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A Cord of Many Strands: A Case Study of Inclusive Practice within the Archdiocese of Los Angeles

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By

Patrick James Allison

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to: my brothers, Christopher and Matthew, who have lived the journey of disability in education and in life; to my parents, who have loved beyond measure; to my wife who I love beyond words, and to my sons, who I trust to God to be continually inspired with the flame of the Holy Spirit.

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ABSTRACT

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The foundational philosophy of Catholic schools impels them toward inclusive practice. Scholars have repeatedly established that a moral mandate exists in Catholic Social Teaching for Catholic schools to include all students. However, students with disabilities have traditionally been excluded from Catholic school settings due perceived resource constraints, lack of practitioner skill, and the disposition that students with disabilities are better served in public schools. Many Catholic schools have made tremendous progress in inclusive practice, and stand at the forefront of this work, but these efforts have not been replicated at scale.

The purpose of this study was to explore how communities of practice support inclusion in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. A convergent mixed methods approach to social network analysis was used to describe the state of inclusive practice in Catholic schools and the relationships that facilitate diffusion of information and resources across these organizations. The findings of this study indicated that Catholic educators strongly support inclusion and associate it with the mission of Catholic education but lack capacity in their knowledge and resources to create inclusive environments, despite the presence of skilled teachers and other internal resources. The study found that Catholic schools are resourceful and build effective partnerships with parents, students, and outside organizations to support students with disabilities, but that networks across school sites are fragmented.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The mission of Catholic schools is ennobled by their call to be a place of formation not only of individuals but of communities on the path to realizing the transcendent purpose of human life. Catholic schools are intended to be centers of dialogue, cultural transmission, personal formation, and advocacy for justice. The clear identity of these schools found in their Catholic character is a gift and a challenge. Perhaps the most visible example of this duality that exists in the United States is the ongoing movement toward inclusion of students with disabilities (SWDs) in Catholic schools. Catholic schools have a resounding moral mandate to welcome and serve all people yet face tremendous institutional challenges in fulfilling this call. It is tempting for Catholic schools to point to these challenges as overwhelming, and direct students with disabilities elsewhere. However, the mission of Catholic schools requires leaders of these institutions to bear faith that "[i]n the pluralistic society of today, the Catholic school, moreover, by maintaining an institutional Christian presence in academic world, proclaims by its very existence the enriching power of the faith as the answer to the enormous problems which afflict mankind" (The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977, para. 62). The call to inclusion is not optional, it is written in the fabric of Catholic school identity. It is in this identity, and the community that works to live it, that Catholic schools can make a true contribution to justice in our world. The Sacred Congregation of Catholic Education perhaps stated it best:

> Today especially one sees a world which clamours for solidarity and yet experiences the rise of new forms of individualism. Society can take note from the Catholic school that it is possible to create true communities out of a common effort for the common good. (para. 62).

This study explored the interrelated nature of a sample of Catholic schools from within the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. The researcher sought to create a profile of the community of educators and leaders that exists across these schools to provide a clear picture of how information and resources flow through this living organization. In doing so, the researcher hoped to illuminate the network of Catholic educators as they work to support SWDs in their contexts, identify hidden resources that support these efforts, and ultimately support a process of continuing organizational improvement to live out this mission. This chapter will provide an introduction and overview to the study, the history and legislation concerning students with disabilities, and the context of Catholic schools for these students. Next, the chapter will introduce a statement of the problem of practice being addressed and the purpose and significance of the present research. The chapter will also provide a brief introduction to the theoretical framework and methodology to be used in this study, along with a description of limitations. Finally, the chapter will conclude with a discussion of key terms before introducing the subject of the next chapter.

History and Legislation Concerning Students with Disabilities

In their review of literature concerning the history of special education in the United States, Spaulding and Pratt (2015) noted that the treatment of persons with disabilities is dependent on broader cultural factors. The authors observed that most discussion of special education history begins with reforms in the mid-twentieth century leading up to the institution of federal legislation that guaranteed the right to a free and appropriate education for all children. They further note that a historical perspective indicates consistent themes and patterns in reform efforts marked by periods of advances and regression. Reform efforts prior to the mid-twentieth

century were marked by social and cultural movements and the development of institutional supports for persons with disabilities, as well as shifts in perceptions regarding the nature of disability. Notably, these early reform efforts lacked the force of legislative action and the language of education as a right, as opposed to a service to social needs (Spaulding & Pratt, 2015).

The case *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) provided a legislative precedent upon which advocates for persons with disabilities were able to effectively campaign for meaningful changes in law (Spaulding & Pratt, 2015; LaNear & Frattura, 2007). In 1958 a series of federal laws were enacted that allocated federal funding for the training of special education teachers, but under these laws education of students with disabilities was still not considered as a right (LaNear & Frattura, 2007). Indeed, as LaNear and Frattura observe, rather than affirming the universal right to an education, early legislation concerning special education served as a force to create separate structures and labels for students with exceptional learning needs. In 1972 two federal district court cases, *Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children (PARC) v Pennsylvania* (1972) and *Mills v. District of Columbia Board of Education* (1972), were decided that applied legal reasoning found in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954). The outcomes of both these cases determined that students with disabilities must have access to public education, and that funding must be provided to support the learning needs of these students (LaNear & Frattura, 2007; Spaulding & Pratt, 2015). Both of these decisions influenced the development and content of future legislation, more specifically the *Education for All Handicapped Children Act* (EAHCA) (*Education for All Handicapped Children Act* [EAHCA], 1975) which would become the current legal framework known as the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*

(IDEA) (*Individuals with Disabilities Education* Act [IDEA], 1997; LaNear & Frattura, 2007; Spaulding & Pratt, 2015).

Another, broader, legal framework involved in providing support for students with disabilities was developed in parallel to IDEA (1997), Section 504 of *The Rehabilitation Act* of 1973 (Section 504). Constructed as a single provision of the law, Section 504 (1973) required that persons with disabilities be protected from exclusion and discrimination within programs receiving federal funds on the basis of their disability (*Rehabilitation Act*, 1973). While IDEA (1997) and its progenitors in legislation establish requirements and boundaries of integration of students with disabilities specifically in public schools, Section 504 (1973) has much broader application. The law extended protections for persons with disabilities to any organization receiving federal funds, to include non-educational institutions as well as private schools (LaNear & Frattura, 2007; Scanlan, 2009; Zirkel, 2019). Further, this law established a broad definition of disability that includes any physiological or psychological impairment to life functions. This broad definition is far less limiting than the IDEA (1997) definition and application of the term disability, which both identifies specific forms of qualifying impairments and requires that these impairments inhibit performance in an educational setting (Scanlan, 2009). The second part of this framework rooted in Section 504 (1973) was established with the passing of the *Americans with Disabilities Act* (ADA) (*Americans with Disabilities Act* [ADA], 1990). The *Americans with Disabilities Act* (1990) broadened the application of the principles established in Section 504 (1973) by extending them to all private institutions, regardless of funding status (LaNear & Frattura, 2007). The ADA (1990) introduced the principle of requiring reasonable accommodation to support persons with disabilities in multiple settings, including

educational institutions (LaNear & Frattura, 2007; Zirkel, 2019). One notable exception to this application exists, namely for religious institutions, but the principle of providing reasonable accommodation has nevertheless guided inclusion efforts for most religious schools (ADA, 1990; LaNear & Frattura, 2007; Scanlan, 2017).

Legislative Requirements

Taken together, these two frameworks have merged into a legal foundation for policies and practices supporting the education of students with disabilities. Most importantly, the historical development of both legislation and the associated judicial interpretation of relevant law has cemented certain key principles into education policy. Specifically, the principles that (a) all persons have a right to a free and appropriate public education (FAPE), (b) persons with disabilities have a right to supports and accommodations to ensure their participation in FAPE, and (c) these accommodations and supports ensure participation in FAPE in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) possible (IDEA, 1997; LaNear & Frattura, 2007; Zirkel, 2019). These three principles provide the legal architecture at the federal level that guide current policy and practice for the integration of students with disabilities in public schools. Yet, these principles still remain open to interpretation and are limited in their direct influence on district level policies. Strassfeld (2019) noted that educational law exists within the context of a system of education federalism. This system creates a complex network of legal and funding structures that allow for substantial state level control over the implementation of education policy through state education agencies (SEAs) and local educational agencies (LEAs). Therefore, it should be noted that while federal laws including IDEA (1997), ADA (1990), and Section 504 of *The Rehabilitation Act* (1973) institute requirements on states to include and support students with disabilities, what the

execution of this law consists of has varied from state to state (Strassfeld, 2019). Therefore, the following description of requirements reflects the law as written at the federal level, though interpretation and practice of these requirements has varied with context.

Requirements for Public Schools

Federal law (IDEA, 1997; *Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act* [IDEIA], 2004) requires that public, P-12 educational institutions, as governed by their SEAs and LEAs, must identify and evaluate students who may be eligible for special education services within a reasonable amount of time from becoming aware of the potential need for said services (Zirkel, 2019). The evaluation process must examine all areas in which a student might be impacted by a potential disability. Parents may request an Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE) if they disagree with the results of the evaluation provided by the LEA (IDEA, 1997). In order for a student to be eligible for services under IDEA (1997) the student must meet the classification criteria for a disability category described in IDEA and demonstrate a resultant need for services, i.e., that disability must impact their ability to access FAPE (Zirkel, 2019). Once identified as eligible under IDEA, LEAs must provide services outlined in an individualized education program (IEP) developed in concert with educational professionals, teachers, and a student's parents/guardians (IDEA, 1997). Law establishes that schools must provide early and sufficient notice to parents that an IEP meeting is to be scheduled, and must include information about the purpose, location, and participants in this meeting (IDEA, 1997).

By law, IEPs are required to contain some basic categories of information. Schools are required to include a student's present levels of performance as indicated by assessment data. Annual goals must be included in an IEP and broken down into smaller, short-term objectives.

An assessment plan must be developed to determine whether the student is making progress toward achieving these goals. Any accommodations, modifications, or services being provided to the student must be noted in the student's IEP, as well as a statement concerning the student's level of participation in a general education environment. The IEP must also include information about a student's needs for transitioning out of school if applicable (IDEA, 1997). The IEP must be reviewed annually, with a triennial review that includes a full reevaluation of the student's disability status under IDEA (1997). In all cases, public schools are bound by law to provide the services described within a student's IEP (IDEA, 1997).

Requirements for Private Schools

Private schools, including religiously affiliated institutions, are not required to provide services for students with disabilities under IDEA (IDEA, 1997; LaNear & Frattura, 2007; Scanlan, 2009). Insofar as federal law requires that private schools include students with disabilities, Section 504 (1973) and the ADA (1990) are the applicable statutes (LaNear & Frattura, 2007; Scanlan, 2009). Under Section 504 (1973), schools are not required to create or support an IEP for students, nor must they modify the curriculum or environment that a student participates in. This means that private institutions are not required to change any portion of their educational programs or provide additional specialized personnel or services to support students with disabilities. Rather, schools are required to provide reasonable accommodation under the minor adjustment standard for students with identified disabilities to participate in the general curriculum and education environment. It should be noted that while private institutions not receiving federal funding are required by the ADA (1990) to provide minor adjustments, religious institutions not receiving federal funds are not. This excludes some Catholic schools

entirely from legal obligations to accommodate students with disabilities. However, insofar as a private school is required to provide services under Section 504 (1973), that school must provide services commensurate with its capacity to do so. This means that as a school's capacity to provide services grows, its obligation to accommodate learners with disabilities grows with it (Scanlan, 2009). It is important to note however, that these services and accommodations differ in scope and degree from those required of public schools under IDEA (1997).

While private institutions are not required to provide services to students with disabilities under IDEA (1997) nor do they receive funding to do so, IDEA (1997) does not prohibit LEAs from providing services to students with disabilities on private school campuses (Russo et al., 2002). The Supreme Court has ruled that the primary beneficiary of funds and services provided under IDEA (1997) are students, not institutions (Taylor, 2005). Therefore, it has been determined that so long as funds are not distributed to schools directly, students can receive services on site at religiously sponsored institutions, including Catholic schools (Taylor, 2005; Russo et al., 2002). However, while the court has determined that under IDEA (1997) students may receive publicly supplied services at a private institution, this has not been interpreted as a mandate for LEAs to do so. Thus, policy regarding services provided for students with disabilities under IDEA (1997) may vary from district to district (Taylor, 2005).

Catholic Schools and Students with Disabilities

Catholic Social Teaching and Inclusive Education

Catholic education is systemically grounded in a philosophy that affirms both the inherent dignity of each person and their inherently social nature (Curran, 2002). This anthropological stance is not an isolated dictum but permeates the aggregate body of ecclesial

teachings on social construction and relationships (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops [USCCB],1998; Curran, 2002). This collection of teachings found in papal, conciliar, and episcopal documents comprises Catholic Social Teaching (CST), which serves as both a philosophical basis for Catholic schools and de facto policy (Scanlan, 2008; Crowley & Wall, 2007; USCCB, 1998). Catholic Social Teaching describes education as a necessary and sacred work that is an inalienable right for all. According to CST, education fosters the growth of individuals to share in the common good of the societies in which they live (Paul VI, 1965a; The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977). Vallely (1998) as quoted in Scanlan (2008) states that the common good incorporates "a notion of integral human development…that no one should be excluded from the benefits of society" (p. 31). Accordingly, Catholic schools are compelled to consider not only the good of the individual, but interdependent, collective nature of the whole of human development toward improved states of existence. Thus, the mission of Catholic schools contains within it an imperative toward inclusivity (Scanlan, 2009).

As noted in previous sections, Catholic schools do not have a legal imperative to serve students with disabilities who would qualify for services in public schools under IDEA (1997) and have a limited obligation to provide accommodations for students with disabilities under Section 504 (1973). Regardless, Catholic schools have recognized the need and importance to include students with disabilities in their communities. In fact, the student population in Catholic schools was found to be composed of 7% students with identified learning disabilities (USCCB, 2002). Most efforts to include students with disabilities have been generated at the individual diocese and school level. Educators and leaders have worked to include and provide services for students with disabilities, despite receiving little to no financial support from public programs

intended to provide services for students with disabilities (DeFiore, 2006). According to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) (USCCB, 2002), out of the 7% of students in Catholic schools with a disability, only 1% receive services from public support systems under IDEA (1997). The challenges to Catholic schools' efforts to include students with disabilities are numerous and include financing, institutional knowledge, access to appropriate student supports, and an organizational culture that has resisted the notion that Catholic schools are equipped to, or ought to, serve those with exceptional learning needs (Boyle & Hernandez, 2016; Crowley & Wall, 2007; DeFiore, 2006; Scanlan, 2008; 2009; 2017). As a result of these challenges, progress toward inclusion of students with disabilities has been siloed, limited to schools with high levels of financial resources and staff capacity to self-initiate such efforts (Boyle & Bernards, 2017; Boyle & Hernandez, 2016; Paz, 2013).

An Ecology of Catholic Schools

While public policy informs the organizational structure of public school systems, Catholic schools share only analogous resemblance to these structures. An ecological metaphor is perhaps most appropriate for describing Catholic school organization. Broadly speaking, Catholic schools fall into three categories within the United States, with some exceptions and overlap existing for individual institutions. These categories are: (a) independent, (b) diocesan, and (c) parochial. Independent schools are those that are self-governing with respect to finance and operations. Some influence or association may be maintained between a religious order or diocese regarding matters pertaining to religious affiliation, religious instruction, or Catholic identity, but all other aspects of governance are retained by the institution. Diocesan schools are those that are governed by a diocese or archdiocese and lack an independent governing body.

Typically, these schools retain a large degree of financial and operational autonomy, but remain ultimately governed by an external organization viz., a diocese. Parochial schools are similar to diocesan schools in that they are governed by a diocese. What differentiates parochial schools from the other categories is their affiliation with a specific parish. In contrast to diocesan schools, which are administered solely by the principal of the school, parochial schools are administered by a parish priest as well. Typically, a principal is appointed by a parish priest, however, the priest retains full administrative authority in most cases.

Governance and structure of individual schools is diverse and consists of a multitude of frameworks and relationships that have been organically developed rather than directed by any one policy in particular. Local relationships between parishes, mergers between schools, and even philosophical approaches of different religious orders all influence the organization of Catholic schools. Dioceses are similarly influenced by local history, culture, and varying philosophical approaches to organizational and educational leadership. Canon law provides a broad framework for the governance of schools and provides the bishop of a diocese with extensive authority to direct the management of schools at his discretion.

In any case of reform there is a disruption to the embedded practices and social systems of organizations that must incorporate this reform into their lived reality (Neumerski & Cohen, 2019). In the case of providing supports for students with disabilities in Catholic schools, this is in part due to historically developed patterns have embedded as organizational language that create challenges to making social justice praxis a reality (Scanlan, 2008). Further complicating the translation of mission to practice is the governance structure of Catholic schools, which has been described as constituting a pattern, rather than a system (Buetow, 1985) and is in practice

highly decentralized. The principle of subsidiarity that is intended to empower local leadership to create solutions to local problems, also creates an environment wherein application of mission can vary widely (Boyle & Bernards, 2017; The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977; Scanlan, 2008; 2017;). Paradoxically, this system also creates conditions for expeditious and efficient change (Imperial, 2012). The integrated approach to service delivery for students with disabilities proposed by Boyle and Bernards (2017) suggests that Catholic schools must develop knowledge, skills, and dispositions at all levels of the Catholic school ecology, from the classroom to the national level. Boyle and Bernards (2017) have provided several pathways to develop these sets of knowledge, skills, and dispositions at each level, but to create and sustain such large scale support system requires both a deeper and broader understanding of what supports exist at all levels of the Catholic school ecology, and what networks exist nationally to develop and sustain changes in practice.

Problem Statement

It is well established that Catholic Social Teaching is at the heart of the mission of Catholic education and a necessary component of the Catholic faith itself (Carlson, 2014; Paul VI, 1965a; Scanlan 2008; 2017; The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977; USCCB, 1998). While Catholic schools are not legally bound to provide the least restrictive environment for students with disabilities under IDEA (1997), scholars have suggested they are bound in mission and moral mandate to go beyond legal requirements to become fully inclusive (Carlson, 2014; Carlson & LaBelle, 2019; Long & Schuttloffel, 2006; Scanlan, 2008; 2009, 2017). Despite many challenges, Catholic schools have demonstrated a commitment to serving the needs of students with disabilities, and some Catholic schools have made tremendous

progress in developing systems of support and inclusion for SWDs (Boyle & Hernandez, 2016; Paz, 2013; Ramirez, 1996; Scanlan, 2017). However, the challenges Catholic schools face in serving SWD populations remain significant, and little research exists to provide a complete picture of inclusion of students with disabilities within this paradigm. (Boyle & Bernards, 2017.; Crowley & Wall, 2007; DeFiore, 2006; Scanlan, 2017).

The organizational structure of Catholic schools contributes to the high variability observed in improvement across the spectrum of Catholic Schools (Boyle & Bernards, 2017; Scanlan, 2017). Boyle and Bernards (2017) have proposed an integrated framework to provide supports for students with disabilities in the Catholic school paradigm. This proposed framework requires the development of knowledge, skills, and dispositions across the ecology of Catholic schools, from the classroom to the national level. While some research has been conducted to explore the supports for students with disabilities present at the diocesan level, most studies on this topic have been focused on the school level. Further, variability in performance has been attributed to patterns of organizational learning at the school level (Scanlan, 2017). Boyle and Bernards (2017) identify the lack of systemic support systems as a contributor to developing siloed "pockets of innovation" (p.10) that are effective, but do not contribute to scaled application. To date, no studies have been conducted that explore how networks of formal and informal relationships support students with disabilities Catholic schools at the diocesan level or higher. This presents an even greater challenge to creating sustainable culture change needed for an integrated framework for inclusive service delivery to be successful (Bryk et al., 2017). In order to explore how an integrated approach to inclusion in Catholic schools could be successful,

it is necessary to explore the existing networks of support for including learners with disabilities at the diocesan level.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore the state of inclusive practice among a sample of Catholic schools from within the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. The researcher sought to describe the typical knowledge, skills, and dispositions of Catholic educators in the Archdiocese as well as to explore the exchange of these resources across networks of relationships. The goal of this was to provide a conceptual profile of inclusive practice among participants to support large scale improvement across the Catholic school paradigm.

Significance

This study may assist scholars and practitioners see the system as it is by providing insight into how our existing structures already support students with disabilities. If, as Boyle and Bernards (2017) suggest, an integrated approach is needed to advance progress in Catholic schools for the inclusion of students with disabilities, an understanding of present communities of practice that support inclusion within larger ecological structures of the system is needed. Further, to sustain the development of knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed for such large-scale culture change within a decentralized system, it is necessary to understand how the structure of this network affects the diffusion of knowledge, skills, and dispositions across the ecology. Secondly, this study may help to uncover hidden resources within and outside of school communities that practitioners are already using to support students with disabilities. This knowledge ultimately will assist leaders in locating resources and information and transmitting them across the network of Catholic schools. For scholars, this study provides rich data for future

analysis and comparison. For practitioners, this study provides essential empirical knowledge upon which to base future efforts to move toward a more integrated model of inclusion across Catholic schools.

Research Question

This study was guided by the following research question: What formal and informal relationships support the inclusion of learners with disabilities in a sample of schools from within the Archdiocese of Los Angeles?

Theoretical Framework

All forms of network theory examine relationships. Network theory explores connections between individual actors, which can be a person, an object, or a construct, depending on how the network is defined. It is the connection or lack thereof between at least two of these actors that defines the fundamental unit of analysis for all network theory. In contrast to purely constructivist or structuralist worldviews, network theory assumes a complex and interrelated reality that is both socially constructed and influenced by the structure of that reality. In short, network theory assumes that phenomena produced by networks are qualitatively different than what could be predicted by an evaluation of each actor within the network individually (Borgatti et al. 2013). This study was informed by portions of three strands of network theory: (a) social network theory (b) actor network theory, and (c) social ecological network theory. Unique elements of each of these theoretical strands have been extracted and integrated with shared elements of network theory into a framework that informed the design of this study.

From all theories, this study will seek to understand the system of supports for students with disabilities in terms of relationships. The type of relationship was understood primarily in

terms of social capital as operationalized by social network theory to mean information and resources present in a network (Borgatti et al., 2013; Daly, 2010). Analysis was guided by social network theory measures, primarily those of actor attributes and network position (Borgatti et al., 2013). From actor network theory, the researcher applied the concept of symmetry by discussing the role of non-social relationships, such as finances, policy, law, etc., as influencing network structure and outcomes (Fenwick & Edwards, 2010). The relationship between social and non-social elements in the network was conceptualized through a social-ecological lens, which aided in the description of networks in terms of a complex ecosystem appropriate to the pattern of Catholic school organization.

Method

This study followed a convergent mixed methods approach informed by social network analysis (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Daly, 2010). Mixed methods refers to the process of collecting, analyzing and integrating both quantitative and qualitative data (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). This is appropriate for social network analysis because of the inherently complex and interrelated nature of networks and the unique characteristics of network data (Nooraie et al., 2020). The convergent method has been used in cases when the topic under examination requires both a broad and rich description to be fully understood, as is the case with social network systems (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). For this study, the initial quantitative phase consisted of a survey intended to collect data concerning attributes of a typical Catholic educator and their relationships that support inclusion. The qualitative phase further explored the characteristics and role of Catholic educators to include their understanding of inclusion, self-efficacy in practice, and the systems of relationships that support inclusion in their context.

Positionality and Trustworthiness

I have approached this work from the perspective of a Catholic educator with both personal and professional experience working with persons with disabilities. My brothers both have disabilities, one is autistic, and the other was identified as having multiple processing disorders and epilepsy. I experienced the dual system of education through my experiences growing up with them. The language of IDEA (1997), of regional centers, and of disability was native to my home. My brothers and I were all segregated from the general education population. They were placed in special day and resource classes, and I was placed in a program for Gifted and Talented (GATE) students. We all went to different schools spread across the city; my mother at one point drove to four different schools all in one day. Though labelled as "gifted" I was not without my own educational struggles. In middle school, I began to fail my classes and eventually withdrew from school entirely. I never attended a traditional high school, rather, I completed two years of independent study with concurrent enrollment in a community college before taking the California High School Proficiency Exam at age 15 and enrolling in college full time.

