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Pepperdine University  
Graduate School of Education and Psychology

PRODUCE & ACHIEVE: A CASE STUDY OF INNER-CITY EDUCATION

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Education in Educational Learning Technologies

by

Daryl A. Tate

September, 2015

Kay Davis, Ed.D. – Dissertation Chairperson

This dissertation, written by

Daryl A. Tate

under the guidance of a Faculty Committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to and accepted by the Graduate Faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

Doctoral Committee:

Kay Davis, Ed.D., Chairperson

Monica Goodale, Ed.D.

Paul Sparks, Ph.D.

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## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my four beautiful children Brittany, Brandi, Daryl II, and Joy.

I love you always.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This project is an outgrowth of all those who gave their lives in service and dedication to educating minority children in an effort to provide an academically level playing field and instill the necessary self-efficacy to be prepared for life.

I am enormously grateful to all those who mentored me before and during this project. I am especially thankful for the guidance and support I received from my dissertation committee:

Kay Davis, Monica Goodale, and Paul Sparks.

I am particularly thankful for my brother William F. Tate IV who continued to sow the seeds of pursuing higher education in my life until I “came to my academic self,” then watered my desire for research-to-practice scholarship.

I am grateful to many friends and family, especially Kevin Tate in Chicago, who was always encouraging and shaped my thinking in important ways and Sandra Graham in California who always championed my cause.

I owe particular thanks to my parents Melva J. Tate-Vasser and the late William F. Tate III who have always been incredibly supportive of my life as a student.

Finally and most importantly, many thanks to April Taylor whose support made this project possible and who helped me shape the work presented here.

## VITA

### **Daryl A. Tate** **Curriculum Vita**

---

Daryl A. Tate is an experienced instructional technology scholar and professional. He holds a Master's degree in Training & Development with extensive coursework in Educational Technology. He has completed all coursework and is currently proposing dissertation as a full-time Doctorate of Education and Learning Technology (DELT) student at Pepperdine University.

Daryl has extensive academic and professional experience in technology related education including: instructional design and development; contemporary instructional technologies; adult centered education; and 21st century, learner centered classroom environments using emerging technologies. His research and development interest coalesce into four interrelated areas: (1) on-line learning communities, (2) multimedia integration into curriculum and technology pathways, (3) technology professional training and development and (4) Digital Humanities initiatives to enhance scholarly inquiry.

#### **EDUCATION**

Ed D. Candidate School of Education & Psychology, Pepperdine University, West Los Angeles, CA  
Major Field: **Educational Learning Technologies**

M.S. School of Educational Leadership, Texas A&M University Commerce, Commerce, TX  
Major Field: **Training and Development** - emphasized coursework in Educational Technology

B.B.A. College of Business, Dallas Baptist University, Dallas, TX Major Field: **Management Information Systems**

#### **RELATED TEACHING EXPERIENCE**

2015 –Spring Term - **Teaching Assistant** - ETEC 424 Integrating Technology into the Curriculum  
Texas A&M University Commerce, Commerce, TX

2014 – Present - **Course Developer**– Texas A&M University Commerce, Commerce, TX

- Instruct and advise University faculty in the design and development of their online courses ensuring that Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and Quality Matters (QM) best practices are incorporated.
- Develop courses with materials that are adapted by faculty to work with adult and traditional students in various modalities of instruction (hybrid, online, and web enhanced) while supporting faculty in the use of adopted emerging technologies in their existing curriculum
- Develop and provide on-demand, online, face to face, and group training in course development topics, such as accessibility, rubric creation, student learning outcomes, course alignment and the learning management system (LMS) adopted by the university, ensuring the incorporation of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and Quality Matters (QM) principles for best practices in online course design.
- Develop documentation for the assurance that online courses comply with Section 508 of the Americans with Disabilities Act and universal accessibility principles adopted by the university.

- Develop Organizational Leadership courses for the inaugural rollout of the competency based Texas Affordable Baccalaureate (TAB) degree program.

2013- 2014 - Instructor–DeSoto Independent School District, DeSoto, TX

- Creating E-Books: Bringing the Text to Life
- Creating a Community of Practice with Video Blogging

2012-2013 - Instructor–City of DeSoto, DeSoto, TX

- Introduction to Multimedia
  - Introduction to Television Broadcasting

2009–2012 - Guest Lecturer-Valley Community College, Valley Glen, CA

- DEVCOM 36A: Developmental Communications

2003-2006 - Adjunct Faculty, Vision International, Ramona, CA

- CE 503: Advanced Leadership and Administration
- LE 501: Introduction to Leadership and Leaders
- RS 200: History of Civilization I
- RS 304: Introduction to Leadership
- CC 101: Sociology of Marriage and Family Life

1996- 2000 - Technical Trainer, Micro Integration Center, Dallas, TX

- Microsoft Office Suite Beginners/Intermediate
- Microsoft Office Network Administration

## **SCHOLARLY PRESENTATIONS**

2014 - American Educational Research Association

- Produce & Achieve: A Case Study of Inner-City Education

2013 - Association for Psychological Science

- Using Technology to Increase Engagement in the Classroom

2013 - Society for Research in Child Development

- Using Social Learning Theories to Increase Engagement and Self-determination in the Technologically Rich Classroom

2012 - Hawaii International Conference on Education - 2012

- Practicing What We Preach: Teacher Technology Professional Development Training
- ACE-IT: A Theory Driven Model of Teacher Technology Professional Development

## **SCHOLARLY PUBLICATIONS**

Tate, D. (In Press). Technology (in the classroom and home). To appear in K. Lomotey et al., *Contemporary issues for people of color: Surviving and thriving in the U.S. today*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO/Greenwood.

## **CONSULTING EXPERIENCE**

2006–2014 - Instructional Technology Consultant - Provide consultation and support services in instructional design, strategies, assessment, technology, and distributed learning for instructional development projects.

- University of California Los Angeles, Graduate School of Education and Information Studies
- California State University Northridge, Department of Child and Adolescent Development
- The American Educational Research Association, Washington, D.C.

### **Essential Duties and Responsibilities:**

Consulted and advised faculty in conceptualizing and restructuring courses for conversion to fully online. Defined client needs and developed learning technology solutions for course migration from traditional to online or hybrid using learning management systems, eLearning authoring tools, social networking and collaborative tools, multimedia, new media technology and video production. This included extensive management of the activities of interdisciplinary project teams charged with distance education initiatives.

Assisted in the development of instructional strategies, course materials, assessment techniques, appropriate integration of instructional technologies and best practices, both technology and non-technology related. Developed surveys and collected assessment data to improve the quality of technology professional development training for teachers ensuring that research supported best practices were incorporated.

Designed and produced learning materials in a variety of formats including print, graphics, audio, video, animation and multimedia to support teaching and learning needs. Provided assistance to faculty and staff in using technology tools, instructional software and multimedia to foster engagement in online training.

Researched and recommended educational best practices, instructional resources, instructional technologies and multimedia hardware and software to support teaching and learning. Designed, developed and delivered workshops and training to faculty and staff in the integration of new media and instructional technologies into the classroom.

## **TECHNICAL JOB EXPERIENCE**

- Learning Management Systems -Moodle, Sakai, Blackboard, eCollege
- eLearning Authoring Tools – Camtasia , Lectora, Softchalk, Articulate, Word Press, Equella
- Social Networking & Collaborative Tools – Elluminate, Adobe Connect, WebEx
- New Media – Blogs, Google Docs, Google Sites., Wikis, Voice Thread
- Video Editing and Presentation - Avid Studio, Adobe Premiere, After Effects, Prezi, PowerPoint
- Video Production – Expert in EFG single camera or multiple camera broadcast studio production, CCC Digital Camcorders, digital broadcast video switchers, audio mixing, and three point lighting.
- Proficiency using standard office software applications and web page editors, graphic software, and basic HTML

## **SELECTED AWARDS AND RECOGNITION**

Video Awards by the Texas Public School Relations Association

- Best in Category Award - In SCHOOL IN STYLE: UNIFORM DRESS GUIDELINES  
DeSoto Independent School District, DeSoto, TX - 2010
- Gold Award - MARDI GRAS: SENIOR CITIZEN PROM  
DeSoto Independent School District, DeSoto, TX - 2009
- Best in Category Award – DESOTO ISD RECRUITING VIDEO  
DeSoto Independent School District, Desoto, TX - 2008

## **OTHER PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE**

Owner/Founder CFC Technologies

Defined client needs, developed technology solutions and directed the activities of a multi-person teams charged with consulting and integrating technology solutions for Fortune 500 organizations. These technology business solutions included training and development, website development and implementation, client server network applications engineering and installation and broadcast video production. Interdisciplinary project team included network engineers, website developers, graphic artists, and computer programmers.

Marketing Analyst IBM Corporation; Farmers Branch, Texas

Responsible for developing automated methods for tracking marketing and sales attainments by extracting data from IBM mainframe systems and importing into personal computer application format. Reports were tracked via flat file database applications and spreadsheets and were presented in front-end graphics and desktop publishing formats

Software Librarian/ PC Technician Arthur Andersen & Co; Dallas, Texas

Responsible for providing hardware support for over 800 IBM desktop and laptop computers, staging software installations, supporting 75 proprietary and shelf software packages and developing a database that maintained the entire company's desktop and printer inventory

## **TRAINING & CERTIFICATIONS**

Quality Matters

- APPQMR Certification - Applying the QM Rubric for quality assurance in online education.

Knowbility – AccessU Training

- Accessibility 101 Basics
- Accessible Content
- Accessible Word Documents
- Accessible Excel Documents
- Accessible PDF Documents
- Designing for Accessibility
- Accessibility Testing with Screen Readers
- Video Captioning Requirements, Best Practices, and Emerging Standards
- Adopting a Universal Design Approach for Accessible User Experiences
- Understanding Color

Pearson Equella – Digital Repository

- EQ - 101 Core Principles Certification
- EQ - 201 Content Administration Certification

## **DEMONSTRATED PROFICIENCIES**

- Knowledge of adult learning theories and instructional strategies
- Skill in project management and efficient use of resources
- Effective at researching and analyzing complex information
- Ability to establish and maintain effective working relationships
- Experience working with computerized systems
- Proficiency with word processing, spreadsheet and presentation software
- Excellent customer service and interpersonal skills
- Outstanding oral and written communication skills

## **PROFESSIONAL INVOLVEMENT AND SERVICE**

- |   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> The American Educational Research Association - Technology Committee | 2006-2008 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> DeSoto Independent School District – District Improvement Council    | 2006-2009 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> DeSoto Independent School District – Technology Committee            | 2007-2008 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> The Association of Information Technology Professionals – Member     | 2008-2014 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> The International Society for Technology in Education – Member       | 2009-2014 |

## **INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES**

TDEV 525 Human Relationships for Career & Technology Training  
TDEV 554 Theories of Adult Learning  
TDEV 548 Designing & Evaluating Curriculum  
TDEV 597 Generational Issues in Training & Development  
TDEV 597 Training Presentation & Design  
TDEV 511 Managing the Instructional Environment

ETEC 579 Administering Media Technology Programs ETEC 557 Integrating Technology into Content Areas  
ETEC 527 Technology for Instructional Delivery  
ETEC 526 Computers in Schools

EDLT 725 New Media Literacy  
EDLT 770A Cognition & Technology  
EDLT 770B Social Learning Theory EDLT 726 Emerging Technology EDLT 780 Imagining Futures

## ABSTRACT

Despite efforts at narrowing the achievement gap, ethnicity-based disparities in achievement are an enduring and pervasive issue in American education. Holy Angels, a high achieving, African American, urban, elementary school in Chicago, Illinois offers a model for successful education of ethnic minority children. Despite coming from predominantly welfare supported, single-mother homes, located in crime ridden inner-city Chicago, during the period bounded by this study, Holy Angels' students produced test scores among the highest in the nation. Previous research indicates that characteristics of schools that support academic achievement particularly among ethnic minority students are high teacher expectations, academic emphasis, and culturally responsive pedagogy. This qualitative single-case study uses ecological systems theory as a framework to examine (a) the salient features of Holy Angels School during the period of 1969-1979 (including actions, events, beliefs, attitudes, social structure, and processes), and (b) how these various features interacted to result in high achievement at Holy Angels School during the period of 1969-1979. The results of semi-structured interviews of administrators, teachers, and former students and archival document analysis suggest that 3 major elements: a high expectation-high help environment, emphasis on life preparation, and iconic leadership – uniquely interwoven, were distinguishing features of Holy Angels School. This study advances our understanding of characteristics of an institution that trains high performing African American students. It is recommend that schools purposefully individualize instruction, strive to incorporate extracurricular and life-enrichment activities that create pathways for students and build meaningful connections with and between the faculty, family and community. Implications and areas for future research are discussed. It is concluded that the phenomenon of Holy Angels



School circa 1969-1979 is replicable and that ecological systems theory is a powerful and nuanced framework for examining socio-historical phenomena.

## **Chapter One: Introduction and Statement of Problem**

There is a crisis in American education – minority youth in urban schools fare poorly in comparison with their non-ethnic-minority counterparts. This disparity known as the achievement gap has persisted for well over half a century with African American males being consistently and by far in the direst of straits. The term achievement gap has been suggested to be given refocus and renamed the opportunity gap in order to broaden the definition to include how success and achievement are socially constructed (Milner, 2010). Much of the literature uses the term achievement gap therefore it will be used for this study. Evidence of the problem is well-documented in the literature (Jencks & Phillips, 1998; Magnuson & Waldfogel, 2008) and defined and substantiated by national test score data (e.g., National Center for Educational Statistics [NCES], 2013; Vanneman, Hamilton, Baldwin, & Rahman, 2009), disproportionately high dropout rates (Ebner, 2013), and low college enrollment and completion (Journal of Blacks in Higher Education, 2006) that exceeds what can be accounted for by socioeconomic status alone (Viadero & Johnson, 2000).

According to the Schott Foundation for Public Education (2012) report, 2009-10 was the first year that the national graduation rate for Black male students topped 50%. Despite recent clamor of the narrowing of the achievement gap, at fourth and eighth grade, African American students continue to trail their non-ethnic minority peers by an average of two grade levels (NCES, 2011). Notably, over nearly the last 100 years, the national Black/White male graduation gap has only decreased by three percentage points to 26%.

The challenge of developing sustainable and replicable urban school reform that addresses (much less eradicates) these documented disparities continues to defy the best efforts of government agencies, local officials, and many in the scholarly community (see Prager, 2011).

Despite unrealized efforts at narrowing the achievement gap and improving the academic outcomes of ethnic-minority youth, we have a model of a high achieving, African American, urban, elementary school that can be studied: Holy Angels School in Chicago, Illinois (see Shields, 1989). Founded at the turn of the century by Irish immigrants, in less than half a decade, due to changing demographics, Holy Angels School came to exist in the midst of an impoverished, African American, inner-city. During the period bounded by this study, 1969-1979, Holy Angels was the largest Black catholic school in North America. Despite coming from predominantly welfare supported, single-mother homes, located in crime ridden inner-city Chicago, Holy Angels' students boasted some of the highest academic test scores in the nation. What makes Holy Angels School particularly interesting and critically beneficial during the time captured by this study is:

- 1) 1969 marked the beginning of a period that Holy Angels experienced ascension from sub-par national test score performance to competitiveness on a national level and out performing local and neighboring school districts ("We Put," 1972).

During the study period Holy Angels moved from sub-par national performance to where 80% of Holy Angels graduates graduated from college (Norment, 1986; Shields, 1989, p. 205). And,

- 2) 1969 marked the beginning of a period of new leadership at the Church (Pastor) and school of the School Administrators and Principal and Assistant Principal (Norment, 1986).

Given the enduring and pervasive nature of ethnicity-based disparities in achievement, a focused, case study examination of this distinctive institution was warranted. The current study is designed to illuminate two broad focal points: (a) the salient features of Holy Angels School

during the period of 1969-1979 (including actions, events, beliefs, attitudes, social structure, and processes), and (b) how these various features interacted to result in high achievement at Holy Angels School during the period of 1969-1979.

My general approach to this research was a single case study of Holy Angels School during the period of 1969-1979 for the purposes of developing a greater understanding of how to promote academic achievement among African American youth. I have unique insight into the dynamics of both Holy Angels School as well as its surrounding community. As a former student of Holy Angels during the period of the study's focus, and an African American male raised in the selfsame neighborhood in which it operated I am an indigenous insider to this research. Although other researchers have recognized Holy Angels as a distinguished institution, this foundational literature is largely descriptive in nature and is limited to focusing on the perspective of the members of the clergy (see Shields, 1989). The current study lends a unique perspective in that it (a) adopts an analytically empirical approach in understanding the key characteristics, relationships, and contexts as well as the intersections of these factors that contributed to the success of Holy Angels; (b) draws on the multiple voices and stakeholders of the institution, including students, faculty, administrators and clergy; and (c) capitalizes on the insight and expertise of a researcher-participant that attended the case school: Holy Angels, during the period under focus.

### **Purpose of Research**

The purpose of this case study was to explore factors that may have contributed to the development of high academic achievement among students at Holy Angels, an African American inner city school, from 1969-1979. The focus was on understanding and interpreting teachers', clergy members', and administrators' intentions and decisions in the design and

management of Holy Angels as well as students' experiences at Holy Angels and their perceptions of the impact these experiences have had on their lives.

### **Research Questions**

My research goal was designed to identify, describe, and document the features, characteristics, and qualities that made Holy Angels a high achieving school as well as explore the plausible relationships among and between these elements that shaped Holy Angels. The overarching research questions guiding this study were:

- What was the experience of students that attended Holy Angels School between 1969-1979?
- What was the mindset and objectives of the school leadership, administration and teachers at Holy Angels School between the years of 1969-1979?

### **Significance**

Despite abundant attention and effort from numerous stakeholders, the African American/White achievement gap persists and shows no sign of contracting. Legislature and research to date offers little promise for narrowing this academic breach. Disparity in educational outcomes is both a historical and chronic contemporary problem for America. There is however a model for successfully educating African American youth that can be looked at for guidance towards solutions for America's educational crisis. The fact that Holy Angels students, economically disadvantaged, African American youth, were outperforming not only their ethnically-matched peers (i.e., catholic educated African American youth) but also their non-ethnically diverse, middle- and upper-class counterparts, in the midst of social and political unrest (i.e., late 60s-70s), is remarkable.

A case study of Holy Angels is important for several reasons. First, understanding the characteristics, processes, and elements of a high achieving, primarily African American urban elementary school can help school administrators, teachers, and program developers to be more effective in employing and evaluating strategies designed to promote learning and achievement particularly for urban African Americans students – a population that remains glaringly underserved by our educational institutions. Second, a qualitative study of this nature is highly relevant to policy makers and legislators in need of information regarding the building of sustainable conditions and mechanisms for change, previous initiatives and their impacts, and cost-benefit analyses of what tools/interventions work best for what populations under various conditions (see Rist, 1994). Third, taken together, this study adds to our body of knowledge in that it bridges the collective research from various disciplines (e.g., educational psychology, cultural anthropology, education, sociology) towards a comprehensive analysis of the factors and intersection of factors that coalesce into an effective model for education of African American youth. I contend that any successful system is more than the sum of its parts and Holy Angels is no different in that it is more than a collection of best practices for African American education and must therefore be considered holistically with an appreciation for the interactions and possible tensions between elements of best practice as they manifest themselves in the living entity of a complex educational institution.

### **Conceptual/Theoretical Focus**

The ecological systems theory (EST) framework was used to ground the research question and inform the research design for this study. EST is born out of ecology which examines the multipart arrangement of interconnected and interrelated relationships amongst biological entities and the physical and communal location in which an organism exists. The

foundation of ecological theory focuses on the activity and dynamics between the living organism and its physical world. In the same manner that, over time, biological alteration is made evident, social relationships too are created and recreated within a broader environmental structure. Every specific social interaction establishes a series of interactive relationships which are not merely reciprocal. Ecological systems theory is self-evident in that it relays the notion that “development never takes place in a vacuum; it is always embedded and expressed through behavior in a particular environment” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 27).

### **Summary**

Despite broad attention to the Black-White achievement gap, African American youth and African American males in particular continue to lag behind their non-ethnic minority counterparts in terms of academic achievement and advancement. The Holy Angels School in Chicago defied this historical pattern of failure and, despite serving low-income, African American youth in an era of political upheaval, serves as a historical model of excellence. This dissertation represents a case study analysis of Holy Angels that explores the features, characteristics, and qualities that made it a high achieving school between the years of 1969-1979. In doing so, this study also examines the plausible relationships among and between the key features that shaped Holy Angels as articulated by the clergy, administrators, teachers, and former students at the time. What follows is an elaboration of ecological systems theory including its origins and tenets and a brief discussion of studies that have used ecological systems theory. In addition, the theoretical propositions relevant to this study are discussed in relation to the applicable ecological level in which they are represented.

## Chapter Two: Literature Review

### Ecological Systems Theory

Crucial to this study, the ecological perspective takes into account the wide range of dynamics that a child encounters while navigating their social environment. This approach assists in identifying distinctive characteristics and contexts that play a role in an individual's experiences, outcomes and development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1986). Hence the ecological viewpoint offers a broad depiction of the multi-contextual elements that influence an individual's academic experiences and achievement.

In Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (EST), the individual is purported to develop within the context of an intricate system of relationships. Specifically, EST describes an individual's development as being affected directly and indirectly by five systems: the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem (see Figure 1). The closest proximal environment that an individual is effected by is called the microsystem. The *microsystem* is comprised of the closest physical relationships to an individual, indicative of but not limited to those found in school, the classroom, home, and church. These microsystem influences themselves interact with one another. The interaction of these influences comprises the *mesosystem*. The broader public or societal influences that effect the mesosystem directly and, by structure, the microsystem and individual indirectly, is referred to as the *exosystem*. The exosystem is largely comprised of the bureaucratic, managing or controlling entities directly related to the microsystem. As such, economic, educational, and religious governing bodies are found here. Values, traditions, and laws shared in a country or community as a whole make up the *macrosystem*. The chronosystem is the system that takes into account the context of when in the course of history these aforementioned systems exist for any particular individual of focus.



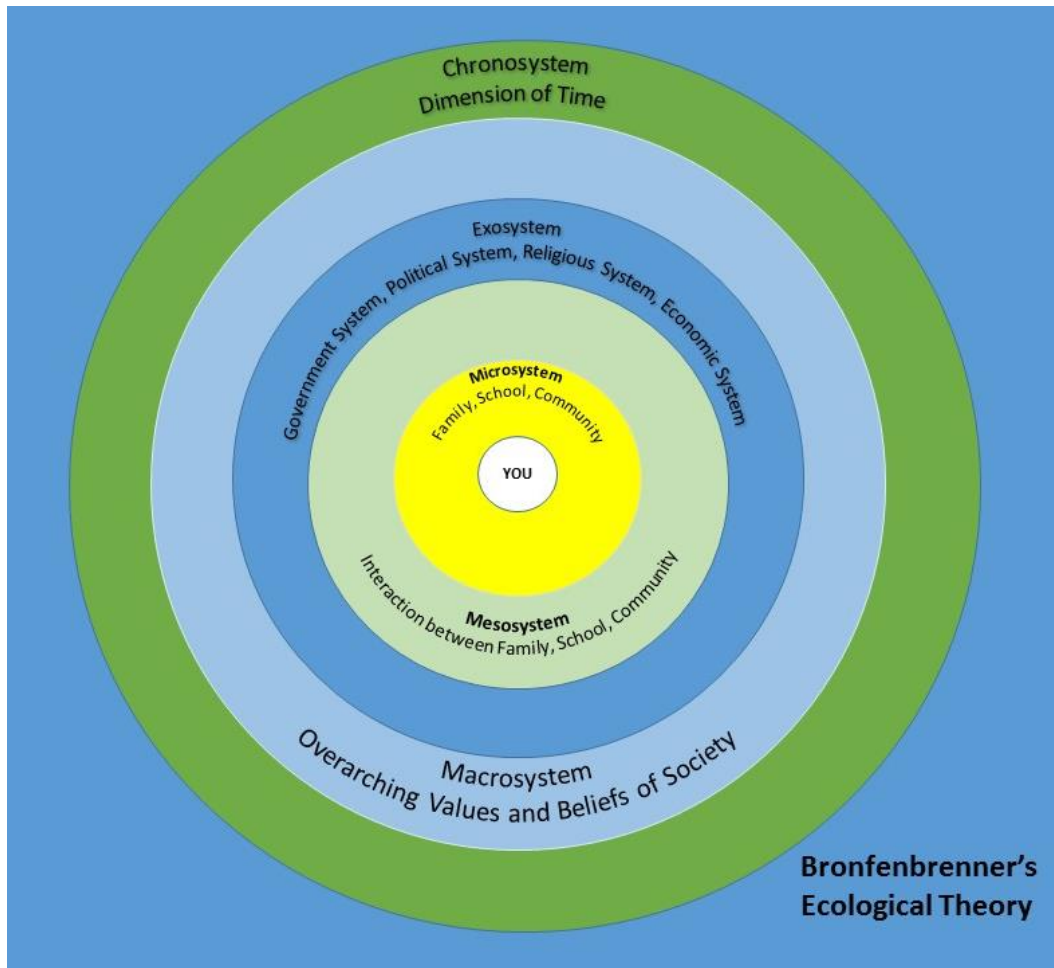


Figure 1. Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory.

**Tenets and foundations of ecological systems theory.** Although given that the richness of ecological systems theory lays in the acknowledgement of the various multiple interactions of and among systems on the developing individual within context, the rudimentary component of measurement is typically the microsystem. Bronfenbrenner, ecological systems theory's most notable proponent, is confident that a child's development does not occur under the influence of real life experiences and activities but by how the child *perceives* and interprets these real life experiences and activities. Bronfenbrenner approved of the earlier work of Lewin that conveyed the notion that (a) intrinsically interpreted experiences of one's environment have precedence over the real environment as it relates to directing behavior, (b) it is futile to attempt to

comprehend a child's behavior within a certain environment based on objective information, without understanding what that environment means to the child, (c) it is crucial to ascertain how the environment affects the child's motivation, and (d) it is critical to identify the impact of the unreal components that influence behavior that result from the child's imagination, personality, and peculiar characteristics of that child (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

The predecessor of ecological systems theory can be traced to Gestalt psychology. This philosophy progressed during the early part of the twentieth century and spread in the U.S. from the early 1920s to the late 1930s. This movement can be attributed to the immigration and tenure of Kurt Koffka (1886-1941), Kurt Lewin (1890-1947), Heinz Weiner (1890-1964), and Fritz Heider (1897-1941) to U.S. universities. The word Gestalt is translated from the German term for *configuration*. Gestalt psychology conveys the holistic perspective of those scientists mainly originating from Europe. These theorists were a representative of various fields of scientific study. Gestalt psychology challenged that of British theorists that surmised that development occurred as a child gradually formed their personality as incremental experiences contributed to their makeup – a concept that had its foundation in behaviorism. This contrasted the Gestalt theorists in that their holistic approach to development deduced that it is not individual incremental experiences compounded that made up the child's development, but rather each new experience *changed* the relationship of all of the existing components that comprised the personality up to that point. Therefore Gestalt theorists reason that the personality is influenced in its entirety with each new experience. Likewise, Bronfenbrenner's theory proposes that child development is not solely biological in nature but is affected by experiences and/or the environment collectively. Although controversial, Bronfenbrenner garnered the support of the Presidential administration of the time. Claudia *Lady Bird* Johnson considered this

theory as one that could make significant headway in combating the devastating results of child poverty by establishing a structure of educational equity. Bronfenbrenner's influences propelled governmental committees aimed at improving child development to concentrate efforts on parental and community engagement, an approach that eventually led to the adoption of the program Head Start.

