

EXPERIENCES OF UNDERREPRESENTED TEACHERS ON CAMPUSES WITH  
DIVERSE STUDENT POPULATIONS

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by

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## **DEDICATION**

To my daughters, Zoë E. Brinkman and Abigail G. Brinkman, may your educational experiences be filled with teachers who represent the world we live in. Your existence inspired me more than you will ever know to investigate and work toward the diversification of the teaching force.

## ABSTRACT

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The United States is becoming a more diverse nation but that racial/ethnic diversity is not reflected in the teaching workforce. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the experiences of underrepresented teachers in schools where there are diverse student populations but low teacher diversity. The goal of this descriptive phenomenological study was to identify ways to increase the representation of diverse educators in schools.

This study was conducted with participants from one school district in the suburban Houston area. Eight individuals participated in individual interviews as a part of this phenomenological study. Five themes were revealed as common experiences of underrepresented teachers in this study: *Pathway to Education, Challenges, Support, The Reasons Why, and Recommendations*.

Through the lens of the participants, common experiences like a deep commitment to education and a desire to be a role model to minority students were discovered. Findings of this research highlight specific barriers to attracting and retaining underrepresented teachers such as social isolation and deficit ideology. When asked to identify the organizational conditions that have encouraged them to remain in the profession, the teachers were in consensus regarding positive relationships with colleagues and administrative support being the largest factors. Underrepresented teachers believed recruitment and retention strategies that could help diversify the

teaching force include scholarships, changes in teacher compensation, and better preparation in teacher preparation programs.

Results from this study might assist school leaders, teacher preparation programs, and policymakers in becoming more proactive in the recruitment and retention of diverse educators. One suggestion from this research is to investigate systemic barriers that might impact the flow of diverse teachers through the certification pipeline. Implications from this study also include the participation of racially/ethnically diverse teachers on decision making committees, the development of cohorts for new teachers, and the diversification of campus administration.

**KEY WORDS:** Underrepresented teacher, Teacher diversity, Teacher retention, Teacher recruitment, Secondary schools, Texas,

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Finally, to the teachers who took the time to participate in this research, thank you. Your passion for the profession and your hearts for students were incredibly evident. Thank you for providing safe spaces for students to learn and grow into who they are meant to be. I can only hope some of them are inspired to enter the classroom and be just like you.



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## **CHAPTER I**

### **Introduction**

#### **Background of the Study**

Even though minority students are predicted to account for 56% of K-12 grade students by 2024, 82% of K-12 school teachers are White (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Non-White students made up the majority of student enrollment in public schools in the United States for the first time in the 2014-2015 school year (Kena et al., 2015). The non-Hispanic White population is predicted to continue to fall creating a more racially and ethnically diversified nation (Vespa et al., 2020). Conversely, White teachers constitute the bulk of the teaching workforce (Kena et al., 2015). Ingersoll (2015) argued the teaching force should look like the population of the United States. Gershenson et al. (2021) assert benefits of teacher diversity and same race teacher-student matches include improvements in student outcomes in the areas of attendance, standardized test scores, graduation rates, discipline, and college enrollment. Students of color, however, outnumber teachers of color in every state. In 2017, public school teachers who identified as American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, Black, Latinx, or two or more races were between 2% and 9% of the teaching population, whereas the percentage of students in these racial/ethnic groups was as high as 26.8% (Rafa & Roberts, 2020).

Texas is also facing a demographic mismatch in student and teacher diversity. In the last 50 years, students of Mexican American origin have risen from 20% to 48% of students in Texas public schools (Kauffman, 2019). Currently, Hispanic/Latinx/Latino children are the largest racial/ethnic group enrolled in Texas public schools at a

percentage of 52.9% (Texas Education Agency, 2021a). The remaining student enrollment by race is 26.5% White, 12.7% African American, 4.7% Asian, and 2.7% multiracial (Texas Education Agency, 2021a). Teacher demographics in Texas in the 2020-2021 school year were as follows: 28.31% Hispanic/Latino, 57.10% White, 11.12% Black, 1.79% Asian, and 1.17% multicultural (Texas Education Agency, 2021b). The difference between the student population and the teacher workforce in Texas is substantial and replicate the dynamics of the national level.

According to national demographic trends, a shortage is present of minority teachers in the United States. Throughout the teacher pipeline, as teachers proceed through postsecondary education, teacher preparation programs, and retention in the classroom setting, the diverse teacher representation decreases. Black and Hispanic students complete bachelor's degrees in education at a lower rate than White students. (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). The U.S. Department of Education (2016) has stated it “is dedicated to increasing the diversity of our educator workforce, recognizing that teachers and leaders of color will play a critical role in ensuring equity in our education system” (p. 1). In alignment with the statement from the U.S. Department of Education, more than half of the states have programs or policies geared toward increasing the number of teachers from underrepresented groups in classrooms (Ingersoll, 2015). Despite these efforts, critics believe that the student-teacher diversity gap has expanded rather than narrowed (Gershenson et al., 2021; Ingersoll, 2015; Tyler, 2016).

## **Statement of the Problem**

Determining best practices for the recruitment and retention of underrepresented teachers is an important cause to explore. Minority adult role models are becoming increasingly scarce (Billingsley et al., 2017; Villegas & Irvine, 2010) and minority students do not have enough access to teachers who understand their cultural and racial backgrounds (Carey, 2020; Ingersoll, 2015). Researchers (e.g., Carey, 2020; Cherng & Halpin, 2016; Cooke & Odejimi, 2021; Rafa & Roberts, 2020; Wright et al., 2017) have provided evidence that racial/ethnic representation matters in the classroom because racial/ethnic representation is linked to positive academic and nonacademic outcomes. Teachers of color tend to hold students of similar backgrounds to high standards, often serve as role models for minority students, and have a positive influence on all learners (Rafa & Roberts, 2020). Cherng and Halpin (2016) concluded students of all backgrounds have a more positive perception of Black and Latino teachers than they do of White teachers. However, Goings and Bianco (2016) indicated it is difficult for current high school students of diverse backgrounds to aspire to become educators because it is difficult to become something you have not seen. Diverse students reported being primarily and, in some cases, even exclusively taught by White females in school (Gist et al., 2017; Goings & Bianco, 2016). Although more teachers from different racial/ethnic backgrounds are entering the classroom, it is also true that the rate of attrition for diverse teachers is higher than the attrition rate of White teachers (Ingersoll et al., 2019). It is vital to understand what brought seasoned minoritized educators to the profession to apply this knowledge to recruit and retain new minority teachers.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the experiences of racial/ethnic minority teachers at suburban secondary schools in the Greater Houston area where there are diverse student populations but low teacher diversity. The goal of this study is to identify ways to increase the representation of diverse educators in schools. Information about the experiences of underrepresented teachers may help increase awareness of the recruitment and retention efforts that have allowed them to persist in the field.

**Research Question**

The following overarching research question was used to guide this study: What are the experiences of underrepresented teachers at suburban secondary campuses in the Greater Houston area with diverse student populations but low teacher diversity? The following sub questions further guided this study: (a) How do underrepresented teachers in these schools describe their entry into the education profession? and (b) How do underrepresented teachers in these schools describe their reasons for persisting in the teaching profession?

**Significance of Study**

A large body of literature exists in which researchers have established that a racially diversified teaching profession has several societal benefits. Academic achievement of diverse students is positively associated with having diverse teachers (Cherng & Halpin, 2016; Samuels et al., 2021; Villegas & Irvine, 2010) and racially diverse teachers serve as role models to students of all ethnoracial backgrounds (Bristol & Shirrell, 2019; Cherng & Halpin, 2016; Yarnell & Bohrnstedt, 2018). However, the



turnover rate of minority teachers is higher than that of White teachers (Ingersoll et al., 2019) and it is crucial to identify the reasons why.

In empirical research, the factors of underrepresented teacher retention have received relatively little attention. Through the lens of the individual perceptions of the participants in this study, a deeper understanding of the experiences of underrepresented teachers regarding the barriers and motivating factors to entering and remaining in diverse suburban schools was sought. Findings of this research highlight specific barriers and catalysts to attracting underrepresented teachers, organizational conditions that support underrepresented teachers, and recruitment and retention strategies that could help increase the number of underrepresented teachers in suburban schools. Results from this study might assist school leaders and policymakers in becoming more proactive in the recruitment and retention of diverse educators thereby saving time and money.

### **Conceptual Frameworks**

Two conceptual frameworks undergird this study: resilience theory and career choice framework.

#### ***Resilience Theory***

The goal of this study was to identify ways to improve the representation of diverse educators. Resilience theory was used to delve into how experienced educators have defied the odds and continued to teach in suburban schools. Gu and Day (2013) argued teacher resilience cannot simply be described as the “capacity to bounce back” but it is the ability to “maintain equilibrium and a sense of commitment and agency” (p. 26). To further investigate how teachers maintain this equilibrium, the conceptual framework established by Polidore (2004) framed this study.

Polidore (2004) conducted a qualitative study with three African American teachers who had extensive careers in rural and suburban Texas schools. Through a review of literature, Polidore developed an original model of resilience in education. At the conclusion of the study, Polidore (2004) determined there were eight themes for adult resilience in education: moral/spiritual support, deeply committed, bias toward optimism, belief that one can control events, flexible locus of control, enjoys change, strong positive relationships, and education viewed as important. Each of Polidore's participants expressed all eight of these themes as areas of influence in their decisions to remain in the profession despite the adversity they faced. This proposed study aims to use Polidore's model to explore the areas of influence in underrepresented teachers who have remained in the classroom.

### ***Career Choice Framework***

Holland's (1959) career choice theory was the second framework for this study. Holland (1962) believed career choice was a product of the influence of social class, peers, culture, and one's hereditary traits. In making a career choice, people seek settings where they can express their values, use their talents, and be around others who are like them. Holland (1962) developed a model in which six personality types were identified: realistic, conventional, social, intellectual, enterprising, and artistic. According to the model, those individuals with a social personality type were more likely to choose teaching as a profession (Holland, 1996). Those individuals with a social personality type value helping people, are skilled with words, and have good interpersonal skills. The environment that benefits social individuals encourages flexibility, strives to gain understanding, and is team oriented. Career choice theory assumes individuals who

selected teaching as a profession did so because teaching was a match between their personality and their environment. Holland (1996) suggested those who work in an environment with like-minded peers are more successful. Career choice theory provides a viewpoint on the reasons some individuals choose to become educators and the reasons they might remain in the profession as well.

### **Definition of Terms**

The following terms, which were utilized in this dissertation, are defined to assist readers in the understanding of the content of this study.

#### ***Asian***

According to the Texas Education Agency (2019), Asian refers to a person with ancestors from any of the indigenous people of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent.

#### ***Black***

The Texas Education Agency (2019) defines Black as a person who is descended from one of Africa's Black racial groups.

#### ***Hispanic or Latino***

According to the Texas Education Agency (2019), Hispanic or Latino is an ethnicity referring to people who are descendants of Spanish speaking cultures such as Cuba, Mexico, Puerto Rico, Central America, and South America.

#### ***Recruitment***

Page (1959) defined *recruitment* as “the effort to increase the numbers of qualified persons who would be willing to accept teaching positions” (p. 134).

### ***Resilience***

*Resilience* is defined by Polidore (2004) as the ability of teachers to “maintain equilibrium and a sense of commitment and agency” (p.26).

### ***Retention***

*Retention* refers to teachers who work year after year at the same school. (Lochmiller et al., 2016).

### ***Teacher Shortage***

*Teacher Shortage* refers to an insufficient number of skilled individuals prepared to provide their services for existing positions at current wages and conditions (Darling-Hammond & Podolsky, 2019).

### ***Turnover***

*Turnover* refers to educators who leave the profession and educators who leave one campus or position for another campus or position. (Ingersoll, 2001).

### ***Underrepresented Teacher***

*Underrepresented teacher* will refer to teachers of color who are inequitably represented when compared to the student population at their school (Goe & Roth, 2019).

### ***White***

The Texas Education Agency (2019) defines White as a person with ancestors from indigenous peoples of the Europe’s, the Middle East, or North Africa.

### ***Delimitations***

Delimitations are present in every research work. This study is designed to obtain a perspective on the experiences of underrepresented teachers on suburban secondary campuses. The perspectives of elementary educators will not be addressed. Secondary

campuses tend to have larger staff numbers and therefore the disparity in representation is likely more isolating for underrepresented staff. A second delimitation is the geographic location of participants. Although the school district identified in the study represented a variety of school sizes and demographics, participants were isolated to a suburban area of a metropolitan city in the state of Texas.

### **Limitations**

Limitations exist as this study was focused on the specific experiences of underrepresented teachers in suburban schools. A limitation that may occur during the study is obtainment of perspective from one predominant ethnic/racial group of teachers. My goal is to learn from the experiences of a variety of underrepresented teachers, but I may only have a segment of the population agree to take part in the study. Another limitation that may occur is participants may censor themselves and not share information that could aid in understanding the experiences of underrepresented teachers. To adjust for possible censorship, questions in the interview protocol are not sensitive in nature.