I came to the Catholic faith through Catholic higher education. My experience of education while at a Catholic university changed entirely. I was drawn by the concept of education as a process of formation toward fulfillment rather than a mechanism solely dedicated to the development of skills for a job market. My practice as a Catholic educator has been informed by my personal experiences, my faith, and my philosophy of education that has been informed by Catholic teaching. Because of my personal experience with disability, education, and my Catholic faith, researcher bias impacted the entire course of this study. While this bias

cannot be eliminated, the researcher took steps to ensure that this bias was recognized as an interpretive lens and accounted for in the research process. In recognition of my privileged place as a researcher and practitioner within Catholic schools, I relied on reflective journaling and the use of analytic memoranda to help me identify the impact of this bias on the study. Additionally, all interview transcripts were member checked to ensure that participant voices were represented in the manner participants intended. The deductive coding scheme was selected as an initial framework in which to categorize findings in a manner that would align with the analysis of quantitative data. However, to multiple passes of inductive coding paired with detailed analytic memoranda helped to ensure that participant experiences were authentically represented. Interview data and quantitative data were triangulated with each other, and where possible, through archival document analysis available to the public through the internet.

Limitations, Delimitations and Assumptions

Several limitations existed in this study that were beyond researcher control. First, the nature of the whole network approach to social network research requires the entire population of the identified network to be surveyed, with a high response rate. This response rate was not achieved, leading to incomplete data and changes to the research design which have been discussed in greater detail in Chapter three. Moreover, a limited sample size meant that quantitative results could not be generalized, including both traditional and network data. Also, this study occurred within the historical context of the COVID-19 pandemic which began in March 2020 and continued to impact this research through 2021 and significantly impacted how all persons relate to one another. Researcher bias also influenced every aspect of this study from its inception to design, to data analysis. The researcher's positionality acted as a lens through

which the data and theory are viewed. Finally, this study assumed that relationships of the specific character under investigation exist within the bounds of the network. A high number of isolated actors were identified and excluded in the course of analysis. Because of the nature of the study and its inherent limitations, findings should not be generalized beyond the context in which the study took place.

Definitions of Key Terms

a. ***Actor***: An actor refers to a single element capable of having relationships with other actors within a network (Borgatti et al. 2013).

b. ***Catholic Social Teaching***: Catholic Social Teaching refers to the aggregate collection of Church teaching concerning social construction and relationships (Curran, 2002; USCCB,1998).

c. ***Community of Practice***: Refers to a group of professionals meeting the criteria of having a shared purpose, mutual pursuit toward accomplishing this purpose, and shared knowledge and skills related to the purpose (Scanlan, 2012; Wenger, 1998).

d. ***Dual System***: The dual system of education or "dual system" refers to the legally constructed dichotomy between general and special education programs in the United States (Baglieri & Shapiro, 2012; Kozleski, 2020).

e. ***Inclusion***: Inclusion is defined by the researcher as a philosophical approach to education grounded in disability studies that seeks to eliminate all forms of social exclusion in education and create educational environments fit for all persons (see Chapter 2).

f. ***Inclusive Practice***: Inclusive practice refers to evidence-based best practices and frameworks that support the creation of inclusive classrooms and schools (Mahoney, 2020).

g. ***Mainstreaming***: Mainstreaming refers to the practice of placing students with disabilities in a general education setting with or without structured supports (Alquraini & Gut, 2012).

h. ***Network***: A network refers to a system of relationships of a particular type between actors within a defined boundary (Daly, 2010).

Conclusion

Catholic schools are imbued with an inherent call to be agents of justice in the world. This emerges from the Catholic faith that places a personalizing anthropology rooted in the inherent dignity of human life at the center of its social teaching. In this way, Catholic schools are compelled by mission toward inclusivity. As Catholic schools approach serving students outside the normal range of development, an integral approach to service delivery has been recommended, yet thus far has not been realized. While Catholic schools have made progress toward inclusion of students with disabilities, as a whole, the pattern of Catholic schools in the United States remains largely stagnant in its movement toward inclusion. To make further progress and capitalize on the critical point of transformation which Catholic schools occupy, (Scanlan, 2017) it is necessary to examine more closely the practices and networks that can be leveraged to foster large-scale improvement. The following chapter will consist of a detailed review of the literature that will situate this study within the larger context of scholarship in Catholic education and students with disabilities.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF DISCOURSE

A historical approach to examining policy for educating students with disabilities has uncovered a pattern of forward progress that advanced the cause of providing free and appropriate public education for all through the paradoxical development of a separate system of education for students with disabilities (LaNear & Frattura, 2007). Adding to this complexity is the parallel application of two legal frameworks, one typified by Section 504 (1973) which applies most directly to Catholic schools, and the other driven by IDEA (1997) and its narrow, prescriptive focus on public education through funding law. In practice, elements of both of these legal frameworks have intersected when considering the education of students with disabilities in any context.

Complexities of legal frameworks aside, the moral foundation of Catholic education found in Catholic Social Teaching compels Catholic schools toward inclusivity, and ultimately aligns with the ontological, moral, and social components of inclusion as a philosophy of education. Fullan (2020) suggested that a moral grounding, while a necessary component to leadership, is insufficient in itself to generate sustainable change in a system. Indeed, objections and challenges that have been raised to inclusion rarely do so on moral ground, but rather have addressed issues of practicality such as funding, training, and adequate staff capacity (Agran et al., 2020). Catholic schools have attempted and succeeded in their efforts to include students with disabilities on their campuses and within their dioceses, despite significant challenges. However, these successes have been characterized as isolated, siloed developments limited to individual campuses and have not been scaled across multiple schools or dioceses (Paz, 2013).

Even within commonly applied frameworks, high levels of variability have been observed within their application. Scanlan (2017) observed that simple faithful adherence to a prescribed program is insufficient to predict the success of inclusion of students with disabilities in Catholic schools. He theorizes that a process of organizational learning must occur to generate sufficient "know-how" to support sustained development. Boyle and Bernards (2017) have similarly proposed that knowledge, skills, and dispositions must be developed at all levels of the Catholic school ecology to sustain inclusive education practices.

To support the expansion of inclusive education beyond a patchwork of individual schools to an integrated approach, it is necessary to determine what practices and networks exist to support the requisite development of knowledge, skills, and dispositions for large scale systemic change (Boyle & Bernards, 2017; Bryk et al., 2017; Scanlan, 2017; Stroh, 2015). This study will therefore be guided by the following research question: What formal and informal relationships support the inclusion of learners with disabilities in a sample of schools from within the Archdiocese of Los Angeles? This chapter will provide a review of the discourse relevant to an examination of diocesan level practices for inclusive education. This review has been approached from a conceptual lens grounded in the intersection of Catholic Social Teaching and inclusive education. Many studies have explored the role of Catholic Social Teaching as both philosophical approach and justification for including students with disabilities in Catholic schools (Crowley & Wall, 2007; Cunningham et al., 2017 Scanlan, 2008; 2017). This study combined inclusive education and CST as philosophical approaches understood within the context of social justice discourse and considers how network theory can be applied to contribute to the practical application of these philosophical principles at scale. To accomplish this, the

following questions have guided this literature review: (a) What characterizes inclusion as a philosophical approach? (b) What is the intersection between inclusion and Catholic Social Teaching? (c) What does inclusion look like at the organizational level? (d) How can network theory be applied to scale inclusive practices to higher levels in an organization's ecology?

The Philosophy of Inclusion

Inclusion, Mainstreaming, and Disability Paradigm

In the United States, inclusive educational practices emerged from the principle of providing education to students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment (LRE) possible (Alquraini & Gut, 2012). Indeed, being educated in the least restrictive environment has been guaranteed as a right for students with disabilities under IDEA (1997) however various interpretations have been proposed regarding what LRE means and how it ought to be applied, particularly with regard to students of greater or lesser degrees of disability (Osgood, 2005). The philosophy of inclusive education has suggested that the least restrictive environment for students with disabilities is spending a maximal amount of time possible being educated with their typically developing peers (Osgood, 2005). This interpretation of the inclusion has not been without controversy, and the dominant view has remained that a student should be placed in a manner that provides adequate support and services to reduce the impact of disability and enable students to engage in the general education environment. Students with disabilities defined as mild to moderate, or high incidence have typically been regarded as being able to participate in a general education classroom, a practice referred to as mainstreaming, to a greater degree than students designated as having a severe, or low incidence, disability (Alquraini & Gut, 2012; Fagella-Luby & Engel, 2020). The practice of mainstreaming has also been exercised to varying

degrees depending on the type of services and support a student requires (Alquraini & Gut, 2012).

Structurally, mainstreaming and inclusion have borne a number of similarities, both in their conceptual basis as a method of ensuring the right to an education in the LRE, and in shared practices (Alquraini & Gut, 2012; Kuntz & Carter, 2019). Mainstreaming however, has referred specifically to the placement of students with disabilities within their instructional context. This practice, while grounded in a philosophy that views access to the LRE as a right, treats the general education environment as a goal toward which students with disabilities strive and approaches education of students with disabilities from a traditionalist lens (Slee, 2001). Mainstreaming is grounded in the medical model of disability that holds the role of special education is to compensate for deficiencies to enable students with disabilities to access the general education environment. In other words, mainstreaming has remained a form of cure-seeking treatment of students with disabilities placing them in roles more analogous to patients than students (Baglieri & Shapiro, 2012). This assigned role inherently removes power from those with disabilities and sustains the social stigmas associated with the perceived identity between moral value and physical well-being (Baglieri & Shapiro, 2012). In mainstreamed contexts where teachers and communities have been ill prepared to support students' learning needs or engage in open dialogue concerning disability, simple presence in a classroom environment can equate to continued isolation from peers and from their own learning (Graham & Slee, 2008; Kozleski, 2020; Molbaek, 2018).

Ultimately, it is not practice that differentiates mainstreaming from inclusion, but rather a philosophical underpinning beginning with radically differing paradigms of disability. The

medical model of disability in which IDEA (1997) has relied on the categorization and placement of students based on diagnoses rather than educational needs (Baglieri & Shapiro, 2012; Fagella-Luby & Engel, 2020). In their philosophical interrogation of inclusion Graham & Slee (2008) noted that categorization of children works to make differences visible and "reify attributes that carry social, political, and cultural currency" (p. 287). Baglieri and Shapiro (2012) reinforced this notion by arguing that since our worldviews influence how we make meaning of social reality, our paradigm of disability invariably affects our conception of persons with disability and our actions toward them. Examples of disability paradigms that have stemmed from the medical model include stereotypes, e.g., that persons with disabilities are the objects of pity, subhuman organisms, or unassailable innocents (Baglieri & Shapiro, 2012). These stereotypes have been reinforced by narratives about educators being miracle workers or that persons with disability must occupy an appropriate given place within the social order (Baglieri & Shapiro, 2012; Kozleski, 2020). Finally, these paradigms have been cemented in policy and practice within the current dual system, resulting in tremendous challenges in restructuring education to an inclusive model (Baglieri & Shapiro, 2012; Kozleski, 2020).

Inclusion, in contrast to mainstreaming, is a philosophical approach to education rather than a defined set of practices and is grounded in a rejection of the medical model of disability in an educational context (Alquraini & Gut, 2012; Ainscow & Sandill, 2010; Artiles et al., 2006; Baglieri & Shapiro, 2012; Graham & Slee, 2008). Fagella-Luby and Engel (2020) emphasized the importance and benefits of viewing disability through a cross-categorical lens. This approach is focused on student needs and interventions to meet those needs in an educational context (Fagella-Luby & Engel, 2020). A cross-categorical lens does not seek to eliminate the

significance of clinical diagnoses for students with disabilities, but rather to situate the meaning of these diagnoses within the lived experiences of students as students (Graham & Slee, 2008). This view of disability aligns with inclusion as a paradigmatic shift that rejects pathological explanations for perceived student deficiencies (Baglieri & Shapiro, 2012; Fagella-Luby & Engel, 2020). By adopting this approach, educators can move away from conceiving of disability as a purely medical concept requiring treatment to characteristics of learners who have unique needs for growth. Yet, this does not mean that educators must embrace ignorance of disability in the name of inclusion. Rather, inclusive educators have sought to understand their student communities in all aspects of their identity with a special focus on responding to these identities with appropriate systems of support to encourage growth.

Anthropological Model for Inclusion

The previous section differentiated inclusion from the practice of mainstreaming on the basis of disability paradigm. This differentiation identified a key element in understanding inclusion; namely, what it is not, a practice that remains part of the existing structure of education as established in law, policy, and practice. Scholarship on inclusion has repeatedly stated that inclusion has suffered from the lack of a clear definition (Artiles et al., 2006; Kinsella, 2020). The resultant challenge has been that many practices have been claimed to be inclusive, though in reality they might work to further sustain the status quo, as is the case of mainstreaming without a foundation in an inclusive paradigm of disability (Kinsella, 2020). In an effort to further establish that inclusion is a philosophy of education, this section will attempt to define inclusion positively by exploring inclusion's relationship with ontological assumptions regarding anthropology. Each of these components of inclusion as a philosophy will then be

synthesized into a definition of inclusion that not only comports with, but naturally arises from the theological underpinnings of Catholic Social Teaching.

Inclusion as Ontological Discourse.

In their critical deconstruction of inclusion, Graham and Slee (2008) evaluated how the term inclusion emerged from discourse that is reliant on the notion of a center of normalization from which margins can be defined. Membership in this center is determined on the basis of power relationships and is defined by absence of definition, as has been the case of whiteness, maleness, ablebodiedness, and so forth. The function of forms of inclusion that seek to normalize, meaning to bring to the discursively defined center, has been to validate or invalidate different ways of being (Graham & Slee, 2008; Slee & Allan, 2001). Much of this validation has been bound to language and its relationship to identity. Significant discussion has taken place regarding how language regarding disability influences attitudes, paradigms, and understanding of the individual and political positioning of those with disability (Baglieri & Shapiro, 2012). An ontological discourse underlies these discussions that asks a critical question about what it is to be human. Inclusion takes a definitive position within this discourse based on the social paradigm of disability and an underlying assumption of the moral value of human existence.

While discourse about inclusion does not make claims about a particular essential human nature, it does unequivocally affirm that categories of human difference are social constructions and abstractions from unique human identities. More succinctly, inclusion as a philosophy affirms that human identities transcend accidental differences, and furthermore, the inherent moral value of human persons is equal. It is the ontological assertion that individuals transcend social categorization and can be developed in community that serves as justification for

inclusion's primary claims about education. From an ontological basis, inclusion discourse makes sets of epistemological and moral claims related to education. For example, Agran et al., (2020) argued that placement determinations for students with severe disabilities treat students as a set of disability characteristics rather than individual persons. This distinction of the individual from socially defined characteristics and the subsequent valuation of that individual above these ascribed categorizations is the central characteristic of inclusion discourse. From here the authors asserted that it is in error pedagogically to place students with similar disability characteristics in the same setting on the assumption that students require similar specialized instruction solely based on similar disability status (Agran et al., 2020). A moral objection to these placement decisions then arises. Simply put, if disability is socially constructed and students are segregated from others on this basis, then this is as morally objectionable as segregation based on any other socially constructed categorization.

Inclusion as Pedagogical Discourse.

Discourse concerning inclusion has frequently made claims about both how students learn. Pedagogical claims regarding inclusion have been based on the position that learners in any given population are inherently unique, and that educators do not need to rely on grouping based on categorization to offer supports. Practices including differentiated instruction, co-teaching, Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) including Positive Behavioral Intervention Supports (PBIS) and Response to Intervention (RTI), and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) have commonly been discussed as empirically backed methodologies for educating students with disabilities in an inclusive environment (Agran et al., 2020; Fagella-Luby & Bonfiglio, 2020; Lahane & Senior, 2020; Tiernan et al., 2020). For students with low incidence disabilities, the

interventionist, co-teaching, and learning consultant models have been frequently applied in inclusive and mainstreamed contexts (Kuntz & Carter, 2019; Lahane & Senior, 2020). These practices themselves are not inherently inclusive, in that they can be applied in nearly any educational context, however, they align with inclusion as a philosophical approach. The Multi-Tiered System of Supports Framework for example, has offered students and educators differentiated levels of support systems that are accessible to all students regardless of disability status or other categorization (Agran et al., 2020). Regardless of the particular instructional methodology, the underlying pedagogical discourse of inclusion is that students do not learn in a uniform manner.

A second pedagogical assertion of inclusion as a philosophy is that learning occurs as much in community as it does in individual students. As such, a balance must be maintained between an awareness of individual student didactic needs, the needs of the learning community, the needs of learners to adapt to the community itself, and the reflexive need of the community to respond to individual learners (Hansen et al., 2020). Inclusion therefore has viewed social learning as a didactic process that is integral to educational outcomes. Hansen et al. (2020) noted that learning is not complete in cases where students with disabilities require significant remediation for perceived deficiencies to operate in a general education environment. For example, students who require a distraction free environment to accomplish a task will learn to accomplish the task but will not adapt to doing so in a socially normative environment. Conversely, the general education environment will not adapt to become more inclusive if it does not respond to the needs of a diverse learners by reconstructing social norms in the classroom (Hansen et al., 2020).

The assertion that learning is a collaborative, community endeavor has not only been applied to students in inclusion discourse. Literature concerning inclusive practices has also frequently discussed the need for collaboration among teachers, specialized staff, and families (Hansen et al., 2020; Kinsella, 2020; Mortier, 2020). Part of this discourse has been generated as the result of the need for educators to develop knowledge, skills, and dispositions that are typically beyond the scope of their general education training. Hansen et al. (2020) asserted that cross-professional collaboration is the main approach that should be taken in constructing inclusive schools, citing the need for teachers to expand their capacity to serve the given diversity in the school environment. This type of cross-professional collaboration has occurred in both formal and informal settings. In formal, direct collaboration, specialists, i.e., experts, pass knowledge on to novices through intentionally developed training, consultation, or by working directly with student populations. In contrast, indirect collaboration occurs in informal settings and consists of the relationships developed between professionals. In indirect collaboration, multiple specialists informally consult one another on specific cases, practices, or dispositions, ultimately constructing a unique set of knowledge through networked exchange (Hansen et al., 2020; Mortier, 2020).

This approach has been conceptualized by Mortier (2020) using the communities of practice model. In a community or practice, the distinction between expert and novice is deemphasized. Instead, mutual concern for addressing a common need is the organizational locus of a community of practice. The essential components of a community of practice have been articulated as a joint enterprise, mutual engagement, and a shared repertoire (Wenger, 1998). These components necessitate a networked community that inherently possesses a diverse set of

knowledge, skills, and dispositions focused on a specific problem set. Many researchers in different forms describe aspects of the learning community model as a necessary approach to inclusion (Agran et al., 2020; Hansen et al., 2020; Kinsella, 2020; Kuntz & Carter, 2019; Lahane & Senior, 2020; Lopez-Azuaga & Riviero, 2020; Mortier, 2020; Tiernan et al., 2020). This discourse establishes that collaborative approaches to learning for students and organizations are not simply a matter of practical efficacy, but an essential component of inclusion philosophy.

Inclusion as Moral Discourse.

A peculiar, though not unique characteristic of inclusion as a philosophy is its engagement in the moral domain of education. Proponents have justified inclusion as a pathway to developing empathy and understanding for those with disabilities and have noted how inclusion challenges students to engage in relationship building with those on the social margins (Artiles et al., 2006; Baglieri & Shapiro, 2012; Kozleski, 2020). Kozleski (2020) observed that inclusion requires teachers and school communities to frame their practices around the concept of human development rather than achievement. This notion incorporates elements of the educational experience present through and in relationships with diverse groups of peers and mentors and recognizes that education outcomes relate to well-being of not only adults, but of a vibrant society (Kozleski, 2020). Thus, inclusion discourse is concerned students' moral development as both individuals, and as a community within a broader social context.

Inclusion as Social Justice Discourse.

According to Alquraini and Gut's 2012 literature review, though scholars have differed in their exact definition of inclusion, each definition has been grounded in the principle that persons with disabilities should not be segregated in their respective educational contexts from the

general education population. This view, however, also remains grounded the idea that inclusion is a function of placement in a similar manner to mainstreaming (Armstrong, 2002; Slee & Allan, 2001). In the absence of a deeper interrogation of the term inclusion with respect to social justice, the term has functioned as one that has been spatialized, removing from the it any radical reformative meaning (Armstrong, 2002; Kinsella, 2020; Slee & Allan, 2001). Inclusion cannot be properly understood, either as a philosophical approach, or set of practices, within the context of a dual system of special education. This dual system is not the result of carefully planned, philosophically grounded development, but has arisen in a haphazard, predominantly reactive manner to movements in law and policy dependent on dominant paradigms of disability (Baglieri & Shapiro, 2012; Kirby, 2017; Kozleski, 2020; Graham & Slee, 2008). Inclusion, in contrast, should be understood as a reconstruction of the ideological underpinnings of education as a whole and within the context of social justice discourse (Armstrong, 2002; Kinsella, 2020; Slee, 2001; Slee & Allan, 2001).

In their critical analysis of inclusion, Artiles et al. (2006) delineated the social justice discourses that underlie discussions of inclusion. The authors identified two operative social justice discourses, which they termed individualistic and communitarian, that exist on a spectrum of ideology regarding inclusion. Individualistic views function by aiming to redistribute resources and grant access to them. The authors noted that simply granting access to resources for students with disabilities does not equate to meaningful participation or redress historically rooted inequities. Further, they argued that these views function to homogenize members of society rather than recognize and value different ways of being. On the other hand, the authors noted that communitarian social justice frameworks based on caring are often vaguely structured

and that restructuring educational frameworks and disability paradigms will not function to change public ideology concerning inclusion. Communitarian views, they argued, serve to sustain otherness and social differentiation, through well intentioned efforts at recognizing groups unique needs. The authors proposed that a transformative view of social justice must be adopted to advance inclusion. According to the authors, this transformative view must critically evaluate existing structures while constructing participatory frameworks that acknowledge the intersectional nature of individual and society (Artiles et al., 2006).

When viewed as a philosophy of education, inclusion itself can be constructed as a transformative approach to social justice. Many scholars, drawing on international research, have adopted a broad definition that describes inclusion as an effort to eliminate all forms of social exclusion from the educational experience (Ainscow & Sandill, 2010; Messiou & Ainscow, 2020). This definition grounds inclusion in the view that education is a fundamental human right and denies the notion that human diversity is categorical (Ainscow & Sandill, 2010). In this way, scholars have described inclusion as a philosophy of education that has clear intersections with social justice theory (Ainscow & Sandill, 2010, Artiles et al., 2006; Baglieri & Shapiro, 2012). This approach to inclusion has moved away from discourse connected specifically to disability to incorporate other aspects of a student's intersectionality, including race, culture, gender, sexuality, and language. Viewing inclusion from a standpoint that transcends disability is appropriate for a number of reasons. As Graham and Slee (2008) noted, any discourse concerning including others operates from the ontological premise of both otherness and a base of power and privilege to include. This implies that structures of power and privilege exist as an underlying discursive reality within societies, though these structures may not be readily

acknowledged. Inclusion appears radical because of its contrast to established social power structures that operate as hidden ideologies (Kirby, 2017). Inclusion seeks to supplant the discourse of inclusion and exclusion entirely and embed itself as a dominant ideology that considers all students as persons with inherent diversity and unique, independent learning needs. In an inclusive approach, these needs are recognized as such without respect to imposed categories (Baglieri & Shapiro, 2012; Slee & Allan, 2001).

Inclusion, therefore, is not entirely distinct from other forms of social justice praxis in education but seeks to operate as an ideology hidden beneath such praxis. For example, inclusion and culturally responsive teaching (CRT) intersect in practice through differentiation of instruction and the use of referents from the lived realities of students in each classroom (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Samuels, 2018). Both inclusion and CRT have goals that reach well beyond students' academic achievement into domains of emancipation and justice for students who have been marginalized by dominant social structures (Baglieri & Shapiro, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Samuels, 2018; Kozleski, 2020). Further, it has frequently been the case that students with disabilities are members of other groups who experience inequity, and conversely there has been overrepresentation of students of color who have been identified as having a disability (Strassfeld, 2019). Slee and Allan (2001) described this as the racialization of special education and argued that this form of continued marginalization is the natural result of the dominant social discourse. They reinforce the notion that inclusion is about more than placement of persons with disabilities into an unrefined, unaltered culture of the present general education classroom. They have argued that inclusion must be understood as a reformation of learning environments to be fit for all persons. The extension of inclusion as inherent to social justice

theory has been explicitly stated by Theoharis (2007) who included disability advocacy as part of his definition of social justice leadership. According to Theoharis (2007), social justice cannot be realized without inclusion of students with disabilities. Theoharis (2007) also cited Sapon-Shevin (2003) who argued in her work that inclusion acts as a catalyst to create student allies who advocate on behalf of fellow students and states that "[b]y embracing inclusion as a model of social justice we can create a world fit for us all" (Sapon-Shevin, 2003, p. 28). Inclusion, therefore, must be viewed within the context of and as a part of social justice discourse.