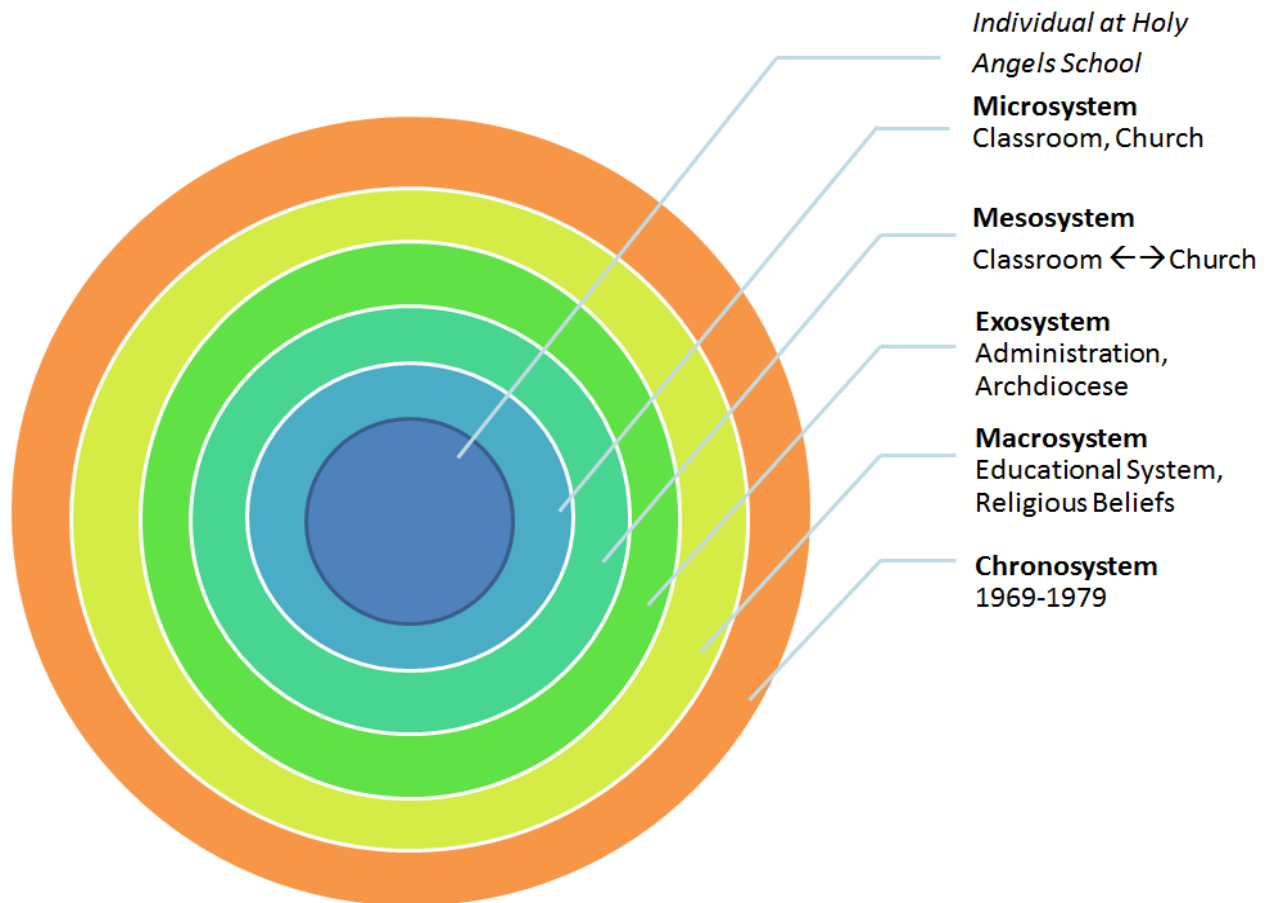
**Studies conducted using the ecological systems theory framework.** In a recent qualitative, multi-case study Williams & Bryan (2012) used an ecological systems theory perspective to examine resilience among eight high achieving, urban, African American high school graduates. These authors reported several school (microsystem) factors that contributed to resilience among high achieving African American students from low-income, single parent families including: supportive school based relationships, school oriented peer culture, good teaching, and out-of-school time activities. The student participants in the study reflected a common portrait – environmental factors played a key role to their academic success in spite of the adverse conditions that they subsisted in. The authors concluded that all students, including those at-risk, have the capacity to achieve academically in spite of socioeconomic disadvantages if ecological and environmental support systems are in place that students can build on.

In addition to understanding the individual in context, EST can also be used to understand the relationships and interplay between contexts themselves and the individual. In a qualitative study focusing on the microsystem and its interactions (i.e., the mesosystem), 22 students identified as academically promising (across nine urban Ohio schools) were asked to share their perceptions of what makes them academically successful (Newman, Myers, Newman, Lohman & Smith, 2000). The *relationship of factors* including school, teachers, peers, and community were examined. The study illustrated the significance of the interaction of several

microsystem elements for high performers. In particular, discipline, support of extended family, and teacher and peer relationships were the most prevalent indicators of high academic achievement.

EST is a useful theory for understanding influences at any level of the system. For example, in a mixed methods study that examined a 60-year school/community partnership at an inner-city high school, Leonard (2011) used Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory to better understand factors that determined the successfulness of the partnership. This research emphasized influences on the school community partnership – a mesosystem element, rather than influences on the individuals within the partnership. Leonard uniquely focused on the chronosystem in identifying how the various systemic influences on partnerships evolved over time. What he found highlights the rich applications of EST. Initially, between the 1950s and 1960s community partners directed their resources toward individual students themselves via internships and scholarships. In the 1970s a trend moved primarily to allocating funding toward teacher training. This was clearly a microsystem influence. In the 1980s community partnerships (in the exosystem) were supported as funders saw the most effective use of their dollars in supporting small learning communities. By the 1990s the focus of intervention efforts had moved from the individual (in the 1950s) to the macrosystem by promoting legislation to implement programs like Upward Bound and Pockets of Excellence. This research concluded that efforts that involved elements on the various ecological levels including the time dimension in the chronosystem were more effective in impacting student development. Although students were the focal point of development, these findings serve as a good reminder that individuals exist within context and a systemic approach, such as that offered by Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory is a fruitful strategy for identifying and addressing the needs of students.

In summary, Urie Bronfenbrenner further advanced theoretical thinking in the area of child development by creating an ecological theory of human development (1977). His theory challenged the status quo rationale for academic achievement when first introduced by suggesting that environment and context have meaningful influence on individual development and that, in fact, the individual cannot and should not be considered in absence of their influencing context. EST is appropriate for the current study because it provides an ideal theoretical framework to examine factors that may have contributed to the achievement and development of African American students at Holy Angels and provides a lens to assess the interaction of these influences (see Figure 2). The microsystem in this case study consists of the classroom and church. These two variables directly affect individuals' experiences (i.e., the students). Equally relevant to the study are the dynamics of the reciprocal interactions between these two microsystem elements. This interaction of the microsystem make up what Bronfenbrenner denotes as the mesosystem. The factors that directly influence the mesosystem and the individual student distally are the school administration and archdiocese. These elements comprise the exosystem within the model. Overarching beliefs and values make up the macrosystem. The literature identifies Catholic religious beliefs as appropriate influences at this level. Finally, variables within the chronosystem outline the dimension of time. This element of the model takes into account the timeframe that this study is bounded by as well as significant events that preceded it. This study explored systemic influences and interactions of influences on students at Holy Angels highlighting key propositions that emerged from the literature in best practices for high achievement of African American students through the lens of ecological systems theory.



*Figure 2.* Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory for current study.

### **Propositions for the Current Study**

A fundamental step in this theoretically grounded qualitative research was to identify study propositions. Study propositions help determine where to begin looking for information that answers a research question (Yin, 2013). Although my examination of the unique dynamics at Holy Angels is novel, there does exist information on high achieving African American students in general that provide direction to avenues that may prove useful to begin exploring answers to my research question. Taking an ecological systems theory approach, I explored the background literature relevant to my research question at each level of the ecological model. In searching the literature in this way three major propositions consistently reoccurred in the literature: teacher expectations (e.g., Ladson-Billings, 1995; Woolley, Strutchens, Gilbert, &

Martin, 2010), academic emphasis (e.g., Hrabowski, 2001; Kannapel & Clements, 2005; Prager, 2011), and culturally responsive pedagogy (e.g., Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995; Tate, 1994). Each of these factors are represented largely at either the micro- or macro-system level and are evident in the bi-directional relationship between teachers and students as in the case of teacher expectations (micro) and teachers' responses to mandates of the administration or clergy as in the case of academic emphasis and culturally responsive pedagogy (macro). Consistent with ecological systems theory, each of these propositions can be related in part to impacts originating from the exo- and chronosystem levels. The role of parochial education (exosystem) and the changing landscape of urban education (chronosystem) are particularly relevant to this work and will be discussed in turn along with the more proximally leveled proposition it most impacts. Overall, these propositions provide the framework that guides the analysis of the data collected in this research.

**Teacher expectations.** Teacher expectation refers to an instructor's implicit and explicit beliefs regarding students or a particular student, whether positive or negative. Teachers' expectations have been found to have a significant effect on teacher behaviors, influence teacher-student interactions, and have an impact on student behavior and outcomes. There is considerable research spanning over half of a century that supports the notion that teacher expectations are positively correlated with student performance (Deal & Peterson, 1999; Good, 1981; Reeves, 2008; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968). Research on teacher expectation can be traced back to the seminal work of Robert Rosenthal and Lenore Jacobson (see Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968). In their classic studies Rosenthal and Jacobson identified students who were described to their teachers to be *late bloomers* according to the Harvard Test of Inflected Acquisition. Unbeknownst to their teachers, the identified students were randomly selected and

no such intelligence test existed. Despite the deception, at the end of the school year, the late bloomers indeed demonstrated greater intellectual gain compared to the control group classmates. In addition, late bloomers were described by their teachers as more interesting, curious, and happy compared to classmates who had made *comparable* gains in intellect *despite* being in the control group (Rosenthal and Jacobson, 1966, 1968, 1992). This phenomenon became known as the Pygmalion effect or the self-fulfilling prophecy. This research suggests that when teachers believe that students are capable, they engage in behavior with their students that endorsed academic achievement.

Rosenthal's work inspired other researchers to study this phenomenon. Notably, as long as a decade ago there were nearly 500 replications of his expectancy studies (see Raudenbush, 1984, 1994 for a summary of replications of the effect of expectations on students' IQ performance). One such study by Brophy and Good (1970) examined the notion that inconsistent behaviors that teachers exhibited regarding high and/or low expectations of their students could explain the findings in a self-fulfilling prophecy. This landmark study examined the behavior of teachers in order to determine if their expectancies were related to engagement in distinguishing behavior toward students. The results of the study supported that teacher expectations translated to behaviors that could in turn result in self-fulfilling prophecies. They observed that teachers demanded a higher level of performance from students that they deemed to be high performers, and provided positive reinforcement when high performance was exhibited. Conversely, teachers demanded a lower level of performance from students that they deemed as low performers and provided much less positive reinforcement for their good performance relative to the high performers. In yet another study Brophy (1983) reported that teachers allowed for less response time to questions for students for whom they had lower expectations compared to those



for whom they had higher expectations. He also reported that in the case of low expectations, teachers often rewarded students even in cases when they demonstrated underperformance.

Rosenthal and Rubin (1978) conducted a meta-analysis that combined research based on studies using diverse methods. They concluded that there exists a large enough volume of compelling evidence to suggest that teacher expectations influence student achievement. Similarly, Brophy and Good (1974) and Jussim (1989) cited that teacher expectations may contribute to students' self-fulfilling prophecies by inducing students to perform at standards that coincide with their teacher's beliefs. Furthermore, research suggests that teachers often interact differently with students and in a manner consistent with their own expectations. For example, low-expectation students are grouped together further from the teacher who is situated at the front of the class (Good, 1981), are given less positive reinforcement and more negative reinforcement (Brophy & Good 1970; Good, 1982), are less likely to be called upon to respond to questions that are presented (Kerman, 1979), and are supplied with fleeting, inexact feedback (Cooper, 1979). Similarly Kathleen Cotton (1989) contends that teacher expectations and the corresponding impacts on behavior warrant attention. Cotton reports that students viewed as low in ability are regarded differently in that they are excluded from learning opportunities, receive less applause for their accomplishments, are assessed verbally with lower level questioning, experience a delay in learning new material, and endure brevity in terms of feedback in comparison to students for whom teachers have relatively higher expectations. Cotton (1989) goes on to conclude that cognitive development, a vital aspect of scholastic achievement, was greatly influenced by teacher expectations and heavily dependent on how teachers convey those expectations.

In seeming contrast to Cotton's findings, researchers have found that teachers also communicate low ability cues through seemingly positive or helpful behaviors and emotional reactions such as praise for success at an easy task, unsolicited help, and displays of pity or sympathy following student failure. These teacher behaviors are not intended to be malicious and in fact are often undertaken in an effort to protect the self-esteem of failure-prone ethnic minority students (see Graham, 1990). For example, Brophy and Good (1974) observed that a set of well-documented teacher behaviors toward low expectancy minority students, such as teaching less difficult material, setting lower mastery levels, and praise for marginal or even incorrect answers may be motivated, in part, by their "excessive sympathy for the student" (p. 311).

More contemporary analyses document that African American students receiving feedback on their intellectual abilities might be particularly susceptible to evaluations from authority figures that are associated with their ability. In experimental research, for example, African American students reported lower academic self-esteem when they received unsolicited help on an intelligence test from a White confederate than did their African-American counterparts who received no such help (Schneider, Major, Luhtanen, & Crocker, 1996). The authors proposed that help that is not requested can confirm a *suspicion of inferiority* among African Americans who regularly confront the negative stereotypes about their group's intellectual abilities. In a related program of research (Cohen, Steele, & Ross, 1999) the motivation of African American students to revise a challenging writing assignment was weaker in a feedback condition of direct praise for performance compared to feedback that communicated criticism and high expectations for improved performance. Despite these nuanced differences in particular teacher behaviors that communicate low ability and in doing so instill

within the student a low expectancy for success, the overarching message is consistent – teacher behaviors can negatively impact academic related beliefs and therefore achievement motivation among African American students.

***Race-based stereotypes about ability.*** Motivation is the study of why people behave as they do. In other words, it answers the question regarding what energizes them to start behaving in a particular way, what directs their behavior and keeps them going, and what leads them to eventually terminate a behavior. In terms of academic achievement a student must maintain high motivation in order to begin and sustain behaviors that will ultimately result in high academic performance (e.g., reading, doing homework, studying for tests). In addition to low expectancies for success that have been found to impede all students' achievement beliefs and motivation, regardless of ethnic background, additional teacher belief factors that can compromise ethnic minority students' motivation in particular relates to teachers' race-based stereotypes regarding ability.

Stereotypes are culturally shared beliefs, both positive and negative, about the characteristics and behaviors of particular groups. Even though beliefs about African Americans have become more positive over the last 50 years, studies of cultural stereotypes continue to show that respondents associate being Black (and male) with hostility, aggressiveness, violence, and danger (e.g., Correll, Park, Judd, & Wittenbrink, 2002).

Research on stereotype threat (Steele, 2010) has provided important insights into the negative consequences of racial stereotypes about intelligence. Stereotype threat is the awareness that individuals have about negative stereotypes associated with their group. Although considered to be a general psychological state that can be applied to any negative group stereotype, the construct originated in the achievement domain and it has been primarily

applied to African American students' awareness of the cultural stereotype associating their race with intellectual inferiority. That awareness can be quite debilitating, especially for those African American students who are invested in doing well in school. For example, in a series of studies with Black and White students attending Stanford University, Steele and Aronson (1995) found that Black students performed more poorly than Whites on standardized test items when they were told that the test was diagnostic of their abilities. However, when told that the test was a problem solving activity unrelated to ability, there was no difference in the performance of the two racial groups. In ability-related contexts, therefore, what became threatening for African-American students was the fear that they might confirm the stereotype about their group or be judged by others based on that group stereotype. Stereotype threatened students often are dividing their attention between the task itself (e.g., taking an SAT exam) and thinking about the meaning of their performance (e.g., what does this say about me or about members of my racial group?). Such negative thought patterns have been shown to both arouse anxiety and deplete the resources needed to do well on academic tasks. Furthermore, it is not necessary that a student believe the stereotype themselves; mere awareness of its existence is all that is necessary to activate threat.

Stereotype threat researchers have documented two consequences of the anxiety associated with thinking about race and intelligence in highly evaluative achievement contexts. First, some students may choose to work especially hard as a way of disconfirming the stereotype; but high effort in the face of increasing academic challenge may be difficult to sustain and may even lead one to question their abilities. Second, stereotype threat can also have the opposite effect, causing students to minimize effort and downplay the importance of doing well in school. Steele coined the term academic *disidentification* to describe students who no

longer view academic achievement as a domain that is either important to them or their self-definition.

Disidentification has been associated with declining achievement from middle school to high school, particularly among African American boys. A similar process, labeled *academic disengagement*, occurs when students begin to discount the feedback they receive about their performance or to devalue achievement altogether. While disidentification and disengagement may serve in part as self-protecting mechanisms for coping with negative racial stereotypes, in the long run their negative effects on motivation outweighs any short-term self-enhancing effects.

In the last two decades, hundreds of studies on stereotype threat have been conducted and the Steele and Aronson (1995) inaugural article is considered to be a modern classic in the social psychology literature (Devine & Brodish, 2003). Despite the impact that this work has made on the field of motivation in general and understanding decrements in motivation among African Americans specifically, the concept of stereotype threat has been criticized as being ecologically invalid given that the phenomenon has been primarily only studied in laboratory settings in which the threat is activated by some experimental manipulation (e.g., Sackett, Hardison, & Cullen, 2004). Given the preponderance of evidence, one must nevertheless acknowledge that prompting students to believe that they may not be able to achieve their goals or that some accomplishments are beyond their dominion, based on any factor – real or imagined, has the potential to greatly debilitate their belief in themselves as well as their accomplishments.

Taken together these findings resonate with the work of Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968, 1992) which revealed that students with lower ability outperformed students with higher ability when presented with inflated expectations. Likewise, students of high ability are shown to

underperform when presented with decreased expectations for success. This research reveals the critical role that teacher expectations play in shaping the educational experiences and outcomes of their students. Adopting a more broad perspective, teacher expectations have added significance because teachers' belief systems direct their institution's infrastructure and have an impact on curriculum and its quality (Danielson, 2002). The implication is that teachers and administrators can individually undermine a school's otherwise praiseworthy mission, goals, and programming.

*The significance of teacher expectations in urban school settings.* The cognitive-behavioral process that can ensue with teacher expectations and the impact that low expectations has on student outcomes, logically suggests that students in lower-SES and/or lower-performing schools, that are assumed to have students of lesser potential, are at greater risk of underperformance (related to negative teacher feedback and interactions) compared to those at higher performing schools (Rubie-Davies, 2010). If true, this puts ethnic-minority students and African American students in particular at greater risk of being the target of low teacher expectations. In fact, an investigation of student teachers' perceptions and expectations of students based on attractiveness, gender, and race shows lower expectations for unattractive students particularly African American males – regardless of the race of the teacher making the judgments (i.e., African American or White; Parks & Kennedy, 2007). This finding is particularly poignant given the ethnic makeup of the majority of low-performing public schools in America.

*Changing U.S. public school demographics.* Not surprisingly, nearly all of the worst-performing schools across the nation are high-poverty, inner-city schools (Kannapel & Clements, 2005). Sadly, the majority of African American students are enrolled in public, inner-city (and

therefore low performing) schools (“Elementary,” n.d.). A brief exploration of the demographic patterns in urban America helps us to understand how this inequity came into being.

Between 1910 and 1930 the U.S. experienced several *Great Black Migrations* that saw a large population of African Americans move from the South to inner city areas of the North. Many came to take advantage of opportunities provided including working in the railway, meat packing, and manning the steel mill industries (“Elementary,” n.d.). After the 1954 Supreme Court decision *Brown v. Board of Education* that mandated school integration, U.S. inner city schools and urban areas experienced a wave of White flight from urban to suburban areas. As a result, urban areas and urban schools became drastically less White and more African American.

At the turn of the century African American students represented approximately 17% of the almost 57 million students attending public schools in the nation. Thirty-percent of the African American student population attended schools located in large urban areas resulting in over 53% of all the schools in urban areas having a preponderance of African American students. The U.S. Department of Education reports that of the more than 8 million African American public school students in the U.S. 76% attended schools inside urbanized areas during the 2009-2010 school year. Of note, in cities like Milwaukee, 61%; Philadelphia, 64%; St. Louis, 80%; Atlanta, 92%, and Birmingham, 94% well over half of the student population is African American (“Elementary,” n.d.).

Research demonstrates that teacher expectations are generally higher for White compared to Black students and for middle- compared to lower-class students (Baron, Tom, & Cooper, 1985; Parks & Kennedy, 2007). Given the reality that the majority of inner-city schools are predominately African American and serve a student population of lesser financial means than their suburban counterparts, it is easy to deduce that urban inner-city students by volume are at a

greater risk for negative self-fulfilling prophecy and underachievement due to low teacher expectations. The findings that teachers expect less from minority and poorer students and more from White and more affluent students is alarming in that this behavior only serves to widen the disparity of achievement outcomes. It's a matter of mathematics. If minority students are expected to perform more poorly while at the same time White students are expected to perform higher, and teacher expectations influence student outcomes, these discrepant teacher expectations serve to widen the achievement gap.

**Academic emphasis.** Ethnic-minority students and students with socioeconomic challenges have perpetually been relegated to a place of academic peril (Gordon & Yowell, 1994; Mickelson & Greene, 2006; Natriello, McDill, & Pallas, 1990). A factor found to perpetuate low academic performance by poor and ethnic-minority students is having a primary learning context with low academic emphasis (Barth et al., 1999). Academic emphasis has been denoted as academic rigor, academic push as well as environmental press. In essence it refers to the degree to which an academic organization is driven by the purpose of achieving academic excellence (Hoy, Tarter, & Hoy, 2006) and is considered to be a vital component of student achievement even after controlling for socioeconomic status (SES; Goddard, Sweetland, & Hoy, 2000; Hoy et al., 2006; Lee & Byrk, 1989). Shouse (1996) contributed to this assertion by making the argument that “educational equity can (and should) be achieved in low SES schools by utilizing both human and social capital in more academically focused ways” (p. 19). In other words, schools need to recruit, train and support well prepared and talented teachers and administrators who work to build a community committed to academic excellence.

Schools that have an elevated academic emphasis are depicted as having an environment that places priority on high, yet achievable objectives for each and every student. These schools



operate from the perspective that all students are capable of achieving these high objectives and that an organized and orderly environment is necessary to attain superior academic achievement (Goddard et al., 2000). The work of Kannapel and Clements (2005) investigating the characteristics of *high-poverty, high-performing* schools implies that academic focus or emphasis is in fact more pivotal to student success than instructional programming and implementation style. The literature points to three basic defining characteristics of rigorous academics: (a) heavy emphasis on basic skills in reading and mathematics (Carter, 2000; Cawelti, 2000; McGee, 2004), (b) emphasis on higher order thinking skills (Barth et al., 1999; Carter, 2000), and (c) increased instructional time (Feldman, Tung & Ouimette, 2003; Kannapel & Clements, 2005). According to research high-poverty, high-performance schools in particular navigate students through a concentrated curriculum that begins with the acquisition of basic skills with the belief that mastery of these requisite rudimentary skills prepares students to move on to more abstract concepts. This approach is aimed at preparing learners for higher order thinking skills development in areas of research, literary analysis, creative writing, oral presentations, and debate.

In addition to developing basic and higher order thinking skills, high-performance high-poverty schools are resourceful at finding ways to afford increased instructional time for students (Barth et al., 1999; Carter, 2000; Caweli, 2000; Feldman et al., 2003; Kannapel & Clements, 2005; McGee, 2004). These schools provide extended instructional periods with time on task and lengthen the typical school day with longer hours, and after school, weekend, and/or summer programs. These schools have been innovative in finding ways to further increase instructional time by implementing peer mentoring programs, parent aids, administrative support and even teachers volunteering unpaid work hours.

In a study of 398 schools Shouse (1996) contended that schools in general, and low socioeconomic schools in particular, can raise student achievement by putting their academic goals at the forefront. Shouse presented three contexts for academic emphasis that outlined collective effectiveness in the schools he studied. Characteristics of schools with academic emphasis/purpose were:

1. Strong academic climate. This speaks in part to the degree that a school offers and makes widely available a rigorous curriculum in addition to acknowledging and rewarding outstanding academic achievement;
2. Strict and fair disciplinary climate. This makes reference a school's emphasis on instituting suitable and operative attendance and discipline policies; and
3. Rigorous instructional practices. This encompasses the establishment of challenging and universal standards for student performance. Shouse suggests that the schools that experienced the greatest success are those in which "a sense of community emerges as a positive result of a strong sense of academic purpose" (p.19).

Although targeting achievement of low-SES students Shouse does not find attention to SES to be a key characteristic of academic purpose. Similarly, Robinson (2007) asserts that students that come from low-income households have higher academic achievement when instruction is directed by high academic emphasis for *all* students and benchmarks are not guided by their socioeconomic situation. His research supports that strategies for student success are futile if coupled with poverty as an indicator for student success. Rather, it is engagement in contexts with challenging pedagogy and high order thinking skills that students categorized as *at-risk* excel. Immersed in a learning environment with the combination of rigorous curricula and learner oriented teaching, at-risk students learned better and were less likely to dropout. Like any

other group, lower income students performed better when they were placed in schools with high academic emphasis than those whose academic standards were lowered because of their socioeconomic conditions (Lee & Burkam, 2003).

Goodard et al. (2000) conducted a study of elementary schools and found that academic emphasis was a key predictor of student achievement in reading and math for low income and minority students. This research indicated that schools with a higher academic emphasis experienced higher levels of student achievement. Even though students that qualified for and received free or reduced lunch tested on average 2.41 points below the school's average reading scores, the school average was 11.39 points higher in areas where they found strong academic emphasis compared to those with weaker academic emphasis. Their results underscored the notion that a school's environment and value of high academic emphasis brings to bear more equitable attributes of student achievement irrespective of socioeconomic status. This suggests that principles and practice correlated with high levels of academic emphasis are related to increases in equitable student achievement.

*Negative reactions to academic challenge.* Despite these desirable student outcomes that have been found to correlate with academic rigor, in considering academic challenge for ethnic-minority students educators must walk a fine line. In the fact of challenge, individuals of color who believe that they are being treated unfairly because of their race or ethnicity can lose confidence in themselves and their willingness to persist. Among the most prevalent kinds of unfair treatment reported by ethnic minority youth are receiving a lower grade than deserved from teachers, being the recipient of unusually harsh discipline from authority figures, being accused of behaving suspiciously in public places, and being the target of verbal, psychological, or physical abuse from peers at school (Fisher, Wallace, & Fenton, 2000).

Perceptions of racial discrimination can take its toll on the mental, physical, and academic well-being of youth. Such experiences have been linked to decreased perceptions of mastery among early adolescents of color and increased negative attitudes about school. Perceived discrimination can lead to mistrust of teachers and to the general belief that the school rules and policies are unfair. Perceived discrimination by teachers (e.g., discipline or assignment of grades) has been found to be directly predictive of academic disengagement with African American students being particularly susceptible to perceive teacher discrimination (Rosenbloom & Way, 2004).

There are however complex interactions between perceptions of discrimination and motivation among ethnic minority youth. Research has found that not all ethnic minority youth react to perceived discrimination with decreased motivation. There may be some circumstances under which youth transform discriminatory experiences so that they become an impetus for increased effort in school. Eccles, Wong, and Peck (2006) asked African American middle school youth whether they believed that being African American would make it difficult for them to be successful in their future educational and occupational pursuits. Analyses showed that youth who anticipated future race-based discrimination displayed *higher* levels of academic motivation than those who did not. Rather than focusing on day-to-day discrimination experiences, some youth may conceptualize unfair treatment as a structural barrier that can be *overcome* through academic excellence.

Research has shown that effective efforts to combat perceptions of discrimination among youth have included instilling a strong racial/ethnic identity and socialization about race. For example, when African American youth report that their race is central to their self-concept and that they were taught about racial pride and vigilance (preparation) against racism, then the

relationship between experiences with discrimination and academic disengagement were weakened (e.g., Neblett et al., 2008). It appears that a moderate amount of preparation for bias and discrimination is most effective. Too little racial socialization may leave ethnic minority children adolescents vulnerable to the harmful impact of discrimination whereas too much preparation could heighten awareness of racial barriers to a level that results in the erosion of self-efficacy or their belief in their ability to overcome these race-based barriers (Harris-Britt, Valrie, Kurtz-Costes, & Rowley, 2007).

**Culturally responsive pedagogy.** Driven largely by immigration during the past 40 years, the racial and ethnic landscape in the United States has been dramatically redrawn. Although Whites are still the majority group in the nation as a whole, Asians and Latinos are now the fastest growing ethnic groups. In some states, like California and Texas for example, that growth has been so dramatic that it is no longer meaningful to talk about majority and minority groups inasmuch as no single ethnic group holds the numerical balance of power. The increased presence of immigrant children of color in the schools has led to a resurgence of interest in the role that culture plays in the academic lives of children and the usefulness of tailoring the curricula to the lived experiences of students in an effort to better address the unique academic needs of ethnic-minority youth (Gay, 2010, p. 31).

This perspective to instruction departs from the general modality in two important ways. First, it moves beyond standards and incorporates the boarder sociocultural context in which learning occurs and factors that are unique to the everyday lives of people of color. Some of those factors are historical and structural in nature. Many racial and ethnic minority groups are positioned at the bottom of a status hierarchy and barriers to opportunity often override personal strivings for achievement. Second, race *and* motivation are considered together from a social

contextual perspective. Central to that perspective is the belief that students' social lives and their academic lives are inter-related and that one cannot fully understand an individual student's motivation to achieve without also understanding their relationships with other individuals including their family, community, and culture as a whole.

It has come to the forefront of current research that educators must attend to cultural differences in education. Gay (1997) makes the case that, "When the cultures of students and teachers are not synchronized, someone loses out – invariably it is the student" (p. 223). The existence of the sizeable achievement gap between White and non-White students corroborates Gay's notion that cultural incongruence between school and home underwrites low achievement among ethnic-minority students. Scholars in teacher education have reacted to the social imperative of advancing academic achievement for all students including ethnic-minority students by cultivating a theory of *culturally responsive pedagogy* (CRP) that describes how educators can focus on the needs of students of varying cultures. CRP has been given various labels including culturally-sensitive, -relevant, -centered, -synchronized, and even contextualized pedagogy. CRP (and its related terms) represents an anthology of ideas and the reasoning of a wide range of scholars. For the purpose of this study I will refer to culturally responsive pedagogy broadly as teaching that uses the cultural comprehension, experience, and awareness of ethnically diverse learners to make learning experiences more appropriate and successful (Gay, 1997, p. 31).

Teaching in a culturally responsive way encompasses recognizing and embracing the importance of race and culture as it relates to learning. Culturally responsive pedagogy takes into consideration the important function that the socio-cultural and political context, the role that race and ethnicity has played in shaping communities, the benefit of understanding the norms

and patterns of the community students are living in, and the value of utilizing culture as a vehicle for learning. It includes viewing cultural differences as assets, and the heritage of individuals as valuable. CRP allows for the diverse culture of communities and families to help develop curriculum, instruction, relationships and classroom experiences that affirm learners while purposefully combating stereotypes, prejudices and preconceived notions that validate a climate of intolerance (Gay, 2010, p. 31).

