Exploring the Experiences of Black Students in a Predominantly White, All-Male, Suburban Catholic High School: A Critical Narrative Qualitative Study

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Exploring the Experiences of Black Students in a Predominantly White, All-Male, Suburban Catholic High School: A Critical Narrative Qualitative Study

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education

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APPROVAL FOR SUCCESSFUL DEFENSE

Sean D’Alfonso has successfully defended and made the required modifications to the text of the doctoral dissertation for the Ed.D. during this Spring Semester.

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Abstract

This study examines the lived experiences and perceptions of Black alumni students in a predominantly White, all-male, suburban Catholic high school, particularly as they relate to a perceived culture of membership within the school. The exploration and analysis of these experiences shed light on various barriers that exist that prevent membership of Black students by marginalizing them in such a school setting. This study considers the following research questions: (1) In what ways do recent Black male alumni describe their schooling experiences in a predominantly White, all-male, suburban Catholic high school? (1a) How can a culture of school membership, if present, be understood through the counterstories of recent Black male alumni from a predominantly White, all-male, suburban Catholic high school? (2) In what ways, if any, do young Black Catholic high school alumni recommend promoting a culture of membership in a predominantly White, all-male, suburban Catholic high school?

Through a qualitative research design, the study utilized a critical narrative method to analyze semi-structured interviews with alumni students who had graduated from the school during the past six years. Four themes emerged in relation to Research Question 1: (1) a lack of White understanding of Black experiences, (2) the silence of Black students in the school, (3) the normalization of anti-blackness and the N-Word, (4) the importance of students’ backgrounds and transitions on their schooling experience. Three themes emerged in relation to Research Question 1a: (1) increased membership through involvement in school activities, (2) political discourse and school membership, (3) the barriers to assimilation for Black students to a White culture. Two major themes emerged in relation to Research Question 2: (1) the need to speak about race and culture, (2) faculty and staff diversity.
Dedication

The completion of this dissertation owes thanks to the support of many. I dedicate this dissertation first to my parents, who worked tirelessly to support my education throughout my life. I am so blessed to have two parents who instilled in me the importance of my faith, family, hard work, and the importance of and gift of education. Their selflessness and the sacrifices that they made so that I could receive an excellent education made this dissertation (and the path to it) possible. Thank you, Mom and Dad. I love you and I am forever grateful.

To my wife, Stephanie, I love you and am grateful for your support in this achievement and for always encouraging me in my pursuits. The road to this dissertation involved you sacrificing over many years and I can’t thank you enough.

To the young men who were participants in this study, I am forever grateful to you for taking the time to speak with me about your experiences in school and in life. Speaking with you and listening to your stories reaffirmed my belief that our world will be in good hands with you all as leaders in the next generation. It makes me proud to know that when our students graduate, they have male role models of great character like yourselves. Learning from you has also inspired me to continue working to make our school and our society a place where we see the Gospel alive, a place where every person is appreciated and valued for who they are.
Acknowledgments

There are many people who made this dissertation possible and supported me along the way in this pursuit. When Dr. Reid became my mentor, I knew that I had a thoughtful advisor who would encourage me but also motivate and challenge me in this research. Working with him over the last year did much more than reaffirm these thoughts. Dr. Reid’s positivity inspired me throughout the entire process of this dissertation, and his guidance and insights were invaluable to this study. I can’t thank Dr. Reid enough for his endless support as my mentor. It has been a pleasure getting to know and work with Dr. McCue over the past three years through the Catholic School Leadership Program at Seton Hall. As a Catholic school administrator, I learned a tremendous amount and grew as an educator thanks to Dr. McCue’s invaluable wisdom and experience and her tireless work with the program. I have been blessed to learn from Dr. McCue first as a student in the program and now as a fellow researcher. Thank you, Dr. McCue! I’d also like to thank Dr. Galloway for challenging me to question and more deeply explore my research. His thoughtfulness and insight inspired me to be more reflective during this study, which challenged me throughout the entire process.

I’d also like to thank the President of my school, who has been a mentor for me for many years and has supported me in my education since I was 14 years old. I am grateful to him for supporting and encouraging my continued education at Seton Hall and continue to be inspired by his support for Catholic education. I’d be remiss if I didn’t also thank my colleague Anthony for his invaluable support and guidance throughout my time at Seton Hall. I’d also like to thank the many men and women in religious life who taught and inspired me throughout my education.

I’d also like to thank the many family members, friends, and colleagues who encouraged me throughout my education. To the lunch bunch at Seton Hall, thanks for always being there!
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Problem Statement

Studies on “the Catholic school effect” and its perceived benefits over public education, including countless factors, are frequently debated by researchers, typically focusing on the academic performance of students on standardized tests or the acceptance rate into four-year colleges and universities (Bryk, Lee & Smith, 1993; Douglas, Lewis, Douglas, Scott, & Garrison-Wade, 2008; Fenzel & Richardson, 2019; Neal, 1997). Despite such debate, Catholic schools also provide an excellent educational option for many, as they promote the common good in a number of ways that are not always easily quantifiable, such as creating a strong sense of community (Coleman & Hoffer, 1987), a learning environment that promotes character development, social responsibility, and a general focus on and concern for holistic student development (Bryk et al., 1993). Given the historical mission and teachings of the Catholic Church, Catholic schools should be a reflection of Gospel values, connect all aspects of the school to mirror Jesus’ teachings, and work to ensure that all members of the school’s community and the culture of the school promote the same (Cook, 1998). However, a deeper understanding of the history of Catholic schools in the United States uncovers a more complex legacy and experience for certain groups of students, particularly students of color. As the demographics of Catholic schools have and continue to change dramatically in recent years, are all students having positive experiences in Catholic schools, and what do these experiences say about the culture of membership that exists within them?

According to the National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA, 2019) Catholic schools represent the largest, non-public school schooling system in the United States, educating
more than 1.7 million students in elementary and secondary schools during the 2018-2019 academic year. According to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and the National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA, 2018), Catholic school enrollment in the United States in 2018 declined to 1.7 million students from a 1960 peak of 5.2 million students. Various factors, including demographic shifts in the United States, ethnic shifts in potential Catholic school students; decreasing Church affiliation, the Church’s sexual abuse scandals, rising tuition costs, as well as the economic recession in the United States have all led to the shuttering of Catholic schools (particularly in urban areas) and the consequent shrinking of the Catholic school student population (Bauch, 2013). Of this shrinking Catholic school student population, 8% identify as Black (NCEA, 2019). While the overall population of students attending Catholic schools has dramatically decreased, the population of Black students in Catholic schools has decreased only slightly in recent years. Suburban flight of more affluent, typically White Catholic families and students has led to the demise of urban parochial schools, and with these “seats” left vacant, less affluent African American students have often taken their place (Bauch, 2013). Yet, with the rapid shuttering of urban Catholic schools, Black students are increasingly moving into suburban Catholic schools. Catholic schools are no exception to what is also happening in public schools across the United States; as demographics shift, Black students are increasingly moving into schools that have traditionally been and remain predominantly White schools and spaces (Chapman, 2013).

Because of these demographic and economic shifts, many Catholic high schools, particularly those run by religious orders, have become the proverbial “societal battlegrounds” between those who decry Catholic schools for becoming “elitist” institutions that contribute to furthering various “gaps” between more affluent, traditionally White students and students of
color and those who defend these schools for continuing the mission of Catholic education despite being the products of tremendous economic difficulties associated with a disappearing clergy-led staff and massive geographic and ethnic shifts in student populations (Bauch, 2013; Greeley, 1998; Youniss & McClellan, 1999). While predominantly White suburban Catholic schools remain just that, *predominantly White*, what occurs when Black students move into the space of traditionally and predominantly White Catholic schools? Milner (2006) describes how White teachers in public and private schools often fall victim to deficit thinking about the students of color that they teach, which reinforces the belief that these students lack the prerequisite knowledge and skills to be academically successful. Douglas et al. describe how such deficit thinking is also compounded by negative attitudes that White teachers frequently have about Black students and their families which are often brought about by troublesome social conditioning (2008). These negative attitudes and beliefs about the educational prowess and effort levels of Black students often lead to extremely problematic outcomes in Catholic schools: episodes of overt racism against Black students perpetrated by various White stakeholders as well as school staff members and administrators turning a blind eye towards prejudicial behavior. In Catholic schools, where school culture and membership often requires assimilating to a common set of beliefs and values, a White culture is often the standard. In a 2020 article in the *National Catholic Reporter*, Sarah Salvadore describes the problematic practice of Catholic schools and their reluctance to appreciate or allow the hair styles of Black students. More problematically, Burke and Gilbert (2016) have shown that historical incidents of White on Black racism abound in Catholic schools in the city of Chicago, and countless other incidents of anti-Blackness have been recently documented in Catholic schools.
As this study seeks to understand the counterstories of Black students in a predominantly White, all-male suburban Catholic school (and a perceived culture of membership there), it avoids the decades long debate over the true “mission” of many Catholic schools to educate the marginalized. Rather, it will focus on listening to and analyzing Black student experiences as they enroll in traditionally and predominantly White Catholic schools; what do their counterstories tell about a perceived culture of membership that Catholic schools proudly promote?

A modern examination of most American Catholic schools’ mission statements will likely produce phrases such as “promoting the value and dignity of others,” “valuing diversity,” or “reflecting the mission of the Catholic Church.” In practice, Catholic schools should be models of acceptance, inclusion, and tolerance, promoting a culture where every student feels welcomed and appreciated. Yet this has never been and still is not the case. Groome (2002) describes how the Church’s history has often produced results of sexism, classism, homophobia and racism, all of which are at odds with the Catholic church’s promotion of acceptance and inclusivity. Inevitably, these beliefs find their way into Catholic schools through their faculty and staff, students, alumni, etc. and contribute barriers to a true culture of membership.

Interpreting Catholic schools via a postcolonial understanding in the United States can be done by viewing them as “white spaces, which through ‘layers of identity’ over time grew into the tradition of a school and a space that only needed to narrate whiteness as a bulwark against the perceived threat not only ‘over competition for jobs, power and status’” (Sleeter, 2011, pp. 424-425; Burke & Gilbert, 2016, p. 530). Burke and Gilbert (2016) continue “that the space only retains its sacrosanctity, at least in the eyes of parents and teachers at the schools, if it remains ‘white’ is something rarely examined in reference to Catholic schooling” (p. 530).
Historically, Catholic schools have been “white spaces” both in theory and in practice, as *Brown v. Board of Education* has only created solid inroads for Blacks into many Catholic schools since 1954. But to say that *Brown* has somehow broken the “white space” of Catholic schools would be grossly naive. This study explores the perceived “whiteness” of suburban Catholic schools, particularly through unpacking the idea of whiteness as property as it relates to the school culture and culture of membership of predominantly White Catholic schools (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

In recent years, dozens of racist, anti-Black incidents have occurred in Catholic schools across the United States, ranging from students promoting violence against fellow Black students to White students “jokingly” dressing in blackface, to staff or faculty members saying or promoting racist words or ideas. As troubling as these incidents are, and they obviously demand immediate attention, they often lead the conversation away from the overarching issue of Catholic schools as “white spaces.” Equally dangerous as the overt displays of anti-Black racism in Catholic schools is the popular practice in many schools to explore the issue of race from a “color-blind” perspective. This perspective promotes the idea that schools shouldn’t focus on race and that students should “shed” their identity in order to assimilate into a dominant (almost exclusively White) culture (Noblit, Malloy, & Malloy, 2001). Promoting a culture of color-blindness allows for schools and their members to “avoid confronting the racial realities that surround them, to avoid facing their own racist presumptions and understandings, and to avoid dealing with racist events (by deracializing them)” (Lewis, 2001, p. 801). Color-blindness in a predominantly White suburban Catholic school focuses attention on assimilating into a Catholic school culture and away from any meaningful discussion on race.
According to a 2014 report from the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights (2014), male students of color are disproportionately affected by suspensions and zero-tolerance policies in schools, are more likely to repeat a grade or drop out, are more frequently referred to law enforcement and more likely to be involved in the juvenile justice system. Research on Black childhood experiences shows that Black children are often perceived as older than their true age and are often viewed by White peers as less innocent (Ferguson, 2000). There is no lack of data demonstrating that students of color, particularly Black males, are some of the most “at-risk” groups of students in the American education system. This idea is frequently portrayed in our society and by popular media, further exacerbating the already difficult process of developing a positive self-identity for adolescent Black males. In the school context, race and social class can influence the sense of identity of African American students (Decuir-Gunby, 2007). A school’s culture and climate can also impact a student’s ability to develop this identity, particularly for Black students in predominantly White school settings.

Much of the research on Black student experiences in Catholic schools comes from urban Catholic schools with homogenous student populations comprised primarily of students of color. This existing research on Black students attending Catholic schools often explores the perceived benefits such as the increased likelihood of attending college or the life changing trajectory that Catholic schools provide these students. But this research rarely explores Black student experiences in predominantly White Catholic schools or explores their stories in their own words. Urban Catholic schools greatly differ from traditionally White suburban Catholic schools in many ways. Yet, as various factors have contributed to Black students continuing to enroll in traditionally White suburban Catholic schools, how are these schools adjusting? Little
descriptive research exists that explores the lived experiences (counterstories) of Black students in predominantly White, all-male, suburban Catholic schools.

**Purpose Statement**

While extensive research exists that explores the experiences of Black students in Catholic schools (Greeley, 1982; McCloskey, 2011; Polite, 1992) and in predominantly White institutions (Carter, 2007; Coleman, 2017; Gloria, Robinson, Hamilton, & Wilson, 1999; Guiffreda & Douthit, 2010; Hall, 1999), very few studies have explored the lived experiences of Black students at a predominantly White, all-male, suburban Catholic high school. Furthermore, little of this research has explored Black students’ lived schooling experiences through their counterstories in such a Catholic school environment and how these experiences describe a culture of membership within them. This study explored and sought to better understand the lived experiences of Black students through their counterstories in a predominantly White, all-male, suburban Catholic high school, particularly as they relate to a culture of membership there.

**Research Questions**

This study sought to explore and better understand the lived experiences of Black students in a predominantly White, all-male, suburban Catholic high school, particularly as they relate to the school’s culture of membership. This study explored the counterstories of these students to learn how they have experienced a perceived culture of membership in such a school setting. The following research questions guided the study:

1. In what ways do recent Black male alumni describe their schooling experiences in a predominantly White, all-male, suburban Catholic high school?
1a. How can a culture of school membership, if present, be understood through the counterstories of recent Black male alumni from a predominantly White, all-male, suburban Catholic high school?

2. In what ways, if any, do young Black Catholic high school alumni recommend promoting a culture of membership in a predominantly White, all-male, suburban Catholic high school?

**Theoretical Framework**

**Critical Race Theory**

Critical Race Theory (CRT) emerged in the mid 1970s as a response to a racially biased society and as both a reaction to the lack of movement of racial reform in the United States (Ladson-Billings, 1998) and a theoretical perspective and tool to examine and challenge the status quo of the legal system and its permeation of society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000; Tate, 1997). Drawing from the Critical Legal Studies Movement (CLS), scholars have looked to CRT “as an epistemological and methodological tool, to help analyze the experiences of historically underrepresented populations across the K-20 educational pipeline” Calderon & Ledesma, 2015, p. 206). More succinctly put, CRT holds that a hegemony of White supremacy, which has subjugated people of color, has been legalized and normalized in American society (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 2000). A pioneer in CRT, Ladson-Billings describes some of the main tenets of CRT as follows: White supremacy has subordinated people of color; racism is a staple of our society and so commonplace that it is accepted; liberalism is problematic because it affords no tools for systematic racial change (1998).

While a plethora of research exists that explores the experiences of Black students in schools, exploring such a topic remains a complex, multilayered task that requires a blueprint to
guide the study. A theoretical framework serves as this blueprint and provides a structure that relies on established theory and prior research concerning it and aligns with the researchable questions (Lovitts, 2005). As this study seeks to understand the lived experiences of Black students in a predominantly White, all-male, suburban Catholic high school, Critical Race Theory provides an appropriate lens to understand these experiences when being a member of the underrepresented group of “non-White other.”

**Counterstory Narratives**

Commentaries and research on Critical Race Theory are particularly relevant when exploring the culture of a predominantly White, all-male, suburban Catholic school and the lived experiences of Black students there. The narrative process of describing one’s lived experiences provides one with the opportunity to tell stories and to name one’s own reality. Through the narrative process of storytelling emerges the process of counterstoryelling, which in addition to naming and owning one’s own reality, provides the author with a transformative opportunity to challenge the accepted reality of oppressive structures (Kraehe, 2015). Counterstories allow persons of color to speak their reality and lived experience, which in turn can challenge a White-centric, majoritarian discourse and advocate for structural racial reform (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002).

**Whiteness/Curriculum as Property**

Another way in which suburban schools maintain and reinforce White privilege and supremacy is through the concept of curriculum as “intellectual property” (Chapman, 2103; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). While in a public school setting, this may be clearly marked by the “absence of racially diverse content and critical stances used to examine power and privilege, regulations targeting racial minority groups, hierarchies of extra-curricular activities in which
students of color dominate the lower echelons, and tracking” (Chapman, 2013, p. 616), its presence and manifestation in Catholic schools is more covert. While it may or may not involve the absence of racially diverse curriculum and content or a higher percentage of Black students being disciplined, it may be more silently embedded in aspects such as the desperate fight Catholic schools often put up against integration and the general culture of the school. Gilbert and Burke (2016) describe, in their research on anti-Blackness in Catholic schools, how faculty and alumni of Catholic schools in the midst of integration “harkens back to a time before Catholic schools faced a ‘blackness problem’ as they reflect fondly on the days of teaching only ‘respectable white boys’” (p. 6). To truly understand the counterstories of Black students in predominantly White suburban Catholic schools, it is imperative to understand how the curriculum in such schools protects an inherent and entrenched whiteness.

Given the demographic makeup of the school setting in this study, and the traditional “whiteness” of Catholic schools, Critical Race Theory provides the most useful theoretical framework to explore the culture of such a school setting. Critical Race Theory challenges the majoritarian discourse by placing Black students at the center of the dialogue. Their counterstories play a crucial role in both providing insight into their lived experiences there and challenge the dominant racial structure. Chapter II further explores Critical Race Theory and its importance in framing this study.

**Definition of Key Terms**

*Black Students.* This study uses the denotation of Black to identify students of African descent through slavery in the United States as well as those students who have Caribbean or African heritage.
Catholic School Identity. Most literature defines this as a Catholic school’s ability to embody and imbue in its students the message taught by Jesus in the Gospels, which includes the following: (a) involvement in the Catholic Church’s mission; (b) commitment to academic excellence; (c) evangelization efforts; (d) spiritual formation of the school community; (e) integration of thinking and believing; (f) reflection of Catholic beliefs, traditions, and sacraments; and (g) affirmation of the dignity of all persons within the school community (Guerra, Haney, & Kealey, 1992, p. 17).

Counterstorytelling. A method through which marginalized individuals (of color), whose experiences are not often told, can share their experiential knowledge while challenging a hegemonic structure of racialized White privilege (Bell, 1987; Delgado, 2000; Kraehe, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 1998).

Critical Race Theory. The view that race, instead of being biologically grounded and natural, is socially constructed and that race, as a socially constructed concept, functions as a means to maintain the interests of a White population that constructed it (Bell, 1987; Ladson-Billings, 1998).

Culture of School Membership. The sense of belonging for students that may or may not exist in schools, which is heavily influenced by, but not limited to, the student’s established bonds with other students and adults in the school as well as their connection with the school’s norms (Wehlage, 1989).

Discrimination (racial). The action(s) of treating a specific group of persons (of color) differently based on prejudicial feelings. These actions may be benign including ignoring and avoidance or more severe such as hatred or violence (DiAngelo, 2018).
**Prejudice (racial):** Feelings that individuals have about others that are pre-judgmental and based on another person’s social group. Humans innately harbor prejudice (DiAngelo, 2018).

**Race.** A disproven idea which posits that humans can be divided according to their shared physical or genetic characteristics (Morrison, 1992).

**Racialization.** A process that connects ethnic or racial identities, behaviors, and practices to specific social group features such as skin color or language (Coleman, 2017; Harris, 1993)

**Racism.** A system that galvanizes the collective prejudice of a social group and allows for legalized and institutionalized actions against another social group. This system often becomes a system of oppression and marginalizes specific social groups (DiAngelo, 2018).

**School Culture.** It “is the underground stream of norms, values, beliefs, traditions, and rituals that has built up over time as people work together, solve problems, and confront challenges” (Peterson & Deal, 1998, p. 28).

**White Privilege.** Rooted in the legal structures and social fabric of American society, these are the advantages possessed by a White person on the basis of their race in a society characterized by racial inequality and injustice (Harris, 1993).

**Nature of the Study**

This study utilized a qualitative approach, as it sought to understand the beliefs, perceptions, and lived experiences of Black students. A qualitative design was utilized, because as Merriam (2009) describes, a qualitative researcher’s work is focused on “(1) how people interpret their experiences, (2) how they construct their words, and (3) what meaning they attribute to their experiences. The overall purpose is to understand how people make sense of their lives and their experiences” (p. 23). Debus’ (1995) work furthers the importance of using qualitative rather than quantitative research in order to have a more profound understanding of
participants’ experiences: “qualitative research . . . provides depth of responses and, therefore, greater consequent understanding than can be acquired through quantitative techniques” (p. 2).

As this study utilized a framework grounded in Critical Race Theory, particularly the use of counterstories, the methodology was marked by critical narrative research and the use of interviews to understand lived experiences of participants. This narrative approach allowed participants to both make meaning of their own lived experiences and share their experiences in a manner that allowed them to speak freely and authentically about their past schooling experiences.

Assumptions

Given the nature and design of this research and the researcher, there are a number of assumptions associated with this study. As the researcher is a White male and participants are Black students, who are an underrepresented group at the school, their responses could elicit uncomfortable, even painful past experiences. Given this nature, one of the most basic underlying assumptions of this study centers on the accuracy and honesty of participant responses. Not only does the study assume that participants are willing and able to share potentially painful past experiences, but also that as alumni, they can accurately remember the experiences that occurred years prior. The study’s methodology and interview protocol are designed to produce honest and clear responses from participants that provided the researcher with the most accurate accounts of the participants’ lived experiences.

Also, with a near exclusively-White administration, faculty and staff that works at the study school, most of whom do not share the societal or life experiences of Black students, it is likely that the participants contended with preconceived notions, stereotypes, and negative or deficit notions about Black students during their schooling there. Similarly, a third assumption
focused on the setting being a Catholic school. As Catholic schools are guided by the precepts and teachings of the Gospel and the Catholic Church, the study assumes that the school which participants attended promoted a culture of membership of all students.

**Limitations**

The study may have been limited in a number of ways. First, the fact that the researcher works at the school of study may have affected or limited the responses of participants in a number of ways. As the researcher knows many of the participants, they may have been more or less likely to answer as truthfully and honestly as possible. The researcher’s previous interactions with these alumni may also have resulted in participants being more or less open to sharing important information. Furthermore, the issue of race in these interactions cannot be ignored, as the researcher is a White male in an administrative position at a predominantly White school. The issue of race may have impacted the interactions that participants had with the researcher. A second limitation involved the perceptions and recollections of the participants. The researcher relied on the truthfulness and accuracy of the participants in relaying their perceptions on topics such as school participation and acceptance as well as on more sensitive topics such as perceived racism or discrimination. Working with alumni perceptions also relied on their ability to accurately remember their experiences years after their occurrence. Furthermore, the student(s) may have had a particularly good or bad experience at the school, which may have caused them to respond in a particularly positive or negative manner. Research by Paulhus and Levitt (1987) shows that subjects often participate in respondent opportunities because of a particularly negative experience. Finally, another limitation included the researcher’s own accuracy in interpretation and analysis of the spoken data collected through the use of interviews. As narrative research relies on the interpretation of the researcher, it can potentially include and be
affected by inherent bias (Peshkin, 1988). While the study did raise important questions and opportunities for future research, due to the size and scope of its population, the research is non-generalizable to other schools.

The delimitation of the study included the very limited sample of participants who met the study’s requirements of identifying as Black and having graduated from the school within the last six years. While the research sample could have included alumni who were less recent graduates, graduating within the last six years provided a perfect timeframe for the researcher to gain insight while the experiences are not new, but still fresh.

