new schools opened, while 98 schools consolidated or closed, which brought the total number of Catholic schools in operation to 6,183 schools (1% decrease): 4,995 elementary school sites and 1,188 secondary school sites. The total number of professional staff also decreased to 146,367 with 97.4% laity (75.1% women; 22.3% men) and 2.6% religious or clergy (1.6% sisters; 0.5% brothers; 0.6% clergy) (National Catholic Educational Association, 2019).

Educational leaders for social justice should be familiar with the aforementioned statistics. As reported by the National Catholic Educational Association (2019), the trends have continued in a declining trajectory as schools continue to consolidate or close and as student

enrollment decreases. School leaders who are aware of these trends can actively work toward

safeguarding their school sites from closure. Furthermore, school leaders focused on social

justice will work to keep their doors open to continue to serve their communities in the mission

of the Catholic Church.

Elite Schools

Catholic schools have historically focused on serving the oppressed and marginalized.

Despite the historical mission, Catholic schools may still become places for the elite. Grace

contended,

> The "position" of Catholic schooling in relation to class, inequality and social
>
> reproduction is not a simple and unitary matter. On the contrary, it is characterized by a
>
> high degree of internal differentiation across the world, related to local power structures
>
> (secular and ecclesiastical), class, economic and race relations, and historical social and
>
> cultural conditions existing in various societies. As the war of position within
>
> Catholicism in its various cultural settings continues in the 21st century, the key question
>
> is whether Catholic schooling will strengthen its alliance with and service to the poor and
>
> oppressed, or instead become increasingly incorporated to serve the interests of a
>
> globalized and materially "successful" elite and an expanded Catholic middle class for
>
> whom academic success is the main purpose of schooling. (2016, p. 79)

In regard to social justice in education, most researchers have focused on narratives and stories

of the oppressed and have explored ways in which to uplift and empower this group

(Gaztambide-Fernandez & Howard, 2010). There is a dearth of research on how the elite have

contributed to the very systems that oppress. In understanding the elite and elite schools,

researchers gain better perspective on how these systems of oppression exist and persist.

To understand elite schools, determining who the elite are must be clarified. It is important social justice leaders in education become aware of these existing dichotomies in the educational system. Researchers struggle to define and determine who the elite are because the group can be qualified across social groups, time, geographic location, degree, and power (Thurlow & Jaworski, 2017). The general thought on elites is divided into two groups. Some define elites in relation to others (i.e., the elite form the upper class). Others define the elite as those who are dominant over others in society. However, no matter the qualification, the elite can be described as "those with vastly disproportionate control over or access to a resource" (Khan, 2012, p. 362). In controlling any specific set of resources, the elite possess power and positionality. If the controlled resource is nontransferable to other forms of capital, then the resource loses its value, and the power is also lost. Another characteristic of the elite is the disproportionate representation of the group in society (i.e., a small group of people possess the greatest power; Khan, 2012). The elite group thrives because it is small—it has the ability to organize, coordinate, and facilitate various interests and actions (Mosca, 1960). In studying the elite, then, the study of inequality takes a different perspective: instead of studying the oppressed, study the elite. Educational leaders of social justice must be aware of the split that exists to understand how to lead their schools effectively.

The elite control and possess power in different sectors of society: (a) political, (b) economic, (c) culture, (d) social networks, and (e) knowledge. It is imperative when a social justice leader engages in the community, they can recognize and understand the power differences that can marginalize oppressed groups. In a political perspective, the elite are at the forefront of changes; they shape and mold logistics and define norms. Their dominant positions allow them to control the direction in which change is made (Khan, 2012). In the same way the

elite can determine and regulate change; the elite are also able to determine their own wealth. The elite continue to thrive economically. The political power and economic power also positions the elite to determine what is acceptable culture while excluding others. The culture the elite control "is a resource used by elites to recognize one another and distribute opportunities on the basis of the display of appropriate attributes" (Khan, 2012, p. 368). In other words, the elite group defines themselves by certain characteristics and markers that are recognized and understood as status. These attributes and characteristics change as the elite group defines itself. This culture is shaped and manipulated to the advantage of the elite. Social networks are formed in elite groups which help to connect the elite among themselves by keeping resources, power, and culture in the group of very like-minded people (Khan, 2012, 2016). Perhaps the most abundant and valued circulated currency in these elite circles is knowledge: "The dominant classes often used cultural knowledge to subsume the interests of the dominated under their own interests or persuade the dominated to share or adopt the values of the dominant" (Khan, 2012, p. 370). Using their resources, and therefore power, the elite control the dominated by keeping the elite in the elite and by keeping everyone else out.

Elite is also sometimes used interchangeably with privilege; however, this should not be the case. Privilege is typically broken down into groupings based on gender, race, sexual orientation, and social class (Wildman & Davis, 2008). Recent studies (Curry-Stevens, 2005; Goodman, 2011) have defined current privilege as a social group or group affiliation to White, male, heterosexual, middle or upper class, able-bodied, and/or Christian; however, it should also be noted privilege is relative (Curry-Stevens, 2005). While the current privilege group may be described by the listed categories, the term "privilege" itself suggests there must be individuals

without privilege as well. Therefore, a privileged group cannot exist without a nonprivileged group (Goodman, 2011). While the elite may be privileged, the privileged are not always elite.

Recognizing and acknowledging elite power structures in the current context of the Catholic educational landscape can prepare a Catholic school leader to stay committed to the mission of social justice. The following section will analyze how educational leaders enact social justice despite the current polarizing context.

Social Justice Leadership Praxis in Education

Leadership is paramount in determining whether or not a school will be a driver of social justice (Belmonte & Cranston, 2009; Boyle et al., 2016; DeMatthews, 2018; Lambert et al., 2016; Northouse, 2019). Scholars and practitioners have attempted to define leadership since the 1920s; however, the definition has changed and evolved over time as context and other factors are considered by researchers. The understanding of leadership has evolved from control and domination to influence and effectiveness. Northouse (2019) defined leadership as "a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal" (p. 5). In understanding leadership as a process instead of a give and take transaction, leaders and followers both affect each other in an interactive relationship. Through this process, leaders can influence their followers and because of their influence, leaders are responsible for initiating the relationship, communicating in relationship, and maintaining the relationship (Northouse, 2019).

Leaders play a crucial and vital role in the functioning of an organization. Therefore, the following section will discuss how transformative leaders are able to lead for social justice. The section will examine a social justice leader's disposition and the following social justice praxis areas: (a) integration of social justice into curriculum, (b) social justice through service learning and other extracurricular activities, and (c) the integration of social justice through community

involvement. The unique role of a leader in a Catholic educational setting and principal preparedness will be considered as well. The review of these facets of leadership will reveal the importance of leadership in Catholic schools so Catholic schools continue to be places of social justice.

Disposition of Educational Leaders of Social Justice

Effective educational leaders of social justice demonstrate specific behaviors, characteristics, values, and beliefs. Theoharis (2007) defined *social justice leadership* as those who "make issues of race, class, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and other historically and currently marginalizing conditions in the United States central to their advocacy, leadership practice, and vision" (p. 223). Social justice leaders respond to the call of social justice by acting out their own personal values. They engage in work that challenges their own assumptions and biases and are constantly reconsidering how to work in such a way that aligns their behaviors and practices with their values and beliefs (Flood, 2019; Jean-Marie, 2008). The personal values and beliefs of school leaders for social justice ultimately direct and guide the way they act and make decisions.

School leaders for social justice embrace and celebrate diversity in their school sites to increase cultural understanding. To lead for social justice, these leaders must be knowledgeable and deeply understand a myriad of complicated social issues that often intersect different layers of oppression (Lewis, 2016; Theoharis, 2007). The vast knowledge they possess helps them believe in and promote the educability of all (Jean-Marie, 2008; Theoharis, 2007). These leaders are invested in their school communities and address the specific issues and needs of their students. They seek to provide equitable educational opportunities (Jean-Marie, 2008). Because

these social justice leaders understand their school sites on a very critical level, they are able to articulate the needs of their students.

Leaders for social justice also work in their greater communities to benefit their schools and their students. They engage with their students' families, reach out to community members, and foster collaborative relationships to benefit the school site (DeMatthews, 2016; Flood, 2019; Theoharis, 2007; Wasonga, 2009). This particular behavior helps a school site develop cultural and community wealth and effectively assemble the community around the well-being of students and their education (Flood, 2019; Theoharis, 2007). Educational leaders for social justice constantly work with varying stakeholders to maximize the education of their students.

Social justice leaders are driven by their personal beliefs and values to serve their students to the best of their abilities. Social justice leaders often ask critical questions and challenges structures of power. As a result, educational leaders for social justice will absolutely face challenges and frustrations (Jean-Marie, 2008). It is imperative educational leaders for social justice practice resistance: (a) resistance enacted against marginalization, (b) resistance faced due to the social justice agenda, and (c) resistance developed to continue the work toward a social justice agenda (Theoharis, 2007). The values and beliefs of social justice leaders and the subsequent decisions guided by the values and beliefs will certainly be met with obstacles. Frustrations and challenges will arise to varying degrees; however, educational leaders for social justice persist in their resistance for the educational opportunities of their students.

Integration of Social Justice Into Curriculum

Effective educational leaders for social justice are committed not only to practicing social justice, but also teaching social justice to their students. School sites with a social justice leader integrate social justice into the school's curriculum (Kraft, 2007). Integrating social justice into

the curriculum involves teaching students to critically think about their own lives to foster a social consciousness (Carrithers & Peterson, 2010; Kraft, 2007). Students who are taught to be social justice-oriented citizens become citizens who consider social justice tenants like fairness, equality of opportunity, and democratic engagement (Westheimer, 2008; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004a, 2004b).

In a Catholic school setting specifically, social justice leaders aim to challenge students to become critically aware of their own gifts to work toward social justice to develop a profound sense of concern and solidarity for the world. Educational leaders for social justice foster social justice in their school sites by ensuring critical thinking is integrated into the school's curriculum. Although social justice should be incorporated across all subjects, social justice is especially emphasized in the religion curriculum (Dobzanski, 2001; Eifler et al., 2008). Catholic schools have an especially important responsibility of teaching social justice through Catholic social teaching (USCCB, 1998). The curriculum in Catholic schools should incorporate "justice and peace concepts, knowledge, skills, and attitudes" that promote social justice (Dobzanski, 2001, p. 321). Educational leaders for social justice strive to build a curriculum that encourages students to enact the basic concepts of social justice in their lives.

Effective educational leaders for social justice also implement socially just teaching practices, including culturally relevant teaching practices (DeMatthews, 2016; Kraft, 2007). Culturally relevant teaching involves cultural and communal empowerment. Rather than focusing on empowering the individual alone, culturally relevant teaching practices focus on humanizing all students. This pedagogy involves three criteria: "(a) Students must experience academic success; (b) students must develop and/or maintain cultural competence; and (c) students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the

current social order" (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 160). Educational leaders for social justice aim to integrate socially just teaching practices to ensure student success.