Culturally responsive pedagogy is not an entirely unique concept. Learning theorist Vygotsky described the school setting as the prototypical example of contextual and situational learning with environment, experience, identity and culture concurrently recognized as relevant elements of the learning process (Moll, 1990, p. 1; Vygotsky, 1978). This social-cultural view of learning speaks to the perspective that thinking is a byproduct of norms, values, and community practices and that thought also influences how people act or react in any given situation. Building on this premise, scholars then argue that since the nature of our thinking, process of learning, and forms of communication are integrally tied to culture, aligning instruction with a cultural framework should naturally advance student achievement (Gay, 2010). Moreover, educators that are culturally responsive view the intricacies and interplay of culture in education as assets and not liabilities.

***Culturally responsive pedagogy for African American students.*** In order to effectively employ culturally responsive pedagogy, educators' awareness of cultural diversity must extend beyond simply *recognizing* that ethnic groups vary in their values. Cultural sensitivity towards African American students in particular, for example, requires that teachers develop a nuanced understanding and appreciation of the cultural individualities of African American students. This includes familiarity with specific achievements of the group and prominent members of the

group and incorporating this information into the curriculum. Instructors and administrators are moreover charged with recognizing and removing obstacles that thwart culturally responsible teaching and realizing and proactively addressing the fact that social images (e.g., media) can be manipulated and affect both what is being taught and how instruction is being received.

According to ethnic-group specific research, African American students, compared to those non-ethnic minority groups, communicate in a more active and multimodal way. This style, often denoted as *call and response*, is characterized by highly participatory and interactive communication in which the listener engages with and responds to the speaker as they present (Baber, 1987; Smitherman, 1997). Unfortunately if this interaction style is misinterpreted as disrespectful and disruptive in the classroom, it can inhibit the scholastic engagement of the student. In contrast, supportive learning groups and peer tutoring are well-suited to African American students' learning styles (Gay, 2010; Spring, 1995). Action, interaction, music, regular changeability in assignment structure, innovation, and dramatic components in teaching have been found to increase African American students' academic performance (Allen & Boykin, 1992; Allen & Butler, 1996).

There is cross-disciplinary support for culturally responsive pedagogy in as much as this approach to education is grounded in acknowledging and appreciating the value systems of individual students. Social psychologists have empirically examined how an opportunity to express one's core personal values can have a positive impact on students' motivational consequences. In one innovative intervention, Cohen, Garcia, Apfel, and Master (2006) had African American and White middle school students choose from a set of values (including those related to achievement) the two or three that were most important to them and to write a paragraph about why they selected those values. Students in the control condition wrote about



the values that were least important to them. The rationale for the intervention was that reflecting on personally important values can be self-affirming and can therefore buffer some of the challenges associated with ethnic minority status. This simple intervention yielded powerful effects. African American students in the values affirmation condition attained higher grades over the course of the school year and were actually able to reduce the achievement gap between Black and White students.

***The role of parochial education in culturally responsive teaching.*** Culturally responsive pedagogy, a culturally sensitive philosophy to teaching/learning does not limit itself to culture grounded merely in race or ethnicity. One's global perspective is inextricably attached to what one knows and how they interpret new knowledge (Ladson-Billings, 2000). Thus one's religious worldview has a profound effect on how one makes meaning of life experiences and frames the kind of questions that are asked. In order to fully embrace the culture that their students bring to the learning context, educators must acknowledge that religious identity is inclusive of this culture.

Ladson-Billings (1999) drew a parallel between the educational experiences of early European immigrants and those of contemporary Latin American immigrants in stating that in both cases there existed a lack of sensitivity to the group's unique culture and the impact of cultural mismatch on learning. Early European immigrants overcame these educational struggles by creating and matriculating their own religious schools that valued and preserved their culture (Walch, 1996). This trend continued as hundreds of urban religious schools came to the forefront in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in response to the desire to preserve the continuity between home, culture, and school (Bryk, Lee, & Holland, 1993). This emergence of more culturally aligned education aided

multiple generations of students of diverse cultures to achieve academic success and socioeconomic upward mobility (York, 1996).

Although many religious schools emerged, it was Catholic school education in particular that placed a premium on the individual culture and achieved a high level of success in educating minority students (York, 1996). By the 1980s research supported that Catholic school educated students of all ethnic groups had higher levels of achievement than their public school counterparts when controlling for socioeconomic conditions (Coleman, Hoffer & Kilgore, 1982). Because of their success with educating minority students as a result of being culturally responsive, Catholic schools contributed greatly to diminishing the harmful effect that socioeconomic status had on educational attainment (Bryk et al., 1993). This effect is known as the *Catholic School Effect* (Evans & Schwab, 1995). Neal (1997) found that minority students attending Catholic schools are 42% more likely to become high school graduates and are 2½ more times likely to become college graduates compared to publicly educated peers. The Catholic School Effect, which promotes culture-centered education, has become a model for effectively educating minority students.

### **Summary**

The literature regarding influences on urban minority students' academic achievement suggests that three primary factors, teacher expectations, academic emphasis, and culturally responsive pedagogy have been shown impact the achievement outcomes of African American students in particular. Teacher expectations have the potential to promote high achievement among academically average students and debilitate the achievement of otherwise higher performing students. The effect of teacher expectations is particularly compelling when taken into consideration with prevailing negative stereotypes regarding the intelligence of African

Americans. Strong academic emphasis or rigor, like teacher expectations, has been shown to promote higher performance among students. Also like teacher expectations, academic emphasis can produce unexpected outcomes among ethnic minority students that perceive rigor to be triggered by racial discrimination. Perceptions of discrimination have been found to be linked to both academic disengagement as well as increased motivation inspired by the desire to dispel or defy the stereotype. The growing ethnic minority population, coupled with the unique educational needs and challenges facing these youth has given rise to the notion of culturally responsive pedagogy – a philosophy of instruction that considers the academic experiences of youth within the context of their social and cultural experiences. The body of work that speaks to culturally responsive pedagogy for African Americans has found that consciously acknowledging and incorporating the values, and communication and interaction styles unique this group has resulted in increased motivation and school outcomes. This literature highlights complexity of the African American educational experience and the value of an inter-disciplinary approach to uncovering and understanding the multiple constructs and intersection of constructs that contribute to their academic achievement.

## Chapter Three: Methods

### Research Design

The research approach for this study was qualitative. The specific design for this study was a single case study. A single case study is appropriate when the research is representing an extremely unique case and/or access to a unique setting. (Yin, 2013) .Case study research primarily allows for the intensive study of a targeted social unit, community, institution, group or individual with societal factors as well as environmental interactions taken into consideration. (Isaac & Michael, 1987). In the single case study of Holy Angels School, I *intentionally* wanted to cover contextual conditions. (Yin, 2013).

The primary strength of a case study is that it investigates social units in-depth and offers a more comprehensive, organized picture of the social unit. The study can vary in scope in that it can be studied in segments or the entire life span of the unit. In a case study one factor can be focused upon or the dynamics of how multiple factors interact can be examined. In comparing quantitative research that usually examines fewer variables across a large unit sample, qualitative case studies usually examine a smaller number of units across a larger number of variables (Isaac & Michael, 1987, p. 48). Because case studies are intensive studies of variables and how they interact they are particularly useful for providing background information, more in-depth investigation, and developing hypotheses for further or future study.

Case studies are generally narrower in nature and focus on a lower number of units of measure. Because of this they are limited in being valid representations of the general population. In addition, case studies must take measures to not allow subjective bias and preconceived notions to devalue the study by influencing the outcome (Isaac & Michael, 1987, p. 48).

## **Sources of Data**

One of the first steps in the study was to circumspectly collect data. Vital to this study was construct validity or, to what degree does this study assess what it purports to assess? In response to this question, multiple sources of data and corroborating sources of evidence was drawn upon including interviews, and archived newspaper and magazine articles. The target population for the interview portion of this study were people who served in the role(s) of administrator, leader, and/or former student at Holy Angels School during the bounded period of the study.

In order to secure a sample the Holy Angels Facebook Alumni site was accessed to identify potential study participants. The researcher was able to conduct interviews with 14 participants as sampling continued until it reached data saturation – the point at which no new information emerges (see Saumure & Given, 2008). A detailed description of the sampling method follows.

## **Sampling Method**

The subjects selected to participate in this study had a specific characteristic tied to the research objectives. The objective of this study was less interested in the tendencies of a larger group and more concerned about why a specific group had certain feelings, the manner by which these mindsets were formed, and the function that they served in a multi-faceted process within the organization. For this reason a purposeful sample was appropriate.

Unlike other methods of research where participants are examined in effect as interchangeable, in case study research, all participants cannot be viewed as all are created equal. One perfectly situated expressive informant can advance the research with greater clarity than a random sampling can ever hope to accomplish.

The primary sampling method for this study was a snowball sample. Snowball sampling is a special nonprobability method for developing a research sample where existing study subjects recruit future subjects from among their acquaintances. This sampling technique is typically used when populations are hidden or otherwise difficult to locate or access (Oliver, 2006). This difficulty may arise out of stigmatization (e.g., individuals with HIV or who consume alcohol while pregnant), illegalization (e.g., drug users, commercial sex workers) or having an otherwise specialized population that is hard to establish. The present study included identifying students, administrators and leaders from the particular case school during a specific bounded period of time. Because the researcher did not independently have contact with the potential participants but can nonetheless access key potential participants who are members of a larger *network* of potential participants, snowball sampling was appropriate for this study. It is necessary to acknowledge that snowball samples are subject to bias. For example, potential participants who were more well connected with others were more likely recruited into the sample whereas those with relatively fewer acquaintances were less likely identified for participation. In an attempt to address this potential bias, available social media (e.g., Holy Angels Facebook page, classmates.com) was used in order to contact and recruit study participants.

The snowball sample began with approaching several Holy Angels alumni on a popular social media website. After approaching three potential participants, one student and one teacher agreed to be interviewed. From the one student that agreed, contact was made available to four potential former participants by phone numbers that were provided. Of these four contacts three students and one teacher consented to be interviewed. From this teacher contact was made and consent was given by two former administrators to be interviewed. One of the administrators that

consented to be a part of the study provided the names of two additional teachers and four additional students, all of whom consented to participate.

A total of 14 interviews were conducted including four male and four female students. All but one student attended the school from first grade and graduated from the school in eighth grade. The one student that did not attend the school their entire elementary school years attended the school from second grade through eighth grade. Each of the former teachers, administrators and clergy that worked at the school during the study period are currently retired, although all remain involved with volunteer work or hobbies. Each participant, their role in the study, and their current occupation is indicated in Table 1.

Table 1

*Participants' Role in the Study and Current Occupation*

Participant	Role in Study	Current Occupation
Participant 1	Student	Social scientist/university professor
Participant 2	Student	International banker
Participant 3	Student/teacher	Teacher/professional musician
Participant 4	Student	Custodian
Participant 5	Student	Social worker
Participant 6	Student	Program director
Participant 7	Student	Life coach
Participant 8	Student	Attorney
Participant 9	Teacher/clergy	Retired
Participant 10	Teacher/administrator	Retired
Participant 11	Teacher/clergy	Retired
Participant 12	Administrator/ clergy	Retired/volunteer teacher
Participant 13	Administrator/clergy	Retired/speaker
Participant 14	Teacher	Retired

Because one teacher was promoted to an administrator during the period bounded by the study, he was able to respond with insight for both a teacher and administrator. In addition, two of the four teachers and both administrators were also members of the clergy during the time period being studied, so they were able to provide dual insight into those roles. Additionally one student eventually became a teacher at Holy Angels and was able to provide insight as both student and teacher. No consent was necessary from Holy Angels because no current administrators, teachers or students were contacted or a part of this study.

### **Initial Communication with Potential Participants**

A script for verbal and electronic communication with potential interview participants was used. The researcher was introduced as a Doctoral candidate at the Pepperdine University Graduate School of Education and Psychology as well as a Holy Angels Alumni from the graduating class of 1977. It was conveyed to potential subjects of the study that the reason for contacting them was to inquire of their willingness to participate in a voluntary dissertation study that would fulfill degree requirements at their University. Each potential participant was informed that the study involved Holy Angels School and was bounded between the years of 1969-1979 and they had been identified as a student, teacher, administrator or clergy member at the school during this period. They were made aware that the goal of the research and their participation would be clearly explained including that their participation in the study would be strictly voluntary. Potential participants were thanked for their consideration and provided contact information if they were interested in participating.

### **Human Subjects Considerations**

The research activity engaged in in this study involved semi-structured interviews with an adult population that are not a protected group. The study neither presented more than a minimal



risk to the participants nor would disclosure of the data outside the study place the participants at risk of criminal/civil liability or damage to their financial standing, employability, or reputation; and no deception was used. Therefore, this study was exempt based on 46 CFR46.101(b)(2); see Appendix A for exemption approval.

This protocol was considered exempt because the interview questions were similar to those given at the end of the semester of higher education courses or a typical everyday life marketing survey for product or service feedback and posed minimal risk to participants. The possible risk of this study was that participants may have had a bad or traumatic experience at Holy Angels. The interviewer was sensitive in perceiving any negative emotional behavior during the interview process. Participants were continually informed throughout the interview that they do not have to answer a question if they felt uncomfortable doing so. Participants were informed throughout the interview that they could stop the interview at any time. In addition, participant were informed that they could opt out of the study at any time during the process.

All study participants first signed a statement of Informed Consent before data collection that detailed the name of the study; the researcher(s) contact information; the participants agreement to participant; the participants role in the study; the study period; the benefits and risks of the study; the participants freedom to opt of the study at anytime with no recourse; confidentiality of the study; finding of the study; and who to contact regarding their rights as a participant.

### **Data Collection Strategies and Procedures**

**Interviews.** One-on-one, semi-structured interviews were conducted using a general interview guide approach. Being semi-structured, questions were used flexibly, and were primarily open-ended. Semi-structured interviews are ideal for this specific research endeavor, as

they allow for specific topics to be explored, but allow for the perspectives and priorities of the informants to play an active role in the information that is conveyed. The guide approach was intended to ensure that, despite flexibility, the same general areas of information were collected across participants. This provided more focus than a conversational approach but still allowed for adaptability in querying the interviewee (Patton, 2002). The procedure for collecting interview data was audio recording.

***Interview questions.*** A unique interview protocol was designed for each group of participants (i.e., students; teachers, administrators, and clergy; and social scientists). During the interview, detail-oriented, elaboration, and clarification probes were used as necessary to increase the richness and depth of responses (see Patton, 2002). The following is the lists of questions that were asked the participants. These protocols should be considered representative of the topics that were covered, and did not function as a predetermined list of questions.

*Interview Questions for Former Students*

- What comes to mind when I say the words “Holy Angels School”?
- What comes to mind when I mention the name George Clements? (Pastor of Church/leader in the school during the period being studied)
- What comes to mind when I say the name Paul Smith? (Principal of the school during the period being studied)
- What comes to mind when I say the name “Sister Helen Strueder”? (Assistant Principal of the school during the period being studied)
- What comes to mind when I say the word “Little Angels”? (The school’s fine arts group during the period being studied)
- What was expected of you as a student?

- Did Holy Angels impact your life? If so, how so?

See Appendix B for possible follow-questions.

*Interview Questions for Former Teachers, Administrators, Clergy*

- What years were you in leadership at Holy Angels School?
- What was your educational approach at Holy Angels School during your tenure?
- What was your academic approach at Holy Angels School during your tenure?
- What cultural experience did you desire for the students to have during your tenure?
- What was your approach to parental and community involvement during your tenure?
- What were you trying to instill in the students at Holy Angels?
- How did you approach the socio-economic situation of the students?
- How did you approach the socio-economic conditions of the neighborhood?
- What did you expect from the students at the school?

See Appendix C for possible follow-questions.

**Artifacts.** In addition to interviews, document collection was another means by which an attempt to understand the complexities of the case with regards to factors that both contributed to and challenged the academic outcomes achieved at Holy Angels School during the period in question was used. Archived documents including articles written during the period by popular press magazines (i.e., Time Magazine, Ebony Magazine, Jet Magazine) and local and national newspapers (The Chicago Defender) were utilized. In addition, academic book chapters chronicling events at Holy Angels during the study period, photographs as well as relevant digital and non-digital artifacts were analyzed. Such documents were primarily associated with the socio-political history related to the bounded period, curriculum, and historical documents created by clergy (e.g., memoirs).

## **Data Management and Security**

All hard copy and electronic data are securely stored to prevent unauthorized access, disclosure, or loss. Hard copy records are stored in a locked filing cabinet located in a secured room. Electronic data is saved on a password protected computer with updated anti-virus software installed and a secure firewall configuration. To guard against data loss or theft, a backup of electronic data is saved on a hard drive that is stored in a locked filing cabinet located in a secured room.

## **Analysis and Data Reduction**

Recorded interviews, field notes, and newspaper and magazine articles were collected and input into a qualitative study database (e.g., Hyper Research) for content analysis. Qualitative case study database software is a collection tool that supports qualitative methods research by allowing for collection, organization and analysis of content. The next step in the study was to thematically code and classify the data into manageable and consistent categories. Once the data was organized into categories it was consolidated, reduced and interpreted to make meaning. Findings from the data were formulated into organized descriptive accounts and themes or categories generated by the data. The schema generated by themes, categories and concepts identified were analyzed by a senior scholar to determine if there was a consistency in descriptive themes in regard to the researcher's interpretation. Once further analyzed for validity the agreed upon accounts, categories and themes were further linked for making inferences and model building. It was interesting to note that some of the study propositions that were formed from the literature review emerged. Chapter four provides further detail as to how these propositions emerged. As themes emerged from the data analysis they were categorized and grounded in the appropriate system of the Ecological Systems Theory model of Bronfenbrenner.

It is from there that the data was further analyzed to report if and how the various systems in the model interact (Chapter 4).

### **Means to Ensure Study Validity**

An essential component of this study was to confirm that the conditions of the arguments reasonably link data to theory. Multiple strategies were employed to support the validity and reliability of findings including adequate engagement in data collection and triangulation of the data (see Merriam, 2009). As a primary strategy for maximizing the validity of the data, there was careful attentiveness to strive to get as close to the data as possible through interviewing multiple stakeholders and studying numerous documents and artifacts. Purposefully seeking out data that may support alternative explanations was followed until a point of saturation occurred. In order to uphold internal validity through triangulation findings were compared and contrasted with a wide array of competing interpretations. Particularly attention was paid to data that did not corroborate conclusions or that raise questions about researcher interpretations. In the end, the *truth* of the findings were that which is was supported by multiple sources.

**Reflexivity/positionality.** Related to the validity of the study is the researcher's acknowledgement of the position as a participant-researcher as well as the perspective brought to the data. As a researcher there was an intention for objectivity; as a participant there was the need for a subjective, no less valid relating of the experience. There was a conscious attempt to be honest to the participant experience and yet reflective without partiality. During data analysis the approach to the data was to be faithful to the subjective truth with an eye of objectivity. Acknowledgement was considered that although the researcher as the instrument of inquiry, not unlike any other instrument, was not without bias.

The researcher's perspective as an indigenous insider was necessarily different compared to someone with no or a less intimate relationship with the subject matter – both to an advantage and disadvantage. As an insider, there was great opportunity to create a sense of rapport and gain the confidence of participants that seemed to be less arduous. In fact, it was noticeable that participants shared their responses with more candor. In addition, it appeared that the researchers' known familiarity with locations, personalities, events, and shared knowledge participants could have provided less detail than they would a less knowledgeable other however, because of the substantial degree of shared schema there was the ability to know when and how to probe for more detail in the course of the interviews in particular.

## Chapter Four: Results

Chapter Four of this research study consists of the presentation of the qualitative data and analysis for this study. The research goal for this study was designed to identify, describe, and document the features, characteristics, and qualities that made Holy Angels a high achieving school as well as to explore the plausible relationships among and between these elements that shaped Holy Angels. The overarching research question guiding this study was: What was the experience of students that attended Holy Angels School between 1969-1979?

What follows is a presentation of the data. Themes were High Expectation-High Help Environment; Life Preparation; and Iconic Leadership. Table 2 below lists the associated subthemes presented. Table 3 in turn provides codes related to each subtheme as well as the number of sources for whom that code applied and that number of total references across all sources.

Table 2

### *Summary of Thematic Analysis: Themes and Subthemes*

Theme 1 High Expectation- High Help Environment	Theme 2 Life Preparation	Theme 3 Iconic Leadership
High Expectations of Students	Cultural Competence	Organizational Consciousness
High Expectations of Teachers	Discipline in the context of caring	Visionary/Risk-taker
High Expectations of Parents	Educational Pathways	Resolute/Confrontational Radical

Table 3

### *Detailed Thematic Analyses: Subthemes and Codes*

Major Themes, Subthemes, and Supporting Codes	Sources	References
Theme 1: High Expectation-High Help Environment		
High student expectations		
Academic and cognitive development of students was important	14	34
Students scored high marks on national tests	6	14

(continued)

Major Themes, Subthemes, and Supporting Codes	Sources	References
Students went to school year-round	5	11
The school was academically competitive	4	9
Students were expected to strive for excellence	5	8
High standards regardless of socio-economic conditions	6	9
High parent expectations		
Parents were expected be involved in their child's educational dev.	9	24
Parents were expected to participate in their child's moral dev.	7	12
Parents were expected to support their child's teacher	2	14
Parents were expected to develop in order to support their child	3	9
Parents were helped to help their children	3	10
Parents were helped to better themselves	2	7
High teacher expectations		
Teachers loved children and loved working with children	5	9
Teachers were intrinsically motivated	8	20
Teachers gave their lives sacrificially	4	10
Teachers worked long and hard	5	11
Teachers wanted to leave a legacy/were influential	4	8
Holy Angels was a high help environment	1	3
Children were helped if they did not understand concepts	5	14
Theme 2: Life Preparation		
Cultural competence		
Students were made to feel proud of their culture	6	19
Had to learn how to teach Black children	2	4
Culture is important in education	2	5
Student awareness of who they were in the context of other cultures	2	5
Teaching was in the context of culture (Black) and period (civil rights)	4	11
Discipline in the context of caring		
Discipline deterred bad conduct	10	23
Discipline enabled me to succeed in life	4	9
Discipline helped promote learning in the classroom	3	7
Discipline helped keep you safe in a difficult environment	1	2
My favorite teachers were strict	3	4
We wanted the children to learn	3	8
Even though it was strict we had fun	1	1
They were strict and loving	1	2
Lack of fond memories of certain administrators because of discipline	1	2
We wanted students to be prepared for life	2	5
Educational pathways		
Scholarships to continue development at prestigious high schools/colleges	5	12
Option of continuing their education at a sister boarding school	7	15
Students were followed up on after they left Holy Angels	2	3
Ability to attend prestigious high schools because of their education at HA	4	6
Inspired by being exposed to life outside of an oppressive community	7	17
Preparation for life and to further education/career opportunities	6	24
Theme 3: Iconic leadership		
Leaders at Holy Angels promoted self-reliance & accountability/liberator	7	18
Leaders at Holy Angels were not afraid of confrontation/radical	6	15
Leaders at Holy Angels were collaborative/organizationally conscious	6	22
Leaders at Holy Angels were visionary	11	14



## **Theme 1: High Expectation High Help Environment**

At Holy Angels School there was a strong focus on academics and there were high expectations of the students to perform well academically. The high expectations upon the student were coupled with high expectations of the faculty to help students meet the challenges posed to them. Similarly, parents were expected to participate in support of the institution's goals. The high expectation environment at the school went beyond academics, addressing moral and community building beliefs and behaviors as well.

**High expectation of students.** The pattern of high expectations of students emerged as a pattern within the theme of high expectation environment. At Holy Angels School the emphasis was placed on preventing students from falling behind grade-level, grouping students with their academic counterparts, explicit expectations and year-round schooling.

***Prevention over intervention.*** The school placed value on catching student weakness and promoting strengths early within a context in which students were positioned for challenge and success academically and morally. This process from kindergarten through eighth grade was not only consistent throughout the tenure of the student but was saturated by a twelve month school year. One faculty member, Sister Helen, described the preventive nature of the Holy Angels program:

Our academic program was one of excellence, reason being as we tried to find the need of the youngster and in finding the need of the youngster you can teach the instructional piece that will answer and respond to what the child actually is having difficulty with. We had small groups as I mentioned before throughout the school in reading and math. We also had the Title I programs that came in, and that was one of the things that I really worked on, and that was getting that title program down in kindergarten because the earlier you catch the weakness and you put strength there and assurance that the child can do it, the better the child will learn.

Sister Helen describes a philosophy of prevention rather than intervention. In identifying a student's weaknesses early and a focusing on strengthening that weakness you halt the failure

experience, develop a strong foundation on which the child can build, and in doing so instill in the child a strong sense of self-efficacy and belief that they *can* excel academically. One student that attended both public school and Holy Angels in early elementary contrasts the two noting Holy Angels' emphasis on academics.

Holy Angels was a special place to me in that initially in second grade the focus was more on academics and cognitive development. I think the key thing that I remember initially was the academic program being rigorous – demands on you that were very different from other places in the sense that, for example, you *had* to learn your multiplication facts by memory in second grade...

This student happened to have experienced and recalled two distinct educational institutions at the onset of their educational career. He noted the stark difference between the local public school and Holy Angels in that at Holy Angels academics were taken more seriously even at second grade whereas the public school was less demanding in regard to rudimentary skillsets.

***Pacing and pushing through grouping.*** This early approach at assessing students was coupled with programming that placed students at developmentally appropriate levels and challenged them to excel at their own pace. An administrator describes the pedagogical strategy of grouping and the philosophy behind it as follows:

Grouping was a very important part of our instructional piece in the school. It always existed at Holy Angels. The children were always grouped. It brought children to accepting who they were, and they were happy because they could feel like they could answer questions. They were in a group where the questions asked them could be answered. It served a real need and answered an academic need of a student.

What is being described is the strategy of academic pacing and pushing through grouping.

Because students were placed in areas that they could be successful, it was reasonable to have an expectation on them to perform. This strategy served to positively reinforce the student's desire to learn because it affirmed their ability to achieve academically. This administrator also alludes to the broader goal of the institution to build each student's academic self-esteem and sense of "I

can” and this is recognized as a fundamental need that students have. She goes on to describe the learner centered nature of instruction at Holy Angels.

Children had to be grouped. Children had to have concepts taught, retaught, reviewed until they understood them. Children had to be allowed to ask questions. Children had to be given time to answer questions. Wait for the child to respond and teach other children that we have to respect each other in their responses, the waiting time. Give them a chance. We have to ask questions of the child when they weren't quite sure of their explanation to make sure that we needed to review or reteach or whatever the case may be.

Holy Angels created an environment where students felt safe to explore, construct meaning, and ask questions and were given immediate feedback if correction was necessary. Students didn't have to overcome embarrassing educational experiences such as being rushed or teased by their peers but were taught to support and encourage each other academically. There was a general excitement about learning something new and meeting a challenge.

Although Holy Angels met students at their level of academic need, there was a concerted effort push to bring students to the level of academics expected, for example, “You *had* to learn your multiplication facts by memory in second grade and if you didn't you couldn't go out for recess until you learned it. But of course they helped you. It was a high help school.”

Once weaknesses were identified strengthening the weakness was a primary goal and free/ recreation periods were used to supplement instructional time until academic goals were met. Two points are worth noting. One, the academic expectation at Holy Angels was not to keep you at grade level but to push you beyond. Recall that this student describes being expected to learn multiplication by memory at second grade at Holy Angels whereas this was not an expectation at the local public school. Second, although free recess was forfeited in lieu of supplemental instruction time, physical education was not. Each student participated in

structured gym activities that were valued along with academics and not waived for supplementary instruction.

Two students described the academic grouping as it functioned in the upper grade levels at Holy Angels in allowing them to surpass the available curriculum. The first student stated that, “In about sixth or seventh grade we started what we called ‘mini courses.’” Another student recalled that, “Holy Angels had a program where they allowed you to advance – to be in an advanced class.” In the case where students advanced beyond the available curriculum, students were provided with advanced coursework that allowed them to advance in subject matter their own pace.

***Healthy competition through grouping.*** The result of having a healthy academic environment where students knew that they could succeed fostered a healthy sense of competition in which students couldn’t wait to have their tests scores read aloud. One student shared that...”Holy Angels allowed us to be very competitive for high school and for life.” Another student stated,

A lot of us graduated eighth grade with 10, 11, and 12th grade scores in reading math vocabulary science – it was amazing. To us it was like, “Oh I got a 10!” – It became a competition. Seventh grade you get all 10s, eighth grade you want all 12’s, you know. We didn’t know how that would impact us but it gave us a study ethic, a work ethic, a drive, something to shoot for.

This study participant is commenting on the times when students’ scores on the national standardized Iowa Test of Basic Skills were read aloud in class. His attitude demonstrates the atmosphere of anticipation for hearing the results of academic performance when one excels. The attitude of competition here was healthy primarily because it was not with other students in the school. The competition was with (a) the student’s own previous scores and (b) national scores. All students were able to achieve their personal best and encourage others to do the same. These

experiences helped to create a pattern of achievement and preserve expectation of achievement, and promote the sense of “I *can* achieve.”

Besides grouping another consideration in explaining why students at Holy Angels excelled past grade level was because they maintained academic momentum. This was made due in part to the fact the students went to school all year round.

The 12-month program began because children were becoming more and more involved in street activity. Around Holy Angels, we had so many public housing units, and everybody knows what’s occurring in the housing units. Parents working, children home, so a wise decision would be to keep the children off the streets and out of those extra activities that were not good for children. What would be a better activity than education? What the educational program did provide for the children is activities like swimming, activities like football, basketball, and so forth. Children actually had a rounded education because of it. We found that is also brought the scores up because children didn’t lapse 2 months, 3 months in the educational field. They were steadily learning something each day.