### **Assumptions**

Multiple assumptions were made in this qualitative study. I assumed all participants voluntarily participated in this study. In addition, I assumed the participants understood the interview questions and answered them truthfully. The accurate data collection and interpretation by myself, as the researcher, is also assumed to be accurate. Finally, I assumed the emergent themes were an accurate reflection of the experiences of the underrepresented teachers in this study.

## **Organization of the Study**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe the experiences of underrepresented teachers at secondary schools with diverse student populations but with low teacher diversity. Five chapters are included in this dissertation. Chapter I includes the background of the study, the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the research questions, the significance of the study, the conceptual framework, the definition of terms, the delimitations, the limitations, and the assumptions of this study. Chapter II contains a review of the literature related to the recruitment and retention of diverse teachers. The findings of this literature review support the need to gain further perspective on how to recruit and retain teachers from diverse backgrounds. Detailed in Chapter III are the specifics on the method of the study. Research design, context of the study, selection of participants, data collection, instrumentation, data analysis, and trustworthiness are provided. Chapter IV includes the findings of the study. Chapter V concludes the study with a discussion of the data collected and the implications for practice and future research.

## CHAPTER II

### Review of the Literature

The purpose of this literature review was to investigate the obstacles underrepresented teachers face in entering and remaining in the teaching profession. To locate relevant literature, I began with the search terms *minority teacher*, *recruitment*, and *retention*. The following databases were used in my searches: APA PsychInfo, Education Full Text, Education Source, Educational Administration Abstracts, and ERIC. Searches were repeated by replacing key words to include *student diversity*, *teacher diversity*, and *secondary schools*. A review of article abstracts was used to select relevant articles. I selected additional articles by using the citations of seminal works. This literature review includes information about (a) the value of underrepresented teachers, (b) the recruitment and entry of underrepresented teachers into the teaching profession, (c) the barriers and obstacles in the teaching pipeline, (d) the retention of underrepresented teachers, and (e) the underrepresentation of teachers in suburban schools and in Texas.

#### The Value of Underrepresented Teachers

Diversifying the teaching force in suburban schools is a crucial step to providing equity for all students. Tyler (2016) investigated how students from diverse ethnoracial backgrounds, students who experience poverty, and students who are emerging bilinguals were perceived by teachers and administrators facing racial and socioeconomic change in suburban schools. Although suburban educators shared an “aspirational commitment to prepare students for a diverse society,” Tyler (2016) noted “a deficit perspective on students from diverse racial/ethnic, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds” was evident. (p. 295). Gorski (2019) argued deficit ideologies create a detour from focusing

on barriers to equitable opportunities for minority students. A deficit perspective assumes someone is less than others and as such, a deficit perspective of students is not in line with a genuine commitment to multicultural, equal schools.

The educators in Tyler's (2016) study exhibited positive views about diversity in theory but substantially more negative attitudes toward diverse classrooms in practice. A predominantly White faculty in suburban schools might struggle to serve diverse learners because the experiences of White faculty members differ from an increasing non-White student body. Increasing the number of underrepresented teachers in suburban schools would bring new perspectives to the table (Tyler, 2016). Deficit ideology may go unquestioned and even become amplified in the echo chamber of a homogeneous teaching force. Educators with diverse socioeconomic, linguistic, and racial/ethnic backgrounds may be better equipped to disrupt such conversations and to offer alternatives to their colleagues. To accommodate and meet the demands of a diverse student body, district and school leaders need to alter their instruction, structures, curriculum, programs, and cultures. Teachers who are better equipped to address the requirements of specific student populations, appreciate the importance of cultural norms and values, and are ready to speak up about demographic changes in the classroom that are needed in public education in the United States (Aydin et al., 2017). Attracting and retaining a diverse teaching population who better represents the changing demographics of the student body should be one of the most significant priorities for suburban schools and districts.

Many teachers do not have the skills necessary to teach in a culturally responsive manner (Gorski, 2019; Ladson-Billings, 1995). The inclusion of more diverse teachers



can provide opportunity for equity pedagogy and culturally relevant teaching. Students who come from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds are often deprived of an equitable education, however; under the guidance of a culturally responsive teacher, these students find support and a place to belong (Glazewski & Ertmer, 2020). Banks & Banks (1995) defined equity pedagogy as “teaching strategies and classroom environments that help students from diverse racial, ethnic, and culture groups attain the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to function effectively” in society (p. 152). Underrepresented teachers can create learning environments that support students who have been marginalized. All students benefit from the ability to interact with teachers from a variety of backgrounds and prepare for real world experiences.

For nearly three decades, Ladson-Billings (1995) has also pushed for a change in pedagogy in the classroom setting for the benefit of all students. Culturally relevant pedagogy consists of three parts: academic success, cultural competence, and sociopolitical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 1995). The development of cultural competence is necessary for all students as they will all have to go out into a world in which they need to understand and work with people who are different from them. According to Ladson-Billings (2016), the many American teachers have a “mono-cultural experience” and do not show a desire to learn about the cultures and life experiences of others (p.36). Students can benefit from the cultural context underrepresented teachers can bring into the classroom by their linking of “principles of learning with deep understanding of and appreciation for culture” (Ladson-Billings, 2014). Having diverse teachers allows underrepresented students the opportunity to grow to understand their own culture even more through contact with same-race teachers, while simultaneously

providing and opportunity for White students to develop fluency in another culture as well.

Short- and long-range impacts from the culturally relevant pedagogy of same-race teachers were noted in a study conducted by Delhommer (2022). He investigated the high school course performance and college enrollment of 649, 320 Texas public high school students from 2012 to 2016. An important finding was Hispanic students had greater long-term benefits than short term benefits from being taught by a teacher of the same race, while Asian students had greater short-term benefits than long-term benefits. Black students had positive outcomes in both the short-term and long-term. Delhommer (2022) found racial congruency between students and teachers significantly decreased the racial gaps in high school graduation and post-secondary enrollment of Black and Hispanic students. The investigation led the author to conclude same-race exposure might have a greater short-term impact on Black and Asian students due to possible “culturally relevant” interactions with racially congruent teachers (Delhommer, 2022, p. 15). Similar findings were present in a study identifying benefits of same-race teacher and student matches for Black students in Tennessee (Gershenson et al., 2022).

Additional benefits of teachers of color include high expectations of students, the development of trusting relationships, and the willingness to advocate for students (Villegas & Irvine, 2010). Fox (2016) conducted a longitudinal study in which she determined there was a statistically significant effect of 11 to 17 percentage points regarding the expectations for Black students from their Black teachers when compared to a White teacher who had the same student. Further, researchers (Grissom et al., 2020; Hart, 2020) determined students with same-race advanced course teachers are more likely

to continue to pursue advanced courses. When compared to Latinx students at schools with fewer Latinx teachers, more Latinx students took International Baccalaureate and Advanced Placement courses possibly due to the increase in Latinx teachers (Bristol & Shirrell, 2019). Latinx teachers encouraged and challenged Latinx students by establishing a sense of belonging, setting high standards, and enhancing student achievement (Bristol & Shirrell, 2019).

Attendance is another area in which teacher diversity may benefit students and schools. Gottfried et al. (2022) examined the attendance rates of 29, 79 high school students in a largely Latinx California school district during the school years from 2013-2017. The authors wanted to determine if students matched with a same-race teacher had better attendance than those without a same-race teacher match. The authors revealed fewer absences were associated with students who had a teacher of the same race or same ethnicity. In addition, Gottfried et al. (2022) concluded there was parity between the effect sizes for academic outcomes and the effect sizes in their study for absenteeism.

From the perspective of student behavior, representation in race matching of teachers is important as early as Kindergarten (Wright et al., 2017). Lindsay and Hart (2017) conducted a study to determine if Black students exposed to same-race teachers were assigned exclusionary discipline such as expulsion, out of school suspension, and in-school suspension at a lower rate than those not exposed to same-race teachers. An important finding was a reduced rate of exclusionary discipline for Black elementary, middle, and high school students who had Black teachers. The authors concluded Black teachers might serve as gatekeepers to the reduction of exclusionary discipline by the use of their discretion in what behavior constitutes a need for a referral (Lindsay & Hart,

2017). Similarly, Redding (2019) found students of color are less likely to be perceived as acting out when judged by teachers of their own race.

The potential benefits of racial matching may function more powerfully for Black male students. Yarnell and Bohrnstedt (2018) concluded Black male students face more stereotype threats, more biased expectations from teachers, and the greater potential for teachers to misread their conduct compared to other students. Accordingly, the effects of disciplinary policies on students of color can be mitigated by hiring teachers with the same cultural backgrounds and experiences as their students and who can explain extrinsic behaviors within the context of the student's cultural background (Wright et al., 2017). Carey (2020) concluded boys of color lose out on the affirmation and recognition provided when they are taught by Black and Latino men instead of only seeing Black and Latino men in the roles of monitors, disciplinarians, and enforcers. Male teachers of color must be recruited for more reasons than their ability to use school disciplinary measures to intimidate and restrict students. Rather, administrators should seek out empathetic, caring males who challenge stereotypical masculinity (Carey, 2020). The potential and influence on students' lives by underrepresented male teachers should not be viewed in a homogenous manner and these teachers should be valued for the diverse variety of roles they have in schools.

Researchers (Cherng & Halpin, 2016; Hart, 2020) have determined students of all races and ethnicities have better perceptions of minority teachers compared to their perceptions of White teachers. Without a diverse teaching force, all students, not just minority students, lose out on the opportunity to see positive representations of people of color. Students can see themselves reflected in a range of occupations thanks to a diverse

faculty. Diversifying the teaching population “is a crucial component of a comprehensive strategy for addressing the achievement gap that historically has existed between students of color and their White counterparts” (Villegas & Irvine, 2010, p. 187).

In summary, diversity among educators has academic (Harbatkin, E., 2021), behavioral (Lindsay & Hart, 2017; Williams III, 2020), and societal benefits (Ladson-Billings, 2014). A diverse teaching force ensures all students, even White students have a more accurate grasp on “what it means to live and work in a multicultural and democratic society” (Ladson-Billings, 2005, p. 231). A deeper understanding of the elements that influence the recruitment and retention of underrepresented teachers is needed.

### **Recruitment and Entry into the Teaching Profession**

Teaching certification requirements in the United States vary by state. Generally, teachers must have a bachelor’s degree and pass a certification test before they are eligible to teach in a classroom setting. With fewer individuals pursuing teaching as a profession (Van Overschelde & Wiggins, 2020), states have developed alternative pathways to certification in addition to the traditional route. More consideration has recently been given to how to recruit future teachers prior to their decisions of postsecondary education.

#### ***Traditional Route to Certification***

The traditional pathway to teaching generally includes a 4-year undergraduate degree in which an individual majors in education or the subject area they plan to teach. In most cases, the traditional route includes course work in subject area content, courses on specific populations such as students who receive special education services and

English language learners, and courses on pedagogy. The teacher preparation program usually culminates with the passing of a teacher certification exam (Jang & Horn, 2017).

Some underrepresented students face an immediate barrier in attempts to gain admission to traditional teacher preparation programs. In recent years, universities have been pressured to raise the admission requirements in teacher preparation programs. Van Overschelde and López (2018) conducted research to examine the relationship between increased GPAs for admission to teacher preparation programs and the admission rates of underrepresented teachers. Under the scenarios of 2.75 GPA and 3.0 GPA criterion for admission, Black, male, and Latinx student denials for admission would be significantly higher than the denial rates of White female students (Van Overschelde & López, 2018). Raising the GPA requirement for admission would dramatically decrease the number of teacher preparation candidates and have a negative effect on the goal to diversify the educator workforce.

An additional barrier in traditional teacher preparation programs is the timing of certification exams. Sharp et al. (2019) conducted a qualitative study at a Hispanic Serving Institution to investigate the benefits and drawbacks of the teacher preparation program through the perspectives of six racially diverse preservice teachers. One important finding from the focus group interviews was the requirement to pass certification exams at an earlier stage in the teacher preparation program. The early examination requirement became a gatekeeper as students must pass the exams prior to completing the required coursework and field experience that could assist in passing the assessment. Although underrepresented teacher candidates have the capacity to excel on these assessments, decision makers must keep in mind that underrepresented teacher

candidates are more likely to be first-generation college students and might not have the support systems of their more privileged peers (Gasman et al., 2017). Unfortunately, early certification exams can cause students to be tested out of teaching if they do not pass the assessments. Sharp et al. (2019) concluded that without sufficient preparation, underrepresented preservice teachers could be subjected to the discriminatory effects of teacher certification exams.