Integration of Social Justice Into Service-Learning and Other Extracurricular Activities

Effective educational leaders integrate social justice into service-learning and other extracurricular activities throughout the school. The student who provides the service and the individual who receives the service are both transformed in effective service-learning (Eifler et al., 2008). When carefully and intentionally planned and executed, service-learning experiences can be pivotal in students' personal transformation for social justice (Proehl & Suzuki, 2009; Westheimer & Kahne, 1994, 2004b) and is most effective for student transformation when the service focuses on change instead of charity. These two models of thinking focus on different aspects of service: Change focuses on social reconstruction to create effective, systemic change; charity focuses on giving as civic duty (Westheimer & Kahne, 1994, 2004b). Students who focus on change are justice-oriented citizens who "critically assess social, political, and economic structures and consider collective strategies for change that challenge injustice, and, when possible, address root causes of problems" (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004a, p. 3). With these values in mind when planning service-learning activities for students, service-learning can become excellent tools integrated by effective educational leaders for social justice.

Educational leaders of social justice in Catholic schools have an even greater responsibility toward creating effective service-learning experiences and leadership opportunities for students that encourage social justice practices. Students reflect on their own personal lives and consider their relationships with others using the social justice values taught through service-learning (Dobzanski, 2001). Service-learning that takes the model of "action-reflection-analysis" challenges students to reflect on social injustices and the social conditions and systems that

perpetuate the injustices. Catholic social teaching and the Gospel values inform educational leaders of social justice to create meaningful service-learning and leadership opportunities for students to critically consider their call to action to social justice.

Integration of Social Justice Through Community Involvement

Effective educational leaders integrate social justice by creating communities of social justice and bringing social justice to their greater communities and contexts despite cultural and structural challenges (DeMatthews, 2018; Johnson, 2006; Kraft, 2007; Lambert et al., 2016). It is imperative social justice leaders work for their communities, which requires them to know and understand the context in which they work on a critical level (Johnson, 2006; Lambert et al., 2016). Effective change processes come from practice (Lambert et al., 2016). Therefore, educational social justice leaders must leverage community relationships and partnerships (i.e., local politicians, religious leaders, labor organizers, local businesses) to work for a collective vision (Johnson, 2006; Lambert et al., 2016). These communities are "nested adaptive systems," which means schools are complex systems in even larger and more complicated systems. All of these organizations and systems affect each other in nonlinear, reciprocal ways (Lambert et al., 2016). To properly navigate and function in these larger systems, social justice leaders lead the way by serving as "transformative intellectuals" in their communities (Johnson, 2006, p. 27). They must share their personal knowledge and experience to better their communities and the general public. The goal of a social justice leader in education is to understand the needs of their own community and to develop the language and processes that are sustainable in their larger context.

Perhaps the most effective way of bringing social justice to the school site's community and context is to engage in practices that encourage the greater community to make decisions in

a democratic manner; educational leaders garner participation from those in the community (DeMatthews, 2018; Lambert et al., 2016). This is very similar to how social justice leaders integrate social justice into the curriculum by teaching students critical thinking skills as mentioned in the previous section. These educational leaders for social justice require the community to learn to advocate for themselves by teaching the community the skills required to address injustices. In other words, these leaders promote public engagement and democratic inclusion. Effective leaders consider the systemic root of the injustices and encourage community members to take action on their own behalf (DeMatthews, 2018; Lambert et al., 2016).

Stewardship

Educational leaders for social justice practice financial accountability in their school sites (Bireda, 2011; Correia, 1998; Fraser, 2012; Xaba & Ngubane, 2010). Financial accountability involves transparently reporting school budget and finances, including any possible discrepancies to various school stakeholders (Bireda, 2011; Xaba & Ngubane, 2010), and involves faculty and staff representatives in creating and determining the school's budget (Fraser, 2012). By including those beyond administration in the decision-making process of the budget and through transparent reporting, partnerships are enabled, and community is built (Correia, 1998). To be financially accountable, it is also imperative educational leaders for social justice are skilled in responsible fiscal management (Carter, 2000; Correia, 1998; Xaba & Ngubane, 2010). Strong fiscal management that is responsible for a school site requires educational leaders spend only what directly affects and impacts student achievement. Student achievement includes resources that further the curriculum and provide fair teachers' salaries and

wages (Bartels, 2012; Carter, 2000; Kealey, 1998). As previously stated, educational leaders for social justice are involved in the community and understand their student body and families.

Educational social justice leaders in a Catholic setting must consider the Church's call to stewardship. The USCCB (2020) stated, "As Christian stewards, we receive God's gifts gratefully, cultivate them responsibly, share them lovingly in justice with others, and return them with increase to the Lord" (para. 2). Educational leaders must consider the finances of their schools in the perspective of stewardship and take seriously their responsibility in fiscal management. As community builders and stewards of a school's budget, Catholic school leaders who work for social justice work with families they serve to understand their tuition capabilities. These leaders understand simply charging a higher tuition is not a long-term solution and can inadvertently become a means of discrimination (Kealey & Collins, 1993).

Summary

School sites possess immense power to become institutions of transformation for the students they educate and the communities in which they are involved. School leadership is especially important in determining the vision and direction of a school and determining whether or not the school site will be a driver of social justice (Belmonte & Cranston, 2009; Boyle et al., 2016; DeMatthews, 2018; Lambert et al., 2016; Northouse, 2019). Catholic schools possess an especially important responsibility and call to action in enacting social justice as the foundation of the Catholic school was built on the mission of serving the oppressed (Caruso, 2012; Grace, 2016; Walch, 2016). With the rise of elite structures and the current landscape of Catholic schools, social justice values and priorities may be difficult for social justice leaders to enact in educational settings. It is imperative to the future of Catholic schools, then, to understand how social justice leadership occurs.

This study sought to understand how social justice leaders of Catholic secondary schools perceive social justice and how that perception affected their praxis of social justice. Accordingly, this study also clarified challenges leaders face when enacting social justice.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

It is unknown whether the values and commitments of social justice are enacted by Catholic secondary schools as historically practiced (Grace, 2016); however, it is known Catholic schools worldwide are challenged by the financial realities of students without means to afford tuition (Caruso, 2012; Grace, 2016; Walch, 2016). Furthermore, researchers have suggested Catholic secondary school leaders are inadequately prepared for their roles in leading in the mission and commitment of social justice (Belmonte & Cranston, 2009; Boyle et al., 2016; Morten & Lawler, 2016). Catholic schools worldwide face problems in recruiting and retaining school leaders (Grace, 2016). To help Catholic secondary school leaders strengthen and solidify their commitment to social justice, it is important to understand what Catholic secondary school leaders believe to be their responsibility to social justice and how they integrate social justice values in the school site. It is also important to determine challenges Catholic secondary school leaders face in their pursuit of social justice. These gaps in research in understanding the cause and solution of these major problems for Catholic education resulted in a call for "stronger scholarly, research-based and policy-related approach to Catholic education" (Grace, 2016, p. 115).

This chapter outlines the research design, the data collection, and the analysis used in this study. This section begins by explaining the qualitative case study methodology as an appropriate approach in understanding how the larger historical and current context affects a situation and how individuals perceive their experiences (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). Next, the research design, approach to collecting data, the instrumentation, and analysis of the data will be presented. Last, the chapter will close with the ethical considerations of this study.

Research Questions

To understand Catholic secondary school leaders' perceptions, practices, and challenges of social justice, this study sought answers to the following questions:

1. How does a school leader's perception of social justice impact their praxis of social justice at their school site?

2. What are successes and challenges associated with the praxis of social justice?

Research Design

A qualitative, multiple case study research method was the most appropriate method as this study sought to explore and understand what Catholic secondary school leaders perceived to be social justice practices and how they practiced those social justice perceptions in their school sites. Qualitative studies help "to unpack the meanings people ascribe to activities, situations, events, or artifacts" (Leavy, 2017, p. 124). Qualitative researchers also seek to give voice to participants in a specific context (Patten & Newhart, 2018). Additional questions and procedures emerged as the data was collected and analyzed. I conducted analysis by using inductive reasoning to determine particulars which leads to general themes (Creswell, 2014). Case study research method is appropriate when seeking to understand how or why something happens (Mills & Gay, 2019). By using a qualitative, multiple case study research method, I collected rich data in the form of in-depth, detailed descriptions. In this qualitative, multiple case study approach, I aimed to understand the participants' perceptions of social justice and how perception affects the participants' praxis of social justice.

The unit of analysis in this study was the bounded system of each Catholic secondary school leader at their particular school site. I explored perceptions of social justice of Catholic secondary school leaders and their praxis of social justice through interviews and document

analysis. All data collected presented a well-rounded view of the perceptions and praxis of social justice of Catholic secondary school leaders.

I triangulated the data to ensure consistency and reliability (Leavy, 2017; Mills & Gay, 2019; Patten & Newhart, 2018). I examined various sources of data through semistructured interviews and document analysis. Interviews provided rich, detailed data of Catholic secondary school leaders' perceptions and praxis of social justice. Document analysis provided important information that was not shared during the interview process. Document analysis also allowed for triangulation and contributed to the overall validity of the study (Mills & Gay, 2019).

Sample and Population

The unit of analysis for this multiple case study included nine different Catholic secondary schools in a local Catholic archdiocese. Purposeful sampling was used to identify each unit of study. I used purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is used when a unit of study is believed to be representative of a given population. Prior knowledge of the specific unit of study and determination of criteria are especially important in purposeful sampling (Mills & Gay, 2019). As such, the unit of study was determined based on tuition cost. Three schools were selected from each of the following tuition ranges: (a) under $12,000, (b) between $12,001 and $17,000, and (c) above $17,001. A purposeful, convenience sample process was used to decide nine Catholic secondary schools and the interviewee of each school site. The interviewee was either the head of school, president, or principal of the Catholic secondary school site. Appendix A, the Participant Recruitment Letter, was used to invite the interviewee to participate in the study. These identified school sites and their leaders provided rich, detailed experiential and personal knowledge of their own perceptions and praxis of social justice in their school sites.

Overview of the Organization

The units of study for this research were Catholic secondary schools in the California Archdiocese. The California Archdiocese covers 8,762 square miles and 120 cities. As of 2005, over 4.3 million Catholics reside in the California Archdiocese. Over 73,750 students were enrolled across 214 Catholic elementary schools and 51 Catholic high schools in the Archdiocese, which made it one of the three largest school systems in California. The annual tuition of the Catholic secondary schools ranged from $7,500 to $37,040 with the average annual tuition at $14,347. Additional annual fees ranged from none to $3,775 with the average annual fee at $1,018.

Overview of the Participants

All the participants are listed in Table 1. Each of the participants were either the head of school, president, or principal of a Catholic secondary school in the California Archdiocese.

Table 1

Participants

Participant	Gender	Title
Matthew	Male	President
Jorge	Male	President
Camila	Female	Principal
John	Male	President
Charlotte	Female	Principal
Frank	Male	Principal
Agnes	Female	President
Luke	Male	Head of School
Josephine	Female	Principal

Data Collection Approach

The primary units of study were the respective leaders of the Catholic secondary schools. Data about each leader and each school site were collected through semistructured interviews with probing questions and document analysis. The data collection approach began with the use of semistructured interview questions to understand the phenomenon (Creswell, 2014) of social justice perception and praxis as explained by Catholic secondary school leaders. The interview began with more structured questions to gain more specific information first. As the interview continued, more open-ended questions were used to further understand each participant's perception and praxis of social justice (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). The interview questions were designed to answer the research questions of the study and were piloted to ensure all questions were practical, appropriate, understandable, and relevant (Seidman, 2013). The goal of the interview was to ask participants questions about their perceptions and praxis of social justice in their school site. Prior to the interview, the participant was given a letter that explained the purpose of the study, their role in the study, and relevant details about the interview. The interviews were one-on-one, conducted either in-person or over video call, and lasted 45 minutes to one hour. The interviews were video recorded with the permission of the participants. Transcriptions were made using Otter.ai (Otter.ai software tool version 2.3.69 – 9a8c214c [2021], www.otter.ai), an automatic transcription software.