The 12 month school year at Holy Angels initially began to combat negative influences on students from within the neighborhood surrounding the school. This adverse environment consisted of various potential mesosystem factors: liquor stores with undesirable people, paraphernalia shops that doubled as candy stores, and gangs that looked to recruit new members. This, coupled with being raised in a single parent household that did not have the infrastructure or resources to provide monitoring (which was common for many Holy Angels students), meant that during summers students were potentially inundated with negative influences in the absence of *any* academic stimulation and very little supervision. Although these negative influences were stable aspects of the community and students’ experiences, Holy Angels offered a protective diversion from these injurious elements during the school year. It was towards this protective aim that Holy Angels extended the academic session into the summer.

It is very possible that Holy Angels administrators were not initially aware of the exponential long-term benefits that year-round schooling would have on the students. It is clear

however that they anticipated that it would have a positive effect at least in protecting the students from social ills – an utmost concern – and in addition, strongly supported the learning goals of the institution. A student shares their memory of the academic schedule and shared that,

I mean we're here 8 hours a day – every day, and we went to school all year round. Before all of this extended day extended year – We had an extended year. We started in August we went *before* Labor Day and we got out in July (laugh) what kind of vacation is that? We got like three weeks of summer vacation. *But* we had fun here.

This student reminisces on the experience of year round schooling. Although their inflection during the interview was one that exhibited that the time spent in school was incredibly sacrificial their take home message was positive – they “had fun” at Holy Angels. Another student recalls the abbreviated summer break and considers it in light of prevailing research regarding educational best practices.

We went to school all year round. I think we had a 2-week vacation in August beginning maybe – I think that started when I was in fifth grade. That was pretty intense. There were no breaks. And retrospectively now there's all this research that says Black kids have summer setbacks in their academic training. Well they were way ahead of the curve on that they didn't have to wait to hear that from some researcher, they actually figured that out logically and began to implement plans and they had a vision to keep us moving along academically that was very different.

The recreational activities that students were then involved in created rich educational experiences that allowed for application of concepts that were learned during the school year. This not only served to reinforce learning that but also eliminated or minimized setbacks or *summer slide* that typically occurs to students over long breaks. This made Holy Angels ahead of its time considering the data today that supports that children have their biggest setup backs academically during the summer months.

***Explicit expectations.*** There was nothing implicit about the expectation of success at Holy Angels. The programming, infrastructure, and operation were an explicit communication of expectation to give your best. These expectations were not only conveyed by the academic

programming and year-round school year, but were directly communicated to students one-on-one as we see in this administrator's philosophy,

You can change their lives just by receiving them, accepting them for who they are and letting them know that they disappoint you when they don't measure up to your expectations of their behavior, achievement, completing the task, whatever you give them, and they'll change for you. I enjoyed my teaching profession.

Students' failure to meet expectations was confronted face-to-face in a deliberate effort to let the students know that faculty believed in them. The high expectations in essence were a communication of confidence in the students' abilities and care for their outcomes. This notion is further supported by the following student comment:

Holy Angels was very serious about your academic performance on testing. I recall not doing well on a test and probably it should have put me in another level in terms of reading. And what she said to me was that you have the ability to do it so she had very high expectations and a lot of help and I learned from her that when you have high expectations and high help there's nothing you can't achieve. And so I take that from her as a very important lesson for my life. There are many, many other people there where there lessons that I learned some of them in a negative way in a sense that you were disappointed and decisions that were made but you were in a context in which you knew that if you fought hard you still had a chance to achieve and I think that was a big part of the whole Holy Angels experience for me.

This atmosphere of high expectation of students created an expectation within the student themselves. That is to say, the students began to *expect* to be expected to give their all and when they did not they were made aware of this fact. An important aspect of this high expectation environment was the students' perspective that (a) effort would lead to achievement, and (b) there was help available. The staff's high expectations of students was coupled with student expectations for support – success was attainable because the student could expect the Holy Angels staff to help them meet (and exceed) the expectations for success as the following two quotations demonstrate:

Expectations were great in the classroom, if I recall, during the times that I was teaching. I wanted the children to do something, so when I went in there, I expressed what it is that

I wanted to do, and then I also asked the children, what is it they want? What were they expecting to do? As an educator in the classroom, what were they expecting me to do, to help them to get where they were going?

The children had to come on time. They had to be groomed, and one thing we always did ... If we saw a family that was careless in that extent, while I was principal, the children would always come and say, “Sister do you have another shirt? Sister do you have another blouse?” Or they’d be at recess and something would happen. Sister, do you have something I can change into. The children had a pride, a real pride, a sense of “I can do this. I can measure up to what they’re expecting.

**High expectations of teachers.** A close analysis of the data reveals a pattern relating to high expectations for teachers. Extrinsic expectations were imposed by the administration that systemically demanded teacher preparation from a pedagogical perspective. Extrinsic or top-down expectations, though essential to the students’ academic development, paled in comparison to the intrinsic expectations that teachers imposed on themselves to support the students holistically. Teachers and administrators at Holy Angels were not only passionate about their work, they viewed it as a gift and a calling to which they would dedicate their lives and in the process leave a legacy for the rest of the world to witness.

***Extrinsic and intrinsic motivations.*** From an extrinsic perspective expectations were placed on the teachers by school administration. Teachers were expected to be collaborative in their efforts to provide a high quality curriculum that quickly identified student weaknesses and capitalized on their strengths. A school administrator shares that,

Teachers sat together and wrote their curriculum. Teachers worked together by telling what strengths they found in the students that came to them. What weaknesses do they have to work on as classes, as a school? Teachers looked at the assessment piece which was given once a year to see if they’re on target with the strength and the weakness in the curriculum. Teachers sat together and if they found the weakness, they chose another textbook or media that they used for curriculum.

This structure for curriculum development that the faculty operated under mirrors the grouping structure practiced by the teachers within the classroom. Just as students were expected to help



and respect each other in the classroom, the faculty was expected to support each other in academic planning. Holy Angels operated in the collective with a mind towards edifying the student. This administrator speaks to the “strengths of the student” and the “Weaknesses of the class/school.” If there was a problem with student learning, the issue lied with the curriculum or the method – all students were capable of success given the proper instruction and teachers were given the authority to address this issue.

The most influential aspects of teacher motivation were intrinsic in nature. The data show that the teachers believed that educating and developing Holy Angels students was their gift and calling from God. This is evident in the following quotations from a teacher and administrator respectively: “I believe I was gifted by God in my early years as a young lady,...I recall [saying], and ‘I want to go where I can service a great number of people in this world, especially Black people.’” An administrator shared similar sentiments in stating that,

I love teaching, sharing the gifts that God has given me, and I seem to have a fairly receptive audience – but we loved the work, and we loved the children, and that was what was most important...My job was to spark a child’s soul to learn.

These responses reveal that working at Holy Angels was more than a job – it was a personal charge for which one was uniquely chosen. In fact, the work was not to merely educate children at all, it was to be of “great service to Black people” and to “spark a child’s soul to learn” – Holy Angels was where individuals came together to fulfill a commission. It is noteworthy that in the overwhelming majority of interviews, teachers and administrators referred to students at Holy Angels as “children,” rather than “students.” This was telling in that teachers thought of the students in retrospect or to this day as more than participants in an educational setting but as family members that were to be loved, valued, and nurtured.

*The commission.* Emphasis was placed on meeting the needs of each child recognizing and addressing the factors that placed them at-risk for academic as well as social and emotional struggle. This often required that the teachers at Holy Angels not only deliver academic content but also be available to support the children in their socio-emotional development and varied needs. An administrator shares that,

Children come out of homes carrying emotional situations, one parent, [my] mother like[s] my older brother better than me, I'm not appreciated, everything I do there's something wrong with it, all of this has an impact on the child's focusing, learning ability, and so the instructional piece must be adapted to the needs of your child. Your teacher must be prepared... Teachers had to love children. Teachers had to accept children for who they were coming with whatever baggage it was and when there was difficulty if they could not find a way to work through that, to send them to someone who could and to trust us that we supported them, that we were there to help the youngster understand.

A teacher shares that, "It's so important that [students] get the understanding that they can do real well, if they want to. All they have to have is all the initiation, the instruction, the concern, the love, the attention that you can."

The administration at Holy Angels recognized that the children that attended the school came from homes that were not necessarily conducive for producing and achieving in school. This required special attention far and above simply exposing them to a high quality curriculum. Teachers had to take into account emotional scarring, psychological needs, physical neglect or abuse, and even social/self-esteem deficiencies students were bringing into the academic context. Addressing the special needs of their at-risk students was seen as fundamental to achieving their goal of developing the child and something that administration wanted teachers to be prepared for. It is striking that, *all* children have to have is *all* the initiation, instruction, concern, love and attention one can give – this charge, what one might easily expect from a parent, though lofty, was what the faculty accepted and strived to accomplish. In addition to *in loco parentis*, teachers

at Holy Angels were in essence pseudo-psychologists, social-workers, and child-advocates among the other varied roles that they assumed in supporting the mission of the school. The majority of the teachers at Holy Angels were nuns and priests and as such were also responsible for serving in ministry functions.

Also we had many sisters who worked in different areas, Sister Merita worked in the liturgy with Sister Lorina; they took care of the sacramental piece. They took care of the masses, prepared the children for taking part on the liturgies. There was Sister Alice who worked with the field trip. They gave them a little bit of competition in sports. Other Sisters worked with the scouts. There was Sister Lorraine who saw the need way back in the middle '60s I would say, for a pre-school program, childcare program, after school program. Sister Lorraine developed it.

In addition to addressing the educational needs of students, the Holy Angels staff managed the extracurricular needs of the students (e.g., sports, scouts, field trips), religious functions of the church (e.g., mass, liturgy, sacraments), and met community needs as well (e.g., pre-school, childcare, after-school programs). Additionally, there were non-teaching staff at Holy Angels that helped to meet the educational needs of the students. As one student put it, "Some people weren't formally teachers but they were educating and they influenced you." I, the participant researcher, recall Sister James-Anthony who worked in the bookstore teaching myself and another student how to run a retail business by allowing us to create our own startup candy table at recess, the cafeteria workers reinforcing politeness and practicing table etiquette, and Sister Joan (a teacher but not my teacher) staying after school to help me write a play.

***Commitment and dedication.*** The commission at Holy Angels was incredibly demanding and the staff worked hard and long hours and dedicated their lives to the cause. A former student that returned to Holy Angels to teach expresses the mindset of the Holy Angels educator in saying that,

During that time, again, this was radical for black children, we were not expected to get the best education, and so Holy Angels was radical in the sense that, "No, these kids are

going to get the best education, and not only that, they're going to score well on every test, and we're going to work our butts off to make sure that that happens."

A nun describes the arduous daily weekday routine, which included attending mass, prayer and teaching with just enough break time to eat.

There were 14 of us there at Holy Angels. All of us had worked very hard. We got an assignment each day. First we went to mass, and we didn't go to one mass, we went to three masses. There were three priests there, and each priest said a mass, and we stayed for each one. Then we came home. We had breakfast, and if we would eat our cereal we could have a roll. Since we were all young, we all took sweet rolls, plus first off the cereal of course. Then we went to work, and we worked straight through. We worked straight through, maybe just enough time to get lunch and to get supper. After supper, we would pray, and then we would work again. We would work until 11 o'clock, because in those days, you couldn't have anything to eat after 12:00. So we all had some ice cream. Then we went to bed and got ready for the next day.

Weekends were equally demanding as the former student-teacher recalls: "That was dedication, day in and day out, and then weekends they would be there cleaning the school. I mean, these people dedicated their lives to that. We're fortunate to have that kind of example...I remember a lot of work." Even more remarkable was that the nuns and clergy sustained this schedule for several years, even decades. Not only was it a day-to-day dedication but one marked with longevity. One student notes, "It was as though it was an urban mission field. They were like, 'We're going to dedicate our lives.'" Another shares a similar sentiment in reflecting on Sister Helen an administrator at Holy Angels during his tenure there:

I think they invested their lives in a sacrificial way to provide high quality education for kids in very tough circumstances. So I view her as sort of an angel in the neighborhood who was very, very, focused on achieving high quality education for kids who basically needed a shot at it and I think that's what she devoted her life to and really did a wonderful job at it.

Yet another student comments that,

These women dedicated their lives for that school. Sister Lorraine was there for over 50 years. I'm 50 years old. That's a long time to dedicate your life to something. There's no way that you dedicate 50 years of your life to anything if you did not care...I tell you, that was dedication.

Sister Helen, an administrator at Holy Angels attributes the school success in part to the longevity of the leadership and faculty, their dedication to the children inspired by their faith, and the creating, encouraging, and sustainability that this supported.

One of the reasons why Holy Angels was so good academically is that the leadership stayed for many years. Sister Hortensia was there many years. Father Smith was there 24 years. I was there with Father [Smith] in administration and then carried on right after Father [Smith]. Second thing was we were all religious people. Religious people tend to be dedicated. They have a real love and care for the children, their ministry, and so that was seen. Also, many things developed because we were there with each other as the next one stepped up to the plate, the program was developed a little further, and a little further, and a little further.

This last quotation makes reference to the religious aspect of dedication – harkening back to the notion that work at Holy Angels represented a spiritual mission, a calling, a purpose. The data also suggests that teaching at Holy Angels was in some ways its own reward.

I really enjoy working with the children, getting them to be inquisitive about the right things, and then finding the right answers to the right things. Then discovering things for themselves, and learning. I learned from them, just as well as they learned from me.

It was just exciting because they wanted to hear about God. They wanted to learn about all the reading, the math, everything that we were told to do, to teach the children.

I remember a lot of fun. I remember a lot of work. I remember when the show being over, it was like, “Wow, all of that work for one show,” but then when you see the joy of the students and the smiling faces of them realizing that we’ve accomplished something impossible. That is...wow. It’s the best. To this day, to see the joy of the students realize that they pulled off something impossible. What a great gift to give someone.

In spite of the grueling schedule, the years in service in multiple capacities, in each of these statements teachers describe what they themselves gained from teaching at Holy Angels. The first got joy out of teaching and learned as much from the students as they did from her. The second expressed excitement over the children’s eagerness to learn and their enthusiasm to learn about God. The third recalls the toil of the annual Christmas Performance in which all (the then) 1300 students participated. The joy expressed by the children delighting in their

accomplishments was a treasured gift to the instructor. These teachers describe the reciprocal quality of their relationship with the students at Holy Angels, the bi-directional nature of the teacher-child relationship in which each nourished the other.

*Leaving a legacy.* The dedication indeed sacrifice that the staff and faculty at Holy Angels exhibited, though rewarding and inspired by a higher calling, was not merely for intrinsic fulfillment. They wanted the world to know of their hard work, what was possible through hard work in the educational arena, and what was possible through love and care for children. When asked what they wanted people to remember about Holy Angels Sister Helen shares that,

The legacy that I would like to see in 50 years from now is that everyone can say what a dedicated group of Sisters we had, the school Sisters of St. Francis. Of their commitment, of their time involvement, of their dedication to give all, in all, to the students. To see that they could say that was a well-rounded, fully-educated school. That we really came upward bound and out all over the United States to let everyone know that education is the most important thing of our lives.

The recognition of hard work in the service of children also factors in prominently in this teacher's account of what she would like Holy Angels to be remembered for: "I would especially like for people to look at the tremendous amount of work that has been done at Holy Angels, and say, 'Someone was there who cared, and did everything they could, to make these children laugh and beautiful.'" A student recounted the dedication of the Holy Angels teachers and shares that, "The biggest legacy that we can give them is to do the same, to do the same. So that's all I got to say."

Teachers at Holy Angels lived up to both extrinsic and intrinsic expectation. Holy Angels had high expectations of their teachers' academic performance and there was a structure in place that supported teachers being able to meet these expectations. There were demands placed on teachers from a nurturing perspective as well: teachers were expected to love the children. In addition to these extrinsic forces students perceived that the work of the teachers at Holy Angels

was intrinsically motivated and went beyond rudimentary instruction, beyond even dedication and commitment, and represented sacrifice toward a greater calling and vision in support of education and child empowerment to which the Holy Angels staff devoted their lives.

**High expectations of parents.** In addition to having high expectations of students and teachers, parents at Holy Angels were also held accountable and expected to be involved in the life of the school as it related not only to their child's development but also their own moral and social development. To be specific, parents there had three areas of expectations: directly promoting the academic and moral mission of Holy Angels School, participating in educational activities to be *able* to promote the mission of Holy Angels School, and participating in educational activities towards social and civic *self*-improvement.

***Parents were expected to be actively involved in their child's academic and moral development.*** At the beginning of the school year all parents were required to attend a school orientation where they learned about the philosophy of Holy Angels, school operations, day-to-day programming, and experiences their children would be having as well as receive information regarding what parents (and their children) could expect of Holy Angels teachers and staff. In addition, expectations of the parents' themselves were clarified including financial support, supporting the instructors, and monthly visits to the school. A school administrator describes the orientation and expectations of parents in the following excerpt:

Parents were expected to support their teachers...The parents were expected to come to orientation right at the beginning of school. Usually while we orientated parents, children were tested so that we would know what their academic needs were, and we could put the children in their right placement. Parents had to find out what their expectations were financially, what the school program was, what would we demand of the children, what were our expectations, and we told them everything that possibly they needed to know to be at ease while their children were in school, what time school was open, what time they ate, what time they had after-school, what kind of programs we ran and so on and so forth...Parents also knew that they had to support the teacher. They had to come up every

month, pick up the children's work, look at it, [and] redo what they weren't satisfied with.

The Holy Angels concept of collaboration, exemplified in student grouping and instructor teamwork, was extended to parents. Holy Angels fostered parents' regular participation and involvement with both the school and their child's progress by implementing mandatory monthly parent-teacher conferences in which they would collect and discuss their child's classwork with the teacher as well as the child – reworking problems that the child struggled with. This engagement was present from the very beginning of the child's tenure and remained consistent throughout their years at the school. If parents did not attend these conferences their children could not remain enrolled in the school. In short, Holy Angels developed mechanisms through which parents were necessarily aware of and involved in their child's academic life.

In addition to the expectation of parents participating in their children's academic development, they were also required to be actively engaged in their spiritual or moral development. This was achieved in part through requiring that families attend church service every Sunday. A former student recollects:

Certain things were established early on at the school under the leadership of Father Smith and Father Clements in terms of mandatory school attendance *as well as* church attendance for both you and your family members. So to me they again, in retrospect, it seemed that they were attempting to build a sense of community around the church. There were many activities that were going on where they wanted your family involved. I think that was important in light of where it was in Chicago on the South Side...where family and community had really not been a strength if you will of that area but they realized that they had to build that kind of strength in order to have a firm academic and moral development for students. That was very real, very different. Never talked about in the things you read about Holy Angels, but it was one of the biggest things that they had.

The incorporation of mandatory family service speaks to both the School's philosophy of holistic development of students, its commitment to a collective identity, as well as Holy Angels extension of itself into the home. In instilling values in the students, the school did not seek to be



the replacement for parental influence. On the contrary, parents held an important role as a model, setting a moral example for children. For both academic and moral development, the school relied on the parent to positively reinforce the values of the school. Holy Angels represented a community of families and parents were expected to help Holy Angels to edify the children.

*Parents were expected to promote their own development in order to support their child.* Holy Angels valued parental participation and reinforcement of values. Parents were not only expected to be aware of what children were learning, but to also engage their children in the learning process. This type of parental involvement however is only possible to the degree that parents themselves are competent in the academic and moral lessons being imparted to the children. Building the competence level of students' parents was therefore also incorporated in the Holy Angels programming. An administrator describes these efforts in the following excerpt:

Parents were expected to come and support their teachers. We always told parents, and we began the year with orientation. It was one of the programs I developed very early on. I felt it was important for our parents to understand what we were going to do with the children. They had to understand the program we had, so they had to take adult instruction so they knew the values their children were getting. They had to come every month to pick up their children's papers, so they were aware of how the children were learning, and if they needed help, come and ask for it. I would have parents there sometimes 6:00, 6:30 helping them understand what to do to improve in whatever it is the child was having trouble.

Parents at times had to be empowered with the skills necessary to be actively involved in their children's development. Supporting Holy Angels teachers meant reinforcing lessons taught in school – this might require that the parent themselves “go to school” both literally and figuratively. Parents were expected to *understand* what their child was learning and to learn how to teach their child. Parents could meet with teachers after school hours to gain the skills they needed to teach their children at home. This is an additional avenue in which Holy Angels used

parents as vehicle to extend itself into the children's home and Holy Angels was going to help parents help the children.

*Parents were expected to self-improve.* Not only were parents expected to be involved in their child's development, they were expected to personally develop as well. Counseling sessions were provided to empower parents with children with behavioral challenges. As a part of the monthly meetings, parents were provided with parenting skills classes. An administrator describes these efforts as follows:

Parents were expected to support the teacher in regards to the child's behavior. If there was a problem, if it became serious, come to the office and counseling sessions were set up with the parent with the child at times, and they were given certain skills: how they could change the behavior between the child and the parent...Parents learned through the monthly meetings, and they got their little packets where there was always a certain counseling skill developed. Believe it or not, parents would come in there ahead of time, read that paperwork so they could understand what the 5, 10, 15 minute presentation on parenting skills was about. Parents were very supportive.

One administrator goes on to describe a unique requirement for child enrollment was that the parent be registered to vote and identify another adult to be involved in the child's development.

He adds,

...if you wanted to put your kid in our school you had to have a voter registration card...both parents have to come and sign the report card. When the lady would say "I don't know where his daddy is. He ain't got no daddy, he's in jail." [the pastor] said, "just get a reasonable [person]. You've got to have somebody else come in here with you because you're not going to do this by yourself, you've got to have some help.

In this way, the school further promoted self-improvement in terms of civic and community and engagement and awareness. Parents were not forced to vote but they were required to be in a *position* to participate in their right to vote. Parents were required to expand their community. No parent was allowed to operate in isolation – single parents were expected to find a reasonable other adult to be involved in the child's development. In this way Holy Angels was further expanding the "community" and in essence helping parents to help *themselves*.

## **Theme 2: Life Preparation**

Holy Angels School sought to prepare students for futures that were rich academically as well as inter- and intra-personally. This entailed developing students' strong sense of ethnic identity and cultural competence, instilling a sense of discipline and self-regulation, and identifying fruitful pathways for their graduates.

**Ethnic identity and cultural competence.** Awareness and exploration of culture and ethnicity was woven into the fabric of the pedagogy. It was a prominent aspect of the curriculum at Holy Angels incorporated not only to inform but to empower and prepare the individual child for the broader cultural milieu in which they would later find themselves.

**Culture as pedagogy.** Consistent with the vein of holistic child development, Holy Angels incorporated culture, specifically Black culture, and ethnic history as a distinct aspect of the curriculum. In addition to typical academic subjects: reading, math, science, students were taught and tested on their heritage. A student describes the prominent integration of culture into the curriculum in stating that,

I characterize my learning from Holy Angels with the letter "C" the first thing I learned from Holy Angels was the importance of understanding your culture or the centrality of your background — who you are that makes you who you are. I think Holy Angels was big at having us focus in on our cultural contributions and applying that to the second "C" which was your cognitive development.

Holy Angels seamlessly integrated ethnic history and culture with core academic content thereby making lessons rigorous while at the same time personally relevant, ethnically enlightening and culturally rich. We learned that our heritage was something to be lived to (rather than be ashamed of). I as participant researcher recall learning about the civil rights movement (a then current event) as a social studies and history lesson – giving reports on current events and analyzing the historical motivations for the civil rights struggle. Questions and topics explored

and debated as a class included, why is Dr. King marching?, compare and contrast Dr. King and Malcolm X's philosophies, and trace the history of rights for Blacks in America – are any other groups that have been displaced or disenfranchised? What does disenfranchised mean? A lesson on Black inventors would easily blend into art (the design of Washington, D.C.), science (the invention of the stoplight), biology (Dr. Charles Richard Drew( blood plasma), and anatomy (blood transfusions). Culturally relevant current events and history were used to stimulate students' minds to learn and challenge. Students learned to be proud of their ancestry while at the same time coming to understand their collective struggle in the United States.

Academic content was organically inspired from current events, ethnically relevant history, as well as student interest. Holy Angels was a student centered environment in that students' cultural-curricular interests were encouraged and incorporated into the broader curriculum. A former student shares an example of such student driven activities: "I remember actually writing, well, I got credit for writing actually my mom wrote it... A...almost a screenplay for a skit for the Rosa Parks bus movement. And I narrated it as classmates acted this scene out in front of the entire school. How many schools do things like that?"

Culture was infused in the pedagogy and in the pedagogy students were inspired to explore. Intrigued by the bus boycotts, this student was allowed to write and direct a play for the school. This single event was educational in multiple regards in that it required research and writing, promoted leadership, teambuilding and social skills, and promoted an educational community both with peers and family. Student inquiry and self-directed learning – a life skill, was fostered at Holy Angels. In addition to student initiated activities, programs were developed that allowed for students to use their unique talents to engage in and celebrate their culture past and present. The result was, as one student put it, "A vibrant Blackness, awareness of ourselves."

*Ethnicity in context.* Although the curriculum, interpersonal interaction, programming and the artifacts that surrounded the school were likely meant to and data suggest did foster a strong positive self-identity, it is important to highlight that lessons were also culturally realistic in that they acknowledged the conflict between Blacks and Whites during that era. Frank topics and conversations were held about the then current civil rights movement and this instilled a sense of obligation, gratitude and respect as depicted in the following student quotations:

It brought a sense of being Black. It was during the civil rights and all that. We had some deep conversations in this school being young. Growing up you don't see us running around here standing on the corner school. We knew what it took, and we knew who sacrificed. It was a lot of sacrifices to go to this school and to make it. We're in the middle of the hood. Who wants to see a little black kid with a tie on walking through the projects. That isn't happening, but we did it.

I think that [Holy Angels] was an important place to go for cultural reasons. In 1968, obviously a very turbulent time in American history, and Holy Angels really focused on who you were in racial terms which is quite radical in my opinion...there was this notion of understanding who you were in the context of American history and the representation of Blacks in American history was very big in second grade all the way through eighth grade.

This student goes on to explain how Holy Angels planted a seed for cultural knowledge and inspired a life-long commitment to self-awareness: "To this day I think I hold true to wanting to understand what the Black experience was and that hunger was started during those times. I think it was very important that [Holy Angels] built their academic program around who we were culturally and racially in society."

This study is bounded by the years 1969-1979. A time marked by turbulent riots in the North, police brutality in the South, and assassinations nation-wide. Holy Angels' students were learning who they were within context rather than a cultural vacuum. Lessons acknowledged the struggle as well as non-Blacks united in the struggle. This honesty, coupled with the fact that the majority of the nuns and lay teachers were in fact White, provided a balanced perspective of

others' perception of Blacks and Black culture. Also balancing the arguably dismaying reality of Blacks' status at the time were inspirational speakers. A teacher remembering one such visit shares,

We also had some very inspirational people come out. How many of you recall when Reverend Jesse Jackson came to Holy Angels? Oh my God, this well-known individual came out and spoke to us as a group and for a time after that, many of you probably remember when I had my own afro and I supported Reverend Jackson and he came out and told us we are somebody. I will never forget that and I tried to instill that in you also. We are somebody. You don't have to look aside at anybody. You can hold your head up high.

The school was often visited by many influential national and international Black leaders of that period that spoke openly at school assemblies about their current value and significance for the future. Students were affirmed that they were Black and that was something to be proud of. Inspirational visitors did not convey the sentiments of hate mongering or demagoguery but love for all, including self.

*Teaching cultural competence.* Holy Angels' incorporation of culture into the curriculum clearly had the effect of instilling cultural understanding, pride and inquisitiveness in its students. Administrators however describe a slightly different goal – preparing students for participation in the broader multi-ethnic community – a challenge they themselves were experiencing as white teachers in a Black community. An administrator shares that,

I think it was more prominent once Father Clements arrived that was a big push on understanding the American life and more broadly, globally – very unique in that regard.

We wanted our young children to walk out, [and] be able to handle what society presented. At Holy Angels they were in a whole entire Black community, but when they went to high school it was definitely different. They were going to meet every cultural group under the sun, so they had to be prepared, and we wanted them to be leaders.

The focus on cultural awareness was not for self-awareness and empowerment for its own sake. The purpose for teaching cultural awareness and ethnic pride was very much forward thinking –

equipping students to function effectively within the broader society – once in which they very well may be confronted with disparaging messages that directly contradict Holy Angels’ theme – You ARE somebody. This process of learning a culture was in fact something that the faculty themselves were experiencing in large part. An administrator recalls an incident of cultural mismatch:

I remember being from the country, I was lining my children up, and one of the youngsters said to me, “Sister, he butt me.” The only thing I could remember in the country, butting was one animal would bite the other one. “Sister Janie Viey what did that child mean, he was butting me?” She said, “Oh, sister, all he did is went in front of him in the line. There were many little incidents like that where I could always go to her, and she was very kind and always gave me insights on what the difference culturally was working with these children.

The faculty and administration at Holy Angels went to great lengths to understand Black culture and how educate Black children in a culturally meaningful way. They were themselves studying to navigate a new social arena and in the very situation that they would be sending students into after graduation and they wanted to prepare them for success in a culturally diverse or majority White setting.

**Discipline.** Discipline emerged as a prominent theme in the data. Students as well as teachers, administrators, and clergy all recalled being the recipients or provider of disciplinary action, respectively. These recollections were vivid, suggesting that discipline was not administered casually and left a lasting impact on all parties involved; for some students memories of discipline were positive and for others discipline left a negative impression. Overall students considered discipline as a tool employed for the students’ benefit and growth.