Catholic Social Teaching and Inclusion Discourse

Catholic Anthropology and Discourse of Inclusion Ontology

Inclusion emerges naturally from the theological and moral foundations of Catholic Social Teaching. The previous section established that the ontological discourse of inclusion affirms that human existence is of a character that transcends categorization and can be developed in community with others. It is here where Catholic anthropology first intersects with inclusion as a philosophical approach. St. Thomas Aquinas (1926) established that God's essence is to exist, and that by His act of creation continually exercised, we participate in existence in a manner contingent upon the love of God. According to St. Thomas, both our essence and our unique act of existence are unique gifts of love and a participation in the divine essence (Thomas, 1926). Indeed, Catholic Social Teaching finds its ultimate ontological basis in the belief that all acts of love are, as St. Thomas (1926) taught, movements toward the other. Love is God's very essence, and through His movement towards us we are able to participate in love of God, of self, and of others (DeLio, 2019). According to Catholic moral theology, the ultimate fulfillment of human persons can only be found through love and must be realized in community

with God and others (Carlson, 2014; Curran, 2002; DeLio; 2019; Francis, 2020; Maritain; 1948). The basis of all Catholic Social Teaching then, can be taken from these metaphysical precepts in two primary ways, the first being that it is from this gift of love that the dignity of the human person is originally derived, the second being that humans are by nature beings who are capable of moral development, and indeed fulfillment through acts of love realized in community (Carlson, 2014; Curran, 2002; DeLio, 2019; Maritain, 1948).

Catholic social teaching has been univocal in the assertion that human dignity is an inherent quality of our existence, rooted in our call to communion with God (Paul VI, 1965a; Scanlan, 2008). In a Catholic context, human dignity has been referred to as being derived from being created in the image of God (Curran, 2002; Paul VI, 1965a). Catholic theologians have had historically differing views of the human person, but contemporary Church teaching has recognized that all persons are images of God insofar as God has created and sustained them as whole beings. Thus, the dignity of the human person cannot be located in a specific aspect, accidental or essential, of the human person. Neither can that dignity be understood as existing as a separate, autonomous quality apart from a relationship with God and the gracious gift of salvation through Christ (International Theological Commission, 2002; Paul VI, 1965a). According to this anthropology, because our dignity is derived from our own act of existence, which is a participation in God's own love, our dignity cannot be subjugated in any way except toward the end to which our existence seeks finality, God Himself (International Theological Commission, 2002).

According to Pope Francis (2020), by virtue of human dignity being derived from the Love of God, we are all equal in that dignity. This assertion of equality has been further

elucidated by the fact that human dignity is not localized to any accidental or essential aspect of human persons; we are all equal insofar as we participate in existence (International Theological Commission, 2002). The lack of localization of dignity in any faculty or quality of human person aligns with a key element of the ontological discourse of inclusion; namely, that human identity transcends categorization. Just as inclusion recognizes and then denies the social equivocation of socially constructed norms of attractiveness with moral goodness, so has Catholic anthropology. This doctrine has asserted that because dignity is tied to our very existence, and is not localized, disability is not a privation of the moral goodness of an individual. In short, Catholic anthropology positively asserts what inclusion ontological discourse assume, that human dignity is equal, inherent, and transcends attempts at categorization.

Catholic Moral Theology and Discourse of Inclusion Morality

Much like the case with ontological discourse, Catholic moral theology aligns with and further expands upon the moral discourse of inclusion. It does so through the assertion that all persons are capable of development and have a right to work toward that development within a community. Carlson (2014) noted that according to Thomistic moral theology, the purpose of human existence is to seek perfection of self as enabled through acts of love. She established that inclusion seeks to further the development of all individual students in their efforts toward this perfection, which can only occur in community. Pope Francis (2020) asserted that "Every human person has the right to live with dignity develop integrally." (para. 107). This integral development requires that all persons live in community. It is impossible, indeed a contradiction in terms, for human persons to simultaneously seek fulfillment through the love of God and not seek unity through recognition of our common dignity and destiny (Francis, 2020). The moral

discourse of inclusion requires the elimination of marginalization by removing from discourse the idea of an illusory interior and exterior of society and calls for actualizing social participation for persons with disabilities (Graham & Slee, 2008). Similarly, Catholic moral teaching explicitly calls the Church and all communities to reach out to the peripheries and move them toward our social center (Francis, 2020). This is itself a manifestation of love, which is fundamentally a movement towards the other (DeLio, 2019).

Just as Catholic anthropology asserts that human moral worth is inherent, equal, and not subject to categorization, it also asserts that we are persons capable of moral development toward fulfilled existences through the salvific work of Christ (International Theological Commission, 2002; Paul VI, 1965a). Catholic education has an explicitly stated mission to continue to develop the consciences and moral identity of all students in concert with its evangelical mission (The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977). This mission applies equally to students with disabilities as to those who are typically developing and cannot be exercised in contexts that are in any way segregated (Francis, 2020). This is because individual human development is incomplete when not realized in unity with others (Francis, 2020; International Theological Commission, 2002; Paul VI, 1965a). It is this characteristic of Catholic anthropology that prescribes not only that are we by nature social, but that we develop toward moral fulfillment in a peculiar manner of community, a manner that is inclusive in quality.

Catholic Social Teaching and Discourse of Inclusion as Social Justice

Inclusion as a philosophy of education is itself a transformational approach to social justice in education. Inclusion discourses that have begun in the context of disability have embraced a wholly transformational approach to education. Catholic social teaching is a

projection of moral theology into the domain of social systems. According to several curial documents, human capacity for individual development is tied to social systems in both complex and powerful ways (Curran, 2002; Francis; 2020; Paul VI, 1965a; 1965b). Catholic social teaching further acknowledges that the common good is situated within time and place and will itself change according to historical and cultural context. Catholic education therefore has a responsibility to play an essential role in the formation of persons who are capable of contributing to the common good in their contexts as well as to counter systems of oppression in the practices of Catholic schools themselves (The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977).

Any form of social marginalization that violates the inherent dignity of the human person or their associated ability to participate in the common good of the societies in which they live is considered a form of injustice according to CST. Specific to inclusion, CST acknowledges that those with disability frequently exist on the margins of society due to social constructions that inhibit their full participation in the goods of society and distribute a greater social burden to them (Francis, 2020; Curran, 2002). This is true with respect to social constructions of disability as well as the intersection of multiple layers of marginalization through social structures that exclude and oppress on the basis of race, gender, sexual orientation, language, or any other construct. By virtue of anthropology, CST and inclusion both assume the intersectionality of the human person and further propose that the moral value of human persons transcends intersectional social constructs. Yet both inclusion and CST also recognize that equality of dignity does not imply uniformity of identity nor equal treatment within existing social structures. With regard to wealth and other temporal goods, CST does not direct that all persons

should have an equal share, but rather that a minimum amount for all persons exists so as to facilitate their development as persons toward fulfillment (Curran, 2002). It is important to recognize that CST does not place emphasis on economic outcomes of education and does not even imply that equal academic achievement is an appropriate goal of education (Paul VI, 1965b).

An inclusive approach to Catholic education, like inclusion as social justice discourse, seeks to supplant the ideology of inclusion and exclusion based on structures of power and privilege with that of justice ideology. The function of education within CST is similar to the function of any social system, to facilitate the participation of all in the common good as mediated through social institutions and the practices of distributive, commutative, contributory, and legal justice (Curran, 2002). More succinctly, among the functions of education according to CST is to realize justice by mediating social goods and burdens to effect the participation of all persons in society. Indeed, it is useful to consider inclusion as a function of the four forms of justice discussed by Curran (2002).

In exercising distributive justice, Catholic schools would need to equitably distribute burden across the student community. All forms of burden would need to be considered, including social, economic, and academic. In a similar manner, schools exercising commutative justice would need to cultivate respect for individual student's property, achievements, and even talents. In exercising contributory justice, schools would need to apply sufficient pedagogical expertise to develop students' capacity to contribute their own goods toward society, to include their own voices in social and political processes. An authentic application of this practice would include structures to model this exercise within the governance of the school. Even with regard

to legal justice, as social institutions, schools act as mediators of law ordered toward the common good and as advocates for those entrusted to their care when faced with laws which are unjust (Curran, 2002; The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977, Paul VI, 1965b). As such, outcomes of Catholic inclusion in education ought to be considered in terms of how well Catholic education facilitated its function as a social institution in advancing justice in all manners of practice.

Much like the discourse of inclusion as social justice, CST is a transformational approach to social justice in all aspects of society, not just education (Artiles et al., 2006; Baglieri & Shapiro, 2012; Curran, 2020; Paul VI, 1965a; Kozleski, 2020; Messiou & Ainscow, 2020). While inclusion discourses have not prescribed teleological ends for the human person and has not not specified a philosophy of justice as such, they do align with these aspects of CST. Inclusion as social justice seeks to eliminate all forms of social exclusion and to validate the unique qualities present in each individual. These ends are already present within and expanded upon by Catholic social teaching which further offers a robust philosophical basis for them. Similar to inclusion, CST does not prescribe a set of practices, but offers an ontological, moral, and social framework around which these practices can be structured. Both inclusion as philosophy and CST are incompatible with a system of education that segregates others based on social categorizations or assumptions concerning their ability to develop. Inclusion and CST both propose that the structure of education ought to mediate justice for all individuals. For both these approaches, outcomes limited to academic achievement, or that regard participation in the common good as a privilege to be earned through sufficient advancement toward an illusory norm, are anathema to education.

Just Teaching and Discourse of Inclusion Pedagogy

The previous section established that according to CST, education is a social institution that functions as a mediator of justice for all human persons. This implies that schools not only have an obligation to mediate justice for students on behalf of society, but that schools themselves must engage in practices ordered toward justice (Curran, 2002; The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977). This implication has been made explicit by The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education (1977) in saying that the Catholic school's pursuit of justice "does not stop at the courageous teaching of the demands of justice even in the face of local opposition but tries to put these demands into practice in its own community in the daily life of the school" (para. 58). The practices Catholic schools engage in, including pedagogy and other organizational practices, must therefore strive toward the creation of communities that both inculcate and practice social virtues.

Inclusive pedagogical discourse makes two assertions about pedagogy, both of which can be understood in terms of CST. The first is that students have unique learning needs that must be addressed with a variety of instructional methods, the second is that learning occurs as much in communities as in individuals. With respect to the former, the anthropology of CST recognizes the inherent diversity and uniqueness present in each individual as an irreplicable act of God (International Theological Commission, 2002; Maritain, 1948). Because Catholic schools have been directed in mission to practice justice, the concepts of distributive and contributory justice can be applied as much to pedagogical decisions as any other judgment of practice. Considered pedagogically, distributive justice can provide an inclusive rationale for practices such as scaffolding, providing accommodations for learners' needs, modifying curriculum, positive

behavioral supports, i.e., differentiation of instruction. Similarly, contributory justice can be applied to understand some aspects of culturally responsive teaching in a Catholic context. Contributory justice assumes that all persons are capable of contributing to the common good and by extension have a right to develop this capacity. Culturally responsive teaching prescribes that educators should maintain high expectations of all students, and that lowering expectations for student groups perpetuates systems of social oppression, particularly racism (Ladson-Billings, 1995). These two approaches are analogous in that they both require educators to counter a deficit mindset that would have them consider students as either incapable of development or participation in complex social systems such as politics. Catholic social teaching unites distributive and contributory justice in education by asserting that all children have unique gifts incapable of replication by any other. All children further have an obligation to the common good to develop and offer their gifts and education has a reciprocal obligation to help develop them (International Commission on Theology, 2002; The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977; Paul VI, 1965b).

Catholic social teaching also aligns with the assertion that learning occurs in communities as much as in individuals. Catholic teaching on education regards the family as the primary and principal educative community, but recognizes that to fulfill their educative mission, the family needs the involvement of the entire community (Paul VI, 1965b). The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education (1977) expanded on the need for the community nature of Catholic schools because of the nature of the faith as an invitation to communion with God and with each other, in addition to the essentially communal nature of human persons and the educative process. They also have asserted that Catholic school communities must engage with their local communities at

large, as a form of humble service, as well as a witness to the Gospel (The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977). This heavy emphasis on the communal nature of education is not purely theological in nature. Catholic teaching regarding education also supports the collaborative nature of the development of educational practice in an increasingly complex world.

In recognition of the increasingly complex nature of schooling The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education (1977) has stated that Catholic schools have an obligation to deliver instruction based on a thorough understanding of research and to collaborate with others for the purpose of maintaining high professional standards. In keeping with the principle of contributory justice in education, The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education (1977) even has recommended expanding professional collaboration to include students and families. This type of professional collaboration that includes corporate learning oriented toward a common purpose has also been described as the community of practice model (Mortier, 2020). This model aligns with both the discourse of inclusive pedagogy and the model of Catholic educational communities just reviewed. Indeed, the community of practice model is pivotal to understanding how inclusion as a philosophy can be realized as practice within any school context but takes on additional significance when understood in light of the evangelical and social mission of the Catholic schools.

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and Inclusion

The discourse concerning disability is not new to the Catholic Church. The USCCB has stated and reaffirmed that the inclusion of persons with disability in all aspects of parish life is a moral mandate (USCCB, 1978; 2017). According to the USCCB (1978) this mandate extends

beyond a simple invitation and rather includes an obligation to create innovative support systems to enable full participation of persons with disabilities in every aspect of the faith. This includes the sacraments, which carry with them the truest essence of communion and community, but it also includes every part of Church life that enables the development and formation of persons (USCCB, 1978; 2017).

The USCCB has made recommendations for practice at all levels to support this inclusion of persons with disabilities the life of the Church. At the parish level, the USCCB noted the need to adjust physical spaces, but also to engage in a process of collective preparation to receive persons with disability fully into the community. To facilitate this the USCCB has recommended that dioceses take an active role in educating clergy and laity on the nature of disability. They have further recommended that dioceses intentionally work to supplement existing Catholic school structures with resources and knowledge necessary for inclusion. In particular, the USCCB proposed that Catholic parishes and schools work to establish relationships among themselves and outside agencies for the purpose of inclusion. This practice, the USCCB noted, is essential for laying the foundation for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the full community of the faithful (USCCB, 1978).

Inclusion and Organizations

Challenges to Inclusion

When examining inclusion as a philosophy, a natural question arises about what inclusion seeks to achieve in practice. If viewed as simply a function of placement, then it would be appropriate to measure the effectiveness of inclusion in terms of the time students with disabilities spend with typically developing peers in an educational context. This has, in fact,

been the method of evaluation assumed by the current dual system (Kozleski, 2020). The effects of this have been to reinforce the status quo of the dual system by justifying exclusionary practices as effective (Kozleski, 2020). This is a rational consideration when inclusion is only viewed as a function of place rather than a philosophy of education. When students with disabilities are placed in a general education classroom without appropriate supports for the students, teachers, organizations, or community, sincere objections to inclusion arise. For example, teachers may not feel adequately prepared to address the needs of students with disabilities or to create learning environments that meet the needs of typically developing students simultaneously (Agran, et al., 2020; Fagella-Luby & Engel, 2020; Kozleski, 2020; Molbaek, 2018). Indeed, many scholars have acknowledged that the primary concerns about inclusion regard its feasibility rather than its appropriateness (Ainscow & Sandill, 2010; Fagella-Luby & Engel, 2020; Kozleski, 2020; Kuntz & Carter, 2019; Molbaek, 2018).

This resistance has remained entrenched even though significant gains have been made in developing researched best practices for the inclusive classroom and in establishing benefits for both students with disabilities and typically developing peers (Agran et al., 2020; Baglieri & Shapiro, 2012; Kuntz & Carter, 2019; Kozleski, 2020). When viewed purely as a function of classroom practice, critical aspects of inclusion are overlooked. Baglieri and Shaprio (2012, p. 13-14) discuss six goals of inclusive education: (a) preparation for adult living, (b) improved learning, (c) growth for peers, (d) friendship development, (e) acceptance of individual differences, and (f) support of civil rights. It is important to note that these goals, while compatible with inclusion, are limited in scope to outcomes for individual students. While important and aligned with the philosophy of inclusion, these goals fail to capture inclusion's

focus on collaboration and community, are limited in their ability to describe inclusion at the organizational level. This omission is significant because organizational learning has been linked to the effectiveness of schools in becoming inclusive institutions (Ainscow & Sandill, 2010; Dyson et al., 2002; Dyson et al., 2004). This link between organizational learning and the effectiveness of inclusion is critical to understanding why inclusion must be viewed a philosophy undergirding a redesign of educational environments rather than a set of practices or placements to be added to existing structures (Agran et al., 2020; Ainscow & Sandill, 2020; Kozleski, 2020)

An alternative conceptualization of inclusive practice was constructed by Molbaek (2018) from a review of literature concerning effective teaching strategies. Molbaek (2018) identified four dimensions of inclusive practice: (a) a framing dimension, (b) a relational dimension, (c), a didactic dimension, and (d) an organizational dimension. These dimensions allow for the description of natural variability in individual students, teachers, and organizations while intentionally addressing the tension between addressing individual student needs and creating sustainable learning communities. Molbaek (2018) argued that inclusive practices rely on aspects of an organization's culture, norms and values, which aligns with the assertions of other inclusion researchers that communities of practice are essential to developing inclusive schools (Mortier, 2020). This paradoxically suggests that the greatest challenge to inclusion also provides a clear path forward, namely, that inclusion requires a fundamental shift in institutional culture. Kinsella (2020) argued that inclusion is a process, not a set of practices, and that because of the political nature of inclusion there is no prescriptive manner in which to implement inclusive practices at an organizational level. Here again lies a paradox, inclusion cannot occur in a siloed, segregated manner, it must be a shift in culture and practice at the organizational level, yet

successful inclusion at the classroom level must be a goal of this change. This does not suggest that a top-down approach to change is needed but instead underscores the need to apply the community of practice model and systems thinking to initiate disequilibrium in school organizations for inclusive reform (Kinsella, 2020; Mortier, 2020).

Communities of Practice and Systems Change for Inclusion

Kinsella (2020) claimed that because of the complex, socio-political nature of inclusion, an organizational approach is the most likely to have a significant impact in moving towards inclusive practice. This claim aligns with the model proposed by Molbaek (2018) who similarly asserts that the organizational dimension of inclusion should be viewed as a critical component both for development of professional practice and to balance tension between the often opposing demands on teachers in the classroom. Kinsella (2020) asserted that taking an organizational approach to inclusion requires the evaluation of organizations using a systems theory lens. In his 2020 multiple case study, Kinsella applied a framework that viewed schools as systems that translated inputs into outputs through various structures and processes. This three-component model has significant parallels to other simple systems architecture descriptions in education. Skrla et al.'s (2004) equity audit proposed that achievement equity can be understood as a function of teacher quality and programmatic quality as inputs interacting with each other positioned within a school context. Similarly, Harris III and Wood's (2016) Socio-Ecological Outcomes model described student success as an outcome of the interaction of four socio-ecological domains with given inputs. While each of these three approaches differed in their consideration of inputs, outputs, and the processes of interaction which drive system results, they all have attempted to describe education in terms of a basic system.

This relatively simple systems architecture is useful for conceptualizing the complex set of contextual variables that makes up a school or the ecological positioning of schools, but even more so for conceptualizing organizational learning as a model for systems change. In all of these models the implication is that inputs, structures, and processes should be the focus of those wishing to implement directed positive change. Typically, these models have focused on student achievement as a measure of success, as is the case with both Skrla et al.'s (2004) and Harris III and Wood's (2016) approaches. In contrast, Kinsella's model (2020) included both staff development and organizational development in addition to student development as outcomes of the system. Including these elements as systemic outcomes allows for the description of how systems can either reproduce results or change, through the manipulation of inputs, structures, and processes. Kinsella (2020) relied on the distinction between development of staff and students as persons within the system and development of the organization as change of the system itself. The former can be described as developing the capacity of individuals through professional development, training, and other forms of resourcing, whereas the latter includes the habits and practices continually reproduced as a part of institutional memory. Organizational learning, therefore, can be distinguished from building staff capacity as a functional change in the inputs, structures, and practices of a system itself.

A critique of this systems approach has been that it is too linear and offers a bureaucratic solution to problems ostensibly created by bureaucracy (Owens & Valesky, 2015). However, while this systems architecture is simple, the permutations of inputs, structures and practices, and outcomes are far from linear. Indeed, an advantage to applying this framework is that it allows for the consideration of organizations as fluid, chaotic ecologies, composed of multi-dimensional

relationships between social and non-social elements that are capable of generating outcomes that are in some sense more than the parts of which they are composed (Daly, 2010). Scanlan (2012) described organizational learning as a cultural phenomenon that recognizes that groups of humans transmit practices, dispositions, and knowledge across individuals in socially constructed realities. Within the context of this systems framework rich networks of relationships, shared language, symbolism, and other cultural artifacts may be found.

Network Theory and Communities of Practice

Systems theory provides a simple architecture that scholars have used to describe the complex nature of educational ecologies. This architecture can be derivatively described as a function, with an input-process-output format. Each component of this function is imbued with complexity resulting from the nature of educational systems themselves. Network theory has offered an approach to describe how actors, both human and non-human relate to each other in specific ways providing insight into how the relational structure of a system influences outcomes (Borgatti et al., 2013; Daly, 2010; Fenwick & Edwards, 2010). Multiple forms of network theory exist and have been applied in the social sciences, computer science, and ecological fields. Each application of network theory is characterized by the fundamental assumptions that relationships, the character of these relationships, as well as their structure interact to create phenomena with characteristics other than individual actors within the network. In other words, network theory is a structuralist approach that recognizes the inherent interconnectivity and interdependence of individual actors (Borgatti et al., 2013). This aspect of network theory aligns with the pedagogical and social justice discourses of inclusion on the assertion that learning occurs in communities and that communities themselves can learn. Because inclusion requires the

transmission of knowledge, skills, and dispositions across a network of teachers and administrators, understanding the structure of this network will help identify formal and informal relationships that constitute existing communities of practice for inclusion.

Social Network Theory

Social network theory has been used to describe the structure of relationships between individual people in a set boundary (Daly, 2010). In the case of organizations, social network methods can describe how social capital, defined as information and resources, is distributed and flow across the web of relationships. Social network theory can also identify influential individuals with respect to a particular type of relationship, i.e., friendship or technical support in terms of the number of connections these individuals have along with their position. Another form of influence can be identified in bridge builders, those who connect different subgroups through relational ties can be identified through social network analysis. Lastly, social network theory can describe the structure of an organization and the impact of that structure on the diffusion of social capital or characteristics, such as information or disposition. In doing so, social network theory attempts to explain how change occurs at a systemic level in terms of the interconnectedness of individuals and the structure of relationships across an organization (Borgatti et al., 2013).

Actor Network Theory

Actor-Network Theory (ANT) has been applied in the field of medicine and medical education to challenge positivist assumptions about the nature of evidence within these fields (Bleakley, 2012; Mitchell, 2020). Bleakley (2012) viewed ANT as a framework for describing systems in medical education, rather than explaining them, while incorporating and recovering

the power of storytelling as an epistemological approach. In short it is these aspects of ANT that have been incorporated into the framework of this study. According to ANT, actors are defined relationally by their observed performances within a network, which in turn is defined as the ways that actors, both human and non-human, meaningfully relate (Bleakley, 2012; Mitchell, 2020; Fenwick & Edwards, 2010). A key assumption of ANT is the symmetry, or the lack or prioritization, of actors within a network (Fenwick & Edwards, 2010). This means that non-human entities are assigned a type of agency based on their performance within a system. That said, the agency given to non-human objects is not an agency of willful action, but rather a description of the functions of a non-human actor within a social system (Fenwick & Edwards, 2010). The emphasis therefore of ANT is not on what an entity is, but rather what it does, referring to its performance within a system (Mitchell, 2020). Thus, an advantage of ANT within the context of this study was that the theory allows for the rich description of the role of non-human constructs in the system such as policy, finance, communication systems, leadership etc., that have been cited as obstacles to including students with disabilities in Catholic Schools (DeFiore, 2006; Scanlan, 2009; 2017).