Internal documents provided by each participant and public documents of each school site were reviewed: curriculum, high-level budgets, and strategic plans. Each school's website was also reviewed as a public document. Document analysis helped further validate the study through triangulation (Creswell, 2014).

Instrumentation

Semistructured interviews were the instrumentations used in this study. Seidman (2013) contended story telling is a meaning-making process for the storyteller. The details selected from their memory are chosen from their stream of consciousness. Interviews, then, were appropriate for qualitative research as the purpose is to understand the lived experiences of other people and the meaning ascribed to those experiences. Interviewing allowed me to understand the meaning of each participant's experiences with social justice in their school site, both in their perception and praxis. The semistructured nature of the interview also allowed me to ask follow-up questions for clarity. Appendix B outlines the protocol question used for each group interviewed. I wrote down field notes immediately following each interview to document any personal, subjective, or objective immediate responses as field notes may become sites for analysis (Saldaña, 2016). Document analysis was a secondary instrument used in this study. Documents provided by the school sites and publicly available documents helped to triangulate data. Appendix C outlines the document analysis process.

Data Analysis

The data analysis followed the model for qualitative data analysis for qualitative research (Creswell, 2014). This approach, also referred to as *a priori* theoretical orientation, was a deductive approach to data analysis in qualitative studies. The first step in this model was to organize and prepare project data for analysis. The organization and preparation included transcribing interviews in Otter.ai, preparing any field notes, and reviewing document analysis notes. The second step was to examine all collected data for topical themes. The third and fourth steps involved the coding process to determine general themes and later emerging categories.

Following the coding process, I developed a narrative representative of discovered themes. Finally, I interpreted data and made meaning.

Throughout the data analysis process, I wrote detailed analytic memos to "work toward a solution, away from a problem" (Saldaña, 2016, p. 44). Analytic memos throughout the entire duration of the research helped me reflect critically on the data presented and challenge any assumptions or beliefs about the data. I used analytic memos to reflect on a range of topics (e.g., how I personally related to the participants or phenomenon, code choices and their operational definitions; participants' routines, rituals, rules, roles, and relationships to the participants and data; emergent patterns, themes, thoughts, assertions, possible connections between themes, any personal or ethical dilemmas with the participants or the study; and future directions for the study (Saldaña, 2016).

Ethical Consideration

Ethical considerations were made prior to beginning research. Upon completion of the dissertation proposal defense, I submitted an application to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Loyola Marymount University to receive approval to move forward with the research study. I followed all guidelines and recommendations set forth by the IRB to protect participants from potential harm.

I developed and distributed consent forms to all participants prior to interviews. Participants had the option to review transcripts and make any changes to their responses. Participants also had the right to be informed of the final outcome of the study. Written consent was obtained from all participants before beginning the interview.

Participants' confidentiality was also safeguarded. Pseudonyms were used to identify participants throughout the study. All electronic data were stored on password protected devices.

Participants were notified the study's findings will be distributed to educational communities;

however, participants would not be traceable through their responses.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Schools can greatly impact and change students and their communities when there are institutions committed to social justice. Catholic schools, especially, have historically committed themselves to lead for social justice; however, it is still unclear whether or not Catholic secondary schools remain dedicated to social justice (Grace, 2016). The financial models of Catholic schools have changed along with their students' need for financial assistance (Caruso, 2012; Grace, 2016; Walch, 2016). Catholic secondary school school leaders are inadequately prepared to lead for social justice (Belmonte & Cranston, 2009; Boyle et al., 2016; Morten & Lawler, 2016). Catholic schools worldwide struggle to recruit and retain effective school leaders (Grace, 2016). School leaders determine the mission, direction, and vision of their schools, which is a tremendous responsibility that impacts social justice. This study sought to understand how Catholic secondary school leaders' social justice orientation impacts their praxis of social justice leadership and the successes and challenges associated with leading for social justice in a Catholic secondary school.

Research Questions

The following questions guided this research study:

1. How does a school leader's social justice orientation impact their praxis of social justice at their school site?

2. What are the successes and challenges associated with the praxis of social justice?

For this study, I employed a qualitative, multiple case study research method to highlight the narrative and voices of participants in their specific context (Patten & Newhart, 2018). I conducted data analysis by inductive reasoning to determine particulars that led to general

themes (Creswell, 2014). I collected rich data in the form of in-depth, detailed descriptions

through semistructured interviews and document analysis. I triangulated the data to ensure

consistency, reliability, and validity (Leavy, 2017; Mills & Gay, 2019; Patten & Newhart, 2018).

Participants included nine different Catholic secondary school leaders from a single local

Catholic archdiocese (see Table 2).

Participants

Table 2

Participants by Social Justice Orientation

Participant	Gender	Title	Social Justice Orientation
Matthew	Male	President	Personally Responsible
Jorge	Male	President	Personally Responsible
Camila	Female	Principal	Participatory
John	Male	President	Participatory
Charlotte	Female	Principal	Participatory
Frank	Male	Principal	Participatory
Agnes	Female	President	Justice-Oriented
Luke	Male	Head of School	Justice-Oriented
Josephine	Female	Principal	Justice-Oriented

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework I designed was based on emerging themes from the literature

review found in Figure 1. The framework began with the Catholic secondary school leaders and

their social justice orientation, adapted from Westheimer and Kahne (2004a): (a) personally

responsible leader, (b) participatory leader, or (c) justice-oriented leader (the far-left rectangle).

Social justice orientation was determined by impact and self-efficacy (Bandura 1997). The

leader's justice orientation ultimately affects their praxis of social justice (the inner rectangles of the framework). The social justice leader is someone who:

- holds specific values and beliefs in social justice (DeMatthews, 2016; Flood, 2019; Jean-Marie, 2008; Lewis, 2016; Theoharis, 2007; Wasonga, 2009);

- integrates social justice into the curriculum (Carrithers & Peterson, 2010; DeMatthews, 2016; Dobzanski, 2001; Eifler et al., 2008; Kraft, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Westheimer, 2008; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004a, 2004b);

- integrates social justice into service-learning and extracurricular activities (Dobzanski, 2001; Eifler et al., 2008; Proehl & Suzuki, 2009; Westheimer & Kahne, 1994, 2004b); and

- is involved in the community (DeMatthews, 2018; Johnson, 2006; Kraft, 2007; Lambert et al., 2016).

The characteristics listed above appear in the blue inner framework. The social justice outcomes of Catholic secondary schools become clearer when there is an understanding of the leader's social justice orientation and praxis of social justice (the far right rectangle). Both the successes and the challenges (DeMatthews, 2016) leaders face when enacting social justice affects the leader themselves which, in turn, can affect social justice orientation of the leader (the outer lines of the framework). The result of this conceptual framework was a feedback loop in which the output of the educational social justice leader became an input into how the educational social justice leader thought and operated.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework

Relationship between Catholic Secondary School Leaders and Social Justice Outcomes
Linda Nguyen (2020)
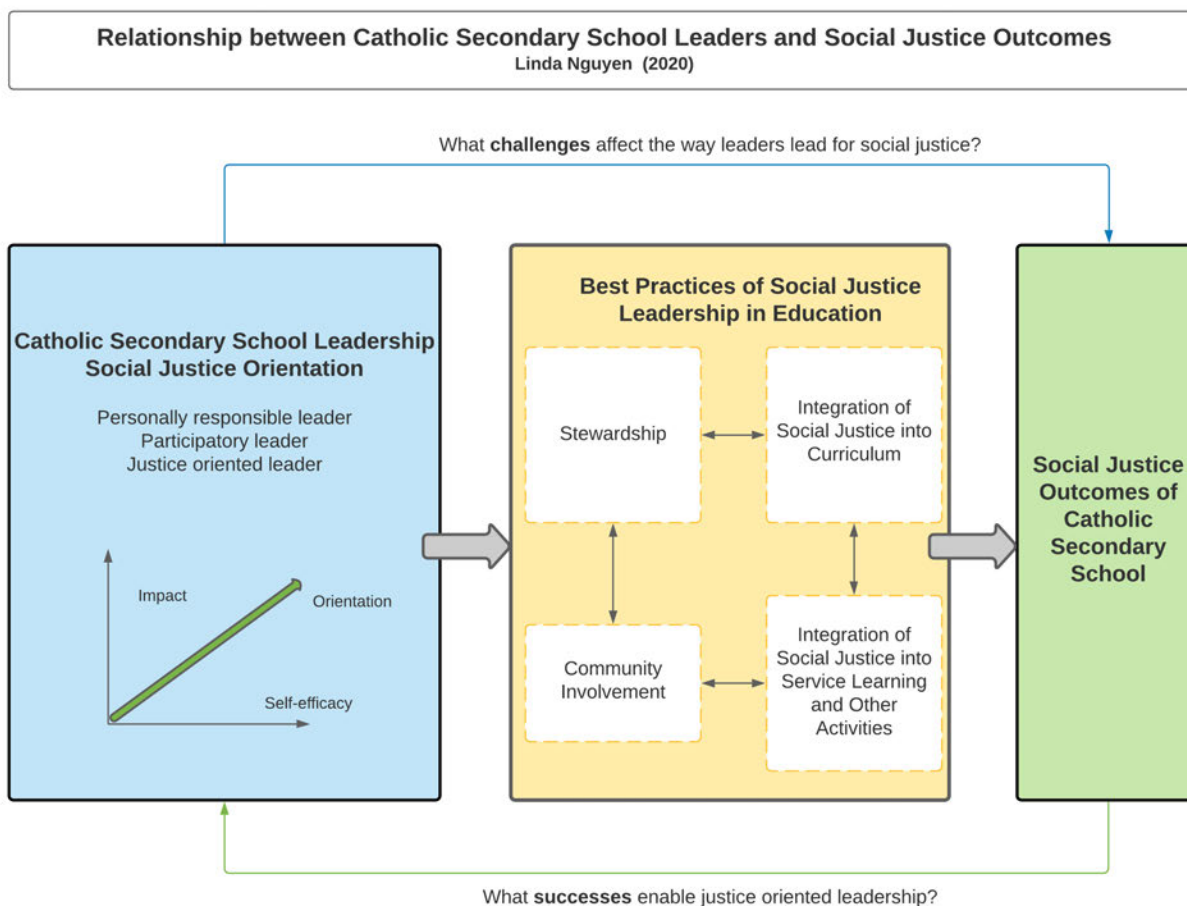
I organized the data using Westheimer and Kahne's (2004a) social justice orientations: (a)

personally responsible leaders, (b) participatory leaders, and (c) justice-oriented leaders. These

data revealed the intersection of a leader's perceived impact on social justice efforts (*y*-axis) and

self-efficacy in moving social justice efforts forward (*x*-axis). Bandura (1997) defined self-

efficacy as "the belief in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required

to manage prospective situations" (p. 3). In other words, self-efficacy is an individual's belief in

whether or not they will succeed in a specific situation. Based on the action, participants were

graphed (see Figure 2). Successes and challenges were also addressed in each group. Social

justice leaders possess a favorable disposition toward social justice that moves them to action.