***Discipline takes on various forms.*** Teachers were expected to be well-prepared with their lesson plans and ready to teach engaging lessons. Students were expected to be on time and ready to learn. Discipline therefore was a rudimentary part of the school’s programming. Playing

in the hallways, being off task or disrupting others was not tolerated and would be met with an escalation of punishment that took on many forms from denial of privileges, being kept after school, public shaming, to corporal punishment (paddling). An administrator describes keeping students after school and denying students privileges for their behavior: “Children were kept after school. Children...were denied their trip. I can remember Father Smith taking away the prom from the eighth graders, their dance because they refused to be quiet when he asked them to be quiet in front of their parents.”

Students describe typical corporal punishment that was practiced.

I certainly experienced it firsthand. Many times I ventured into areas that were obviously outside the scope of what they said was appropriate behavior and you paid a price for that whether it was a physical swat in third grade with a ruler or as you got older little more intense “board of education.” [paddling]

But coming here gave you a stricter educational format. You got paddled, something they’ve taken away from schools now. Because then, if you act up you would get paddled. So a lot of students refrained from excessive bad behavior – because there were thresholds and when you got to that level, it was time for a paddling. The paddling provided two things, an incentive for good behavior, and a deterrent from bad behavior. But it helps you focus because you didn’t want to waste time getting paddled you did your work.

This excerpt suggests a subtle distinction between disruption to avoid schoolwork and disruption due to developmental capabilities for focus. This student wanted to learn and not “waste time” away from studies being disciplined. For this student the threat of discipline did not function as *punishment* to bring him back on task but encouraged focus so as to not be taken *off* task. Rather than a tool to help students to focus on the curriculum, conduct was an element in the curriculum in its own right and discipline was a means to help students achieve acceptable conduct. Recess taken away, writing “I will not talk” lines on sheets of paper, a ruler to the hand or a paddle to the rear were a few of the deterrents to poor conduct. Students received a grade for conduct and



could be retained if it was deemed that they were not prepared to be promoted due to their behavior or inability to focus.

Discipline was not an isolated practice reserved by a few teachers, a few classrooms, or in splintered areas. Discipline ran throughout the entire experience of the student including in the church. This is exemplified in the priest's description of using public shaming in response to student misbehavior.

I would be in the church giving a sermon and some kids would start acting up. I would stop and I would tell them, "Look, we don't do that here and you're going to have to behave because if you don't, there is going to be consequences." They would be quiet, then I would I go on and then all of a sudden I would look back and I would see them doing it again. Then I would I say, "Look, you don't want to keep doing this because if you do you are going to be totally embarrassed." Every now and then I would get someone, unfortunately too often it was a girl, and she would be still giggling, talking, laughing. Then I would just stop and I would go down from the [pulpit] go right up to her and I would say, "Young lady, get out." Then she would start crying, "I'm sorry." I said, "I'm sorry too, get out." Then of course you could hear a pin drop.

As she was going out, I would say to all the kids, "Who's next?" They would really be quiet because no one wanted to be totally embarrassed like that. It was not uncommon to see Reverend Clements stop in the middle of a sermon, walk out of the pulpit and expel a disruptive student out of the church during a church service. This could occur during a weekly service which consisted of a majority of the student body or on a Sunday morning service when parents and the community at large were present.

In addition to the behavioral modification strategies described, students discussed discipline in terms of the presentation and interaction expectations of all students. For example, one student stated that, "We had fun. It was strict here. We had to wear uniforms, ties which set you up for later on in life because you knew how to dress. You knew how to tie a tie... Another comments, "If you saw a visitor you spoke. That's a discipline issue. If you were leaving the playground you left in line orderly. That's a good discipline issue." Self-control and

conduct was expected and was born out in students comporting themselves in a manner that was conducive to order. Conduct was described as walking quietly in line as a class, turning in school work and homework completed and on time, being on time for school, wearing a clean and complete uniform, being obedient to instruction and even introducing oneself to guests.

Discipline was foremost a noun at Holy Angels referring to the expectation for students to practice self-control. It was foundational and that upon which the academic and moral mission of the school could be built. Interventions, the manifestation of discipline in the verb sense, were a means to achieve the model behavior sought.

*Discipline was impactful and effective.* When asked to recall their most memorable teachers at Holy Angels students recalled discipline – that with love or memories for which they still carry with them negative feelings.

Father Smith. Father Smith was strict. Father Smith was loving. Father Smith expected the best from you.

My favorite teacher would probably be Father B. He was tough, stern, and he didn't play. A lot of times I was sent out of another tough teacher's room to his room because she couldn't handle me back then. He did. He had me write a lot of law. I should have been an attorney.

Sister Helen was my buddy. She was really, really strict, man, and most people really thought she was mean, but I had the great fortune to get to know her on a personal level, and everything that I think that she did was from love. Really, I think, wanting everyone to be the best that they could be, and not taking any crap...She would read right through it. She was cool. She was real cool.

For these students their favorite teachers were remembered for being “strict,” “tough,” “stern,” and “not taking any crap” as well as “loving,” “expecting the best from you,” “able to “handle [you],” and “cool.” Discipline was not the antithesis of care but the expression of it.

One study participant indicated that she remembers her class having a privilege denied. Although she went on to say that the discipline prepared her for life her statements indicate that

because of the discipline implemented she did not have fond memories of certain administrators:

“And just Father Smith because he took so much for our class so he wasn’t, you know, my favorite...yeah, our prom. He took our prom we were the only class that lost our prom because [we had a substitute] and our class was unruly.”

A teacher recalls being reminded of a disciplinary error and shares, “...I had to spank occasionally. I need to mention this too, and I hope I’m not embarrassing Helen Coleman, but she reminded me at the reunion that I spanked her unjustly. She said, ‘Mr. Lindsey that was one time you got the wrong victim.’ I got on my knee and I apologized to Helen in front of her classmates 40 years later. Even teachers can admit mistakes.”

Whether they remember disciplinarians fondly or negatively recollections of discipline, looking back, students consider the discipline to have shaped them for the best. This is demonstrated in the following student comments:

I can hear Fathers Smith saying right now, “Self-control! Self-control!” When I think about Father Smith Father Smith was the principal of Holy Angels the entire time that we were there so he taught us discipline – discipline and self-control. Without discipline and without self-control you can’t be successful you don’t become a lawyer without discipline. You don’t become a lawyer without self-control. You don’t finish college without discipline. You don’t go to graduate school or medical school without discipline and self-control and that’s something that we got from father Smith and got from Holy Angels.

You learned to negotiate it in such a way that didn’t compromise your moral integrity. That was a big part of it. Control your anger, manage it, and deal with the community. Not sure what else it meant. It was a great academic background, certainly provided a moral foundation for making decisions later, introduction in a seamless way to understanding the relationship between your faith and living. I think those were the big things.

For this student “Self-control” served as a mantra. Students acknowledged the life pathways that self-control (i.e., discipline) afforded them. At Holy Angels they acquired skills that were necessary for success later in life not only professionally (e.g., to succeed in higher education) but also personally – controlling anger and dealing with others. Even the student that had negative recollections of discipline stated that, “It got me ready for some things.” Yet another

student alluded to the no-nonsense practice of Holy Angels being crucial in lifting students' station in life and making a proverbial way "out" of the 'hood – the economically depressed South Side of Chicago: "They didn't play no games here and we're located dead in the 'hood. People came out here. We got some big time lawyers. I believe a couple of dentists and doctors."

It is important to note that although students remember the environment as strict and no nonsense, they also indicate that they perceived the sense of caring that the sternness emanated from. The overall sentiment was that the structure of discipline within the atmosphere of caring provided them with the ability to self-regulate and prepared them for negotiating though difficult socio-economic circumstances to professional careers a successful in life in general.

*Discipline had many purposes.* Though teachers used disciplinary action to command students' attention towards learning – both academics and self-regulation, teachers also describe other purposes for discipline – that of empowering the child as well as giving them attention that they crave. A teacher describes discipline to promote attention to academic lessons in describing that, "...you [as a student] had to listen, and then if you listen, then it requires you to have a certain amount of discipline, in order to get the application of the lesson."

An administrator describes the role that discipline played in teaching children the life-lesson that each decision has consequences in sharing that,

Discipline made the youngster understand life is full of consequences, when you make a decision. You choose and there's a response to that choice. We try to teach them. We tried very hard as young as possible to get children to understand you don't play at recess time unless you deserve it. You don't get to go on a field trip unless you do your work. You may have to stay and do your work. You don't get to go home at 3:00 unless you follow what the teacher asked you to do.

One teacher described that the purpose of discipline was to get the students' attention so that they would understand that what was being taught was important. The school had a desire to minimize disruption so that learning could take place. An administrator highlighted self-

regulation and self-control as their part of developing the child. In addition, discipline was also used to encourage students and instill a sense of self-efficacy as we see in the following quote: “The discipline was really to draw in the child, to say, “You’re special,” because I know that you can do something, and I’m going to see that you do it, because if I neglect to do it, then I have not done what I said I was going to do in the very beginning. That was to educate and develop a well-developed child.”

Discipline was used to communicate to the child that you believed in them, you knew that they were capable of more and that you expected them to perform to the best of their abilities in all arenas. Teachers wanted the students to pay attention in the classroom so that they could fulfill their own call – to prepare students for life. Discipline was in fact an integral aspect of the teacher’s duty at Holy Angels. At times the nurturing that children needed was adult attention and interaction. Here too discipline was utilized. The same teacher goes on to say that,

Some of the things that might have been leaning towards discipline really wasn’t discipline. We know it to be a way of getting attention, so we as teachers were able to give back to the children, the attention that they needed, in order so that they can grow and that they could learn.

Discipline at Holy Angels revolved around providing the child with what they needed for optimal development be that an atmosphere conducive for instruction, practice in self-regulation, encouragement, or attentiveness the child was seeking.

**Inspiring and providing opportunities and access for fruitful pathways.** As part of preparing students for life after graduation Holy Angels set students on fruitful pathways. This consisted of a comprehensive process beginning with sparking students’ aspirations, outlining a route to achieve their goals, clearing the pathway for success, and following up with students post-graduation.

*Inspiring vision.* Holy Angels' goal was to prepare their student for opportunities that presented themselves in life and their desire was to enhance those opportunities. There were several unhealthy elements within the neighborhood of the school and in which their students lived. These negative mesosystemic elements marginalized students. Coupled with this was the lack of enrichment opportunities within the community and oftentimes the family. Holy Angels strived to expose students to life "beyond the neighborhood" so to speak. To this aim, Holy Angels exposed children to alternative experiences and life options thereby inspiring a vision for what one could aspire towards. In describing the desire to expose children to new ideas an administrator explains that, "It was very enriching. Father [Smith, the principal] had many, many ideas. He wanted many things to be taught and shown to the children, that they would get classical music...with Brahms and Beethoven. We just kind of laughed because we were wondering how this is all going to fit in with all the regular just normal studies that we had for that time."

Being exposed to new ideas and experiences that they can't imagine having were it not for Holy Angels was a concept that the majority of students mentioned in their interviews. A student recalls the life changing impact that a school trip to perform at the Super Bowl had on them in the following excerpt:

Super Bowl XIII. I was in sixth grade. I actually had the fortune of being able to participate in that trip, and I think that's one of the reasons I moved to California...is because I remember California, which was actually like the Westwood area, and I thought all of California was that. I'm like, "Oh, I'm going to where the hills and the money and all of that is." What a great experience. They wined and dined us. They treated us like stars, which for students coming from the South Side of Chicago, to fly us out to California, to put us up, to take us to Disney Land, to have our own chartered busses, and doing photo shoots on the beach in the middle of January. I mean, we're from Chicago, so it was summertime to us. What a great experience. What great exposure to a young mind. It definitely helped me expand my horizons to see what was possible as a human being, what was possible.

Consistent with the vision of Father Clements, the school developed a fine arts program that consisted of what became an internationally known choir and theater group known as the Little Angels. These students shared their singing gifts and theatrical talent around the nation and region. They were often invited to sing the national anthem at professional sporting events, invited to sing on television with celebrities and they hosted an annual Christmas program at the Arie Crown Theatre in Chicago that regularly sold out to 5000 people. These experiences exposed students to a world that they might otherwise not have envisioned. Another student mentions being introduced to the notion of being a Black, male academic – something that was not common in his world growing up:

Father Smith was to me probably one of the first real academics that I interacted with. Definitely a man of letters who really understood the value of an education and was really transparent about why you ought to have one... Father Smith was important for me in terms of seeing it as okay to be a man of letters and an academic and so as it turns out I live a life as an academic.

Most of the students at Holy Angels came from single-parent, low-income households with under-educated/underemployed caregivers. Holy Angels provided professional and academic role models for children who otherwise did not have anyone in their family that had continued their education beyond high school or trade school. In an economically depressed ghetto, Holy Angels inspired a Black male child to aspire to be “a man of letters.”

Other students credit their general desire to achieve to what was instilled in them by Holy Angels.

So one of the greatest mottos...that resonated in my life and one that I've always tried to live by was “Produce and Achieve.” That was imbedded in us as students to be the best that we could be at every moment that we could. I definitely applied that to my life, and because of that, I was able to achieve so many different things and so many things that someone from the projects on the South Side of Chicago would've never even dreamt of had they not had that vision implanted in them at a very young age.

Another shared,

I've had the opportunity to work with some of the best people in the business. Peabo Bryson, Stephanie Mills, Lynette Hawkins... It all started, remember when we did the show with the Staples Singers and Jerry Butler, how they always imparted with us to strive to be the best, to reach for the stars. This is how we should raise our children nowadays, to give them these dreams.

In both cases, what Holy Angels imparted to students was at times intangible and yet invaluable – a picture of what life could be, what *you* could be, permission to dream, and confidence in yourself to strive to achieve your dreams.

*Illuminated and cleared pathways.* Administration at Holy Angels desired that students not only be inspired, socially prepared, and able to compete academically with other students, they wanted Holy Angels graduates to have *access* to opportunities. In addition to exposing and inspiring students, Holy Angels provided concrete pathways for students to achieve their dreams. Holy Angels provided opportunities for advancement that students would not have otherwise known about and facilitated access to these opportunities. This was particularly clear in the transition from Holy Angels to high school.

The students interviewed went on to prestigious high schools and attributed their academic preparation to their education at Holy Angels stating that: “We went on to pretty good schools: Whitney Young, De La Salle. We did pretty good for ourselves;” “Most of us went on to Catholic schools some of us went to public schools but we went to better schools than you would have gone to had you not graduated from Holy Angels because of your scores;” and, “We all graduated. We all went to decent high schools, nice high schools. That was the key. We all graduated.”

Educational pathways were forged by creating avenues after grammar school into high school. Holy Angels' administration was active in seeking and evaluating next steps for students about to graduate. Many of the top academic high schools in Chicago at the time were Catholic



and Holy Angels fostered relationships with them to help advocate for Holy Angels graduates' entrance into these prestigious academies. Many top performing Catholic schools in the Chicago area had Holy Angels graduates (e.g., Quigley South, St. Ignatius, and Mendel Catholic). The last student comment highlights that for Black children in Chicago, graduating alone, much less from a prestigious school, was an accomplishment in and of itself.

Holy Angels School was aware that they were educating in the context of a community that had some obvious weaknesses. The neighborhood was high poverty, high crime, populated with single parent families and students were exposed to dysfunctional circumstances outside of school life. The school provided support for their graduating students above what might be expected. They were committed to placing graduating students in schools and communities that would provide more stability as they matriculated through high school. Although Holy Angels partnered with many Chicago area schools in better neighborhoods to create avenues for graduates to continue their education, one school in particular was a pathway completely away from the dangers that were prevalent on the South side of Chicago, St. Lawrence Seminary in Mt. Calvary, Wisconsin. One student describes the rationale behind the partnership with this high school boarding school:

So you had students that they encouraged to attend high school in Wisconsin...[Holy Angels] realized that if they *stayed* in that zip code positive things wouldn't happen for them so they sent those students to St. Lawrence seminary in Wisconsin. I know they attempted to negotiate all kinds of arrangements with other schools across the archdiocese and across the geographic boundaries of Chicago to make sure placements happened for students that were unique and could give them a sense of community and a sense of safety so they could continue to develop academically. I think that's quite special.

A student that attended St. Lawrence seminary shares some of their experience and how Holy Angels prepared him to go away for school:

I went to St. Lawrence seminary *with SEVERAL*, I mean there were 25 in my class, maybe 30 in the class in front of me, average of 20 to 30 in every class going to St. Lawrence on *scholarship*. The St. Lawrence seminary was in Wisconsin which means you leave home – got you ready for college. Because now you’re away from home, you’re living in a dormitory, you change classes, but you’re on your own within a structure but like college, you’re on your own. So that fostered personal growth – which we were taught here [at Holy Angels].

Holy Angels’ relationship with and investment in their students did not end with the transition to high school. For particular at-risk students continuing their education in the Chicago public schools – beyond the shelter of Holy Angels, would jeopardize their academic and/or positive social development. St. Lawrence Seminary boarding school in Wisconsin was an educational pathway for students that lived in depressed conditions to leave the Chicago area for their high school years. Retreats and visits to the school began in seventh grade for the boys starting with a long weekend retreat. During the summer between seventh and eighth grade a two week trip was organized for students who were interested in attending. In eighth grade several weekend trips were made by students that planned to attend the school. In this way, students were introduced and acclimated to moving away from home for secondary school.

An administrator describes how Holy Angels prepared all of their students for the high school transition and how this related to the long term goals of the school:

We wanted [students] to choose a profession so high school day was very important. Getting them to think of what they wanted to become, asking the different schools if they had a program that would foster their goal, and we would prepare them for high school day. We would set them in their rooms and go through everything, what you have to ask about finances, the curriculum, and activities that you would like to see after school, everything that they needed to be prepared to walk into school.

Holy Angels not only advocated for students but prepared students to be their own advocates in their education. It was assumed that students were going to high school and a private high school (you have to talk about finances). Students were also preparing for a career and going to be

involved in extracurricular activities – this was a given for Holy Angels students instilled in students from early on.

I was able to go to Catholic Grammar School as a result of being in Link Unlimited which again was very fortunate. That enabled my mother to be able to pay for my high school because she was a single mom we were going to be a struggling family without that Link Unlimited but she was determined to keep us in a Catholic school. So I was able to go to Aquinas and like I said with regard to Aquinas my pathway to the college I eventually went to Princeton.

Holy Angels partnered with the LINK Unlimited program to address financial challenges of many students in continuing their academic development. LINK Unlimited is a program that during the period of this study provided scholarships for tuition to students in need that desired to attend Chicago area Catholic high schools. The program is still in operation to date. The program required students to attend Loyola Academy in Wilmette Illinois during their eight-grade through junior year in the summer and received high school credit. Transportation was provided by the program. LINK Unlimited not only provided much needed financial assistance to pay tuition and fees of Holy Angels graduates, it was also an academically enriching program. Because of the Summer school attendance students earned enough credit to graduate after their junior year of high school. This provided students with the opportunity to explore subjects well beyond the core courses needed to graduate from high school.

***Supportive measures after graduation.*** Unbeknownst to most students, Holy Angels' investment in their graduates extended even beyond the high school transition encompassing post-graduation follow-up. A student shares a post-graduation experience meeting seeing Holy Angels' principal at his high school and finding out that he was there to check up on the student.

I left Holy Angels I went to Quigley South and I remember seeing Father Smith come into the building at Quigley South and I wondered what he was doing there. I think I was a junior in high school by then. Later on, many years later, I came back to visit the school and I talked to him about it I asked, "What the heck were you doing at Quigley South? What business do you have there? I know you're a Holy Angels guy." And he indicated

to me, “We follow up on all of our students who leave Holy Angels at the various high schools in the area to make sure they are doing well and I came to see how you were doing.”

And I think I was the only one from Holy Angels at the time my brother was there as well and he was just checking to make sure that the Quigley South experience was going well for us and he indicated they did that for all the other students too in the archdiocese area. I think that’s really unique I mean he really cared about your academic development, your social development and obviously it didn’t end when you got your diploma and graduated from Holy Angels so...I don’t know of other schools that do that kind of thing, that’s very unique to me and quite special.

Holy Angels School set their students on fruitful pathways beginning with planting seeds of aspiration, providing high quality education and opportunities for success, affording access to pathways to reach to reach ones goals, and following up on students’ progress and adjustment. Holy Angel’s administration supported students well after they graduated from the school, their intention, indeed their call, was to develop a child, to touch a soul and they remained true to this charge throughout the child’s academic career and beyond.

### **Theme 3: Iconic Leadership**

The innovations and advancements made at and through Holy Angels School were led by a two-pronged leadership team inspired by Reverend Clements. Reverend Clements was an iconic leader in that he was a visible leader that made dramatic and lasting impacts in his domain – holistic development of children in the South Side of Chicago. Reverend Clements’ leadership was characterized by his being a liberator, responsive to the needs of the organization, a risk-taker, and resolute to the point of being confrontational in his passions. Overall Reverend Clements was a radical leader that broke away from the prototype of priest in pursuit of revolutionary change.

**Liberator.** One of Reverend Clements’ first actions as head of Holy Angels was not a concrete task but a socio-cultural challenge. He recognized that in order to exact the changes he

envisioned in the community, the mindset of the people must transform from one of dependent to controller. Revered Clements describes the reliant mentality of the community when he first came to Holy Angels and his radical tactics to achieve financial (and therefore organizational) liberation:

When I got to Holy Angels in 69, I was really struck by the fact that so many of the parishioners were of a mindset that all they had to do was just come to the church and they didn't have to contribute that much to the church, if anything. That somehow we would manage somehow. I knew that they just had not been taught because to be quite honest, there was a mindset that in the Catholic Church there are some White people who are going to be really paying for this. Of course, at Holy Angels, we were really struggling. But I was determined that we would have a spirit in that church where we would not be going downtown to that chancery office begging.

I've always said that you cannot have pride and dignity and self-respect and have your hand out begging. I told everyone there that we were definitely going to make it on our own. This was shortly after I got there. I said, "We're going to prove that right now because we're taking up our collection." We did, and of course it was virtually nothing. I said, "Here's the difference though. We're going to count this collection right now in front of all of you and nobody is getting out of here because I already told the ushers to lock the doors." We counted it and I said, "Okay we're going to take up another collection. We'll keep on doing this until you give me what I know I got to get. I better get [nine] off the top. Before you get your Johnny Walker and all your other mess that you get into, you're going to contribute to this church."

So we took another one and counted, I said, "I think one more go around will do it." We did, and it was pretty hefty. I said, "Be prepared every Sunday when you come here to have this take place because I would far rather do this than go on my hands and knees to those White folks crying and begging." Sure enough, the next Sunday, they came prepared and we wound up with a budget of over 1-million dollars a year which was really something for a ghetto parish.

I unveiled a big banner that said, "We Got It Together By Ourselves." We were very proud of the fact that we were not subsidized.

Before a transformation of the community could be realized, the church efforts would have to be supported both philosophically and financially by the community members. Individuals in the community were attending church but had not taken ownership and accountability for it. It was not THEIR church, it was a White man's church that did not require their support – they were

just visiting. Reverend Clements employed gangster-like tactics to induce the parishioners to support their church by locking the church doors and holding parishioner's hostage until an acceptable collection had been taken up. He demanded his "off the top" – before money is spent on alcohol, uncontrolled substances, and deviant activity – contribute to the church. This stimulated an increase in giving that released the community from the antiquated and suppressing rule of the Archdiocese. This first financial, then mental and emotional liberation was captured by one of Holy Angels' mottos, "We Got It Together By Ourselves."

"To avoid interference by the conservative officials of the archdiocese, Clements has made the once subsidized school completely self-supporting. Its meager \$375,000 annual budget comes entirely from tuition, supplemented by public drives such as the one now raising funds for additional air conditioners. The 34 teachers (17 of them nuns) must clean their own classroom" ("We Put," 1972).

This theme resonated through the church, to the Holy Angels School, and into the hearts of the community members and students who adopted a new mentality of *self*-reliance. An administrator shares the motivation behind the motto: "Father Clemens is famous for coining the phrase "We Got It Together By Ourselves," because he did not get help from the Archdiocese. He did not get help from the government because of his strong opposition to the current political landscape – the current system going along with the flow. He did not want to do that, he wanted us to break that cycle." This simple motto encapsulates a powerful message of self-efficacy which a former student has passed down to their own children: "We got it together by ourselves." That's a theme I talk to my own kids about to this day.

Reverend Clements undertook the molding of a self-help mindset within the community with passion. He brought to the school the notion of self-help and relying upon your own resolve

for self-enhancement and “getting it together” as a church, school, and community. Reverend Clements recognized the importance of Black people having that kind of resolve in the American context – it was important to not allow others to control your destiny. Weekly sermons were often on topics that were related to development of the organization, the institution, the neighborhood, your community, and your family. The philosophy was that you make whatever sacrifice necessary to become independent of bureaucrats that threatened advancement.

**Organizational consciousness.** The motto – We Got It Together By Ourselves – might at first blush suggest independence however, to the contrary, Reverend Clements acknowledged and lived by the philosophy that no one can/should be alone. He encouraged community building in the neighborhood at large, required that parents identify supportive others within their extended family, and likewise established a system of support for himself.

One of Clements’ first actions at Holy Angels was to recruit a black staff, including the Rev Paul Smith as principal of the parish school. Clements also install a new altar inscribed with what has become the parish slogan: WE PUT IT ALL TOGETHER – BY OURSELVES. (“We Put,” 1972)

Reverend Clements describes the vital contributions made by Father Paul Smith whom he appointed as principal of Holy Angels School and the nuns and other priests that labored at Holy Angels:

When I was at Holy Angels there were so many things going on in that church and I could not begin to do the activities I did in the church and also try to get things underway in the school. I was so blessed by God to have this man there who took total control of the school. That was not a problem for me at all. He handled all that. Our working relationship was, I would take care of the church matters, he would take care of the school matters and that worked out beautifully.

... There was no way I could have survived at Holy Angels if I had not had so many wonderful people surrounding me who had dedicated their lives to that institution. I think of course, first and foremost, about the nuns. ...it was not George Clements, it was first of all those nuns and also it was all those other priests who were there. We had some magnificent priests, particularly Father Paul Smith who worked so very hard in that school as the principal.

Both the school and the parish changed when Reverend George Clements took control in 1969. Under his and Father Smith's leadership the school began its meteoric rise academically. Reverend Clements describes some of the innovations and initiatives of Father Paul Smith in the following dialogue:

...[Father Paul Smith] was just absolutely top notch...He was so dynamic and he had instituted all kinds of innovations that really put Holy Angels school on the map. For example, it was he who promoted a movement to that if you wanted to put your kid in our school you had to have a voter registration card. That really motivated a lot of other schools to start doing the same thing. He also had a regulation about report cards – that both parents have to come and sign the report card.

Those kinds of things he was putting into play and they all really struck a responsive chord throughout the city.

Those kinds of things could not have happened without me not having to worry about the school. We had a great working relationship, and he did also with the nuns. He worked very well with them. For example, he knew that our nuns were dwindling, that we were losing nuns. What he did is, he went over to Africa and he got some African nuns to come in and work in our school. He also got some teachers from Ireland to come there and work in our school. There were just ways that he had of bringing the whole phenomenon of Holy Angels around so that it would be something we could be proud of.

Reverend Clements appointed talented others that shared his vision to leadership roles and gave them the autonomy to determine how to contribute to the mission of Holy Angels as well as allowed them to build and maintain their own systems of support. Father Paul Smith had a pioneering spirit in his own right and put together a coalition of talent that met the challenges that were present in different areas of the Holy Angels infrastructure head on and at a high level.

Reverend Clements supported others in seeking support for the church, finding talent in unlikely places. One instructor, Mr. Lindsay, describes his surprising appointment to Holy Angels:

Perhaps many of you aren't even aware that my degree is in philosophy. Stop laughing. Me, a philosopher? I'd just gotten out of the service in the US Navy and my mom had died. Father Clements has known me; I grew up with Father Clements out at Saint Dorothy's Parish, 77th and Eberhardt. I had asked him to officiate at the service and then after the service, I asked him, Father, I just got out of the Navy, need help finding a job.



Two weeks later, Father Clemmons says, come on down to my school – you’re going to be a teacher.

I had to laugh. I was probably the worse kid in class and he wants me to be a teacher? You got to be kidding. I’ll never forget, some of you in that first fourth grade class that I taught might even remember this, I was as nervous that first day of class as many of you were. I was petrified, but as it turns out, it was the greatest decision of my life. I will forever be grateful to Father Clements. What a magnificent man...

Reverend Clements recognized talent in a person that did not yet see it in themself.

Reverend Clements appointed Mr. Lindsay to be a teacher and Mr. Lindsay rose to the occasion.

This parallels students’ experiences at Holy Angels in that we too were often given tasks that we believed to be beyond our capabilities only to discover that we can meet the expectation.

Other efforts at building a support network included reaching out to the community at large including leaders and stakeholders from all walks of life. Holy Angels not only served the community, it *belonged to* the community and the community was invited into the life of Holy Angels.

It was known throughout the city that you could always come to Holy Angels and there would be a great lunch, great conversation and all. We had people from city council, people, some of the doctors from the local hospital, people from all walks of life who would come and they would be our guests at lunch and we would be able to get a lot of information and they would get information and it really put the school on the map.

The leadership at Holy Angels was a group of individuals who worked together in a collective effort to not only change the lives of students at the school, but to also transform the community. They all shared an organizational consciousness in that there was a collective purposefulness to interact in the best interests of the school, church, and community. The clergy, administrators, and teachers at Holy Angels were all given leadership roles and aimed to inspired leadership qualities in the students. Their joint actions to create change, enact innovation, and spur development were aligned in a single, multifaceted purpose. The Holy Angels leadership had a vision that they were passionate about. Not only did they live the vision day in and day out

for years, they lived IN the vision, in the neighborhood, in the community with the people that they had a heart to serve.