Socio-Ecological Network Theory

Social-ecological network theory (SEN) has been used as an approach to describing complex interdependent systems in terms of social connections between actors and ecological factors (Bodin et al, 2019). This approach arose from environmental science as a method to describe how human social structures are influenced by and influence environmental factors. Relationships in SEN can be described in ecological terms such as predation, collaboration, competition, etc. (Bodin et al., 2019). These ecological analogies are useful for the analysis of

causation within networks and the description of network effects as a whole (Bodin et al., 2019). Because of the analogous nature of Catholic schools to an ecological structure, this element of SEN has partially informed the analysis phase to help describe relationship types and causal connections between social and non-social actors. No specific allusions to SEN have been made in the analysis of data, however, the researcher assumed for purposes of analysis, that a complex interplay of human and non-human factors was present in the data. This assumption of ecological complexity operated as a part of the conceptual framework from which the data were viewed and interpreted.

Conclusion

Inclusion is a construct that is still evolving within the academic literature. In this chapter, the researcher proposed that it should be understood as a philosophical approach to education defined by four discourses found in scholarly and practitioner dialogue. This anthropological model for inclusion strongly aligns with the approach to education outlined in Catholic social teaching. Further discussion concerning inclusion in organizations highlighted the importance of organizational structure and building a culture of inclusion to address practical challenges. Network theory offers an approach to describe these organizational structures as well as the flow of information and resources within them. This description can then be used to evaluate how a system presently operates and help support the analysis necessary to identify key drivers of systemic change. The next chapter will introduce the design of this study including how a mixed methods approach aligns with social network analysis and a detailed review of research procedures.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

According to Scanlan (2017), Catholic schools are at a point in their history where transformational change is needed. Declining enrollment numbers and challenges to historical patterns of practice in the Catholic school ecology lend this point in history an aura of existential crisis. As suggested by Scanlan (2008), the underlying grammar of Catholic schools requires significant reform to remain consistent with the mission of Catholic education established by the Church. Given the clear intersection of the philosophical commission of Catholic schools found in CST and Inclusion as a philosophy of education, movement toward systemic reform for inclusion appears a natural course of action. Catholic schools have made significant strides in supporting learners with disabilities; however, this progress has been characterized by siloed development limited to single school sites rather than large scale systemic change.

Boyle and Bernards (2017) argued that an integrated approach to inclusion in Catholic schools is needed, which requires the transmission of knowledge, skills, and dispositions across all levels of the Catholic school ecology. Inclusive practice has been found to be best developed and sustained through communities of practice, which are networks that can be leveraged to generate lasting organizational level change (Molbaek, 2018; Bryk et al. 2017). This study explored networks of formal and informal relationships that constitute communities of practice for inclusion in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. This chapter will review the research question which guided the study and provide a detailed description of the design selected to answer this question.

Research Question

The purpose of this study was to explore the state of inclusive practice among schools in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles and understand how networks of relationships are structured across these schools. The study was designed to obtain data concerning: (a) the typical Catholic educator's knowledge, skills, and dispositions concerning inclusion, (b) the networks of relationships that support the exchange of information and resources to support SWDs, and (c) how these networks work to support inclusion in Catholic schools. To accomplish these objectives, this study was guided by the following research question: What formal and informal relationships support the inclusion of learners with disabilities in a sample of schools from within the Archdiocese of Los Angeles?

Design

Social Network Analysis (SNA) has been used as a method of inquiry aimed at describing how individual actors relate to others in a defined way within a specified network boundary (Borgatti et al., 2013). Whole network analysis is a sub-category of SNA that refers to the attempt to describe the structure of networks by mapping these relationships. The outcome of a network analysis is a map of this structure which yields the identification of isolated, peripheral, and central actors as well as network subgroups and flows of information and resources (Borgatti et al., 2013; Daly, 2010). Social network analysis has been represented as a unique application of traditional quantitative and qualitative research methods. Nooraie et al. (2020) considered SNA as an example of how the traditionally dichotomous qualitative and quantitative methods could be integrated on a continuum of fusion, reflecting the unity of

qualities in the phenomena under investigation. In short, SNA is well suited to be the subject matter of a mixed-methods approach to inquiry (Nooraie et al., 2020).

Mixed methods research has been used as a method for collecting and analyzing quantitative and qualitative data to obtain a complete understanding of the research question from multiple perspectives. Collection of quantitative and qualitative data can occur simultaneously or in multiple sequential phases. Regardless, both types of data are integrated to provide procedural and conceptual connections between data types, thus generating a complete picture of the phenomena under investigation (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). For this study, the researcher chose to follow a convergent mixed-methods approach for data collection. According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2018) the convergent design is well suited for approaches that required different but related types of information on the same subject. In this method, quantitative and qualitative data are collected separately, then converged in the analysis phase to provide a complete description of the topic of inquiry (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). This approach to data collection aligns with the analytic approach given in the conceptual framework of SNA, where both quantitative and qualitative data concerning the attributes of network actors and their relationships within the network are synthesized to provide a characterization of the network as a whole (Daly, 2010).

Setting and Participants

This study took place within the Archdiocese of Los Angeles (ADLA), which encompasses 8,762 square miles across three counties, Los Angeles, Ventura, and Santa Barbara in southern California. Fifty high schools and 214 elementary schools serving over 66,000 students exist within the Archdiocese. Of the secondary schools 25 were independent schools

and 25 are parochial or archdiocesan while most elementary schools were parochial. Participants in this study included teachers and academic administrators (i.e., assistant superintendents, principals, vice-principals, assistant principals, counselors, and deans) recruited from the Department of Catholic Schools office, 12 secondary schools and six elementary schools within the Archdiocese of Los Angeles (Archdiocese of Los Angeles, 2021).

Quantitative Data

This phase was exploratory in nature, and no hypothesis was generated for testing. Quantitative data were used in convergence with qualitative data to generate a profile of the knowledge, skills, and dispositions concerning inclusion that typified Catholic educators in the Archdiocese. Additionally, the survey instrument used to collect quantitative data contained questions used to identify and describe networks of relationships that diffuse information and resources for inclusion within and across schools.

Sampling

Unlike traditional quantitative methodologies which rely on techniques to obtain a representative sample of a given population, whole network SNA samples all actors within a specified network boundary. As such, quantitative SNA studies are not intended to be generalizable, but instead are intended to describe relationships between actors as practiced within established boundaries (Daly, 2010). Because of this, the researcher distributed the survey instrument to all secondary schools in the Archdiocese and all elementary schools within one pastoral region. In total, the survey was distributed to 50 secondary and 17 elementary schools. This strategy reflected the exploratory nature of this study and the goal of identifying as many network connections as possible.

Quantitative Instrumentation

The researcher created a three-part survey instrument (see Appendix A) consisting of three parts using Qualtrics (www.qualtrics.com, 2020) software maintained by the researcher's university. Parts I and II were adapted from the Support and Technical Assistance through Relationships and Skill building (STARS) assessment created by Bruns and Mogharreban (2007). Part I consisted of structured items that measured participants' beliefs about inclusion rated on a five-point Likert style scale. Part II consisted of similar Likert-style items that measured participants' self-efficacy in inclusionary practices. Construct validity was maintained by using questions designed by Bruns and Mogharreban (2007) based on extant literature regarding inclusive practice. The researcher adapted these sections of the survey to be applied in a Catholic school context. Survey items specific to IEPs were removed, as were references unique to early childhood settings, toys, and play, for the purpose of maintaining construct validity in the context of this study. Part I and II of the survey taken together were found to have a high level of internal reliability with a Cronbach's alpha of $\alpha = 0.92$.

Part III was constructed by the researcher to collect network data. The first two items were constructed from two question types characteristic to social network analysis viz., name generator and name interpreter questions (Daly, 2010). The name generator question was phrased in a manner that specified the character but not the directionality of the relationships e.g., "Name no more than five people with whom you share information and resources to support students with disabilities." The name interpreter question asked respondents to specify the organizational affiliation, and role of their named connections. Finally, two unstructured items were added to

the survey which asked participants to provide their name, role, and organization and offered an opportunity to provide their thoughts regarding inclusion.

Quantitative Data Collection

The survey instrument was created using Qualtrics (2020) software. A survey link was generated and distributed to potential participants via email. Surveys were distributed to principals of all secondary schools within the Archdiocese and all elementary schools within the boundary of the selected pastoral region. Principals then forwarded the survey link to their staff. An informed consent form was displayed as the first page of the survey. After participants read the informed consent page, they will be required to select either "I Agree" or "I Disagree" before proceeding. Participants who did not provide informed consent will be immediately exited from the survey.

A high response rate is desirable in social network research, particularly when attempting to describe whole networks (Borgatti et al., 2013). This study did not aim to accurately describe the entire network of ADLA, but rather sought to identify communities of practice working for inclusion within the identified boundaries. Regardless, the highest possible response rate was desirable to achieve this exploratory aim. The researcher chose to omit demographic information to reduce the length of the survey and encourage participation. This decision limited the ability to identify patterns based on the comparison of demographic groups. Additionally, to encourage participation, participants were be given the opportunity to enter a raffle for an item not to exceed fifty dollars in value. Participants who wished to participate in the raffle were asked to email the researcher. Three winners were randomly selected in a raffle drawing process.

Because of the nature of social network analysis, it is required that individual survey responses be matched to participants, therefore participant anonymity was not guaranteed. Confidentiality therefore was maintained through strict adherence to procedural safeguards. Original survey responses were encrypted through Qualtrics (2020) security software and downloaded to a password protected file on a password and biometrically protected laptop only the researcher has access to. At the conclusion of the study, data were removed from Qualtrics (2020) program. Participants and individuals identified by name as a part of a network were assigned a coded identifier located in a password protected file separate from both the original survey data and data used for analysis. These codes were be used to identify all names in data analysis. No participant names or names of others identified as part of the network population by participants appeared in this study.

Quantitative Data Analysis

The researcher exported all data from Qualtrics (2020) to Microsoft Excel spreadsheets for detailed analysis. Names present in the original dataset were substituted for codes developed by the researcher that described the respondent's coded organizational affiliation, role, and a unique alphanumeric identifier. Data from Part I and Part II of the survey were then analyzed using Microsoft Excel software for frequencies and measures of central tendency. These data were not intended to be analyzed in isolation, but rather in conjunction with qualitative and network data in a process of convergence.

Part III of the survey collected network data that established relationships between actors with respect to information and resource sharing to support students with disabilities. To analyze this data, the researcher first coded names of participants and named connections according to

their organization, role, and a unique alphanumeric identifier. These data were then entered into an adjacency matrix to establish the existence or non-existence of relationships. This information was used to create network map using UCINET software (Borgatti et al., 2002). This software creates a visual representation of network structure that allows for qualitative pattern analysis. This analysis includes inferential observations related to the structure of the network that can be tested quantitatively if they present a surprising finding. Quantitatively, the network was evaluated for different measures of centrality including degree centrality, closeness centrality, and betweenness centrality (Borgatti et al., 2013). However, the because of a low survey response rate, quantitative analysis did not provide a meaningful measure by which to describe identified networks. Instead, the research applied an interpretative approach to network analysis based on the attributes of participants and the connections they reported.

Qualitative Data

The primary purpose of qualitative data collection was to obtain a more complete understanding of the knowledge, skills, and dispositions concerning inclusion typical of a Catholic educator. A secondary purpose was to provide a richer description of relationships that typically comprise communities of practice that support inclusion. Both these purposes were exploratory in nature and were converged with quantitative and network data to create a profile of educators and networks that support inclusion. This integration of multiple sources of data yielded a rich and complete understanding of the state of communities of practice for inclusion in ADLA.

Sampling

Participants in the qualitative phase were identified in the analysis of data collected in the quantitative phase, which is characteristic of mixed-methods design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The researcher used purposeful sampling in the qualitative phase based on the participant's responses to open-ended survey questions, including open response and network generating questions. Snowball sampling was also used when participants identified members of their network that could further characterize their experiences regarding inclusion. Table 1 depicts the role, rationale, and sampling technique used for each participant. Because of the sampling techniques used, the generalizability of results was limited. However, the triangulation of data using multiple interviews, quantitative data results, network descriptions, and some archival document review ensured the trustworthiness of results.

Table 1

Interview Participant Selection

Participant	Role	Rationale	Sampling Technique
Isabella	Administrator	Referral	Snowball
Joey	Administrator	Previous SPED Experience	Purposeful
Julia	Administrator	Public school relationships	Purposeful
Monica	Administrator	Inclusion Experience	Purposeful
Bailey	Teacher	Referral	Snowball
Linda	Teacher	Referral	Snowball
Anne	Administrator	Referral	Snowball

Qualitative Data Collection

The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews (see Appendix B) lasting no longer than one hour with each participant. The researcher developed open-ended questions that

allowed participants to provide an in-depth description of their understanding of inclusion, self-efficacy in inclusionary practice, and their relationships with others in their network. These questions were developed to match the measurement objectives of the survey instrument and were informed by the conceptual framework developed in the literature review. The researcher also used probing and clarifying questions on an as-needed basis to obtain clarification or more information about a particular aspect of a participant's experience. Prior to the interview, participants were presented with an informed consent form and the researcher explained the purpose of the research as well as potential benefits and risks to participation. Each participant was assigned pseudonym to protect confidentiality. Additional measures were also taken to ensure the confidentiality of participants, including using generalized role descriptions, and the omission of certain demographic and geographic information. Interviews were recorded and transcribed for coding and analysis. These transcripts and were member checked for accuracy and to ensure an authentic representation of participant meaning was communicated.

Qualitative Data Analysis

The researcher created a provisional list of deductive codes derived from the structure of the survey instrument and the conceptual framework of the study. These codes were organized into three categories: (a) Dispositions, (b) Knowledge and Skills, (c) Relationships. Initially, the provisional coding scheme included only the categories and a hierarchical scheme indicating whether dispositions were generally positive or negative, and whether knowledge, skills, and relationships skills present or absent. Inductive coding led to the creation of additional codes and categories that reflected the subtleties present in the data. All codes remained organized under the three initial categories established by the researcher. Dedoose software was used to assist in

coding the data and in establishing patterns (Dedoose software tool version 8.3.47b, 2021, www.dedoose.com). The researcher completed three cycles of inductive coding and completed both analytic memoranda and a research journal entry after each cycle to establish a clear audit trail and aid in the identification of emergent themes.

Data Convergence

In convergent mixed methods designs, data from quantitative and qualitative sources must be synthesized to obtain a broad and rich understanding of the topic of examination (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The survey instrument and interview protocol were designed to supplement each other in the measurement of knowledge, skills, and dispositions concerning inclusion and the description of network relationships. To obtain both a rich understanding of each of these areas and provide a coherent, practical synthesis of results, data were converged according to emergent themes present in both sets of data.

Limitations

There were several limitations of this study. As in all SNA studies, the researcher assumed that the type of relationships under investigation, viz., information and resource sharing to support students with disabilities, exist within the network boundary. Additionally, network research requires a high response rate, a challenge that was compounded by the large population of the network. Further, sample sizes were inadequate to generalize quantitative results to the population of all Catholic educators. Sampling techniques were limited by time and available resources to purposeful and snowball sampling. Interview participants likely held a bias in favor inclusion, skewing data to show more positive dispositions than negative. Further, interview

participants were all recruited from elementary schools, while survey participants included both elementary and secondary schools.

Missing or inaccurate self-reported data required significant alterations to the study design. For example, both incomplete data and the reported fragmented state of networks required the treatment of identified networks as individual cases rather than a true whole network analysis. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic and its associated impact on education may influenced the results of the study. This is particularly true for network data, as COVID-19 has impacted the way in which we relate to one another. This pandemic began in March 2020, and led to schools transitioning to a virtual, distance learning model until October 2020 at earliest. Schools then engaged in a variety of virtual, in-person, and hybrid models of instruction, which persisted through 2021. Lastly, the influence of researcher bias impacted the findings. This study was approached from the researcher's positionality, which includes extensive personal experience with disability and the position of a privileged participant-observer in the Catholic school system. The researcher maintained a detailed audit trail, including analytic memoranda at all stages of analysis, and a reflective research journal which helped the researcher to reflect on the impact of the lens of his personal experiences on the research. Findings were also triangulated through multiple interviews, convergence with quantitative data, and archival document analysis. However, these steps can at best minimize, not eliminate researcher bias. Given these limitations, findings from this study should not be considered generalizable outside the context of the study but should be considered transferrable in a manner consistent with qualitative research (Mills & Gay, 2019).

Delimitations

This study was limited in scope due to time and availability of resources. The researcher determined the sampling strategy and time limit within which data must be collected. Due to the large number of elementary schools in ADLA, only a subset located within one pastoral region were selected for sampling. The researcher reasoned that geographic and organizational proximity would increase the likelihood of detecting network relationships, therefore a pastoral region was selected as representative of the entire population. In addition to sampling, the researcher established criteria for analysis. The structure of the survey and interview protocol were informed by extant literature, which further informed the analytic framework by which the results were reported. With regard to network data, the researcher established network boundaries based on the presence of multiple dyadic relationships identified in the adjacency matrix. This meant that network isolates and isolated dyadic pairs were excluded from analysis.

Conclusion

This study explored communities of practice that supported students with disabilities in ADLA archdiocesan secondary schools. The primary purpose of this study was to describe the state of inclusive practice among Catholic school communities in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. To accomplish these aims, the researcher conducted a convergent mixed-methods social network analysis. The study began with quantitative data collection that informed the sampling for subsequent interviews. Results from both sources of data were converged to develop a complete picture of key findings, which will be presented in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

This study sought to describe the networks of formal and informal relationships that constitute communities of practice for SWDs within the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. The goal was to provide a detailed and thorough understanding of the state of inclusive practice within the school communities in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. The research was guided by the following research question: What formal and informal relationships support the inclusion of learners with disabilities in a sample of schools from within the Archdiocese of Los Angeles? To answer this question and obtain the research goal, the researcher followed a convergent mixed methods action research design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Data collection occurred in two phases. The first phase yielded quantitative and qualitative data obtained through a survey instrument that was distributed to participants via email. In the second phase, interviews were conducted with teachers and leaders identified either through their responses to the survey or by interview participant recommendation through snowball sampling. Quantitative data were analyzed using a combination of descriptive statistics and quantitative network analysis. Qualitative data were coded using a deductive provisional coding scheme derived from the conceptual framework and structure of the survey instrument. This provisional scheme was supplemented by inductive descriptive codes where emergent themes became apparent. This chapter will first review the framework for data presentation and provide a detailed review of key findings.

Data Presentation

In convergent mixed methods studies, quantitative and qualitative results about the same topic are merged in analysis to obtain a complementary and complete understanding of the topic under examination (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The data were presented in this chapter according to four key themes that emerged in data analysis: (a) Desire for Inclusion, (b) Lack of Capacity, (c) Leveraging Public Resources, and (d) Leadership and Community of Practice. Survey and Interview data were converged for each key finding to present a complete understanding of the finding from multiple data sources. Because of incomplete data and the small size of networks detected in survey responses, network data were analyzed qualitatively through the use of network diagrams and attributes of network actors. Patterns identified in network data were converged with themes found in participant interviews to further illuminate key findings.

Notes on Quantitative Data

The survey instrument was distributed to principals at 50 secondary schools within the Archdiocese and 17 elementary schools located within one pastoral region. In total, 93 participants responded to and initiated the survey from 12 secondary and 4 elementary schools. Of the 93 responses, 15 were invalidated for not responding to any survey items beyond the informed consent. An additional four responses completed Part I but did not respond to part II and III. A total of 37 participants responded to the request for network data in part III. Survey respondents identified as holding the roles of: Teacher (n = 44), Principal (n = 8), Vice Principal (n = 3), Dean of Students (n = 2), Dean of Academics (n = 4), Assistant Principal (n = 2), Counselor (n = 2), Athletic Director (n = 3) and Coach (n = 2). Several participants (n = 23) did

not identify a specific role. Further demographic data concerning gender, age, race, ethnicity, and time in practice were not collected. This was omitted in part to reduce the length of the survey instrument to encourage a higher response rate and because the researcher did not intend to compare results from different cohorts.

Parts I and II of the survey instrument were adapted from the Support and Technical Assistance through Relationships and Skill building (STARS) assessment created by Bruns and Mogharreban (2007). This instrument used scaled response questions with five possible options: (a) strongly agree, (b) somewhat agree, (c) neither agree nor disagree, (d) somewhat disagree, and (e) strongly disagree. A response of "strongly agree" was assigned a numeric value of one with assigned numeric values increasing by one whole number for each possible response. In keeping with the structure of the original instrument, data were categorized into two groups. Items in Part I were intended to measured dispositions concerning the inclusion of students with disabilities in Catholic school settings. Items in Part II measured self-efficacy in practices critical to the inclusion of students with disabilities in Catholic school environments.

Composite variables were unable to be generated for both subscales, possibly due to the complexity of the concepts being measured or simply due to measurement error. When considered as a subscale measuring practice self-efficacy Part II demonstrated strong internal reliability ($\alpha = 0.90$). Part I, however, yielded consistently low reliability scores even when outlier responses and survey items were removed. The highest computed value of Cronbach's alpha for the Part I subscale was $\alpha = 0.35$. A correlation matrix was computed which treated each survey item as a variable. This matrix indicated that there was minimal correlation between the survey items, except in cases where the survey items were strongly conceptually related. For

example, participants' ability to create Support Team Education Plans (STEP) strongly correlated with their ability to implement STEP plans into existing curriculum ($r = 0.73$). Moderate positive correlations were also found between knowing where to locate adaptive materials and knowing how to effectively assess SWDs ($r = 0.59$) and arranging the physical environment of the classroom for SWDs ($r = 0.65$). Survey items pertaining to inclusive beliefs were unable to be correlated with each other or with items pertaining to practice.

To minimize the impact of measurement error on findings, results from Part I and Part II were analyzed using frequencies and measures of central tendency, including the mean, standard deviation and median, which were appropriate to the descriptive aims of this research. The median has been included as a measure of central tendency to provide additional clarity where the mean reflects polarization of responses (Mills & Gay, 2019).

Desire for Inclusion

The first theme to emerge from the data was a desire for inclusion. This section will share both quantitative and qualitative data that indicated teachers and leaders had this desire, which was grounded in participants' personal experiences with disability and their Catholic identity.

Quantitative Data

Table 2 depicts the results for responses to items in Part I of survey concerning dispositions toward inclusion. Generally, survey respondents' dispositions aligned with an inclusive approach, with some exceptions. Participants overwhelmingly expressed the belief that all children can learn ($M = 1.09$, $SD = 0.33$). Similarly, participants reported strong beliefs that children with disabilities should be educated in Catholic schools alongside their same-age peers ($M = 1.56$, $SD = 0.76$) and that children are more alike than different ($M = 1.67$, $SD = 0.86$).

Participants reported less agreement that children without disabilities are positively affected by learning alongside peers with disability (M = 2.00, SD = 1.24). In this case 58 (74%) participants reported they agreed with the survey item, while 11 (14%) reported disagreement and 9 (12%) remained neutral. Significantly higher levels of disagreement were reported concerning the ease of implementing strategies to assist students with disability (M = 3019, SD = 1.24). Here, the results were far more polarized with 39 (50%) participants reporting that they disagreed, 30 (38%) reporting agreement, and 9 (12%) remaining neutral. Notably, this survey item pertained to beliefs about practice, and may reflect more about participant self-efficacy than a disposition toward inclusion itself.

Table 2

Dispositions Concerning Including Students with Disabilities in Catholic Schools

Part I Survey Item	*M*	*SD*	*Mdn*
Children with disabilities should receive services in Catholic high school settings alongside their same-age peers.	1.56	0.76	1.00
The strategies and adaptations necessary to assist a child with a disability are easy to prepare and implement.	3.19	1.24	3.50
Children without disabilities are positively affected by learning alongside their peers with disabilities.	2.00	1.24	2.00
All children can learn.	1.09	0.33	1.00
Children are more alike than different.	1.67	0.86	1.00

Note. n = 78.

Qualitative Data

Three subthemes emerged from the quantitative data that further contextualize the desire for inclusion evident from the survey. These subthemes were the influence of prior experience and Catholic identity on participants' attitudes toward inclusion, and the positive effects of relationship building for inclusive practice. This section will review each of these subthemes as they emerged from the data.

Prior Experience

Prior experience with disability, either in a personal or professional context, in part contributed to participants' desire for inclusion in their schools. All interview participants reported previous experience working with students with disability. Some of this experience was reported as being personal, disconnected from their role as an educator, but participants felt that it was an important influence on their practice. Linda reflected on how her experience as a parent of a child with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) influenced her approach to understanding students. Linda stated:

> My husband and I have six children, four of our own, two are adopted and the youngest one is autistic. The oldest one has Asperger's and so the idea of studying and knowing why students do a certain thing, what they're going through that has been my main desire, to understand how a student thinks.