**Ethical Considerations**

As this study included research involving human subjects, all institutional review board (IRB) guidelines defined by Seton Hall University were adhered to. In order to conduct this research, the researcher obtained informed consent from all participants, which informed participants as follows:

1. Their position as participants in a research study
2. The purpose and procedures of the research
3. All of the risks and benefits associated with the research
4. The study’s voluntary nature
5. The participants’ right to opt out of the study at any time
6. All of the precautionary measures taken to protect the participants’ confidentiality

**Significance of the Study**

This study sought to add to the absence of literature exploring the experiences of Black students in predominantly White, all-male, suburban Catholic schools. As more urban Catholic schools which have traditionally served communities of color continue to close, Black students
are increasingly enrolling in suburban Catholic schools. The study provided insight into the experiences of a group that represents 8% of all students in Catholic schools (NCEA, 2018).

As Catholic schools purport to promote a culture of membership, tolerance, and promoting social justice, there have been many instances of racism found within them. This study not only sheds light on the lived experiences of Black students in Catholic schools but also provides a better understanding of the type of culture that may exist within a predominantly-White, all-male, suburban Catholic school. The findings of this study may be particularly useful for predominantly-White Catholic schools in both identifying issues of anti-Blackness in school culture and also identifying ways in which the school can improve the schooling experiences of Black students. Furthermore, this insight may be beneficial to not only similar Catholic schools, but also to other schools working to promote school cultures that accept all students, regardless of race or ethnicity.

**Summary**

Studies of Black students in Catholic schools have traditionally focused on urban schools and focused on the effectiveness of Catholic education on student outcomes. As more of these urban Catholic schools close, Black students are moving into spaces traditionally dominated by White students. While Black students represent 8% of students in Catholic schools, their experiences in predominantly-White, all-male, suburban Catholic schools have rarely, if ever, been researched in depth. As many incidents of anti-Blackness in Catholic schools have recently been publicized, a deeper understanding of these students’ experiences is crucial in improving a culture of membership in such Catholic schools.
CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature and research on the lived experiences of Black students in predominantly White, all-male, suburban Catholic high schools is scant to non-existent. Such a dearth of research exists despite Black students comprising 8% of the non-university Catholic school population (NCEA, 2019); and more Black students, as previously mentioned, are moving into traditionally White Catholic schools (Chapman, 2013). Despite the fact that nearly 60,000 students who identify as Black attend Catholic schools in the United States (NCEA, 2019), understanding the lived experiences of Black students in a predominantly White, all-male, suburban Catholic high school remains complex and intertwined with a number of phenomena. In her discovery of a lack of research on the experiences of African American males in predominantly White independent schools, Coleman (2017) attributed such a scarcity, in part, to stereotypically negative images of Black males in academic environments. While her hypothesis may also contribute to the lack of research on Black male experiences in predominantly White, all-male, suburban Catholic schools, the scarcity of both finding and compiling such research in Catholic schools is more complex.

The literature reviewed in this chapter provides a framework to more deeply understand Black students’ experiences in predominantly White, all-male, suburban Catholic schools. The framework is guided by Critical Race Theory and explores literature concerning whiteness (curriculum) as property, the phenomenon of colorblindness, and the specific educational experiences of Black boys, including the process of assimilation into a White school culture. Upon completion of the analysis of the data, an emerging theme of prejudice and the effects of the election of Donald Trump as president warranted the addition of a section exploring literature
related to this theme. The review of the literature begins with an in-depth exploration of Catholic schools and their purpose, their history in the United States, their perceived whiteness, and the culture of membership that exists within them. An understanding of Catholic school spaces, their intended purpose, and the culture within is crucial to understand the lived experiences of Black students who are educated in them.

Catholic Schools in Practice

Catholic School History and Purpose

The Vatican’s 1965 *Gravissimum Educationis* outlined the main tenets of Christian and Catholic Education, highlighting that the function of Catholic schools . . . is to create for the school community a special atmosphere animated by the Gospel spirit of freedom and charity, to help youth grow according to the new creatures they were made through baptism as they develop their own personalities . . .” (Paul VI, 1965, p. 8). The Vatican Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education (1977) expanded upon *Gravissimum Educationis*, signaling that some of the many roles of the Catholic school include the following: to create a culture that allows students to realize their own faith, to guide students to live responsibly in a community with others, to commit to serve God and others, and to make the world a better place for others to live. In a more modern interpretation from the 1995 NCEA publication *Momentum*, Sister Catherine McNamee, CSJ and the former NCEA President described how Catholic schools must develop students who must be . . . prepared to work toward ending racism, sexism, and classism in American society; appreciative of their own cultures; and have a passionate love for all of God's creatures” (p. 4). The role of Catholic schools then clearly describes schools that foster faith, promote the teachings and values of the Gospels, and encourage a vibrant school community that accepts and values all students and inspires them to serve others and the society around them.
Like all schools, Catholic schools adopt a particular code of conduct, a set of learning standards, and a shared mission and values that guide the school and its stakeholders towards common goals and student growth. Needless to say, almost all Catholic schools share commonalities such as their desire to promote excellent student achievement, impart Gospel values and the teachings of the Catholic church and create a faith community for all stakeholders.

**Catholic School Identity**

While the history and intended goal of Catholic schools is relevant in understanding Catholic school culture, the 1970s brought a new interest in understanding the concept of Catholic Identity in Catholic schools. Generally speaking, Catholic Identity referred to the amalgam of factors that “make a Catholic school Catholic.” However, there was a wide range amongst Catholic school researchers in the exact definition of Catholic Identity in the school setting. While some referred to Catholic Identity as the process of teaching the traditions and instilling Catholic values in its students, others found, through interviewing Catholic school students, that Catholic Identity meant being tolerant of others and having a more hopeful outlook (Greeley, McCready, & McCourt, 1976). In 1992, a study on Catholic Identity was commissioned by the National Congress on Catholic Schools for the Twenty-First Century. This study produced a model of beliefs that defined Catholic school Identity, which included the following:

- (a) involvement in the Catholic Church’s mission; (b) commitment to academic excellence; (c) evangelization efforts; (d) spiritual formation of the school community; (e) integration of thinking and believing; (f) reflection of Catholic beliefs, traditions, and sacraments; and (g) affirmation of the dignity of all persons within the school community (Guerra, Haney, & Kealey, 1992, p. 17)
The Congress additionally created a set of guidelines designed to better implement these beliefs into the school setting:

(a) providing opportunities for spiritual formation for Catholic school personnel; (b) challenging faculty, staff, students, and families to witness to their belief in Jesus Christ; (c) making efforts to maintain superior academic standards; (d) making commitment to integration of gospel values into academic curriculum; and (e) having a welcoming attitude towards a diverse population, culturally and economically—a “hallmark” of Catholic identity (Guerra et al., 1992, p. 18)

These beliefs and guidelines that came out of the 1992 National Congress’s study have served as a foundation in how Catholic identity could be defined by schools and how outsiders could identify a Catholic school from its counterparts (Bauch, 2013). Future research on Catholic identity conducted by Groome (1996) explored Catholic identity from a more philosophical perspective; while these factors may not be evident in the schools, Catholic schools and their stakeholders must be committed to individual personhood, justice, and Catholicity.

While these guidelines provide a framework for Catholic schools and their communities to work towards “being truly Catholic,” other factors also contribute to shape the identity of Catholic schools. Catholic schools are a part of the community in which they are located and the communities from which they draw students. In addition to outlining the purpose of Catholic schools, the Vatican’s Gravissimum Educationis (1965) also described how Catholic schools must make every effort to keep with the local community’s circumstances and setting. For many Catholic schools in the 21st century, their local setting and those stakeholders who come from it are in many ways different from stakeholders in 1965 when Gravissimum Educationis was
written. Over the last nearly sixty years, Catholic schools across the demographic and geographic spectrum have changed tremendously as stakeholders are much more ethnically diverse and less frequently Catholic (Bauch, 2013). Given this changing environment of Catholic schools, Steinfels (2003) raised important questions on the measuring of Catholic school identity at the university level with a prefabricated list of factors that make Catholic schools Catholic. Steinfels asks two overarching questions when Catholic schools look to measure their own Catholic identity:

At this individual institution, with its own history, location, socioeconomic niche and everything else, what do we mean by our distinctive Catholic identity and mission? What goals and standards are we willing to articulate, concretely and specifically enough so that we would be able actually to know whether we had failed to meet them?” (Steinfels, 2003, p. 148)

Bauch (2013) describes how, while these questions were directed towards Catholic institutions of higher education, they are salient in helping Catholic institutions of any level determine their own individual Catholic identity. Steinfels’ questions challenge the paradigm of Catholic schools relying on a conformance to Catholic identity and instead allow Catholic schools to be introspective in how the aspects of their school that are different from others determine what and whom they serve.

**School Membership**

According to Wehlage, Rutter, Smith, Lesko, and Fernandez (1989), school membership is defined by four major tenets:

(a) attachment- personal investment in meeting the expectations of others, caring what others think, and positive reciprocal teacher and student relations, (b) commitment-
complying with a school’s rules and demands, (c) involvement- active participation in school activities and school tasks, and (d) belief- valuing and trusting the institution” (p. 313)

In exploring the theme of adolescents’ perceived belonging and psychological membership in the middle school environment, Goodenow (1993), developed the Psychological Sense of School Membership Scale (PSSM). This questionnaire explores how students perceive their own membership in school environments based on a range of factors such as inclusion and respect. Hagborg (1994) utilized the PSSM to explore its applicability to high school aged youth. While there was not a significant school difference in results between results from middle and high schools, results showed that there is a link between a student’s overall rating of their school and their perception of membership within it (Hagborg, 1994). In her model used to research high school students’ perceptions of school membership, Becky Smerdon identified three contributing features: Social Organization (how students interact in school); School Structure (school size, school sector); School Composition (student socioeconomic status, social class) (2002, p. 291). This research found that a student’s perception of membership was much more dependent on a student’s experience within the school that he or she attends (Smerdon, 2002). Hagborg’s research also described how school membership is also linked to two positive student outcomes: positive student behavior in respect for fellow students and adults, as well as a link between active engagement in school tasks, which leads to enhanced social-emotional development and school achievement (1994). In their research applying the PSSM to school drop-out prevention and models of school membership, Wehlage et al. found that a student's enhanced sense of self-esteem is linked to a higher likelihood of school membership (1989)
Clearly, there exists a positive relationship between a student’s sense of membership in a school and a multitude of important educational and developmental outcomes. Yet much of the research on student perceptions of membership in schools has explored them without utilizing a critical lens to understand how the perceptions of marginalized groups of color are affected by a dominant White culture. A dearth of literature exists on perceived membership of students of color in predominantly White institutions or organizations. When exploring faculty experiences in a predominantly White independent school, Coleman and Stevenson found that racial experiences of faculty members were very much related to their sense of membership in the school (2013). Furthermore, they posit that privileged groups (White) often marginalize the experiences and capital of persons of color in schools, devaluing the contribution that persons of color can make to the school’s mission and practices (Coleman & Stevenson, 2013). While this research looked at the experiences of adult faculty members, its findings are relevant to the experiences of high school students: how can Black students feel a sense of membership when they (1) see few to no faculty members of color and (2) as this study later explores, see no appreciation (or a complete denial) of Black culture or social capital in the school’s mission or curriculum? In their research surrounding the various benefits associated with Catholic schools when compared to public schools, Bryk et al. found that Catholic schools had a stronger sense of community, which included shared beliefs of school purpose and the provision of more common activities for students (1993). This stronger sense of community in Catholic schools can be attributed to their religious beliefs that emphasize, among other mores, a social responsibility and concern for others (Bryk & Driscoll, 1988; Smerdon, 2002).

However, what happens when those students, in addition to being from a different cultural and racial background, also don’t necessarily share the same faith? The question of
students’ faith backgrounds cannot be ignored in a review of literature surrounding school membership of Black students in a Catholic school. While race is obviously a major factor in school membership of Catholic schools, faith is also a salient factor when considering student perceptions of membership. As Catholic school identity is deeply rooted in the religious symbolism, traditions and practices outlined by the Church, non-Catholic students may feel less of a sense of membership in Catholic schools. While Black students make up roughly 8% of the overall population of students in primary and secondary Catholic schools in the United States., many of these students are non-Catholic Christians. Beginning in 1965, the Catholic Church’s *Gravissimum Educationis* (Paul VI, p. 9) publicly welcomed non-Catholic students to join Catholic schools, which the Church has affirmed and has since expanded upon in various papal documents concerning education. While this study later explores the process of Black students assimilating to a White Catholic school culture, it is still important for the purpose of this study to review literature on the experience of non-Catholics in Catholic schools.

Although non-Catholic, many of these Black students are part of another Christian denomination. While they share many of the same fundamental beliefs, Catholicism and the means through which it is practiced in Catholic schools are in many ways profoundly different from other Christian denominations. In his research on the inclusion of non-Catholics in Catholic schools in Canada, J. Kent Donlevy outlines “ten dimensions,” which stem from research on the inclusion of non-Catholics in Canadian Catholic schools (2007). These include the fifth and six dimensions, which describe the cultural and spiritual aspects of inclusion for non-Catholics. As mentioned, these can be profoundly different for students who are non-Catholic or who have not previously attended a Catholic school. For non-Catholic students, their previous schooling or personal experiences may be profoundly different from the religious symbolism and ritualism
that define Catholic schools (Donlevy, 2007). Furthermore, non-Catholic students from different
cultural backgrounds may have significantly different norms and dress and may interact
differently in regard to authority (Donlevy, 2007). As this study later explores in more depth,
Black students’ cultural norms are often profoundly different from their White peers.

While a Catholic school’s culture, like its Catholic identity, relies on myriad different
factors, one of the most important is this perceived culture of membership. Catholic school
identity, given its promotion of membership and inclusion, is linked to the idea of students
feeling a sense of belonging and common purpose. As previously mentioned, research shows that
Catholic schools are often more effective than public schools in creating this sense of community
for its students, which begs the question, do all students feel like they belong? When comparing
Steinfels’ (2003) questions regarding Catholic school identity and deeper understanding of a
culture of membership as defined by Hagborg (1994) with the experiences of Black students in a
predominantly White, all-male, suburban Catholic school, a clear gap emerges. When a
predominantly White Catholic school explores Steinfels’ first question; i.e., inwardly at its
historical roots and traditions, it will almost certainly find an exclusively White history, tradition,
and culture to draw from. Furthermore, the culture of membership that exists in such a school
setting largely rests on the social and cultural norms and religious tradition defined by Whites.
Black students in predominantly White schools must navigate cultures that have been and
continue to be dominated by a White perspective.

**Historical Roots of Catholic Schools in the United States**

**Anti-Blackness and Exclusion in the U.S. Catholic Church**

While this study does not focus particularly on the experiences of Black Catholic
students, an understanding of the historical relationship that the Catholic church and Catholic
schools in the United States have had with both Catholic and non-Catholic Black students is imperative to understand the modern experience of all Black students in a predominantly White, all-male, suburban Catholic school.

The American Catholic Church’s relative complicity in (and inaction against) subjugating Blacks to a second-class status dates from colonial times through the pre-Civil Rights Movement. Davis (1990) and Bauch (2013) describe how Catholic religious orders such as the Jesuits and the Ursuline Sisters were directly involved in both owning and selling slaves, who were used as free labor in territories throughout the colonies. In the French colonies, Louis XIV decreed *Code Noir* (1724-1803), which mandated that all free persons and slaves be baptized and provided religious education (Bauch, 2013). Catholic slave owners often failed to carry out the promises of the decree, and in doing so, failed to provide the role that baptism plays in providing a person with a name and dignity and a connection with the Catholic Church (Bauch, 2013). The Catholic Church’s role during the early colonial era could certainly be viewed as being complicit in marginalizing Black persons.

As Bauch (2013) describes, throughout the 18th and 19th century, the American Catholic Church hid “from the moral issue of slavery by insisting that slavery was political” (p. 25). While exploring the various scholarly critiques of the Church’s (both the institutional Church in Rome and individual Catholic Bishops in the United States) ambivalent response (or lack thereof) to slavery, Capizzi (2004) concludes that Catholics in the United States received misguided teachings about the morality of slavery. Even after its release in 1839, Pope Gregory XVI’s letter disavowing the slave trade, *In supremo apostolatus*, did not sway the opinion of the majority of American Catholics, who not only did not view slavery as sinful, but also opposed the abolition movement (Capizzi, 2004). Rather than support what it saw as a dangerous
ideology of the abolition movement, the Church’s hierarchy toted the Gospel’s power to gradually enact social change (Capizzi, 2004). While there was some differing in opinion regarding slavery across the Catholic population and hierarchy in the United States, numerous groups within the Church were directly involved in slavery and the slave trade. As mentioned, religious orders with missions in the United States were often involved in the sale and ownership of slaves and utilized slave labor for the religious order’s financial gain and survival (Davis, 1990). Even when Blacks reached out to the Church for intervention, Hayes and Davis (1998) describe how in 1853, Pope Pius IX received and ignored a letter from an African American woman in New York, in which she pledged allegiance to the Church while pleading for an end to its discriminatory policies and for schooling for African American children. Franklin and McDonald (1988) describe how in both Northern and Southern cities, Catholic Diocesan policy and specific religious orders helped to create separate schools for Black students, including the transformation of predominantly White schools to schools solely for Black children. Despite the fact that Blacks were being educated in Catholic schools and more frequently interacting with White Catholics, the institutional U.S. Catholic Church and its schools showed little to no concern or appreciation for Black culture or history (Davis, 1990).

The aforementioned and the following historic overview of the Catholic Church’s relationship with Blacks in the United States serves a multitude of purposes: (1) it creates a foundation for understanding how the institutional U.S. Catholic Church interacted historically with Blacks before Vatican II; (2) it displays how the U.S. Catholic Church, by isolating enslaved and freed persons, “missed” an opportunity to truly evangelize a large segment of the Black population; (3) it describes the social and racial climate that many Catholic immigrants
would arrive in and assimilate to during post-Civil War America until the Civil Rights Movement.

**A White Immigrant History**

From pre-colonial times to the mid-20th century, Black students, by and large, were not privy to White Catholic schools across the United States. While student demographic data from pre-1960 Catholic schools is difficult to obtain, finding data concerning student ethnicity during that time is nearly impossible. While Catholic religious orders opened 76 schools for African Americans between 1890 and 1917, these schools were opened specifically for Black students (Benson, Yeager, Wood, Guerra, & Manno, 1986). Between 1870 and 1900, more than 12 million immigrants arrived in the United States, primarily from Germany, England, Ireland, and China (U.S. Immigration Timeline, n.d.). By 1920, millions more immigrants had arrived in the United States, the majority of them Catholic and Jewish peasants arriving from South, Central, and Eastern Europe (U.S. Immigration Timeline, n.d.). For many European ethnic groups (particularly in the 19th and 20th centuries), the American Catholic Church was a godsend, as it acted as a societal center, often linking recent immigrants to economic opportunity and in many cases access to an education for their children through a Catholic school connected to their parish (Bauch, 2013). As Appleby (2011) describes, European Catholic immigrants played a vital role in the proliferation of Catholic schools in the United States, as their involvement in local parishes created the opportunity for schools to educate their children. Despite often having to deal with generations of prejudicial treatment as new immigrants and Catholics, this connection to a parish and Catholic school drastically changed the economic outlook and societal inclusion of many of these European immigrant groups over time (Appleby, 2011).
It cannot be overstated here, the significance of the ethnic makeup of the institutional Catholic Church and community in the United States during these times, which included a nearly exclusive White Church hierarchy, Catholic school staff, and White immigrant families who made up the bulk of the church parishioners and the schools that the Catholic Church opened in the United States in the 19th and 20th centuries. When writing a letter in 1919 to the president of St. Mary’s Seminary in Baltimore, Thomas Wyatt Turner, the founder of the Federation of Colored Catholics, was told that prospective Black seminarians would be denied entry (Pfeil, 2007). In response to this denial, Turner and the Federation of Colored Catholics wrote another letter to the U.S. Catholic bishops in 1926, explaining how at that time forty-two Black priests were serving on the continent of Africa, while only five Black priests served in the United States (Massingale, 1997; Pfeil, 2007). Turner, Pfeil explains, pointed to the sad truth that defined the U.S. Catholic Church and its hierarchy at the time: “Their location of structural advantage as White Catholics, defended through the dehumanizing power of White supremacy, made a mockery of their profession of faith as disciples of Jesus Christ” (2007, p. 134). This White-centric makeup has largely been a hallmark of elite Catholic schools since; as White flight opened seats in urban Catholic schools for Black students, more wealthy White families moved into suburban enclaves. While Catholic schools in the United States have a legacy of educating poor, disadvantaged children, the bulk of these students came from European and Hispanic ancestry (Grace, 2003). This “tradition” of whiteness, as Burke and Gilbert describe, “requires a conspiratorial silence to survive in its more pernicious forms” (2016, p. 13). As this review of the literature later discusses, it is this silence that too often still pervades predominantly White Catholic schools.
John Ibson describes how using the term “ethnic” to historically differentiate between White Americans, was far less significant than applying the term to darker persons; i.e., Blacks, Hispanics, Asians, or Native Americans (1981). Similarly, White Protestants viewed White Catholics or Jews as being more “ethnic” than themselves (Ibson, 1981). Despite White Catholic immigrants being viewed by other Americans in such a light, they were and would still be through years of assimilation, White, which would have profoundly positive impacts on their social mobility. McGreevy (1996) notes that although European Catholic immigrants arriving in the United States in the 19th and 20th centuries were differentiated in a racial context by Polish, Irish, Italian, and other ethnic groups, the Black/White racial binary was much more pronounced (Pfeil, 2007). Barrett and Roediger further this notion in their discussion of European immigrants “becoming White” as they assimilated into American society and the color hierarchy that categorized immigrants in varying levels of whiteness (1997). The Irish were able to climb the ladder of whiteness when other “darker” Eastern European immigrants began to arrive in the 1920s (Barrett & Roediger, 1997). Alba (1999) describes how throughout U.S. history, European immigrant groups that have come to the United States have had the ability to, and have attempted to, climb the ladder of “whiteness” to improve their social standing and potential mobility. Such mobility, as Alba describes, came at a cost, with immigrant groups using violence against African Americans to separate themselves in the social hierarchy and damning Blacks in U.S. society to the lowest positional standing. As this study later explores racialization in more depth, it is worth noting that such violence, as Hebert Gans describes, served “White” immigrants well in closing the gap with the “racial dominants” (native born Whites) and further distancing themselves from Blacks (2017, p. 344). Pfeil posits that this display of anti-blackness by White U.S. Catholics of many ethnic heritages helped to forge a structure of white supremacy and
hegemony in both the U.S. Catholic church and U.S. society at large (2007). Such a legacy has persisted until the present day, where in nearly any measure of socioeconomic, social, or educational standing, African Americans can be found at or near the bottom (Alba, 1999).

Gliedman and Roth (1980) describe how the dominant group in a society sets the norms of a culture that defines and separates those who can and cannot, and the understanding of such differences are found in both people’s attitudes and beliefs as well as their reactions. While this study later explores more in depth the whiteness of Catholic schools and their curriculum, any understanding of modern Catholic schools as White spaces relies on this salient point—that Catholic schools have historically been and continue to be defined and dominated by a White culture. Such an understanding relies on appreciating the institutional U.S. Catholic Church’s complicity in racist tendencies and relationship, or lack thereof, with Blacks, as well as the historical development of the U.S. Catholic schools being defined by a White culture through generations of immigration.

**Modern Catholic Schools**

Even during the Civil Rights Movement, the American Catholic Church did not have a major role in the movement (Bauch, 2013). Despite *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954 and the 1958 decision by the U.S. Catholic Bishops to denounce racial discrimination in American society, prejudice and discrimination against Blacks continued both in mainstream society and the U.S. Catholic Church (Bauch, 2013). While the institutional U.S. Church was failing to take action during the Civil Rights Movement, the Catholic Church in Rome was convening the Second Vatican Council (Vatican II), which would be a catalyst for tremendous change in the American Church. Vatican II (1962-1965) marked a huge theological, social, and political shift in the hierarchical Catholic Church, which amongst other changes, included a shift towards the
Church being in closer dialogue with all people of the world, including non-Catholics, and a renewed belief that sin not only includes actions of the individual, but those of society and its structures (Grace, 2003). Vatican II also included a shift from promoting social charity to social justice, which positioned the Church in a counter-cultural stance and allowed it to criticize systems and structures of oppression, which included systems of exploitation through capitalism as well as prejudice and bias through racist systems (Grace, 2003). Subsequently in 1977, the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education (SCCE) released *The Catholic School*, which would essentially become the “foundation charter for contemporary international Catholic education” (Grace, 2003, p. 40). This document outlined major principles of modern Catholic schools, which included a focus on the common good, and a focus on serving the poor, and promoting community and solidarity (Grace, 2003).