**Visionary/risk taker.** Everyone was invited to support Holy Angels as they could – for some that meant the investment of some combination of time, money, energy, or talent. For others, it meant to get out of the way of progress or to cease being a *negative* influence. Reverend Clements led the charge against the Catholic strongholds that in his opinion impeded participation and progress for Blacks and confronted the gang element in the neighborhood. A former student/teacher describes controversial changes that Reverend Clements instituted in the practice and symbolism of Catholicism in his parish in the following excerpts: “He changed the dialect of the Catholic Church, so we can get into it for the Blacks. He even changed the uniforms for the priests to wear on Sunday school. He even changed the picture of Jesus Christ. He changed it to a Black man.” And,

...I remember, they had a big picture of Martin Luther King. It was almost like a shrine for him in the church, and I heard ... I don't know about this, but I heard that they were ordered to take it down. “He's not a saint,” you know. Father Clements was like, “If you want it down ...” this is fighting the Catholic Church or the hierarchy. “If you want this picture taken down, you come into this black community and take it down yourself.”

Another student recalls the same event and shares the lasting impact that it had on his life:

Father Clements brought in a picture of Martin Luther King after his death and put it on the altar in the Catholic Church, unheard of at the time. Cardinal Cody told him to take it down and Father Clements told him you take down. So it was this revolutionary spirit, this consciousness spirit coming out of this priest that changed my life and one of the reasons I do the things that I do today. I had a great example. Father Clemens is a hero of mine man – he's a superhero!

Vision for development of the community sometimes meant going against the grain of traditions of Catholicism in order to make the religion more relevant to the community. Quite often this meant coming into direct challenge with the cardinal of the Chicago Archdiocese. Leadership at Holy Angels did not buckle under the pressure of the hierarchy or authorities in order to enact

change necessary and germane to the development of the community. They saw what people needed in order to develop and they were resolved to see it done. Some of these confrontations involved issues with the Catholic Archdiocese that they felt were not addressing the needs of the Black community as it related to artifacts and traditions of the church. Holy Angels' leadership created conflict by pushing the envelope in making change.

Progress at times required risking harm or failure. Reverend Clements at times pushed the community out of their comfort zone – taking risks that would reap great reward and growth. One example of such a risk was the introduction of a Father's Day celebration knowing that many children came from fatherless homes. Reverend Clements describes the circumstances surrounding this decision and his own angst at the potential negative impact it might have:

One of my memories I have is the memory of what we would do for Mother's Day. We would have all of the mothers come with all of the school children, the teenagers and everything, and they would all come to the front and they would put a flower on their mother and give her a big hug. They would be singing and so forth. It was just a marvelous time, got huge crowds and everything.

One year, Father Smith and I were talking about it and we said, "This is all well and good, but what about daddies? What about Father's Day?" We said it really would be very dangerous because so many of our children, two-thirds of them did not have fathers in the home and they would be embarrassed. We didn't know whether we could do it or not. We went back and forth and we decided to bite the bullet and try it.

We announced that on Father's Day, everyone was to come because we had medals and they would pin a medal on their dad and give them a big hug – and we didn't know what would really transpire. That Father's Day, I'll never forget. We came into the church and it was jammed. All of these men, the first and second balcony even, they were all standing in the aisles. We realized what was going on. Those mothers went back there and said to the daddy, or the significant other or the whoever, whoever was involved with their children and said, "You're going to get in here because you're not going to embarrass me or my child." They came. That was really one of the most wonderful things that happened while I was at Holy Angels.

Father Clements had a vision to address the issue at the school that many students came from single family households parented by the mother. On Mother's Day the church honored the

mothers of the students by having their children pin a flower on them in front of the entire assembly. When the leadership began to discuss honoring the fathers on Father's Day, it was a visionary, but risky. The risk that fathers might not show up could have devastating effects on children who may have an absentee father. The risk paid off as mothers were a large catalyst in getting the fathers to attend. For those fathers who could not be contacted, a male relative or friend of the family stood in that father's place.

**Resolute/confrontational.** Reverend Clements boldly implemented positive change making critical decisions for the sake of progress even when it risked the possibility of negative ramifications. In the same vein, he actively worked to stamp out negative influences. He confronted the leaders of the gang and drug element in the neighborhood surrounding Holy Angels – refusing to buckle under the pressures of sociopathic behavior in their community. Father Clements describes one manner in which he contended with neighborhood conditions that threatened the security of the children:

The biggest challenge that I had was the whole question of safety because we were in an area that was rife with gangs. The Black Stone Rangers, the Conservative Vice Lords, we had all of these different groups that were battling each other, and our children, many of them had to come from distances to get off the bus at Cottage and Oakwood Blvd. and come to our church. People were frightened and so was I.

What I did is, I went to the gang leaders, Jeff Fort, I remember from the Black Stone Rangers was one. I said, "Look, we have to coexist over here. Our children cannot be subjected to bullets whizzing around their heads. I promise you that if you see to it that our children are safe, then I will make sure that I don't publicly come out and give you what I should give you in the press and have the police swarming all over here. Let's just respect each other." They agreed. I look upon that as one of the real victories that I had.

As discussed in the literature, for a productive school environment to subsist students must feel safe. Holy Angels went beyond securing the facilities. They negotiated a safe environment from dangerous known threats of the surrounding neighborhood streets during the hours that students

navigated to and from home and school. This meant confronting the issue and those that posed the threat head on.

These well organized, criminally funded, and well-armed gangs were all-Black (in contrast with the Catholic Archdiocese which was all-White). To Reverend Clements color was no factor when it came to taking a stand against perceived wrong leadership and threats to the progress of Blacks in the community in general and development of the students in particular. Two students recall illustrations of Reverend Clements' confrontational nature including defying the Chicago police in an instance when he believed them to be acting unjustly:

Father George Clemens is my father. That's the one of the things we forget about Father Clements is that in the 70s and late 60s when we were at Holy Angels Father Clements was a revolutionary. Father Clements was an activist. Father Clements was in the streets. Father Clements was the first priest to walk into the El Rukn fort (street gang headquarters) and basically told Jeff Fort (gang leader) to leave our kids alone. Father Clements opened the church when the Chicago Police Department was looking for Fred Hampton and Mark Clark and Bobby Rush. He had Bobby Rush who is now a congressman, in the church and would not let the police in. He saved congressman Rush's life. Father Clements is the one who walked into stores that were selling drug paraphernalia in our community. Remember he hurt his hand breaking some of those bottles that were used to smoke crack and so on and so forth.

Okay. I can remember times that Father Clements besides the issue with the crack pipe, he also had meetings with gang leaders, and they came. We would get out of school early, but that man stood there and he talked to Jeff Fort. I believe he had Hoover. He talked to all those guys. They didn't too much mess with Father Clements. He was a tough, stern guy. He had confrontations with the archdiocese, certain teachers left here because they couldn't work with him, and certain students were expelled from this school because he didn't play no games. He was tough.

Despite what student interviews might suggest, Reverend Clements was not a "fearless leader" akin to how a child might view a "superhero." Reverend Clements admitted being "frightened" – frightened perhaps for the safety of the children or of the gang members themselves that terrorized the community. This did not stop him however, from confronting the problem head on. He was not afraid of conflict or to take risks in the process of going after the vision. He didn't

shy away from conflict necessary for making change. In fact, in some circumstances conflict was precisely what was needed to affect change. Reverend Clements challenged any person or system that stood in the way of achieving Holy Angels' goals. Students were taught that as Black Americans attempting to achieve a high level of cognitive and socio-cultural development would require some conflict with systems and individuals that were resistant to it, blocked it, or deemed it impossible.

**Radical.** Taken together, the qualities of leadership that Reverend Clements possessed might be best encapsulated in the term *radical*. One student summarizes his impression of Reverend Clements in the following manner:

He did not buckle under the pressure of the hierarchy or the authorities or whatever. He saw what was necessary in the community. He saw what was necessary in people, and he went after it courageously. Courageously, and I...I don't know if I would've had that much courage, you know? I probably would've looked for a little softer tone, but he was right there in the face, and why is that? He was able to bring to so much attention to the plights of the things that were going on and the things that were necessary. In that sense...he was kind of radical.

Reverend Clements' goal – to support the community was likely quite common for a community advocate – which he undoubtedly was. His unconventional strategies however were jaw-dropping – expected more from a community activist, a rebel, a radical. What follows are two narratives that encapsulate the nature of Reverend Clements and vividly depict his character. In the first narrative Reverend Clements describes the issue of a drug paraphernalia store in the community, his motivation to confront the issue, and the escalation from closing this one drug store to prompting congressional legislation.

When I got there I realized that every problem that we had in the city of Chicago was really concentrated in Holy Angels, particularly that with narcotics and with liquor and so forth and housing and unemployment, just a of social issues. The one that really did bother me in a certain sense more than anything else was the large presence of alcohol, these liquor stores, these places where they were selling drug paraphernalia. One evening one of our kids came by to see me, valedictorian of his class at Holy Angels. He was in

his second year at High School, he was just a real star. He came by to ask me if I could give him some advice about becoming an obstetrician. I said, oh sure, I think that's a great idea.

When he left that evening, I was very happy about the interview that we had had and I went to bed. Then around 3 in the morning I get this call from Michael Reese Hospital saying that I should come quickly that this young man was dying of an overdose. I couldn't believe it. He jumped in the car and got there and was too late. When I got there he was a corpse. It really shook me up so badly until- I went through the motions of a funeral and got back and I was sitting up there in my crying at my desk. Then all of a sudden, something, I hope it was the Holy Spirit, something jerked me by the back of my neck and said, "Why don't you get up off your dead and do something about it?" It was at that point I started thinking about how on 39th and King, just 2 blocks from our school, there was a store there that was selling crack pipes, coke pipes, the stuff you dilute it with, free based kits, needles, syringes, all of that drug paraphernalia.

Our kids would leave Holy Angels school and would be going home and stopping there to get bubble gum and cracker jack and all that. I was just furious when I thought about that. I got in my car and drove over to that store. Got out and went in and there this guy was behind bullet proof glass, could hardly speak English, but he sure knew how to count money. I said, "I want this stuff out of here, our kids have to see this when they're buying their goodies and I want it out." He looked at me and he said, "get the hell out of my store."

I said, "Why are you doing this? Would you give this to your son or your daughter?" He said, "Of course not." I said, "Why are you doing it here?" He said, "because you niggers don't care." When he said that I just completely lost it. I said, "Okay, all right." I went and I stood in the doorway. Everybody wanted to come in. I said, "You don't want to come in here, they're selling drug paraphernalia in here." "Yeah you're right father."

After about a half hour he didn't have any customers. He comes out there to me and he says, "I'm taking the stuff off the shelf." I said, "Where is it?" "Back in the back room?" I said, "No, bring it out here on the sidewalk, I've got two baseball bats. You and I are going to smash this stuff up in front of all these people." By that time a big crowd had gathered and the news media was there and all that. After we did it, I was very pleased but I had no idea it was going to be that easy. So I said I'm going to go around to all the stores on 39th, 43rd, all over and we're going to get rid of drug paraphernalia. Finally after about 3 days I was told about the largest purveyor of drug paraphernalia in the entire Midwest. A place called Good Deal, over on 79th and I said, okay I'm going to go over there, strike at the source. But before I went, I went and got a priest who was called The Baddest White Boy on the South Side, Father Michael Flayger.

I went over to Mike and told him, he said, "Let's go." We went over there and by this time this wholesale place had gotten word we were coming. They had the doors locked and all that. We were banging on the door and they wouldn't answer so we said we'll just call a revival in the parking lot of Good Deal tomorrow. That's what we did. We went on

the Black Radio and all that and that's what we were doing. The next day there was a huge crowd out there and Flayger really knows how to get down. He was up there preaching and calling scripture and all that. Got me all worked up. I went over to the door and I started banging on it, and let's just say the door fell on me. In any event, we got in there and when we got in the police came, they arrested us, and the very next day, the state of Illinois passed a law outlawing drug paraphernalia throughout the state.

Right after that, we heard about the largest in the world place, in Tucson Arizona, called Republic Plastics. We went with 60 minutes and went down there. I got them closed up for interstate shipment of drug paraphernalia and we got a law passed in Congress outlawing drug paraphernalia throughout the country.

In this second narrative Reverend Clements describes his encounter with a representative from an adoption agency and the series of events that led to him decide to adopt a child making him the first Catholic priest ever to do so.

While I was at Holy Angels, one hot July afternoon, I got a message, I was upstairs, saying there was a gentleman down there that was the newly appointed director of the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services. His name was Greg Cohler, and that he wanted to see me. Quite frankly, I said "Damn." Because I did not want to go down there and talk to some man who just gotten some new job. But I went down anyway and sure enough there was this huge Irishman and he was a big smile and he was telling me that he had just gotten this position that the top item on his agenda was going to be finding homes for homeless black children. That was something that was neglected, it was the biggest problem they had. He went on and on. After about 9 minutes, I figured I had given him enough of my time and I said, "Okay Mr. Cohler, thank you very much for coming by and I certainly will keep you in my prayers." I got him to the door, and I said, "I'll certainly be remembering you at mass." He said, "Hold it father, hold it." He pointed his finger in my face. He said, "You don't have to do this, I'm leaving. But I want you to know that if you people are not interested in your own children, don't expect us to be." I said, "No you hold it brother, come here, sit down." The man was absolutely right. After he laid it out the way he did I said, "Look, what I'll do is we'll have a meeting at Holy Angels and we will have a meeting on black adoptions. I guarantee you that we will make a significant impact on this problem.

"The meeting was going to take place within a month. The Sunday before the meeting I went into the church to get the names of all the people that had been signing up and the only thing I saw was a list with 15 names. I knew there would be at least 4 or 500 people. I went to the chief usher and I said "Where are all the names?" He said, "That's it father." I said, "That's it? Are you serious?" Then I just lost it.

I went in that church and I started screaming and yelling and I said, "If you people won't adopt, I will." I said it out of pure anger or frustration. Right after that, that evening one of my friends called, George O'Hare, and he said, "I heard some crazy thing about you adopting?" I said, "Yeah I am, what's the big deal?" He said, "Priests don't adopt." I



said, "Who cares. Nobody care about some ghetto priest going to adopt a kid." He said, "No this is big stuff, I'm going to call Cup." You know Cup is the chief Sun Times. I said "Cup don't won't care about that." That evening, later, Cup calls me, he wanted to check out the story. I said, "Yeah it's true." He said, "Who knows this?" I said, "No one." He said, "Oh I got a scoop." I said, "Come on Cup who cares?" The next day, sure enough it was in the Sun Times and someone certainly did care because that evening I got a call from the Cardinal and the Cardinal was furious, he was screaming and yelling over the phone.

He said, "Priests do not adopt, never have adopt, never will adopt, it's against law, it's against everything we stand for and you aren't going to do it." I said, "Okay, I won't do it." The next day I started getting calls from all over the nation. People calling in from different cities, from Miami, and Los Angeles and all that. News got out that this priest was going to adopt. Maybe it was something like around 11 that night. I started getting calls from foreign countries, , Spain, Berlin, and all that. Then finally, they call and adopt, I will. I just said it out of pure anger or frustration.

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He said, "His holiness, Pope John Paul the second had heard the news, the Pope was very pleased, he wanted to get more reaction from me." Right after that I got a call from Cardinal Cody and he said, "We're issuing the statement praising your efforts to sensitize the community for this problem. That's really how it got underway.

We were determined we would rebuild- as a matter of fact, the first person to show up that morning was Mayor Harold Washington. He came running over to me. I'll never forget, he said, "It is going to be rebuilt." And it was. It took us 5 years but we did rebuild it. On the Sunday that we dedicated the new church. That was when I got up on the pulpit and I said, "I have been telling you for years that we need to make room for young

people, for new ideas and it's time now for me to put my money where my mouth is. I want you to know that I'm very proud of our new church but I feel it's necessary for you to get someone else now and so I am leaving Holy Angels." And I did. I left and they did bring in a younger pastor.

I really feel that one of the biggest problems we have in this nation are old folks who do not want to step aside for the youth. The only way you're going to be able to grow is when you know when to say when.

Overall, the experience at Holy Angels is characterized by strong mesosystemic interactions that exist in spite of and that undergird against negative/debilitating/challenging exo-, macro-, and chrono-systemic influences. The mesosystem encapsulated qualities of the school including its philosophy and programming, and interactions with individuals within the institution as well as those drawn into institutional activities (i.e., parents and community).

The broader systems that influenced the mesosystem included the neighborhood at the exosystem, the Chicago Catholic Archdiocese at the exosystem, societal perspectives at the macrosystem, and the timing of the civil rights movement in the choronosystem.

The outcome of this confluence of forces or systems was an individual that excelled not only academically but embraced self-confidence as a lifelong learner with a strong moral compass. This study asserts that to have successfully educated African American children that there was a set of complex interactions that came together synergistically. The best practices that contributed to high achievement of African American inner city children worked together to interact in an ecological way as opposed to a prescriptive set of do's and don'ts around three themes and their respective subthemes.

## Chapter Five: Summary

There is a crisis in American education – minority youths in urban schools fare poorly in comparison with their non-ethnic-minority counterparts. This disparity known as the achievement gap has persisted for well over half a century with African American males consistently lagging behind their peers academically to a staggering degree. Evidence of the problem is well-documented in the literature (Jencks & Phillips, 1998; Magnuson & Waldfogel, 2008) and defined and substantiated by national test score data (e.g., NCES, 2013; Vanneman et al., 2009), disproportionately high dropout rates (Ebner, 2013), and low college enrollment and completion (Journal of Blacks in Higher Education, 2006) that exceeds what can be accounted for by socioeconomic status alone (Viadero & Johnson, 2000).

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, at fourth and eighth grade, African American students trail their non-ethnic minority peers by an average of two grade levels – a pattern that has persisted for decades (NCES, 2011, 2013). Although substantial effort and resources have been devoted to reducing this educational disparity (see Prager, 2011) the challenge of developing sustainable and replicable urban school reform that reduces the achievement gap continues to be elusive. We do however have a model of a high achieving, African American, urban, elementary school that can be studied: Holy Angels School in Chicago, Illinois (see Shields, 1989). Founded at the turn of the century by Irish immigrants, in less than half a decade, due to changing demographics, Holy Angels School came to exist in the midst of an impoverished, African American, inner-city. During the period bounded by this study, 1969-1979, Holy Angels was the largest Black catholic school in North America. Despite coming from predominantly welfare supported, single-mother homes, located in crime ridden inner-city Chicago, Holy Angels' students boasted some of the highest academic test scores in

the nation. What makes Holy Angels School particularly interesting and critically beneficial during the time captured by this study is the fact that:

- 1) 1969 marked the beginning of a period that Holy Angels experienced an ascension from sub-par national test score performance to competitiveness on a national level, outperforming local and neighboring school districts (“We Put,” 1972) whereby 80% of their graduates completed college (Norment, 1986; Shields, 1989). And,
- 2) 1969 marked the beginning of a period of new leadership at both the Church (i.e., pastor) and school (i.e., principal and assistant principal; Norment, 1986).

Given the enduring and pervasive nature of ethnicity-based disparities in achievement, a focused, case study examination of this distinctive institution was warranted. The current study was designed to illuminate two broad focal points: (a) the salient features of Holy Angels School during the period of 1969-1979 (including actions, events, beliefs, attitudes, social structure, and processes), and (b) how these various features interacted to result in high achievement at Holy Angels School during the period of 1969-1979.

The general approach to this research was a single case study of Holy Angels School during the bounded period for the purposes of developing a greater understanding of how to promote academic achievement among African American youth. The researcher has unique insight into the dynamics of both Holy Angels School as well as its surrounding community. As a former student of Holy Angels during the period of the study’s focus, and an African American male raised in the selfsame neighborhood in which it operated, the researcher is an indigenous insider to this research. Although other researchers have recognized Holy Angels as a distinguished institution, this foundational literature is largely descriptive in nature and is focused on a broader perspective of the school (see Shields, 1989). The current study lends a

unique perspective in that that it (a) adopts an analytically empirical approach in understanding the key characteristics, relationships, and contexts as well as the intersections of these factors that contributed to the success of Holy Angels; (b) draws on the multiple voices and stakeholders of the institution, including students, faculty, administrators and clergy; and (c) capitalizes on the insight and expertise of a researcher-participant that attended the case school: Holy Angels, during the period under focus.

**Purpose of research.** The purpose of this case study was to explore factors that may have contributed to the development of high academic achievement at Holy Angels, an African American inner city school, from 1969-1979. The focus was on understanding and interpreting teachers', clergy members', and administrators' intentions and decisions in the design and management of Holy Angels as well as students' experiences at Holy Angels and their perceptions of the impact these experiences have had on their lives.

**Research questions.** My research goal was to identify, describe, and document the features, characteristics, and qualities that made Holy Angels a high achieving school as well as explore the plausible relationships among and between these elements that shaped Holy Angels. The overarching research question guiding this study was:

- What was the experience of students that attended Holy Angels School between the years of 1969-1979?
- What was the mindset and objectives of the school leadership, administration and teachers at Holy Angels School between the years of 1969-1979?

**Significance.** A case study of Holy Angels is important for several reasons. First, understanding the characteristics, processes, and elements of a high achieving, primarily African American urban elementary school can help school administrators, teachers, and program

developers to be more effective in employing and evaluating strategies designed to promote learning and achievement particularly for urban African Americans students – a population that remains glaringly underserved by our educational institutions. Second, a qualitative study of this nature is highly relevant to policy makers and legislators in need of information regarding the building of sustainable conditions and mechanisms for change, previous initiatives and their impacts, and cost-benefit analyses of what tools/interventions work best for what populations under various conditions (see Rist, 1994). Third, taken together, this study adds to our body of knowledge in that it bridges the collective research from various disciplines (e.g., educational psychology, cultural anthropology, education, sociology) towards a comprehensive analysis of the factors and intersection of factors that coalesce into an effective model for education of African American youth. It can be argued that any successful system is more than the sum of its parts and Holy Angels is no different in that it is more than a collection of best practices for African American education and must therefore be considered holistically with an appreciation for the interactions and possible tensions between elements of best practice as they manifest themselves in the living entity of a complex educational institution.

### **Theoretical Framework: Ecological Systems Theory**

The ecological systems theory (EST) framework was used to ground the research question and inform the research design for this study. Since EST is born out of ecology which examines the multipart arrangement of interconnected and interrelated relationships amongst biological entities and the physical and communal location in which they exist, this approach assisted in identifying distinctive characteristics and contexts that played a role in individuals' experiences, outcomes and development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1986).

This framework allowed for focus on the activity and dynamics between individuals and their physical world in the same manner that took into account time period and social relationships within a broader environmental structure. Every specific social interaction establishes a series of interactive relationships that are not merely reciprocal. EST supports the notion that “development never takes place in a vacuum; it is always embedded and expressed through behavior in a particular environment” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 27).

Crucial to this study, the ecological perspective takes into consideration the wide range of dynamics that a child encounters while navigating their social environment. Individuals are purported to develop within the context of an intricate system of relationships. Specifically, EST describes an individual’s development as being affected directly and indirectly by five systems: the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem (see Figure 1). The closest proximal environment that an individual is effected by is called the microsystem. The microsystem is comprised of the closest physical relationships to an individual, indicative of but not limited to those found in school, the classroom, home, neighborhood and church. These microsystem influences themselves interact with one another. The interaction of these influences comprises the mesosystem. The broader public or societal influences that effect the mesosystem directly and, by structure, the microsystem and individual indirectly, is referred to as the exosystem. The exosystem is largely comprised of the bureaucratic, managing or controlling entities directly related to the microsystem. As such, economic, educational, and religious governing bodies are found here. Values, traditions, and laws shared in a country or community as a whole make up the macrosystem. The chronosystem is the system that takes into account the context of when in the course of history these aforementioned systems exist for any particular

individual of focus. Hence the ecological viewpoint allows for a broad depiction of the multi-contextual elements that influence students' academic experiences and achievement.

## **Methods**

**Research design.** The research approach for this study was qualitative. The specific design was a single case study which was appropriate because the research represented an extremely unique case with respect to a unique setting (Yin, 2013, pp. 40-41).

**Sources of data and sampling method.** The target population for the interview portion of this study was individuals who served in the role(s) of administrator, leader, and/or former student at Holy Angels School during the bounded period of the study.

The primary sampling method was a snowball sample which began with approaching several Holy Angels alumni on a popular social media website. A total of 14 interviews were conducted. The researcher was able to conduct interviews with 14 participants as sampling continued until it reached data saturation – the point at which no new information emerged (see Saumure & Given, 2008).

**Data collection strategies and procedures.** One-on-one, semi-structured interviews were conducted using a general interview guide approach. A unique interview protocol was designed for each group of participants (i.e., students compared to teachers, administrators, and clergy). During the interview, detail-oriented, elaboration, and clarification probes were used as necessary to increase the richness and depth of responses (see Patton, 2002). The procedure for collecting interview data was audio recording.

## **Findings**

The research goal for this study was to identify, describe, and document the features, characteristics, and qualities that made Holy Angels a high achieving school as well as to explore



the plausible relationships among and between these elements that shaped Holy Angels. The overarching research question guiding this study was: What was the experience of students that attended Holy Angels School between 1969-1979?

Three major themes emerged from the data: High Expectation-High Help Environment, Life Preparation, and Iconic Leadership.

**Theme 1: High expectation-high help environment.** Between 1969-1979 the data reveal that the environment at Holy Angels School exemplified a strong focus on academics and student performance. The high expectations placed on students were coupled with high expectations of faculty to help students meet the challenges that were placed upon them. Analogously, parents were expected to be active participants in supporting their children and the institution's goals. The high expectation environment at the school went beyond academics by addressing moral and community building values and actions as well.

*High expectation of students.* The pattern of high expectations of students emerged as a pattern within the theme of high expectation environment. At Holy Angels School the emphasis was placed on preventing students from falling behind grade-level, grouping students with their academic counterparts, year-round schooling, and explicit expectations,.

Holy Angels placed value on catching student weakness and promoting strengths early within a context in which students were positioned for challenge and success academically and morally. This process from kindergarten through eighth grade was not only consistent throughout the tenure of the student but was saturated by a twelve month school year. One faculty member and administrator described the preventive nature of the Holy Angels program: "Our academic program was one of excellence, reason being as we tried to find the need of the youngster and in finding the need of the youngster you can teach the instructional piece that will answer and

respond to what the child actually is having difficulty with. We had small groups as I mentioned before throughout the school in reading and math.” This administrator describes a philosophy of prevention before intervention. In identifying a student’s weaknesses early and focusing on strengthening that weakness, you halt the failure experience, develop a strong foundation on which the child can build, and in doing so instill in the child a strong sense of self-efficacy and belief that they CAN excel academically.

This early approach at assessing students was coupled with programming that placed students at developmentally appropriate levels and challenged them to excel at their own pace. An administrator describes the pedagogical strategy of grouping and the philosophy behind it as follows:

Grouping was a very important part of our instructional piece in the school. It always existed at Holy Angels. The children were always grouped. It brought children to accepting who they were, and they were happy because they could feel like they could answer questions. They were in a group where the questions asked them could be answered. It served a real need and answered an academic need of a student.

What is being described is the strategy of academic pacing and pushing through grouping. Because students were placed in areas that they could be successful, it was reasonable to have an expectation on them to perform. This strategy served to positively reinforce the students’ desire to learn because it affirmed their ability to achieve academically. This administrator also alludes to the broader goal of the institution to build each student’s academic self-esteem and sense of “I can” and this is recognized as a fundamental need that students have. Once weaknesses were identified strengthening the weakness was a primary goal and free/recreation periods were used to supplement instructional time until academic goals were met. It is worth noting that the academic expectation at Holy Angels was not to keep students at grade level but to push them beyond.

Besides grouping another consideration in explaining why students at Holy Angels excelled past grade-level was that they maintained academic momentum. This was in part due to the fact the students went to school all year round as an administrator describes:

The 12-month program began because children were becoming more and more involved in street activity. Around Holy Angels, we had so many public housing units, and everybody knows what's occurring in the housing units. Parents working, children home, so a wise decision would be to keep the children off the streets and out of those extra activities that were not good for children. What would be a better activity than education?

The twelve-month school year at Holy Angels initially began to combat negative influences on students from within the neighborhood surrounding the school. This adverse environment consisted of various potential mesosystem factors: liquor stores with undesirable people, paraphernalia shops that doubled as candy stores, and gangs that looked to recruit new members. This, coupled with being raised in a single parent household that did not have the infrastructure or resources to provide monitoring (which was common for many Holy Angels students), meant that during summers students were potentially inundated with negative influences in the absence of any academic stimulation and very little supervision. Although these negative influences were stable aspects of the community and students' experiences, Holy Angels offered a protective diversion from these injurious elements during the school year. It was towards this protective aim that Holy Angels extended the academic session into the summer.

There was nothing implicit about the expectation of success at Holy Angels. The programming, infrastructure, and operation were an explicit communication of expectation to give your best. These expectations were not only conveyed by the academic programming and year-round school year, but were directly communicated to students one-on-one. The high expectations in essence were a communication of confidence in the students' abilities and care for their outcomes. This notion is supported by the following student comment:

Holy Angels was very serious about your academic performance on testing. I recall not doing well on a test and probably it should have put me in another level in terms of reading. And what she said to me was that you have the ability to do it so she had very high expectations and a lot of help and I learned from her that when you have high expectations and high help there's nothing you can't achieve.