Researchers (Gasman et al., 2017) have recently investigated successful traditional teacher preparation programs at minority serving institutions. A minority serving institution is a postsecondary school with a significant population of minority undergraduate students. Over 50% of Hispanics and one-third of American Indian/Alaskan Natives, Asian American, and Black/African Americans with education degrees graduate from minority serving institutions (Gasman et al., 2017). In addition, a disproportionate amount of public school teachers of color earned their education degrees at minority serving institutions. Gasman et al. (2017) conducted a three-year study at four minority serving institution teacher preparation programs. The researchers interviewed 80 participants and utilized data from the National Center for Education Statistics Schools and Staffing Survey to learn about practices minority serving institutions utilized to assist in diversifying the teaching force. Proactive recruitment strategies such as admission despite low GPAs and test scores combined with unique retention methods such as cohort models, certification exam preparation, childcare options, and financial aid were utilized in these programs (Gasman et al., 2017). The authors concluded the methods used at minority serving institutions might be relevant to predominantly White institutions to increase the completion rates of minority teachers in those programs.

### ***Alternative Pathways to Teaching***

Since 1985, Texas has allowed teachers to enter the profession through alternative pathways that do not include a traditional 4-year university teacher education program (Etheredge, 2015). Alternative preparation programs offer fast-track certification to help states quickly expand the number of teachers available. Such routes include certification programs for individuals who have previously obtained a bachelor's degree or transferred from a community college to a 4-year university. Due to the majority minority present at many community colleges, the community college level might be a solution to the shortage of minority teachers in classrooms (Perkins & Arvidson, 2017). In a study to investigate innovation in Texas teacher preparation programs, Castro and Edwards (2021) determined that a higher proportion of students of color enrolled in non-traditional 4-year university programs. Prospective underrepresented teachers accounted for almost two-thirds of the enrollment in community colleges, independent non-profit, independent for-profit, and school district teacher preparation programs. Castro and Edwards (2021) discovered that some programs (community colleges and for-profit independent schools) had lower overall enrollment but had a smaller diversity gap than traditional teacher preparation programs in Texas. When compared to public or private university programs, racial and ethnic enrollment in non-traditional teacher preparation programs is more reflective of the Texas K-12 student population.

Alternative routes to teaching increase the number of available teachers in the pipeline, but they tend to offer less preparation in the day-to-day practices of education (White et al., 2019). Perkins and Arvidson (2017) concluded important factors in the success of teachers pursuing alternative education routes were mentoring opportunities



and a cohort model. Students who were provided hands-on experience in the community to grow as teachers were also more successful in completing the certification process.

The state of Texas leads the nation in educators prepared through an alternative certification program (Van Overschelde & Wiggins, 2020). Since 2015, more teachers have completed alternative certification programs than tradition certification programs in the state of Texas (Horn et al., 2020). Van Overschelde and Wiggins (2020) investigated the differences in demographics of educators who completed their teacher training through a traditional pathway and those educators who completed their training through alternative means. The study sample included all teachers who were teaching between 2006 and 2007 and 2017 and 2018 in the state of Texas. An important finding was that male teachers were most likely to have entered the profession through an alternative certification program. In addition, Latino, Black, and other ethnicity teachers were most likely certified through an alternative pathway than a traditional preparation program. The authors hypothesized minority teachers were overrepresented in alternative certification programs because those programs do not require an unpaid student teaching internship (Van Overschelde & Wiggins, 2020). Through an alternative certification pathway, teachers may enter the profession immediately as a full-time paid teacher under the supervision of a program supervisor. The researchers concluded teachers prepared in traditional programs remained in the classroom at a higher rate than teachers prepared in an alternative certification program (Van Overschelde & Wiggins, 2020). Though alternative pathways have assisted in addressing the teacher shortage and provide a means to diversify the workforce, the lower retention rates of alternatively certified teachers are a long-range cause for concern.

### ***Early Recruitment Opportunities***

In an effort to increase the availability of teachers from diverse backgrounds, Carothers et al. (2019) suggested early intervention by guidance counselors at the high school level. The researchers continued that guidance counselors often have the opportunity to speak with students who are unsure of their postsecondary plans. These undecided students could be encouraged to explore the possibility of earning teaching credentials while enrolled in college thus increasing the number of available teachers and creating job opportunities for these undecided students-even if a long-term career in education may not result.

Carothers et al. (2019) conducted a study to address the effects of a program in which high school students considering teaching as a career dually enrolled at a local mid-sized public university while attending a summer camp named EDUCamp. One important finding was the program improved student perception of being prepared for the application process, including the financial and the matriculation process to the university. Student participants were surveyed prior to the start of the summer program and asked to measure their level of perceived preparedness to teach. Slightly more than one-third of the students indicated that they were prepared to teach or could train others how to teach before the start of the EDUCamp program, but when polled again at the conclusion of the camp nearly 100% of the group responded positively to the same question (Carothers et al., 2019). EDUCamp participants recognized, through additional questioning, that teaching was a more difficult job field than they had anticipated, but yet the authors noted an increase in number of students who reported their probability of

becoming teachers increasing from just slightly more than half of the participants to nearly 90%.

A similar university-public school partnership in Washington was evaluated by Schmitz et al. (2013). The partnership introduced minority high school students to teaching as a possible career route while also supporting them in graduating from high school. The students were then urged to enroll in community colleges or 4-year institutions to seek teaching careers. Through the program, students learned pedagogy, curriculum design, and classroom management while also gaining over 40 hours of field experience. Participants were exposed to high needs areas in education such as science, math, and special education. Students benefited from mentorship from teachers in the partner school district and gained access to college admissions and financial aid personnel. Schmitz et al. (2013) determined the program was successful because every participating student successfully completed high school and enrolled in a community college or in a 4-year university. University partnerships with school districts appear to be helping minority students get into teacher preparation programs, graduate from college, and begin teaching in the classroom.

Another path to diversifying the profession involves the children of diverse educators. Jacinto and Gershenson (2020) conducted an analysis using longitudinal data for a cohort of young adults to investigate parental influence in the selection of professions for teachers. One important finding was that teachers' children were slightly under 90% more likely than were nonteachers' children to become teachers. The authors concluded the transmission of teaching as a profession was higher for females than males. In addition, Jacinto and Gershenson (2020) noted an extremely limited transmission of

teaching to Black sons from their mothers and a higher transmission rate to Hispanic daughters from their mothers. Considering that nearly half of teachers are the children of teachers (Gershenson & Jacinto, 2019), diversifying the teaching profession might influence the demographics within the profession for years to come. It would be valuable for future researchers to investigate the intergenerational transmission of the profession as it may assist in understanding some factors in the recruitment and retention of teachers.

### **Barriers and Obstacles in the Teaching Pipeline**

There are multiple barriers and obstacles individuals face as they enter the teaching profession. Underrepresented teachers often struggle to get through the pipeline due to feelings of social isolation, the standardized testing requirements, the financial burden, and the lack of emotional support and mentorship provided prior to becoming a full-time teacher (Ahmad & Boser, 2014; Gist et al., 2017; Goe & Roth, 2019; Tyler et al., 2011; Wallace & Gagen, 2020). Unfortunately, many underrepresented teachers also feel inadequately prepared to enter the teaching field and often do not stay beyond a couple of years (Kohli, 2019; Pham, 2018).

### ***Social Isolation***

Goe and Roth (2019) conducted a mixed research study on the efforts of educator preparation programs to recruit, retain, and graduate diverse teacher education candidates. From 2016 to 2018 the authors conducted surveys with a total of 139 educator preparation programs and proceeded with phone interviews and site visits with some of those programs. Goe and Roth (2019) discovered 80% of educator preparation program respondents reported they have established some sort of outreach measures to

acquire or recruit applicants from underrepresented groups for teaching roles. Barriers reported by educator preparation programs included lack of support, lack of recruitment, lack of diversity at the institution, and a lack of partnership with K-12 schools. A number of primarily White educator preparation programs identified their existing student and staff demographics as a barrier to attracting diverse students. When minority students enroll in programs at mostly White colleges, they may encounter few students who are similar to them, producing a sense of isolation. Students may also notice that the teachers and staff are all or predominantly White, which can make it difficult for students to feel included in the program and raises questions about mentorship. Goe and Roth (2019) concluded personal relationships with advisors and faculty, financial support, cohort models, mentorship from more advanced students, and one on one support were strategies that assisted in the success of diversifying many educator preparation programs.

The development of structural supports (i.e., college application assistance, financial supports, and mentorship) that promote entrance to higher education was crucial for aspiring Black women educators transitioning from high school to university campuses (Gist et al., 2017). The transition from high school to postsecondary education necessitates the anticipation and development of solutions to address the challenges that Black female teacher candidates confront when entering postsecondary studies and teacher preparation programs. Gist et al. (2017) interviewed 32 Black females over the course of 5 years. In their study, Gist et al. (2017) noted emotional supports were necessary to help Black female educators navigate social isolation while enrolled in teacher preparation programs. Participants reported limited access to other underrepresented teachers who could serve as role models and mentors. Gist et al. (2017)

concluded educator preparation programs must encourage a Black women educator pipeline in secondary schools, as well as provide structural supports such as mentorship to ensure the successful transition of Black female educators from high school through completion of a teacher preparation program.

The feeling of social isolation continues in the pipeline once educators are in the classroom. Nelson (2019) conducted a case pair matching study to investigate how teachers from various racial backgrounds form and utilize social bonds to acquire professional and emotional resources at work. The author conducted observations and interviews with 98 teachers at multiple school sites with varying faculty compositions in the southeastern region of the United States. One important finding was when Black teachers were underrepresented, they relied on same-race relationships for emotional support. In addition, differences in access to resources in the organization and in social integration could be explained by racial differences. Nelson (2019) described Black minority teachers in their study to be “lonely onlies” in an occupation that rewards teamwork (p. 422). The author concluded coworker engagement is required for processes that influence commitment, well-being, and work performance, such as knowledge transfer, voice, and emotion management. Improvement in coworker interaction might improve with the diversification of staff.

### ***Standardized Testing***

Closing the teacher diversity gap in many respects begins with closing the achievement gap on teacher certification exams. Tyler et al. (2011) conducted a data analysis on Educational Testing Service (ETS) assessments to determine the extent of the achievement gap between teacher licensure candidates as a function of ethnicity and race.

Their results were in line with other academic skill assessments, such as the SAT® and ACT®, with significant disparities in average test scores among test takers from various racial/ethnic categories. The largest gaps in student performance were observed in the passing rates for Black test takers who performed at a 35% lower passing rate than White test takers (Tyler et al., 2011). Though a gap was present in every ethnic and racial group when compared to White testers, the gaps were not uniform across tests. Black test takers had the largest gaps in reading and mathematics, Hispanic test takers had the largest gap in mathematics, Asian test takers had the largest performance gap in reading, and Native American test takers had the largest gap in writing (Tyler et al., 2011). The authors also conducted interviews with preservice teachers and higher education teacher preparation programs. Some faculty members expressed concern with the ability to motivate students to attend test preparation support sessions their universities offer to address educational deficiencies. Minority faculty members expressed concern that the teacher licensure assessments lacked cultural relevance. As a result of their study, Tyler et al. (2011) concluded it is necessary to involve individuals from various backgrounds to evaluate each test item for bias.

Test anxiety is another barrier teacher candidates might face in the certification process. Anxiety is a prevalent cause of poor academic performance among students and many underrepresented students are generally anxious about tests (Dawood et al., 2016). In a recent study with participants from a Hispanic Serving Institution, Hardacre et al. (2021) suggested a connection to anxiety and the weight of certification exams due to the exams impact on a student's future livelihood. Test anxiety was a factor that hampered the capacity of students to effectively complete and pass their teaching certification

exams. Anxiety was reported more often by participants who claimed their program did not adequately prepare them for the certification exams and by participants for whom English is a second language. Based on their findings, Hardacre et al. (2021) recommended additional test preparation assistance for students such as preparation workshops and additional staff support.

In summary, the performance gaps experienced by minority preservice teachers during their primary and secondary education on high stakes standardized assessments persist in college entrance and teacher licensing examinations (Taylor et al., 2017). Minority preservice teachers on average have lower scale scores on teacher certification exams. The gap in performance was present even when Black preservice teachers had higher grade point averages than White preservice teachers who took the licensing examination (Taylor et al., 2017).

### ***Financial Burden***

The opportunity to enroll in college through participation in dual credit courses removes one barrier that inhibits racial/ethnic minorities from entering the profession. Additional obstacles faced by minority teacher candidates include costs of teacher preparation and certification exams. The cost of certification exams throughout the country ranges from \$60 to \$300 each and can be prohibitive to prospective teachers (Masterson & Gatti, 2022). The financial burden for certification is amplified for those who are unsuccessful on their initial exams and must pay to retake a certification test. When compared to the cost of a college education, the income potential of a teacher is a substantial barrier (Wallace & Gagen, 2020). For those individuals without the means to



pay for college, student loan debt amassed from four or more years in higher education becomes burdensome on a teaching income.