Without question, the U.S. Catholic Church has its roots steeped in immigration to the United States during the 19th and 20th centuries. The wave of immigration would lay the foundation that has dominated Catholic school culture and curriculum in many ways ever since; a foundation that is unequivocally White. Despite the hopeful progress that one might believe Vatican II and *The Catholic School* would have on promoting the social capital, traditions, and experiences of communities of color in Catholic schools, Catholic school culture in many schools in the United States failed to do so. Even more alarming is the lack of progress that has occurred regarding racial progress since the Civil Rights Movement, towards the end of which would birth Critical Race Theory, which guides the framework of this study and provides an appropriate lens through which to better understand the school culture Black students experience in predominantly White, all-male, suburban Catholic schools.
Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory (CRT) emerged in the 1970s as both an extension of the Critical Legal Studies Movement (CLS) as well as a response to the slow movement of racial reform in the United States (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Sleeter describes how Critical Race Theory emerged as legal scholars from communities of color analyzed and criticized how the law was sustaining inequality and inequity between races in American society, even years after the Civil Rights Movement (2011). While CLS provided the foundation to focus on oppressed individuals and groups in society, it failed to provide adequate solutions to implement racial reform; and thus, Critical Race Theory became the dominant framework of legal scholars of color (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Coleman, 2017). Taylor (2000) further describes CRT as an “oppositional intellectual movement,” which seeks to challenge the status quo of race and racism in a supposedly “post-racist” society. Critical Race Theory lays the necessary foundation to explore and analyze American society (and its institutions) as being inherently and continuously impacted by the legacy of slavery and racism.

CRT holds that a hegemony of White supremacy, which has subjugated people of color, has been legalized and normalized in American society (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 2000). Critical Race theory provides a theoretical perspective and tool to examine and challenge the status quo of the legal system and its permeation of society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000; Tate, 1997). CRT, then, provides an appropriate lens through which to explore institutionalized racial oppression within legal and educational spheres. Yet utilizing CRT as a tool to explore institutionalized racism in environments such as schools requires defining a number of its important foundational beliefs:
1. Racism is “normal, not aberrant, in American society” (Delgado, 1995, p. xiv) and is a permanent fixture in American society (Ladson-Billings, 1998).

2. The use of storytelling is crucial to analyze the dominant culture’s myths and narratives that marginalize communities of color (Delgado, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1998).

3. Liberalism must be critiqued, as it provides no mechanism for racial change (Ladson-Billings, 1998).

4. Whites are beneficiaries of various social programs and because of this, have subordinated people of color by cementing a status as the dominant culture (Ladson-Billings, 1998).

Given these foundational aspects of CRT, research on Critical Race Theory in education is inextricably linked to the subjugation and marginalization of communities of color. Catholic schools, given the Catholic Church’s focus on social justice and equality outlined in Vatican II, should theoretically be spaces where institutionalized racism is being fought. But as the literature shows, predominantly White, all-male, suburban Catholic schools are often plagued by prejudicial influences and the forced assimilation to a culture that is both White-centric, and typically fails to value the cultural and social capital and traditions of Black students.

This study’s use of Critical Race Theory allows it to more deeply understand how the counterstories of Black students of a predominantly White, all-male, suburban Catholic school describe their experiences there and the culture of membership within the school. Furthermore, as CRT assumes a society dominated by a White hegemony and the subjugation of communities of color, it allows the researcher to explore how Catholic schools are influenced by these societal
forces. Similarly, these counterstories shed light on the culture of membership in the school and how, if at all, the social and cultural capital of communities of color might be marginalized.

Racialization of Identity and Racial Identity Development

Despite the fact that race has been scientifically disproven as being a biologically accepted concept, it still serves as an incredibly impactful social construct (Morrison, 1992). Since the first population census was taken in the United States in 1790, race has always been included, typically in the comparative categories of Black and White (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Lee, 1993). While other racial categories have appeared on the census through the years, Black and White have remained unchanged, a striking point upon which Ladson-Billings expands: “while the creation of the category does not reveal what constitutes within it, it does create for us a sense of polar opposites that posits a cultural ranking designed to tell us who is White or, perhaps more pointedly, who is not White!” (1998, p. 8). This Black/White binary has driven the climate and discussion of race in the United States ever since and has had a profound impact on the “racialization” of identity and the effects it has had on American society.

While various debated definitions of racialization exist, Michael Omi and Howard Winant’s description identifies it as being an “act” that includes extending racial meaning to a social group (2014). Herbert Gans’ definition of racialization, while appreciating Omi and Winant’s definition, deems it more a process which can have an end, in which case he describes, “all members of the racialized group are treated as if all they do, feel, and think is caused by their race as it is conceived by the racially dominant population (in the U.S., read mostly Whites)” (2017, p. 343). For the purpose of this study, Gans’ description aptly describes how racialization in the United States has subjugated Blacks (“the racialized”) to a defenseless position against the racialization of a dominant White (“racializers”) society (Gans, 2017). This process of
racialization and the stereotypes that have filled American society for generations have had disastrous effects on Blacks, particularly young Black men, who as Gans describes, are part of an “undercaste” at the bottom of America’s racial hierarchy, and “are prevented from escaping it by unusually severe stigmatization, exclusion and punishment” (Gans, 2017, p. 343). Racialization permeates every aspect of our society, as we are bombarded and influenced by the racialized depictions and stereotypes portrayed by social media, popular film and radio, and advertising, many of which portray young Black men, as Tatum describes, as “muggers, drug dealers or other criminals” (1997, p. 53). Conceptualizing the interplay between this process of racialization and personal and group racial identity formation is important in beginning to understand the whiteness of many Catholic schools and how Black students experience this in predominantly White schools.

“Like most white people in the United States, I was not taught to see myself in racial terms and certainly not to draw attention to my race or to behave as if it mattered in any way” (DiAngelo, 2018, p. 7). Robin DiAngelo’s discussion of her conceptualization (or lack thereof) of race, as it is for many Whites in the United States, is a poignant reminder of the great privilege that Whites have, in that they rarely if ever have to question their own racial identity because of its dominance in society. Her quote also poignantly describes how our own conceptualization of who we are (including our skin color) is defined by both comparing ourselves to others, and in doing so, determining “what we are not” (DiAngelo, 2018, p. 11). In her 2018 work “White Fragility,” which chronicles the many factors that contribute to Whites having such difficulty understanding the fallacies of race and speaking openly about prejudice and racism, DiAngelo describes how from a young age humans are conditioned into social groups and taught what membership or non-membership means and comes with innate privileges and affects identity
formation. Most children are simultaneously raised to treat others equally and to avoid treating others differently in any situation, for fear of being prejudiced or biased (DiAngelo, 2018). But this is problematic, because as humans we are innately judgmental and prejudiced, products of the ways in which we are raised, and the influences of the society in which we grow up. It is particularly problematic for Whites, who when asked to be reflective in a society bent on individuality on what it means to be part of a group (Black, White, etc.), have been conditioned and raised to believe that having a “racial viewpoint” is biased (DiAngelo, 2018). Such a dilemma causes many Whites to shut down, protecting their own biases, and failing to question or challenge them (DiAngelo, 2018). Understanding this identity formation and socialization from a White perspective allows one to better understand why both appreciating white hegemony is so difficult for Whites to understand, and why racial progress and equity is so difficult to accomplish. For Black students, understanding who they are and how they “fit in” requires not only an understanding of themselves, but doing so in a perpetually White context.

As DiAngelo’s aforementioned quote reminds us, racial identity development is starkly different for Black children, who at a young age, are more cognizant of being “different” than Whites and the advantages of having lighter (whiter) skin (Derman-Sparks, Higa, & Sparks, 1980; Boyd-Franklin, 1989). Such questioning by Black children at a young age includes not only skin color but also factors from hair style to language, all examples of Black culture that are questioned and marginalized by a dominant White majoritarian culture (Tatum, 1997). While such questioning has large impacts at a young age, research shows that identity formation is most impactful during adolescence, an age in which schools provide various factors that influence Black students’ experiences (Mitchell, 1992; Decuir-Gunby, 2009). This adolescent period is crucial in identity development and the ways in which children begin to conceptualize society,
particularly as race is also a focal point in discussions around norms, power, and access (Castagno, 2008). Roxanne Brown-Garcia’s (2015) research on Black high school students’ perceptions of success and failure in schools highlights a “brotherhood of Blackness,” in which students shared lived and educational experiences that fight against a racism institutionalized in the “fabric” of American society (p. 164).

As Decuir-Gunby (2009) describes, the factor of race is often the most “salient aspect of African American identity” (p. 33). Countless studies have explored the unique experiences that Black and African American students have in predominantly White institutions, particularly as they relate to their own consciousness and conceptualization of race as being this crucial factor (Andrews, 2009; Decuir-Gunby, 2009; Irvine & Foster, 1996). Crucial to the experience of Black students in PWIs are the strategies that they must employ to not only succeed, but find membership in. In her research on the strategies employed by high achieving Black students in a predominantly White, independent high school, Dorinda Carter Andrews (2012) describes how these students in this setting were marginalized in a variety of ways and “perceived their school context as racialized” (p. 37). They were subject to a variety of treatments that included microaggressions, anti-blackness and overt acts of racism as well as being a single Black student in a class and thus being seen as a racial spokesperson (Andrews, 2012). As Andrews (2012) goes on to describe, the negative social, emotional, and psychological effects from such treatment have been well documented (Williams, 1999). Despite such subjugation, these students found and developed strategies in order to succeed by adapting to microaggressions both inside and outside of the classroom, assisted by “positive racial socialization messages they received from parents and other members of the Black community” (Andrews, 2012, p. 38).
The Schooling Experience of Black Boys

In understanding the experiences of Black students in a predominantly-White, all-male, suburban Catholic school, it is crucial to appreciate and understand the specific educational experiences of Black males in general. Long before Black male students enroll in high school, they are subject to societal and cultural forces that put them in a deficit position. Beginning with the legacy of slavery and exacerbated by negative depictions in modern American society, Black males truly are born into a world where it is more difficult for them to succeed. Amongst many other socioeconomic indicators where Black males often rank lowest, Black children have higher infant mortality rates and are more likely to be chronically impoverished (Howard, 2015). While such measures show how Black males are unequivocally put at an early disadvantage in society which later extends into their schooling years, their reputation and role in society is called into question at an early age.

There is a lack of freedom that Black boys have to imagine themselves during childhood and boyhood, as research shows that Black children are often mistaken to be older than they actually are (Dumas & Nelson, 2016; Ferguson, 2000). Too often Black males’ lives are heavily influenced by this stunted childhood and exacerbated by other social forces, including societal distrust of Black boys (being viewed less trustworthy than other children) and their dehumanization, through which they are seen as “problems" themselves, not victims of a society whose racial bias has already put them on a more difficult path (Dumas & Nelson, 2016; Wilson, 1996). As previously mentioned, Harris’ (1993) research describes how this dehumanization of Blacks began with “chattel” slavery, creating a system of property that commodified Black bodies and solidified Whiteness as the social norm. Dumas and Nelson contend that such a
system has persisted until today through a society that stifles the creativity and imagination of Black children and warrants little public compassion towards their status (2016). One need not search long to find stories and videos of Black children, particularly Black males, inhumanely treated by law enforcement or school staff members across the United States. Given the constant attention given to Black males as it relates to crime and order, Dumas and Nelson contend that such dehumanizing and inhumane treatment is much less likely to be seen towards White children (2016). Such racially based mistreatment, coupled with an educational mantra that offers “no excuses” when dealing with the achievement of Black children, creates a schooling environment where Black boys have no room for error and can only be seen as “tough” (2016).

Such societal roles are just some of the many ways in which Black males must navigate a nearly nonexistent childhood and by the time they enter school, have already been labeled by society. Harper and Davis (2012) describe how a wide range of research on Black male experiences in education converge to paint a picture of ineptitude and hopelessness surrounding their schooling experiences, which furthers the stereotype that Black males do not value or care about education. Much of the educational research on Black male students, albeit true, has furthered that stereotype, as the research often shows how Black males fall behind White students (and Black females) in common measures such as academic achievement and graduation rates (Hubbard, 1999).

Allen (2010) describes how such studies display the ways in which Black boys are further distanced from the educational process, separated by the discordance between their own culture and proverbial “school culture.” Allen’s research on the schooling experiences of middle-class Black males in secondary schools represents a different perspective than is customary when exploring the educational experiences of Black males in general, a study population typically
dominated by students from low-income families (2010). Nonetheless, regardless of socioeconomic status, Black male students are often seen by their teachers as more “problematic” and likely to misinterpret the style and behavior of Black male students as threatening or defiant (Allen, 2010; Ferguson, 2000). This misinterpretation of Black student behavior and its intent can result in punitive action or disciplinary measures that are unjust or unequal and often more severe for Black students than their White peers (Allen, 2010; Ferguson, 2000). Such stereotypes White teachers or staff members might have of Black students can have profound effects on their overall schooling experience, including participation in classes, academic performance, and feelings of inclusion in the school (Allen, 2010; Davis, 2003).

**Whiteness/Curriculum as Property**

The definition of White as a racial category has been a large point of contention throughout U.S. history, as claiming to be White brought with it special privilege and standing in society, and to not be considered White cemented a second-class status (DiAngelo, 2018). As previously mentioned, European Catholic immigrants to the United States in the 19th and 20th centuries fought to assimilate and climb the “ladder” of whiteness in order to increase their social standing and mobility. Without question, the ability to identify as, and be identified as White in the United States, has provided and continues to provide profound advantage and privilege. As Allen (2004) describes, to be White in society is to be synonymous with “human” or “normal,” which “serves to mystify the actual particularities of White existence and White dysfunction” (p. 126). Whiteness remains both an image of normalcy and an inheritable item through the normalization of White power and privilege in society and the diversion of attention from its occurrence (Harris, 1993; Allen, 2004). Conversely, to be identified as non-White automatically
relegated one to a lower class; and given the racial hierarchy throughout American history, Blacks were found at the bottom.

As Cheryl Harris (1993) describes, the idea of whiteness as property in American society has its roots in the system of chattel slavery, where Whites codified the difference between “slave” and “free” to “Black” and “White,” important constructs that have pervaded and divided American society and its institutions to the present day. This construct is evident throughout legal decisions in American history, evidenced by acts such as the “Three-Fifths” clause and Black women’s bodies being used as property for unborn slaves, all of which solidified the idea that Blacks were property as decided on from a White perspective (Harris, 1993). This system of “blackness” as commodity and property insulated Whites from the threat of being commodified, and thus “whiteness” became both a characteristic and symbol of freedom; White identity was the ultimate source of protection and freedom (Harris, 1993). As Harris points out, however, “whiteness” both historically and in its present conception denotes more than just a physical property; it could and can also be understood metaphysically: it symbolized and could be utilized as physical property, identity, or status. In a more modern interpretation, Harris identifies how “whiteness” continues to pervade American society through the group identity outlined historically through the court system; the marginalization of Blacks as “other” continues to both exclude non-Whites and insulate Whites with position and privilege that has become ingrained in society.

In applying the idea of “whiteness as property” to the realm of education, Harris describes how, while Brown v. Board of Education prevented legal protection of White privilege, it failed to acknowledge that the inherent White privilege in society violated the equal protection afforded to Blacks. With this landmark case, the modern conception of whiteness as property
was born, and with it a modern-day form of exclusion and marginalization of Blacks in the education system that has been systematically implemented for decades (1993). Catholic schools are not impervious to such exclusion. Sister Patricia Flinn, S.N.D. (1970) described how her own experiences in a Catholic school in the 1960s made her a “racist” through her complacency teaching in a Catholic school that promoted Gospel teachings but failed to actively practice them as it related to race relations. Burke and Gilbert (2016) theorize that some Catholic schools, like the one mentioned by Flinn, either overtly protect an inherent “whiteness” by, for example, capping minority enrollment or overtly do so through staff or parental protests of perceived “blackness problems.” Burke and Gilbert expand upon this covert protection by describing how in Chicago’s Catholic schools, staff members and parents sought to fight off an “infiltration” of Black students by harkening back to their ideas of perceived tradition, history, and integrity of a traditionally “White school.” While this idea is easily identifiable when racially charged incidents of bias occur in schools as Burke and Gilbert describe, it is much more difficult to do in schools where such incidents are not as inflammatory or are never reported.

More succinctly put, “whiteness” and the effects that it can have in the culture of Catholic schools is often difficult to define. However, as Moreton-Robinson (2004) describes, the concept of whiteness is more aptly described or defined by “what it is not” (p. 74). Regarding research on Black Catholic theology and African Americans in urban Catholic schools, Green (2011) describes how racism and bias by White clergy often creates “separate” schools for African Americans (and other minority student groups). Green’s discussion of how biased “snap judgments” of African Americans, for example, regarding preconceived notions about high performing African American students in traditionally White schools, can be tremendously detrimental to the spiritual, educational, and emotional growth and development of students.
Despite a lack of literature and research regarding institutionalized racism in the Catholic Church, such biases have been recognized by Church leaders, including New Orleans Archbishop Alfred Hughes. In a 2006 pastoral letter, Hughes recognizes that institutionalized racism is alive in the modern Catholic Church; yet as Burke and Gilbert (2016) point out, most of the attention it garners relates to its effect on academic progress.

Such a polarized educational space in which Black students are seen as “other” and either covertly or overtly marginalized can often be better understood by examining whiteness as property through the curriculum. Catholic schools in the United States have been and continue to be dominated by a White, Eurocentric tradition and curriculum, which has only been further cemented by the inheritance of each proceeding generation of this racialized norm (Sleeter, 2011). Such a White-centric system not only inherently benefits White students, who can easily identify their own normalized White culture but also acts as the mechanism through which cultural capital is passed down to students (Utt, 2018). As previously mentioned, Catholic schools have long represented and passed down this “White space.” When students of color see reflections of themselves in their educational experience, they are more likely to experience the benefits of the cultural wealth of the community (Yosso, 2005; Utt, 2018). What effect then does this have on students of color, particularly Black students, whose cultural capital and experiences are often left out of their schooling experience?

**Assimilation**

As Martin (1996) describes, Catholic schools must have some type of a moral standard because of the moral purpose of Catholic schools. Yet this standard should be based on Gospel values and not focused on students shedding their own culture to assimilate to that of the school. Catholic schools, therefore, should focus on molding students to live the Gospel values of
acceptance, tolerance, love for neighbors, etc. as Jesus taught. Yet in this process of assimilation, Catholic schools must determine what is “right” and what is “wrong” as it relates to the ways in which they teach and guide their students and school community. McDermott (1987) contends that when schools adopt a complete assimilation model for students to conform to, students are forced to determine whether to abide by their home life and culture or that of their school. In the case of understanding this paradigm through the lens of a Black student in a Catholic school, this could be seen as deciding between “Black” and “White” culture. Such strict assimilation, Martin contends, is too strong an approach, and advocates for Catholic schools to embrace and value the culture of students by promoting multicultural education via Gospel, and thus Catholic school values (1996).

Applying the work of Foucault (1972) and Britzman (2003) on the theoretical foundations of discourse and their relation to Chicago’s Catholic schools, Burke and Gilbert (2016) describe how such discourse has defined the racial boundaries of schools (particularly Catholic schools) and in doing so, created a system that has normalized their whiteness and marginalized blackness as “other.” As Martin (1996) questions, “what is it like for a young African American student in a Catholic high school to receive a syllabus for a literature class and find not one African American author on the list? Or perhaps only one?” (p. 14). Such discourse is merely a reflection of the aforementioned realities of assimilation that have been normalized in Catholic schools via American culture, passed down through the generations of European immigrants that have occupied the leadership and congregation of the American Catholic Church and filled American Catholic schools. Whiteness, as Levine-Rasky (2000) conceptualizes, is based on a European-American model of values and norms that have preserved a society marked by White privilege and superiority and marginalized non-White persons and cultures. In their
study of racial boundaries in Catholic schools in Chicago (and numerous documented incidents of racist practice within them) Burke and Gilbert (2016) describe how students in Catholic schools are often taught to suppress the idea of “individuality” and self and to replace these notions with a complete devotion or conformity to the school and/or mission. Such a devotion to the mission, culture, and institutionalism of Catholic schools is problematic not necessarily because of the Church’s dogma, teachings, or mission that guides them, but rather the institutionalized whiteness that has defined schools in the United States both before and after Brown v. Board of Education. Complete assimilation in Catholic schools represents a dangerous proposition for non-White students, particularly Black and African Americans, who when forced to “shed” their home culture are thrown into schools that, despite well intentioned teachings and curricula that are guided by Gospel principles, are heavily influenced by the racialized tendencies of American history and society.

This perceived whiteness of Catholic school is not merely conjecture. According to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and the National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA) (2018), Catholic school enrollment in the United States has declined since 1960 from a peak of 5.2 million students. Despite this decline, Catholic schools still represent the largest private educational system in the United States and educated 1.8 million students in 2014 (USCCB, 2018). Of these 1.8 million students enrolled in Catholic schools in the United States., the USCCB and NCEA (2018) estimate that “minority” students account for more than 20% of enrollment and that 8% of these students are African American and Black students. Sanchez (2018) describes that while Catholic school student enrollment has become increasingly diverse in recent years, those working in them have not. For example, only 2% of Catholic school faculty during the 2017-2018 school year were Black or African American. While the student
demographics of Catholic school continue to become more diverse, staff and faculty demographics remain overwhelmingly White. During the 2018-2019 school year, the NCEA found that 87.6% of all Catholic school faculty in the United States identified as White, while only 3% identified as Black (NCEA, 2019). These changing demographics represent a proverbial “fork in the road” for Catholic schools as either an opportunity for them to reflect on their increasing diversity and work to reflect it in the diversity of their entire school community or to continue with the status quo of the past and to protect a seemingly inherent “White” tradition of Catholic schools. The direction taken at this proverbial “fork” will largely impact students, particularly students of color, who continue to enroll in Catholic schools that are traditionally “White” schools.

**Colorblindness**

One of the most problematic trends that developed during the era of the post-Civil Rights Movement was what has come to be known as colorblindness; i.e., the notion that individuals should not be seen or treated differently based on their skin color. In order to completely understand the experiences of Black students in predominantly White, all-male, suburban Catholic schools and the culture that exists within them, the phenomenon of colorblindness must be further explored.

Eduardo Bonilla-Silva describes the problematic effect that colorblindness has on our society: despite the fact that racism still exists across society today, most people claim to not be racist (2006). Furthermore, for those not affected by race or racism, it is more easily overlooked or ignored (Bonilla-Silva, 2006). As Rosenberg (2004) describes, “Race, especially skin color, has consequences for a person’s status and well-being. That blindness to skin color and race remains a ‘privilege’ available exclusively to White people” (p. 257). Colorblindness is based on
the idea of color blind racism, which describes racism’s dangerous tendency to adapt and change based on cultural changes (Barker, 1980). In exploring U.S. culture during the post-Civil Rights Movement, Robin DiAngelo (2018) describes how after the violence perpetrated against Blacks in the South became more publicized, for someone to be seen as a morally good person they could not be complicit with racism. DiAngelo goes on to describe how the passing of the Civil Rights Act not only encouraged Whites to be less “accepting” of racial prejudice, but caused them to completely distance themselves from or be complicit in any mention of racism, what she terms the “Good/Bad Binary.” Akin to aversive racism, those seen as typically old, Southern racists were denoted as “bad,” and those who did not emulate these racist perpetrators were not only “good,” but stopped reflecting on prejudice and racism altogether (2018). DiAngelo points to a crucial line from Dr. Martin Luther King’s famous I Have a Dream speech that was the catalyst for colorblindness: describing his dream of not being judged by his skin color but by the content of his character, King provided a line which Whites used to turn away from seeing race and believed that racism would disappear from society (2018). DiAngelo’s discussion highlights one of the largest impediments to racial change in American society today and lays the groundwork to explore how colorblindness pervades society and thus the landscape of education.

Ullucci and Battey (2011) describe the importance of the role teachers play in recognizing that race is a salient factor in society and education: “Teachers cannot see racial inequities if they position race as insignificant in schooling and see racism as a historical artifact” (p. 2). Joseph, Viesca, and Bianco (2016) describe the various ways colorblindness impacts schools, including its continued promotion of a racial hierarchy in schools, minimalizing of major educational inequalities related to race, and its permeation in children’s literature
(Thomas, 2016). Colorblindness in education, particularly in predominantly White institutions, is problematic because it fails to recognize or appreciate the cultural capital and lived experiences that Black students bring to the schooling environment.