The actions of social justice involve decisions regarding social stewardship, integration of social

justice into curriculum and extracurricular activities, and community involvement.

Figure 2

Justice Orientation Continuum

Social Justice Orientations Graph
Linda Nguyen (2020)
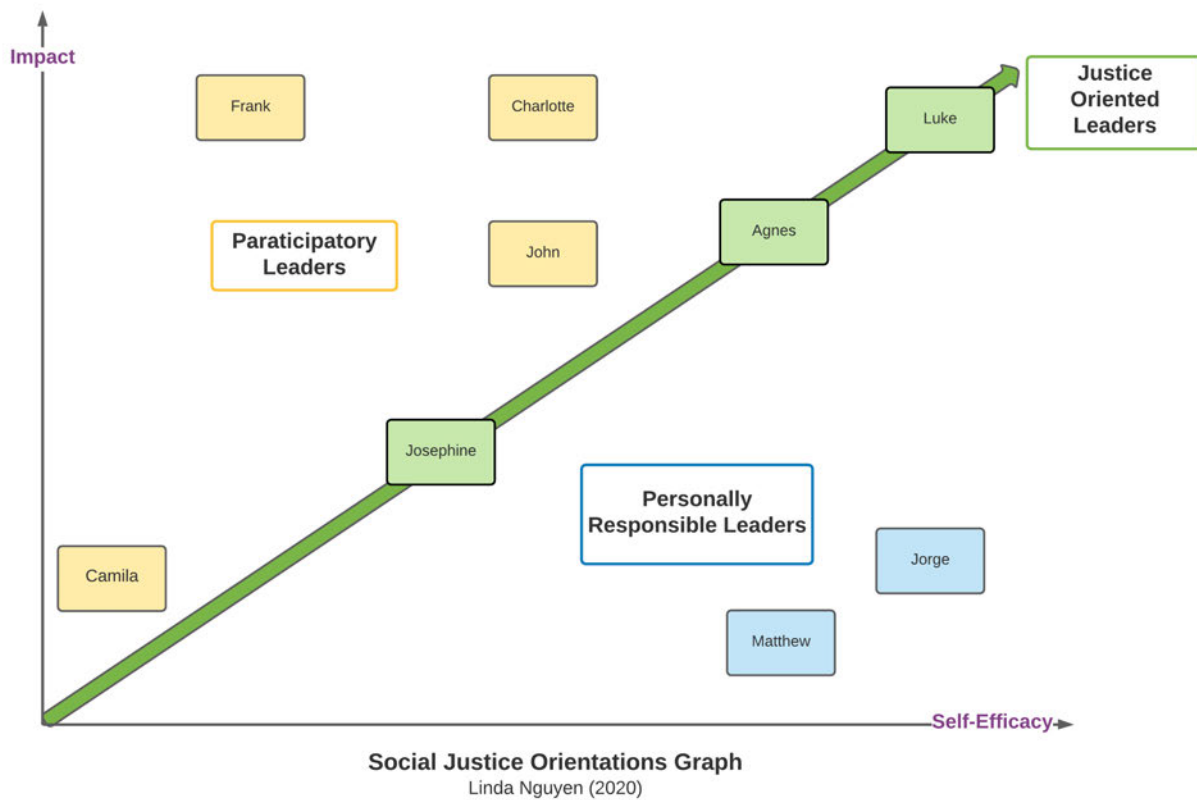
Personally Responsible Leaders

Matthew and Jorge were considered personally responsible leaders. These individuals

were categorized here because they had a perceived lower impact on social justice efforts, but a

perceived higher self-efficacy regarding achieving social justice in their school sites.

Disposition

Matthew and Jorge were both presidents of their school sites. They were very faith-filled leaders, focusing heavily on their relationship with God, and their ability to think and act like Christ. Both participants concentrated primarily on the individual development and transformation of the student through a strong faith life and academics. Jorge shared his preference was to work for a school with a religious sponsor because they provided a "framework and a foundation for everything that you do" and a "template in marching orders". Because the religious sponsor lays out the map, he did not have to "figure it out" which was "reassuring" and gives "meaning and purpose". When asked about their own personal values, both highly value faith and vocation as an educator; both are called to serve as educational leaders. Jorge shared it was early in his teaching career when he realized education was his vocation: "It changed from being a profession, a job, a way to pay the rent, to a vocation that I could live out in service of my faith and I get emotional talking about it because it was life changing." When asked about personal reflection practices as leaders, both mentioned Mass and prayer. Matthew shared he strived to attend daily Mass because it rooted him in the sacraments of Confession and Eucharist. He also sometimes sat in his backyard to experience the morning sun as connectedness with God: "I go to get nourished with the Sacrament and then I try to experience the reality."

When asked about their thoughts regarding integrating social justice into their work as school leaders, Matthew and Jorge answered differently from each other; however, their answers did not indicate a full justice orientation. Both leaders' responses lacked an indication social justice was important to their work as school leaders. Jorge shared stories of students over the years and his own personal experiences with social justice. In summation, he stated,

That's really heavy on my heart these days . . . when you even asked for me to participate in this and what am I talking about? I think the word is guilt . . . I think it's a mixed bag with me. I think that there have been times when I've hopefully done some really good things. And there's sometimes when I probably have failed.

Matthew shared when he talked about social justice with his students, he encouraged them to consider why they serve:

Are you serving because it makes you feel good? Or are you serving because you recognize who you're serving? . . . You know from a social justice standpoint, if you're serving or calling out the injustices in the world because you recognize who it affects, it affects Christ Himself. That's true social justice. But we have to take it back to that.

Self-Efficacy

Both of these participants were able to make the changes necessary to orient their schools toward justice. They were both presidents and both indicated they have a role in the mission and the direction of the school. When discussing his priorities as a school president, Jorge stated, "I need to make sure that our policies and our procedures and our classes and our programs and the way we choose to spend our resources or to acquire them is all run through the lens of mission." Matthew shared, as president, he was outward facing and concerned more with financial resources to ensure the school can operate. He also shared,

I kind of see my role is like the pastor. I'm charged with the spiritual care of the flock that's been entrusted to me. So that's all my students, my staff, the parents, the alumni, everyone that's tied to that community. I try to be that shepherd for them.

Actions

These personally responsible leaders' actions were the intersection of a lower favorable disposition or understanding of social justice and a high self-efficacy or capacity in taking action toward social justice. When discussing practices to increase diversity, Matthew stated, "And when we added football, obviously that brought a contingency of African-American kids." Also, in a conversation surrounding diversity, Jorge explained why it has been difficult for his school site to increase in diversity:

> We're not going to bus kids from South Central to increase diversity beyond the diversity that exists in this community looking broadly, right? It's an interesting question because I think that's what a lot of the conversation is around, well, more diversity. Well, we are as diverse as it comes in our context. We're not as diverse as your school is. You're in a different context. We're not diverse in the same way that, I don't know, St. Suki Jain in Watts. I don't know what that school is, but whatever. Because we're not in that community.

Both Jorge and Matthew's quotes revealed a very basic understanding of the reason and methods in which to increase diversity at school sites. These leaders recognized action needed to be taken but did not necessarily take the steps that lead to social justice.

Curriculum

Both the academic content and extracurricular material were basic in their promotion and support of social justice. Both leaders shared social justice appears in the theology and history curricula and some campus ministry activities. Matthew stated activities at his school site were aligned with the local Church or the USCCB: "Respect life month, there'll be activities for the classes or some sort of discussion, same thing for marriage week, and I think February that was

something that was just added." In all of his sharing of social justice in the curriculum, all activities were vague, nonspecific, and closely related to the Church. Jorge shared his students were trying to hold the school accountable for social justice "and all those kinds of things" as a result of the death of George Floyd. A working group was established to help determine where social justice could appear in the curriculum in response to the students' call for accountability. He also stated he was surprised by the students' call for accountability:

> But, you know, I've always—up until May—I've felt pretty comfortable. "Yeah, we cover that, we're doing our job" . . . But I think we are called to be much more discreet in our awareness, much more precise in our strategies, and to really be able to better describe and explicate exactly what it is we're doing.

Stewardship

Both participants shared a snapshot of their budget is provided to families each year so families can understand the financial state of the school. When asked how these leaders ensure the school's budget is directed primarily toward student achievement, Matthew did not give a clear process. Instead, he stated anything that served the students was "typically approved." Jorge shared the expense must advance the mission and shared a set of questions he asks before approving an expense: "How does this advance mission? What is it doing for student achievement, and fulfilling all of the things that we want our students to have? So it's all about you know, how are we delivering service to our kids?"

Community Involvement

Matthew and Jorge were somewhat involved in their greater community; however, the purposes were primarily for networking. When asked about their work beyond the school walls, Matthew shared he volunteers and lends his talents in his parish community as a musician and

youth minister. He also shared he was a member of several professional organizations including the local Rotary Club; however, he stated it is primarily for networking purposes as president of his school site. Jorge was also a member of his local Rotary Club organization and shared Matthew's sentiment of the necessity of networking within certain clubs and groups.

Challenges and Successes

When asked about challenges and obstacles faced as a leader, both Jorge and Matthew shared difficulties. Jorge first said, "I can't say that I've ever had an obstacle or a challenge in leadership because of my name—that would be disingenuous to say that." Jorge instead shared the current difficulty he faced was regarding COVID-19 and school operations; his faculty and staff were narrowly focused and driven by emotions rather than science and data. Matthew also discussed COVID-19 as an obstacle in his work; however, the core issues he shared were "daily spiritual battles" and "when people don't truly understand your mission as a school." The decisions Matthew made were driven by the mission of the school; therefore, when people did not truly understand the mission of the school, they did not agree with Matthew's decision making.

When asked about successes as a school leader, Jorge shared anecdotal stories of his experience in which former students returned and shared their own successes, or when someone he mentored has risen to leadership positions: "To have been, you know, just a small part of their encouragement and their development, that's very satisfying to me." Matthew, too, shared the joy of impacting a student's life: "They leave you grateful for the work that you've been able to encounter through all of this. . . . You have those moments that truly are the rewarding moments that remind you why you serve." Matthew also shared one of his biggest successes was doubling school enrollment over the course of his time at the school site.

Overview of Personally Responsible Leaders

Throughout the interview, both participants in this group revealed their own understandings of social justice through personal anecdotes and stories. Jorge and Matthew acknowledged there is a need for social justice; however, their methods of achieving that social justice signaled a misunderstanding of how to achieve the necessary social justice in a meaningful, sustainable, and research-based way. Jorge shared a story of his own life and how he came to learn English. In the closing remarks of his story, he shared,

> I've never been particularly sympathetic about a bilingual approach. I think immersion is what it's all about and that needs to happen immediately. And why? Not because of a lot of research, I mean, other than my gut, what I know about how the brain works, because it worked for me. So, it worked for me, it should work for everybody. You know, it just doesn't get more complicated than that. Is that correct? Maybe. Maybe not. Certainly, the way I was raised has impacted how I live, right? How I think.

Matthew's understanding of social justice and how he imparted social justice work were directly tied to his Catholic faith:

> I think social justice flows from our understanding and belief in the Eucharist. And if I'm somebody that says I believe Jesus loves me and is in the Eucharist and I have no action behind it, then I'm not truly living out what I believe.