Minority students who pursue higher education frequently end up in greater debt than their White counterparts (Ahmad & Boser, 2014). Delisle and Holt (2017) described the web of loan options many aspiring educators must pursue to meet the financial requirements of certification (bachelor's degree, student teaching, master's degree). According to Delisle and Holt (2017), 67% of undergraduate education students borrowed on average \$26,792 in federal student loans. Those who pursued a master's degree were even further in debt. Depending on the loan program, borrowers can start accumulating interest from the date of disbursement. Although there are a variety of loan forgiveness programs for educators, many of the programs are complex and contradict each other. In some cases, completing the forgiveness process for one program is detrimental to the forgiveness plan in another loan program (Delisle & Holt, 2017).

In a grounded theory study with 18 Black male teachers, Scott and Alexander (2019) discovered tuition support and competitive salaries to be key recruitment tools. Participants reported the need to find certification programs that did not place them further into debt after obtaining student loans to pay for their undergraduate degrees. Stipends were suggested to recruit teachers to high need areas such as special education by participants who reported the underpayment of teachers as a barrier to diversifying the workforce (Scott & Alexander, 2019). Robinson et al. (2003) believed value was present in creating financial aid packages that might encourage students who had options outside of education to consider a career as a professional educator.

In an investigation of the perceptions of Latino preservice teachers on the barriers they face in pursuing education as a profession, Bergey et al. (2019) found cost to be one of the largest factors. The authors used a mixed method approach with 53 Latino men in teacher training programs in New York City. One important finding was participants reported teaching salaries as insufficient when compared to the amount of work teachers must do. In addition, participants expressed specific concerns about having to leave their current job to fulfill their student teaching obligations. Some participants shared that their financial obligations would result in them pursuing an alternative certification pathway because they could not afford to be without pay for an entire semester of student teaching. The authors concluded financial support might assist in having Latino education students complete teacher training programs.

Because many education preparation programs are not possible to complete while holding a job, education is not a career option for some potential teachers. The financial barrier is even more of a concern in the case of teacher candidates who are changing career pathways and hoping to enter the teaching field. Diversifying the teaching workforce implies a pay cut for many people of color who have chosen professions outside of education. For example, Black female college graduates who are not educators earn \$4000 more each year than those who chose to become teachers (Gershenson et al., 2022). The burden of diversifying the educator pipeline should not be a financial burden placed on people of color. Policy makers and school districts should investigate means to improve the compensation plans for all teachers. The removal of financial obstacles might assist in the diversification of the teaching workforce.

### ***Mentors and Emotional Supports***

Connection to others who have completed the certification process has been documented as an important factor in supporting future educators. Robinson et al. (2003) conducted a case study to explore the recruitment and retention of minority college students at a university in New Jersey. Through the Teacher Education Advocacy Center, the university was able to collaborate more closely to deliver coherent messages to future educators. Robinson et al. (2003) discovered the most valuable piece of the program was the involvement of caring mentors for students in the program. Students were able to reach out to these role models who served as guides throughout the program. Robinson et al. (2003) concluded that consistent support at all levels of the university was a key factor in students persisting to completion of educator credentials.

In a similar qualitative study, Wallace and Gagen (2020) focused on the experience of Black males enrolled in teacher preparation programs. The researchers noted that building relationships with professors who effectively modeled teaching methods allowed Black male teacher candidates the ability to develop skills needed in classrooms they themselves would manage. Additionally, it was expressed by the authors that professors who provided instruction, support, and certification preparation should be viewed as positive support factors. The advantages of interacting with classmates who have similar interests and goals was also mentioned by the participants. Being a part of campus organizations offered a sense of connection and the support needed to focus on their studies. According to Wallace and Gagen (2020), underrepresented education majors might “benefit from a dormitory living and learning community with fellow teacher education program students” (p. 424). The dormitory learning community could

help students better grasp course content, enhance motivation to finish the program, and provide the assistance they need to stay on track academically. Wallace and Gagen (2020) concluded their study should be replicated by individuals who are interested in improving teacher diversity.

### ***Inadequate Preparation***

Farinde-Wu et al. (2019) conducted a phenomenological study with 12 Black female teachers to investigate how they describe the influence of their teacher preparation programs on their decisions to remain in-service teachers. Most teachers did not feel their teacher preparation program prepared them adequately to enter the classroom. Four themes emerged from the data in this study: (a) limited knowledge of special education; (b) the absence of culturally responsive teaching; (c) the lack of training for teaching diverse students, particularly in Title 1 Schools; and (d) the inadequate length of teacher preparation programs (Farinde-Wu et al., 2019). Farinde-Wu et al. (2019) concluded Black female teachers were likely to leave education based on the perception of a lack of preparation prior to becoming classroom teachers.

Furthermore, Kohli (2019) conducted a narrative inquiry to investigate how experienced teachers of color felt their teacher preparation programs prepared them for the profession. Participants expressed contradictions in their preparation programs regarding the overall lack of discussion of issues involving racial injustice. Some participants expressed the idea that their preparation programs exacerbated inequity in education. The overall feeling was a lack of development of “racial literacies” could push teachers out of a largely White profession (Kohli, 2019, p. 43). Another finding was the need to have mentors of color who could assist teachers of color with navigating the

profession. Teachers of color should be equipped with the means to strengthen their racial literacies, the ability to expand their social networks, and teacher preparation programs should build their capacity (Kohli, 2019). Improving preparation can lead to teachers of color defying the odds and having lasting careers in education.

Preservice teachers often battle with the disparity between the lecture-based methods of their mentor teachers and the university or teacher preparation program approach of more student-centered learning and discussion. Pham (2018) conducted an ethnographic case study with two preservice teachers of color to determine how peer learning shapes educators. The preservice teachers in Pham's (2018) study had greater opportunity to engage one another regularly in self-reflection through the peer teaching model. Participants reported feeling ill equipped to address student trauma but through collaboration the teachers were able to reflect and strengthen their ability to address situations for which they did not personally feel prepared. Peer teaching aided the preservice teachers in comprehending the application of pedagogical skills taught by the university teacher preparation program in a contextualized setting. Pham (2018) concluded a structural shift in how teacher preparation programs prepare prospective educators is required. Mentor teachers and program supervisors should shift from only providing support in pedagogy and should begin to also provide systematic peer learning support by establishing structures for peer reflection and collaboration.

The gap between teachers' experiences and the children they educate is widening as the demographics of the teaching force do not reflect the racial and ethnic demographics of the United States (Braunstein et al., 2021; Ingersoll & May, 2011; Ingersoll & Merrill, 2017). As a result of a lack of employment of teachers with diverse

experiential backgrounds, diverse students are sometimes misunderstood due to cultural differences. Additionally, diverse students encounter fewer role models than their White peers, potentially causing a lack of motivation and additional misunderstandings. The need for diverse teachers is high, yet there is a considerable supply of available individuals to fill the positions if the proper steps are taken to recruit them.

### **Retention of Underrepresented Teachers**

Recruiting individuals to enter the profession is just part of the underrepresentation problem. Underrepresented teachers leave the profession at higher rates (Ingersoll & May, 2011). District and school leaders should address the negative experiences of underrepresented teachers and supports should be provided to help these teachers remain in the profession.

### ***Negative Experiences of Teachers***

Racialized experiences are often push factors for underrepresented teachers (Grooms et al., 2021). The researchers conducted a study with 216 minority educators in Iowa. The purpose of the study was to determine the relationship between racialized experiences of educators and their connection to their work environment. An important finding was when underrepresented educators felt stress about the way their school handled issues of diversity, educators were less satisfied with their jobs and experienced Racial Battle Fatigue. Racial Battle Fatigue (RBF) is the “psychological, emotional, physiological energy and time-related cost of fighting against racism” (Smith, 2009, p. 298). Educators in the study expressed concern with the treatment of minority students and resistance by their White peers to hold conversations that might address equity and justice. The authors concluded educators had higher rates of job satisfaction on campuses

where they felt they did not have to ignore issues of race and racism (Grooms et al., 2021).

Frank et al. (2021) discovered that racialized microaggressions were connected to teacher retention. The more racialized experiences teachers had, the more likely they were to consider leaving the field. Micro aggressive experiences and teachers' age were the two most important variables in predicting teachers' thoughts about leaving the profession. Teachers reported regularly experiencing questions of aptitude and intelligence based on their race. One participant described teaching mathematics while Black as "teaching with thick skin" to survive the constant attacks on her IQ, topic knowledge, and pedagogical practices (Frank et al., 2021, p. 387). Despite teachers' insistence that shared language helped them connect daily understandings to codified mathematics vocabulary and concepts, some teachers in this study said they were chastised by administrators for using it with Black students. Frank et al. (2021) concluded more experienced teachers have had longer careers, either in teaching or in other disciplines, and as a result, they are more likely to have professional experiences that assist them in navigating their work environments.

In an ethnographic multicase study, Choi (2018) investigated the experiences of two Korean American social studies teachers through observations and interviews. Important findings from the study included the disappointments teachers felt with prejudices they faced and a lack of satisfaction with Eurocentric curriculum. Choi (2018) concluded more attention is necessary to the experiences of Asian American teachers and suggested that more research investigations be conducted regarding how successful teachers of color navigate their identities throughout their tenure as educators.

Similarly, Amos (2020) explored the role of race in fostering a sense of alienation in Latina bilingual educators. Through a series of semi-structured interviews, teachers in the study expressed a feeling that their Spanish skills led to an invisible divide between the bilingual teachers and their White monolingual colleagues. Even though the teachers demonstrated their ability to be effective in the classroom, the Latina teachers felt their White colleagues responded to them with microaggressions. The teachers also shared a common perception that administration on their campus did not provide them with the proper instructional support to build their capacity as educators. The characteristics that contributed to their competence such as the ability to speak Spanish, their cultural awareness and bonds with students, and the use of successful discipline practices seemed to have resulted in the isolation of the Latina teachers. Amos (2020) recommended courageous leadership among administrators to encourage collaboration instead of competition among White teachers and minority teachers. Teachers need to have positive professional communities where they can receive the support they need to grow as educators.

Race and racism should be discussed in policy discussions that affect teacher education, especially when it comes to working conditions and attrition. To enhance the working environment for underrepresented teachers, microaggressions should be investigated and neutralized. Racism and its consequences should be considered in research models, policy discussions, and corrective policy actions. Frank et al. (2021) recommended administrators at the school district and school campus levels take proactive approaches to anti bias and race-focused professional development that address how racism and privilege manifest themselves in collegial and supervisory interactions.



Unfair practices such as being allocated to lower-tracked teaching assignments or having restricted prospects for leadership are factors in underrepresented teacher retention (Frank et al., 2021). To address racialized microaggressions, educational leaders should reconsider gatekeeping practices such as teacher appraisal systems that ignore the intangible practices brought to the profession by some underrepresented teachers.

### ***Support for Teachers***

One of the largest factors in teacher retention is support. Teachers should be supported by school leadership through high expectations, visibility, and other standard administrative practices. Stanley (2020) conducted a qualitative case study with 15 Black women to explore their experiences with administrative support. In their dealings with administration, the experiences of the teachers in the study underscored their intellectual, political, and social invisibility. According to Stanley (2020), the top three reasons Black women teachers left or were intending to leave their schools were “(1) arrested social justice efforts, (2) insufficient discipline support, and (3) relationships with administration” (p. 221). The consequences of discriminatory and repressive discipline policies, procedures, and practices, as well as the effects of combative or fragmented relationships, all influenced turnover decisions. Some educators reported their administration had lower standards for minority students (Stanley, 2020). One teacher reported apathetic administration. Another teacher stated her concerns were ignored by administration for an extended period and that the pressure of being the only voice for minority students was forcing her to leave her school.

The lack of visibility of school leaders and the lack of high expectations for students has a negative impact on the learning environment. A participant in Stanley’s

(2020) study believed that her school leader's absence contributed to the school's disciplinary difficulties and hampered her capacity to provide instruction to her students. Another participant stated that suspending children implies students are solely responsible for their behavior, rather than putting some responsibility on school officials to review their policies (Stanley, 2020). Stanley (2020) argued that school leaders might support underrepresented teachers more intentionally by practicing critical reflexivity and redressing institutions, practices and policies that correlate to inequitable outcomes for minority students.

Stanley (2020) also reported on the unawareness administrators have to the social isolation Black women teachers experience. The administrators for the teachers in this study dismissed Black women teachers' requests for assistance with instructional and disciplinary needs. The teachers also reported their administrators failed to support minority students and perpetuated inequitable disciplinary practices. According to the educators, their administration failed to build solid, trustworthy relationships with them, leading to increased feelings of isolation. Stanley (2020) concluded that administrators should strive to build “strong relationships, leadership visibility, and high expectations” to help combat this isolation. (p. 222).