This atmosphere of high expectation of students created an expectation within the student themselves. That is to say, the students began to expect to be expected to give their all and when they did not they were made aware of this fact. An important aspect of this high expectation environment was the students' perspective that, (a) effort would lead to achievement, and (b) there was help available.

***High expectations of teachers.*** A close analysis of the data reveals a pattern relating to high expectations for teachers. The administration systemically demanded teacher preparation from a pedagogical perspective. These extrinsic expectations however paled in comparison to the intrinsic expectations that teachers imposed on themselves to support the students holistically. Teachers and administrators at Holy Angels were not only passionate about their work, they viewed it as a gift and a calling to which they would dedicate their lives.

From an extrinsic perspective expectations were placed on the teachers by school administration. Teachers were expected to be collaborative in their efforts to provide a high quality curriculum that quickly identified student weaknesses and capitalized on their strengths.

A school administrator shares that,

Teachers sit together and write their curriculum. Teachers work together by telling them what strengths they found in the students that came to them. What weaknesses do we have to work on as classes, as a school? Teachers look at the assessment piece which is given once a year and see if they're on target with the strength and the weakness in the curriculum. Teachers sit together and if they find the weakness, they choose another textbook or media that they use for curriculum.

This structure for curriculum development that the faculty operated under mirrors the grouping structure practiced by the teachers within the classroom. Just as students were expected to help

and respect each other in the classroom, the faculty were expected to support each other in academic planning.

The most influential aspects of teacher motivation were however intrinsic in nature. The data show that the teachers believed that educating and developing Holy Angels students was their gift and calling from God. This is evident in the following quotations from a teacher and administrator respectively: “I believe I was gifted by God in my early years as a young lady,...I recall [saying], ‘I want to go where I can service a great number of people in this world, especially Black people.’” An administrator shares similar sentiments in stating that, “I love teaching, sharing the gifts that God has given me, and I seem to have a fairly receptive audience – but we loved the work, and we loved the children, and that was what was most important...My job was to spark a child’s soul to learn.” These responses reveal that working at Holy Angels was more than a job – it was a personal charge for which one was uniquely chosen.

Emphasis was placed on meeting the needs of each child recognizing and addressing the factors that placed them at-risk for academic as well as social and emotional struggle. This often required that the teachers at Holy Angels not only deliver academic content but also be available to support the children in their socio-emotional development and varied needs. An administrator shares that,

Children come out of homes carrying emotional situations, one parent, [my] mother like[s] my older brother better than me, I’m not appreciated, everything I do there’s something wrong with it, all of this has an impact on the child’s focusing, learning ability, and so the instructional piece must be adapted to the needs of your child. Your teacher must be prepared...Teachers had to love children. Teachers had to accept children for who they were coming with whatever baggage it was and when there was difficulty if they could not find a way to work through that, to send them to someone who could and to trust us that we supported them, that we were there to help the youngster understand.

The administration at Holy Angels recognized that the children that attended the school came from homes that were not necessarily conducive for producing and achieving in school. This required special attention far and above simply exposing them to a high quality curriculum. Teachers had to take into account emotional scarring, psychological needs, physical neglect or abuse, and even social/self-esteem deficiencies students were bringing into the academic context. Addressing the special needs of their at-risk students was seen as fundamental to achieving their goal of developing the child and something that administration wanted teachers to be prepared for.

The commission at Holy Angels was incredibly demanding and the staff worked hard and long hours and dedicated their lives to the cause. A former student that returned to Holy Angels to teach expresses the mindset of the Holy Angels educator in saying that,

During that time, again, this was radical for Black children, we were not expected to get the best education, and so Holy Angels was radical in the sense that, “No, these kids are going to get the best education, and not only that, they’re going to score well on every test, and we’re going to work our butts off to make sure that that happens.”

Weekends were equally demanding as the former student-teacher recalls: “That was dedication, day in and day out, and then weekends they would be there cleaning the school. I mean, these people dedicated their lives to that. We’re fortunate to have that kind of example...I remember a lot of work.” Even more remarkable was that the nuns and clergy sustained this schedule for several years, even decades. Not only was it a day-to-day dedication but one marked with longevity. One student notes, “It was as though it was an urban mission field. They were like, ‘We’re going to dedicate our lives.’”

Teachers at Holy Angels lived up to both extrinsic and intrinsic expectation. Holy Angels had high expectations of their teachers’ academic performance and there was a structure in place that supported teachers being able to meet these expectations. There were demands placed on

teachers from a nurturing perspective as well: teachers were expected to love the children. In addition to these extrinsic forces students perceived that the work of the teachers at Holy Angels was intrinsically motivated and went beyond rudimentary instruction, beyond even dedication and commitment, and represented sacrifice toward a greater calling and vision in support of education and child empowerment to which the Holy Angels staff devoted their lives.

*High expectations of parents.* In addition to having high expectations of students and teachers, parents at Holy Angels were also held accountable and expected to be involved in the life of the school as it related not only to their child's development but also their own moral and social development. To be specific, parents there had three areas of expectations: directly promoting the academic and moral mission of Holy Angels School, participating in educational activities to be *able* to promote the mission of Holy Angels School within their children, and participating in educational activities towards social and civic *self*-improvement.

Parents were expected to be actively involved in their child's academic and moral development. At the beginning of the school year all parents were required to attend a school orientation where they learned about the philosophy of Holy Angels, school operations, day-to-day programming, and experiences their children would be having as well as receive information regarding what parents (and their children) could expect of Holy Angels teachers and staff. A school administrator describes the orientation and expectations of parents in the following excerpt:

Parents were expected to support their teachers...The parents were expected to come to orientation right at the beginning of school. Usually while we orientated parents, children were tested so that we would know what their academic needs were, and we could put the children in their right placement. Parents had to find out what their expectations were financially, what the school program was, what would we demand of the children, what were our expectations, and we told them everything that possibly they needed to know to be at ease while their children were in school, what time school was open, what time they ate, what time they had after-school, what kind of programs we ran and so on and so

forth...Parents also knew that they had to support the teacher. They had to come up every month, pick up the children's work, look at it, [and] redo what they weren't satisfied with.

The Holy Angels concept of collaboration, exemplified in student grouping and instructor teamwork, was extended to parents. Holy Angels fostered parents' regular participation and involvement with both the school and their child's progress by implementing mandatory monthly parent-teacher conferences in which they would collect and discuss their child's classwork with the teacher as well as the child – reworking problems that the child struggled with. This engagement was present from the very beginning of the child's tenure and remained consistent throughout their years at the school. If parents did not attend mandatory monthly parent-teacher conferences their children could not remain enrolled in the school. In short, Holy Angels developed mechanisms through which parents were necessarily aware of and involved in their child's academic and spiritual development. A former student recalls:

Certain things were established early on at the school under the leadership of Father Smith and Father Clements in terms of mandatory school attendance AS WELL AS church attendance for both you and your family members. So to me they again, in retrospect, it seemed that they were attempting to build a sense of community around the church. There were many activities that were going on where they wanted your family involved. I think that was important in light of where it was in Chicago on the South Side...where family and community had really not been a strength if you will of that area but they realized that they had to build that kind of strength in order to have a firm academic and moral development for students.

Parents were expected to promote their own development in order to support their child. Holy Angels valued parental participation and reinforcement of values. Parents were not only expected to be aware of what children were learning, but to also engage their children in the learning process. This type of parental involvement however is only possible to the degree that parents themselves are competent in the academic and moral lessons being imparted to the children. Building the competence level of students' parents was therefore also incorporated in



the Holy Angels programming. An administrator describes these efforts in sharing that, “I would have parents there sometimes 6:00, 6:30 helping them understand what to do to improve in whatever it is the child was having trouble.”

In addition to being involved in their child’s development, parents were expected to personally develop as well. Counseling sessions were provided to empower parents with children with behavioral challenges. As a part of the monthly meetings, parents were provided with parenting skills classes. An administrator describes these efforts as follows:

Parents were expected to support the teacher in regards to the child’s behavior. If there was a problem, if it became serious, come to the office and counseling sessions were set up with the parent with the child at times, and they were given certain skills: how they could change the behavior between the child and the parent...Parents learned through the monthly meetings, and they got their little packets where there was always a certain counseling skill developed. Believe it or not, parents would come in there ahead of time, read that paperwork so they could understand what the 5, 10, 15 minute presentation on parenting skills was about.

A second administrator goes on to describe a unique requirement for child enrollment was that the parent be registered to vote and identify another adult to be involved in the child’s development. He adds,

...if you wanted to put your kid in our school you had to have a voter registration card...both parents have to come and sign the report card. When the lady would say “I don’t know where his daddy is. He ain’t got no daddy, he’s in jail.” [the pastor] said, “Just get a reasonable [person]. You’ve got to have somebody else come in here with you because you’re not going to do this by yourself, you’ve got to have some help.

In this way, the school further promoted self-improvement in terms of civic and community and engagement and awareness. Parents were not forced to vote but they were required to be in a position to participate in their right to vote. Parents were required to expand their community. No parent was allowed to operate in isolation – single parents were expected to find a reasonable other adult to be involved in the child’s development. In this way Holy Angels was further expanding the *community* and in essence helping parents to help themselves.

**Theme 2: Life preparation.** Holy Angels School sought to prepare students for futures that were rich academically as well as inter- and intra-personally. This entailed developing students' strong sense of ethnic identity and cultural competence, instilling a sense of discipline and self-regulation, and identifying fruitful pathways for their graduates.

*Ethnic identity and cultural competence.* Consistent with the vein of holistic child development, Holy Angels incorporated culture, specifically Black culture, and ethnic history as a distinct aspect of the curriculum. In addition to typical academic subjects: reading, math, science, students were taught and tested on their heritage. A student describes the prominent integration of culture into the curriculum in stating that,

I characterize my learning from Holy Angels with the letter “C” the first thing I learned from Holy Angels was the importance of understanding your culture or the centrality of your background — who you are that makes you who you are. I think Holy Angels was big at having us focus in on our cultural contributions and applying that to the second “C” which was your cognitive development.

Holy Angels seamlessly integrated ethnic history and culture with core academic content thereby making lessons rigorous while at the same time personally relevant, ethnically enlightening and culturally rich.

Holy Angels' incorporation of culture into the curriculum had the effect of instilling cultural understanding, pride and inquisitiveness in its students. Administrators however describe a slightly different goal – preparing students for participation in the broader multi-ethnic community. An administrator shares that,

I think it was more prominent once Father Clements arrived that was a big push on understanding the American life and more broadly, globally – very unique in that regard. We wanted our young children to walk out, [and] be able to handle what society presented. At Holy Angels they were in a whole entire Black community, but when they went to high school it was definitely different. They were going to meet every cultural group under the sun, so they had to be prepared, and we wanted them to be leaders.

The focus on cultural awareness was not for self-awareness and empowerment for its own sake. The purpose for teaching cultural awareness and ethnic pride was very much forward thinking – equipping students to function effectively within the broader society – once in which they very well may be confronted with disparaging messages that directly contradict Holy Angels’ theme – *You are somebody*.

***Discipline.*** Students as well as teachers, administrators, and clergy all recalled being the recipients or provider of disciplinary action, respectively. These recollections were vivid, suggesting that discipline was not administered casually and left a lasting impact on all parties involved; for some students memories of discipline were positive and for others discipline left a negative impression. Overall students considered discipline as a tool employed for the students’ benefit and growth. Students describe typical corporal punishment that was practiced. For example, one student shares: I certainly experienced it firsthand. Many times I ventured into areas that were obviously outside the scope of what they said was appropriate behavior and you paid a price for that whether it was a physical swat in third grade with a ruler or as you got older little more intense “board of education” [paddling].

Discipline was not an isolated practice reserved by a few teachers, a few classrooms, or in splintered areas. Discipline ran throughout the entire experience of the student including in the church. This is exemplified in the priest’s description of using public shaming in response to student misbehavior.

I would be in the church giving a sermon and some kids would start acting up. I would stop and I would tell them, “Look, we don’t do that here and you’re going to have to behave because if you don’t, there is going to be consequences.” They would be quiet, then I would I go on and then all of a sudden I would look back and I would see them doing it again. Then I would I say, “Look, you don’t want to keep doing this because if you do you are going to be totally embarrassed.” Every now and then I would get someone, unfortunately too often it was a girl, and she would be still giggling, talking,

laughing. Then I would just stop and I would go down from the [pulpit] go right up to her and I would say, “Young lady, get out.”

Then she would start crying, “I’m sorry.” I said, “I’m sorry too, get out.” Then of course you could hear a pin drop.

As she was going out, I would say to all the kids, “Who’s next?” They would really be quiet because no one wanted to be totally embarrassed like that.

It was not uncommon to see Reverend Clements stop in the middle of a sermon, walk out of the pulpit and expel a disruptive student out of the church during a church service. This could occur during a weekly service that consisted of a majority of the student body or on a Sunday morning service when parents and the community at large were present.

Discipline was foremost a noun at Holy Angels referring to the expectation for students to practice self-control. It was foundational and that upon which the academic and moral mission of the school could be built. Interventions, the manifestation of discipline in the verb sense, were a means to achieve the model behavior sought. Looking back, students consider the discipline to have shaped them for the best. This is demonstrated in the following student comments:

I can hear Father Smith saying right now, “Self-control! Self-control!” When I think about Father Smith Father Smith was the principal of Holy Angels the entire time that we were there so he taught us discipline – discipline and self-control. Without discipline and without self-control you can’t be successful you don’t become a lawyer without discipline. You don’t become a lawyer without self-control. You don’t finish college without discipline. You don’t go to graduate school or medical school without discipline and self-control and that’s something that we got from father Smith and got from Holy Angels.

For this student “Self-control” served as a mantra. Students acknowledged the life pathways that self-control (i.e., discipline) afforded them. At Holy Angels they acquired skills that were necessary for success later in life not only professionally (e.g., to succeed in higher education) but also personally – controlling anger and dealing with others.

Though teachers used disciplinary action to command students' attention towards learning – both academics and self-regulation, teachers also describe other purposes for discipline – that of empowering the child as well as giving them attention that they crave. Discipline was also used to encourage students and instill a sense of self-efficacy as we see in the following quote: “The discipline was really to draw in the child, to say, “You’re special,” because I know that you can do something, and I’m going to see that you do it, because if I neglect to do it, then I have not done what I said I was going to do in the very beginning. That was to educate and develop a well-developed child.” Here discipline was used to communicate to the child that you believed in them, you knew that they were capable of more and that you expected them to perform to the best of their abilities in all arenas. Discipline at Holy Angels revolved around providing the child with what they needed for optimal development be that an atmosphere conducive for instruction, practice in self-regulation, encouragement, or attentiveness the child was seeking.

***Inspiring and providing opportunities and access for fruitful pathways.*** As part of preparing students for life after graduation Holy Angels set students on fruitful pathways. This consisted of a comprehensive process beginning with sparking students' aspirations, outlining a route to achieve their goals, clearing the pathway for success, and following up with students post-graduation.

Holy Angels' goal was to prepare their student for opportunities that presented themselves in life and their desire was to enhance those opportunities. To this aim, Holy Angels exposed children to alternative experiences and life options thereby inspiring a vision for what one could aspire towards. In describing the desire to expose children to new ideas an administrator explains that, “It was very enriching. Father [Smith, the principal] had many,

many ideas. He wanted many things to be taught and shown to the children, that they would get classical music...with Brahms and Beethoven. We just kind of laughed because we were wondering how this is all going to fit in with all the regular just normal studies that we had for that time.”

Being exposed to new ideas and experiences that they can't imagine having were it not for Holy Angels was a concept that the majority of students mentioned in their interviews. One student in particular mentions being introduced to the notion of being a Black, male academic – something that was not common in his world growing up: “Father Smith was to me probably one of the first real academics that I interacted with. Definitely a man of letters who really understood the value of an education and was really transparent about why you ought to have one... Father Smith was important for me in terms of seeing it as okay to be a man of letters and an academic and so as it turns out I live a life as an academic.”

Most of the students at Holy Angels came from single-parent, low-income, households with under-educated/underemployed caregivers. Holy Angels provided professional and academic role models for children who otherwise did not have anyone in their family that had continued their education beyond high school or trade school. In an economically depressed ghetto, Holy Angels inspired a Black male child to aspire to be “a man of letters.” Other students credit their general desire to achieve to what was instilled in them by Holy Angels.

So one of the greatest mottos...that resonated in my life and one that I've always tried to live by was “Produce and Achieve.” That was imbedded in us as students to be the best that we could be at every moment that we could. I definitely applied that to my life, and because of that, I was able to achieve so many different things and so many things that someone from the projects on the South Side of Chicago would've never even dreamt of had they not had that vision implanted in them at a very young age.

Administration at Holy Angels desired that students not only be inspired, socially prepared, and able to compete academically with other students, they wanted Holy Angels

graduates to have *access* to opportunities. In addition to exposing and inspiring students, Holy Angels provided concrete pathways for students to achieve their dreams. Educational pathways were forged in part by creating avenues after grammar school into high school. One school in particular was a pathway completely away from the dangers that were prevalent on the South side of Chicago, St. Lawrence Seminary in Mt. Calvary, Wisconsin. One student describes the rationale behind the partnership with this high school boarding school:

So you had students that they encouraged to attend high school in Wisconsin...[Holy Angels] realized that if they STAYED in that zip code positive things wouldn't happen for them so they sent those students to St. Lawrence seminary in Wisconsin. I know they attempted to negotiate all kinds of arrangements with other schools across the archdiocese and across the geographic boundaries of Chicago to make sure placements happened for students that were unique and could give them a sense of community and a sense of safety so they could continue to develop academically. I think that's quite special.

Holy Angels' relationship with and investment in their students did not end with the transition to high school. For particular at-risk students continuing their education in the Chicago public schools – beyond the shelter of Holy Angels, would jeopardize their academic and/or positive social development. St. Lawrence Seminary boarding school in Wisconsin was an educational pathway for students that lived in depressed conditions to leave the Chicago area for their high school years. Retreats and visits to the school began in seventh grade for the boys starting with a long weekend retreat. During the summer between seventh and eighth grade a two week trip was organized for students who were interested in attending. In eighth grade several weekend trips were made by students that planned to attend the school. In this way, students were introduced and acclimated to moving away from home for secondary school.

An administrator describes how Holy Angels prepared all of their students for the high school transition and how this related to the long term goals of the school:

We wanted [students] to choose a profession so high school day was very important. Getting them to think of what they wanted to become, asking the different schools if they had a program that would foster their goal, and we would prepare them for high school day. We would set them in their rooms and go through everything, what you have to ask about finances, the curriculum, activities that you would like to see after school, everything that they needed to be prepared to walk into school.

Holy Angels not only advocated for students but prepared students to be their own advocates in their education. It was assumed that students were going to high school and a private high school (you have to talk about finances). Students were also preparing for a career and going to be involved in extracurricular activities – this was a given for Holy Angels students instilled in students from early on. Holy Angels partnered with the LINK Unlimited program to address financial challenges of many students in continuing their academic development. LINK Unlimited is a program that during the period of this study provided scholarships for tuition to students in need that desired to attend Chicago area Catholic high schools. The program is still in operation to date. The program required students to attend Loyola Academy in Wilmette Illinois during their eight-grade through junior year in the summer and received high school credit. Transportation was provided by the program. LINK Unlimited not only provided much needed financial assistance to pay tuition and fees of Holy Angels graduates, it was also an academically enriching program. Because of the Summer school attendance students earned enough credit to graduate after their junior year of high school. This provided students with the opportunity to explore subjects well beyond the core courses needed to graduate from high school. One student comments:

I was able to go to Catholic High School as a result of being in Link Unlimited which again was very fortunate. That enabled my mother to be able to pay for my high school because she was a single mom we were going to be a struggling family without that Link Unlimited but she was determined to keep us in a Catholic school. So I was able to go to Aquinas and like I said with regard to Aquinas my pathway to the college I eventually went to Princeton.



Unbeknownst to most students, Holy Angels' investment in their graduates extended even beyond the high school transition encompassing post-graduation follow-up. A student shares a post-graduation experience meeting seeing Holy Angels' principal at his high school and finding out that he was there to check up on the student.

I left Holy Angels. I went to Quigley South and I remember seeing Father Smith come into the building at Quigley South and I wondered what he was doing there. I think I was a junior in high school by then. Later on, many years later, I came back to visit the school and I talked to him about it I asked, "What the heck were you doing at Quigley South? What business do you have there? I know you're a Holy Angels guy." And he indicated to me, "We follow up on all of our students who leave Holy Angels at the various high schools in the area to make sure they are doing well and I came to see how you were doing."

Holy Angels School set their students on fruitful pathways beginning with planting seeds of aspiration, providing high quality education and opportunities for success, affording access to pathways to reach to reach ones goals, and following up on students' progress and adjustment. Holy Angel's administration supported students well after they graduated from the school, their intention, indeed their call, was to develop a child, to touch a soul and they remained true to this charge throughout the child's academic career and beyond.

**Theme 3: Iconic leadership.** The innovations and advancements made at and through Holy Angels School were led by a two-pronged leadership team inspired by Reverend Clements. Reverend Clements was an iconic leader in that he was a visible leader that made dramatic and lasting impacts in his domain – holistic development of children in the South Side of Chicago. Reverend Clements' leadership was characterized by his being a liberator, responsive to the needs of the organization, a risk-taker, and resolute to the point of being confrontational in his passions. One of Reverend Clements' first actions as head of Holy Angels was not a concrete task but a socio-cultural challenge. He recognized that in order to exact the changes he envisioned in the community, the mindset of the people must transform from one of dependent to

controller. Reverend Clements describes the reliant mentality of the community when he first came to Holy Angels and his radical tactics to achieve financial (and therefore organizational) liberation:

When I got to Holy Angels in 69, I was really struck by the fact that so many of the parishioners were of a mindset that all they had to do was just come to the church and they didn't have to contribute that much to the church, if anything. ...there was a mindset that in the Catholic Church there are some White people who are going to be really paying for this. Of course, at Holy Angels, we were really struggling. But I was determined that we would have a spirit in that church where we would not be going downtown to that chancery office begging..

I told everyone there that we were definitely going to make it on our own. ...I said, "We're going to prove that right now because we're taking up our collection." We did, and of course it was virtually nothing. I said, "Here's the difference though. We're going to count this collection right now in front of all of you and nobody is getting out of here because I already told the ushers to lock the doors." ...We'll keep on doing this until you give me what I know I got to get. I better get [nine] off the top. Before you get your Johnny Walker and all your other mess that you get into, you're going to contribute to this church."

...Sure enough, the next Sunday, they came prepared and we wound up with a budget of over 1 million dollars a year, which was really something for a ghetto parish.

I unveiled a big banner that said, "We Got It Together by Ourselves." We were very proud of the fact that we were not subsidized.

Before a transformation of the community could be realized, the church efforts would have to be supported both philosophically and financially by the community members. Reverend Clements employed gangster-like tactics to induce the parishioners to support their church which stimulated an increase in giving that released the community from the antiquated and suppressing rule of the Archdiocese. This first financial, then mental and emotional liberation was captured by one of Holy Angels' mottos, "We Got It Together by Ourselves."

The motto – We Got It Together by Ourselves – might at first blush suggest complete independence however, to the contrary, Reverend Clements acknowledged and lived by the philosophy that no one can/should be alone. He encouraged community building in the

neighborhood at large, required that parents identify supportive others within their extended family, and likewise established a system of support for himself. “One of Clements’ first actions at Holy Angels was to recruit a Black staff, including the Rev. Paul Smith as principal of the parish school. Clements also install a new altar inscribed with what has become the parish slogan: WE PUT IT ALL TOGETHER – BY OURSELVES” (“We Put,” 1972).

Reverend Clements describes the vital contributions made by Father Paul Smith whom he appointed as principal of Holy Angels School and the nuns and other priests that labored at Holy Angels:

When I was at Holy Angels there were so many things going on in that church and I could not begin to do the activities ... there was no way I could have survived at Holy Angels if I had not had so many wonderful people surrounding me who had dedicated their lives to that institution. I think of course, first and foremost, about the nuns. ... it was not George Clements, it was first of all those nuns and also it was all those other priests who were there. We had some magnificent priests, particularly Father Paul Smith who worked so very hard in that school as the principal.

The leadership at Holy Angels was a group of individuals who worked together in a collective effort to not only change the lives of students at the school, but to also transform the community. They all shared an organizational consciousness in that there was a collective purposefulness to interact in the best interests of the school, church, and community. Everyone was invited to support Holy Angels as they could – for some that meant the investment of some combination of time, money, energy, or talent. For others, it meant to get out of the way of progress or to cease being a negative influence. Revered Clements led the charge against the Catholic strongholds that in his opinion impeded participation and progress for Blacks and confronted the gang element in the neighborhood. A former student/teacher describes controversial changes that Reverend Clements instituted in the practice and symbolism of Catholicism in his parish in the following excerpts:

He changed the dialect of the Catholic Church, so we can get into it for the Blacks. He even changed the uniforms for the priests to wear on Sunday school. He even changed the picture of Jesus Christ. He changed it to a Black man.

And,

I remember, they had a big picture of Martin Luther King. It was almost like a shrine for him in the church, and I heard ... I don't know about this, but I heard that they were ordered to take it down. "He's not a saint," you know. Father Clements was like, "If you want it down ..." this is fighting the Catholic Church or the hierarchy. "If you want this picture taken down, you come into this Black community and take it down yourself."

Vision for development of the community sometimes meant going against the grain of traditions of Catholicism in order to make the religion more relevant to the community. Quite often this meant coming into direct challenge with the cardinal of the Chicago Archdiocese. Reverend Clements boldly implemented positive change making critical decisions for the sake of progress even when it risked the possibility of negative ramifications. In the same vein, he actively worked to stamp out negative influences. He confronted the leaders of the gang and drug element in the neighborhood surrounding Holy Angels – refusing to buckle under the pressures of sociopathic behavior in their community. Father Clements describes one manner in which he contended with neighborhood conditions that threatened the security of the children:

The biggest challenge that I had was the whole question of safety because we were in an area that was rife with gangs. The Black Stone Rangers, the Conservative Vice Lords, we had all of these different groups that were battling each other, and our children, many of them had to come from distances to get off the bus at Cottage and Oakwood Blvd. and come to our church. People were frightened and so was I.

What I did is, I went to the gang leaders, Jeff Fort, I remember from the Black Stone Rangers was one. I said, "Look, we have to coexist over here. Our children cannot be subjected to bullets whizzing around their heads. I promise you that if you see to it that our children our safe, then I will make sure that I don't publicly come out and give you what I should give you in the press and have the police swarming all over here. Let's just respect each other." They agreed. I look upon that as one of the real victories that I had.

Reverend Clements admitted being "frightened" – frightened perhaps for the safety of the children or of the gang members themselves that terrorized the community. This did not stop him

however, from confronting the problem head on. He was not afraid of conflict or to take risks in the process of going after the vision. He didn't shy away from conflict necessary for making change. In fact, in some circumstances conflict was precisely what was needed to affect change. Reverend Clements challenged any person or system that stood in the way of achieving Holy Angels' goals. Students were taught that as Black Americans attempting to achieve a high level of cognitive and socio-cultural development would require some conflict with systems and individuals that were resistant to it, blocked it, or deemed it impossible.

Taken together, the qualities of leadership that Reverend Clements possessed might be best encapsulated in the term *radical*. One student summarizes his impression of Reverend Clements in the following manner:

He did not buckle under the pressure of the hierarchy or the authorities or whatever. He saw what was necessary in the community. He saw what was necessary in people, and he went after it courageously. Courageously, and I...I don't know if I would've had that much courage, you know? I probably would've looked for a little softer tone, but he was right there in the face, and why is that? He was able to bring to so much attention to the plights of the things that were going on and the things that were necessary. In that sense...he was kind of radical.

Reverend Clements' goal – to support the community was likely quite common for a community advocate – which he undoubtedly was. His unconventional strategies however were jaw-dropping – expected more from a community activist, a rebel, a radical.

## **Discussion**

This case study yielded findings that were both confirming and enlightening in terms of identifiable features, characteristics, and qualities that made Holy Angels a high achieving school for African American youth and ecological systems theory as a framework for case study research in general. First, the experience of the student at Holy Angels School during the period of 1969-1979 was that of life preparation programming through a high expectation-high help

environment where cultural competence, discipline and educational pathways were systemically established by iconic leadership. Second, the mindset of the school leadership, administration and teachers, was to use the school/church (microsystem) influences and infrastructure to counteract negative (microsystem) elements (dysfunctional family unit, gang ridden, drug infested neighborhood and depressed economic conditions) that were also present within the system. And third, ecological systems theory is a useful and powerful framework with which to examine complex social phenomena and should be considered for similar case study research.

### **Students' experience at Holy Angels.**

*High expectation-high help environment.* The findings revealed that a key element of Holy Angels' education was high expectations for students. This is consistent with the wealth of literature that suggests that teachers' expectations impact their behaviors towards students and ultimately play a role in shaping student behavior and outcomes (Good, 1981; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968; Smith, 1980) perhaps though inducing students to perform at standards that coincide with their teacher's beliefs (Good & Nichols, 2001). This suggests that implicit bias training may be a beneficial component of teacher training programs and in-service training not only to combat racial bias but also gender-based stereotypes (Chemaly, 2015). In support of this notion, a randomized control trial found that having teachers participate in a high expectation teaching intervention resulted in increases in student math scores over one year equivalent to an additional 3-months of instruction (Rubie-Davies, Peterson, Sibley, & Rosenthal, 2015).