**Prejudice and the Trump Effect**

Social norms are impactful in guiding the behavior of individuals or groups in a society, as they often dictate membership and identity (Crandall, Miller & White, 2018). Changes in social norms can also lead to changes in attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors, particularly when these norms lead to the approval of prejudice, which can embolden groups to carry out hateful speech and rhetoric or violence (Crandall et al., 2018; Alvarez, 1999). While White expression of prejudice has declined over time and has slowly been replaced by a stronger approval of the ideas of racial equality and integration, there still exists a great degree of difference in perceptions held by Blacks and Whites regarding discrimination that Blacks still face (Bobo, 2001; Dovidio & Gaertner, 2004). The cause of these sentiments can be better interpreted through an understanding of the conceptualization of dominative and aversive racism, as introduced by Kovel (1970). Kovel introduced a theory that posits an understanding of the perpetrators of racism as dichotomous: dominative racism, which is perpetrated by those who openly act out their racist beliefs, versus aversive racism, which can be perpetrated by those who may empathize with victims of prejudice or may even espouse beliefs of racial equality yet likely still harbor a deficit view of Blacks, which may be subconscious (Kovel, 1970; Dovidio & Gaertner, 2004).

Dovidio and Gartner’s research on aversive racism highlights the ways in which averse racism plays out in society. In situations where strong social norms exist or where parameters of a “normatively appropriate” (right and wrong) response exist, aversive racists will not
discriminate (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2004, p. 7). This apprehension to discriminate in such situations is often motivated by aversive racists' fear of damaging their self-image, and discrimination is often replaced by the perpetrator treating Blacks and White equally or by treating Blacks more favorably (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2004, p. 7). In situations where “normative structures are weak”; i.e., there are unclear guidelines of what is socially acceptable or seen as right or wrong, aversive racists are more likely to discriminate (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2004, p. 8). Furthermore, aversive racists will discriminate when able to use a factor other than race to justify a negative response (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2004, p. 8). Various motives for expressing such prejudice exist, such as freedom of speech, which is particularly important for U.S. citizens (Crandall et al., 2018). As Crandall et al. describe, there exists some ambivalence, be it individual or cultural, that surrounds the acceptability of most prejudices (2018). Such ambivalence leads to an “open interpretation” of social norms, particularly as they relate to prejudice or discrimination.

In the wake of the election of Donald Trump as the 45th U.S. President on November 8, 2016, The Southern Poverty Law Center reported more than 400 bias-related incidents in the week following the election and more than 1,000 similar incidents in the month after (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2016; Crandall et al., 2018). Research by Crandall et al. included conversations with Trump and Clinton supporters both before and after the election about their perceptions of social norms of prejudice and their own levels of prejudice (2018). This research found that as participants perceived that prejudice was more accepted, they perceived themselves as less prejudiced (Crandall et al., 2018). The study also found that the 2016 election “ushered in a normative climate that favored expression of several prejudices” (Crandall et al., 2018, p. 186).
Such shifts in social norms and the perception that prejudice (or prejudicial language) is more accepted, can have profound impacts on behaviors, particularly in educational settings.

Research on the political discourse in U.S. public high schools in the first four months of President Trump’s regime found a rise in problematic trends such as discriminatory remarks towards racial minorities and a rise in the stress and anxiety levels of students of color in predominantly White schools (Rogers et al., 2017). This research found that the polarized political environment often spilled into the classroom, particularly in predominantly White schools, where teachers reported an increase in student usage of unsubstantiated sources and a rise in student combativeness towards their peers (Rogers et al., 2017). Teachers also reported that students that espoused ideas of racism or prejudice felt more empowered to openly share these ideas in classroom discussions, exacerbating already tense classroom environments (Rogers et al., 2017). This hostile environment and the conversation surrounding it also marginalized groups, according to some teachers, who shared that marginalized groups of students avoided conversations and had silenced students.

Studies on reactions to the 2016 U.S. election and teachers’ pedagogical responses describe the importance of conversations about politics that occur in classroom settings and the profound impacts they can have on students (Sondel, Baggett, & Dunn, 2018). Teachers play a critical role in these conversations, as they “have to consider ‘who decides,’ ‘what issues are open and closed,’ and ultimately ‘who benefits from framing issues in this way.’” (Sondel, Baggett, & Dunn, 2018, p. 176). While opinions differ on how teachers should or are able to discuss such topics in a nonpartisan manner, so too do opinions on the effects of staying neutral in such conversations (Sondel et al., 2018). While some believe teacher neutrality when teaching such topics is impossible due to the political positions that teachers harbor (Journell, 2011;
Sondel et al., 2018), others contend that teachers remaining neutral or silent in political discussions can further cement inequity or racial marginalization (Howard, 2013; Sondel et al., 2018). Such neutrality by teachers, as well as that found in textbooks, must be offset by providing opportunities to Black students to share their lived experiences (Journell & Castro, 2011; Sondel et al., 2018).

Summary

This review of literature, through the inclusion of research on a variety of influential phenomena, helps people to understand the complexity of the schooling experiences of Black students in predominantly White, all-male, suburban Catholic schools. Without exploring the intersection of these phenomena, it is difficult to understand their effect on the educational experiences of Black students. It is imperative that predominantly White Catholic schools recognize their role of promoting and teaching Gospel values to all students while reviewing how their history and traditions may potentially act as barriers to fulfilling this call. With this in mind, these schools must also appreciate just how salient a factor race is in the schooling experiences of Black students and how this affects their feelings of membership in such an educational environment.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce and discuss the methodology used for this qualitative, critical narrative research study regarding the experiences of Black students in a predominantly White, all-male, suburban Catholic school, particularly as they relate to a perceived culture of membership in the school. The use of a methodology grounded in Critical Race Theory and the collection of data through the use of counterstories allowed the researcher to develop theory regarding a perceived culture of membership in such a Catholic school setting. This chapter includes a discussion of how a critical narrative approach, guided by Critical Race Theory, framed the research study. The study’s participant sampling and setting, methods of data collection and analysis, as well as the researcher’s background are also discussed in this chapter.

Of the 1.8 million students enrolled in Catholic schools in the United States, the USCCB (U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops) and NCEA (2018) estimate that “minority” students account for more than 20% of enrollment, and 8% of these students are African American and Black students. While research regarding the success of Black students in Catholic schools exists (Aldana, 2014; Johnson, 1999; Wenglinsky, 2007), scant research exists that explores Black students’ perceptions or accounts of their experiences in the schools. While research has shown that Black students often succeed in Catholic schools, much remains unknown about their personal experiences there from their own perspective. The vast majority of any such research typically comes from Catholic schools in urban areas, where the majority of these students are students of color. Little to no descriptive research exists that explores the experiences of Black students and their perceptions of a culture of membership in predominantly White, all-male,
suburban Catholic schools. As previously discussed, Burke and Gilbert (2016) have shown that historical incidents of White on Black racism abound in Catholic schools in the city of Chicago, and countless other incidents of anti-Blackness have occurred and been documented in Catholic schools. Are these incidents isolated; and if not, how do such experiences if present, affect the perceived membership of Black students in a predominantly White, all-male, suburban Catholic school setting?

Through this study, the researcher explored the lived stories of these students in the ways in which they experienced and perceived a culture of school membership in such a setting. To better understand these experiences, the study’s theoretical framework was guided by Critical Race Theory and explored a suburban Catholic school’s culture as both a product and example of “whiteness as property.” The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. In what ways do recent Black male alumni describe their schooling experiences in a predominantly White, all-male, suburban Catholic high school?

1a. How can a culture of school membership, if present, be understood through the counterstories of recent Black male alumni from a predominantly White, all-male, suburban Catholic high school?

2. In what ways, if any, do young Black Catholic high school alumni recommend promoting a culture of membership in a predominantly White, all-male, suburban Catholic high school?

**Research Design and Approach**

This study employed a qualitative approach as it sought to understand the beliefs, perceptions, and lived experiences of Black students. A qualitative design was utilized because such research work is focused on “(1) how people interpret their experiences, (2) how they
construct their words, and (3) what meaning they attribute to their experiences (Merriam, 2009). The overall goal is to understand how people make sense of their lives and their experiences” (p. 23). Debus’ (1995) work furthers the importance of using qualitative rather than quantitative research in order to have a more profound understanding of participants’ experiences: “qualitative research . . . provides depth of responses and, therefore, greater consequent understanding than can be acquired through quantitative techniques” (p. 2).

As this study utilized a framework grounded in Critical Race Theory, particularly through the use of counterstories to collect data, it was guided by a critical narrative approach and the use of interviews to more richly understand participants’ past experiences. Narrative inquiry allows us “to make sense of ourselves and our experiences over the course of time” (Bochner, 2001, p. 154). Riessman (1993) describes how narrative researchers analyze individual stories to learn about society and culture, and how these individual stories become a “community of life stories” (p. 4). This narrative approach allowed participants to both make meaning of their own lived experiences and share their experiences with the researcher in a manner that allowed them to speak freely and authentically about their past schooling experiences. Guided by a framework grounded in Critical Race Theory, the researcher gathered and analyzed the counterstories of participants in order to gain a deeper understanding of the culture of the school. This narrative approach allowed the researcher to not only understand the culture of membership that exists in the school, but to do so through the “insider perspective” of individuals who were part of and experienced a predominantly White school community and culture as non-White members.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to learn about the lived experiences of Black alumni during their time at a predominantly White, all-male, suburban Catholic high school. This design was chosen because of the personal experiences of students that are often difficult to
discuss due to their sensitive nature; i.e., experiences concerning race, acceptance, stereotypes, etc. Such a reflective experience was much more suitable for a qualitative rather than a quantitative research design. The use of semi-structured interviews was chosen because of their ability to capture the wide variety of the students’ lived experiences. As Merriam (2009) describes, “Less structured formats assume that individual respondents define the world in unique ways” (p. 90). As each student’s experience in a school is different, semi-structured interviews provided the opportunity for the researcher to listen to the student describe his experiences in his own words, thus creating ownership. Ladson-Billings (1998) and Barnes (1990) posit that Critical Race Theory and the use of “counterstories” allow for persons of color to have a voice and interject minority viewpoints in a racially dominated society. Semi-structured interviews, then, not only provided the opportunity for deeper interpretation of lived experiences, but in a particular way for Black alumni students, with a vehicle that allowed them to tell their own “contextualized story” in a seemingly racially dominated school.

**Setting and Context**

As the study contains information that may be sensitive for a variety of reasons, all identifying data concerning participants was changed and the identity of the school and participants remains anonymous. The study included Black alumni students who graduated within the past six years from a single, predominantly White, all-male, suburban Catholic school located in an affluent suburb of New York City. The school’s student demographic breakdown can be seen below, and is compared with student demographic data from two predominantly White, all-male, suburban Catholic high schools located near New York City. These schools draw students from the same geographic locations as the study school.
Figure 1. Student Demographics

Of the study school’s staff, approximately 1% identify as Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander; 7% identify as Black or African American; 9% identify as Hispanic or Latino; 4% identify as Multiracial or Other and 79% identify as White. The school has a local and regional reputation as being a high performing school academically, highly successful in athletics and offers a variety of extracurricular activities. As much of the study relies on the lived experiences and sensitive information from participants regarding their schooling experience, limited information about the school is presented here.

Participants and Sampling Strategy

As the study focuses on the perceptions and lived experiences of Black alumni students of a predominantly White Catholic school, it was crucial to include participants who identify as Black and have graduated from the school recently enough to remember their experience in detail. Therefore, all participants graduated from the school within the last six years to give the most accurate and recent understanding of their experiences in the school. Participants were selected through the use of selective sampling, which was used to include students who identify
as Black and African American, who have graduated from the school within the last six years. Schatzman and Strauss (1973) describe selective sampling as a necessary sampling method, which is “shaped by the time the researcher has available to him, by his framework, by his starting and developing interests, and by any restrictions placed upon his observations by his hosts” (p. 39).

Information detailing the study and a request to participate were emailed to potential interviewees. Twenty-seven participants consented to participate in the study. Based on these responses, those who consented to participate in the study completed a short survey that collected descriptive information about the participant such as graduation year, faith background, previous schooling type, and involvement in school life during their time in the school. This information was not analyzed and was only collected to better help the researcher understand the background of the student and their involvement in school life. Once this information was collected, the researcher used it to ensure that the participants involved in the study represented a diverse range of factors, such as age, faith background, involvement in school life, etc. As a student’s experience and perception of a school’s culture of membership is heavily dependent on their involvement within it, only including participants in the study who graduated from a single class year or were involved in a limited variety of extracurricular activities; for example, may have led to sampling bias and skewed data. While the researcher had interactions with many of the participants during their time enrolled in the school, the researcher had little to no communication or interaction with participants after their graduation.

In addition to selective sampling to identify initial interviewees, the study also employed snowball sampling, which successfully allowed alumni who participated to recruit fellow Black alumni to do so as well. Noy (2008) describes how snowball sampling “relies on and partakes in
the *dynamics of natural and organic social networks*” (p. 329). In her seminal work, *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria*, Beverly Tatum describes the racial identity formation of Black students, particularly when encountering a dominant White culture in a social environment such as a school (1997). Tatum describes how Black students, especially when encountering racism or prejudice from White school staff members, will turn to other Black students to find support. The researcher employed snowball sampling to utilize the organic social networks of Black students from this predominantly White institution in order to involve as many participants as possible.

**Procedures**

After IRB approval from Seton Hall’s Review Board was granted, the researcher emailed potential participants with information regarding the nature of the research study. This information included an informed consent document (Appendix A) and a letter of solicitation (Appendix B) to participate. Those participants that consented to participate were then sent a short survey (Appendix D) that provided the researcher with relevant information such as their graduation year, faith background, previous schooling type and their involvement in school life during their time at the study school. After participants completed the short survey, the researcher coordinated one-on-one, video interviews with each participant, which were conducted via Google Meet.

Upon completion of all interviews, the researcher used Scribie.com, an online transcription service to transcribe all interviews. Once transcription was completed, the researcher reviewed each script to ensure accuracy and clarity. This included the comparison of transcripts with the field notes and memos from each interview.
In compliance with Seton Hall’s IRB guidelines, all data collected from the study (digital audio and video files, field notes, interview transcripts etc.) were kept on an encrypted digital storage device (USB) in a locked safe in the researcher’s private residence. This data will be destroyed after three years.

**Data Collection**

Data from this study were collected through semi-structured interviews. Before interviews took place, the initial survey was sent out (via Google Forms) to gauge each participant’s involvement during their time at the school. The data collected in the initial survey were used solely to better understand the participant’s involvement in the school. These data were not analyzed and only used to help guide the interview process by allowing the researcher to help participants expand upon their experiences.

Semi-structured interviews lasted approximately 40 minutes and were recorded via Google Meet video conferencing. The researcher also took field notes and completed memo-writing (memoing) while conducting the interviews. The use of memoing in qualitative research allows the researcher to be reflexive and to better understand his own impact on collecting and analyzing data (Birks, Chapman & Francis, 2008). A semi-structured interview protocol provided alumni with some structure that adhered specifically to the research questions, yet also provided enough freedom for them to expand upon particularly meaningful or salient parts of their schooling experience. As Bogdan and Biklen (2007) describe, semi-structured interviews allow for participants to play a larger part in defining the content of the interview process which allows for an emergence of codable data. The interview protocol that guided the collection of data can be found in Appendix C.
Data Analysis

Due to the research design of the study, the researcher gathered a large amount of narrative data through interviews with 27 participants. This narrative data created “mountains of words” which can be difficult to organize and analyze for the researcher (Johnson, Dunlap, and Benoit, 2010, p. 648). The researcher took data gathered from pre-interview surveys and organized them by the date of interview, use of pseudonyms, and the background information of participants. The recorded video interviews were transcribed through use of a professional transcription service. Transcriptions were then uploaded to professional qualitative analysis software and were coded using the researcher’s field notes and memos. The use of memo writing was crucial in reflecting on participants’ stories and to highlight emerging themes. Memoing also allowed the researcher to compare data obtained in prior interviews and adjust the interview protocol as necessary.

While qualitative research is mainly inductive, the researcher utilized both inductive and deductive methods to analyze the data. Once transcriptions were completed and reviewed a second time for accuracy, the researcher began coding the data through a template (deductive) approach. This approach allowed the researcher to have a pre-made, a priori codebook, before the analysis began, by creating predetermined codes through the research questions and theoretical framework (Crabtree & Miller, 1999). Coding was first completed through use of a holistic approach, which allowed the researcher to apply a single code to large chunks of data, in essence “prepping” the data for further coding into other categories that later developed (Dey, 1993). The researcher then utilized a “concept” approach to apply codes to these larger units of data to “harmonize with the bigger picture” (Saldaña, 2015). As more codes were developed, the researcher was able to create categories that more specifically grouped coded segments (Saldaña,
These categories were organized first by correlating each question used in the interview protocol. Because of the narrative approach of the study and the many open-ended questions included in the interview protocol, the data and codes were unable to be organized or quantified using a scale. Most of the questions produced 5-15 unique codes, and some of these codes overlapped and appeared between multiple questions. Once these strands of data were coded, the researcher identified patterns that emerged, which can be described as actions or data that appear more than two times (Saldaña, 2015). For example, Question 3a “Please tell me about the ways in which Black students were treated at the school” had initial codes as follows: “had to hold my tongue,” “if you said something, you might be looked at differently,” “some black students who, when something crazy was said by a White student, or when the topic of race was brought up, they would stay silent,” “I feel like they were kinda scared to voice themselves because they have tried before and it kinda got shut down, they some were afraid to kind of follow that up,” “obviously, you hold your tongue when you wanna’, I guess, retaliate and you come off disrespectfully to somebody because when you are on a sports team, they could say, oh no, you can't play the next whatever amount of games or stuff like that.” From these codes, the theme of “Black Silence” was derived from the recurrence of these and similar, more detailed participant descriptions. As more data were reviewed and \textit{a priori} codes generated from the review of the literature were exhausted, the researcher inductively coded as new themes emerged from analyzing the data. These larger categories were grouped into emerging themes that related to each corresponding research question. The data were reviewed thoroughly as the study progressed, which included frequent revisitations of interview transcriptions and comparisons with the codes and the researcher’s field notes and memo writing.
Once the coding process was completed, the researcher ensured internal validity and inter-coder reliability through the assistance of a colleague, a doctoral recipient from the Department of Educational Leadership Management and Policy at Seton Hall University. This colleague was briefed on the study and its methodology and was asked to independently code the same set of data generated from two questions that reflected thematic saturation: Question 3a “As a student, describe your level of consciousness of being Black in a mostly White school. Did this matter to you?” and Question 2f “Was race a discussion point at school; if so, how? If not, was it avoided? Why?” After this colleague coded these same data, results were compared and were found to be correlated in the same way.

Once coding was completed, the researcher created a codebook that contained their compellation and descriptions (Saldaña, 2015). The researcher then utilized Dedoose, a qualitative analysis software, to review and organize all codes into broader categories. Once these categories were organized, the researcher utilized qualitative analysis software to create code descriptor charts and other visual analyses to narrow down categories into emerging themes. Examples of themes that emerged included the following: segregation by race, differential treatment of Black students, perceived whiteness of curriculum, tokenism, perceptions of microaggressions, etc. These themes were reviewed extensively and, through an iterative process, were combined and narrowed down to major themes that related to each research question. These major themes and their subthemes are explored in Chapters IV and V.

**Researcher Background**

As the product of and now a current employee of the Catholic high school used in this study, this research was heavily inspired by the researcher’s experiences in Catholic schools. As a student in a Catholic school, the researcher was able to develop and grow in a school culture
where he felt accepted, cared for, and able to be himself; he felt like a full member of this school community and always felt that his voice was heard and listened to. The researcher’s schooling experience in a Catholic school also opened doors and provided impactful educational and life experiences that have paid dividends throughout his life.

Before teaching at the study school, the researcher spent three years teaching in Baltimore County, Maryland, through Teach for America. The researcher could not have been in a more different setting from his own experience in high school. Here, he witnessed educational inequity and inequality up-close and personal as he watched his students fighting a nearly impossible battle against not only what was happening in their lives outside of school, but also with the inadequate education system they were a part of. Teaching at a school where more than 95% of the students were Black, the researcher is still embarrassed to say it was the first time he truly became cognizant of the privilege he, a White male, had and continue to have in his educational experiences and society at large. It was clear to see that the school in Baltimore where the researcher had taught, which was part of a school district that was more “White” than the school at which he presently taught, was in the eyes of many a “blemish” on the rest of the school district. The researcher was able to see the many ways in which the school and its students were victims of a system that was inherently racially biased, a system in which these students did not matter and truly had no voice, which had profound effects on their education and their lives. It was abundantly clear that the educational system and model that the researcher’s former students were part of was unequivocally “White,” as more affluent White schools in the district were constantly being lauded for their accomplishments. What has always stuck with the researcher from his teaching days in Baltimore was the fact that his former students lacked a
voice and that it has always been and continues to be the norm for many Black students in schools across the United States.

The researcher’s teaching experience in Baltimore made me aware of, if not for the first time, of the incredible privilege of his own education in a Catholic high school, not only the privilege of attending an elite predominantly White school and the benefits it afforded but the privilege of doing so while being White. This afforded me the luxury of being the part of the racial “norm” and never having to think about or reflect on race or develop and utilize strategies to navigate such a schooling environment while being seen as “other.” Certainly, this research will neither be the first nor last example of a White male of privilege inquiring about or “trying to understand” Black students’ experiences. In reality, it is something that this researcher or any non-Black individual, particularly a non-Black male, will never fully understand. However, this and similar research can be impactful and effective, first by listening to the experiences and voices of Black students, then using it to take purposeful action. The researcher’s hope is that this study will contribute to the scant literature on Black students’ experiences in such a Catholic school, push Catholic schools towards exploring possible shortcomings and allow them to achieve their true purpose of creating a school culture that includes, appreciates, and accepts all students.

**Validity, Reliability, and Researcher Bias**

Narrative research is defined by the relational aspect between participants and researchers. Inherent in any qualitative research study are the inevitable bias and preconceptions that the researcher may inject and impose on the interpretation and analysis of the data. As Peshkin (1988) describes, such biases “have the capacity to filter, skew, shape, block, transform, construe, and misconstrue what transpires from the outset of a research project to its culmination
in a written statement” (p. 17). To combat such biases, the qualitative researcher must commit to practicing reflexivity throughout the study process. As Wasserfall (1997) describes, “… the use of reflexivity during fieldwork can mute the distance and alienation built into conventional notions of ‘objectivity’ or objectifying those who are studied . . . The research process becomes more mutual, as a strategy to deconstruct the author’s authority” (p. 152). Being reflexive of the “other,” in the case of this study Black males, can ensure that the White researcher allows the participants to “speak for themselves” (Trinh, 1991, p. 57). This reflexivity is particularly important in narrative analyses, the findings of which are largely open to the interpretation of the researcher. Riessman (2008) further describes this interpretation in a narrative study, “a narrative is not simply a factual report of events, but instead one articulation told from a point of view that seeks to persuade others to see the events in a single way” (p. 187).

Ensuring validity and reliability were of the utmost importance to this study, given the background of the researcher, the participants, and the research itself. The researcher had a prior relationship with many of the participants. The researcher taught some of the participants during their time at the school and knew others through involvement with extracurricular activities. Given the fact that these participants are now alumni of the school and the researcher is no longer in regular contact with them, the researcher believes that their answers and accounts were authentic and honest. The researcher’s own identity as a White male working in a predominantly White school cannot be overlooked. Validity was ensured through the practice of self-reflexivity throughout the interview and data analysis process. Mitigating the possible bias a researcher may inject into a study requires them to see and interpret the experiences of participants subjectively (Segady, 2014). This reflexivity and self-awareness of positional power and privilege was crucial in conducting interviews as well as analyzing the data. Throughout the coding process and
analysis of interview data, the researcher practiced this reflexivity in order to identify and mitigate any personal bias and prejudice. The validity of the study was also ensured through the use of selective sampling of alumni to ensure the participants represented a diverse range of ages and involvement in the life of the school. While the use of member checking of the interview response was another way in which reliability was ensured, participants’ answers were clear and no further clarification was necessary (Merriam, 2009).

The dependability of the study was maintained through use of a second coder during the data analysis process. The researcher was assisted by a colleague, a doctoral recipient from the Department of Educational Leadership, Management, and Policy at Seton Hall University. This colleague assisted by coding an interview transcript utilizing the codes that the researcher employed. This colleague and the researcher coded strands of data in the same way. Dependability was also ensured by capturing concise notes of the procedural aspects of the interview process to make it as replicable as possible.

**Protection of Participants**

The protection of participants, their data and their anonymity were of the utmost importance to this study. None of the participants’ real names were used and will never be used in the study or data concerning it. Each participant was given a non-identifying pseudonym to protect their identity. Furthermore, any identifying information concerning the participants was changed to protect their anonymity.