Furthermore, Samuels et al. (2021) conducted a sensemaking autoethnography to investigate the personal experience of Black women in education. One important finding was the belief that professional development needed to be more well-rounded to include support for the emotional well-being of educators. When designing preparation programs and making decisions regarding professional development, it is important that the experiences of Black women are considered. Samuels et al. (2021) believed improving

the attrition rates of Black women will increase the number of underrepresented students who are successful in K-20 education. The authors concluded Black women stayed in the classroom because they desire to be role models, are determined to prove their credibility, believe that they can add value to other teachers, and want to disprove negative stereotypes of Black women. In their specific cases, Samuels et al. (2021) believed Black women's personal motivation and intentionality has caused them to remain in the profession.

In a nationwide study of the Black teacher turnover rate, Campoli (2017) discovered teachers who felt they had strong bonds with faculty members and a supportive administration were more likely to return to the classroom the following year. Principals who provided recognition, establish a clear vision for their campuses and encourage staff members had more success with teacher retention. Due to the influence of school leaders on school climate and culture, Campoli (2017) recommended the use of funds provided through Title II of Every Student Succeeds Act to improve administrative preparation and administrative professional learning to influence the retention of underrepresented teachers. Additional recommendations included prioritizing time during the school day for teachers to collaborate and plan. Campoli (2017) suggested future researchers investigate the effect of social ties among underrepresented teachers on teacher retention.

Administrators are an important piece of the teacher retention puzzle. Boyd et al. (2011) utilized surveys and administrative data to investigate the connection between the decisions teachers made to remain in the profession and the working conditions in New York schools. One important finding was the importance of administrative support to the

retention decisions of teachers. Dissatisfaction with administration for over 40% of respondents was the most important factor in the decision to leave (Boyd et al., 2011). Teachers look to administrators to identify the vision and goals of a school, set high expectations, foster collaboration, and provide curriculum support. According to the findings, strategies focused on enhancing school administration may be successful in lowering teacher turnover (Boyd et al., 2011). The authors concluded future researchers should seek to determine why support from administration and the actions of administrators that influences the decision of teachers to stay or leave the profession.

### **Underrepresented Teachers in Suburban Schools**

Suburban areas are increasingly becoming more diverse. Minorities represented at least 35% of suburban populations in over one-third of the largest metropolitan areas in the United States according to the 2010 census (Frey, 2018). As the diversity in suburban areas increases, decision makers should consider how students might benefit from a more balanced representation in teaching staff.

When welcoming diverse teaching staff to a campus, attention should be given to the socialization of underrepresented staff members. Lee (2013) conducted a qualitative study into the socialization of teachers of color in suburban schools. The author conducted a co-constructed research design with eight participants and utilized a constant comparative method along with member checking. Lee (2013) determined minority teachers felt unfairly scrutinized by parents, teachers, and administrators as compared to their European-American counterparts. Participants reported hiding parts of their identity while working in their suburban schools and participants also expressed a feeling of involuntary isolation from the other faculty members on campus. Lee (2013) called for

in-service that might address cross-cultural issues that affect the interactions between teachers of color and White teachers. Lee (2013) also concluded administrators creating time and space for teachers of color to meet could be a useful forum for discussion of issues as they arise.

Sosa and Martin (2020) conducted an extended case method study on teacher perceptions of racial equity training in a suburban district in Illinois. In response to the diversification of the student population within the district, district officials began requiring racial equity training on race and racism for teachers and staff. Teachers of color reported feeling a lack of commitment in the district to moving beyond just talking about race because the training was not required for everyone. The underrepresented teachers expressed a lack of support and a general struggle with the barrier of teacher resistance to attending the training. Teachers of color shared feelings of frustration in working with their White colleagues when faced with issues of racial prejudice against students. In addition, teachers of color often reflected upon the defensiveness of their White colleagues when discussing issues of race and equity. Many underrepresented teachers felt a strong need to serve as intermediaries for students of color struggling with the balance of their culture and environment. The teachers of color in the study repeatedly discussed the psychological, physical, and emotional costs of repeated and pervasive instances of racism in their work environment. Sosa and Martin (2020) concluded school districts should fully commit to creating a more inclusive environment for students and staff.

### **Underrepresentation in Texas High Schools**

Teacher preparation programs and decision makers in Texas schools have failed to recruit and retain teachers who are ethnically/racially representative of the demographics of the students in Texas classrooms. A series of quantitative studies have been conducted to investigate the racial/ethnic breakdown of Texas high school teachers and the imbalance that exist in the representation of minority students with teachers who share their race or ethnicity (Bone, 2011; Khan, 2014, Moye, 2020). Bone (2011) found that between the 1999-2000 and 2009-2010 school years, the proportion of Black students was more than twice that of Black teachers. There was a 22.20% to 40.20% increase of Hispanic students over the same 11-year span, however the Hispanic teaching population only rose from 3.4% to 8.75% during the same time (Bone, 2011). While underrepresented teachers persisted during the period, White teachers were represented at a rate of 2 to1 during the years studied.

Further research conducted by Khan (2014) explored the issue of representation from the 2002-2003 school year through the 2012-2013 school year. Khan (2014) revealed the representation of White teachers had reduced from 76.7% to 68.5%. Black teacher representation was 7.9% during the 2002-2003 school and increased to 9.3% by the 2012-2013 school year. An increase in Asian teachers was noted from 0.9% to 1.6% during the same time frame. Hispanic teacher representation notably increased from 14.6% to 20.6%. Although Hispanic teacher representation improved over this time frame, results indicated Hispanic teachers were represented the least at the high school level in Texas when compared to elementary and middle schools (Khan, 2014).

Similar trends of underrepresentation were described by Moye (2020) who examined the same issue from the 2010-2011 school year through the 2018-2019 school year. Moye (2020) documented an increase of Hispanic teachers from 17.08% to 22.23% and an increase in Black teacher representation from 7.46% to 8.57%. During the same period, Hispanic students were the largest represented group in Texas schools ranging from 43.69% to 49.50% of the student population from 2010-2011 and 2018-2019. Black students decreased in representation from 11.68% to 10.63%. The representation of Asian teachers remained below 2% throughout the period of study while the Asian student population grew from 1.92% to 2.63% (Moye, 2020). On average between the 2010-2011 and 2018-2019 school years, White teacher representation was 31.01% greater than that of White students, Hispanic student representation was 26.94% higher than Hispanic teacher representation, and Black student representation was 3.11% over that of Black teacher representation.

The researchers in each of these longitudinal studies found an imbalance in student and teacher ethnicity/race. The percentage of White high school students and teachers have declined over the years leading to more diverse classrooms in Texas high schools (Bone, 2011; Khan, 2014; Moye, 2020). A student population that is increasingly more diverse calls for a teaching population to match that diversity for the benefit of all students. Although these studies (Bone, 2011; Khan, 2014; Moye, 2020) highlight a deficiency in ethnoracial representation, the information provided in these quantitative studies is limited. Khan (2014) suggested future qualitative research regarding the factors that might influence underrepresented teacher recruitment and retention as a tool for decision makers to gain a better understanding of how to address the ethnoracial

imbalance. A qualitative approach is needed to understand the reasons behind the imbalance that exist in secondary school teacher representation.

### **Summary**

In summary, the recruitment and retention of underrepresented teachers is valuable to all students, not just students of color. Across the literature, themes regarding the barriers to entering the profession and the need for support while in the profession repeat. Underrepresented teachers who enter the profession through traditional and alternative pathways often face barriers such as social isolation, standardized testing, and financial burdens. Unfortunately, many underrepresented teachers also report being ill prepared to enter the classroom and feel as though they were not provided with the level of support needed to be successful. Once in the classroom, underrepresented teachers express concerns with negative racial experiences and the need for administrative and mentor support.



## **CHAPTER III**

### **Method**

The purpose of this descriptive phenomenological study was to describe the experiences of underrepresented teachers at suburban secondary schools with diverse student populations but low teacher diversity. The goal of this study was to identify ways to increase the representation of diverse educators in schools. Knowledge about the experiences of underrepresented teachers will help increase awareness of the recruitment and retention efforts that have allowed them to persist in the field. The following sections are addressed in this chapter: (a) research design, (b) selection of participants, (c) context of the study, (d) data collection, (e) instrumentation, (f) data analysis, and (g) trustworthiness.

#### **Research Design**

Qualitative research utilizes a “wide- and deep-angle lens” to answer a question through exploration (Johnson & Christensen, 2017, p.35). Data are collected and analyzed to establish themes or patterns based on the viewpoints of participants and the researcher's reflexivity (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As such, qualitative research yields a detailed description of the problem posed by the researcher.

A phenomenological research design was selected for this study. Phenomenology is heavily rooted in psychology and refers to consciousness and how one perceives their experiences (Moustakas, 1994). The intent in a phenomenological study is to produce a composite description of what and how individuals experience a specific phenomenon (Beck, 2021; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994).

The specific phenomenological method chosen for this inquiry was a descriptive phenomenology based on the methods of Paul Colaizzi (1978). In Colaizzi's (1978) methodology, the researcher begins with an examination of their potential biases of the phenomenon. This practice is in alignment with the phenomenological elements of epoché and bracketing (Husserl, 1973; Moustakas, 1994). Removing preconceived ideas limits the possibility of the researcher contaminating the results with their presuppositions. Colaizzi (1978) recommended the researcher return to the participants to validate findings prior to the determination of an exhaustive description of the phenomenon.

In summary, qualitative methods are employed when it is important to speak directly with individuals to better understand and address an issue (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A phenomenological approach was an appropriate design to understand the experience of underrepresentation of minority teachers who serve in suburban schools with diverse student populations. By utilizing Colaizzi's (1978) descriptive phenomenological methodology I sought to learn about the experiences of underrepresented teachers and create a composite description of their experience.

### **Context of the Study**

Although Houston is one of the most diverse cities in the United States of America, large discrepancies are present in the diversity of teacher populations in the diverse schools of the region. The three most populous counties in the Houston area are Harris County, Fort Bend County, and Montgomery County (Understanding Houston, 2020). In 2018-2019, the racial and ethnic breakdown of public-school students in the three-county area was 20.9 % White, 51.4% Hispanic, 18.1% Black, 7.1 % Asian, and

2% other. In contrast, the racial/ethnic percentage of teachers in the three-county area was 53 % White, 20.4 % Hispanic, 21.1% Black, and 5.3% other. A stark contrast exists in Montgomery County where 81.8% of teachers are White and 12.25% of teachers are Hispanic whereas 49.4% of the student population is White and 38.1% of the student population is Hispanic. Even with this imbalance, the teacher workforce in the Houston area is more diverse than the state of Texas where 60.9% of teachers are White, 25.9% are Hispanic, 10.1% are Black, and 3.1% are other (Understanding Houston, 2020). It is important to explore how and why underrepresented teachers are staying in classrooms in the Houston area to explore solutions to close the gap representation.

I examined the phenomenon among teachers in the high school campuses of one suburban Houston school district. The teaching population is more than 75% White whereas the student population is approximately 45% White. The Hispanic student population makes up 40% of the total student population, whereas Hispanic teachers are a little more than 10% of the district's teaching population. Black teachers are approximately 7% of the teaching population whereas Asian teachers make up about 1% of the teaching population.

### **Selection of Participants**

Participants were selected via criterion sampling as it was important to ensure that all participants have experienced the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The criteria for participation in this study were (a) an individual who identifies as a minority teacher, and (b) an individual who has at least five years of teaching experience at secondary campuses with diverse student populations but low teacher diversity. Snowball sampling provided additional identification and recruitment of participants.

Using Texas Academic Performance Reports, a Houston area school district in which every high school campus has a teaching staff that is 70% or more White whereas the student population is less than 55% White was identified. The diversity mismatch is more pronounced on some campuses than others. One school has a student population that is 60% Hispanic with a teaching staff that is 75% White whereas another campus has a teaching staff that is 90% White with a student population that is 50% White, 30% Hispanic, and 15% Black and Asian. Participants in this school district who met the criteria were identified via campus websites and they were emailed an invitation to participate in the study.

Colaizzi (1978) did not suggest a set number of participants. Data saturation can be achieved after the analysis of as few as six interviews (Guest et al., 2006). As the goal in qualitative research is to gather extensive details about everyone studied, I aimed to have a range of 6 to 12 participants in hopes that I would be able to share a range of perspectives from teachers of different ethnic and racial backgrounds as they described the experiences of underrepresented teachers (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I determined no additional interviews needed to be conducted after data saturation was reached with the eighth interview due to in depth descriptions given by the participants in the study (Beck, 2021).