In addition to having high expectations of students teachers had high expectations of themselves and this foremost in "soft-skills" including "sparking a child's soul to learn" and giving all "the instruction, the concern, the love, the attention that you can." This perception of what it means to be a teacher is consistent with research demonstrating that first and fourth-year

pre-service teachers rate being patient and tolerant as the most important qualities of a good teacher – over general and expert knowledge of subject matter. In fact, seven of the top ten qualities identified as being essential for a good teacher were personal vs. professional (Hosgorur, 2012). Interestingly research has found that when asked, students focus more so on classroom-based behaviors in describing good teachers including, keeping students on task, controlling the class, helping, explaining content clearly, varying class routine, and getting to know the student (Corbett & Wilson, 2002). Though it differs from teachers’ perspectives of good teaching, it is consistent with students’ appreciation of discipline reported in this case study. Future research is needed to clarify, of the multitude of teacher qualities, which are empirically and differentially related to student social, academic, and emotional success (Cruickshank, 2001).

Although it was not an anticipated characteristic of Holy Angels in terms of promoting student success, given the great extent to which parents were incorporated into the fabric of the school and church, expectations of parental participation emerged from the data. The positive impacts of parents’ involvement in their child’s educational success is well-documented in the literature (see Jeynes, 2007). Researchers have conceptualized parental involvement as a multifaceted construct encompassing involvement at school: parent-teacher communication, attending school events, volunteering at school; involvement at home: providing structure for homework, monitoring homework and progress; and academic socialization: communicating the importance of schoolwork/education, encouraging/supporting future/career goals (Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014). In examining parental involvement among African American families in particular, Hayes (2012) found home-based involvement to be the only involvement behavior that predicted adolescents’ grades and the number of days missed from school. According to this

study, one might conclude that of the multiple mechanisms that Holy Angels employed to involve parents, the monthly meetings in which parents were required to review classwork with their child and discuss their child's progress may have been the most impactful in terms of student academic success.

***Culturally responsive life preparation.*** Students describe a curricular and extracurricular experience at Holy Angels that was culturally rich – that which took into consideration the important function of the socio-cultural and political context, the role that race and ethnicity has played in shaping communities, the benefit of understanding the norms and patterns of the community students are living in, and the value of utilizing culture as a vehicle for learning. These functions are characteristic of both culturally relevant pedagogy (Aceves & Orosco, 2014) and the more recent culturally *sustaining* pedagogy. Culturally sustaining pedagogy can be distinguished from culturally relevant pedagogy in that rather than focusing on practices of instruction, it describes practices that encourage students to critique dominant power structures, and resist static, unidirectional notions of culture and race that reinforce traditional versions of difference and inequality (Paris & Alim, 2014; Ladson-Billings, 2014). From their motto, “We got it together by ourselves!” to their Black empowerment-self-empowerment curriculum, to their self-appointed saint Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Holy Angels School vigorously resisted the constrained status quo of the African American experience of the time thus embracing a culturally sustaining pedagogy.

Although this study focused on educational factors that contribute to high academic achievement social factors also played a strong role in children's experience and success at Holy Angels not the least of which was classroom management/discipline. Classroom management is a prominent theme in educational literature with multiple strategies for achieving attentiveness in



students, and pre-service teachers reporting that they have not received adequate training in this area (see Emmer, Sabornie, Evertson, & Weinstein, 2011). Like instruction above, classroom management too has been discussed in the literature from a culturally responsive lens. According to this literature culturally responsive classroom management focuses not on establishing order but rather understanding and respect. It involves a common foundation of behavioral expectations, and communicating value for student contributions to their own learning and that of their peers. The responsibility for culturally responsive classroom management lies not with the teacher (as does the traditional view of behavior management) but rather includes all school personnel, parents, and members of the related community (Cartledge, Lo, & Vincent, 2015). Such is the nature of the disciplinary practices and goals described by the students, faculty, and administrators in this study.

Within the vein of social facets of the Holy Angels experience is the promotion of social- and in turn cultural-capital (Al-Fadhli & Kersen, 2010) for its students. The term social capital speaks to the value of networks, relationships, and working in community (see Coleman, 1987). More can be accomplished and efficiency is enhanced through working collectively rather than individually – this philosophy in action is evident in Reverend Clements’ charge that a single mother, find some help – “because [you can’t] do this [i.e., best support your child] by yourself.” as well as in their motto – We got it together by ourselves! “By ourselves” acknowledges the use of social capital, the collective community working together to achieve a common goal rather than struggling individually/in isolation to towards parallel aims. Through social capital and empowerment (see Christens, 2012) protecting and educating a child was supplanted by protecting and educating *the children*. The literature describes two forms of social capital: bonding and bridging (Pappano, 2009). Bonding capital relates to emotional support and

friendship characteristic of family and community ties. Bridging capital relates to connections with people and organizations that facilitate access to networks *outside* of one's family and community. Cultural capital in turn refers to exposure to cultural activities that promote one's positive engagement in society (e.g., visiting theaters, museums, learning about college) – often facilitated through bridging capital particularly for low-income families (Ciabattari, 2010). Both social and cultural capital are associated with increased academic outcomes for African American adolescents including aspirations for college (Al-Fadhli & Kersen, 2010). Holy Angels attributed to their students' success in part by promoting the development of the multiple forms of social and cultural capital not only for the students but also for parents and the family as a whole.

***Transformational leadership.*** The leadership that was exercised at Holy Angels during the period examined in this research can be characterized as being *transformational*. Since the 1970s, much attention has been given to the notion and effectiveness of transformational leadership (Northouse, 2010, p. 186) – that which focuses on the concerns and needs of followers in order to develop them into semi-autonomous entities that can act to advance the goals of an organization without the need of constant direction. Holy Angels' leadership cultivated an atmosphere in which everyone in the community had a stake in the success or failure *of* the community. The schools' administration, teachers, students, parents and the neighborhood at large were all stakeholders with ownership and responsibility in the vision. The slogan, "We got it together by ourselves" was a rallying cry for the *entire* community to engage in advancing the community.

According to Stone, Russell and Patterson (2004) transformational leadership style is characterized by role-modeling, motivation, encouragement, and risk-taking in the context of the

organization's vision. The willingness of leadership to take risks for the sake of community development is seen in part by them challenging established systems that disrupted the school and church's ability to engage in practices that the leaders deemed healthy for the members of its community even if there were financial repercussions for doing so (e.g., losing the financial support of the Archdiocese).

From the field of educational leadership studies, Kirby, Paradise, and King (1992) investigated the behaviors of exemplary educational leaders. They quantitatively examined followers' descriptions of *extraordinary* leaders and found that exceptional leaders focus on challenging the development of those around them as opposed to rewarding the status quo. This quality of leadership is evident in Holy Angels' consistent push towards excellence and growth among its students, parents, families, and community. Holy Angels' outcomes confirm research revealing that transformational leadership that engendered collective responsibility among all stakeholders, including students, parents, and teachers, was positively associated with student academic achievement (Leithwood & Mascall, 2008).

**Purposefully empowering administration.** On par with achieving its goal of educating inner-city Black children, the data clearly revealed that the mindset of the school leadership, administration, and teachers, was to use the school and church's influence and infrastructure to counteract unfavorable elements in the community that could have a negative effect on Holy Angels students. From an ecological perspective, it can be seen in this case study that each entity (the school and church) has a strong influence over other (subsidiary) microsystem elements and has a controlling influence on the entire mesosystem. At the mesosystem the Holy Angels School and church were controlling factors that influenced parents, the community, and the surrounding neighborhood. It was Holy Angels that compelled – nay, *required*, that parents interact positively

with the school, church and community; drew the community in positively; and impeded the negative influences in the neighborhood – all for the benefit of the individual student.

Also apparent in the data was that Holy Angels' leadership concurrently capitalized on its influence as a Catholic institution, standing in the community, and autonomy in dictating school policy in mandating efforts for change. This is evident in leadership garnering support from other local Catholic institutions in combating drug paraphernalia shops, high profile visibility (e.g., news coverage) in combating gang violence, and requiring parents to be engaged in the church and school (PTA). In doing so, the mesosystem was itself strengthened and began to work positively towards its own growth.

Worth mentioning is that leaders at Holy Angels became agents for change in the community by not just working in and with the community, but by being a part of the community in the context of living *in* the community themselves. In other words, the Holy Angels faculty and administration did not pack up and go home at the end of the day to return the next morning. While the Holy Angels leadership took advantage of their standing in community to build the community they had the authority to do so as it was *their* community that they were advancing and mobilizing.

**Ecological systems theory as a fruitful and nuanced framework.** The application of the ecological systems theory framework in this study uncovered several nuances and avenues for extension of the theory. Through the lens of ecological systems theory what can be clearly seen by the data is that, consistent with EST, microsystem elements influence the individual: school, church, home, neighborhood, community. Also consistent with EST, microsystem elements interact and influence one another (mesosystem) for the benefit or detriment of the individual students at Holy Angels. Moving out, the Archdiocese of Chicago presents itself

within the exosystem; and legal, political, and cultural influences emerge within the macrosystem. The Holy Angels School (micro- and meso-system) was in a manner provoked by the chronosystem (dimension of time that they lived in) to engage students, infuse them with a cause and conviction that not only were they somebody, but the charge to act on that knowledge. In addition to the expected interplay of systemic elements, the data informed us of the nature of influences and interactions within and between systems. EST has fluidity within its system interactions with the potential for the identification of the hierarchy of system elements, blocking, outward, and unidirectional influences, and the possibility of *jumping* systems of influence.

***Blocking of influences.*** This high expectation environment that was a theme in the mesosystem continued in an outward flow beyond the exosystem and blocked macrosystemic influences. Overarching cultural values or beliefs that Black students weren't supposed to test well or get the best education were clearly debunked. In addition, Holy Angels students developed a sense of cultural awareness and pride that was distinct to the movement of the time in that it was independently based within the accomplishments of the individual and ancestors rather than countercultural (i.e., in opposition to White supremacy). The Holy Angels School gained national recognition and became a model school for many to aspire and emulate. The school brought a sense of pride within the Black community and advocates for fair educational practices have a model for success still today.

***Outward influencing.*** What also can be gathered by the data is that, led by a strong mesosystem (school, church, neighborhood, community), the ecological interaction between the mesosystem and the exosystem (the Catholic Archdiocese) shifts to an outward influence while simultaneously maintaining influence on the individual. It is not unusual to see the exosystem

influencing the mesosystem but in this case study we see an overwhelming occurrence of the opposite. Not only did the church, school, and community refuse to be imposed upon by the exosystemic pressure of the Archdiocese, it was able to make radical change to the century old traditions of the institution not only in its own environment but led the charge to sweeping change outside of its domain. The idea of Catholic priests adopting children was unheard of at the time. Today the One Church One Child program, founded by Reverend Clements at Holy Angels, has swept the nation (Norment, 1986).

*The potential for unidirectionality.* The Holy Angels leadership did not reject the exosystem element of the Catholic archdiocese as a whole, but did challenge the traditions and bureaucracy that they felt marginalized their effectiveness in achieving their goals. It was clear that the aim of the school was to educate urban children, create positive change in the community, and leave a legacy that would continue to perpetuate positive change. Though they challenged the thinking of the culture at the time (macro- and chrono-system elements), these goals are largely consistent with those of the archdiocese. In attacking the influence of the macrosystem however, Holy Angels had to reject the Archdiocese's compliance to the status quo and notion that Holy Angels' methods were overly-extreme which created a one-way valve of sorts through which the macrosystem impose inescapable influence. In this way, the exosystem influence was in disallowing bi-directional effects.

In order to effect change in or protection against the macrosystem blockage from the exosystem had to be removed. The leadership at Holy Angels was successful at removing hindrances in this system as witnessed by the initial outrage of the cardinal of the Chicago Archdiocese of a priest adopting children. This vehement resistance was quickly reversed when

the highest authority of the Catholic Church, the Pope, gave his blessing – validating the fact that Holy Angels was working in alignment with the Catholic Church.

Again, in many ways Holy Angels' leadership identified with the exosystemic elements of the Catholic Church in that it leveraged the Church's influence to create educational pathways of scholarships, connections to Catholic high schools including St. Lawrence Seminary. Furthermore, much of the infrastructure and coalitional forces that addressed the elements of drug paraphernalia and caused the groundswell of support that catapulted neighborhood (mesosystem) and governmental change (macrosystem) were Catholic-based. One might assume that it was through the authority of the Catholic Church and what it represents that Reverend Clements' actions were tolerated (e.g., challenging gang members, defying police,) and awarded such notoriety (e.g., adopting children, antagonizing drug paraphernalia store owners).

***Jumping systems.*** Surprisingly, the data revealed an example of influences *jumping* systemic levels. As a case in point, the school and church leadership overpowered other microsystem elements (i.e., drug paraphernalia being sold in stores in the community), which led to government legislation being changed (Hubbell, 1990). This is evidence of the mesosystem actually bypassing the exosystem to influence the macrosystem.

### **Study Limitations**

There are a few limitations to this study that are worth noting. First, this study relied heavily on participant recollection. Although there was frequent corroboration with archival data (e.g., news and magazine articles) there was a dearth of *school-based* artifacts available for triangulation (e.g., school records, lesson plans, student files). This was due largely in part to the fact that archival data and many artifacts from Holy Angels School were lost in a fire that destroyed the original church building in 1986. Many of the few records and artifacts that

survived the fire were lost during the school's move from its location during the bounded period of the study to its current location several blocks away.

A second limitation of the study arose as a result of the snowball sampling technique. Although the exponential non-discriminative snowball sampling employed in this study allowed me to access a research sample where no list or known network of potential participants exists, this method has inherent weaknesses. Namely, my research sample relied almost solely on the previous participants themselves; representativeness of the (even bounded) sample was not guaranteed. It is expected that participants would nominate other participants that they knew well and had knowledge of since graduating from Holy Angels many years earlier. As such participants were likely more similar to each other than not. One of these characteristics may have been sociability; those who were more well-connected with others were more likely to be recruited into the sample whereas those with relatively fewer acquaintances were less likely to have been identified for participation. In an attempt to address this potential bias, social media (Facebook) was used in to contact and recruit study participants. Still, it is possible that I was only able to target a *subgroup* of the population of interest. Given that my starting point for recruitment was the Holy Angels alumni Facebook page, potential participants that did not care to associate with Holy Angels (e.g., had a negative experience) or who experienced relatively decreased life success (e.g., no internet access, prematurely deceased, participating in deviant lifestyle) were not approached for participation in the study.

All told, future case study research conducted in similar urban communities within and beyond the bounded timeframe would serve to corroborate or challenge the observations and interpretations made in this study.



## **Means to Ensure Study Validity**

An essential component of this study was to confirm that the conditions of the arguments reasonably linked data to theory. Multiple strategies were employed to support the validity and reliability of findings including adequate engagement in data collection and triangulation of the data (see Merriam, 2009), expert review, and careful consideration of reflexivity/positionality. As a primary strategy for maximizing the validity of the data, there was careful attentiveness to strive to get as close to the data as possible through interviewing multiple stakeholders and studying numerous documents and artifacts. Purposefully seeking out data that may support alternative explanations was followed until a point of saturation occurred. In order to uphold internal validity through triangulation, findings were compared and contrasted with a wide array of competing interpretations. Particular attention was paid to data that did not corroborate conclusions or that raise questions about researcher interpretations. In the end, the *truth* of the findings was that which was supported by multiple sources.

Another strategy used to address validity and reliability in the formative (i.e., can this study be improved) and summative (i.e., did the data answer the research question) periods of the study was expert review. At the formative stages a proposal for this research was critiqued and modified by a faculty panel. At various summative stages a scholar familiar with issues regarding academic achievement of ethnic minority youth and disparities of such served as an expert reviewer. In particular feedback was provided in regards to the accuracy of transcription, agreement of themes and constituent codes, and data interpretation.

Related to the validity of the study is the researcher's acknowledgement of the position as a participant-researcher as well as the perspective brought to the data. As a researcher there was an intention for objectivity; as a participant there was the need for a subjective, no less valid

relating of the experience. There was a conscious attempt to be honest to the participant experience and yet reflective without partiality. During data analysis the approach to the data was to be faithful to the subjective truth with an eye of objectivity. I acknowledge that although the researcher as the instrument of inquiry, not unlike any other instrument, was not without bias, deliberate efforts were made towards achieving high reliability and validity in the study.

### **Recommendations**

The results of this study offer several suggestions for strategies to improve the academic experience of inner-city, ethnic-minority students. First, in terms of the curriculum and instruction, educational institutions could better serve students by addressing their needs individually. This can be accomplished in part by, (a) grouping by academic- (rather than merely grade-) level, (b) increasing instructional time, and (c) individualizing and contextualizing the curriculum. Students at Holy Angels were assessed in order to challenge them in their areas of strength and to support them in their areas of weakness. Testing was used as an assessment to individualize instruction rather than chart gains (or losses) in the student body in aggregate. Students overall were engaged academically year-round – thus addressing the *summer slide* typically experienced by children who are not involved in summer enrichment activities (often due to lack of access or resources) – and students who fell behind academically were afforded *extra* instructional time during the school and after-school day. Moreover, the curriculum was fluid –bringing in current events and topics that were personally relevant and engaging to the students. Student-teacher co-construction of the curriculum yields increased student interest, engagement, and learning (see Beane, 2005).

Second, schools should strive to incorporate extracurricular and life-enrichment activities that create pathways for students. Although public schools may not have inroads to private

schools or colleges (as did Holy Angels) there is much that they can do to prepare students for academic transitions. For example, schools could (a) teach students the *hidden curriculum*, including preparing for standardized tests, scholarship opportunities, and preparing personal statements and resume building; (b) help build students' social capital and networks through local college campus visits, guest speakers, and virtual tours of campuses, laboratories, and employment sites; and (c) increase students' cultural capital through exposure to experiences beyond their neighborhood. Doing so would help students to envision and prepare for life beyond their current grade level and social circumstances.

Third, schools should strive to build meaningful connections with the family and community. Not only should parents feel welcome (if not required) to participate in the academic life of their child, a strength of Holy Angels was the development of parental programming – weekend courses on parenting skills and adult academic enrichment/refreshers. Concerted effort should be made to employ/incentivize employing teachers that live within the community that they teach – this would not only reduce teacher turnover but would also increase the cultural competence of teachers. Along this same vein, cultural awareness and competence should be incorporated into the professional development of teachers that serve at lower-income, inner-city, ethnic minority schools.

Given the centralized governance and restrictive nature of public school policy, these recommendations may be less arduously carried out by private or charter schools. These critical elements for high academic achievement of African American students can possibly more easily be implemented by leaders of private or charter schools.

## **Implications and Future Research**

Although this study was bounded between the years of 1969-1979 there are chronosystemic similarities to present day. The Civil Rights Movement of that time provided a foundation for culturally relevant pedagogy, the need for access and opportunities and a galvanizing cause for visionary leadership. It also provided the backdrop for students to be taught self-awareness and positive cultural identity that was the antithesis of their environment and the values and beliefs of mainstream society of that day. It can be argued that very similar assaults on African American youth exist today. Although the unjustifiable police and vigilante shootings of unarmed African American youth that are becoming more and more pervasive may not be the methodology of Bull Conner, African American youth today arguably need the self-efficacy, positive cultural identity and pathways towards high achievement that Holy Angels provided to students in its day.

This dissertation contributes to our knowledge of strategies for promoting high academic achievement among inner-city ethnic minority children, and represents a starting point for continued exploration on this topic. This study focused on the experiences of the student, teacher, and administration. Future work could focus on the experiences of additional stakeholders and key participants, namely parents, community members, sister schools, and the Archdiocese. Incorporating additional voices into the narrative would serve to either corroborate or contradict the findings reported here. For example, the role of parents emerged as a central component particularly in regards to cultivating a high expectation environment. It would be interesting to discover parents' own perceptions of school expectations and the impact they believe that it had on their child's as well as their own development. Likewise, the Chicago Archdiocese emerged as a central force in the life of Holy Angels from the perspective of the

clergy – at times a force in opposition. It would be interesting to learn the Archdiocese’ perspective of Holy Angels school and church particularly given the mercurial nature of their relationship (e.g., at times supporting and at times not).

Holy Angels served as a model for educating inner-city, African American youth. Future research might explore the possibility of other schools that produce high achieving students within similar and dissimilar contexts and examine the characteristics of these schools. For example, Xavier University sends more African Americans to medical school than any other university and Georgia Tech has demonstrated success in graduating minorities from its engineering department (The Louisiana Weekly, 2012; GeorgiaTech, 2015); institutions that have success in economically depressed rural areas would also be enlightening.

Similarly, it would be informative for future studies to examine the experiences of current and newly graduated students. This study captured a unique period in Holy Angels’ history, necessarily relying on participant retrospective accounts. Although the findings were triangulated across informant, informant type (students, teachers, administrators) and data source (informant vs. archival data) the limitation of this method is the potential for incomplete/faulty memory or *halo effect*, – a bias towards positively recalling their Holy Angels experience.

## **Conclusion**

The propositions that emerged from the data for educating Black children were academic rigor, high teacher expectations, and culturally responsive pedagogy, each of which were woven throughout the data. In fact, not only were they present they were born out in the data as hyper-present, meaning that there was a saturation of these elements. Holy Angels was a high expectation-high help environment (Theme 1). Academic rigor was intensely pronounced at the school. This is in part demonstrated by the school’s commitment to year-round schooling.

Teachers were both extrinsically and intrinsically motivated to expect excellence from students and this high teacher expectation was intensive in that it was demonstrated in the context of a high expectation environment in general – one that demanded much of the parents, community, and themselves.

Students were prepared for life beyond Holy Angels. This was achieved in part by educating the student about their culture and grounding the curriculum in personally relevant topics and current events. Culturally responsive pedagogy (Theme 2) was integrated into the curriculum and, because of the turbulence of the time, students were able to participate as stakeholders and experience real time learning with issues relevant to their culture. Many of the leaders and examples of their culture were present in their daily lives and were able to share frontline experiences as they inspired the students and introduced them to the world beyond their immediate community. Armed with a strong academic, ethnic, and moral foundation, students were supported and afforded fruitful pathways as they transitioned from Holy Angels to prestigious high schools (Theme 2).

Noteworthy is the concept of caring that was interwoven throughout the data. It is important to operationalize this concept, in that caring was not seen as simply an emotion or feeling. It is in this case and other research, the demonstration of teachers' and administrators' commitment to understanding students' experiences, celebrating their accomplishments and an unwavering expectation that student give their very best at all times (see Howard, 2002).

Overall, the study propositions supported the literature and were not only present but present with great intensity. We know the characteristics of an institution that trains highly performing African American students. This study suggests that the features of such an institution must however be uniquely integrated coming together in an *ecological recipe* rather

than a list of ingredients. One theme that was not anticipated was that of iconic-transformational leadership. Extending the analogy, the emergence of this theme suggests that not only must the ecological recipe come into being, but that it needs a *master chef* to oversee and direct the efforts – in fact, the ingredients may not even come into existence (much less the integration of them) without such direction. The findings of this study suggest that the phenomenon that was Holy Angels School is certainly replicable – we have a recipe. A key component of one such institution that supports and propels high achievement among African American children however is a visionary and, if need be, radical leader (Theme 3).

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## APPENDIX A

### Graduate & Professional Schools Institutional Review Board Exemption Notice

# PEPPERDINE UNIVERSITY

## Graduate & Professional Schools Institutional Review Board

July 18, 2014

Daryl A. Tate

**Protocol #:** E0514D02

**Project Title:** Produce and Achieve: A Case Study of Inner City Education

Dear Mr. Tate:

Thank you for submitting your application, *Produce and Achieve: A Case Study of Inner City Education*, for exempt review to Pepperdine University's Graduate and Professional Schools Institutional Review Board (GPS IRB). The IRB appreciates the work you and your faculty advisor, Dr. Davis, have done on the proposal. The IRB has reviewed your submitted IRB application and all ancillary materials. Upon review, the IRB has determined that the above entitled project meets the requirements for exemption under the federal regulations (45 CFR 46 - <http://www.nihtraining.com/ohsrsite/guidelines/45cfr46.html>) that govern the protections of human subjects. Specifically, section 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2) states:

(b) Unless otherwise required by Department or Agency heads, research activities in which the only involvement of human subjects will be in one or more of the following categories are exempt from this policy:

**Category (2) of 45 CFR 46.101**, research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless: a) Information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and b) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

Your research must be conducted according to the proposal that was submitted to the IRB. If changes to the approved protocol occur, a revised protocol must be reviewed and approved by the IRB before implementation. For any proposed changes in your research protocol, please submit a **Request for Modification Form** to the GPS IRB. Because your study falls under exemption, there is no requirement for continuing IRB review of your project. Please be aware that changes to your protocol may prevent the research from qualifying for exemption from 45 CFR 46.101 and require submission of a new IRB application or other materials to the GPS IRB.

A goal of the IRB is to prevent negative occurrences during any research study. However, despite our best intent, unforeseen circumstances or events may arise during the research. If an unexpected situation or adverse event happens during your investigation, please notify the GPS IRB as soon as possible. We will ask for a complete explanation of the event and your response. Other actions also may be required depending on the nature of the event. Details regarding the timeframe in which adverse events must be reported to the GPS IRB and the appropriate form to be used to report this information can be found in the *Pepperdine University Protection of Human Participants in Research: Policies and Procedures Manual* (see link to "policy material" at <http://www.pepperdine.edu/irb/graduate/>).

Please refer to the protocol number denoted above in all further communication or correspondence related to this approval. Should you have additional questions, please contact Kevin Collins, Manager of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at [gpsirb@pepperdine.edu](mailto:gpsirb@pepperdine.edu). On behalf of the GPS IRB, I wish you success in this scholarly pursuit.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Thema Bryant-Davis".

Thema Bryant-Davis, Ph.D.  
Chair, Graduate and Professional Schools IRB

cc: Dr. Lee Kats, Vice Provost for Research and Strategic Initiatives  
Mr. Brett Leach, Compliance Attorney  
Dr. Kay Davis, Faculty Advisor



## APPENDIX B

### Interview and Follow-up Questions for Former Students

- What comes to mind when I say the words “Holy Angels School”?
  - Could you say some more about that? You mentioned [x], what do you mean by that?
  
- What comes to mind when I mention the name George Clements? (Pastor of Church/leader in the school during the period being studied)
  - Do you have an example of that [behavior/characteristic]?
  
- What comes to mind when I say the name Paul Smith? (Principal of the school during the period being studied)
  - Do you have an example of that [behavior/characteristic]?
  
- What comes to mind when I say the name “Sister Helen Strueder”? (Assistant Principal of the school during the period being studied)
  - Do you have an example of that [behavior/characteristic]?
  
- What comes to mind when I say the word “Little Angels”? (The school’s fine arts group during the period being studied)
  - Do you have an example of that [behavior/characteristic]?
  - What was your involvement in that?
  - Could you say more about that?
  
- What was expected of you as a student?
  - Do you have an example of that [expectation]?
  - Could you elaborate on that?
  - When did that happen?
  - What was your involvement in that?
  - Who else was involved?
  - How did you remember feeling about that at the time?
  - What do you think about that now?
  - How do you feel about that now?
  
- Did Holy Angels impact your life? If so, how so?
  - Can you elaborate on that?
  - How do you feel about that?
  - How do you think your life might be different otherwise?

## APPENDIX C

### Interview and Follow-up Questions for Former Administrators

- What years were you in leadership at Holy Angels School?
  - What was your involvement in that?
  - Who else was involved?
  
- What was your educational approach at Holy Angels School during your tenure?
  - Could you tell me more about that?
  - What does education mean to you in terms of your role at Holy Angels School?
  - How does this compare to alternative approaches
  - How did you feel about that at the time?
  - How do you feel about that now?
  - What were the goals of this approach?
  
- What was your academic approach at Holy Angels School during your tenure?
  - Could you tell me more about that?
  - What were key components of the academic program?
  - How does this compare to alternative approaches?
  - What was your involvement in this?
  - Who else was involved?
  - How did you feel about that at the time?
  - How do you feel about that now?
  - What were the goals of this approach?
  
- What cultural experience did you desire for the students to have during your tenure?
  - Can you tell me more about that?
  - What do you mean by [x]?
  - What were key components of the cultural experience at Holy Angels?
  - What was your involvement in this?
  - Who else was involved?
  - How did you feel about that at the time?
  - How do you feel about that now?
  
- What was your approach to parental and community involvement during your tenure?
  - Can you tell me more about that?
  - What do you mean by [x]?
  - What were key components of parental involvement at Holy Angels?
  - What were key components of community involvement at Holy Angels?
  - What was your involvement in this?

- Who else was involved?
- How did you feel about that at the time?
- How do you feel about that now?
  
- What were you trying to instill in the students at Holy Angels?
  - Can you tell me more about that?
  - What do you mean by [x]?
  - Was there any resistance to this effort?
  - What was your involvement in this?
  - Who else was involved?
  - How did you feel about that at the time?
  - How do you feel about that now?
  
- How did you approach the socio-economic situation of the students?
  - Can you tell me more about that?
  - What do you mean by [x]?
  - What were necessary components of this effort?
  - Was there any resistance to this effort?
  - What was your involvement in this?
  - Who else was involved?
  - How did you feel about that at the time?
  - How do you feel about that now?
  
- How did you approach the socio-economic conditions of the neighborhood?
  - Can you tell me more about that?
  - What do you mean by [x]?
  - What were necessary components of this effort?
  - Was there any resistance to this effort?
  - What was your involvement in this?
  - Who else was involved?
  - How did you feel about that at the time?
  - How do you feel about that now?
  
- What did you expect from the students at the school?
  - Can you tell me more about that?
  - What do you mean by [x]?
  - What were necessary components of this effort?
  - Was there resistance to this?
  - What was your involvement in this?
  - Who else was involved?

- How did you feel about that at the time?
- How do you feel about that now?