**Summary**

The goal of this chapter was to outline the methodology and design that answered this study’s research questions. The chapter also included specific details concerning the study’s setting and participants, how research was conducted, and how data were collected and analyzed.
Critical Race Theory guided the study’s framework, which led to the use of a critical narrative methodology and the collection and analysis of data through the counterstories of alumni. These counterstories provided the researcher with rich data from participants, which provided insight into their experiences in a predominantly White, all-male, suburban Catholic school. Chapter IV serves to provide the results of the study in concert with the study’s research questions and the methodology described in this chapter.
Chapter IV

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study is to explore and better understand the lived experiences of Black students in a predominantly White, all-male, suburban Catholic high school, particularly as they relate to the school’s culture of membership. To do so, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with 27 alumni students who identified as Black or African-American and had graduated within the previous six years from a single, predominantly White, all-male, suburban Catholic high school. These interviews varied in length, between 35 and 60 minutes in duration. By drawing from the interviewee responses, the researcher was able to explore factors that contributed to and more deeply understand the lived experiences and perceptions of these alumni students, particularly as they related to a perceived culture of membership within the school.

The study was inspired by a lack of literature that explores the lived experiences and perceptions of Black students in such a Catholic school setting. The foundation and framework of the study was guided by Critical Race Theory, as well as whiteness (curriculum) as property, and highlighted the importance of counterstories through which Black students described their own realities in a predominantly White school culture. Participants were asked a variety of questions to allow the researcher to better understand their lived experiences and perceptions of a culture of membership in the school setting. This chapter presents the findings for the following research questions:

1. In what ways do recent Black male alumni describe their schooling experiences in a predominantly White, all-male, suburban Catholic high school?
1 a. How can a culture of school membership, if present, be understood through the counterstories of recent Black male alumni from a predominantly White, all-male, suburban Catholic high school?

2. In what ways, if any, do young Black Catholic high school alumni recommend promoting a culture of membership in a predominantly White, all-male, suburban Catholic high school?

The 27 alumni students who were interviewed represented six different graduating years; the breakdown of participants by their graduating year can be seen in the chart below.

**Figure 2. Participants by Class Year**

More information regarding each participant and their faith background can be found in the graphic below:
Due to concerns of the COVID-19 pandemic, all interviews were conducted via Google Meet video conferencing software between the months of July and December of 2020. The findings presented in this chapter describe the themes that emerged from the interviews that were conducted. The narratives of the participants represent their experiences and perceptions during their time enrolled in the study school.
Findings: Major Theme Strands by Research Question

This section presents the major findings of the study based on the data that emerged from the coding process. Deductive coding and analysis were initially utilized by the researcher to connect data with *a priori* codes and themes developed from the literature review. As these *a priori* themes were exhausted, the researcher employed an inductive approach to identify significant emerging themes in the data and created new codes (Thomas, 2006). The data were coded through use of concept coding, which allowed the researcher to analyze the larger stanzas of narrative data created by participants to apply them to larger, more broad themes (Saldaña, 2015). As the goal of this narrative analysis is to find common themes from a collection of stories, the researcher utilized an analysis of narratives approach to simultaneously examine similar stories (Polkinghorne, 1995).

The major themes that emerged from the coding process are presented under each research question that they most closely relate to.

Research Question 1

*In what ways do recent Black male alumni describe their schooling experiences in a predominantly White, all-male, suburban Catholic high school?*

Through the interview process, participants described in detail their experiences attending a predominantly White, all-male, suburban Catholic high school. A number of prevalent themes emerged from analyzing data related to Research Question 1. There was, however, a tremendous variety and diversity of experiences and perceptions that participants had that hearkened back to their time in the school, a poignant reminder that the African American and Black experience is not a singular one. The vast majority of participants described their overall experience in the school as positive, citing long lasting relationships, important life skills, and a sense of
achievement that were all developed at the school. With that being said, as the themes below describe, participants’ experiences, particularly those concerning race, were impactful in both positive and negative ways.

**Lack of White Understanding of Black Experiences**

A prevalent theme that emerged from the interview process was participants’ perceptions that White members of the school community, particularly students, did not understand the background, culture, and experiences of Black students and the Black community. The vast majority of participants described how they felt that the school community at large, particularly White students, simply did not understand what Black students’ culture or lives were like. Participants frequently cited current events, including the policy of “stop and frisk,” events regarding police brutality, the shooting and killing of unarmed Black children and men, and recent U.S. elections as instances where White students frequently displayed an ignorance or lack of desire to understand the realities and experiences that they as Black students and the Black community at large encounter. Many participants recalled instances where White students would mention to them during classroom discussions that “racism doesn’t exist anymore.” Participants frequently discussed how when these topics came up in conversations with White students, both formally (such as in a classroom discussion or other school venues) or informally (such as in the hallways, locker rooms, etc.), few White students would demonstrate any understanding of the issue or would mock, joke, or make fun of the topic. Participants frequently described how these conversations often pitted White students against their Black peers, and despite participants wanting to develop a cordial relationship and mutual understanding with these peers, they perceived that many White students simply did not “want to make the effort to understand.” Participants described how teachers did their best to guide these conversations or
calm them when they became hostile, but many participants felt that the school itself made few efforts to promote a deeper understanding of the experiences of Black students. Furthermore, many participants commented on how they felt that the topic of race wasn’t discussed enough, and many interviewees felt the school tried to avoid discussing race. One participant, Antwon, described his perceptions of the reactions of White students when such topics came up:

I feel like they’re sort of like, “Why are you starting issues, why are you starting problems?” There's nothing really wrong going on. Because the school is an “accepting community,” so they don't see it firsthand or they've been sheltered from it all their lives, so it's like, they don't really understand. So when they say something that can be given off as racist or something like that and a Black student reacts, they'll be like, “Nobody wants to hear that right now,” kind of thing.

Another participant, Christopher, added:

If we would have certain discussions on racism, like especially about race, I remember one time during one class, there was a topic about the “stop and frisk” in New York City. And the students just did not understand why it was just not a good thing to just stop a person based on their appearance. You know they just kinda’ took the approach, “You're making the city safer,” but no, you're racially profiling and then it turns into something worse. But I just felt like they were unaware of issues going on.

While most participants described how this lack of understanding of Black issues mainly emanated from White students and typically related to current events, numerous participants alluded to the school’s administration not understanding the neighborhoods and socioeconomic situations that Black students came from. For these participants, this had a profound impact on
their daily experiences at the school. Joseph described his own background and his perceptions of the school’s understanding:

Some of us didn’t have a tie, we wore the same tie all year. So when I don’t have one or don’t have a jacket, I’m gonna’ take the detention ‘cause I don't wanna’ wear a suit coat that was in lost and found that's three sizes too big. What if you don't have a belt? I don't think people understood the neighborhoods that we come from; we don't have certain things, our parents aren't spending that kind of money. Some of our parents don't even have a suit; they don't own those kinds of things. So I think instead of just telling kids to go get that, wear that, maybe they're separate conversations.

Daniel added:

For those Black kids just coming from predominantly Black environments and then coming to the school, it's not even like just affluent White kids; you're literally meeting sons of millionaires and hedge fund and equity managers, and all sorts of people that live in [wealthy town names]. There’s a major gap in culture and understanding.

While the vast majority of participants described that they enjoyed their time at the school and spoke positively of their overall experience, many commented that this lack of understanding of their background and culture was problematic and affected their time there. According to participants, the perceived lack of understanding or combative nature of White students regarding Black experiences would lead to arguments, scuffles, and a widening divide, as Daniel described:

We definitely got into arguments. As I learned more and more, that these White kids have different opinions on things than I did, but these things I didn't really realize ’til senior year when I was in these classes with them, when it wasn't just math and science which is like, you can't have different opinions on math and science because you were either right
or you're wrong. But in one class, we were talking about the current events and things like that, and everybody has an opinion, so that's where I guess the divide, the hidden chasm was definitely shown.

Participants described how this chasm, as Daniel put it, led to students segregating by race into groups and cliques. This chasm was particularly widened by the aforementioned discussions on race, according to many participants, who described how tense classroom discussions led to further segregation. David described the following:

I think like at that time it was weird because when those conversations occurred, you could kind of like gauge the room and see like where students stood on issues, so it made you like reconsider like, “Oh wow, I’m surprised by this [White] kid, like where he stands, so I thought we were friends but maybe not anymore.

Keith described similar experiences when comparing conversations about race and politics between his more racially diverse middle school and this predominantly White high school:

We had these talks about politics and we had talks about police brutality and President Obama and whatever. Through those conversations, that's where seeing the brotherhood became more difficult. I started to see like, okay, do I wanna’ label these students as racist? Not necessarily. I don't wanna’ hold them as racist; I wanna’ see them as maybe being ignorant or not being able to see my side of the story, in my opinion. It’s a little bit better than labeling somebody as racist. That was a difficulty for me being able to understand the changes between the two schools where in my old school or even at home, my political identity or certain topics would just align with each other so much more easily than at [school name] where you gotta’ kinda watch your words sometimes. ‘Cause
what you would think is accepted in other places may not be accepted there or you may have to prepare yourself to fight, maybe not physically, but verbally.

Participants also described how, despite these problematic conversations and a seeming need to promote dialogue to promote mutual understanding, they often were too scared or uncomfortable speaking up about issues that affected them.

Black Silence

Another theme among participants was their own fear of speaking up when a variety of issues arose during their time at the school, particularly when they felt that wrongdoing had occurred. As David put it, “I felt like I often had to hold my tongue because I was Black.” This silence that participants described related to a wide range of situations and scenarios. For some, remaining silent was a product of not wanting to be stereotyped by other students, Black and White alike, for being “one of those Black kids that always has to speak out about race” [Participant Matthew]. For other participants, remaining silent was for fear of the backlash that they perceived might come from a school administrator or a teacher. “I didn’t want it to backfire and blow up in my face if I spoke up,” said one participant. Other participants didn’t speak out because they felt that they didn’t have anyone in the school that they could go to when a situation arose. Other participants were fearful of speaking up because they worried it might jeopardize their grades or participation in an extracurricular activity. David described this fear in his experience:

Yeah, that was something I've always been conscious of anywhere I go, because back then it wasn't really normal to speak up [about issues of race]. We're in a different time now where you're supposed to . . . You're more likely than not to speak out on something that is wrong, that you see wrong because that's just something we've evolved to
nowadays. Yeah, back then I was definitely more conscious of holding my tongue, because also there were also detentions and stuff, so you were always getting detentions and I had practice, so I'm not trying to miss practice and get yelled at in practice 'cause I had detention.

Victor recalled similar fears that Black students had because of a differential treatment that they perceived and the possible consequences:

For some [Black] kids, it was probably that they were scared to do certain things 'cause they feel like they could probably get the boot faster because of the color of their skin. So there's always that conscious fear in the back of a lot of kids’ minds, and it's even a conversation I've had with my other fellow students when I was there. They were scared 'cause they got in trouble for one thing, then they saw a Caucasian kid get away with it, but then they were like, “This could be the end and all for me.” So I think it makes you more cautious, but it also makes us more cautious in life; we're scared to do a lot of things that other people aren't.

When conversations that involved race came up in classroom settings, participants described how they were often uncomfortable joining the conversation, fearful of being verbally attacked or for fear of being viewed negatively by their peers [both Black and White] after the conversation. As Antwon described, “People who really spoke out on the issues [surrounding race] were looked at differently.”

Darin described this in a similar way:

So for the most part, I feel like [Black] kids will be quiet because like I said, the environment is primarily White, and not saying that in a bad way, but it's like if you do speak out at times, people are gonna’ look at you just because you're not. It's more White
people than Black. If you say something that they can't relate to, they're gonna’ look at it through a certain way, not saying that's bad or good, but they're gonna’ look at you a certain way, so most people were kind of just passive. They just let things happen. You know what I mean? So that's the one thing I would say; not everyone kinda’ defended themselves or spoke up or said everything they should have at the time.

James described the silence of Black students as it related to the escalation of these conversations with White students around race:

Say a word like that [the N-word] was used, or a racist comment in general. Like the typical Black person wouldn't say much about it, and I feel like the thought that goes by in their head is maybe if they do say something about it, it wouldn't be paid too much attention to. Because most times it would end up violent, so I feel like they're like, “What's the point of getting violent?”

Numerous participants also described the reality they faced as being the only, or one of two or three Black students in an activity or class. This was particularly true for students in higher level classes, who reported that they were frequently the only Black student in, for example, an AP class, which often put them in awkward situations where White students seemingly looked to them as Derrick described, “the spokesperson for Black students and experiences.” Derrick went on to describe his experience as one of few Black students in his classes:

There were a lot of times where I was facing situations where questions were asked, but I know it wasn't just because someone really cared about my opinion. It's more that they thought that I was offended and they'd find a way to relieve pressure by having me speak on it. What it did was create an uncomfortable situation where, I'm explaining about slavery and I would think like, why would I even have any insight on that? But also it
being very much put in this position where, most of the time I was often the only Black kid in class or maybe like me and three other Black kids, all of us being there and then being put in the spotlight to discuss such a heavy topic that you don't often wanna’ talk about in general, but being forced to speak about it, while the whole class is pretty much like an audience. The class is just struggling to talk about this topic, and you clearly indicate I don't wanna’ talk about it.

Deontay described his experience being the single Black student in academic and athletic experiences:

I think in certain spaces I felt like I didn't belong. Even on that team and I was on it for my entire career there. Sometimes I felt okay. I've been playing it since I was three years old. I was also like, because the whole team was White and I was the only minority, not even just only Black student on the team. Sometimes at a game, I’d wonder do I even belong in this space? Because I don't see anyone else who looks like me, I didn’t see anyone, so do you belong in this space? So that's something I was struggling with there. I think something I also struggled with, and this kind of goes along with it, I noticed the farther I went up in terms of whether it was an Honors or an AP class, the less people I saw who looked like me. And I think that's something worth thinking about because that's something my parents talk about as well; my mom speaks about how the further you go up, the less people of color you see. And I noticed that when I was in AP classes eventually, I think there were only two Black students in my AP Government class. And that was like, that ended up being normal. And I think that’s a problem, the problematic nature of characterizing that as normal is crazy,
Lamar described a similar situation where he was the only Black student in a class, and how he was put in an awkward place when asked in front of a classroom if the usage of the N-word was acceptable:

I was the only Black kid in the class, and I was the only Black kid for a lot of my classes, not a lot I guess, but for a good handful. And we were reading *A Raisin in the Sun*. And the teacher asked me, can we say the N-word because it's in the book? And again, I'm a sophomore, so I'm just like, it's not something a sophomore kid would really get asked, especially from the teacher. I'm used to another kid asking to use the word, but a teacher who's a lot older than me and should be socially conscious, I kinda froze up a bit. Not only that, so I'm sitting on the far left side next to the window, so the whole class just turns immediately. So I freeze up and say I said yes, because I didn't know what to say, or I'm not comfortable with that. And then afterwards, I'm thinking about it because after that, we read the book and the teacher asked other kids to read and they're saying the word, it's in the book frequently, so then I get uncomfortable. Then after class, I pulled the teacher aside and said, “Hey, I'm kind of uncomfortable. So for the remainder of the book, if you could just not say it.” So that was kind of an early instance where I guess race was a big topic, and then after that next class, the teacher did address it, but I was still uneasy and uncomfortable.

Participants described how classroom discussions around race often became tense, and Black students would often avoid the conversation. Christopher described how in a particularly tense conversation around race, in a classroom where participation was part of the grade, he and another Black student turned to one another and agreed, “Yeah, we don’t need the participation points today!”
This silence, as participants described, was often reflected in not reporting times when they were mistreated by another person. Participants described how this mistreatment was often at the hands of White students, particularly surrounding anti Black language, most notably the usage of the N-word by White students. Nearly every participant described hearing this word used by White students during their time at the school. When asked about why they did not report these incidents, there were a variety of responses. Deontay described his experience being the only Black members of a sports team, an experience during which his teammates used the N-word towards him:

I was called the N-word in the beginning. So they mentioned it twice, and then the first time I didn't hear it, and then one of them starts talking in the back and says it again to me. And so that was an experience that was obviously a bad interaction. And I didn't report it at the time, because I think that sometimes I would have issues, I wouldn't know who would be most receptive to the message or receptive to understanding even.

Some participants didn’t speak out against racialized mistreatment because it was something that was so prevalent in their previous schooling and life that they had become “accustomed to it.” Others reported not speaking out because the White students “meant no harm” in using the word. Other participants, like Lamar, described that as younger students, they didn’t speak out because they were still trying to fit in and didn’t want to jeopardize doing so:

But I think I just wanted to have friends at the time and to feel accepted where it's kind of like he's [a White student saying the N-word] joking, but he's still a friend, so. We've been called some pretty derogatory stuff.

A number of participants, now young adults, expressed regrets about not speaking up on issues, particularly those concerning race. Derrick recalled:
And again looking back at it, I'm like, there's more ignorance. When I was there, I was very angry about it. But looking back at it, I'm like, I'm not even angry, more just kind of wish I spoke up more and tried to at least help, not help really, because I'm not really responsible for other people's children's ignorance, but I felt like I could have contributed a lot more than just silence. I could have just been like, this is not how this is gonna go, like this is not how this thing actually is; this is your opinion, that's not a fact.

Michael reflected in a similar way:

It definitely makes me reflect on lost opportunities that maybe that could have happened, but then again, the whole Black Lives Matter Movement, I do think was going around that time period as well. And then you have the ignorant comments,” all lives matter” or whatnot, but I think it was definitely a lost opportunity to talk about race during that time when I was there. I don't think any of us realized how powerful conversations about race would have been until stuff like this happened.

Lamar also reflected:

But now we know, and it's kind of the too late factor. I try to give advice to guys behind me, so they can go through the rest of their years at the school not making the same mistakes I did, and a lot of us did not speak up about it [microaggressions and racist incidents], so even if it was said, it wasn't a big deal because it just isn't really talked about.

Needless to say, the factors that contributed to Black students not speaking up or feeling silenced in the school were widely varied. Many, however, revolved around another theme that emerged from that data surrounding participants’ perceptions of race within the school.
Normalization of Anti-Blackness and the N-Word

One of the most frequent topics that came up during interviews with participants was the discussion of microaggressions and anti-blackness perpetrated by White students, particularly surrounding the participants’ experiences and perceptions of these incidents. As previously mentioned, nearly every participant described their experience of hearing anti-Black language and sentiments or the N-Word used by White students during their time at the school. The normalization of the usage of anti-Black language and the N-word was a pervasive trend that participants described in their interviews. While participants’ perceptions varied greatly in how they conceptualized the usage of the word, its prevalence was commonplace in nearly every counterstory.

Participants mentioned that rarely, if ever, did they hear a teacher or staff member make a negative remark surrounding race. Participants overwhelmingly described this language as coming from White students, often in settings or locations of the school that teachers or administrators would not be privy to. One participant also discussed how social media, particularly through the app Snapchat, allowed White students to commit racially insensitive acts or sayings in a seemingly obscure setting. This seemingly “hidden” issue was frustrating for participants, as they often felt that, while “everyone knew about it,” the school was unable to adequately address it because of its covertness.

To some participants, hearing such language from students was a normalized part of their entire schooling experience, even before coming to high school. As David described,

For me, I've heard that most [microaggressions and anti-Black language] of my life as I've gone to those suburban schools, and that's something that I've always been around. That's something that I hate to say, that I got used to and then I just ignored it. That's
really what happened, 'cause that's something that I've always been around, I've always been used to, and then people feel comfortable saying certain things that are not right all around me because I was just, I was not taught, but that's how I adapted. That's how, in my opinion, I made friends.

There was great variety amongst participants regarding their perceptions of White students committing microaggressions or using anti-Black language towards them or other Black students and reactions that participants had to these incidents were widely varied. Despite the prevalence of the usage of racially charged language or the N-word by White students, many participants believed that such language was not used in a “harmful” manner aimed at being intentionally “racist,” and frequently downplayed these incidents as isolated events. As Darin described:

I genuinely feel like just because someone may say something racist or may make racial statements, that doesn't necessarily make them a racist. Because I feel like racism is a belief you have to have. You have to believe other people are inferior to me that are not my race. You know what I mean? For example, I always make the analogy of like, a smart person can make stupid comments. That doesn't make them stupid, you understand? You can't define them solely based on the things they say; it's like it has to come from your heart.

Francis also reflected on the use of the N-word in the school:

Yeah, for sure in the hallways, you definitely could hear White kids or just really any kid, even Black kids, say just racial slurs with a negative connotation to it. So me personally, when I would hear that stuff, I wouldn't really be mad or anything because if I know you're trying to be funny, I'm not gonna scold you and try to get in a fight with you. Like okay, whatever, you said that type of thing, but if I know you have negative intentions
behind the word that that would be a different situation. But I never was in that situation at the school. If a person, say a White kid, said the N-word or whatever, they never came off trying to disrespect whoever they were talking to, even though obviously it's not a good word to say. They never came off just in a disrespectful tone and manner to another person, at least what I saw.

Other participants had different interpretations of the usage of anti-Black language and also had widely varied reactions and responses to it. Isaiah described his sentiments about the use of the N-word:

I'm not someone who, if I hear someone say something racist, I'm gonna get up into their face and be like oh you don't say that because I'm saying it myself and I know no one should be saying it, but hearing it so often, did kinda get comfortable sometimes, but something I kind of learned how to deal with myself, internally.

Jamel similarly described the following:

People would say the N-word and stuff like that. I don't think it was, at least towards me, it wasn't to be mean or to be cruel or anything like that; it was kind of just talking pretty much, and I never took it offensively or anything like that. I mean, even all of my other Black friends I’ve known, really no one ever meant to say it intentionally to get them frustrated or to try and be mean to them. It was never in that manner.

When speaking about the very few episodes of anti-blackness he faced at the school, Terrance described how he perceived that Black students somehow played a role in this normalization:

Just some White kids saying the N-Word under the radar things just like that. But again, it just starts with us [Black students] when they see us use it, then they probably think, “Oh, we can do it too.
James also spoke on the prevalence of the N-word and his perceptions of its normalization:

The use of the N-word, a lot of people would use it. Whatever race you are, like White, Black, Asian, whatever you are. That word was used a lot, and the problem with what I kind of saw was that the Black students wouldn't really address it too much either because they weren't offended by it, or they felt like if they tried to address it, it would get physical and then they would face the consequences for starting it, or not really starting it, but getting physical with the other student for making that comment or stuff like that.

**Student Background and Transitions**

Another major theme that emerged from the interviews was the prior experiences that participants have and the impact those played in their experience and interactions at the school. While the researcher anticipated that participants who had previously attended a Catholic elementary or middle school would have had an easier transition to the school due to the similar Catholic culture, participants frequently described how the racial makeup of their previous schools had a much more profound impact. Participants who grew up in a predominantly Black neighborhood and/or attended a predominantly Black school frequently described how their transition to the predominantly White school was more difficult and oftentimes affected their experience there, particularly in the 9th and 10th grade. One participant, Joseph, commented on his transition from a predominantly Black neighborhood and school to the study school:

You come from an all-Black neighborhood and school where there was one White family; I still remember them. Then I came to our school and I’m one of the few Black kids in an all-White school. When I got there I didn’t fit in right away. It took me a year
to figure out what music they’re [White students] listening to, how to talk to them, you’re
wearing a dress code instead of a uniform, you notice the wealth gap, things like that.

Many participants who came from predominantly Black middle schools commented on a large
cultural change when coming to the study school. Another participant added:

I think it was a big shift for many Black students, coming to a predominantly White
school like [school name] ‘cause many people from my neighborhood, we usually hang
out with people that look like us and my parents always advocated that I hang out with
people who looked like me.

A different participant, Chad, commented as follows:

Ah yeah, I came from schools with barely any White people. Well, at first, 'cause
everyone spoke a little bit differently, but it's not like it was that big, but I was aware that
oh, they're not people I used to hang out with or anything, so I was aware they're not part
of my community at home. That was the only thing I was really thinking of. I wasn't
really thinking about them being White or something, it was just more like me not being
in the same community as them, and also not being able to relate with a lot of things like
they did when they were kids and stuff 'cause they'd could go to vacation spots I never
heard of and stuff like that.

Another participant described how his transition to the predominantly White school from a more
diverse, urban public middle school made his earlier years at the school more difficult to fit in.

Many participants also described how the transition to the school was also made more
difficult by the prevalence of microaggressions and anti-blackness they experienced from White
students in their early years transitioning into the school. While nearly every participant (89%)
commented that they perceived that they experienced anti-blackness or microaggressions from
White students throughout their years at the school, most students described how their experience at the school greatly improved as they got older. While many participants attributed these episodes to White students being young, immature, or “trying to be funny,” particularly as 9th or 10th graders, they noted that these episodes still had a large impact on their experiences at the school. One of the participants, Lamar, described this in his interview:

There was definitely racism and microaggressions in the younger grades; it's kind of like, I don't know how it is now in the freshman and sophomore years, but I know when I was a freshman and a sophomore, 'cause I wasn't the only one who was going through that, but I didn't allow it to get to me. And it's kind of dumb, like looking back at it, 'cause it's not cool at all.