### **Data Collection**

Before data were collected, approval was granted from the university's Institutional Review Board, as shown in Appendix C. I served as the primary instrument as participants completed an interview protocol designed to understand perceptions of underrepresented teachers who have experienced teaching at secondary campuses with

diverse student populations in a suburban setting. One-on-one interviews were conducted virtually via video software on Zoom. Individual interviews took approximately 45 minutes. The interviews were recorded in the Zoom platform for initial data collection. To maintain participant privacy, individuals were not required to use video on the Zoom call or to identify themselves by their name in the recording. Recordings were transcribed into word processing software to begin the data analysis process. A research journal was used to take notes throughout the data collection process.

### **Role of the Researcher**

I have been interested in diversity and representation for well over 20 years. I grew up attending a very ethnically diverse elementary school and a diverse middle school. When my family moved, I attended a school that was predominantly White with very few ethnically diverse staff members. I was lucky enough to be taught by some teachers who looked like me over the years and I can still remember the profound impact those experiences made. As an educator, I have served five secondary campuses throughout my career. On three of those campuses, I was one of very few Black staff members. I witnessed more connections between students and staff at the campuses that were much more diverse in both student and staff population.

In my current role as an administrator, I am tasked with hiring staff members, and I am very cognizant of the need to diversify our staff. Although we make strides to diversify, we have not been able to retain ethnically diverse staff members over the years. Due to my personal life experiences and my current role, I have a strong desire to understand the experiences of underrepresented teachers to assist in increasing representation for future students. It was imperative that I bracketed my perceptions,

feelings, and beliefs throughout the study and focus on how participants described their experiences (Beck, 2021; Colaizzi, 1978; Moustakas, 1994). My role in this study was to serve as the primary instrument while using inductive and deductive reasoning to develop a holistic account of the perspectives of underrepresented teachers (Creswell & Poth, 2018). To manage my potential biases throughout the study I used member checks, saturation, and reflexivity.

### **Instrumentation**

Moustakas (1994) identified interviews as the typical method of data collection in a phenomenological study. Interviews can assist in understanding a phenomenon from the perspective of those who have lived through it (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In addition, one on one interviews can provide an opportunity to develop a rapport with the participants and ask more probing questions (Johnson & Christensen, 2017). The instrumentation for this investigation included the collection of participant answers in virtual one-on-one interviews. The virtual setting provided participants flexibility in scheduling and allowed them to be in a familiar and comfortable setting during the interviews. The video recording and transcription of the interviews also allowed me to be fully present during the interviews and to be more attentive to the nonverbal behaviors and nuances of speech of the teachers in the study after the one on one interviews were concluded.

Themes in the review of literature regarding the recruitment and retention of underrepresented teachers were the basis for the interview questions. Questions in the interview stage of the study included participant backgrounds that led them to work in K-12 education, their experiences on their current campus, and their thoughts on the recruitment and retention of underrepresented teachers. The questions allowed me to gain

an understanding of their background and how it may or may not have contributed to their longevity in the classroom.

Questions for this study were initially developed through coursework under the direction of a professor. During the class I had the opportunity to test several questions on minority K-12 educators in my class in addition to having minority high school teachers review the questions. Revisions were made to the questions as I received feedback from my professor and the teachers. In the fall of 2021, I had the opportunity to complete an Institutional Review Board approved pilot study with similar questions for this proposed study as a part of my coursework. In the pilot study I interviewed and collected data from two teachers with experience in suburban schools in the Greater Houston area. Member checks of the data were completed to check the accuracy of the data and increase the credibility of the pilot study (Kornbluh, 2015; Shenton, 2004). Based on the outcomes of the pilot study, refinements were made to improve the questions for this dissertation study (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

To participate in the study, teachers provided informed consent (Appendix A) verbally. An interview guide approach was used to ensure interviews stay on track (Johnson & Christensen, 2017). The full protocol for this study consisted of interview questions (Appendix B). Additional clarifying questions were asked during interviews to gain a deeper understanding of participant experiences.

### **Data Analysis**

Colaizzi's (1978) data analysis method was the primary data analysis approach for this study. The seven steps for the Colaizzi method include (1) reading verbatim transcripts to become familiar with the data, (2) extracting significant statements

pertaining to the phenomenon from the data, (3) formulating meanings for the significant statements in Step 2, (4) organizing those meanings into clusters of themes, (5) developing an exhaustive description of the phenomenon using the themes established in Step 4, (6) identifying the fundamental structure of the phenomenon, and (7) returning to participants to validate the findings of the study (Colaizzi, 1978). An eighth step in the Colaizzi analysis that can be used if necessary is to work any new relevant data into the final research product (Beck, 2021).

I took a data analysis spiral approach for this study. A data analysis spiral was ideal for this study because it allowed me to collect data, analyze data, and represent the data simultaneously (Creswell & Poth, 2018). While waiting to interview additional participants, I reflected on memos and formed preliminary codes to get to the essence of the phenomenon.

Interview recordings were transcribed into word processing software by me as the researcher. I read through transcriptions to identify significant statements and began first-cycle coding within the word processing software by extracting significant statements from the data. As I completed this process for each interview, I made memos of emergent ideas in my research journal to assist in formulating ideas for how the data would be represented. First cycle codes and corresponding significant statements were transferred to a searchable spreadsheet so I could identify themes in the data. I completed multiple cycles of coding as I connected the experiences shared by each participant to the literature and the experiences of other participants to assess the defining characteristics of the experiences of underrepresented teachers. A codebook was created to organize and identify the code names, descriptions, and examples of codes from the study (Creswell &



Poth, 2018). Through this process I identified the fundamental structure of the phenomenon and returned to participants to validate the findings. Finally, I reported the findings in a narrative form to create a vicarious experience of the shared experiences of the teachers who participated in the study (Johnson & Christensen, 2017).

### **Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness is key in qualitative research because researchers desire to share accurate accounts of their studies. Creswell & Poth (2018) recommend the use of at least two strategies for trustworthiness. I utilized the strategies of member checking and reflexivity.

To ensure I shared participant experiences accurately, I used member checks to allow participants to verify the interview captured their experience (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Participants had the opportunity to review their interview transcripts and the initial codes that were developed from their interviews. Member checks allowed me to ask participants directly if I captured their experience and gave participants an opportunity to expand upon what they shared if they desired to do so. I interviewed participants until I reached saturation. If saturation were not reached, I could not be sure that I am sharing the full picture of those individuals who have experienced the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth 2018).

I also used the strategy of reflexivity to ensure I have a quality phenomenological study. Maintaining a reflexive journal that was utilized every time something was done in relation to the study allowed me to document my biases, assumptions, thoughts, and ideas throughout the study (Beck, 2021; Colaizzi, 1978; Creswell & Poth, 2018). By engaging

in a reflexive practice, I was able to provide a realistic and accurate picture of what participants in the study have experienced.

### **Summary**

In summary, the focus of Chapter III was the phenomenological method that was used in the study. Chapter III began with an overview of the research design. Following information on the context of the study was the selection of participants and the data collection method. The instrumentation section covers the design of interview questions. Colaizzi's data analysis method is then described and finally, trustworthiness is discussed.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **Findings**

#### **Overview**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the experiences of underrepresented teachers at secondary schools with diverse student populations but low teacher diversity. An in-depth investigation of the perceptions and experiences of the participants in this study revealed the motivating factors and barriers to entering and remaining in diverse suburban schools. Chapter IV begins with the demographic characteristics of each participant. The themes and subthemes from the analysis of the eight individual interviews are discussed in narrative form and presented in tables. Finally, a description of the experiences of underrepresented teachers in diverse suburban schools is given.

#### **Participants**

Criterion sampling (Creswell & Poth, 2018) was used to identify potential participants for this study based on the following criteria: (a) an individual who identifies as a minority teacher, and (b) an individual who has at least five years of teaching experience at a secondary campus with diverse student populations but low teacher diversity in a suburban setting. Three participants were male, and five participants were female. One of the males and two of the females were Hispanic. Two of the males and three of the females were Black. To ensure confidentiality, pseudonyms (i.e., Alex, Jason, Amber, Jada, Leo, Luisa, Isabela, and Destiny) were used. The participants were evenly divided in terms of the preparation methods used to enter the profession; four entered the profession through a traditional educator certification program and four entered the

profession via alternative certification methods. The years of teaching experience for the participating teachers ranged from seven years to 21 years of experience. Table 1 details the demographic characteristics of the teachers who participated in the study.

**Table 1**

*Demographic Data Collected from Participants*

Participant	Gender	Ethnicity/Race	Preparation Method	Years of Experience
Leo	Male	Hispanic	Alternative	7
Jada	Female	Black	Alternative	10
Jason	Male	Black	Alternative	10
Alex	Male	Black	Traditional	11
Isabela	Female	Hispanic	Alternative	15
Amber	Female	Black	Traditional	16
Destiny	Female	Black	Traditional	18
Luisa	Female	Hispanic	Traditional	21

**Emergent Themes**

Colaizzi's (1978) descriptive phenomenological methodology and Saldana's (2016) coding techniques were utilized to identify themes in the data. Through the common experiences of the participants, five major themes emerged from the data. The themes were Pathway to Education, Challenges, Support, The Reasons Why, and Recommendations. Subthemes in the data provided a deeper understanding of the experiences of the underrepresented teachers in this study. The themes and subthemes are

discussed in the following section. A summary of the major themes is provided in Table 2.

**Table 2**

*Operational Definitions Relating to Emergent Themes*

Theme	Operational Definition
Pathway to Education	Actions and experiences which led to underrepresented teachers entering the profession.
Challenges	The barriers, obstacles, and difficulties faced by underrepresented teachers as they entered and persist in the profession.
Support	The structures and individuals who help and provide comfort to underrepresented teachers.
The Reasons Why	Day to day experiences that underrepresented teachers refer to as their reason for persisting in the profession.
Recommendations	The advice from underrepresented teachers to teacher preparation programs and school districts regarding the recruitment and retention of underrepresented teachers.

***Pathway to Education***

Participants identified multiple catalysts to their decisions to enter the K-12 workforce. The Pathway to Education theme emerged and presented the following sub-themes: (a) Experience in Schools, (b) Mentorships, and (c) Family. Table 3 contains the descriptions of each subtheme.

**Table 3***Description of Emergent Themes of Pathway to Education*

Pathway to Education	Description	Significant Statement Example
Experience in Schools	Previous employment or volunteering in the K-12 school system.	“I was in PTO and a lot of the things that interacted with the parent piece to the education world ..., I just felt like, wow, I would have a lot to offer these kids.”
Mentorships	Relationships with experienced educators.	“My high school coach played a big part... I’m just here following in those footsteps.”
Family Influence	The role of family in the decision to work in K-12 education.	“I’d just become a mom and I needed more stability in terms of hours.”

**Experience in Schools.** A common subtheme of *Pathway to Education* was *Experience in Schools*. All eight participants referred to how time they spent in schools influenced their decision to become K-12 educators. Jason shared that he “fell into education” after having a job as a teacher’s aide while working on his undergraduate degree. Prior to committing to an education major, Destiny spent time observing classes in schools. She expressed that she “did not want to be a teacher” and then she “went and observed a class and it was like, I get it.” Leo was an occasional substitute in schools before changing his career path to become a high school teacher through an alternative certification program. Jada was influenced to leave her corporate job and become a teacher from her time volunteering in her child’s parent teacher organization. She stated, “I shifted gears from me being a parent to being involved in another aspect and thought how much fun it would be to really get these kids to where I know I could get them.” The

time these teachers spent in schools prior to entering the profession allowed them to gain a better understanding of K-12 education and to see themselves in teaching roles.

**Mentorships.** The second subtheme of *Pathway to Education* was *Mentorships*. The advice participants received from individuals who were already in the teaching profession steered them in the direction of education careers. Alex mentioned the influence of a high school coach on his decision to enter the teaching field saying, “just seeing him work and seeing him interact with us... He drove me to pretty much be the person I am today.” Jason was working in the business sector but had a mentor working in schools who encouraged him to utilize his STEM background and become a certified teacher by asking, “have you ever thought about teaching?” His mentor helped guide him step by step through the alternative certification process until he achieved his certificate. Destiny had a family friend who was an educator who asked her, “why don’t you teach?” Similarly, Isabela also had a family friend who encouraged her to enter education as a “fall back plan” when she was unsure of what she wanted to do after graduating college with degrees in History and Political Science. Jada reached out to the principal at her daughter’s school to learn about the options available to become a certified teacher. The principal guided her through the process of alternative certification. The conversations the participants were able to have with trusted individuals helped them develop a curiosity to explore education and their mentors provided direction to make the pathways to certification clearer.

**Family Influence.** The final subtheme of *Pathway to Education* was *Family Influence*. Most of the female participants referred to family being an influence in their decision to become teachers. Luisa transitioned from working in a higher education

setting to secondary education because “I’d just become a mom and I needed more stability in terms of hours.” Jada recalled thinking a career in education would “be a good fit for my family in terms of what our needs were at the time.” Family also influenced where Jada worked as she stated, “I did not want to be in a different school district with different days off.” Another aspect of family influence involved a family history of educators. Luisa proudly expressed, “I come from a family that has four educators alone on my mom’s side.” Further, Isabela’s mother is an elementary teacher, and that familial connection helped her settle into a career in education. A family history of educators, and the ability to be on the same schedule as their children while also providing income for their family influenced most female participants in this study.