Both Jorge and Matthew's foundations for social justice were based on personal experience, personal beliefs, and personal value in developing their own relationship with God, rather than community involvement, community need, or research. This perceived low impact on social justice within their school site and community coupled with their perceived high self-efficacy to affect change for social justice resulted in personally responsible leadership.

Participatory Leaders

Camila, Frank, Charlotte, and John were considered participatory leaders. These individuals were categorized as participatory leaders because they had a higher perceived impact on social justice efforts, but a perceived lower self-efficacy regarding achieving social justice in their school sites.

Disposition

Frank and Charlotte were both principals who report to a president; however, the president at Charlotte's school site retired unexpectedly at the time of this study. Both Frank and Charlotte were primarily responsible for the day-to-day operations of their school sites. John was new to the president role. Camila was a principal of her school site without an acting president. She took on both principal and president roles.

When asked about the culture of each of these individual's school sites, each of these leaders were honest in their assessment and reflection: Charlotte spoke about the slow improvements at her school site in attempts to be more culturally sensitive:

> We are finally making inroads, for example, in our uniform code, you know, why is that boy's hair have to be a certain height length? I mean that works on White people's hair, but African-American hair is very different. And if you're telling some young man of color that his hair needs to conform to your standard of what's appropriate, and he goes back to his neighborhood on the weekend, how does he fit in with his friends and family? We need to think about that and his natural hair or, or locks or braids . . . if we're going to embrace our students, whoever they are, that we ought to love his locks and his braids because he's part of the body of Christ. I don't understand why we get to pick and choose. So, we are making progress, but it is slow. It is absolutely slow.

Charlotte revealed a deeper understanding of why the uniform code did not work for all her students. As the principal of her school, she expressed frustration with the slow progress of social justice at her school. Frank discussed tensions between the neighborhood in which his school site is situated and the school community:

> We had a local community that has totally cut itself off from [the school], in large part because of our demographic, which is primarily African American. And we are located in a very wealthy White neighborhood . . . it is a culture in development.

> They also shared stories and incidences of tensions that had arisen in their communities

following the aftermath of the death of George Floyd and the need for improvements in regard to inclusivity and racial justice. Charlotte expressed concern over the urgent necessity of diversifying her school:

> Do we have work to do? You bet. We absolutely do. We absolutely have to get more students of color particularly African-American students. . . . We definitely have a ways to go certainly with our faculty population as well. And that has been a commitment that I had for a few years.

Camila shared because she was new to her school site, the students did not know her and therefore did not trust her yet: "I think that's where the relationship is at odds is figuring out the conversation and how the how to have those conversations when especially we don't agree with each other."

> When asked about their most important values, all of these leaders mentioned a faith

component. Camila was particularly clear in sharing her personal vision statement:

> I will fulfill my mission statement through love, living joyfully, loving richly, knowing more, growing deeper, serving with my gifts, ministering to the needy, and witnessing to

those entrusted to my care that my relationship with God, and the power and possibility

that can come from it are great.

John stated his values were those directly stated in the Beatitudes from Luke's Gospel, which

focuses on the poor, hungry, those who weep, and those who are hated; as well as Matthew

25:35–40 (New Revised Standard Version), which discusses feeding the hungry, sheltering the

homeless, caring for the sick, and visiting the prisoner. Charlotte shared prayer is embedded

throughout her day:

> So, prayer is important to me. I pray every morning when I get up. I have a book that is
>
> just sort of a "prayer a day." And it speaks, and I can't tell you how many times I open it
>
> and go, "Oh my God, that's exactly what I needed to see today."

Frank discussed what he called the "golden rule": "You got to try and see where people are

coming from and try to understand it as best as possible."

Self-Efficacy

While each of these participatory leaders have a favorable disposition toward social

justice, they were not necessarily positioned to take actions needed toward social justice.

Camila's school site in particular faced major financial obstacles:

> I need to start pushing those envelopes too, but it's hard when, what the justice you're
>
> working on right now is your own—trying to save the school. That's my main justice
>
> mission. Because you know, I know these [students] just deserve [the school].

John also shared similar sentiments as Camila. He shared a story in which he realized as much as

he wanted to do service himself, his job as president was to fundraise money for the survival of

the school and for the students, faculty, and staff. One particularly strong statement came from

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Charlotte as she discussed what might happen at her school site in regard to social justice after George Floyd's death:

> It is so palpable for me right now. Absolutely. I absolutely think that that's the direction we need to go. And again, like I've said to you before, we've just been given permission we've known—I've known that it's the right thing. And now I'm not afraid anymore. I feel like I lived in fear, Linda, for a lot, a lot of my time here; afraid I would lose my job. And now I get to be fearless.

Frank, too, shared the necessity of social justice integrated into his work as a school leader, despite not having the resources:

> And while we may not always have the resources or the answers, if it's not part of the discussion, then we're failing our students and our community, and we're failing ourselves, and we're failing our vocation. There's just, there's no separation. There can't be.

Actions

These participatory leaders' actions were the intersection of a higher favorable disposition or understanding of social justice and a lower self-efficacy in taking action toward social justice.

Curriculum

Both academic and extracurricular material were simple in their promotion and support of social justice; however, all these leaders shared plans toward improving both academic curriculum and extracurricular activities to further their efforts toward social justice. Frank jumped at the opportunity to improve the curriculum in the wake of George Floyd's death:

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When the George Floyd incident took place, the executive director and I got together within a day and just said, "You know, this should be a real kick in the butt for us as a school that is primarily African American."

He continued to share that within a week, he met with all his faculty to discuss how their curriculum integrated social justice. At the time of the interview, the Black Lives Matter movement was on Camila's mind:

I think it's a call for reflection about what we are presenting in our curriculum and how does it reflect all these lives. . . . I know that's the part we need to work on is making it intentional, and perhaps having those tough conversations with the girls.

Charlotte had a different lens in which she aimed to improve social justice in her curriculum. She shared her faculty ranged in their understanding of cultural sensitivity or their skills in navigating challenging conversations. She described them in two camps: the "best intentions camp" and the "denial camp." As a result, she provided a professional development to her faculty and staff on the topic of cultural sensitivity with an outside consultant after school. She provided dinner as well. Only eight out of 135 faculty and staff members attended. Still, Charlotte shared further plans to make professional development surrounding the topics of diversity, equity, and inclusion mandatory for faculty and staff moving forward.

Stewardship

Each of these participatory leaders shared a basic public annual report that demonstrated the school's stewardship and financial commitments. Each leader provided a different response, however, when asked about how they ensure funds are directed primarily toward student achievement. Charlotte admitted to not knowing the answer to the question and instead said the question would be best asked to the chief financial officer or president. As the president of the

school, John stated, "Principals primarily are the drivers." Frank shared because the budget was so tight, there was no room for spending anything beyond student needs. Budgeting for student needs alone included cutting stipends for teachers and reframing the conversations he had with his faculty and staff in regard to job descriptions and compensation: "Remember Catholic schools, it's a vocation, not a great job opportunity." Camila was in a similar restricted financial situation as Frank and shared, "How are you going to pay your teachers? That's your first student achievement, right? Because they're the ones that have to be in the classroom with them."

Community Involvement

Camila, Frank, and Charlotte were somewhat active in their local communities, and all mentioned a lack of time due to their work in the school and familial obligations. Camila was an active parishioner, a member of her local Rotary Club, and a member of the Women's Foundation in her city. Charlotte was also an active parishioner and did *pro bono* college counseling for students who cannot afford college counseling. Frank was working to develop principal partnerships both at the local and international levels and was part of the local Rotary Club. John was very involved in his local community. He was the board chair, financial advisor, and weekly volunteer of a local organization that served the homeless population in his city. He was also a board member of a local seminary and an active parishioner.

Challenges and Successes

When asked about challenges in their school site, all of these individuals shared instances in which their leadership ability or capacity was challenged. For Camila, her first year as principal was focused on trying to gain the trust of her faculty and staff in her leadership skills and decision making. John had to navigate new relationships as a leader at his school site and also had to convince his faculty, staff, board, and pastor of his capabilities. Frank considered the

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problem of replacing long-term leadership and implications of that often difficult transition. He also mentioned the problem of trust, gaining the trust of his faculty and staff, but also discovering who he could trust as a leader. Frank said, "It's really, really hard to find constituencies at your place of work that you can truly trust. That, I'd say, would be a real challenge that I've come across as a principal." Charlotte struggled to balance between leading based on her personal beliefs and leading as a representative leader of the Catholic Church or of the school. Additionally, she mentioned the challenge of not having priests or nuns on campus who can minister:

> But wouldn't it be amazing to have weekly Mass or daily Mass on campus at lunch? We'll never be able to do that because we do not have the resources; we don't have access. And everybody I talked to struggles with the same thing. . . . If I'm going to keep that Catholic identity, to me, the sacraments are very, very important.

When discussing successes, each of these leaders discussed very measurable markers of success: (a) hiring and firing, (b) consolidation of roles, (c) fundraising, (d) improved relationships and partnerships in the school's greater community, (e) facility updates, and (f) enrollment. When discussing improved relationships, Frank stated, "They know me, they trust me. They believe in my vision. And so that's important to have them start to be able to share that with their constituents. That's really exciting." Frank's strengthened relationships with his faculty and staff enabled them to continue the vision he set forth as principal. Charlotte continually stated she was proud of improvements made over time regarding the management of faculty and staff:

> We have hired more diverse people in the last few years. I am proud of that. I'm proud of the commitment . . . Other thing I think I'm proud of is we have finally advocated to the

point where we are getting a human resource manager to be able to be more responsive to

the needs of the faculty. . . . So in the middle of a pandemic, we've done amazing. I'm

also proud of the program I put in place with department chairs to help with more of an

evaluation process.

Amid the pandemic, Charlotte remained steadfast in her efforts for social justice not only for her

students, but also her faculty and staff. Charlotte's successes brought her pride in her continued

efforts as principal.

Overview of Participatory Leaders

Throughout the interviews, these individuals revealed their desires to enact social justice

in their school sites, but expressed great frustration with various obstacles in doing so, ultimately

affecting their overall impact on social justice efforts. For Frank, his struggle in enacting social

justice was primarily a financial difficulty and building a culture of sacrifice among the faculty

and staff on campus. Camila faced similar financial setbacks like Frank. Because she was

focused solely on keeping school doors open, Camila was unable to shift her energy and focus on

social justice goals at her school site. Charlotte's school site did not face any financial difficulty

at the time of the interview. Contrary, her school site was overenrolled and was thriving from a

financial standpoint. Charlotte's biggest obstacle in achieving social justice was based on a lack

of support and buy-in from faculty and staff; she struggled to build a culture in which faculty and

staff, and other school leadership desired to achieve social justice in a meaningful and

sustainable way. Even though John was the president of his school site, it was the role and title

itself that hindered him from enacting social justice at the school. John's primary focus in his

role was to raise funds for the school. The school's day-to-day operations were dictated by the

principal, and the mission and vision of his school site was directed by a pastor. Camila, Frank,

Charlotte, and John possessed a perceived high understanding of the problems of social justice at their schools and have a perceived strong sense of what needs to be done to achieve social justice. Their work for social justice had an impact on their school sites and communities; however, they also had a perceived low self-efficacy to enact change for social justice. The challenges that these leaders faced hinder them from moving social justice efforts forward. As a result, these leaders were considered participatory leaders.