Another participant, Timothy, alluded to similar experiences during his early years:

Yeah, so I remember once, my freshman year, a very annoying student; he used to call me a monkey, ‘cause he said like the way my body was looking, like I had really long arms, and so he always would say “Oh, you look like a monkey.” Another time, the same person actually said how whenever Black people get their hair cut very short, they look like they have cancer or they're sick or something ‘cause like why would someone cut off all their hair? And I felt like that was like really insensitive to say such a thing. So I'd be hearing comments like that, mostly my freshman year, early years, freshman and sophomore years.

Conversely, the majority of participants who had previous experience attending a predominantly White middle school [or other prior experiences in predominantly White settings] often had an easier experience transitioning to the school and being prepared for its culture.
Participants who had these past experiences often described how it had prepared them for what they encountered in the study school. A participant, Carl, described this sentiment:

Middle school really prepared me. Middle school was the first time I was in that [predominantly White] environment, so I was really a little shook around that, but after that experience, it prepared me to be around a majority of White students.

Another participant, Isaiah, added:

I really think my [predominantly White] middle school prepared me, especially after talking to some of the other kids that came later in high school. At my middle school, I feel like it was less minorities than it was in high school, by far. So when I got to the school, I'm like, I'm used to this.

Furthermore, Black students who came from predominantly White neighborhoods or middle schools were very conscious of how their Black friends who came from predominantly Black neighborhoods or schools often had a difficult experience transitioning to the school or fitting in. Another participant, Pedro, who came from a predominantly White middle school spoke about this at length:

I felt like I was a part of that community. Yeah, there are definitely a lot of other [Black] students who . . . Well, I've spoken to them and I was like, “Oh, would you send your kids there?” And they were like, “Absolutely not.” Their experience was so different than mine because they came from such different backgrounds than mine that they didn't feel like a part of the community. I was already kinda’ . . . I came from that kind of community before, so I was comfortable going into it, but they weren’t.

Another participant, Anthony, similarly described how his upbringing in a predominantly White town was different from that of Black students from different backgrounds:
So I guess for me personally, coming from [town name] surrounded by a majority of White people, I stepped in and was like, Oh, this is fine; I felt in place. And then you have other students who might come from a more diverse background or just come from mostly Black neighborhoods; they’ll come in with a much different energy than I would come in with.

Anthony continued on to describe how this affected his relationship and feeling of acceptance with other Black students:

I felt like I should be getting along with these guys because I see they’re Black, I'm Black; we should have that common ground, but it was always, I think, a little bit more difficult for me to find that way to enter those discussions, whether it be about music or the jokes or whatever terms they're using, I don't know.

Participants’ background and prior experiences clearly had an impact on the ways in which they transitioned to, and experienced the study school. For many, this transition often involved a process of assimilation, which was another theme that emerged from the data, which is more thoroughly explored in Chapter IV.

Research Question 1a

How can a culture of school membership, if present, be understood through the counterstories of recent Black male alumni from a predominantly White, all-male, suburban Catholic high school?

Wahlage et al.’s (1989) and Smerdon’s (2002) research on student perceptions of membership in their schools described how a sense of membership is often multifaceted. Smerdon’s (2002) findings indicated that perceived school membership may relate to a school’s “composition and structure” (p. 297). Lee, Bryk, and Smith (1993) furthered this notion when
noting that the cultural beliefs and values that stakeholders bring into the school can influence organizational behavior. The findings related to Research Question 1a seem to support these ideas, as participants from the study frequently described their perceptions of a culture membership, or barriers to it, as defined through a variety of themes described below.

Membership Through Involvement

One unexpected theme that emerged from the coding process was the seeming lack of importance of a student’s faith background that participants described in their perceived membership in the school community. As the study is focused on better understanding a culture of membership in a Catholic school setting, the researcher had expected that more participants would discuss the interplay of faith and race, particularly as they relate to a sense of membership in the school. Only one participant, Deontay, described perceptions of how the faith of many students was a factor in their membership of the school:

I think the culture of the school sometimes can exclude members or persons in the community, and they can feel that they don't belong. You see that, so to speak, in the Masses, for example. I think a lot of people are kind of uncomfortable. So, for example, when you go up and receive communion, I think a lot of people are uncomfortable sitting there. They'll just sit down because they're not Catholic, and then it's like there's this tension that goes with that between the Catholic community but then also the Protestant community and then other different traditions. And it's like, okay, but how are we forging this community and how do we make it good, and open to everyone? And I think that’s really something that I would wanna emphasize: incorporating these different, or if not incorporating, at least acknowledging these traditions.

To the contrary, few participants mentioned faith being a particularly salient point of their
experience, and no participants described faith as being either negatively or positively related to their feeling of membership. Rather, participants described how membership was more reliant on students’ racial and socioeconomic backgrounds, as well as the types of activities that students became involved in.

Participants overwhelmingly described that there was a culture of school membership that was accepting for nearly all students. While the participants did not believe that every student at the school necessarily felt that they were a fully accepted member in the school community, they did describe how in their perception, a culture of membership did exist at the school. Much of this feeling of membership revolved around becoming involved in some type of activity outside of classes and school day. Many participants described how the students that they believed did not feel that they were members of the school may have felt that way because they never found an activity or communal group of students that they could relate to. While participants described a myriad of activities that made them feel like more of a welcomed member of the school community, there were two activities that participants mentioned overwhelmingly when describing their positive experiences around membership: athletics and a school affinity group for Black students.

Athletics was the activity most frequently brought up by participants when describing ways that were impactful in their sense of membership in the school. Many interviewees described how athletics taught them lessons, helped them to make friends and feel like a valued part of the school community. Victor described the following:

I truly think our sports community brings the building together, and I know that the school wants to say it’s academics first, but when we have games and the way we rally
together, I feel like that’s what makes the school fun. I think that sports pushes that building.

Darin added to this sentiment of athletics and school membership:

So with basketball, first of all, I learned how to build a bond with people. I learned how to communicate better, I learned how to sacrifice for the greater good, I learned skills that I feel like are really gonna help me and everything else I do. And it was just like that was when I experienced the most camaraderie, that’s where I really kinda built relationships and stuff.

Other participants described how athletics allowed them to form bonds, particularly with other Black students in a predominantly White environment that they did not always feel comfortable in. Joseph and Daniel alluded to this with the friends and brotherhood they found through athletics, most of whom were Black and whom they continue to be friends with today after graduating. Many participants described how having a brotherhood of Black friends that were made through participation in athletics allowed them to find groups of students who understood them and their life experiences. Another participant, Albert, spoke about how his participation in traditionally White sports gave him a sense of pride that he was “breaking barriers” and serving as the “face of that sport.”

Conversely, athletics was also seen by some participants as a dividing activity in the school, particularly for those participants and students who weren’t involved in sports. These participants often found membership through other, non-athletic activities, but frequently commented on membership being closely tied with athletic participation or support of the athletics program. A number of participants even perceived that Black athletes, for fear of losing friends or standing amongst their peers, wouldn’t speak out against instances of racism or anti
blackness. A number of participants who were both athletes and non-athletes also pointed to the fact that athletes at the school were treated differently, nearly always in a better way than other students. Numerous participants who had participated in athletics mentioned the fact that they felt that athletes were more “valued” at the school because of their contributions to school life.

Many participants also described how participation in a student affinity group for Black students was particularly impactful on their sense of membership at the school. One participant, Mathew described the importance of the group for Black students:

It was just like, wow, I finally have a club where it's like, oh, I can talk about certain things, and no one's arguing back. No one is getting mad and no one's cursing me out, it's a safe space, I'm with friends. Antwon expressed a similar sentiment:

The club was a great outlet for students who, I wouldn't say are tired of being surrounded by White culture all the time, but just you know, might want an outlet to experience their own culture with their people, you know what I'm saying? And it doesn't even have to be just Black students, more of talking about Black culture exploring Black figures and stuff like that. That club was the first time I felt like I had ownership in something in the school.

Many participants reflected on how this group allowed them to discuss certain issues and topics that they were often scared to discuss in more formal, classroom settings, and provided them with opportunities to bond with students who came from similar backgrounds and shared similar experiences. Many interviewees also described how they would like to see the affinity group more active in the school community, particularly as it related to promoting conversations on race.
Political Discourse and School Membership

An unexpected theme that emerged from the coding process was the frequent discussion by participants about political discourse, and how a student’s political identity often affected their membership in the classroom or school culture. This was frequently discussed by participants when recounting conversations with other students about politics or related issues. More specifically, participants discussed the 2016 U.S. presidential election more frequently than any other topic when they were asked about how race mattered in the school. Of the 27 participants in the study, 22 attended the school between the years of 2016 and 2020, and were thus students in the school during the time of the election. Of these 22 participants, 16 (73%) described how this election played a role in their feeling of membership in the school community. Even amongst the five participants who had graduated before the 2016 U.S. presidential election, three participants described how the election had impacted their lives in general and their relationship with other White alumni students from the school in the years following graduation from the school.

When students discussed the 2016 U.S. presidential election, other contentious topics such as “stop and frisk,” police brutality, and the protest by Colin Kapernick often came up as experiences where a seeming intersection between race and one’s political ideology existed. When these conversations occurred in classrooms, race again became a salient factor in participants’ experiences. Keith described how he felt this way in a particular classroom situation:

In one situation in one class, we talked about “stop and frisk,” and it was supposed to be like a debate that the teacher started that was about multiple topics, and I chose “stop and frisk.” I chose the assignment of being against “stop and frisk,” and especially in New
York City in that context. And when I tell you at the end of that debate . . . Here I was thinking, I did everything right [in preparing for the assignment], everything is good. Literally, if we had a class of 20 students, 15 to 16 students were all against me. And a lot of it was like, “Oh, the police are our friends, police are our friends and family, this is really disrespectful, blah, blah, blah, there’s more Black on Black crime and so on and so forth. And it wasn’t, you know, I’m doing this as an assignment, I’m not saying you guys are the worst people in the world now. I’m doing it as an assignment and there was so much passion against what I did. And for me, that was an experience that I'll never forget, it was just so much passion for the opposite side. I'm not saying what they're saying is entirely wrong; it’s just, this was an assignment someone had to take the side that you don’t. Even though I was still on the side that you didn't like, there was too much passion and too much rage, and it was like the whole class was against me and the teacher was sitting on the side like, “Oh, I didn't mean for this to get that way.”

Keith would go on to describe how race was not only a factor in the content that was discussed [stop and frisk], but also in the interactions between himself and White students:

So I think in that situation I was so dumbfounded by it. I kind of wish somebody would have stepped in. ’Cause also what didn't help were the students; it was me and my partner. My partner was White. The students came to me! They were looking at fighting with me, they weren't fighting with him, none of the questions went to him, all to me. And I guess I would, if I was to go back in time, ask the teacher, can you ask some questions to the other student?

Many participants described similar situations where political ideology and race came into the forefront, particularly in interactions, conversations, and discussions with White students.
Nowhere was this more prevalent than their perceptions of the 2016 election and President Donald Trump. Participants overwhelmingly described how the 2016 election had either had a negative impact on their feeling of membership in the school community or a negative impact on their perceptions of interactions between many Black and White students. Much of this was due to, according to the perceptions of participants, the political discourse leading up to, during, and after the 2016 U.S. presidential election. While participants were not able to succinctly define the effect it had on the school, many participants described a shift in the culture of the school, particularly as it related to interactions between Black and White students, as well as the discourse of conversations concerning politics and race. Furthermore, participants were able to point specifically to the effect that President Donald Trump has had on altering these conversations. Many participants also alluded to the 2016 election making them more aware and socially conscious of being Black in a predominantly White institution and reflected on how that event was the catalyst for this consciousness.

Participants mainly described this discourse in two ways: first, a shift in the climate or culture of the school since the 2016 election and second, a negative shift in interactions between Black and White students in this same time period. Isaiah described the shift in the climate of the school during Trump’s presidency:

I feel like the situation with President Trump and some students, between African American students and White students, like that whole situation, I feel like it definitely was, not even a backlash, but there was a sense of hostility, or it turned to hostility more easily. And it wasn't even to that point, but there was definitely discomfort there, especially when people would talk about it and you see like someone would just be like,
Oh Trump 2020, or something like that; you could feel that shift in the air and people would get uncomfortable.

Carl reflected similarly:

Once Trump became elected, everything changed in my opinion. I feel like in the world, race was just, ‘cause race was always talked about in society, but I think in my lifetime, from what I remember, Obama had always been president, because Obama became president when I was like eight. So before then, I don't really remember. So most of my lifetime we had a Black president, so race was always talked about. But it wasn't as polarizing as Trump, ‘cause Trump at the time, the stuff he was talking about, all the scandals with him and his racism with Mexico and “build a wall.” It was just a lot of crazy things to people. A lot of people at the school supported Trump. I remember when he became president, people brought Trump flags; it was just wild because I've never experienced anything like that. And it was like you had to talk about it, and then it became more polarizing, ‘cause now people knew who was for him and who wasn't and it became even worse. It was 2016 or 2017 when he became president, so ever since that year, it's been eye-opening to say the least.

Other participants reflected on how after President Trump was elected, there was a polarization between students on opposite sides of the political spectrum. That polarization often pitted White students [and in some interviews participants noted other White school stakeholders] supporting Trump, and Black students opposing him, which further spread the gap between these groups.

As to the negative interactions between groups, participants described how the shift in the school climate after President Trump’s election inevitably led to more tense interactions between White and Black students. Two participants reflected on how White students would “rub the fact
that Trump won in my face” while others described how there was a connection with the boldness of some of President Trump’s remarks and the remarks that White students made at the school. Lamar described the following:

Trump says some very outlandish things that just come to his mind and he doesn't care. So with that being said, it's like, Oh, if the President of the United States is acting this way and he's saying stuff that is not necessarily meant in the best way, maybe I can say it and kinda’ get away with it too.

Other participants described how President Trump's election also made both Black and White students alike retreat into their own groups, highlighting how each side might automatically make assumptions that the other voted for a specific candidate or took a certain stance on a polarizing topic. Isaiah reflected on this seeming polarization between groups:

So yeah, Trump, that was a big focal point. The riots going on. I feel like it wasn't even the way the topics were brought up, I feel the way some people delivered their argument on it, and how they kind of just . . . It was never just, “Oh, people are rioting.” I see the good and the bad part of it; it was kind of either like, “Oh, they're causing all this destruction; there's no reason behind it.” And there's two extremes. Nothing really in the middle.

The effects of this polarization, participants described, could be felt in many aspects of life, not just merely in classrooms at the school. A number of participants described how in the aftermath of President Trump’s election and the recent racial injustice in the United States, that they had stopped speaking to White friends who were President Trump’s supporters, who were in their opinions, “out of touch with them as Black men.”
Assimilation to White Culture

The theme of assimilating to a predominantly White culture was another theme that participants spoke of frequently, albeit in different ways. As discussed in the review of the literature, McDermott’s (1987) research on assimilation discusses this situation that students of color often find themselves in when attending a predominantly White school, “shedding” their own cultural identity to assimilate to the dominant culture. The ways in which participants described assimilating into the culture were varied and often ambiguous. Some participants downplayed the process of assimilating into the culture of the school as things they described as “little stuff.” This included speaking in a different way, code switching, being parts of conversations that they couldn’t relate to, or not seeing themselves reflected in the demographic makeup of the school, including the staff. Other participants spoke frequently of this assimilation process throughout their entire interview, citing the fact that the school’s perceived White culture dictated much of their schooling experience and caused them to find membership amongst their Black peers. Antwon noted the following:

They [the school] wanted a certain type of individual. They wanted everyone to be the same, so I would say there wasn’t a lot of culture allowed, but there wasn't really a lot of culture tolerated.

Carl added the following:

The culture was very, I don't know, just very uptight in a way. There wasn't much room, especially for your opinions. I feel like it was very much you're forcing you, not forcing you, but subconsciously making you think a certain way or believe certain things. You couldn't really express yourself freely in my opinion, about certain issues and certain
stuff like that. Particularly with Black issues for me personally. I feel like I couldn't really talk about certain issues, especially after Trump became president.

Another participant added:

I feel like from my experience and from people I've talked to, I feel like it was just a comfortability level. I feel like we weren't allowed to be in terms of like, couldn't say anything about Black culture, like Black issues, Black music, anything about Black culture. A lot of people didn't feel comfortable saying it because people didn't understand it. It was like they [Black students] kind of felt ostracized in that sense, so they just had to water their culture down, if that makes sense.

There was a wide range of participant reactions to seeing Black perspectives in the school [mainly through the curriculum]. Many participants felt that they did experience diversity and Black perspectives in their classes and the school’s culture, while others described a “cookie cutter” or “whitewashed” curriculum that they attributed to the education system at large, not necessarily to the school. Participants often noted a lack of an appreciation for Black culture, particularly on a seeming lack of awareness around Black History Month. Deontay spoke about his perceptions of the curriculum, particularly regarding how Black students experienced it:

If you bring a certain experience where you're coming from a different background. If you try to insert your background or your knowledge, your personal knowledge, so to speak, in an academic paper or an essay, you would get marked up because you didn't write it in a certain way, and it would be wrong. And I think that's something worth thinking about, maybe how to teach students an alternative way of writing to help them to maintain their culture, because a lot of that has to do with culture.

Deontay added the following:
So thinking about how to engage with these different experiences, and even how do you engage with the learning environment and how to make the students feel comfortable. Can they see themselves in the history so that they could know what they're learning actually? I think if they do, they’ll want to take the learning further.

Furthermore, participants noted that a lack of diversity in the school’s staff was often something they were conscious of and made it more difficult to fit into the culture.

Other participants, like Timothy and Derrick, mentioned that the class status of their White counterparts often isolated and marginalized them, particularly around conversations surrounding “coming of age” norms like driving. Both Timothy and Derrick recalled their experiences of conversations with White students who were getting a car for their 16th birthday, as Timothy recalled:

So I feel like a lot of people would be like, "Oh, what car are you getting?" Like their parents would buy them like a nice new car. And I would be like, this is crazy, I don't know if I'll get a brand new car in my lifetime.

There were also participants who noted a seeming need to have to “conform” to a White culture. As Antwon described it:

I just feel like the Black people that just kinda' conformed with kind of the White ideology of Trump and just had to feel there's no problem with race in this country, I feel like those are the people that were really accepted.

Some participants cited the fact that Black culture is “just different” than the White culture of the school. Other participants mentioned that in their perceptions, Black students are louder than White students, which many White teachers “didn’t know how to deal with.” One way that many participants described this assimilation was the dichotomy between the school’s culture and
Black culture and their perceptions of how this culture was seen as “different.” David described how he felt this gap in cultural understanding during his experience:

We come from a culture that is so much more different than White students, so when they would see certain things, it wouldn't make sense to those teachers because they're just not used to it. They're used to staying uptight and not loose like the way Black students are used to in life. And sometimes like Black students like we really, I guess you could say that from the culture we come from, we don't really speak articulately. So when we don't speak that certain way, they will always think we're trying to you know, be funny, be cocky, arrogant, or whatever in the class and try to get the whole class to laugh at us, but it wasn't really that; that's just the way we know how to communicate, that's the way we talk or whatever. Some teachers just don't understand 'cause that's not what they've been around, so. But as a student, you kinda realize that was the time when you really learned to hold your tongue. You just stopped speaking or whatnot because you don't want to be put in that position where you're being targeted or punished by something that's regular, that's just how you maneuver.

Another participant, James, expressed similar thoughts, and also described situations where difficult topics such as race came into discussions:

As a Black student, you need to learn to compose yourself and learn to deliver yourself in a way where people won't want to fight you all the time or where they sit and listen and understand you because most times people of color, we kind of tend to have this enthusiasm or this spark, or loudness or I don't know what the word is to describe it, but very abrasive. I don't know if that's the word I wanna’ use, but we kind of just get loud, we're very passionate about things that we say, so we basically tend to get loud and we
tend to use a lot of hand movements, things like that, and raise our voices and stuff like that. Because some people aren't used to that type of behavior or things like that, and they kind of get scared when you do things like that, so you just learn to compose yourself in order to speak. You try to articulate and speak well and get your point across in a succinct manner, but also to stay calm; I know what's going on is hard but just stay calm so that people can sit and listen to you to understand you and try to see it through your eyes.

Participants also described strategies they used, or ways in which they were able to navigate this cultural difference. Joseph mentioned the following:

No, I don't think I didn't fit in but I was able to code switch. That's what we call it, it's called codeswitching. You'd get on the bus, I don't wear my tie in my neighborhood, I take that off at home. It's like, I guess I was seen as a White Black kid to some. I've heard that it's like, “Oh, he does speech and debate, he could do this.” He knows how to talk but I was like, you gotta’ learn how to talk to the White administration, you gotta’ be able to code switch. Nobody wants authentic you.”

For some participants, this also included things such as hair style, clothing, and cultural norms. While a number of students recalled preferential treatment by administrators for things such as not having to shave because of skin conditions such as razor bumps, other participants had vivid recollections of Black students being treated differently, as one participant recalled:

But I think certain ways, because we wear our clothes differently, so pull up your pants, that was a big thing. Don't wear those types of boots. Of course we were treated differently because we're different and because that difference was never recognized, which is why Black kids were getting more detentions; we were getting more reprimands because they didn't recognize the difference; they tried to treat us all the same. We're not.
Participants also described the process of becoming conscious of race during their time in the school and the different ways they experienced the world versus their White counterparts. Matthew described the different experiences that Black students have versus their White counterparts when reading an article on race:

I was like OK, I get you saying that, then [student name] raised his hand and was like, “Oh, I don't understand why you're so mad, because we're the same. When we leave here, we're the same. We both went to [school name].” And I'm like, “Oh, we're not the same. I'm Black, you're White; there's a difference.” Yes, you might not be rich, but there's different teachers, people. The world looks at you differently than me automatically.

Daniel described the different experiences that Black students have when coming to and leaving school:

There’s sort of the feeling that there's a mask; wearing a suit is the mask that you put on when you go to the school and you take that suit off when you leave and you just gotta' ask any Black kid that didn't grow up in an affluent white town, when they take that bus or train back to their neighborhood, they will tell you about that, for sure. Depending on where you live, that suit can be armor or it can be a target. Not everybody lives in the hills of [affluent town] so that suit can put a target on your back if people don't know you. But in other circles, people might say, Oh, that's an upstanding young man, so it depends on your environment that you're currently in. So that was something I was aware of.

These are the kids that you go to school with, so that was definitely interesting to them [Black students], and I even noticed it then, they were just living in two different worlds; the Black students were living or operating in a different world, different worlds than the White students.
Isaiah expanded upon this:

Well, it [the difference in culture] didn't really affect me more so at school, it's just when I hung out with the White kids outside of school, that's when I had to become more conscious. Because my mom would always tell me, you can't do everything that they can do. Certain situations are gonna put you in more danger than it's gonna’ put them in. So that's when it kind of really spoke to me and it took a while to really get that, to really understand that, because being around them for so long, you kinda’ feel like you have the same, what's the word I'm thinking of, not advantages, but the same access maybe. So it took me a while to fully understand that, you know there are situations where if I put myself in, it's not gonna be the same outcome. In school I didn’t really feel that way, I felt I had people I could go to, but outside for sure.

Another major theme related to assimilation was the discussion of the school’s promotion of the concept of brotherhood, a concept which many participants felt existed, but with some reservations. Many of the participants felt that in their own social circles, particularly with other Black students or students who shared a similar interest such as athletics, this “brotherhood” did exist. But for many participants, the concept of brotherhood was merely a façade, as Carl described:

I know we're [students of color] the minority, but you do have people of color in your school, I feel like you're not really including us. I think they included us in the sense of a general scale, just like students. They talk about brotherhood and stuff, but I don't think they really included us according to people's identities and stuff like that, which I think is important. 'Cause this is the way life is, people get treated differently. I don't think they did in that sense, I think they kinda’ just watered it down, didn't talk about it.
Andrew also described this sentiment in his interview:

I don't think they've ever reached out to the Black students in that type of environment. If they were ever to do something like that, it was just, yeah, it was more of a keep the peace in the classroom. Or you know how everyone, you know how the school was, it was like brotherly love and stuff, love your neighbor and they just kind of reiterated that so they would never have issues in the classroom, racially wise.