### ***Challenges***

The second theme, *Challenges*, emerged when discussing the experiences of the underrepresented teachers. Challenges are the barriers, obstacles, and difficulties faced by underrepresented teachers as they entered and persist in the profession. All participants referenced some difficulties they have experienced over the years. Challenges are presented in the following sub-themes: (a) Social Isolation, and (b) Responsibility. Table 4 contains the descriptions of these subthemes.



**Table 4***Description of Emergent Themes of Challenges*

Challenges	Description	Significant Statement Example
Social Isolation	Working in an environment in which not many of your colleagues are similar to you.	“When I first got there, I looked around and it was just me. It was really noticeable.” (continued)
Challenges	Description	Significant Statement Example
Responsibility	Feeling obligated to bridge a cultural divide.	“If I don’t do it, who else will.”

**Social Isolation.** A universal subtheme for participants was a feeling of *Social Isolation*, particularly when they first came to their current campus. Alex described his first staff meeting by saying, “I looked around. And just a natural instinct is to see how many other people look like me... The first thing I noticed is not many people on this campus look like me.” Similarly, Luisa stated, “when I first got there, there was no real Hispanic representation at all.”

Isabela described her arrival as a “shell shock” after coming from a much more diverse teaching environment. She shared that her biggest challenge in working at her school were “the assumptions that I am fluent in Spanish and assumptions that I speak for everyone that’s Latina.” Isabela often felt her colleagues would “assume that they could control me. There were teachers thinking they could just bulldoze me” in relation to lesson planning and team decisions. She was often left out of plans in her early years on campus and not looked to as a professional who could assist in lesson planning. Isabela also felt her experiences were unique as a Hispanic woman from Arizona as she

explained the culture there was very different from Texas. She felt she did not fit in much with the majority White staff or with some of the few Hispanic staff members on campus. Isabela felt “stuck in the middle” because “when you are Latina or Latino, and you don’t speak Spanish other Latinos think you are whitewashed. No one understands you; you are not white enough and you are not brown enough.”

Amber found her experience to be isolating not only from a racial mismatch but also from a mismatch of social issues. Amber arrived on her campus during a contentious national election season, and she expressed feeling isolated in the following statement:

It is hard being in an environment that you feel openly supports some things that you don’t. Some days it was really hard for me to be professional, and I learned to shut up sometimes and just walk away because it’s easier.

In some of her more trying moments Amber found it difficult to cope because she did not have a “teacher bestie to run to.”

**Responsibility.** The subtheme of *Responsibility* emerged from the expectations the teachers often put on themselves to be responsible for the behavior of students and the future employment of diverse teachers. When working with emerging bilingual students Leo often conducts some of his lessons in Spanish to assist in content acquisition for his students. Though he knows it is beneficial to them to hear content in their native language, he described feeling like he had to “push them so that they don’t get used to not learning the language (English).” As the only Hispanic and Spanish speaking teacher in his department, Leo felt a great responsibility to take in all the emerging bilingual students he could because he is the only one with a similar background to them.

Jada expressed a “responsibility and duty as a Black teacher to ensure” that Black students on campus “carry themselves and act a certain way.” She reflected on her earlier years on campus when she was the only Black female teacher and remembered being particularly hard on her Black female students. She emphasized that she “wanted to be a more positive light” and remind them regularly that they did not have to “be loud to be seen...and they should be prideful of their strong history and heritage.”

Destiny also felt a responsibility to filter herself as an underrepresented teacher. Destiny felt she needed to make sure she “was proving myself” and always keeping her composure. She described her need to filter as follows:

Sometimes it is very easy for the majority race to get upset and get passionate and to cry and it is understood. I feel like if I do the same thing then I am looked at as if I have an attitude or I have to pick and choose how I say things. I get this with parents, administration, and other teachers. If I get too passionate, they assume I am attacking and I have to figure out how to not come off that way.

The pressure Destiny felt to maintain her composure was not only for her sake. She also “wanted to make sure my actions did not lead to other Black teachers not being hired because of any negative experiences with me.”

Alex and Jason both mentioned a responsibility to be mentors to new teachers. Alex said, “I find myself in a different role guiding new teachers and helping them be successful.” He also shared, “I’m one of the first ones trying to get them comfortable.” He takes the time to explain to them what to expect and how things are done on campus. He felt an obligation to their success and stated, “they don’t know until they are told and they are used to their habits that they have always done until someone actually tells

them.” Likewise, Jason’s feeling of responsibility to mentor new teachers stretch beyond his campus. He stated, “I know for my content area we are often the only ones that teach the subject in our building. And so I try to help new teachers too that are new to the district.”

Finally, Amber brought up a responsibility to advocate for the diversification of staff. She was often met with assumptions of colleagues that the race/ethnicity of individuals was the same. She recalled a time when she brought up the discussion about how few Black teachers were on staff, and someone would try to remind her that there was a Black math teacher. Amber would have to clarify for them that the individual was not Black and that minority teachers can come from a variety of different backgrounds. For the benefit of all students, Amber felt an obligation to bring up representation. At times she felt that the attitude regarding diversification on her campus is to “keep it moving” instead of “openly discussing the lack of representation.” Despite the nonchalant approach she believes is present at her campus, she continues to advocate for diversity.

### ***Support***

*Support* emerged as a theme as underrepresented teachers discussed their reasons for remaining in profession and reasons they could potentially leave. The theme of Support is presented in two sub themes: (a) Teacher Support and (b) Administrative Support. Table 5 contains the subtheme descriptions for Support.

**Table 5***Description of Emergent Themes of Support*

Support	Description	Significant Statement Example
Teacher Support	Assistance provided by colleagues.	“Most of us wouldn’t have lasted as long as we have lasted without that support system.”
Administrative Support	Assistance provided by school leaders.	“They are good about giving a helping hand. They want you to do well. They don’t want you to crash and burn.”

**Teacher Support.** All participants mentioned some level of *Teacher Support* as a reason for their success and ability to remain in the teaching field. Relationships with colleagues assisted multiple teachers in this study. Alex shared that he “had a lot of teachers help me get to where I’m supposed to be on this campus.” He explained that “a lot of the things they told me, I still use today so I am thankful for them.” Amber commented a teacher near her and some counselors on staff at her school have made “it easier” to work in the building. She often must plan visits to sit down and decompress with these individuals because they are not near her classroom. Luisa praised her department chair for “helping me and backing me up when I pressed to teach advanced courses.” She appreciated that her department chair saw her value as a classroom teacher who could be successful teaching upper-level courses instead of keeping her in the introductory course.

Due to entering the profession through an alternative certification program, Jason found his mentor teacher to be one of the biggest supports. Jason stated, “they set us up with a mentor...because I had no education background it really helped out quite a lot.”

One of the most valuable practices in his time with a mentor was teacher observations. He shared, “being able to see other teachers just teach, I picked up little things as I went along and that was really good for me starting out.” He continues to use observation as a primary tool in growing as an educator through his relationships with other staff members. He noted “if I just go in their classroom for something and see how they speak to students or when they are in the hallway seeing how they interact with students is really helpful to my own development.”

For Isabela having teachers who support her was one of the primary reasons she has persisted as an educator. She said, “a person can only handle so much crap and everybody’s crap load is different...we last because of our support systems.” She has leaned on her support system of teachers regularly to vent when she is tired and exhausted, and their support renews her spirit and will to teach.

**Administrative Support.** The second subtheme for *Support* was *Administrative Support*. One of the common statements from the teachers in the study was that they feel like an equal on their campus by administration. Alex stated, “I am thankful they see me for me, and not as anybody less.” He also praised how understanding his administration team is by saying, “this is one of the best administrations I’ve ever worked for...they are relatable, and they understand coaches. They understand coaches and schedules and the long nights and early mornings.” He appreciated what he felt was a feeling of mutual respect from the administrative team and the coaching staff.

Jason referred to the administrative staff on his campus regularly telling teachers, “we are here to support you, let us know how we can help you.” He also mentioned the administration on his campus maintained an “open door policy.” Though he did not use it

regularly he appreciated that they would make themselves available whenever needed.

Amber shared the administration on her campus “haven’t made it any harder than what it is.” She is grateful that the team she is working with on her current campus is better than her previous experience where she was held to unreasonable expectations by administrators.

Jada, Destiny, and Leo described themselves as proactive go-getters who figure out how to make things happen, but they each praised how much administration would make sure their needs were met. Jada and Leo were in need of technology solutions to assist their students academically. Jada stated, “I have not had my back turned. Everyone has been willing to look for where they can find resources. If they can’t help me, they’re going to send me to somebody else that can.” Leo described his administration as being “a great help” in securing the necessary technology to work with emerging bilingual students. He appreciated the overall assistance he has received from the administrator on his campus who works with emerging bilingual students. Destiny described the impact of administrators by saying, ‘I think administration makes a huge difference in who stays and leaves.’ In her current experience she stated, “I feel like if you feel appreciated, even in hard times as nutty as the last few years have been with COVID, I didn’t feel like our administration threw us to the wolves.” She described her campus leadership as a support system to get through the many ways the pandemic has impacted education.

### ***The Reasons Why***

The Reasons Why theme emerged when discussing the experiences of the underrepresented teachers as the teachers referred to the reasons they have remained in the profession. The Reasons Why is presented in the following sub-themes: (a)

Representation of Students and (b) Relationships and Student Growth. Table 6 contains the descriptions of each subtheme.

**Table 6**

*Description of Emergent Themes of the Reasons Why*

The Reasons Why	Description	Significant Statement Example
Representation of Students	Opportunity to connect to and give voice to minority students.	“Representation does matter.”
Relationships and Student Growth	The perceived connections and impact the participants have had on their students	“When you get to see them become successful is the most rewarding thing.”

**Representation of Students.** A common subtheme was the ability to factor into the *Representation of Students*. Amber has often had students confide in her that they have never had a Black teacher. She stated her “most rewarding experience is for minority students to see someone like them in the classroom.” She called these interactions each year her “driving force.” Jada recalled often being “sought out” as one of few Black female teachers. She enjoys being a “safe place” for Black students throughout the building and not just those who may be scheduled in her classes.

When entering his majority Hispanic school, Leo explained that as soon as he arrived on campus “the kids clicked because I knew exactly what it was they were struggling with.” He enjoys the ability to be one of few Hispanic teachers on the campus and the understanding he can provide to teachers who are struggling with reaching the student population. Similarly, Isabela had a strong desire to, “make sure that these kids are represented correctly and getting what they deserve to have in education... I can fight for them.” Each of these participants believed representation was important in the



teaching population for minority students and their ability to provide that representation was tied to their reasons for remaining in the classroom over the years.

**Relationships and Student Growth.** *Relationships and Student Growth* was the second subtheme for *The Reasons Why*. Luisa described education by saying, “it's not just about teaching them, it's about interacting with them, getting engaged with them so that they feel like they're part of the community because the school is a community.” She enjoys connecting with her students and staying connected to them over the years to see their progress not only in her classes but throughout life.

As an elective course teacher, Destiny enjoys seeing the growth of students in her program from year to year. She explained that helping to “make the kids more accountable and for them to say that’s not good enough I can do more” is a when she knows she has had an impact. Jason mentioned the most rewarding thing in his current role is “seeing all of the students hard work pay off” in competition or final projects in his coursework. Similarly, Alex shared that one of the most rewarding things about his position is seeing students succeed and over the years having them “email me or call me and just thank me for the impact that I’ve had on them.” Though Alex has considered moving into roles outside of the classroom, he remains because, “I like my interactions with kids right now. I know this is where I need to be.”

Isabela said her reason for staying is “by far the kids.” She shared that seeing the growth of her emerging bilingual students is a key factor in her staying in the classroom. She went on to state, “you see all their work paid off and just having a little something to do with that makes you proud because you knew what they were like when they first came.” Leo recalled getting letters written in English from former students who did not

have a grasp of the language when they were enrolled in his class as being the most rewarding part of his job. He stated, “it really opens your eyes to the difference you make. Especially when they come back and they’re becoming engineers, that’s a huge accomplishment.”

Leo was passionate about students defying statistics and pushing beyond what statistics might say about them. He likes for his students to know “it doesn’t matter whether you are brown, Black, yellow, green, or White. It doesn’t matter. You can achieve the impossible.” Leo speaks from experience as a first generation Hispanic male who is working on a master’s degree in the STEM field after graduating from a high school he reported having a 5% college readiness rate. He credits his high school teachers for explaining to him “you are not a statistic” and pushing him to be successful. He now works to do the same thing for his students. The passion the participants have to form bonds with and be a part of the growth of students was one of the primary reasons the educators in this study have persisted.