Anne mentioned that she also had a relative with ASD, and while she did not provide specific details about how that impacted her practice, she included it as a detail relevant to her professional background. Monica included that her mother was a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (LMFT) and discussed how her "seeing the world that [her mother] is in" influenced her understanding of people. Monica also discussed how her father had shared his memory of how growing up with his sister with Down syndrome helped to forge strong relationships among his siblings. Monica related that "they were really held together by the sister and their love of her among her differences." Joey also shared that he had personal experiences in the world of special education prior to his own career. Joey noted that he "had a lot of background in special ED you know just kind of growing up." His parents were both special education teachers, which gave him access to a perspective on education closely tied to disability.

While all interview participants reported some professional experience working with disabled students, some marked individual experiences as standing out more than others. Isabella recounted how she had worked with a student who was later identified as having Oppositional Defiance Disorder (ODD) while in her student teaching. Isabella recalled:

> All I was able to do in the classroom, before I even knew he had Oppositional Defiance Disorder, was just to get advice and do my own research on tactics that I could try with him, or try to figure out what was triggering, and what to avoid, All so that I could help him learn as best as he could in a classroom environment without being too disruptive to the other students, because he was at a point where he wasn't learning and he was also hindering the learning of the other kids because I didn't know enough about how to work with him.

This experience provided her with insight concerning students with disabilities in a classroom setting. Anne theorized that these prior experiences, be they personal or professional, influenced how educators approached children with disabilities. Anne noted, "Some people go through the system for 20 years and don't have to work with students who have disabilities, I guess, and then other people, they have lots of experience with it because they've dealt with disability."

Catholic Identity

Survey responses indicated that participants held strong beliefs about the nature of children and learning that align with an inclusive approach to education. Seventy-seven (99%) participants agreed that all children can learn and 87% (n = 65) agreed that children are more alike than different. Further, 78% (n = 58) believed that students without disabilities benefitted from being educated alongside disabled peers of the same age. Further, survey data indicate that 92% (n = 71) of participants believe students with disabilities should be educated

alongside typically developing peers in Catholic schools. This pattern of strongly positive beliefs about inclusion was also observed in both interview data and qualitative survey responses.

In most cases, participants articulated that inclusion was embedded in the mission and philosophy of Catholic schools. At times, this was stated directly. One participant, Isabella, noted:

> It is definitely in our mission as Catholic schools to create a place for students with disabilities.

Another participant, Bailey, stated:

> I think a lot of people have the perception that Catholic schools are just for one type of person, and that you have to be that type of person to go to a Catholic school; the fact is Catholic schools were intended for everyone.

At other times, the relationship between inclusion and the mission of Catholic schools was more implicit. Participants frequently referred to aspects of Catholic education's "whole child" approach and related this to the work of inclusion. In particular, Monica and Bailey referred to elements of the Catholic faith and how this translated to creating a loving environment for students. As Monica related:

> You know, I think that it's so important for students to have experiences with all sorts of students and all sorts of needs, because it helps them to recognize there's not one picture perfect way and we box out everybody else. It's the sense of everyone is a child of God, everyone is a creation of our Lord, everyone is beautiful, and we have to adapt ourselves to be able to live in this world of differences, so that we can all be taking care of each other and growing together and having this life moving forward together among the differences.

Bailey echoed these sentiments, further connecting faith to the whole child outcomes of Catholic education:

> I think it's so important that students aren't defined by grades and that they're loved and appreciated and wanted by God and all of us. Just finding joy in being a good person, being a good Catholic, is really helpful. We want them to do well, but grades aren't the

> only things that make a person here at our school, it's our whole self. You know we're trying to make sure that students are career and college ready, but we're also trying to make sure that they're good, holy, people. And I think both of these things include all people, people with disabilities, people without disabilities, people who look different than us, people who look the same, you know, people we get along with and people we don't get along with well.

Participants consistently expressed inclusive attitudes concerning Catholic schools. For Bailey, the idea of inclusion in Catholic education extended beyond just students with disabilities and could be applied to all persons. This was also true for several other participants who described disability as a type of diversity. Some spoke in general terms about the uniqueness of each student, like Linda who reflected that "Every single student comes from a different background." Others more intentionally discussed diversity as desirable and further expressed the impact of this diversity on all students. Isabella noted:

> I think that any type of diversity is beneficial to all of the students. I think it's important for students to be in a learning environment with other people who aren't like them. It creates empathy, it helps bring perspective. I mean students that have disabilities have a lot that they're bringing into the learning environment that students without disabilities can benefit from as well. I do think it's important that they are learning together, side by side as much as possible.

For Joey, inclusion was extended to all as a matter of community. Joey commented:

> This is a school of our community, and our community includes people who you know have special needs. You know, I think that I think our Catholic schools should reflect what our Catholic community looks like, and that means not eliminating people.

Some survey respondents also expressed inclusive beliefs in their open responses. One participant stated, "The empathic charism that is at the heart of my school creates a student body that is inclusive and supportive." Another related that "I feel strongly that it [inclusion] is an important area for growth in Catholic schools." Anne perhaps most succinctly stated the

prevailing attitude toward including students with disabilities in Catholic schools "We're here to include everybody."

Relationship Building

A key strength of Catholic schools identified in this study was the ability of the school environment and culture of Catholic identity to enable positive relationship building between staff and families. Survey respondents indicated a high level of confidence in their ability to initiate positive relationships with families (M = 1.39, SD = 0.65) and engage in problem solving dialogue with them (M = 1.47, SD = 0.55). Participants felt that strong relationships with students and parents were an essential component of how Catholic schools worked to support students with disabilities. One survey respondent simply noted that "Communication between the family and staff is key." Interview participants also reported that they built positive relationships with students and families which worked to support all students, including those with disabilities.

Interview participants highlighted the small "community" and "family" atmosphere of their schools and discussed how this environment worked to support students. The participants discussed the importance of relationships with parents and how these relationships informed their work. Julia shared that in her practice, she prioritized collaboration with parents early on. Julia reported:

> I'm really big on communication, so from the beginning of the year, when I was teaching if saw a student that needed further support. I'd meet with the parents right away and we'd come up with a plan or a goal.

Isabella and Monica both noted that in working with families of students with disabilities, that building trust and a shared language are essential. As Isabella put it:

> I think one of the most important relationships is between the school and parents to make sure that everyone is on the same page and everyone understands that both parties are

> doing everything that they can best support the students, just knowing that all decisions that are made for any student are made in the best interest of the student. I think this goes a long way in ensuring the family trusts me and trusts the child's teacher, so that they know that any decision that's being made is being made in best interest of the student.

Monica also discussed the importance of families and school staff having a common understanding of student support needs. Monica noted:

> The most valuable relationship is that with parents because we must be working in partnership. We always make it a focus that as soon as we start making specialized plans for a child, we meet with a parent, the teacher and myself, because we want to all not only be on the same page but be using the same shared vocabulary.

She further went on to share a specific example of how shared language between school staff and parents directly contributed to a teacher's ability to create a more inclusive classroom. Monica reflected:

> I just had a meeting, the other day, with a parent of a little kindergartner who was nonverbal for a good portion of his early years and he's somewhat verbal now, but he mumbles a lot, so we don't often get full answer. His teacher has been saying "louder, louder I need you to be louder" and when meeting with them, the parent was able to say, "Oh no, no, that's not what we say at home, we always tell him speak up." And so we said, "Thank you that's an amazing shared vocabulary!" The next day she had him in class and she said "No, no, speak up" and right away he understood what we meant. So, by having that relationship with the parent and really focusing on partnership for the sake of the child, the parent and the school will have a shared vocabulary and share ideas.

Bailey also reported that the positive relationships between parents and school staff were critical.

> I think that first relationship for supporting students, is what the parents is like the most important. I think that if parents feel like we're a team me the parents and the students are all on the same page all trying to just be the best that we can be it's a lot easier.

Bailey further felt that these relationships helped her when she needed to have challenging conversations with parents about the possibility of their child having a disability. In discussing these conversations, Bailey said:

> It's a big decision for parents to make I feel like there's a lot of weird stigma to being assessed, and so just trying to break that down and just say "We know, you're welcome

> here, you're always going to be welcome here" is going to help me if I can help them see that.

Joey also remarked that working with parents, particularly when identifying a potential disability, is critical. He relied on his prior experience as a special educator to build trust with parents that he would be looking for their child's best interests. Joey shared some of his experience:

> Having a specialized background has helped a lot with our parents, because what I can say to our parents is, "I'm going to do my observations, I'm going to work with your child, and we're going to give you accommodations that we can give here at this school setting. But I'm also going to be very transparent with you and let you know if this isn't the right type of setting, and they may need more accommodation." So I think parents are a little bit more at ease when I'm able to have this conversation with them.

All participants felt that forming relationships with families was a strength of theirs and their schools. They spoke confidently about how these relationships were a priority and contributed to student success.

Participants also discussed relationship building between students and teachers as a critical component of supporting student learning needs. Their comments went beyond indicating that the student-teacher relationship was important by characterizing the type of relationships that were beneficial to students. Anne, for example, discussed how listening to students could change a teacher's approach to supporting them in particular with behavioral needs. Anne stated:

> I found that they needed to be listened to. If I could get that student just give them space and time to calm down and then just hear them, like what happened, or why, you're going to understand what was going on and you're going to understand what the trigger was or what you could do to prevent it. The number one thing I think you have is to do is to let the child know that you love them and that they can trust you.

Joey too felt building trusting relationships was critical to working with students who had disabilities. In his experience as a special education teacher, he believed that his success was

more attributable to his ability to form positive relationships than other factors. As a principal, he sought to hire staff who also had this ability. Joey reflected on relationship building as a critical skill:

> I mean that's the number one quality. If you can find somebody who can have the patience, the care, and empathy to really deal with kids of all kinds you're going to find somebody who can help kids with special needs, whether those needs are significant or not. There are people on campus I can really rely on because they do such a great job building those relationships with kids. That's what I look for when hiring. A lot of my interview questions are about relationships. When is a time you built relationships with the kids? How has that helped you? That's what helped me as a special ED teacher. It wasn't because I was the greatest teacher, it wasn't that I was the smartest person, because none of that is true. It was just that I was really good at getting to know those kids.

Anne commented on the importance of relationships in implementing effective student supports. She believed that no matter what supports you had available, they only were effective when applied within the context of a strong communication relationship with students. In reference to strategies used to support students Anne said:

> What do you need? Let's try this. I don't think there's a one size fits all method, that this technique works for this or that student. I mean, I think that's the biggest erroneous mistake of all. People say, "Give me something to do with this attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) student." Well, I could give that to you, and it might not work. The student might be like, "Why are you giving me this? I'm going to throw this across the room. I don't need this."

Both Anne and Joey felt that building relationships was the most important factor to support student learning needs. They and other participants felt that these relationships were facilitated by the environment created in Catholic schools.

Some reported that the small school environment at their site allowed them to easily provide individualized supports to students. Monica said of the environment:

> You know at a Catholic school you tend to know each of the kids more closely, because we are smaller.

She felt that as a result, her team was more successful at identifying effective student supports and passing them on. Bailey also attributed her ability to be flexible with students and find effective supports to the small school community. Bailey stated:

> I think we do a really good job of continuing to try new strategies. If one thing doesn't work out, we try something else. There's not really a lot of just like. "Oh let's just pass them on you know it's not working" I think the small school environment is really helpful with that.

Joey contrasted his experience in Catholic and public school environments and noted how the small school environment of the Catholic schools enabled relationship building. Joey commented:

> You're going to get to know you know the kids in your class, you know, for years, upon years, which means their parents know each other. Your teachers know you really well, the teachers care about building a relationship with you. You know all that stuff only comes here at the Catholic schools; it can't be built like that in the public schools. With all those relationships that are being built, we get to know a kid on a much more detailed level, especially when they have issues, whether it's academic or social or emotional. I was dealing with a kid, who was having those issues. If we were in the public school setting, we would have never even approached this kid on this topic. Student issues are a little bit more glaring here, only because of our size, but in a good way.

Julia also commented that the character of the small community also supported the development of positive relationships and ultimately, helped support student learning needs. Julia stated:

> I think the number one thing that is great with the Catholic school is the environment itself. That is ideal. It's a faith Community, we're a small community where we're kind of really connected and become one family. That in itself is all about support and communication and I think is ideal.

Lack of Capacity

Another theme that emerged from the data was a lack of capacity for participants to practice inclusion. This was defined from the literature as a perception of disability grounded in the medical model and a lack of the ability to implement evidence based practices for inclusion

either within or outside of a structured inclusive framework such as MTSS (Agran et al., 2020; Fagella-Luby & Bonfiglio, 2020; Kinsella, 2020; Lahane & Senior, 2020; Mahoney, 2020; Tiernan et al., 2020). Both quantitative and qualitative data pointed to this lack of capacity, which was expressed as a lack of participant confidence in specific practices and the notable absence of the discussion of evidence based practices to support inclusion.

Quantitative Data

Table 3 depicts the results of Part II of the survey regarding self-efficacy in knowledge and skills for inclusive practice. The results of this part of the survey present a greater degree of diversity than those of Part I. An appropriate generalization of these findings would be that as the requirement for specialized knowledge and experience increases, practitioner confidence decreases. Some areas, particularly those related to relationship building and communication, participants identified as areas of strength. For instance, participants expressed high levels of confidence in their ability to form positive relationships with families (M = 1.39, SD = 0.65) and engage in problem-solving collaboration with family members (M = 1.47, SD = 0.55). Similarly, though not as strongly, participants were confident in their ability to positively guide student behavior (M = 1.90, SD = 0.97) and to apply positive behavioral supports for all students (M = 1.72, SD = 0.78). Yet, what participants understand as positive behavioral supports was not measured in the survey and interview data suggest there may be a lack of knowledge concerning best practices like PBIS. Respondents also reported that they were able to effectively work with outside professionals to support students with disabilities (M = 1.81, SD = 1.02), though many also reported a lack of awareness of what services were made available by these professionals (M = 2.39, SD = 1.29).

Participants reported less confidence in classroom level skills for providing accommodations for students' learning needs. Regarding assessment, 27% (n = 20) of participants disagreed that they were aware of methods to effectively assess the skills of students with disabilities, 61% (n = 45) agreed and 12% (n = 9) remained neutral. As skills became more targeted to specific needs, participants' confidence levels decreased. For example, varied levels of confidence were reported for adapting the classroom environment either physically (M = 2.17, SD = 1.11) or through adaptive instructional materials (M = 2.77, SD = 1.39). In the latter case, 37 (50%) agreed that they were able to locate and use adaptive instructional materials, while 26 (35%) disagreed and 11 (15%) remained neutral. Regarding communication needs, 65% (48) of participants reported using strategies to encourage communication development, while 45% (34) reported familiarity with alternative forms of communication. Finally, participants reported a low level of confidence in their ability to position students with motor impairments (M = 3.99, SD = 1.17).

Table 3

Self-Efficacy in Knowledge and Skills for Inclusive Practice

Part II Survey Item	*M*	*SD*	*Mdn*
I am aware of ways to effectively assess the skills of children with disabilities.	2.57	1.17	2.00
I can arrange the physical environment to meet the needs of all children, including children with disabilities.	2.17	1.11	2.00
I know where to locate and how to use adapted learning materials (e.g., fidget toys, weighted blankets, hearing adaptive technology, specialized writing implements, etc.)	2.77	1.39	2.50
I know how to initiate, develop, and maintain positive relationships with families (e.g., reciprocal communication, honoring preferences).	1.39	0.65	1.00
I know how to engage in collaboration and problem solving with parents and/or family members (e.g., understand different perspectives develop mutually beneficial solutions).	1.47	0.55	1.00
I am aware of the services provided by related professionals (e.g., speech and language pathologist, physical therapist, child psychologist).	2.39	1.29	2.00
I am able to effectively work with professionals from other disciplines (e.g., speech and language pathologist, physical therapist, child psychologist).	1.81	1.02	1.00
I am familiar with how to develop a Support Team Education Plan (STEP).	2.53	1.40	2.00
I understand how to implement STEP goals and objectives into an existing curriculum.	2.31	1.31	2.00
I am able to implement positive guidance approaches to encourage appropriate behavior with all children, including children with disabilities (e.g., assist children to learn expectations, environmental considerations).	1.90	0.97	2.00
I use effective strategies to facilitate positive behavior with all children, including children with disabilities (e.g., smooth transitions, natural consequences, redirection).	1.72	0.78	2.00
I incorporate strategies to encourage communication skills with children with disabilities (e.g., mirroring, self-talk, using descriptive statements).	2.23	0.98	2.00
I am familiar with alternative forms of communication and their use (e.g., sign language, picture systems, specialized augmentative devices).	2.96	1.28	3.00
I know how to position children with motor impairments (e.g., use of wedges and supine standers, proper lifting techniques).	3.99	1.17	4.00

Note: n = 74

Qualitative Data

Subthemes emerged in the qualitative data that characterized lack of capacity as a lack of knowledge and resources. This lack of knowledge and resources was connected to the emergence of another subtheme, that of resistance to inclusion encountered by participants. This section will review these subthemes as they emerged from the qualitative data.

Lack of Knowledge

The first subtheme to emerge in lack of capacity was a lack of participant knowledge concerning inclusive practice. Despite strongly held positive attitudes toward inclusion, survey respondents reported lower levels of confidence in inclusive practices. This is consistent with the belief reported by 50% (n = 39) of participants that strategies and adaptations to support students with disabilities are not easy to implement. Survey participants expressed a large range of skill levels regarding specific adaptations for students with disabilities, especially when compared to questions concerning communication, relationship building, and beliefs about inclusion. Analysis of the interview data revealed similar variations in confidence and expertise in providing supports for students with disability. Joey expressed a high level of confidence in his ability to assess students and create an environment to support the diverse learning needs of his student population. He drew on his confidence from his experience as a special education teacher and administrator when engaging in conversations with parents and staff, and also made several policy changes at his school site aimed at creating a more inclusive environment.

Joey described these changes in his interview:

> One big accommodation that I put in place this year that I used to do with my special ED students was that I changed the schedule. I included into our school bell schedule something called “JAG” period, for all of our fifth through eighth graders. It's a 20-minute period in the middle of the day, where all the students have to write down their work. On Fridays they actually teach a 20-minute executive functioning lesson to the students and so that way they're actually getting some intentional instruction in this area.

In addition to implementing schedule changes and targeted executive functioning supports, Joey also hired additional staff to help support his students’ needs. Specifically, Joey reported that he created a full-time counselor position, which “has been helping a lot with social-emotional

development for our kids." Anne expressed similar confidence in adapting the instructional environment to support students. Anne recounted:

> Any student that I had with a disability, I wanted to learn as much as I could. I'd go talk to doctors or I'd go to the professional development on whatever student needs I was working with, dyslexia, ADHD, etc. I just wanted to learn what strategies can I implement to help this student be their best, and that's how I learned a lot by just working hands on with different students. I then found that often I'd be the person other teachers would ask for help from. I was the person that could get the students back on board.

In contrast to Joey, Anne's knowledge of support strategies was not drawn on education alone, but from on the job experience and independent professional learning. Anne's desire was to learn as much as possible to build her capacity to support any student, a disposition which she said was important to growing as a professional.

Other interview participants did not express similar confidence or provide specific examples of adaptations to their instruction. Apart from Joey and Anne, who had experience working in special education and public school settings, none of the participants discussed implementing elements of known best practices for inclusion. Some referred to providing extra time on assessments, individualized tutoring, checklists and other executive functioning supports. More frequently, participants reported a process of continual trial and error informed by student performance and collaboration with the family. However, collaboration with family was discussed as an informal process with no mention of how meetings were organized, how goals were created and communicated, and what follow-up processes were in place. Student performance was discussed, but typically in a general fashion by which teachers identified students who were "struggling". The use of assessment data to drive a goal setting process or inform changes in the instructional environment was not discussed. When speaking of assessment, participants most frequently discussed referring students for specialized assessment

and support services provided by public school districts, rather than implementing specific adaptations themselves. Established frameworks for inclusion, such as MTSS, UDL, PBIS, co-teaching, and peer mentoring were noticeably absent from participants' responses.

Support Team Education Plans (STEP) were discussed by some interview participants. A variety of beliefs concerning STEP were expressed. This mirrored the diverse levels of expertise reported in the survey items pertaining to STEP creation (M = 2.53, SD = 1.40) and implementation (M = 2.31, SD = 1.31). These differing perceptions of STEP were exemplified in Bailey and Isabella's interviews. Bailey identified specific processes that take place in the production and implementation of STEP plans at her site. She discussed the student support log and other components of the STEP program as important to her practice. Bailey stated:

> I think that the STEP program is a really good idea, I think that it really helps you get started on how you're going to help students. I think the hardest part with the STEP program is the follow through. Meeting with a team of teachers and the principal and having those meetings and having like a STEP committee is really a lot of work, but I think it's useful.

Bailey's response was not typical, however. Other participants did not comment on STEP as a critical component of their practice for students with disabilities.

Rather, participants generally discussed STEP as an administrative process carried out in parallel to their supports for students with disabilities. Isabella's description of STEP was characteristic of how most interview participants referred to the program. Isabella stated about STEP training that:

> They take you through the paperwork and administratively what to do, but it's not training in what to do if you, say, have a student with oppositional defiance disorder, for example, or who is displaying behaviors like a child who has ODD. It's more just about the logistics of okay you meet with the family, you create an individualized behavior plan you write it down, you set some goals you, you make sure there's a timeline, but it doesn't tell you like what those goals could be or what strategies could be put in place.

> That's probably because we have so many different types of students that they can't really cover that in a two-hour training.

She also shared that from her perspective, STEP served the function of a legal protection justifying the exclusion of students with disabilities. Isabella stated:

> It is really how to cover yourself if you have a student who, you need to give a STEP plan to so that if it doesn't work out you've done what you need to do to not be at fault for anything.

What emerged from both survey and interview data was that STEP is actively practiced in Catholic schools for students with disabilities, but with varying degrees of program fidelity and understanding of its function. Teachers with no experience in the public school setting may see STEP as a valuable component of their instruction, but most educators and administrators view the STEP program as a purely administrative or legal function with little to no value for supporting inclusion.

Lack of Resources

A second subtheme that emerged from the qualitative data was a reported lack of resources to support inclusive schools and classrooms. Participants nearly universally expressed that they felt ill equipped to support students with disabilities in their contexts, despite noting many positive cases and outcomes for these same students. This was particularly evident in the open-ended survey responses. Several participants expressed doubt in Catholic schools' abilities to provide adequate support, often citing the lack of specialists to provide targeted interventions as well as a general lack of knowledge. One participant noted, "I wish I knew more about helping [students with disabilities]." While another related that "We do not have all the supports necessary to support students with learning disabilities." Still another commented that "I know

enough to understand that I am not trained to effectively service students with disabilities. Public schools have access to specialists and resources within their schools."

These excerpts are illustrative of the feelings of inadequacy reported by interview participants as well. Both in the survey responses and in interviews participants reported feeling that they were either undertrained, under resourced, or both. Monica, who felt confident in her abilities to support all students, related how she worked as a principal to bring training to her staff that she missed out on during her first years of teaching in Catholic schools. Isabella noted that:

> Our [Catholic school] teachers and administration don't necessarily have the tools and the resources and the educational background to support students that way.

For many, the challenge in implementing classroom level strategies for inclusion came down to knowledge and time. Bailey and Linda both commented that they needed training and time to effectively support students with additional needs. Bailey remarked:

> I think a little bit more training would be helpful, like more training for me to keep up on what the newest practices are. . . . You know it does take extra time to make the accommodations I do. You know, like reading the test out loud to them that takes their time and my time.

Linda shared that while knowledge is readily available, it may not be accessible or adequately resourced for Catholic educators. Linda shared:

> Okay, the knowledge is out there to help students. It is not always accessible for Catholic School teachers. So yes, knowledge is one part of the problem. Another part of the problem is identification and implementation. Here is where public schools have an advantage over private schools. They have the resources, the funding and the staff to identify and implement strategies for students. The STEP program is the Archdiocese's solution to this problem. But, even though it is available, it is not practiced at each school nor are there enough resources such as staffing to implement it.

Julia and Joey expressed similar concerns about the time and workload placed on teachers to create inclusive classroom environments. Julia stated:

> Sometimes teachers think that I have my standards to get to and so many things to do, it's hard to provide that additional support.

Joey further commented on the effects of workload on Catholic school teachers:

> We can't as expect our general ED Catholic school teachers who are already making less than the public school teachers, who are already feeling overworked…you take all of that and then you ask them to make specific accommodations on a form that looks like an IEP or 504. You know that's just adding to the work. Then you get to all this legal paperwork, I mean you might as well just forget about the whole [inclusion] plan, it's not going to work. You're going to get people burnt out.