Matthew also mentioned a sense of not feeling part of the “brotherhood”:

The mission is very much brotherhood, but I don't think the result is brotherhood. For some people, I feel like if you're one of those people of color where it's like, you're kind of passive and you're kind of like, “oh, it's whatever they’re always gonna be like that [not understanding race]. There's no point talking. I have some friends or family members like that. Then okay, if you're good with certain kinds of things and comments, then I guess maybe there is a brotherhood. But if you're like me, where it's like, certain things should not be said, I feel like I don't feel the brotherhood. I made friends and there were people that I was cool with, but I didn't feel the brotherhood.

Daniel also described how certain extracurricular activities acted as a facade that masked underlying cultural issues:

And that's why sports was like a great pair of like drunk glasses per se, or like a great filter. It was an amazing mask 'cause it basically... Everything was like, Oh, he's on my team. That's the guy on my team, I don't know. Whatever sports you're playing. Oh, that's my running back, that's the guy who runs this event, that's the catcher, the goalie, yada, yada. And so everybody's identity was so tied to their sport and it became a glue that held this rickety house together.
While the theme of assimilation was a frequently discussed topic amongst participants, the vast majority of participants did not necessarily equate this process with being excluded from membership; rather, they utilized strategies or found membership in different communities, particularly amongst their Black peers.

As alumni, many participants described how their own current views and the ways in which they now interact with and see the world were affected by their experiences, particularly those related to race, at the school. As participants reflected on their experiences at the school, many commented on how they have a much more heightened awareness of race in society, and how their identity as Black men made both their time at the school, and their current lives in society different than their peers. Isaiah, Matthew, and Victor all commented specifically on their awareness of the different experiences they had as students as compared to their White peers, because they were young Black men. Victor and Isaiah applied this awareness to their current lives and the ways in which they have to be more cognizant and cautious of their decisions and actions because of their race. A number of participants commented on how, given heightened awareness on racial injustice, they questioned or abandoned relationships (and social media connections) with White alumni (some of whom were former friends) because of, as participants described, “a continued lack of understanding and ignorance of issues of race.”

As alumni, the post-secondary school experiences and awareness that many participants had likely influenced the ways in which they described their time at the school. Inevitably, participants conceptualized their experiences at the school by looking through their most recent and current lenses. Many participants described how their experiences in college allowed them to be much more cognizant and aware of the power of race and racial disparities in the Unites States, which helped them to better understand and explain the experiences they had in the study.
school. Additionally, given the timing of the interviews (summer of 2020), these reflections may also have been affected by a heightened awareness for racial injustice in U.S. society.

Research Question 2

In what ways, if any, do young Black Catholic high school alumni recommend promoting a culture of membership in a predominantly White, all-male, suburban Catholic high school?

During the interviews, the researcher asked each participant what recommendations they would make, if they felt they were needed, to promote a stronger culture of membership within the school. Every participant noted that there were specific ways that the school could take purposeful actions to improve this culture of membership. While participants described a number of initiatives, including changing hiring practices; reviewing and changing the curriculum; and installing a “diversity” requirement for students to complete during their early years, there were two recommendations that emerged as themes from the coding process.

Speaking About Race and Culture

Perhaps the most frequent suggestion that participants provided when asked how to promote a culture of membership within the school community was the recommendation that the school make intentional efforts to promote conversations around the topics of race and culture. Furthermore, many participants believe that the school needs to make a stronger effort to make students more aware of current events and to provide students with opportunities to learn from persons of color about their unique experiences that non-persons of color don’t understand. Participants frequently mentioned that these changes were most needed during 9th grade, when they felt that students are more immature and are transitioning into a new environment. A number of participants spoke of the school’s intense efforts on promoting and fostering specific
norms, values, or programs, none of which they believed recognized students’ races or cultures.

Matthew eloquently described his feelings of the need to change this:

I think the same energy that the school has for our young men looking professional and not being late and not cheating, that energy needs to be applied to racially insensitive situations. 'Cause I just feel like there's more to life than making sure your tie is straight or you have a belt on; like we got it, because it was ingrained in us. If people are being racist or insensitive, I should be able to speak to an administrator about it and an appropriate response should be there.

The vast majority of participants described how conversations surrounding race and cultural topics were either non-existent (that the school did not talk about them or avoided them), or they quickly descended into heated discussions or arguments about the topic. Darin described the following:

But I'll tell you, conversations like that were really uncomfortable because the school is majority White, so just in terms of not making people uncomfortable, it was kind of a topic that was avoided in a grand scheme, like in terms of the whole school talking about it.

Lamar added:

I feel like all of the topics and events and the injustices were swept under the rug.

Because it is an uncomfortable topic for a lot of people to talk about. But it's a topic that a lot of people need to understand and learn, and try to take all of the information that you get with that and try to grow and help the next person in terms of that.

When asked about his recommendations about improving a culture of membership in the school, Francis described the following:
It only could be beneficial depending on how you do discuss it. Say it's completely discussed from all views, 'cause then you wouldn't have the ignorance of some students saying or doing certain things, because now that it's been discussed, you know that it is harmful to others, or what can be said and what cannot be said. And just you get a better understanding of not only yourself, but just everybody else's views, so you come to an understanding of just why people think and say certain things or why their views are that way. So it just makes for a better environment in the school, and the kids would even be, I guess, more accepting or definitely more understanding of one another.

Other participants like Andrew agreed, stating:

It really starts with the students, you can relate way more with another student. The teachers educate us in terms of the textbook-wise and all that stuff. Students have to educate each other social-wise, because that's the type of people around every single day of their life. So if they're not educating each other socially, I feel like we're never gonna take that extra step.

Andrew added that the school should take intentional steps to promote student interactions between races and cultures. Christopher recommended a program that paired younger students with older students, perhaps trying to pair students from different cultural backgrounds, in the hopes of promoting a deeper mutual understanding.

Other participants recommended that the school make efforts to help White students understand Black history, culture, and experiences through a number of methods. Some participants advocated for an inclusion of outside speakers of color to tell students about their life experiences. Other participants recommended using the school’s television station to host weekly segments aimed at promoting this cultural understanding, while other participants focused more
on a curricular approach, via efforts to include and discuss Black history and perspectives as well as current events involving race in the classroom setting.

**Faculty and Staff Diversity**

Another prevalent theme that emerged relating to recommendations to promote a culture of membership was the need for a more diverse faculty and staff. Many participants described what they felt was a lack of diversity, particularly with faculty of color, during their time attending the school. The vast majority of participants described how, in retrospect, having more faculty and staff members of color would have made their experience a much more positive one. Nearly every participant mentioned that they only knew of one or two faculty of color on staff during their time attending the school. Victor described the following:

> I feel that it would give more kids comfort if you’re able to see other people like you being successful in front of you. That makes it easier for you to feel a little bit more safe. And truly not having that presence, it may be like for some kids, they just may not know how to show up and just be able to accept who is in front of them. And for others, they might wanna’ see a person of color being able to teach a class.

Christopher added:

> So yeah that was an interesting thing that I’ve always thought back on as important. That at the school there were a lot of students of color, Black students. But there were like no teachers or very few teachers of color. Most of the people of color that worked there weren’t teachers. And I think like there were a lot of Black students or students of color there, and it really would have been helpful to students of color or Black students to see someone like me. It would have been impactful to have a teacher or administrator of color who was giving me my grades or teaching me or whatever.
Some participants also described how the non-teaching staff members in the building often accounted for the “only diversity they saw.” This also related to the school counseling staff, as many participants felt that they were unable to discuss issues in their own life with White school counselors. In many of their perceptions, these staff members just wouldn’t understand the experiences of a young Black man, such as themselves. While many participants described this need for a more diverse staff, they were explicit in their expectations and realities about this change. “It’s not like you can fire all the White staff and hire more diverse teachers,” one participant jokingly mentioned. When asked about the execution of installing a more diverse staff, participants did not make recommendations.

Summary of Interview Analysis

Chapter IV presented the qualitative data that were collected from semi-structured interviews with 27 Black alumni participants from a predominantly White, all-male, suburban Catholic high school. These interviews allowed participants to share, through their counterstories, detailed descriptions of their schooling experiences and perceptions of these experiences during their time at the school. These experiences and perceptions were used to analyze the research questions of the study. Analysis of this interview data revealed major themes which relate to each research question.

Research Question 1

Four major themes emerged from the analysis of the critical narratives in relation to the experiences of Black students in predominantly White, all-male, suburban Catholic high school: (1) a lack of White understanding of Black experiences, (2) the silence of Black students, (3) a normalization of anti-blackness and the N-Word, and (4) the importance of student background and transitions. Participants frequently described their perceptions surrounding a lack of
understanding of the lived experiences and culture of Black students by White members of the school community and how this affected their schooling experience in the study school in a myriad of negative ways. Participants also frequently described how Black students at the school often did not speak out or use their voice to report various concerns at the school due to a variety of perceived negative consequences that could result. Participants spoke often of the prevalence of the usage of the N-word in their schooling experiences, and their descriptions of its usage and varied reactions to it described a process of its normalization in the educational environment. Also important in the schooling experiences of participants were details of their background and former schools. Participants’ backgrounds and prior experiences had profound effects on their transition to the study school, particularly in their early years, as well as the ways in which they conceptualized attending a predominantly White school.

Research Question 1a

Participants described how a culture of school membership at the study school did exist, but there were distinct differences in who was included in this perceived membership and how. Race was a salient factor in this perceived culture of membership that participants described. Four major themes emerged as being particularly relevant to a culture of school membership: (1) membership through involvement, (2) political discourse and school membership, and (3) assimilation to White culture. Participants spoke frequently of how perceived membership in the school was largely tied to being involved in activities, particularly through athletics and an affinity group for Black students. Interviewees frequently cited these two activities as opportunities for students, particularly Black students, to find membership in the school community by developing relationships through common experiences. Participants frequently cited how lack of involvement in extracurricular activities was a major barrier to membership in
the school community. Political discourse was also a key factor in school membership according to participants. This was prevalent in school discussions on current events concerning race and the 2016 U.S. presidential election, events which participants described as racially polarizing in the school community. Participants frequently cited conversations surrounding these events as situations where Black students were ostracized and/or marginalized because of their own political beliefs or the perceptions that White students had about them. Political discourse greatly affected the ways in which participants perceived they or others felt accepted as members of the school community. Assimilating to the culture of a predominantly White school was another frequent theme that emerged from the interview analysis. Participants described how this school culture affected their perceived membership, particularly as young Black men in an educational environment where they rarely saw inclusion or reflections of themselves or their culture.

Research Question 2

While participants suggested a variety of ways in which such a school can promote a culture of membership, two major themes emerged: (1) speaking about race and culture, and (2) faculty and staff diversity. The topics of race and culture were frequently cited by participants as divisive in the school. This was for two reasons that participants frequently cited: race and culture not being talked about enough and thus becoming a “taboo” subject in the school, or in instances where race and culture were discussed, a hostile and combative environment often created by “ignorant” White students. Participants largely suggested that schools must take intentional actions (via changing the curriculum, inclusion of outside speakers of color, promotion of events surrounding race and culture) to make these topics priorities in school and classroom discussions. The diversity and makeup of the school’s staff was a theme that was frequently discussed in interviews. Participants described how the lack of diversity in the
school’s staff was a barrier to inclusion, support, and learning for many students, particularly Black students. While participants had few recommendations on how to improve this, the lack of staff diversity was a poignant part of their schooling experiences.

Chapter V provides a summary of the study’s findings through the data analysis and a discussion of the results of the study. This chapter also incorporates the conclusions and implications for future research.
Chapter V

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of Black students in a predominantly White, all-male, suburban Catholic high school, a topic that is rarely explored. There is even less existing research that explores these students’ experiences and perceptions in predominantly White Catholic schools as they relate to a culture of membership within such educational settings. The data were collected over a five-month period through interviews that were completed via use of video conferencing software. Through the analysis of the counterstories of 27 Black alumni from a predominantly White, all-male, suburban Catholic school, the study provided a space for these students to reflect on and describe their experiences, shedding light on a culture of membership and the existing barriers to it. This study examined three research questions:

1. In what ways do recent Black male alumni describe their schooling experiences in a predominantly White, all-male, suburban Catholic high school?

   1a. How can a culture of school membership, if present, be understood through the counterstories of recent Black male alumni from a predominantly White, all-male, suburban Catholic high school?

2. In what ways, if any, do young Black Catholic high school alumni recommend promoting a culture of membership in a predominantly White, all-male, suburban Catholic high school?

   Without question, not only race, but blackness mattered tremendously in the schooling experiences that participants described. As was similarly discussed in the review of the literature
on predominantly White Catholic schools, participants described how blackness was often seen as “other” in the school community, which had profound effects on how participants navigated the school and saw their membership in it.

Another finding of this study was the sub-culture participants described in the school that was created by race and how this sub-culture often influenced their experiences in the larger context of the school. Participants shared how their experiences in the school often involved finding membership or connections with other students through involvement in activities in smaller groups; i.e., through athletics or clubs. These relationships and bonds were frequently described as being with other students with whom they felt they had similar interests (such as a specific club or sport) or with whom they had shared cultural experiences or knowledge (membership with other Black students). Conversely, participants described how sub-groups or cliques in the school sometimes reinforced negative stereotypes that students had about other students or groups, which furthered divisions between them.

Somewhat surprisingly, faith was a theme that was nearly nonexistent in interviews with participants. Being a Catholic school setting, the researcher had expected that the prevalence of faith and its promotion in the culture of the school would emerge as a frequent topic that participants would discuss. With that being said, only eight of the 27 participants self-identified as Catholic, which might help to explain why faith was not a particularly important topic that they expanded upon while describing their schooling experiences. Other than one student who identified as agnostic, most of the other 21 participants self-identified as being another, non-Catholic, Christian denomination, which may also have influenced their experiences in the faith life of the school. While participants did not disclose this, non-Catholic participants may have felt that their beliefs or faith may have acted as a barrier to membership as well. However, as is
often the case in the schooling experiences of African American students, race was a much more salient factor in participants’ interactions at the school and either directly or indirectly impacted many of the ways in which they experienced a culture of membership in the school (Decuir-Gunby, 2009).

Exploring the themes that emerged as separate, isolated phenomena, does a disservice to truly understanding the experiences of participants in this school setting. To truly appreciate these counterstories, the themes that emerged must be viewed through the lens of Critical Race Theory and understood as not only being related, but as inseparable, interconnected patches in the complex fabric of these students’ experiences.

**Research Question 1**

*In what ways do recent Black male alumni describe their schooling experiences in a predominantly White, all-male, suburban Catholic high school?*

Four major themes emerged in relation to the first research question: (1) a lack of White understanding of Black experiences, (2) Black Silence, (3) a normalization of anti-blackness and the N-Word, and (4) the importance of student background and transitions.

Overall, participants summarized their experiences at the school as positive and recalled the good memories they made during their time at the school. The topic of race surfaced throughout these critical narratives, particularly as it related to race either being a divisive subject in conversations with White peers or as a topic that was seemingly avoided in the larger context of the school as a whole. This echoes findings from similar studies that race was the most salient factor in many participants’ experience (Andrews, 2009; Decuir-Gunby, 2009; Irvine & Foster, 1996). Participants frequently described how their history and culture were frequently “left out” of the school and their experiences were downplayed or misunderstood by White
peers, a frequent experience for persons of color in PWIs (Coleman & Stevenson, 2013). This lack or misunderstanding of Black experiences often marginalized participants in the school, particularly when the topic of race was discussed both formally and informally with other White students. Participants often cited this lack of understanding or empathy by White peers (particularly when discussing political events or racialized current events such as “stop and frisk” or the murders of Trayvon Martin and Eric Garner) not as their intentionally harboring ideas of prejudice or racism, but as willful ignorance, characterized by a lack of wanting to understand. This lack of understanding could be seen as the manifestation of Whiteness as Property, as White students defending a White norm, and as marginalizing Black experiences and opinions as “other” (Moreton-Robinson, 2004). While there is no direct link between this lack of understanding and the normalization of anti-blackness, these types of conversations were a missed opportunity for students to learn about and discuss the relationship between power and race and a missed opportunity for teachers to help students build empathy and interracial connections (Collins, 1998; Castagno, 2008).

Similarly, although there is no direct evidence linking the theme of a lack of White understanding of Black student experiences to the silence of Black students at the school, participants described how they often felt as if they could not speak up about a variety of issues and topics, which involved their having to “hold their tongue.” While navigating a dominant White culture, such silence by Black students is an unfortunate norm in such school settings (Darder, 2012). This silence stemmed from a fear of the consequences of being a Black student “speaking out” in a White environment, consequences that participants conceived might include being held out of extracurricular activities, being marginalized by White and Black peers, or facing worse backlash or disciplinary action from staff members in the building. Furthermore, as
participants often noted how issues of race were often avoided or silenced by teachers or
administrators, this silence seemingly became the norm during their experience (Castagno,
2008).

This silence may also help to explain another theme that emerged from the analysis of
interviews: the normalization of anti-blackness and the N-word. The experience of hearing such
language and the N-word used by non-Black students was a common theme during interviews, as
too were other incidents of anti-blackness such as microaggressions. Yet reactions to these
instances were widely varied and seemingly “accepted” as normal in participants’ schooling
experiences. Similar to their descriptions of the lack of White understanding of Black
experiences, participants frequently characterized this anti-blackness and use of the N-word by
White students as “trying to be funny” or “just joking around.” Such normalization of anti-
blackness and language surrounding it is a common theme that is embedded in the tenets and
framework of Critical Race Theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000). When asked how they or the
school reacted to such language, participants reiterated both this normalization and their silence,
frequently responding that they “were used to it” or did not want to “cause more problems” by
directly addressing it or bringing it up to school staff.

Another theme that emerged was the impact of a student’s background and transitions on
their experience at the school. Growing up in predominantly White areas or having prior
schooling experiences in predominantly White schools made for an easier transition for
participants to the study school and made fitting into and navigating a “White culture” less
problematic. Participants noted how, by previously attending a predominantly White middle or
elementary school, they already had experience being one of “few” Black students in their school
or classes. Participants who had previously attended a PWI noted how they had developed
strategies and strong self-conceptions of race, which allowed them to more easily transition to the school and navigate a predominately White school environment (Harris, 1993). These findings also support those of Goodenow (1993) and Schmuck and Schmuck (1992) in that group development and membership within it are crucial during early stages. Particularly for adolescents, this sense of membership and belonging are often paramount to all other schooling concerns (Goodenow, 1993).

**Research Question 1a**

How can a culture of school membership, if present, be understood through the counterstories of recent Black male alumni from a predominately White, all-male, suburban Catholic high school?

Participants did describe that a culture of membership existed at the school and noted that they often felt like a member of the community. But participants also highlighted a myriad of factors that they felt were exclusive and unique to the experience of Black students which disrupted or prevented full membership of themselves and other Black students in the school community. Three major themes emerged from the critical narratives in relation to Research Question 1a and the existence of a culture of membership in the school: (1) membership through involvement, (2) political discourse and school membership, and (3) assimilation to White culture.

One opportunity that allowed for membership in the school was through involvement in extracurricular activities. Without participating in an activity outside of the classroom, participants described the difficulties in making connections with peers or feeling accepted as a member of the school community. This theme reflects one of the foundational aspects of school membership: active involvement in school activities and tasks (Wehlage et al., 1989). Two
activities were particularly impactful in feeling a sense of membership for participants: athletics and a Black student affinity group. Both of these activities promoted mutual understanding between racial groups, a sense of brotherhood and acceptance amongst peers, and also served as opportunities for making important connections with fellow Black students. Many participants described how a Black student affinity group provided them with a safe space where discussing race wasn’t as polarizing as it was in the classroom setting and gave them an opportunity to learn more about and openly discuss their history and culture (Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000).

Another major theme that emerged was the process of assimilation into a predominantly White schooling environment and the challenges that stem from a gap between home culture and that of the school. This was perhaps most evident in the ways in which participants described a false sense of brotherhood they often felt within the school. This brotherhood normalized whiteness and heavily promoted the mission of the school, but marginalized the experiences of Black students, which were not or could not be talked about (Burke & Gilbert, 2016). In the perceptions of participants, being a full member of the school community meant silencing or “shedding” this blackness to conform to the mission or brotherhood of the school (McDermott, 1987; Tatum, 1997). Other participants described how Black culture or norms were not accepted at the school, which meant that code switching was necessary to navigate the school’s culture. Code switching refers to the act of speakers changing their “pitch, volume, rhythm, stress, [or] tonal quality” (Goffman, 1981, p. 128) in order to “better accommodate the expectations of their listeners or conform to the context of perceived participant roles and relative power hierarchies of any given social interaction” (Boulton, 2016, p. 132). Many participants described how Black students who “acted” or were seen as more “White” by White students because of their language or style were often more welcomed as members of the community or brotherhood, an
unfortunate norm in predominantly White institutions (Glenn & Johnson, 2012). Participants who had been in higher level AP classes frequently described being one of, if not the only Black student in the class, which affected their racial identity development and conceptualizations of race (Tatum, 1997).

School membership was also heavily influenced by political identity and the polarizing political discourse surrounding issues tied to race. Political and racial division were exacerbated by the election of Donald Trump as president in 2016, which furthered a chasm between many Black students and their White peers at the school. One of the most prevalent themes that emerged from the study was participants’ descriptions of the rhetoric and political discourse that surrounded President Trump and the ways in which it shifted the school’s culture to seemingly allow White students to be more vocal in their belittling and ignoring of non-White groups, particularly the Black community (Crandall et al., 2018; Rogers et al., 2017). Participants frequently described how, after the election of President Trump, issues concerning race such as “stop and frisk,” the murders of Eric Garner and Trayvon Martin, and Colin Kaepernick’s protest of police brutality often became much more heated and divided by race. According to participants, Trump’s election seemingly allowed White students to no longer have a “filter” on what they said, which impacted classroom and informal discussions tied to current events related to race. During these conversations concerning politics and race, participants described that teachers often tried to end the conversation or remained silent, which could have furthered the marginalization of Black students (Howard, 2013; Sondel et al., 2018). Such silence and teacher efforts to silence student conversations reinforce norms for students about what can be acknowledged, publicly recognized, and discussed (Polite & Saenger, 2003).
Research Question 2

In what ways, if any, do young Black Catholic high school alumni recommend promoting a culture of membership in a predominantly White, all-male, suburban Catholic high school?

Two major recommendations were put forth by interviewees to improve a culture of membership within the school: (1) speaking about race and culture and (2) faculty and staff diversity.

While participants described a number of thoughtful and potentially impactful recommendations to promote a culture of membership, they overwhelmingly recommended that in order to improve a culture of membership, the school must make efforts to promote and guide conversations about race and culture, particularly through the inclusion of Black experiences and perspectives. Participants felt that speaking about this seemingly taboo topic and providing opportunities for White students to learn about the authentic experiences of persons from communities of color can close the chasm of distrust between White and Black students in the school and promote a mutual understanding. They believed that efforts to promote such conversations must also include an audit of the school’s curriculum to identify opportunities to infuse it with more diverse resources. These resources should abandon what they felt was often a deficit view of Black history and experiences and include more sources from Black authors.

Furthermore, the school must take steps to promote a more diverse faculty and staff. Interviewees commented frequently on how the diversity of the student population had greatly increased, and they felt that there were many students that looked like them. Conversely, participants described how in many situations and discussions concerning race, they felt as if few, if any, staff members in the school could understand the experiences that they had as a
young Black man. This was particularly problematic, as participants described how more young Black men are seemingly now attending the school.

Critical Race Theory

Storytelling and the use of counterstories lie at the foundation of Critical Race Theory and are crucial in analyzing the dominant culture’s myths and narratives that marginalize communities of color (Kraehe, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Solorzano & Yosso, 2000). The findings of this study are much more meaningful when viewed through the lens of CRT and with an understanding of the legacy of predominantly White Catholic schools. Critical Race Theory allowed for a deeper understanding of these counterstories by providing the contextual reality that participants faced in the school. This reality included the normalization of whiteness, evidenced by participants failing to describe any situations that involved the self-reflection on or self-awareness of bias or prejudice perpetrated by White actors in the school (Delgado, 1995). These counterstories provide participants with a voice in a setting where they have not traditionally been heard, and provide an opportunity for this and similar schools to examine how bias, prejudice and racism silence and oppress Black students in such settings (Delgado, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Delpit, 1988).

Implications

Researchers

This critical narrative study provides a framework to assist predominantly White, all-male Catholic high schools in exploring a culture of membership in the school, particularly as it relates to its inclusion of Black students. The study’s results were conclusive in identifying clear barriers that exist for Black student membership in the school that were almost always related to race. The themes that emerged from interviews with Black alumni in this study can provide
predominantly White Catholic schools and other PWIs with an opportunity to reflect on the existence of these potential barriers and to devise plans to promote multicultural, antiracist, or pro-Black educational best practices.