Justice-Oriented Leaders

Josephine, Agnes, and Luke were considered justice-oriented leaders. These individuals have been categorized as justice-oriented leaders because they have a perceived matching impact on social justice efforts and self-efficacy regarding achieving social justice in their school site. The leaders can be placed along the justice-oriented leader continuum.

Disposition

Agnes was the president, and Luke was the head of school at their respective school sites. Josephine was the principal at her school site. Josephine's site did not have a president. Therefore, Josephine fulfilled both positions as president and principal.

When asked about what they believe was the mission of all Catholic school sites, Agnes, Luke, and Josephine provided a description that incorporated faith, education of the entire student, and servicing the students based on their needs and the needs of the community. Luke stated, "I don't think there's a single mission for all Catholic secondary schools. I think they really need to understand their local, their mission, contextualized by their local community." Agnes shared Catholic schools should educate the head, the hands, and the heart:

I think it's important, you know, to teach the [students] their Catholic faith, of course. But then also faith has to be an act of faith. It can't just be I'm going to go in the chapel

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and pray to Jesus all day. It has to be, if I really am a Christian, then I'm acting out of my faith and doing something to help others, whatever that particular thing happens to be.

The leaders at each of these schools fostered cultures that were welcoming and inclusive; still, each leader also included future plans to further their social justice work in their community. Josephine described her school site as a place of vulnerability. The adult community and student community gathered once a week to share what was happening in their lives and in their communities. From these gatherings, the school was then called to action through "I" statements that then act as commitments toward bettering the situation. She also shared the student body is 50% Black; and in the aftermath of George Floyd's death, it was evident to her, students needed a Black Student Union which was started as a student initiative: "They really wanted to share their experience. And so, if anything, we see this more as a safe space for them to have, and for people who want to learn, about that experience, to have open discussion." Luke described a culture that was also very open and trusting. For example, there were no locks on the lockers at his school site, and there had never been an incident of theft. He explained, however, society was filled with injustices and it was required of school leaders, including himself, to be honest, to name things for what they are, and to reach into the Catholic tradition to raise the prophetic voice:

> And so, the first step is to be honest, to speak the truth. And the second step, once you've done that is to embrace this prophetic tradition that allows for and actually encourages the dismantling of systems and structures so that we might actually create a world that is more just, more in line with what Catholic social teaching tells us what society should look like and what it can actually be.

Self-Efficacy

Each of these leaders oversaw and made decisions that affect their entire school site. As president, Agnes considered her work as an outward facing role. Still, she made it a point to mention she remained connected to the students by moderating a club, by attending games, and by eating lunch with a small cohort of freshman once a week during their first quarter. Luke was the head of school who also considered himself the chief mission officer of the school, which was why he believed all mission statements should be actionable:

> But the number one thing is if your mission statement isn't something you can memorize and isn't something that is something that's actionable, that helps you actually make better decisions when you're faced with difficult choices, then I think the mission statement probably needs to be revised and questioned.

Josephine encompassed the roles of both president and principal. While she managed the leadership team of the school, she also tried to respond to the needs of her community in any given day.

Each of these leaders also mentioned some type of obstacle that affected their ability to lead for social justice: financial constraints, resources, and time. However, each of these leaders possessed a disposition that encouraged them to continue despite obstacles and setbacks. Josephine discussed the difficulty of her work while having young children at home during the pandemic:

> Those three months are over, and I made it, and I survived, and it's one of those things, you know. There's a lot of empowerment that comes from this. I look up to other women leaders who are trying to balance everything out because it's not easy, but to know that there are other female leaders, too, who have obligations, who are mothers, who are

wives, who have to do all of that and stay dedicated to the mission. I think it is important, so inspiring. I think it's just one step at a time.

After Luke shared stories of many challenges he has faced as a Catholic school leader, he highlighted the biggest lesson he has learned:

> We need to look up and out, to learn from others in so many ways. And then when we do that, other industries can also learn from us, nonsectarian, independent schools can learn from us. We have things to teach just as much as we have things to learn.

After sharing a great deal of obstacles she faced, Agnes, too, shared her joy of her work: "I'm just really proud of the school. When I stop and think about it, . . . I've spent 31 years here. Most of my professional life has been at this school."

Actions

These justice-oriented leaders' actions were the intersection of an equal favorable disposition or understanding of social justice to an equal self-efficacy or capacity in taking action toward social justice.

Curriculum

The curriculum at the school sites dove deeper into social justice or integrated social justice into student programming more than schools whose leaders were personally responsible leaders or participatory leaders. Each of these leaders included social justice into the curriculum through theology or religion classes. Agnes's school site tied a different social justice corporate stance from the school's charism each year. Themes included issues of access to clean water, immigration, human trafficking, and mistreatment of women and children. Luke's school site recently created various task forces that tackled various issues of social justice as well. The task forces were environmental justice, mental health justice, and equity and social justice.

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Josephine's school site incorporated a cross-curricular social justice project that was required of each student. A new forthcoming addition to this project required students to include their own family background and history to provide students an opportunity to share their family stories.

When asked about the school's service-learning programs, these leaders' school sites not only included the basic hour requirements as most schools, but also additional elements. Agnes shared the entire school community spent the whole day on Holy Thursday in a service activity. In describing his own service-learning program, Luke stated, "I would hesitate to call it a service-learning program because that implies something a little more robust" and then went on to share his plans to further bolster the program. Luke was working to change the program to focus less on an hourly requirement and, instead, shift students to consider the overall impact they are making on a given organization. The service-learning program at Josephine's school site worked in conjunction with the school's scholarship program. The service in which the students partook was aligned to the students' desired career paths. Josephine shared this was important because it helped students share their individual talents and passions with the greater community.

Stewardship

Each of these school leaders responded differently to questions surrounding stewardship and have different methods in which they managed school finances. Still, they were each unique and responsible stewards of the school's funds. To ensure the budget was directed primarily toward student achievement, Josephine required the highest percentage of funds to be used on student curricular and cocurricular programming. When considering how decisions were made about his school budget, Luke always considered direction, alignment, and commitment and made sure every decision was made clearly in the direction of the mission of the school. Agnes required an annual audit by an outside firm and changed firms every six to seven years. This

audit was able to highlight where funds are spent. Kathleen shared 80% of the budget was directed toward student achievement. When asked why she went through an annual audit when it was not required, she stated, "To have credibility with our constituents, I think transparency is critical especially in a time where there is so much fraud. Every penny we receive goes into giving girls a quality Catholic education."

Community Involvement

Each of these leaders mentioned a lack of time when they discussed community involvement. Agnes was an active parishioner and very involved in her religious community and furthering their social justice efforts through corporate standards. Luke was part of the Los Angeles coalition of antiracist schools. Josephine was an active parish member; however, she wished to be more active in her community, but had young children—which made it very difficult to do much community work beyond her role as a principal.

When asked about some of the immediate and long-term needs of their school sites, each of these leaders were knowledgeable of their communities. Agnes provided context and anecdotal stories of undocumented families and students who needed support through scholarship and financial assistance. Luke mentioned an immediate need for cultural competency in his own school site, and the need for an antiracist institution as a resource for schools in his community at large. Josephine shared her school site needs more funding to keep the school affordable for her current students and to expand the school's reach to other student groups in her community.

Challenges and Successes

Each of these leaders responded differently when asked about challenges they faced. Luke shared a story in which a school he worked very hard to keep open ultimately closed. In the

conversation, he said, "Our hope is dependent upon our honest assessment of reality so that we can move forward." His biggest challenge and concern for Catholic education was Catholic education lacks creative problem-solving. He provided the example of the COVID-19 pandemic and the disappointment he felt in the missed opportunity for conversation among all Catholic education constituents:

> From the financial situations that our schools are in, to conversations from the Archbishop about statues of Junipero Serra, there are so many missed opportunities for us to become more Catholic, more faithful, the Catholic social teaching, more faithful to the teachings of the Universal Church rather than the really narrow teaching authority of just American bishops.

Josephine also shared the struggle she faced in light of the COVID-19 pandemic: the extreme fluidity of information, and having to shift despite great uncertainty and without formal training. Agnes's major challenges included enrollment and its impact on the budget, hiring and firing faculty and staff, and facing the messiness of lawsuits.

These leaders also varied in their responses to their individual successes. Josephine shared her joy in creating a positive work environment built on support and trust in the community. She was proud of building the capacity of her team because she was able to see the gifts of each individual and allowed them to lead based on those gifts: "I think that is a comfort for our teachers, just knowing that it's not like an evaluative type of relationship. It's more of a supportive relationship." Agnes also shared she was able to develop a strong school climate and morale among students and teachers that consequently brings "cohesiveness" to the school community. She also shared the school's mission and values are strong in the community. Luke's

successes revolved less around programs or other measurable markers. Instead, Luke stated his success was in his ability to say the truth every time he talked to his constituents:

> The reality is, I think the best leaders are the ones who, well, sometimes, have the answer, but will oftentimes demonstrate their ability to rely on others and to think, allow others and not just allow, but actively encourage others to help them think better to poke holes in their arguments, to consult, to listen, before making decisions that affect a lot of people. So, in some ways, I think my biggest successes have to do with less with starting this great new program, and more to do with sort of learning from my mistakes and learning to truly trust others. And that is when students are going to get the benefit of your leadership, right?

Overview of Justice-Oriented Leaders

These school leaders were in very different school contexts; however, these three leaders shared their perceived higher understanding and desire to lead for social justice and their perceived high self-efficacy to enact social justice in their respective school sites. Luke was candid and honest in naming the problem with Catholic secondary school leadership in regard to social justice:

> Catholic schools in particular can be very navel-gazing institutions. And it's only to our detriment. The more Catholic schools can understand alternative business models, the more they can understand approaches to customer engagement, the more they can understand equity and inclusion work and sustainability practices from the other industries that have nothing to do with education, the more intellectual resources we'll be able to bring to our challenges in Catholic education.

As a result of noticing this issue, Luke met regularly with leaders from various institutions in education and beyond to continue learning best practices to improve his school site. Immediate changes in his school site following these meetings were an update to the curriculum to highlight Black, Indigenous, People of Color, or BIPOC voices, an update and revision to school policies to remove body shaming or natural hairstyles, and a critical evaluation of recruitment, hiring, and onboarding of faculty and staff. Agnes's primary social justice focus continued to be the retention of students who cannot otherwise afford Catholic school tuition, especially undocumented students and students whose parents were furloughed during the pandemic. She stated,

> It's better to have somebody in the seat paying half tuition than the seats sitting empty. And so, our board has been extending whatever financial aid you need and if we have to go into our reserves or whatever, we'll have to do that. But we really want the students to stay here.

Agnes had a conversation with every family who wished to pull their student due to financial restraint and found a way to work with each family. Josephine faced a great deal of financial strife at her school site with 97% of students on financial aid and an increasing amount of need. Still, Josephine found meaningful ways to build community among all constituents and a culture of accountability, commitment, and action. Additionally, she remained a hopeful leader who was committed to the improvement of her school site:

> I love my school. I love my school community. I know that my heart is where it needs to be. I know I'm in the right place and I know the school needs a leader like me. A part of that reason is not being scared of all the challenges that are here. Just my loyalty—not only to this community, but for Catholic education.