Many participants compared their resources and training to those present in public schools as well. When asked what areas we can improve upon for including students with disabilities, Isabella felt that parents were forced to make a choice between receiving a Catholic education and effective support services for their children:

> I think, just the services that their students might need, you know public schools have teachers specifically for special education, they have pull out programs, they have counselors at their disposal. I know that some families do end up leaving because they want their child to get those services, or they just say "We understand we're not going to get those services and you're going to do everything you can." But that's I think what the compromise is, then, that there are other services that a child can get at a public school and they can't always get it, a Catholic school.

Julia also believed that a lack of resources was her school's largest barrier to effectively serving all students.

> The lack of resources, including funding, to support students in our biggest battle. Whether it's hiring a resource teacher or an aid in the classroom…it's hard you know to have the resources for that.

Joey, who notably had an extensive professional background as a special educator and administrator in public schools, also felt that resourcing was a challenge compared to public school settings he had worked in. Joey recalled:

> You know we'll have kids that need that additional aide support from time to time, and we just don't have the resources to provide that support like you would at a public school. We're able to provide extra time on tests, smaller groups for test settings, things like that, we're able to provide all that. But having the kids, you know, even have the ability to have any type of review, where they can actually meet with a special ED teacher, that's an accommodation I've used a lot in IEPs in the past, and that's something that we don't have access to. I'd say if I could sum it up into one thing, it would be that we have a lack of resources. Really it's just a lack of staff. We don't have the financial backing to provide anything more than that STEP coordinator for these kids who struggle and you know a big part of that is because we have to use our tuition money the public school systems get state money for this.

Anne, who also had previous professional experience in public schools, believed that resources were a challenge, but also remarked that the differences between public and Catholic schools were not as large as typically perceived. In her role, she had encountered several Catholic educators who believed students with disabilities did not belong in Catholic schools, in part because Catholic schools lacked necessary services. Anne noted:

> I think a lot of it is ignorance even like in terms of what's best practices are now in public education. Typically, you're put in General ED even in public school, and a lot of what we do isn't much more than what's done for the children at the public school. I mean there's so much room for us, I think, to incorporate and help students with disabilities, I think, with us the challenge that I see is a financial one.

The resource deficits reported by participants were expressed both as specific staffing needs and a more general expression of a need for training and funds. These expressions carried more depth for participants than simply a statement of fact, they reflected an attitude that was nearly universal among participants. While most expressed a strong desire to include students with disabilities in their classrooms and schools, most also felt that there were limitations in their

ability to do so in their current contexts. It is important to note that this disposition didn't reflect a desire to exclude students with disabilities, but rather a concern for students' abilities to grow and thrive. In some cases, resource limitations, be they training, staffing, time, or otherwise, impacted these educators' ability to effectively create inclusive environments. At times, this led to students being transferred to other schools. Joey, and Isabella, and Anne identified past experiences where students transferred to public schools because of a lack of support resources in the Catholic school setting. In describing her experience, Isabella remarked:

> So, it was unfortunately I don't think, at least, while he was with us, it was definitely not the best situation for him, so I hope that when he went to a public school, he was able to get the help that he needed.

Reflecting on a similar circumstance, Joey stated:

> I did a series of observations, just like I would have been in the public-school settings, and had a meeting with parents, and asked the parents to go get an assessment for their child. The assessment came back that the child had autism, so now that that child is in a placement that's more suited for them.

Anne shared her emotional response to having to inform a parent that resources would not be available for their child:

> I mean it breaks my heart when I'm not able to provide services to a parent who calls me. You have those parents or kids who want to stay in the Catholic school, but she can't afford to pay for the two private aides her child would need, and I don't have a pot of money for her either so I have to say, "I don't have money, I wish you could stay, I think you're going to have to go to a public or charter. She wants to stay, and we'd love to have her stay, but I don't have any money for her to pay for her child's aides.

In each case, the participants recognized that the present learning environment was not beneficial to their student and took steps to support that student. In each case, the decision to transfer was made in concert with the student's family. Both of these circumstances exemplify the reality that

for these educators, while the desire to be inclusive was present, resource limitations ultimately influenced their ability to create an inclusive environment.

Lack of Capacity and Resistance

The third subtheme to emerge was that participants encountered resistance to inclusion apparently driven by the reported lack of capacity for inclusive practice. Participants reported that they had encountered opposition among Catholic educators to including students with disabilities in Catholic schools. This perceived resistance from colleagues emerged from a lack of individual or institutional capacity to create inclusive environments. For Julia, the opposition she encountered came in the form of a long-entrenched school culture that felt that students with disabilities belonged in public schools. Julia reflected about the disposition:

> The culture that has been at this location, and hopefully I can help change that, has been if they have special needs, they to need to go to public school, we don't have services to help them. I had a different mindset than that, so I always worked with the students and the parents. The goal I have is to create that culture here going forward where, working with alongside parents and the [public] school districts, and even the Archdiocese to provide supports, because in the end, once they get to a certain grade they were always told "Okay, there are no other services we can provide for you so, you have to go to a public school."

Julia further commented on a particular experience she had as both a teacher and STEP coordinator that exemplified this attitude:

> I've had students with IEPs. In my personal experience it was always, "let's set goals and make progress towards those goals" whereas other teachers were not as willing to work with them. I would pass them on to the next grade and the teachers were like, "They're not ready, they need to go back" And then, I'll never forget this, one second grade teacher sent some students back to my class to read to me what they wrote. So that's the thing, we know that they're not average, but you have to work with them.

Julia felt that the teacher who sent the students to her was offering proof that the student didn't belong in her class, or that she did not have to adapt her instruction to support the student. Linda spoke of similar experiences in her role as STEP coordinator:

> I feel that the biggest problem that we have as Catholic schools is the previous concept of teaching. It wasn't required for teachers to implement programs for students who had either an academic, social or behavioral problem. There was little consistency across the board in a school of how to help a child. Teaching was this way: here are your standards, now teach them and teach them the same for everyone. What is important? Is there a system to identify a student, help the student and continue this throughout the years? This is the one area where public schools do a much better job than we do. I actually had one teacher, two years ago, when I explained to her what she would be doing with the STEP program she said, "No, I'm not going to do it".

Anne reported encountering similar dispositions among her colleagues. She perceived that the attitudes of her colleagues were mixed, that there were some who felt that it was inappropriate for students with disabilities to be in Catholic schools, or that it was too difficult, and that there were those who held this attitude because of a lack of knowledge. Anne related in her interview:

> I think in a lot of people's minds there's this idea that we don't have to deal with "these kids." You know, they're for public school, public school takes care of these kids, this is too much, we can't help these kids, we're not trained to do this with these kids. They say, "these kids" you know, which that in itself is terrible to say. They say, "This is why I'm teaching in a Catholic school, or private school, so I don't have to deal with this." or "I'm an administrator I thought handbook says we can just let people go if it's not working." They don't want to deal with them, and then I think the other side of it as you talk to them, is that they don't know how to [support students with disabilities].

Other participants also indicated that exclusionary dispositions may be the result of a lack of knowledge or confidence rather than a stand-alone belief. Monica indicated that Catholic educators mostly fall into the category of wanting to include students with disabilities, but not knowing what that looks like. She reflected on her experience on a trip sponsored by the Archdiocese to explore the system of inclusionary practices in Northern Ireland. Monica related:

> It seems to be a very American thing that many of our teachers have this mindset of "I'm a teacher, send them to a special ED teacher, I shouldn't have to deal with this." It really prompted for our group, the discussion of, we need a mindset change because even our private school teachers, even our Catholic school teachers, it's easy to fall prey to that mindset. I feel like out of all the teachers in the, in this, nation, Catholic school teachers are the least in that mindset, but we're still to some extent there. Even if it's just from this point of view of "I wish I could address the needs of this child, but I don't know how." I think that's so often where Catholic educators fall. So that prompted a huge discussion in our Ireland group about how we need to not only change the mindset of our teachers and our schools and our other principles, but we also need to provide tools. We need to practical and applicable strategies to bolster the teachers' toolbox that they feel confident to no longer just say "I'm just teacher" but be able to say, "I'm a teacher of all students."

This view aligns with the survey data which indicated that Catholic educators hold strongly positive attitudes toward inclusion but express less confidence in inclusive practices. The prevailing theme that emerged from interview data was that a strong desire existed to support students with disabilities, but practitioners lacked the confidence in their ability to do so. Ultimately, where resistance to the idea of inclusion was reported, it appeared to be grounded in this lack of confidence or common perceptions of special education advanced by the dual system of education in the United States.

Leveraging Public Resources

A key finding that emerged from the analysis of network and interview data was the degree to which Catholic schools relied on external resources to support inclusion. Of the four networks detected by the survey, all but one had connections to public school resources. Many also reported having support relationships with non-profit organizations, specialized consulting agencies, and higher education institutions. Whether these relationships were formalized, or the result of interpersonal relationships was not always specified. However, interview data suggest that access to public school resources through a support relationship is crucial to bridging resource gaps for Catholic schools. The data also highlight the importance of categorical funding

received for low-income students, who may also have additional learning needs related to disability. In any case, partnerships with public school districts and other agencies, where they exist, enable Catholic schools to be more inclusive.

Network Cases

Insufficient data were collected to create a network map of ADLA secondary schools or schools within a particular region. Further, because of the incompleteness of network data, quantitative measures of network analysis such as degree centrality, betweenness centrality, and density did not produce meaningful results. However, from the 37 participants who provided responses to survey questions seeking network data, four bounded networks were identified. Each of these four networks has been treated as a case which was qualitatively analyzed and compared to network data collected from interview participants and survey responses. Patterns identified in this analysis that can be treated as emergent themes (Daly, 2010). In doing so, characteristics of network relationships may be identified and transferred to other cases, but not generalized, in a manner typical of qualitative research (Mills & Gay, 2019).

The network data were non-directional and intended only to detect the presence of a relationship not its potential strength or other attributes. Thus, a network edge was defined as simply the existence of a named relationship between two actors. The only presumed quality of the relationship was that these actors exchanged information or resources to support students with disabilities in some manner. To detect the existence of the networks, an adjacency matrix was created where a “1” indicated the presence of a relationship and a “0” indicated an absence. These data were then uploaded to UCINET software to generate a visualization of the network

data (Borgatti et al., 2002). When isolates and simple dyads were removed from analysis, four networks, disconnected from each other, remained.

Adjacency matrices were created for each of the four networks. These matrices were then used to generate network diagrams in UCINET (Borgatti et al., 2002). A coding scheme was applied to ensure participant confidentiality while being able to distinguish between organizations. Table 4 contains a legend for interpreting alphanumeric codes as well as color and shape representations in network diagrams. Catholic schools were assigned a Greek letter designation, public schools, public school districts, and higher education organizations were assigned a Hebrew letter, and an additional designation of "EXT" was created for unknown or non-academic organizations.

Table 4

Legend of Symbols used in Network Visualizations

Organization or Role	Nominal Code	Graphic Symbol or Color
Catholic School	Greek Letter	
Public School or Public District	Hebrew Letter	
College or University	Hebrew Letter	
Non-Education Organization	EXT	
Teacher	T	Blue
Administrator (Principal, Vice Principal, Assistant Principal, Dean, District Admin)	P, VP, AP, D, X	Green
Counselor	C	Yellow
Learning Specialist	T	Pink
Consultant	Y	Red
Unknown	U	Red

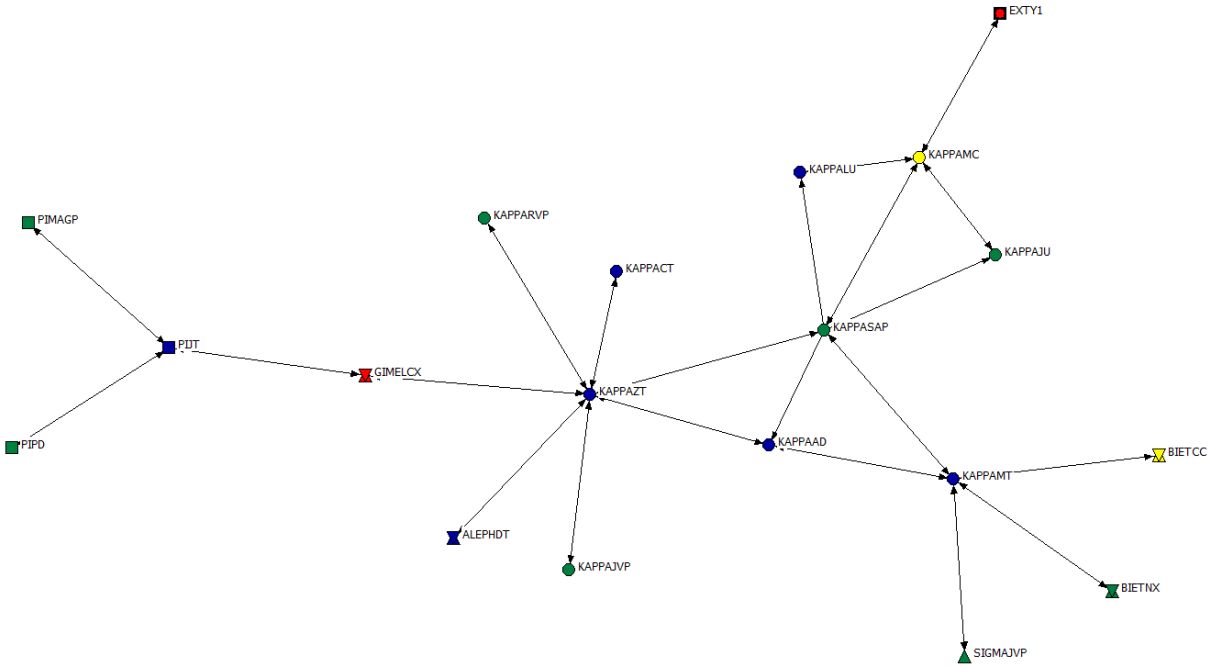
Each actor was assigned a nominal code beginning with their organization type, followed by an individual initial identifier, and their role. In the event of duplication, a number was added to the end of the actor code to differentiate actors, e.g., "ALPHAJT" and "ALPHAJT1"

Network Case 1

Figure 1 depicts the network diagram derived from data provided by participants from St. Erasmus, “KAPPA” and St. Drogo, “PI”. Both high schools are independently operated private secondary schools within the Archdiocese of Los Angeles.

Figure 1

Network Diagram of St. Erasmus and St. Drogo



This diagram depicts a network where single actors connect what would be otherwise isolated groups together. These actors can be spoken of as bridgebuilders between network groups. In this case, multiple bridgebuilders exist both within individual schools and across organizations. These structures can help facilitate Within St. Erasmus, an Assistant Principal, KAPPASAP, appears to link two groups of teachers together, acting as a potential pathway for information sharing across the organization. This actor shares a connection with a teacher at St. Erasmus, KAPPAZT, who also acts as a bridgebuilder. KAPPAZT not only connects three otherwise

isolated actors within St. Erasmus to other groups via KAPPASAP, but also acts as a connector between St. Erasmus and two public school resources.

One of these sources, GIMELCX, is a district administrator responsible for overseeing special education services provided to private schools within their district. GIMELCX also acts as a bridgebuilder for two otherwise disconnected Catholic schools. In this case, both schools reside in the boundaries of the same school district, and both have independently worked with GIMELCX to coordinate services for students with special needs. This relationship is unique in part because no other connections between the schools were reported and also because of the shared resource these schools have through GIMELCX.

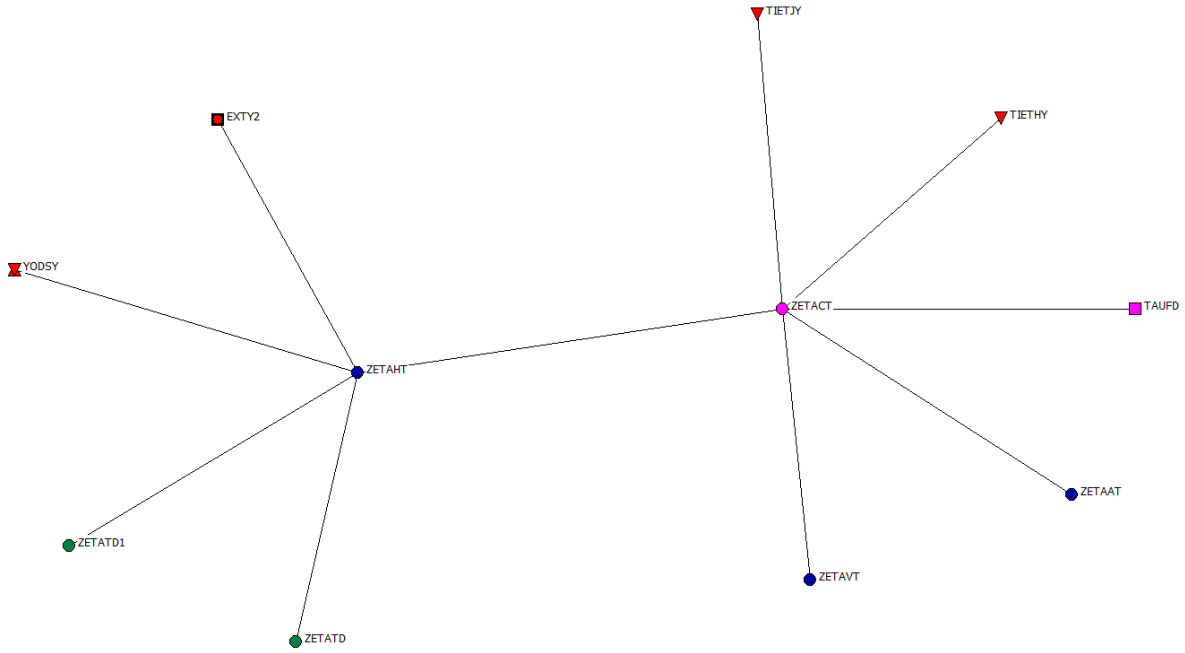
Another notable aspect of this network was that it presented a case which was rich in connections to external resources. In total, six outside resources were identified by participants in this network. These included GIMELCX, three other public school relationships, one Catholic school relationship, and a Licensed Educational Therapist/Speech and Language Pathologist. It is unknown whether these specific resources have formal or informal connections to St. Erasmus, with the exception of GIMELCX, whose relationship whose relationship is formalized with respect to their organizational role.

Network Case 2

Figure 2 presents the network diagram for St. Edward Academy, "ZETA", which is an independently operated private secondary school within ADLA. The diagram of St. Edward's depicts two actors in a dyadic relationship, each with a number of connections unrelated to the other actor. This structure is likely due to incomplete network data; however, relevant patterns can still be identified

Figure 2

Network Diagram of St. Edward Academy



St. Edward was similar to St. Erasmus in the number of outside resources named as network connections. In this case, five outside resources were identified by participants. These resources include one public school teacher, one Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA), one learning specialist at a Catholic secondary school, and two university faculty. In this case as well, the exact nature of the relationships these resources have with St. Edward's is mostly unknown, with the exception of the public school teacher and Catholic school learning specialist, who have informal relationships with participants.

Two unique aspects of this network are of note. First, two learning specialists have been identified, one an employee of St. Edward and another employed by another independent Catholic school. Both learning specialists were connected, creating a bridge between two schools where information and resources dedicated to supporting students with disabilities may be

exchanged. The existence of a relationship between learning specialists, with training and expertise directed at support students with disabilities, was not observed in other networks and did not emerge from interview data. Second, the learning specialist at St. Erasmus, ZETACT, also maintained relationships with faculty at a local university. While the nature of these ties was unreported, their existence provided another example of a resource that was not identified in interviews.

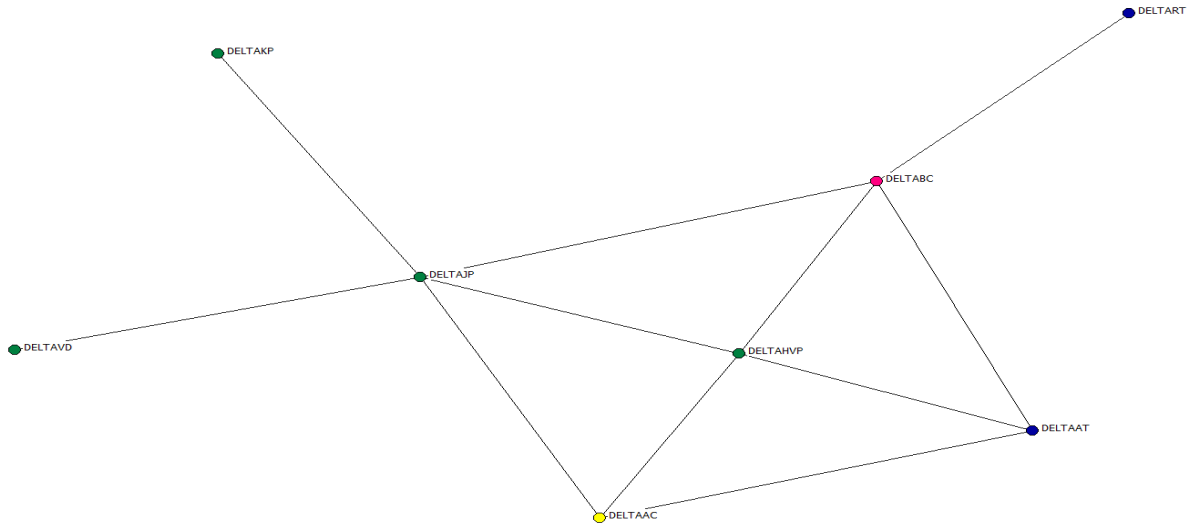
Network Case 3

Figure 3 presents the network diagram of St. Elizabeth Academy, "DELTA", an independently operated private school within ADLA. This network is unique in that no outside resources or connections to other Catholic schools were reported by participants. It is important to note that this does not mean these relationships do not exist, but their absence is significant due to the number of external resource connections reported by other participants.

In this network, the attributes of internal actors are more significant than their connections to outside organizations. St. Elizabeth has two counselors on staff including one, DELTABC, who also holds the title of learning specialist and LMFT qualifications. Additionally, another actor in this network is a qualified attorney. Also, as most actors in this network reported relationships with each other, the structure of this network appears to depict an administrative team who work together to support students with disabilities.

Figure 3

Network Diagram of St. Elizabeth Academy



Network Case 4

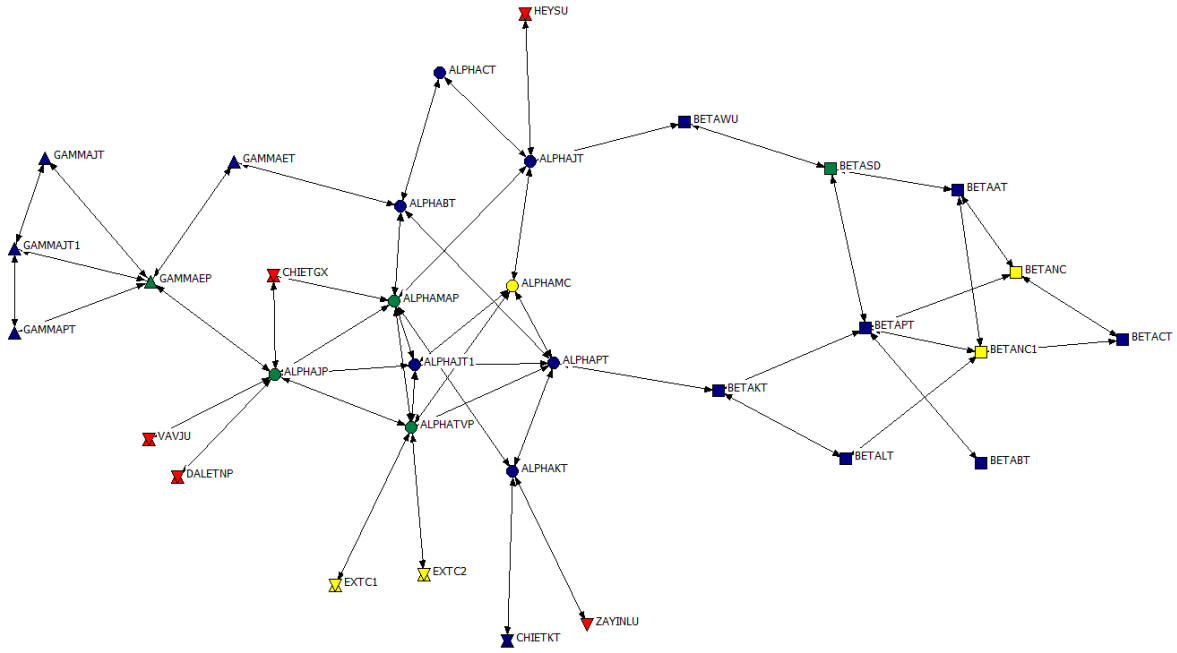
Figure 4 depicts the network diagram of three archdiocesan secondary schools, St. Athanasius "ALPHA", St. Xavier, "BETA", and St. Therese, "GAMMA". These schools exist within close geographic proximity. In contrast to schools in the other represented cases, each of these schools is governed by the Archdiocese of Los Angeles and the Department of Catholic Schools.