The study was conducted with Black alumni participants of a single predominantly White, all-male, suburban Catholic high school. Adolescent development varies based on gender and age, and the age and sex of the child has differing impacts on their capacity for reflection or emotional intelligence (Santrock, 2007). The findings of the study may be different if conducted in a similar all-female or co-educational school setting. Additionally, the socioeconomic and demographic makeup of the study school may also have an impact on the findings. If the study were conducted in a school that was more or less affluent or more or less racially diverse, the results might differ. The results might also change depending on the affiliation of the Catholic school being studied. Would the results vary based on the school being operated by a parish or diocese rather than a religious group? Comparative studies may be useful in exploring results from different settings or with different groups of participants.

The study may also have been limited by the researcher himself. As a White male who had a prior educational relationship with some of the participants, this could have affected their responses and thus the findings of the study. Would participants have disclosed more or less about their experiences at the school or have been more positive or negative about these experiences with a researcher they did not know? Would the findings of the study change if conducted by a Black researcher? The relationship between the race of the researcher and the participants and the timing of the interview process cannot be overstated as well. Participants were interviewed during a time which included some of the most heightened attention given to racial inequality in American and world history, sparked by the murders of George Floyd,
Ahmaud Arbery, and Breonna Taylor. Some participants even commented on this heightened attention to race during their interviews, particularly among older alumni participants, who reflected on how their own understanding, awareness and conceptualization of racism and bias had become stronger during recent months. This heightened awareness and attention to racial inequality may have had an impact on the ways in which participants spoke about their experiences in the school and also highlights the need for further research on the psychological and emotional effects that Black students experience from incidents of racial violence and inequality.

**Practitioners**

When describing the frequent educational and post-educational success of African American males who attend predominantly White independent schools, Coleman ponders at what cost does this success come? (2017, p. 113) Just as Coleman’s research found problematic educational and structural practices for African American students in a predominantly White independent school, so too does this study in a predominantly White Catholic school setting. At the root of these issues lies the process of assimilation into the culture of a predominantly White Catholic school, which encompasses a myriad of factors that have implications for those working in Catholic, private and public educational settings alike.

**Catholic School Identity and Assimilation**

Students who are non-Catholic may come from markedly different backgrounds and practice significantly different cultural norms than those found in a Catholic school (Donlevy, 2007). The process by which participants described their assimilation into the school’s Catholic culture was problematic in a number of ways. This process first involved a need to conform to a culture that participants described not only as being unequivocally White but also required the
marginalization of their blackness to fit into a perceived “brotherhood.” As Howard (2003) describes, there still exists a need for a place in schools where Black students’ lived experiences and beliefs can add to a dialogue “about their own perspectives, the influences on their academic identities, and their educational experiences in general” (p. 4). As institutions that promote diversity and inclusion encompassed by Gospel values, Catholic schools should be places where the cultural capital and lived experiences of Black students are both included and valued. Being forced to shed part of his identity can have detrimental effects on a student’s self-worth, sense of belonging, and academic achievement. A predominantly White school may have a predominantly White student population, but this should never prevent the school from taking the necessary steps to promote and value the background and culture of all students. While Catholic schools are often defined by a White tradition and history, this does not have to be reflected in the school’s educational practices or inclusion of diverse experiences and viewpoints. The traditions, history and experiences of those who make up the Catholic Church are much more diverse and varied than that which is often reflected in its schools. This promotion of diversity, inclusion, and acceptance for all students is often found in the mission statement or motto of the school. The role of Catholic schools, however, cannot just be announced in the school’s mission statement; it must first be implemented by the school’s leadership and then practiced and lived out by the school’s many stakeholders.

Staff and Curriculum

One prevalent theme that emerged from the analysis of interviews was the need for a more diverse faculty and staff that is reflective of the student diversity of the school. When students see teachers from similar racial or ethnic backgrounds, this can have a profound impact on the curriculum and environment of the school and on student learning and achievement in it
(Nieto, 2000). For Catholic schools, this diversity is severely lacking: Black students account for roughly 8% of the Catholic school student population, while Black teachers account for merely 3% of all Catholic school educators (NCEA, 2019). As more Black students enroll in such Catholic school settings, a shift in the hiring strategies and practices of these schools is imperative. Participants recognized this need to hire more Black faculty members yet were candidly pessimistic in their expectations of this actually coming to fruition and the challenges that prevent the hiring of more Black teachers in predominantly White schools. This difficulty is even more pronounced for predominantly White Catholic schools. Catholic schools are more inclined to hire teachers that are Catholic themselves and the very small population of Black Catholics in the United States makes the potential hiring pool markedly low. Despite the challenges that exist in “finding” and hiring Black teachers to work in predominantly White Catholic schools, this cannot be used as a crutch. Predominantly White Catholic schools (and PWIs alike) must create more aggressive strategies and practices to prioritize the recruitment and employment of Black teachers to reflect the growing diversity and meet the needs of their student populations.

Participants spoke frequently of the lack of inclusion of Black experiences, history, and culture they witnessed in the school’s curriculum. When it was included, participants noted that it was nearly always from a deficit perspective (the horrors of slavery, the Jim Crow era, etc.). Increasing the diversity of the schools’ staff must also be supplemented by a review of the school’s curriculum. This is particularly relevant for predominantly White Catholic schools where, as previously mentioned, a Eurocentric culture and curriculum are the norm. When a student fails to see their own culture, background, or history in the curriculum, it can have negative impacts on their learning and educational outcomes (Ladson-Billings, 1994).
Furthermore, research shows that multicultural education, particularly the inclusion of the culture and lived experiences of students in the curriculum, is crucial in enhancing learning (Ladson-Billings, 1994). Predominantly White Catholic schools must take steps to review their curricula and to adopt methods to include the lived experiences and cultural capital of Black students. While there are many approaches to transforming the curriculum (Contributions Approach, Additive Approach, Transformational Approach, Social Action Approach), any approach must involve Catholic schools designing their curriculum to include the cultural capital of Black students and to provide all students the opportunity to “understand how what they are taught—the knowledge that schooling offers—has been shaped historically, ethnically, culturally, and linguistically” (Jenks, Lee, & Kanpol, 2001, p. 97; Milner, 2005). While Black students must see their own culture and history included in this curriculum, so too must all students learn how to reflect on the ways in which what they are learning has been influenced. This revamping of the curriculum must be done in conjunction with ongoing training for staff members and students as well.

**Multicultural Awareness and Training**

One of the most prevalent themes that emerged from the study involved participants’ perceptions of a lack of understanding that White students have of Black students, their experiences, and their culture. Some participants even reflected on how this lack of understanding was felt across their entire experience in the school through its policies and practices. Participants described how they felt this lack of understanding emanated from beyond the school’s walls, but was often made more evident within them. Participants frequently mentioned how White peers were “not necessarily racist” but “just completely ignorant” of their own privilege and the experiences and challenges that many Black students face. It was this
ignorance that many participants felt led to a chasm between themselves and some of their White peers. These reflections speak to the need of predominantly White Catholic schools to implement programs that train and equip members of their school community in multicultural awareness, recognizing inherent bias or prejudice, and cultural competency.

First and foremost, this begins with recognizing that the promotion of multicultural education and awareness is not merely “the curriculum” but a philosophy that involves “helping students see life through a different set of lenses; that is, in a way that they might not have seen or considered on their own” (Pohan, 2000, p. 24). By developing a deeper understanding of multicultural educational practices, teachers can equip students with the skills to be reflective of privilege, bias, or prejudice, and the analytical skills to understand the role they play in education and society. Strategies and techniques for teaching diversity and promoting cultural awareness abound and include helping students connect their family history to socio-cultural landscape and identity (Heuman, 2009), understanding the manifestations of privilege and oppression in society (Griffin & Jackson, 2011), and gaining a deeper understanding of identity through cross-cultural dialogue and performance (Foeman, 2006). This training, as participants noted, must also prepare teachers for situations they might encounter, as participants did, when race might become a contentious or tense subject in the classroom. Such precarious moments can go in different directions depending on the teacher’s cultural awareness and competency; these can become teachable moments for all students in the class to acutely recognize and address the interplay of privilege, race, and power or can further widen the “chasms” and racial divisions between different groups of students. Equipping teachers to properly guide these discussions can dispel stereotypes and biases and bring about positive results (Sue, 2015; Turner, Sweet, & Fornaro, 2019).
Recommendations

A deeper understanding of the counterstories of Black students from this school sheds light on how their experiences describe the culture of membership that exists within it. While this study is limited to a single predominantly White, all-male, suburban Catholic high school, the findings and their implications can be relevant to practitioners in many educational settings. The theme of race and the profound effect it had on participants’ schooling experiences was prevalent throughout the findings of the study. More pointedly, the analysis of the interview data showed how such a school environment brought a variety of challenges and barriers to Black students and their membership in the school community.

Predominantly White Catholic schools, like the school involved in this study, must first make efforts to include the experiences and culture of Black students. This first step requires a realization of the inherent whiteness of these school settings, which have been passed down throughout their history and cemented through the legacies of those who lead and attend the school. This understanding should lead to a deeper review of and changes to the curriculum and educational practices of these institutions. This should involve schools making intentional efforts to provide students and teachers with opportunities to understand the impact that inherent bias can have on educational experiences and the development of enhanced cultural capital. These efforts should also include training teachers to guide conversations about race by providing them with specific strategies that allow them to teach students about the legacies and impacts of societal power structures and ways to include the lived experiences and voices of persons of color in the classroom.

Many barriers to participants’ membership in the school involved negative interactions with White students. Participants frequently mentioned how a Black student affinity group had a
profound impact on their experience in the school and created a space where their culture was normalized and their experiences were listened to and valued. This group also provided participants with a space to conceptualize their own self-identity as Black males in a predominantly White setting. The group or club could be expanded and similar clubs could be created to provide Black students with this important space. Furthermore, predominantly White schools should look to expand opportunities for cross-cultural and interracial interaction and dialogue through such clubs and allow for authentic and meaningful sharing of lived experiences.

It is also important to note participants’ discussions of their transition into high school, and how previous experience in predominantly White schools prepared them for this setting. Predominantly White Catholic schools should explore the implementation of orientation or mentoring programs that prepare Black students for this school setting. This idea came from a number of participants, who suggested programs that would pair Black students in 9th and 12th grade and allow older students to mentor and guide these students through their transition into a predominantly White school.

**Future Research**

The study provides useful information concerning the experiences of Black students from a single predominantly White, all-male, suburban Catholic high school in a suburb of New York City. The findings warrant further research on topics that were not explored in depth through this study. This includes two topics that this study did not thoroughly explore: a deeper understanding of participants’ faith backgrounds and the role they play in their schooling experience as well as an understanding of the role that school administrators play in promoting a culture of school membership. As previously mentioned, faith was rarely spoken about by
participants when describing their experiences at the school. Furthermore, the majority of participants self-identified as being non-Catholic. This warrants future research on how a student’s faith (particularly the faith background of minority/marginalized students) affects their involvement in and perceptions of membership in the school. Additionally, this study did not explore or discuss the role that administrators played (or did not play) in promoting a culture of membership within the school community. Participants rarely spoke about their interactions with administrators at the school but discussed a variety of issues that should have been brought to the attention of and encouraged action from administrators. Participants also provided many recommendations for promoting a culture of membership that would rely on both the approval and support of school administrators. Future research should include the study of administrators’ perceptions of their role in promoting a culture of membership in the school and their own perceptions and beliefs that might affect their decision-making process in handling school concerns related to race.

Another suggestion for future research includes an expansion of the study to include a larger sample of participants in similar Catholic school settings but from diverse geographic and socioeconomic areas. This would allow for future researchers to make comparisons between Catholic schools (including parochial, diocesan, and private settings) and to determine if and how the type of school, demographics, or socioeconomics may play a role in shaping the experiences of Black students.

Another theme that emerged from the study shed light on how Black participants experienced and adapted to the White culture of the school. In a similar vein, future research could involve a longitudinal narrative or ethnographic study to explore the process of racialization of Black students across their schooling years and the strategies they develop and
use while navigating PWIs. This study might also follow students through college and beyond to understand the effects of this process as they transition out of education and into employment.

The dearth of literature in exploring the experiences of Black males in predominantly White, all-male, suburban Catholic high schools is overshadowed by an even greater lack of research on the experiences of Black females in similar high school settings. Future research should involve the exploration of the experiences that Black female adolescents have in these educational environments. This research may prove useful in comparing male and female experiences concerning membership, identity formation, and strategies used to navigate a predominantly White school setting.

While the possibilities for future research abound, a number of other opportunities for the expansion of this research might include the following:

1. A narrative study that more deeply understands the decisions of Black parents to send their sons to predominantly White Catholic schools. This research might also include parents’ perceptions of their and their children’s experiences at the school, particularly concerning school efforts to support these students and parents.

2. A study of the experiences that Black students have in higher and lower level classes in predominantly White schools. This study might also include a comparative exploration of the experiences and strategies used by students in classes of varying levels.

3. A large study that compares the curricula of predominantly White Catholic schools across geographical locations around the United States. This study would involve an audit of the curricula of these schools, which could shed light on how
the educational practices of these institutions affect the experiences and learning outcomes of students of color.

4. A quantitative study that further explores the relationship between school membership, race, and political identity/beliefs.

Conclusions

As the product of and now an employee of a Catholic school, this research was as much a personal endeavor as a scholarly one. Catholic schools, as they were for the researcher, can be learning environments where students thrive, environments where students can create lifelong bonds, nurture their faith, and develop key habits and skills to prepare them to be successful and lead in the world around them. The mission of the Catholic school is to be a place where diversity is celebrated and all students, regardless of their background, are welcomed and cared for. Catholic schools are often lauded for their success in instilling empathy and social responsibility in their students and fostering a sense of community amongst stakeholders. Reflecting on and comparing the researcher’s own experiences in a predominantly White, Catholic high school with those of the participants in this study raises the question, do Catholic schools fulfill this mission for all students? Just as the researcher had witnessed student experiences while teaching in his previous school, the findings of this study shined a stronger light on the unfortunate reality of marginalization that many Black students face in an educational landscape steeped in and dominated by whiteness. The white tradition and history of this school largely affected the educational practices and norms of the school, which had profound impacts on the experiences of its Black students. As one participant described the experience he had in society when wearing the same uniform he wore to school, “that suit can be armor or it can be a target.” The same dichotomy can be seen in the culture of membership that
exists in this predominantly White Catholic school. While most participants spoke fondly of their overall experience at the school, participants also described how being Black in this setting can seemingly put a target on your back, forcing Black students to navigate a culture where whiteness has been normalized and acted as the proverbial “armor” against the inclusion or influence of other cultures.

Research concerning the experience of Black students in predominantly White, all-male, suburban Catholic high schools is scant, as too is research relating to cultures of membership in such schools. This study explored the experiences of these students, via their counterstories, from a single school setting. The counterstories were analyzed, through the lens of Critical Race Theory in order to more deeply understand these students’ experiences and to explore a culture of membership within the school. Particularly for Catholic schools, this study can be used as a guide and framework to explore a culture of membership and to identify potential barriers to membership that may exist for students of color. This study also highlights the need for educational stakeholders and leaders, particularly those in predominantly White schools, to value and include the cultural capital of Black students in their educational experience. Given recent calls for antiracist and multicultural education, this study could potentially serve as a guide for predominantly White schools to audit and adapt their educational plans and practices as needed.

It is the researcher’s hope that the experiences that these young men shared with him were as meaningful and impactful for them as they were for the researcher. The researcher is hopeful that the sharing of these young men’s experiences will bring increased attention and meaning to the educational experiences that young Black men have, particularly in predominantly White Catholic schools. The findings from this study also serve as a call for Catholic schools to explore their school culture and efficacy in delivering upon their mission for
all students. Furthermore, this study serves as a reminder of the great need for research examining the educational experiences of Black male students, particularly concerning their membership in predominantly White school settings.
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Appendix A

Interview Protocol

1. Describe your general experience during your time at the school.
   a. What types of things were you involved in?
   b. Describe your interactions with others during your time in school.
   c. Was your experience in school a positive one? Why or why not?

2. Describe the culture of the school.
   a. What was the school known for? What was its identity?
   b. How did students treat each other, adults, etc.?
   c. Describe your interactions with teachers.
   d. How would you describe/define the culture of the school?
   e. Would you agree with the statement that the school culture was accepting? Did every student feel like they were a full member of the school community? Why or why not?
   f. Was race a discussion point at school, if so, how? If not, was it avoided? Why?

3. Describe your experience being a Black student in a predominantly-White, suburban Catholic school.
   a. As a student, describe your level of consciousness of being Black in a mostly White school. Did this matter to you?
   b. How did race “matter,” if at all, during your time at the school?
c. What were interactions with teachers and staff like there? Was there a strong presence of teachers of color? Did you have a relationship with teachers of color?

4. **Describe your experiences/perceptions of fellow Black students.**

   a. Please tell me about the ways in which Black students were treated at the school.
   
   b. Was there any difference in the way Black students were treated in relation to other races/ethnic groups?
   
   c. Were there preconceived notions that you ever heard/experienced about Black students at the school?
   
   d. If you can recall who you were friends with/ spent time with, who were these students? Describe their race, their religion. What were they involved in?
   
   e. Did you experience cultural diversity in the curriculum you learned? If so, how? If not, please describe the curriculum.

5. **In what ways would you recommend improving a culture of acceptance/membership at the school?**
Appendix B

Request for Approval of Research Involving Human Subjects

REQUEST FOR APPROVAL OF RESEARCH, DEMONSTRATION OR RELATED ACTIVITIES INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

All material must be typed.

PROJECT TITLE: Exploring the Experiences of Black Students in a Predominantly White, All-Male, Suburban Catholic High School: A Critical Narrative Qualitative Study

CERTIFICATION STATEMENT:

In making this application, (I/we) certify that (I/we) have read and understand the University's policies and procedures governing research, development, and related activities involving human subjects. (I/we) shall comply with the letter and spirit of those policies. (I/we) further acknowledge (my/our) obligation to (1) obtain written approval of significant deviations from the originally-approved protocol BEFORE making those deviations, and (2) report immediately all adverse effects of the study on the subjects to the Director of the Institutional Review Board, Seton Hall University, South Orange, NJ 07079.

[Signature]

DATE

**Please print or type out names of all researchers below signature. Use separate sheet of paper, if necessary.**

My signature indicates that I have reviewed the attached materials of my student advisee and consider them to meet IRB standards.

[Signature]

DATE

**Please print or type out name below signature**

The request for approval submitted by the above researcher(s) was considered by the IRB for Research Involving Human Subjects on the ___________ meeting.

The application was approved ___ not approved ___ by the Committee.

Special conditions were ___ were not ___ set by the IRB.

(Any special conditions are described on the reverse side.)

DIRECTOR,
SETON HALL UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FOR HUMAN SUBJECTS RESEARCH

DATE

Seton Hall University
320055
Appendix C

Seton Hall University Internal Review Board Approval

July 9, 2020

Sean D’Alfonso
Seton Hall University

Re: Study ID# 2020-126

Dear Mr. D’Alfonso:

The Research Ethics Committee of the Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board reviewed and approved your research proposal entitled, “Exploring the Experiences of Black Students in a Predominantly White, All-Male, Suburban Catholic High School: A Critical Narrative Qualitative Study” as resubmitted. This memo serves as official notice of the aforementioned study’s approval as exempt. If your study included an informed consent form, letter of solicitation or flyer, a stamped copy is included for your use.

The Institutional Review Board approval of your research is valid for a one-year period from the date of this letter. During this time, any changes to the research protocol, informed consent form or study team must be reviewed and approved by the IRB prior to their implementation.

You will receive a communication from the Institutional Review Board at least 1 month prior to your expiration date requesting that you submit an Annual Progress Report to keep the study active, or a Final Review of Human Subjects Research form to close the study. In all future correspondence with the Institutional Review Board, please reference the ID# listed above.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Mara C. Podvey, PhD, OT/L
Associate Professor
Co-Chair, Institutional Review Board

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Appendix D

Informed Consent

Informed Consent Form

Dear ____________________.

Researcher Affiliation

The researcher is a doctoral student in the College of Education and Human Services at Seton Hall University in the Department of Education, Leadership, Management and Policy. Under the mentorship of Dr. David Reid, the researcher plans to explore the lived experiences of Black students at Iona Preparatory School, a predominantly White, suburban, all-male Catholic high school, particularly as they relate to perceptions of a culture of membership there. The participant is receiving this letter as an invitation to participate in this study.

Purpose

The intent of this qualitative, narrative study is to meet with and interview Black alumni students who have graduated from the school within the last six years. By understanding the participants’ perceptions and lived experiences, the researcher hopes to gain a deeper insight into the culture of membership that may exist within predominantly White, all-male, suburban Catholic schools. Participants will consist of students who identify as Black, male, and who have graduated from the school within the last six years.

Procedures

Participation will involve responding to a short, qualitative survey and either a 1:1, in-person interview or a video interview through Google Meet, both of which will last approximately 45-60 minutes in length. All in-person interviews will be conducted onsite at a time, date, and place of the participant’s convenience.

Duration

Participant involvement in the qualitative survey and interview is expected to be approximately two hours.

Instruments

The qualitative survey will involve questions surrounding the participants’ background, including their ethnicity and religion as well as their past experiences in high school. The interview
will contain similar questions, including additional questions surrounding the culture of membership and acceptance in the school.

Voluntary Nature

Participation in this research is completely voluntary. If the participant agrees to participate now and change his mind later, he may withdraw at any time by sending the researcher an email at sean.dalfonso@student.shu.edu.

Sample Interview Questions

- Describe your general experience during your time at the school.
  o Was your experience in school a positive one? Why or why not?

- Describe the culture of the school.
  o How would you describe/define the culture of the school?

- Describe your experience being a Black student in a predominantly-White, suburban Catholic school.
  o How did race “matter,” if at all, during your time at the school?

- Describe your experiences/perceptions of fellow Black students.
  o Was there any difference in the way Black students were treated in relation to other races/ethnic groups?

- In what ways would you recommend improving a culture of acceptance at the school?

Anonymity

The researcher will take various steps to ensure that the information and lived experiences that the participant describes as part of this study remains confidential. Participants’ identities will remain anonymous and will never be revealed in any publications, presentations, or reports resulting from this study. Any identifying information provided by the participant will be altered to maintain anonymity, this includes the use of pseudonyms when referencing specific participants.

Confidentiality

Information from the interview will be collected through the use of a digital audio recorder or Google Meet and through field notes from the interviews. The confidentiality of all participant
names and information will be ensured during the interview and will be replaced by a pseudonym upon review.

**Records**

Data transcribed and recorded will be stored on an encrypted, password protected flash drive with the researcher for a period of five years concluding the study until erased. This flash drive will be stored in a locked safe in the researcher’s private residence. Records will be assigned codes and no one but the researcher will have access to the legend of the transcript. Additionally, only the researcher has access to the password-protected account through which online surveys and interviews will be accessible.

**Benefits of Research**

Although the participant will not directly benefit from this study, it has been designed to learn more about the experiences of Black students in predominantly White Catholic schools, and the ways in which alumni suggest promoting a culture of membership in them.

**Risks**

There are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this study.

**Renumeration**

Participants will be given a $10 Amazon gift card for their involvement in the study. This will be funded through the researcher’s private funds.

**Permission to Record**

By signing below, the participant consents to partake in audio and/or video recording. The subject will be identified by code number on the recording, and all recordings will be stored on an encrypted, password protected storage device. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings. These recordings will be destroyed five years after the completion of the study.

**Contact Information**

Participants may contact the researcher at any time. The researcher is a doctoral student in the College of Education and Human Services. The researcher’s telephone contact information is: [Redacted]. The researcher’s email is sean.dalfonso@shu.edu.
The researcher’s faculty advisor is Dr. David Reid, Assistant Professor and Director of K-12 Doctoral Programs in the Department of Education, Leadership, Management and Policy. The researcher’s faculty advisor may be contacted at: [Redacted] or at david.reid@shu.edu.

Seton Hall’s Institutional Review Board Office may be contacted at: Dr. Michael LaFountaine, Director: 973-761-9334 or IRB@shu.edu.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of participation in this study and the researcher asks that participants sign this page of the letter below and email it back to the researcher at the email provided above.

Sincerely,

Sean D’Alfonso
Principal Researcher
[Redacted]
sean.dalfonso@student.shu.edu

By signing below, you agree to participate in this study. You indicate that you understand the risks and benefits of participation, and that you know what you will be asked to do. You also agree that you have asked any questions you might have, and are clear on how to stop your participation in the study if you choose to do so. The researcher will provide a copy of this signed, completed form to all participants.

Participant’s Signature

Participant’s Name, Printed

Date