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Josephine's hope and belief in herself as president and principal and her commitment to her school and Catholic education empowered her and encouraged her to stay despite many challenges and obstacles she faced in her role.

Conclusion

School leaders' impact on social justice coupled with their perceived self-efficacy to enact social justice affects the way they lead for social justice. Personally responsible leaders are those leaders whose impact on social justice efforts are lower than their perceived self-efficacy to enact social justice. When a school leader's perceived impact on social justice efforts is higher than their perceived self-efficacy to enact social justice, the leader is a participatory leader. Those leaders whose perceived impact on social justice efforts match their perceived self-efficacy to enact social justice are justice-oriented leaders. At first glance Agnes, Josephine, and Luke seemed to be very different leaders in very different contexts. Their shared positive self-efficacy, attitude, and hopeful optimism toward social justice, coupled with their favorable actions toward achieving social justice demonstrated that justice-oriented leaders can exist along a continuum, rather than a single point.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Catholic secondary schools currently face challenges in leadership. Catholic secondary school leaders are inadequately prepared in leading Catholic schools toward the mission and commitment of social justice (Belmonte & Cranston, 2009; Boyle et al., 2016; Morten & Lawler, 2016). Catholic secondary schools also struggle with recruiting and retaining school leaders (Grace, 2016). Furthermore, Catholic secondary schools operate on a financial model that requires tuition from families who cannot afford the cost of schooling (Caruso, 2012; Grace, 2016; Walch, 2016). To support Catholic secondary school leaders in their commitment to social justice, an understanding of these school leaders' perception and orientation of social justice as well as a critical assessment of how they practice social justice in their school site were necessary. Understanding these school leaders' challenges and successes and how they ultimately impact the way the leader leads were also crucial. This study, then, sought to answer the following questions:

1. How does a school leader's perception of social justice impact their praxis of social justice at their school site?

2. What are the successes and challenges associated with the praxis of social justice?

To highlight the narrative and voices of school leaders within their context, I collected data through a qualitative, multiple case study research method (Patten & Newhart, 2018). I collected in-depth, detailed descriptions through semistructured interviews and document analysis. I analyzed the data by using inductive reasoning to determine general themes (Creswell, 2014). The data were triangulated to ensure consistency, reliability, and validity (Leavy, 2017; Mills &

Gay, 2019; Patten & Newhart, 2018). Participants included nine different Catholic secondary school leaders from a single local Catholic archdiocese (see Table 2 on p. 59).

This chapter continues with a discussion of findings, suggestions for future research, theoretical and practical implications, and concludes with recommendations for different constituents.

Discussion of Findings

Findings revealed a Catholic secondary school leader's disposition directly affects their social justice orientation. Researchers have shown educational leaders for social justice possess a disposition toward social justice (DeMatthews, 2016; Flood, 2019; Jean-Marie, 2008; Lewis, 2016; Theoharis, 2007; Wasonga, 2009). Social justice leaders take action in their advocacy of historically and currently marginalized groups, including but not limited to: (a) race, (b) class, (c) gender, (d) disability, or (e) sexual orientation (Theoharis, 2007). Social justice leaders also understand social issues within the complexity of oppression (Jean-Marie, 2008; Theoharis, 2007). It is only through this profound awareness and understanding that social justice leaders can clearly articulate the needs of their school sites and communities. I characterized the participants into three performative identities based on their impact on social justice efforts and their ability to enact change for social justice. Westheimer and Kahne (2004a) found that personally responsible citizens are those who act responsibly within their community through small acts such as recycling, picking up litter, or contributing to food pantries. Participatory citizens are those individuals who actively participate in the community by volunteering within the community. Justice-oriented citizens are people who deeply understand the complex issues and needs surrounding a community and work to solve the root cause.

In a similar way, this study found leaders of the study could be categorized into Westheimer and Kahne's (2004a) performative identities based on their impact on social justice efforts and their self-efficacy regarding achieving social justice. The personally responsible leader's foundation for social justice is rooted in personal experience, personal faith, and a desire to develop their personal relationship with God, rather than a deep understanding of their constituents or the context of their community. These leaders aimed their lives at Christ, hopeful for their relationship and their students' relationships with God. The participatory leaders are aware of the needs of their community and strive in the work toward social justice for their students; however, they possess a lower self-efficacy to enact social justice in a consistent or sustainable way. This low self-efficacy comes from challenges and obstacles faced when working towards moving social justice efforts forward at their school site. The justice-oriented leaders deeply understand their community, the community's needs, and work toward meeting those needs. They are keenly aware of individuals within their school site and community who are poor and vulnerable, and seek to serve them with dignity. Justice-oriented leaders do meet obstacles and challenges in their work; however, they are persistent in their impacts toward social justice.

Findings revealed a Catholic secondary school leaders' social justice orientation directly affected the way they lead for social justice at their school sites. The personally responsible leader, participatory leader, and justice-oriented leader all take varying degrees of actions toward bringing social justice to their school site. The personally responsible leaders of this study demonstrated a lack of understanding of issues of social justice at their school sites and did not present plans in achieving or seeking social justice in a meaningful, sustainable, and research based way. Because these leaders did not have a disposition towards social justice, they were not

making efforts towards integrating social justice in their own leadership practices. Both the personally responsible leaders did not speak of the poor, vulnerable, and marginalized that they encountered in dignified ways. The participatory leaders of this study acknowledged and understood problems of social justice in their school sites; however, they also expressed great frustration in obstacles preventing them from acting for social justice and reacting to issues of social justice. They were not able to plan and build on their social justice values. They lacked the vision necessary (Belmonte & Cranston, 2009) to change a school culture to move towards social justice. The justice-oriented leaders have a profound understanding of the social justice issues and deeply value social justice as leaders. Therefore, these leaders prioritized their efforts in leading for social justice and integrated it into their planning and action. It is through thoughtful and intentional planning that justice-oriented leaders are able to ensure that systems of injustice do not exist within their school sites or communities.

Findings revealed a Catholic secondary school leader affects the school site as a whole. These findings coincided with research that school leadership is essential in determining a school's participation and action in social justice (Belmonte & Cranston, 2009; Boyle et al., 2016; DeMatthews, 2018; Lambert et al., 2016; Northouse, 2019). Each of these leaders' social justice orientations directly impacted the social justice work at the school site. Personally responsible leaders demonstrated minimal support for social justice in the curriculum and extracurricular programming, and heavily rely on the theology curriculum, the Archdiocese, or religious sponsor for guidance and content. These leaders' involvement with their community was similar to those of the elite: their participation in social networks was not to understand the needs of their community, but rather to access resources and power within a group of like-minded people (Khan, 2012, 2016). Plans to integrate social justice further into the work of the

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school, or intentions to further understand their community were basic or nonexistent. The participatory leaders also demonstrated minimal support for social justice in the curriculum and extracurricular programming and their impact in this area was low; however, these leaders were planning for or were earnestly starting integration of social justice in a meaningful way into their school sites for students as well as faculty and staff. The justice-oriented leaders integrated social justice into their school sites in traditional and creative ways. The actions toward social justice were apparent in the curriculum, extracurricular programming, the responsible stewardship of the school's finances, and the overall culture of the school.

Findings revealed Catholic secondary school leaders encountered challenges and successes when trying to lead for social justice; however, there was no clear connection between social justice orientation and type of challenge or success. The challenges and successes of the leaders were presented collectively. As expected, the effects of COVID-19 were at the forefront of the participants' minds as they attempted to navigate the fluid information around the reopening of schools. Participants revealed feelings of inadequate preparation for their leadership roles. One participant expressed frustrations in not having formal training in leadership— especially social justice leadership. Another participant shared that she must lead in various roles in which she had no formal training or experience. Many leaders also were in current struggles or mentioned past struggles of fostering a relationship of trust with faculty and staff. Some leaders' ability and capacity to lead successfully were challenged by their faculty and staff. Other administrative challenges included dips in enrollment, hiring and firing faculty and staff, facing lawsuits, and even closing schools. Another notable challenge two leaders mentioned involved spiritual battles as well as struggling with the decision to lead with personal beliefs versus the decision to lead as a representative leader of the Church and school.

Successes of social justice leaders also varied. Leaders shared hearing stories of success from their students and alumni as well as past and current faculty and staff brought moments of joy that encouraged them to continue past the challenges. Some leaders also considered building leadership capacities of their teams as a success. Participants shared the following administrative successes: (a) increased enrollment, (b) hiring and firing the right faculty and staff, (c) consolidation of roles among faculty and staff, (d) facility updates, and (e) successful fundraising. Other important successes that contributed to the work of social justice included improving relationships with community partners, creating positive work environment, developing strong school climate and morale for the entire school community, strengthening the mission and value of the school, and being able to tell the truth as a leader.

Finally, findings revealed social justice orientation existed on a continuum rather than a finite point. Justice orientation is determined at the intersection of impact on social justice efforts and self-efficacy regarding achieving social justice; the impact on social justice movements must match the self-efficacy to enact or lead for social justice. A Catholic secondary school leader cannot have a significant impact toward social justice if they have a perceived low self-efficacy to enact the social justice (i.e., they are consistently overwhelmed with obstacles or do not have decision-making power). They will not align on the justice-orientation continuum. If a leader possesses a perceived high ability to enact social justice (i.e., they are the president of a school site or organization or are in a clear position to act for social justice), but simply does not impact the work for social justice, then they, too, will not align on the justice orientation continuum. The disposition toward social justice is instrumental in driving impact for social justice. The actual impact of their efforts must match the level of the self-efficacy in working toward social justice to align on the justice-orientation continuum. Leaders must continue to critically assess their own

disposition, actions, and impact toward social justice to remain on the justice orientation continuum.

Personally responsible leaders are strong in their personal faith and individual relationship with God; however, they fail in their commitment to serving the poor, the vulnerable, the marginalized, and "the weakest", as directed by The Congregation for Catholic Education (1977). Their individualized faith practice is separated from the universal Catholic Church that works towards rooting out unjust practices and structures; it is disconnected from the tenants of Catholic social teaching that emphasize the common good, solidarity, and subsidiarity. The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education emphasizes that Catholic school leaders must be active members in culture and society; however, these leaders are part of local organizations for networking purposes only. Personally responsible leaders lack in their commitment to their communities or understanding their constituents on a deep level. Perhaps what was most concerning about this group of leaders was the absence of critical self-reflection to determine what was the greatest need and who was of the greatest need (Paul VI, 1965). Schools have major implications on their individual school sites, the local communities, and society at large (Grace, 2016), yet the individualism exuded by personally responsible leaders signals a blaring concern for the future of Catholic schools and all individuals and communities they impact. Catholic secondary school leaders must commit and continually re-commit themselves to the social justice mission of Catholic secondary schools so that these schools can continue to serve the poor and the vulnerable for generations to come. The continuation of this Catholic social justice mission and tradition can only continue, however, if all Catholic secondary school leaders strive to becoming justice-oriented leaders—leaders who work proactively to preserve human

dignity, who work in solidarity with the poor for the common good, who dismantle unjust structures of privilege and power, and who create and maintain justice.