The greater number of shared relationships in this case is not due to a higher response rate, but rather to a greater number of reported ties to other individuals in each organization and across organizational boundaries. A total of eight connections to outside resources were identified by participants in this network, notably all from St. Athanasius. These connections included one higher education representative, two public school district administrators, two public school teachers, two additional public school district employees and two counselors from non-academic organizations. The two public school district administrators had a formal

relationship with St. Athanasius providing supports to teachers and students through categorical funding programs. The remainder of the relationships were either informal or not specified by participants.

Figure 4

Network Diagram of Three Archdiocesan Schools



The structure of this network indicated that information and resources acquired from outside resources are diffused throughout the network. In short, this diagram depicts a high level of collaboration between actors to support student needs. In this case, multiple bridgebuilders connected the three schools. These connections between schools occurred at multiple levels, including teachers and administrators, indicating that these collaborative relationships were maintained systematically, rather than through individual chance connections. However, whether the connections between schools was formalized or the result of informal relationships supported by the organizations was not reported.

Varied Experiences of Public School Support

Interview participants reported several examples of collaboration with public schools to support students with disabilities. All interview participants reported some level of collaboration with public schools in supporting students with disabilities. In most cases, this was reported in the form of referral for assessment. Joey, Julia, and Isabella provided specific examples of referring families to public school districts for assessment to identify an eligibility for special education services. However, some participants also shared a much more developed relationship with public schools that allowed for an exchange of material support services for students with disabilities.

Julia and Bailey both reported that their partnership with the local public school district was very supportive. Julia shared that she was discovering new resources offered through the district. "I'm finding out that the local school district actually holds monthly professional development and offers that to our staff. As a teacher I had no idea that all these years that they had these monthly professional development trainings." She also reported that the district provided on site speech and language support services to her school. Bailey also noted that the public school district was a supportive resource for her and her students. She identified that there were personnel at the public school dedicated to providing support to students at private schools. She stated that:

> The school district really helps us out, they have a psychologist who's just for the private schools. I'd call them, I met with the psychologist, I met with a special education teacher who was in charge of private schools, and they would not only you know evaluate the students who needed to be assessed, but also give the tips for what we can do.

Monica also felt the relationship her school had with the public school district was positive. She also reported that the public school district was working closely with them to provide services

for students on site. In her case, this assistance came through the form of categorical funding. She shared:

> We work very closely with the local public school district here in town, and actually we're lucky in that we're the only private school for this district. They're helping us to set up this year, being able to use our title funds to hire our own reading and special needs specialist.

Isabella mainly discussed her relationship with the public school district when it came to referring a student for assessment, but she also felt that her experience was positive and that she received support in less formal ways. She noted that:

> I can kind of talk them through what the student is experiencing, or what the teacher is experiencing and kind of get an idea of what they think could be going on and then they've given me their extension or direct line to get the parents in contact with them and the process has moved fairly quickly.

She also related that some of her students with disabilities received services through the district off site. She reported:

> We do have some students who go to their home [public] school if they need occupational therapy or some number of minutes per month of pull-out services. We are able to make that work.

Isabella also shared that she was able to receive overlapping support services on campus from the public school district through categorical funds. These services she said were able to provide low-income students with disabilities "with more individualized attention for their academic needs."

These positive, highly developed relationships between public school districts and Catholic schools was not universal. Linda observed that:

> Okay, according to the state education code, all public schools are supposed to provide support for the private schools. That's a beautiful sentence, however, it does not work that way, especially in the poorer districts. In these districts, the management says we do not have enough money for our own students so, no. They seem to forget that the public

> education code states that all students living in a particular area are that public school's responsibility. I have only had two instances where I've had support from the district in our area.

Anne commented that other states provided public funding to Catholic schools, but that in California this was not the case. She said of the matter:

> I think in some states Catholic and private schools actually receive state money for special education. Sometimes you'll hear about this Catholic school being inclusive in another state, and you find out they're getting public funds. I would love for that to happen in California. If we could get public funds for special education for us, it would be a game changer for sure.

In general, most participants reported that their relationships with public schools were positive and enabled them to support students with disabilities more effectively. However, these relationships, where they existed, were not of a consistent nature. Some districts were reported to have multiple personnel assigned to support Catholic and other private schools both on and off their respective campuses. Others provided services only off campus for students receiving SPED support, and still others did not provide support other than assessment.

Leadership and Community of Practice

Another finding that emerged from analysis of both network and interview data was that while collaboration was viewed as essential to inclusion, inter-school support relationships were few. Collaboration between teachers at individual school sites is variable, and no structures to support collaboration dedicated to inclusion were reported. Similarly, while deanery and diocesan level relationships exist, it did not appear that these relationships were supported by a strong system to foster mutual support and collaboration for inclusion or otherwise. However, participants reported a desire to create such a system, and even proposed mechanisms by which such collaboration could occur and provide effective supports to teachers and students. Resource

sharing and leadership prioritization were proposed by participants as pathways to fulfilling the desire of Catholic schools to realize inclusion. This section will review the subthemes of collaboration efforts, leadership influence, and resource sharing as they emerged in data analysis.

Collaboration Efforts

Survey and interview participants reported varying experiences with collaboration to support students with disabilities. Survey respondents did not provide specific examples of collaboration at their school sites but did comment on the importance of working together. One participant noted, "Collaboration among teachers, staff, and admin is key." While another commented that "A team approach is most effective for all." Interview participants provided a few specific examples of their experiences collaborating with colleagues. Monica commented on the relationship she shared with one teacher who had experience as a parent raising children with disabilities. She noted how she had learned from her and that "She has spent her time teaching working to include all students and all student needs, so we have worked well together to build that." Linda also shared how her principal had provided her with dedicated time to lead professional development sessions on supporting student learning needs. Bailey spoke of how she was able to collaborate with colleagues from other schools during deanery meetings. She noted during these meetings:

> We sit by grade level and that has been really helpful because we bounce ideas off each other for the students who need more support or who need to get additional just additional help in general. We kind of bounce off the ideas of what we do within our grade level, and it's been super helpful. There hasn't been anything really geared towards students with disabilities, specifically. But I would say, when we talk about certain students, we normally bring up the ones that we're having a hard time helping out.

Monica also discussed collaboration at the deanery level. She shared that "Across the board the deanery is very supportive of each other." She also mentioned that prior to the COVID-19

pandemic, her deanery had discussed ways to change current professional development to be more supportive of teachers of students with disabilities. Julia also discussed deanery meetings and training with other schools but did not share the same experiences. Julia did not consider these meetings as being directed toward student supports and stated that it had been over two years since she had last attended one.

Leadership Influence

One part of the Catholic school environment that was not captured in survey data was leadership. Interview participants, however, commented on the impact of leadership on inclusion in Catholic schools. The most apparent relationship between leadership and inclusive practice was the impact of leadership on dispositions. Linda observed that the principal played an important role in influencing the disposition of teachers at their campus. Linda reflected that:

> The principal that we have now, this is very, very important to her. She allows meetings for me, as STEP director, to give presentations to the staff. I'm available for teachers which is a valuable tool when you can teamwork and discuss strategies back and forth. There's a lot more willingness for the teachers to jump on board, since it is a principal priority.

Anne shared similar observations concerning the impact of leadership on dispositions about inclusion in schools. Anne observed:

> There’s also the disposition barrier. I think that's bad because you can do amazing things for a student, even if you have no money. If all of the teachers are on board, and administration’s on board, and the pastor’s on board, and you have the right attitude, you can do so much. But if you're not open to students with disabilities and the pastor isn’t open to it and the principal isn’t and the teachers aren’t, it’s not going to happen. We have a lot of schools where that's the case, and disposition is free, that doesn't cost any money.

Joey and Isabella provided examples of how as principal, they implemented policy changes to support the creation of inclusive environments. While the impact of their efforts on dispositions was not reported, these efforts provided examples of leadership making active and intentional changes in their school culture to support inclusion. In Joey's case, this included hiring personnel and changing the school schedule. For Isabella, it was improving fundamentals of instructional practice and consistency of their implementation. She said, "The first line of defense is making sure that there's practices in place for everybody." She reflected that when she first became principal, she "perceived that there was a lot of need for structure and systems being put in place" to support learning. She worked to build consistency in "lesson design that was straightforward" and "standards based". After she worked to build her staff capacity in these areas, she established a system to identify students with additional needs and set goals for them. She reported that once an additional need is identified she works with teachers to establish "an individualized plan with the student and with the parents."

While these principals provided examples of leadership actively engaged in creating inclusive environments, the absence of clear policy also impacted these efforts. Joey posed the question:

> I see a growing number of kids with disabilities and 504s in the public school ranks and, they're growing to astronomical numbers. Has the archdiocese or anybody come out and said, "this is what we're looking to do?

Isabella remarked that the current system makes supporting students with disabilities a challenge Isabella also commented about the STEP program specifically, saying:

> I don't know how effective is because it's not used with fidelity at every school and I'm including my own, because I don't know enough about it.

Anne commented that the mission and values of Catholic education say, “we’re here to include everybody”, but that she thought “policies and money are not backing these things.” Linda summed up her beliefs about the need for clear direction by saying:

> It would be wonderful to have every Catholic School have the STEP program with the resources and staffing to actually make it work. I understand that money is always a matter in the situation with Catholic schools, but is it a priority or not? If it is a priority, then let’s start designating people who have had the background, who have had the education, let’s put them in charge of working with the teachers, be the teacher’s assistant in this matter.

Resource Sharing

Participants felt that resources needed to be made easily and immediately accessible to teachers. Julia commented that it would be helpful “if there was a place where teachers could go for resources to support students with not a lot having to search for it so it’s easily manageable accessible.” In a similar statement, Joey said “When teachers or school staff hear ideas like this, the first thing they think of is oh my God it’s another meeting, it's another professional development.” Another concern participants expressed was the need for personnel dedicated to supporting inclusion at Catholic schools. Bailey expressed the need for someone to provide her with support either by pulling students aside who needed additional support or by giving her the ability to focus on students with additional needs. Joey also felt that having personnel dedicated for inclusion was needed. He said, “I think that Catholic schools need to think about a really viable option if this is what we want to start doing with our schools, we need to have more inclusion specialists on campus.” Yet, participants also recognized resource constraints in their schools and in ADLA in general. In reflecting on the need for additional, dedicated inclusion support in light of resource constraints, the notion of resource sharing emerged in several interviews.

While not currently a part of the Catholic school ecology in ADLA, a number of interview participants proposed that a resource sharing framework could be adopted to support inclusion in Catholic schools. Joey proposed adopting a program he implemented for school security as a possible model to support inclusion. Joey shared:

> I met with all of the people who were in charge of school safety at all of our local schools, whether they were private, Catholic, public whatever it was, and we had about 10 people come, we built a security network. We talked to each other, and we were able to reach out to one another, if we were having any issues or if there were issues in the community that we all need to know about. I always thought it'd be something cool to do in SPED also right would be to build that network with your local public schools or other private schools. And having you know, a standing meeting you know once or twice a year, where you talk about your instructional practices, and ways that you were able to fund resources on campus and "hey I know this guy you know, he would be great for your campus" things like that, just networking.

He also discussed having immediately accessible resources for teachers through the use of technology. He felt that this would reduce the perception that this network was "another meeting". Joey proposed:

> One thing that we did in the security network was that we had a shared drive where any type of security practices or presentations about new system being used in the school or something like that you'd put it in the drive. Now we're all sharing resources. That was a huge benefit for us because it's great to have that network that gets away from the meetings. We don't have to meet once a month, we can drop the resources and if you care to look at it great, if you don't then you're done.

In her interview, Monica proposed a similar idea:

> If we were to have a deanery you know, like a diocesan wide, almost like social media platform where there could be a first-grade teachers' group and second-grade teachers' groups, an all teachers' group, a principals' group, etc. Where a teacher who has a problem can just hop on to people who understand their reality, because they're in a similar boat, and say "I've got this student he's doing X, Y and Z I'm at the end of my rope and looking for what to do, anybody have ideas?" And everybody can chime in and say "I tried this, I use this resource, this is what I did" and they could really be having that shared support for each other. Someone else reading it might also say "Oh that's similar to what I'm going through, I could use that too"

The concept of resource sharing participants proposed extended beyond mutual information exchanges through technology. Isabella suggested that personnel could be assigned to multiple schools to support cases that may need additional expertise. She proposed the idea of a "STEP team that could visit schools who are specialists in the field and could help give more specific tools to schools." Linda suggested a similar framework:

> Because we have limited funds and resources, why not in a particular area share a STEP coordinator, speech therapist, therapist, etc? We can contribute to the finances for each of these particular people. Schools would contribute financially according to the percentage they use each staff member.

Anne discussed building on similar structures that already exist within the Archdiocese to create a support network similar to what other participants described. Anne proposed:

> We could have a full-time inclusion person that could like oversee inclusion like how we do with the networks that we have, STEM, dual-language immersion, etc. They could oversee inclusion and they could even little team underneath them, similar to how we have academic excellence specialists, but it would be an inclusion specialist. It would be nice to have one for each region.

Conclusion

This study sought to describe the network of formal and informal relationships that support students with disabilities in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. Data were collected through the distribution of a three-part survey and a series of interviews. Analysis of the data yielded four key findings: (a) a desire for inclusion exists and is grounded in Catholic identity, (b) there is a perceived lack of capacity to create inclusive classrooms and schools, (c) teachers and leaders rely on public supports, but with varying degrees of effectiveness, and (d) teachers and leaders believe that leadership prioritization and resource sharing are pathways to build capacity for inclusion.

Catholic educators believe that inclusion is integral to the mission of Catholic schools and felt that they have a moral and vocational duty for inclusive practice. They are resilient, creative, and dedicated educators that worked to achieve the best possible outcomes for all their students as whole persons. These educators had varied levels of experience and knowledge concerning inclusive practices, reflecting their varied personal and professional backgrounds. These same educators have encountered resistance to the idea that Catholic schools are capable of inclusion, and themselves felt undertrained, under resourced, and under supported.

A variety of different types of relationships existed to support inclusion at Catholic schools. The strongest of these was between teachers, students, and families as well as educators at individual school sites. Public school relationships provided vital resources to teachers and students, but the depth of these partnerships varied widely. Some collaborative interchange existed between Catholic school sites, but no formal relationship structures were reported to support inclusion. Catholic educators expressed the desire to create structures across the Archdiocese to strengthen network relationships to support inclusive practice, and proposed models they felt would be successful in doing so. The following chapter will provide an interpretation of these findings and recommendations for future research and practice.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Catholic schools are impelled toward inclusion by virtue of the common mission which has emerged from Catholic teaching (Paul VI, 1965a; Scanlan, 2009; Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977). Yet in the United States, numerous challenges have limited the progress of Catholic schools in practicing inclusion. Previous research identified finances, resource deficits, and entrenched institutional dispositions have acted as barriers to inclusion at scales beyond individual school sites or small groups of schools (Boyle & Hernandez, 2016; Crowley & Wall, 2007; DeFiore, 2006; Scanlan, 2008; 2009; 2017). Boyle and Bernards (2017) proposed an integrated approach to inclusion in Catholic schools which required development of knowledge, skills, and dispositions across multiple echelons of the Catholic school ecology. The researcher theorized that the community of practice model, in concert with an understanding of these communities through the lens of network theory, could help support the creation of systems to support a sustainable diffusion of knowledge, skills, and dispositions at scale. Previous research has proposed communities of practice as essential components of inclusion (Kinsella, 2020; Molbaek, 2018; Mortier, 2020) and of the development of social justice praxis (Scanlan, 2012) at the organizational level. This study sought to explore existing communities of practice within the Archdiocese of Los Angeles and describe the nature of their work to support the inclusion of students with disabilities in Catholic schools. The research question that guided this study was: What formal and informal relationships support the inclusion of learners with disabilities in a sample of schools from within the Archdiocese of Los Angeles?

To answer this question, the researcher collected and analyzed data using a convergent mixed methods design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Data were obtained through a survey instrument which measured beliefs and self-efficacy of inclusive practices and collected information regarding relationships that facilitated the exchange of information and resources to support inclusion. Semi-structured interviews served to provide depth and context to survey data and further characterize information regarding networks of relationships that support inclusion. Data from these sources were analyzed and converged in three phases in order to provide a tiered, in-depth description of the communities of practice of the participants. Results were triangulated to ensure consistency, reliability, and validity (Mills & Gay, 2019). This chapter includes a discussion of the findings, implications for theory and practice, as well as recommendations for future research and praxis.

Discussion of Findings

Key Finding 1: Desire for Inclusion

Boyle and Bernards (2017) noted the criticality of developing inclusive dispositions grounded in Catholic social teaching. Here, the data suggest that Catholic educators in ADLA are in remarkable agreement. Not only did they believe that it is an integral part of the mission of Catholic education, but they also recognized the value that these students added to their classrooms and campuses. There was a deep awareness of the dignity of all students and the effectiveness of the Catholic school environment at uplifting this dignity in community. Interview data also indicate that Catholic educators have grounded this belief in their faith. Overwhelmingly, Catholic educators reported a belief that all students can learn, that all students belong in community with one another, and that it is the responsibility of Catholic schools to

reflect the natural diversity present in the Body of Christ. Further, Catholic educators also did not heavily distinguish between student needs that are the result of disability and those resulting from natural variation, background, or other causative factors including trauma. They openly and proudly discussed how their campuses embraced all students with love, compassion, and a belief that learning is a matter of whole person growth. Catholic

These educators were confident in their ability to form positive, problem-solving relationships with students and their families. educators are expert at developing relationships with multiple constituents. Unsurprisingly, Catholic school teachers and leaders emphasized the importance of clear communication, shared language, and collaborative problem solving with students and families. These equitable partnerships are a key component of inclusive practice (Smith et al., 2020) and part of the philosophy upon which Catholic schools are founded, namely, that parents are the primary educators of students (Paul VI, 1965a; Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977). That these partnerships are prioritized is a remarkable testament to the power of the mission and philosophy of Catholic education to provide a common ground.

This finding indicates that the dispositional barrier traditionally reported is not present in ADLA. In fact, the reported dispositions suggest that the mission and values of Catholic education are a strong uniting bond among schools that are geographically and socially distant. This, chief among all findings, indicates a strength within Catholic education that is not found among many organizations. A strongly held common purpose provides the fertile ground from which a highly effective community of practice can emerge and be nurtured (Scanlan, 2012).

Key Finding 2: Lack of Capacity

Boyle and Bernards (2017) integrated framework proposed that development in knowledge, skills, and dispositions was needed at the classroom level. Specifically, the authors recommended that teachers must increase their knowledge of disability and its impact on students and second, build their capacity to implement evidence-based inclusionary practices. This study found that classroom teachers and school leaders have varied levels of experience with disability, but that an overall systemic deficit in both disability knowledge and practitioner experience existed. This deficit can be identified most clearly in the absence of data rather than what was observed. Many relied on personal experiences and relationships outside of an educational context to inform their practice. Most participants reported little formal training on disability and many expressed ideas about disability that reflected prevalent exclusionary attitudes. Descriptions of cases of students with disability and practices used to include these students were also notably absent from the data. When asked about strategies used to support inclusion, no interview participants discussed currently accepted best practices such as UDL, MTSS, or even differentiation by name. Some indirect allusions were made to Response to Intervention (RTI), but these were limited in scope to behavioral challenges. No participants reported receiving training directed toward inclusion as a result of their employment in Catholic schools; however, some participants reported experience working in SPED settings in the past. Joey, for example, relied on this experience and shared this expertise within his school site as a principal. He mentioned past work with co-teaching, but this is not used in his current practice. Joey is, however, in the minority of Catholic educators with extensive professional training and

experience working with SWDs. Further, the expertise that Joey had was not positioned within a community of practice with systemic supports in place to be diffused across school sites.

Participants also reported encountering resistance to the idea of inclusion among their colleagues. This resistance does not seem to be the result of a principled exclusionary stance, but rather a belief that has emerged from a lack of self-efficacy, institutional knowledge, and organizational will. In other words, it is the result of institutional culture not the cause of it. In school sites where leaders prioritized inclusion either through their stated vision, practical actions, or both, staff reported that the belief that Catholic schools could not support SWDs appropriately was reduced. Even among these sites however, there were challenges. Leaders and teachers recognized the additional time and resources needed to create truly inclusive environments. Principals were reluctant to impose additional workload on an already overburdened staff, and even teachers dedicated to the notion of inclusion admitted that time and resources limited their capacity. Training on the STEP program was the only policy or practice at the diocesan level consistently mentioned by participants. Many participants were uncertain of how to develop STEP plans or implement STEP goals into existing curriculum. Participants largely did not see STEP as a vital component of their services, but at best as an administrative procedure and at worst a justification of exclusionary practice. Multiple participants remarked that there was an absence of diocese level supports in either the form of training or material resources that would indicate inclusion is a leadership priority.

This dichotomy characterizes the attitude of Catholic educators: We're here to include everyone, but we don't know how. Yet, ironically, the majority of the ingredients that create high quality inclusive schools are already present in Catholic school communities. Catholic schools

have an innate organizational flexibility and strong commitment to mission that has contributed to successes schools have already had with inclusion. However, key elements of high-quality inclusive practice are missing. Valuing personal dignity, relationship building, and problem solving are not enough to create inclusive classrooms. Nor does the mere presence of students with disabilities in general education settings (Armstrong, 2002; Kinsella, 2020; Slee & Allan, 2001). Integration of students with disabilities and inclusive dispositions are a strong foundation, but they are just that, a foundation. Skills must be developed to ensure that all students, including SWDs are in fact growing and thriving in these classroom communities.

Key Finding 3: Leveraging Public Resources

Some wealthier independent schools have taken steps to increase their internal staff capacity to support student needs. These schools have hired qualified learning specialists or counseling staff and have even adjusted elements of their campus life to create a more inclusive environment. However, schools without the resource capacity to hire these personnel have relied on support partnerships with public school districts and other outside professional agencies. This finding suggests that a significant gap in practice exists between high- and low-income schools with respect to inclusion. The nature of this gap was not identified in this study. It may be theorized that wealthier schools possess greater internal resources to support SWDs, and therefore rely less on publicly available resources. The efficacy of wealthier schools versus lower income schools at inclusive practice was not explored in this study and should be a focus of future research and leadership examination.

Perhaps most surprising, were the partnerships established with public schools by lower income Catholic schools. These partnerships provided material aid to students, and in some cases

training for teachers as well. Both elementary and secondary schools reported a support relationship for SWDs. Some of these public resources were directed specifically to SWDs, while others, purposed for low-income students, were applied to support SWDs indirectly. While relationships with public school districts were frequently reported, the quality of these relationships was highly dependent on individual school district policy and leadership. More plainly, these relationships are inconsistent and unreliable when viewed at levels above individual schools. The case is similar with higher education and non-education organizations. Some schools reported relationships with educational therapists, psychologists, or other professionals to provide services or training for their staff. More frequently, these relationships are informal and originate from individual school employee connections. There was no consistent framework in place to support building either public school partnerships or connections with outside organizations. In both cases, data suggest that these relationships are developed as a matter of convenience or happenstance rather than strategy.

Key Finding 4: Leadership and Community of Practice

In their discussion of inclusionary practice in Catholic Schools Smith et al. (2020) described high quality inclusive schools as having cultures built around shared ideas, driven by leadership committed to inclusion. In this area, Catholic schools are decidedly siloed. Some schools have developed exchange networks with other Catholic schools, but these are incidental to other structures and inconsistent across the Archdiocese. In particular, elementary and archdiocesan schools appeared to have more frequent connections within and across their organizations than did independent schools. This suggests that the organizational structure of these schools facilitates relationships building between them. Deanery meetings were cited as a

location where ideas were shared between teachers and school leaders, facilitating the diffusion of knowledge and skills across school sites. However, these meetings occurred infrequently and with varying purpose. There were no systems in place to support the shared learning toward a shared goal that characterize a true community of practice (Kinsella, 2020; Scanlan, 2012; Smith et al., 2020). The exchange of information and resources to support inclusion in these contexts was again incidental, not intentional. The absence of clear direction and commitment to inclusion by leaders at individual school sites, deaneries, and the Archdiocese means that the systems that do exist to support the diffusion of knowledge and skills are underutilized for this purpose and do not constitute a community of practice for inclusion, or other specified purpose.

The ecology of Catholic schools is highly fragmented. This structure facilitates the adaptability of Catholic schools and their responsiveness to local community needs. This is very much in line with the principle of subsidiarity found within CST (USCCB, 1998) and is one of the key strengths of Catholic school organizations. However, the principle of subsidiarity does not mean that all challenges should be addressed at the local level, but that authority and responsibility should be assumed at a level fitting to address the problem at hand. The nature of inclusion requires that it be taken up by a community of practice approach. This means inclusion cannot be left to individual teachers or school leaders to implement, it must be developed through the intentional shared learning of knowledge, skills, and dispositions enabled by organizational leadership that is committed to this purpose. In short, as Boyle and Bernards (2017) suggested, an integrated approach is required.

The data from this study suggest that for this integrated approach to take root, a clear vision from diocesan level leadership is needed along with a pathway to enable the shared

learning to achieve that vision. Where policies do exist to support inclusion, Catholic educators have observed inconsistency in the implementation of these policies within their school site and at others and question the priority of inclusion in Catholic schools. Participants believed that current policies regarding inclusion painted it as a legal risk and a drain on resources rather than an essential component of mission. As a result of this, Catholic educators have felt a sense of confusion from the inconsistency between the expressed mission of their schools and policies that appear to diminish the importance of that mission. Participants proposed that diocesan level leadership had been moving toward policies that support inclusion, but that it was critical to establish a clear vision for what inclusion should look like on Catholic school campuses. Additionally, participants felt that this vision must be supported by policies and structures that enabled growth in school capacity.

Participants recognized that beyond a clear vision, there was a need to diffuse both knowledge and material support resources across school lines. They suggested that structures were needed to strengthen the network ties between schools. Recognizing the challenge of acquiring funds for this purpose, some proposed efforts be directed at forming a formal support system to exchange internal knowledge and skills. They felt that a digital network would provide easily accessible resources for teachers. Others, recognizing the need for additional expertise and leadership, proposed a diocesan wide network dedicated toward inclusion. They suggested that the financial burden be shared by all schools in alignment with their use of these resources. This framework of resource sharing is also a step toward realizing justice more fully in the Catholic school system.

Future Research

Network Research

This study revealed a fragmented organizational structure to support inclusion in Catholic schools. Understanding how network structure impacts the diffusion of knowledge, skills, and dispositions across large organizations is critical to developing systems that support strategy. This information is critical for leaders of large organizations to implement policies to foster communities of practice at the school and classroom level. Future research should seek to understand more about how Catholic schools relate to each other and what systems enable resource sharing. While this study did not make full use of the tools of network analysis, it did establish that network diagrams that illustrate relationships and attributes of network actors can be used as an effective research tool. Network research should be continued and expanded to help researchers and practitioners better understand the impact of existing network structures on school communities and students. Future research should continue to apply network research methods in innovative ways, particularly with an eye toward informing decision making at the diocesan or district level. Different structures of school governance should be further compared, as should differences in school locations and demographic composition.

Additionally, this study identified several partnerships with public schools that worked to support SWDs in Catholic school settings. The nature and effectiveness of these partnerships should be explored to provide leaders and practitioners with guidance in developing such meaningful relationships. Further, this information could assist Catholic school leadership in developing a greater level of consistency in public school relations through advocacy, policy changes, and political engagement.

Anthropological Model for Inclusion

One of the critiques of Inclusion has been its resistance to rigorous definition. This study proposed an anthropological model for inclusion that defined inclusion as a philosophy of practice and synthesized existing literature into four discourses. The anthropological model for inclusion frames inclusion as praxis grounded in ontological assumptions regarding the human person. The consequences of these assumptions as practiced in an educational context can be organized according to four discourses: (a) inclusion as ontology, (b) inclusion as morality, (c) inclusion as pedagogy, and (d) inclusion as social justice. This model could be used to create a new survey instrument that can be used for both research and practical purposes. Such an instrument could be used to measure beliefs concerning inclusion, frequency, and efficacy of practice toward inclusive aims, and outcomes of inclusion for teachers, students, and school communities. Ultimately, the anthropological model of inclusion could provide the theoretical foundation for a new shared language of inclusion for both researchers and practitioners.

Effects on Enrollment

Lastly, researchers should explore the impact of inclusive practices or the lack thereof on the enrollment of Catholic schools. Resource deficits were listed as a common limiting factor for inclusion, yet little is known about how many students and families leave Catholic schools as a result of exclusionary environments. Participants reported both that families were forced to choose between a Catholic education and receiving appropriate services and that inclusive practice would lead to increased enrollment. As enrollment is a primary driver of resource generation in tuition-based schools, the question of the impact of inclusion on enrollment is natural.

Implications and Recommendations

Public Policy

Policymakers should consider the impact of policy decisions on students with disabilities in non-public schools. This study revealed multiple exiting support relationships between Catholic schools and their local public-school districts. While some of these relationships were positive and yielding an environment conducive to collaboration and skill diffusion, this was not the norm. Policies, be they state or local laws or administrative guidelines should support collaboration rather than competition between public/private schools in supporting all students. Further, while specific goals may vary between public and private institutions, the common purpose of supporting student growth and learning remains. Both types of institutions further the public interest and common good and the cross collaboration between professionals from these different contexts can result in mutual learning.

Further, Catholic schools are not homogeneous, they reflect the diversity of the communities which they serve. As indicated in the results, many students qualify for and receive Title 1 services at Catholic schools. These services provide supports that schools serving low income and working-class students likely would not be able to afford. Families who would otherwise receive services through the public school district under IDEA (1997) for free still typically do not receive these services while enrolled in a Catholic school. While IDEA (1997) does not mandate that LEAs provide services to students at non-public schools, it does not prohibit this either. Families with SWDs in Catholic schools from low- and middle-income backgrounds typically do not have the resources to afford privately funded support services, and benefactors who provide funds dedicated to these services are uncommon. The result is an

inequitable distribution of supports across the Catholic school ecology between wealthy and low-income families, and a similar disparity between SWDs in private and public schools.

Higher Education

The findings of this study indicate that Catholic school teachers who have completed a teacher preparation program are unprepared to create inclusive educational environments. While teacher preparation programs are not wholly responsible for the development of professional educators, the design of these programs furthers practice guided by an ideology of exclusion under the medical model of disability and the dual system of education. While specialty professionals including psychologists, occupational therapists, speech therapists and the like are essential components of creating inclusive environments, the idea that teachers must be specialized to support SWDs is unfounded. However, teacher preparation programs reinforce the notion of segregated classrooms by providing high levels of training on disability to SPED teachers and very little to GENED teachers. Teacher preparation programs should address inclusion as a mode of educating students with disabilities. Currently, teacher preparation programs rely on IDEA (1997) structures for education of both SPED and GENED teachers. Programs should be reframed to support the idea of inclusive practice and supporting student needs first, followed by legal and administrative structures. Specialized programs in inclusion can pave the way for an increase in knowledge, skills, and practitioner confidence while also working to create networks of support for practitioners.

Diocesan Level Leadership

The findings showed that the raw materials of dedicated teachers, shared philosophy, quality equitable partnerships with stakeholders, and isolated pockets of professional knowledge

all exist across ADLA. Two pieces were missing that would bring these resources together to create high quality inclusive schools. The first is a clear vision for inclusion at the diocese level, and the second is an actionable framework to realize that vision. Ultimately, these suggest that the missing link for highly effective inclusive practice is leadership. Dioceses should intentionally message inclusion within their vision and strategy. This, perhaps more than any other action, would advance inclusionary practice in Catholic schools greatly. Vision statements that focus on legal requirements, medical definitions of disability, or contain caveats allowing for the dismissal of students because of lack of resources or lack of legal requirements create confusion among school leaders and represent a breach of moral responsibility outlined in CST.

Case studies conducted in Arkansas (Council of Chief State School Officers [CCSSO], 2021a) and Mississippi (CCSSO, 2021b) highlight the importance of a clear vision and structural supports at the district level and above for inclusion. The report from Mississippi (CCSSO, 2021b) begins by describing a school system with siloed development of inclusive practices and resources dedicated to compliance work rather than student supports. Their efforts at becoming more effective at inclusion began with a collaborative reconstruction of vision. This element, a clearly articulated and commonly held vision, is a critical component of developing communities of practice (Scanlan, 2012). This type of collaboration for vision establishes inclusion as a priority and allows for legitimate challenges to be named and addressed. From there, strategies can be implemented to support the collective learning required for schools to become more inclusive. This collective learning marks the second essential component of a community of practice (Scanlan, 2012). Such learning could be modeled on the work outlined in the CCSSO's (2021a) Arkansas case study, in which principals led the initiative to support diffusion of

knowledge and skills across SPED and GENED domains by focusing on High-Leverage Practices (HLPs).

The HLPs emphasized by Arkansas are not extraordinary or specialized in any way. They encompass well established teaching strategies that all teachers should be versed in (CCCSO, 2021a). In fact, many of the HLPs share common language with the core instructional practices already adopted by most general education teachers. The practices needed to support inclusion are well researched and have been successfully implemented at a number of schools, including Catholic schools (Scanlan, 2017). Frameworks like the HLPs, UDL, PBIS and MTSS provide a mold for inclusive practice at the organizational level, and more importantly, work to improve instructional quality for all students, not just those with disabilities (Smith et al., 2020).

Additional frameworks exist to support developing a system to capture and build upon existing institutional knowledge and resources. Resource sharing networks, like the ones proposed by participants in this study, exist in education and other industries. The Center for Army Lessons Learned (CALL) is a multimedia network that collects, analyzes, and disseminates key information learned by organizations in the course of their operations. This center connects widely disparate units across the United States Army and provides information to fill gaps in knowledge and practice. The information is readily accessible and available to any Soldier, along with contact information for subject matter experts inside and outside of the organization. The center itself creates and curates publications that include after action reports, reflections, updates to standard operation procedures, and other information concerning the profession of arms (Center for Army Lessons Learned [CALL], 2021). The CALL model could be adopted to create a center for educational excellence, dedicated to providing a readily

accessible hub for information and resources to support the education of all students. This model could be applied at any scale but would be most effective at the diocesan or national level.

Organizations that exist specifically to support inclusion also have a presence in Catholic education. The FIRE foundation has partnered with Catholic schools across multiple dioceses to provide material support to schools' inclusive practice. This includes funding, but also consulting services, and detailed guides to create inclusive environments in Catholic contexts (FIRE Foundation, 2022). The National Catholic Board on Full Inclusion provides readily accessible contact information for inclusion specialists, school leaders, and researchers engaged in the work of inclusion in Catholic schools (National Catholic Board on Full Inclusion, 2022). Model schools and dioceses exist where inclusion has been practiced successfully for many years. These schools and dioceses are diverse and consist of multiple demographic and economic compositions. Dioceses should look to partner actively with organizations like these to generate resources, however, these organizations cannot themselves be the progenitors of inclusive Catholic schools. This work must occur from within and must be led at the diocesan level. This is so because ultimately, the greatest limiting factor for inclusion at scale is not resourcing, knowledge, or skills, but rather the leadership commitment required for building communities of practice for inclusion.

School Level Leadership

As is the case at the diocesan level, clear vision and leadership are critical to efforts at developing inclusionary practices at the school level. In fact, the vision and structures implemented at the diocese level work best in the role of supporting the work of school level leaders in their individual school communities (Scanlan, 2012; Kinsella, 2020; Molbaek, 2018).

Indeed, the Arkansas (CCSSO, 2021a) and Mississippi (CCSSO, 2021b) case studies reinforce the role of principals in leading sustainable development in their school communities. In Arkansas (CCSSO, 2021a), it was an inclusive principal leadership initiative that drove efforts at furthering inclusive practice. The results of this study also indicated that where inclusive practice is prioritized by principals, changes in disposition and staff development follows.

In addition to setting a clear vision for inclusion at their school site, principals must also lead the implementation of frameworks to support inclusive practice. Providing a forum for cross-professional collaboration between teachers and other service providers is an effective way to increase disability knowledge (Hansen et al., 2020; Mortier, 2020). Further, these cross-professional collaborations could have a secondary effect of strengthening partnerships with public schools and outside organizations. Professional development focused on inclusive practices and an intentional evaluation of school policies in light of inclusive best practices could have a meaningful impact on students and teachers. Regardless of the particular support frame that is selected, the critical component remains building a community of practice dedicated to inclusion. This means principals must establish a clear vision and shared understanding of that vision among their staff, while designing support systems that encourage mutual development and learning in the process of realizing that vision.

Conclusion

This study explored how Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles connected to one another and to the world for the purpose of supporting the inclusion of students with disabilities. The findings indicated that Catholic school educators strongly support the inclusion of students with disabilities in their schools and believe that it is an integral part of their mission.

However, these same educators remain unsure of how to make inclusion happen. Many believe that the education of students with disabilities may best be left to specialists in specialized settings not on principle, but out of a lack of the self-efficacy in practice that comes from knowledge and experience. The Catholic schools in Los Angeles contain a wealth of highly dedicated professionals who work to live their mission as educators, in particular by forming strong and equitable relationships with students and families. Many of these educators already have professional backgrounds and experience supporting students with disabilities. Leaders in Catholic schools have independently forged relationships with public schools and outside agencies that contribute to their capacity to serve all students. Yet, progress in the mission of inclusion is startled and fragmented. School leaders and teachers are unclear as to the vision for inclusion at the diocesan level and seek support while scrambling to independently assemble necessary knowledge and resources. While some schools have established connections with others to support inclusive practice, there remains no dedicated network for professional collaboration in this area.

To say that Catholic schools are impelled toward inclusion by our commonly held teachings is significant. While legal requirements are compulsory, our movement toward inclusion emerges from within. The principles of Catholic teaching provide an unshakable foundation upon which inclusive practice can be built. Inherent personal dignity, formation of the whole person, community life, and social justice are built into the fabric of Catholic school identity. These don't just imply inclusion, they are inclusion. In this way, the largest barrier to inclusion in the United States has already been crossed. For Catholic schools, there can be no dual system, there can be no segregation, there can be no medical model of disability; there can

only be “the formation of the human person in the pursuit of his ultimate end and of the good of the societies of which, as man, he is a member, and in whose obligations, as an adult, he will share” (Paul VI, 1965a, para. 5). That challenges exist to the fulfillment of this mission is given, but the call of the Church is clear; this is a problem that requires “clear and positive thinking, courage, perseverance and cooperation to tackle the necessary measures without being overawed by the size of the difficulties from within and without.” (Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977). The knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to realize inclusive practice at scale are already present within our schools. The key to unlocking this commonwealth lies in creating a community of practice dedicated to realizing its own identity.

APPENDIX A

Survey Instrument

Informed Consent

TITLE: **Supporting Student Needs in Catholic Schools**

INVESTIGATOR: **Patrick Allison, School of Education, (805) 428-6227, pallison@lion.lmu.edu**

ADVISOR: Lauren Casella, Ed.D., School of Education, (310) 338-2700

PURPOSE: You are being asked to participate in a research project that seeks to investigate networks of formal and informal relationships that support students with disabilities in Catholic schools. You will be asked to complete a survey which asks you questions about your beliefs regarding inclusion of students with disabilities and your knowledge and skills to do so. This survey will also ask you to identify people with whom you share knowledge and resources to support students with disabilities in your context. At a later date, you may be asked to participate in an interview that will help explain the roles of certain people in supporting students with disabilities in Catholic schools. Not all participants will be asked to participate in an interview, and all participation is voluntary. Interviews will be recorded and later transcribed. Interview participants will be able to review the transcript of their interview.

RISKS: Risks associated with this study include: Risks associated with this study include those typical of taking any survey. A minimal risk exists that your responses may be released which could unintentionally affect your employment status or reputation. Your responses will not be anonymous, however, your identity will remain confidential. Only the investigator will have access to your responses. You will be assigned a pseudonym or a code to disidentify your responses with your identity.

BENEFITS: This study will help researchers and leaders in Catholic education understand how our professional relationships support students with disabilities. This information can be used to help teachers and administrators improve practice for students, and improve supports for students with disabilities overall.

INCENTIVES: Participation in the project will require no monetary cost to you. You will be offered a chance to participate in a drawing for three $50 Visa gift cards. Participation in this drawing is voluntary. You will have the option to opt in by emailing the investigator if you wish to participate. Three winners will be randomly selected and notified by the investigator via email at the conclusion of the study.

CONFIDENTIALITY: Your name and some demographic information about you will be collected as a part of this study. You also will be asked to provide names of those you share information and resources with to support students with disabilities. Your name and the names of anyone else, will never be used in any public dissemination of these data (publications, presentations, etc.). All research materials and consent forms will be stored digitally in a password protected file on a password and biometrically protected computer. Only the investigator will have access to these data. Any notes or hand-written materials will be stored in a locked cabinet only the investigator has access to. When the research study ends, any identifying information will be removed from the data, or it will be destroyed. All of the information you provide will be kept confidential.

RIGHT TO WITHDRAW: Your participation in this study is *voluntary*. You may withdraw your consent to participate at any time without penalty. Your withdrawal will not influence any other services to which you may be otherwise entitled. You may choose to not answer any question in the survey or in an interview without penalty.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS: A summary of the results of this research will be supplied to you, at no cost, upon request. To obtain a copy of these results, please contact the investigator at (805) 428-6227. Results will be available no earlier than February, 2022.

VOLUNTARY CONSENT: I have read the above statements and understand what is being asked of me. I also understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my consent at any time, for any reason, without penalty. If the study design or use of the information is changed I will be informed and my consent reobtained. On these terms, I certify that I am willing to participate in this research project.

- ◯ I consent, begin the study
- ◯ I do not consent, I do not wish to participate

Beliefs about Inclusion

The following section will present you with a series of statements about your beliefs and experiences working with students with disabilities. For this survey, a student may be considered to have a disability with or without a formal STEP plan. Disability can include physical, emotional, social, or cognitive impairments with or without formal diagnosis. Please select an option that corresponds to your point of view for each statement.

Children with disabilities should receive services in Catholic high school settings alongside their same-age peers.

- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Somewhat agree

- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Strongly disagree

The strategies and adaptations necessary to assist a child with a disability are easy to prepare and implement.

- ○ Strongly agree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Strongly disagree

Children without disabilities are positively affected by learning alongside their peers with disabilities.

- ○ Strongly agree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Strongly disagree

All children can learn.

- ○ Strongly agree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Strongly disagree

Children are more alike than different.

- ○ Strongly agree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree

- ○ Strongly disagree

Practice

I am aware of ways to effectively assess the skills of children with disabilities.

- ○ Strongly agree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Strongly disagree

I can arrange the physical environment to meet the needs of all children, including children with disabilities.

- ○ Strongly agree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Strongly disagree

I know where to locate and how to use adapted learning materials (e.g., fidget toys, weighted blankets, hearing adaptive technology, specialized writing implements, etc.)

- ○ Strongly agree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Strongly disagree

I know how to initiate, develop, and maintain positive relationships with families (e.g., reciprocal communication, honoring preferences).

- ○ Strongly agree
- ○ Somewhat agree

- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Strongly disagree

I know how to engage in collaboration and problem solving with parents and/or family members (e.g., understand different perspectives, develop mutually beneficial solutions).

- ○ Strongly agree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Strongly disagree

I am aware of the services provided by related professionals (e.g., speech and language pathologist, physical therapist, child psychologist).

- ○ Strongly agree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Strongly disagree

I am able to effectively work with professionals from other disciplines (e.g., speech and language pathologist, physical therapist, child psychologist).

- ○ Strongly agree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Strongly disagree

I am familiar with how to develop an Support Team Education Plan (STEP).

- ○ Strongly agree

- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Strongly disagree

I understand how to implement STEP goals and objectives into an existing curriculum.

- ○ Strongly agree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Strongly disagree

I am able to implement positive guidance approaches to encourage appropriate behavior with all children, including children with disabilities (e.g., assist children to learn expectations, environmental considerations).

- ○ Strongly agree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Strongly disagree

I use effective strategies to facilitate positive behavior with all children, including children with disabilities (e.g., smooth transitions, natural consequences, redirection).

- ○ Strongly agree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Strongly disagree

I incorporate strategies to encourage communication skills with

children with disabilities (e.g., mirroring, self-talk, using descriptive statements).

- ○ Strongly agree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Strongly disagree

I am familiar with alternative forms of communication and their use (e.g., sign language, picture systems, specialized augmentative devices).

- ○ Strongly agree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Strongly disagree

I am familiar with alternative forms of communication and their use (e.g., sign language, picture systems, specialized augmentative devices).

- ○ Strongly agree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Strongly disagree

I know how to position children with motor impairments (e.g., use of wedges and supine standers, proper lifting techniques).

- ○ Strongly agree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Strongly disagree

Network Identification Prefix

The following section is meant to help map relationships that may help support students with disabilities. Please provide as much of the requested information you as you can. Any names you provide will be kept confidential, and will not be included in the published results of the study.

Network Identification

Please provide the first name and last initial of up to five (5) persons with whom you exchange information and resources to help support learners with disabilities. These persons do not need to work at your school site, or have any particular qualifications. Anyone who you either provide, or receive information and resources from can be included.

Person 1	
Person 2	
Person 3	
Person 4	
Person 5	

For each person you named in the last question, please identify the school or organization they work with and their position within that organization if known.

Person 1	
Person 2	
Person 3	
Person 4	
Person 5	

Is there anything you would like to share about your experiences in serving students with disabilities?

Demographics

At which school site do you primarily work?

Please select your role(s) in your school - select any that apply

- [ ] Teacher
- [ ] Principal
- [ ] Vice Principal
- [ ] Dean of Students
- [ ] Dean of Curriculum or Academics
- [ ] Assistant Principal
- [ ] Counselor
- [ ] Athletic Director
- [ ] Coach

Please provide your first and last name. Your name will not be included in the study.

Please enter your email address

Block 6

Thank you for sharing your experiences and beliefs in this survey, your input is highly valued. Would you like to enter into a drawing for the possibility to receive one of three 50$ Amazon gift cards?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

Please enter your email address here, you will be contacted if you are selected in the gift card drawing.

APPENDIX B

Interview Protocol

I. Basic Information
   a. Date:
   b. Time:
   c. Place:
   d. Participant Demographics:
   e. Participant Pseudonym:
   f. File Storage:

II. Opening
   a. Introduce self
   b. Introduce purpose of the Study
   c. Obtain/Confirm Informed Consent
   d. Begin Recording

III. Interview
   a. Tell me a little about your professional background?
      i. How long have you been in your role?
      ii. What has your experience been working with students with disabilities?
         1. Have you been able to apply your experience in your current or previous roles in Catholic Schools?
         2. Could your experience be more meaningfully applied?
         3. Is there anyone you may know or have worked with in your previous roles that you could consult to help support students in your current role?
   b. Describe how you might work with others to support a student with additional learning needs?
      i. What learning needs do you see that your students have?
         1. Academic
         2. Behavioral
         3. Social Emotional
         4. Other
      ii. What practices do you or your team use to help support them?
      iii. Do students without disability benefit from being educated alongside their typically developing peers?
   c. What relationships are the most valuable in supporting students' needs, both with disability and without?
   d. Who would you go to if you or someone in your organization needed some extra supports?

i. Why?
ii. What kind of supports would help you or your team in your practice?
iii. Can I talk to them?

e. Do you connect with other Catholic schools to discuss student learning needs or supports for students with disabilities?
    i. Who do you connect with?
    ii. Why?
    iii. Can I talk to them?
    iv. Do you think these connections are effective?
    v. What might help schools grow stronger relationships with each other?
f. Do you connect with outside professionals, agencies, or schools for information or support to help students?
    i. What supports/services
    ii. How are they used?
    iii. How can these connections be supported?
g. Are there families, teachers, or other non-traditional sources of support that you know of or could call upon?
    i. Who are they?
    ii. What is their role?
    iii. Can I talk to them?
h. What are some things you see in Catholic education that are done exceptionally well for students with disabilities?
i. What areas can we improve upon?

IV. Closing
a. Thank Participant
b. Reaffirm Confidentiality
c. Explain Member Checking
d. Explain follow up procedures

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