Implications and Recommendations

The findings from this research have implications for social justice leadership development in dioceses, school networks, school leadership preparation programs, and for current school administrators and leaders. These findings revealed the disposition of a school leader ultimately affects the social justice outcomes of a school site. Therefore, diocesan leaders and leaders of school networks, school leadership preparation programs, and current school leaders may find the results of this study helpful in work toward social justice. This section will explore the implications for various groups and will be immediately followed by recommendations.

Diocesan and School Network Leaders

While it is inevitable the environment of Catholic schools continually changes and evolves, it does not change the historical mission of Catholic schools to serve the vulnerable and the marginalized. Catholic school dioceses and leaders of Catholic school networks must be explicit about the commitment to social justice and the expectation of the schools' commitment to social justice. I recommend this commitment be framed and grounded in the tenants of Catholic social teaching. The school diocese and school network leadership should require schools to set key performance indicators for social justice work within the school's strategic plan, which signals to all constituents social justice is a crucial and integral part of the Catholic school experience.

Catholic secondary school leaders are often unprepared to lead for social justice and already face a myriad of challenges that include and go beyond financial, managerial, and

academic responsibilities. If possible, Catholic secondary schools should hire full-time social justice directors who would oversee the schools' practices of equity and social justice that would include, but not be limited to, the oversight of responsible stewardship of funds, integration of social justice in curriculum and extracurricular programming, the school's community involvement, an on-going assessment of the needs of the school community, and professional development for social justice for faculty and staff. If it is not feasible to hire a full-time social justice director, dioceses and Catholic school networks should instead require a social justice committee that is representative of all constituents of a school site: students, administration, faculty, staff, parents, and community leaders. This committee would meet quarterly to engage in critical dialogue about the schools' needs and to set social justice outcome goals. The duration of membership of this committee should not be unlimited, but rather for a finite number of years as decided by the committee.

Many dioceses and Catholic school networks provide leadership retreats and experiences for school leaders. These retreats should integrate a social justice component in which leaders honestly and critically reflect on their own social justice dispositions. During these retreats, leaders should also discuss their best practices in leading for social justice and areas of opportunity to learn from each other. These moments of conversation should consider the current environment and climate of each school's community. Leaders should leave retreats prepared with determined milestones to lead their school in social justice.

School Leadership Preparation Programs

There is an urgent necessity for adequate leadership preparation programs, especially for Catholic secondary school leaders. Leaders should be required to take a history of social justice in education course to learn from successes and failures of past leaders. Additionally, social

justice should be woven into all facets of school leadership training. A social justice framework needs to be integrated in all decisions. Therefore, school leaders need to be prepared in the following areas with an integration of social justice: (a) delivering an articulate and clear vision, mission, and direction of the school; (b) being responsible stewards in fiscal management; (c) making personnel decisions; (d) surveying the community's needs and desires; (e) providing academic and extracurricular guidance; and (f) providing admission guidance.

This research indicated the leader's disposition toward social justice is pivotal in all decisions and a school leader needs to be engaged in the greater community to understand the needs of all constituents. The findings of the study, however, indicated leaders are unprepared in time management, having difficult conversations, and engaging their community. School leadership preparation programs should offer courses and experiences in which future school leaders engage in critical dialogue with other leaders from various industries to solve a social justice problem within the community. This dialogue would foster critical thinking and provide a realistic, hands-on experience in which the leader must weigh and consider how their decisions affect others. This experience would also provide hands-on experience in acting as an outward facing, social justice ambassador for the school.

Current School Leaders

The research findings revealed Catholic secondary school leaders juggle various responsibilities, have immense time constraints, feel unprepared, and must constantly manage unpredictability. These circumstances leave little to no time for thoughtful planning toward social justice or meaningful reflection on personal social justice disposition and action. A leader's personal understanding and honest assessment of their social justice disposition and action is the only way to increase both areas toward social justice. Therefore, it is recommended

current school leaders conduct a semesterly, personal social justice audit. The audit considers the disposition and action of the leader in the following areas: vision, mission, and direction; social justice integration into curriculum and extracurricular activities; community involvement; responsible stewardship of fiscal management; and prioritization of goals (see Appendix D).

Future Research

This study revealed the importance of the disposition of Catholic secondary school leaders toward social justice in determining social justice actions that affect school sites. This section offers recommendations for future studies.

This study included nine leaders from nine different schools in one diocese. Future studies should consider including additional participants in leadership roles from the school site beyond the president or principal. Additional participants could help demonstrate how multiple leaders from a single school site collectively affect social justice outcomes of a school. Future studies should also consider including schools from different regions to understand how varying community needs may affect the way a school leader leads for social justice.

This study did not gather educational or training information from participants. Future studies should consider where the school leader received their school leadership preparation and training, if any, and discover whether or not social justice values were integrated. It would be beneficial to discover how leaders who received social justice training versus those leaders who did not receive social justice training differ in school outcomes. Comparing these two groups would reveal areas of opportunity for additional education for school leaders.

This study examined Catholic secondary school leadership; however, the educational realm spans far beyond Catholic secondary schools. Future studies should consider repeating this study across all school types (i.e., Catholic, private, public, independent) and levels (e.g.,

preschools and daycares, elementary schools, online schools, vocational schools, community colleges, universities, and extension programs). Understanding all school leaders' disposition toward social justice is pivotal in determining what further work and training needs to be done to adequately serve the most vulnerable and marginalized communities.

Conclusion

This study aimed to discover how school leaders dispositions toward social justice impacted their social justice praxis at their school sites. It also sought to understand the challenges and successes associated with the praxis of social justice. The findings of this research suggest justice orientation and, therefore, social justice outcomes of a school site are dependent on two factors: (a) a leader's impact on social justice efforts and (b) their self-efficacy to enact that justice. Additionally, the findings of this research suggest justice orientation exists on a continuum that requires leaders to continually educate and re-educate themselves, evolve and transform. The findings of this research hold implications for dioceses and school networks, school leadership preparation programs, as well as school leaders themselves. Catholic secondary schools must stay committed to the historical justice mission of educating the vulnerable and marginalized even as the educational landscape shifts and changes. This social justice commitment can only be improved and sustained with continuous, critical reflection and assessment of the Catholic secondary school leaders' disposition, impact, and self-efficacy to enact social justice. It is only from this honest assessment that Catholic schools can provide hope in continuing its social justice mission.

APPENDIX A

Participant Recruitment Letter

Date:

Dear Participant,

My name is Linda Nguyen and I am a doctoral student at Loyola Marymount University's Educational Leadership for Social Justice Program. I kindly request your participation in a research study that I am conducting titled Social Justice Leadership in Catholic Secondary Schools: A Critical Examination of Perception and Praxis.

You have been selected to participate in this study due to your experiences as a Catholic secondary school leader. Your participation in this study will contribute insight to those seeking to understand what impacts Catholic secondary school leadership for social justice.

The aim of this study is to understand what leaders of secondary Catholic schools perceive as social justice, and how those perceptions of social justice affect the praxis of social justice in their secondary Catholic school sites. This study will also explore how successes and challenges affect social justice leadership. The following research questions are posed to explore this phenomenon:

1. How does a school leader's perception of social justice impact their praxis of social justice at their school site?

2. What are the successes and challenges associated with the praxis of social justice?

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may withdraw from the study at any time. Your name, title, and demographic information will be requested; however, your name will never be used in any public dissemination.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact my dissertation committee chair, Dr. Lauren Casella by phone at (310) 338-7862 or by email at lauren.casella@lmu.edu. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a subject in this study, you may contact the IRB Compliance Office at Loyola Marymount University.

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this study.

Gratefully,
Linda Nguyen

Interview Protocol

Catholic Secondary School Leader Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

Interviewee Name:

Interviewee Title:

Interviewee school site:

Date:

Time Start:

Time End:

Other Notes:

The following questions will frame the semi-structured interview.

General

1. Please tell me about your experience and role as a leader at the school.
    a. What is a typical day in your role look like?

2. In your own words, please tell me what you believe is the mission of all Catholic secondary schools.

3. What is the mission of your specific school site?

4. Please describe the culture of the community at your school.
    a. Amongst students with students
    b. Amongst students with teachers
    c. Amongst teachers with teachers
    d. Amongst students with administration
    e. Amongst teachers with administration

Social Justice Praxis

5. Please describe how social justice appears in the curriculum. (SJ in curriculum)

6. Tell me about your teachers and their practices of cultural sensitivity to the students. (SJ in curriculum)

7. How do you address issues of social injustice, race, and socioeconomic status? Do you address ICE raids or police brutality? (SJ in curriculum)

8. Please tell me about the service-learning program at the school. (SJ in service learning and extracurricular activities)

9. Please describe your student leadership development program. What are some of the values and skills that are taught to students? (SJ in service learning and extracurricular activities)

10. Tell me about some of your work beyond the school walls. (Integration in the community).

11. Can you describe some of the long-term and immediate needs of the community? (Integration in the community)

12. Who is included in planning and determining allocation of the school's budget? (Financial accountability)

13. How much of the school's budget is shared with stakeholders? How often is the school's budget is shared with stakeholders? (Financial accountability)

14. How do you ensure that the school's budget is directed primarily towards student achievement? (Financial accountability)

15. Please name and describe some of your most important personal values and beliefs (disposition)

16. Tell me about how you reflect on your work. How and when does reflection happen? What form does it take? (disposition)

17. What are your thoughts on integrating social justice into your work as a school leader? (disposition)

18. Can you describe and explain some obstacles or challenges you have faced as a school leader?

19. Tell me about some of the successes of your work as a school leader.

20. To help me fully capture your experience as a Catholic secondary school leader, is there anything else you would like to share that you feel is important?

APPENDIX C

Document Analysis Protocol

Document Name:

Associated School Site:

Retrieved from:

Date Accessed:

Step	Researcher's Notes
1. Superficial examination – a skimmed reading	
2. Thorough examination – a more detailed reading	
3. Interpretation – content and thematic analysis	

Catholic Secondary School Leadership Personal Social Justice Audit

Catholic Secondary School Leadership Personal Social Justice Audit		
Name: Date:		
This is the mission statement of my school site:		
This is the vision for the school in the next semester:		
Rate how much you agree with each statement below on a scale from 1 to 5. 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = neutral; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree		
Statement	**Rate**	**Reflection**
Social justice values are taught in the curriculum.	1 2 3 4 5	
Social justice values are taught in extra-curricular programming and activities.	1 2 3 4 5	
The faculty and staff demonstrate cultural sensitivity to students.	1 2 3 4 5	
The school community has addressed and discussed current issues of social injustice, race, and socioeconomic status.	1 2 3 4 5	

I understand the long-term needs of the school community.	1	2	3	4	5
I understand the short-term needs of the school community.	1	2	3	4	5
I understand the long-term needs of the community in which the school resides.	1	2	3	4	5
I understand the short-term needs of the community in which the school resides.	1	2	3	4	5
I have engaged in activities with the community in which the school resides.	1	2	3	4	5
I have included different constituents from the school community to plan the budget.	1	2	3	4	5
The budget is primarily directed towards student achievement.	1	2	3	4	5
The budget is shared with stakeholders.	1	2	3	4	5
I have taken time to reflect on my work throughout the semester.	1	2	3	4	5
I have calendared time in the next semester to reflect on my work.	1	2	3	4	5

My top three priorities for the next semester are:
 	
   1.
   2.
   3.

I will integrate social justice into the direction of the school this coming semester in the following ways:
 	
   1.
   2.
   3.

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