### ***Recommendations***

Recommendations emerged as the final theme of this study. The recommendations presented by the teachers pertained to a variety of ideas on how to recruit and retain a more racially diverse teaching population. Recommendations are presented in the following sub-themes: (a) Cultural Diversity Training, (b) Recruiting, (c) Retention, and (d) Transparent Preparation. Table 7 contains the descriptions of each subtheme.

**Table 7***Description of Emergent Themes of Recommendations*

Recommendations	Description	Significant Statement Example
Cultural Diversity Training	Proactive measures to increase cultural awareness and reduce implicit bias	“Even people that have a good heart don’t realize what they’re saying sometimes. Unless we educate them, they’re never going to know.”
Recruiting	How programs and school districts attract talent.	“To me, your staff should reflect your population.”
Retention	Preserving the talent currently in the school district.	“Empowering them to let them know that they are valued.”
Recommendations	Description	Significant Statement Example
Transparent Preparation	Open communication about the expectations and working environment for educators	“We teach, we mentor, we are the mom and dad away from home. We see these kids more than their parents see them. Nobody talks about that.

**Cultural Diversity Training.** The concept of required *Cultural Diversity Training* was a reoccurring subtheme from multiple participants. Destiny advocated for diversity training that focused on understanding all students stating, “I don’t feel that a person needs to be screaming from the rooftops that we need more diversity, I think we should say we are looking for people who understand and love all kids and can do the job.” Isabela described the need for cultural diversity training by stating, “even people that have a good heart don’t realize what they’re saying sometimes. Unless we educate them, they’re never going to know.” As demographics within the district have changed

there were concerns by multiple participants that the predominately White teaching population might not know how to connect with the increasingly diverse student population. Luisa shared concern that “we cannot keep using the same recipe that they used 5, 10, 15 years ago. It's changing and if we don't improve, it's going to eat us alive.”

Leo recalled being in team planning meetings “with six other educators and they don’t understand why students are struggling. It isn’t necessarily their content skills. It’s more of an issue with the language barrier.” Leo advocated for connecting with students to gain an understanding of who they are stating, “you don’t have to be a Hispanic educator to understand the culture of Hispanics.” He felt training could focus more on understanding how to work with students who are learning English while being held to the expectations of high school curriculum.

Jada mentioned that the district previously had cultural diversity training, but she has not seen much since the initial training a few years ago. Her thought was the training should be done in “fidelity, not just for 30 days or for one semester and then it poof goes away.” Jada believes school districts should show they know they are lacking in representation and be forthcoming with what they are doing to address it. She recommended a “reoccurring resource” such as a regular meetings or course modules that individuals could utilize to learn about how to work with and understand diverse students and staff members.

**Recruiting.** A second subtheme to *Recommendations* was *Recruiting*. All participants made a point to mention that school districts, colleges, and preparation programs should begin the teacher recruiting process early. Luisa mentioned educator preparation programs and school districts getting out into diverse high schools to recruit

future teachers. Leo's concern was his perception that there is a lack of recruiting minority educators at the collegiate level. He mentioned wanting to see programs and districts reach out to minority candidates and "explaining that minorities connect with kids well and this is why we need you." He would like to see a "push" for more diverse educators at the collegiate level and more communication about scholarship opportunities and loan forgiveness programs that might assist prospective teachers with the "fear of cost" to earning a degree in education.

Jason was interested in more communication with potential Career and Technical Education (CTE) educators about the alternative certification process. He relied heavily on a friend to get him through the process and felt that "underrepresented populations could qualify if they knew how to go about becoming educators." He specifically mentioned reaching out to law enforcement agencies and informing police officers of the option to teach law enforcement classes.

Alex expressed that often organizations and school districts, "say they want something to happen, but don't actually make it a focus and make it happen." He would like to see preparation programs and school districts really focus on ways to diversify the teaching force. Jason recommended a mentoring program between educators and interested parties in the community that might help recruit more diverse teachers. He thought "getting them in the building to see what it is like" might be the first step in recruiting more individuals to the teaching workforce. This recommendation would be in alignment with most of the participants in this study who were brought into education by their previous experiences in schools as substitutes, PTO volunteers, and

paraprofessionals. Jason's hope is a mentoring program could show people what their impact could be on students and therefore encourage them to become classroom teachers.

Leo also completed an alternative certification program and mentioned that though his current district is not far from where he took his course work to complete the program, the school district did not send any administrators to recruit from his program. Luisa felt communication in Spanish needs to be improved for proper teacher recruitment. She said most of the time communication is in English and then sometimes translated. Her concern is that qualified degreed professionals for whom English is not a first language may miss important messages that would encourage them to enter the K-12 workforce.

Throughout the conversations with participants, the recruitment of diverse teachers was often mentioned with a caveat that participants did not want diverse teachers just for the sake of diversity. Luisa was adamant, "it is not just a warm body." In agreement Jada added, "if you're in it for the right reasons, if your heart is for kids, I tell anybody diverse or not this is a great profession to be in." Destiny stated, "we have to find good ones, I don't want them to just fill a spot. We need to find good ones who are passionate about all kids."

**Retention.** Another subtheme for *Recommendations* was *Retention*. Amber strongly recommended a "friendly inviting environment" as a key to retaining underrepresented teachers. One way participants recommended to establish a positive environment was through pairing new teachers with mentors. When discussing mentor-teacher relationships, Amber emphasized a mentor "shouldn't make you feel like you are always doing something wrong." Amber expressed that the teacher-mentor relationship

should be a relationship built on trust. She referenced how pleasant it is to not have concerns that someone is “talking about the way you talk, the way you dress, or the way your hair looks.” She felt the focus should remain on the job being done by the teacher and how they can improve their practice.

Isabela and Jada each recommended organizations for minority teachers to connect with each other on campus or throughout the school district. Isabela felt having a group of people with similar experiences might bring about some camaraderie. Jada expressed the groups would not be to “silo ourselves, but that it would allow more interactions between staff members who are underrepresented throughout the district.”

Another group structure recommended was a cohort model for new teachers from their preparation programs and the school districts they enter. Amber suggested teachers should stay connected from the preparation program for three years so the novice teachers can connect in a manner that is not “intimidating” because they are on the “same level” with others in the cohort. Three participants recommended a similar multi-year program for their new teacher programs on campus. Isabela felt the one-year new teacher program on her campus was not sufficient enough and that she still needed to remain connected to the resources offered in the program. Participants believed a longer-range new teacher program might help administrators see trends in the first three years of teachers arriving on the campus and be able to identify any issues with retention more easily.

Each participant in this study also recommended support from administration as a tool to retain educators. Destiny recommended administrators engage teachers in the hallways. It is one of the things she enjoys most about her current administrative team. In

her previous experience she felt the administrators tended to seemingly avoid even speaking to her in the hallway. Alex recommended administrators at the campus and district level get out of their offices and “get into classrooms and see how everything is going. See how kids are interacting with teachers...make sure things are well run. Get out and support your teachers.” Luisa recommended more administrative support in the area of student behavior. She expressed, “this agenda that the child is always right and to make excuses for kids not being accountable for their actions” is driving teachers away. A repeated thought from the participants was the idea of being able to go to administration to seek support without feeling judged for what they bring to discuss with the administrative staff.

Compensation plans were another area of retention discussed by multiple participants. Six teachers recommended an increase in teacher salaries. Jada expressed, “you’re not valued if you go into education” in some communities because the pay is low for a degreed professional. Her concern with low compensation stems from her desire to have better representation among male teachers. She stated, “as a male you’re not going to be making top dollar unless you tie in coaching.” With men largely being breadwinners for families, education is not an attractive profession for many and pay could be a cause for fewer males entering and remaining in the profession.

Jason specifically pointed to pay as a deterrent for those considering education as a profession. He commented, “personally growing up I’d hear people say don’t be a teacher because of the pay.” He went on to state, “pay could definitely be an issue that could prevent some otherwise qualified individuals from teaching.” Amber brought up concerns that teachers, especially those with advanced degrees, are not compensated



enough for their expertise. She felt a master's degree should lead to significantly more pay in a teacher's salary, "There is no reason why someone with a master's degree should just get a \$1500 stipend. It's just not fair." From Amber's perspective those who seek an advanced degree while teaching often take the degree to a different field to earn more money or get a degree that will take them out of the classroom, such as administration, because the pay is higher.

**Transparent Preparation.** The final subtheme for *Recommendations* was the need for *Transparent Preparation*. The concerns from participants were regarding how preparation programs prepare prospective teachers for what they will encounter in a teaching position. Jada considered that some teachers come in with an "idyllic vision" of what being a teacher will be. She continued, "they've envisioned this job where they're going to come in and students are all going to sit like on Little House of the Prairie and it's not happening." She shared that often new teachers have a "deer in the headlights" look when they see all the things teaching entails. One of her key concerns was that more emphasis needs to be placed on the development of relationships with students.

Another concern regarding transparency for those entering the K-12 workforce is communicating the many roles teachers take on and the emotional toll it can take on individuals. Amber stated,

We teach, we mentor, we are the mom and dad away from home. We see these kids more than their parents see them. Nobody talks about that...we're counselors when the counselors can't be counselors. So on top of writing lesson plans and developing curriculum, it's a lot.

She felt teacher preparation programs need to be honest with prospective teachers. Jada expressed, “if you can’t multitask and wear all your hats and still be present for these kids, this may not be for you.” Amber continued, “what needs to be said is teaching is a calling, and it’s not always rewarding. I think that will help with retention.”

Alex shared that even with his student teaching experience, his traditional educator preparation program did not prepare him as well as he would have thought. Jason shared that his alternative certification program “didn’t prepare me well because everything was a presentation we had to go to and we just sat through it. We didn’t have true interactions in the building.” He relied on his master’s program to “fill in the gaps” of planning, curriculum, and teaching. Leo recommended alternative certification programs have a face-to-face component in which professors lead prospective teachers instead of online module-based programs.

Luisa encouraged preparation programs to make sure teacher candidates enter the field with, “hands-on experience.” She stated, “more than just the amount of books and papers I wrote and read, it was the actual experience in the classroom that has allowed me to stay and become the teacher I am today.” Over the years Luisa has noticed that those with classroom experience as a part of their programs tend to last longer in the profession.

### **Description of the Phenomenon**

One of the final steps in a phenomenological study is to provide a description of the phenomenon as a whole. Colaizzi (1978) encouraged phenomenological researchers to integrate the data collected into an “exhaustive description of the investigated phenomenon in as unequivocal a statement of identification of its fundamental structure

as possible” (p. 61). Through the use of member checking (Colaizzi, 1978), the following description of the experiences of underrepresented teachers in diverse suburban schools was developed.

Underrepresented teachers in diverse suburban schools enter their positions with a desire to make a difference not only for minority students, but all of the students they encounter. They are fueled by their perceived ability to be a safe space for students and to be a factor in the academic and personal growth of the students they work with. Despite the challenges they face, such as social isolation and the burden of responsibilities placed on them, underrepresented teachers are resilient and remain in the classroom when they have support from their administrators and their teacher colleagues. To increase the representation of minority teachers in diverse suburban schools, underrepresented teachers recommend cultural diversity training and transparency in communication within the recruitment and retention process of teachers.

### **Summary**

In Chapter IV, the analysis of the data from eight semi-structured interviews were presented according to Colaizzi’s (1978) descriptive phenomenological methodology and Saldana’s (2016) coding techniques. Detailed in the chapter were five emergent themes with multiple subthemes. In Chapter V, the research question will be answered and findings in relation to the literature review and conceptual frameworks will be discussed. Implications for practice for school districts and teacher preparation programs will be presented in addition to recommendations for future research.

## CHAPTER V

### Discussion, Implications, and Recommendations

#### Overview

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to gain an understanding of the lived experiences of underrepresented teachers in diverse suburban secondary schools. As described in Chapters III and IV, I collected data in interviews with eight participants who currently serve as teachers in suburban Texas secondary schools with diverse student populations. Five themes were revealed as common experiences of the participants in this study: *Pathway to Education, Challenges, Support, The Reasons Why, and Recommendations*.

I chose to study this topic because of my previous experience as an underrepresented teacher in a diverse suburban school and because of my current role as an administrator who is tasked with hiring teachers in a similar setting. I wanted to examine how minority teachers described their entry into the profession with the hope that insight in this area might assist preparation programs in identifying future teachers. In addition, the information provided by participants about their path to certification might expose some challenges faced by minority teachers and lead to the identification of areas of improvement for educator preparation programs. Regarding underrepresented teacher retention, I wanted to know what factors might contribute to the resilience of teachers who have remained at their campuses for at least five years. I hoped to provide recommendations to improve the recruitment and retention of underrepresented teachers to provide all students with the representation they need.

In this chapter I will discuss the findings of my research. The research question will be answered and findings in relation to the literature review and conceptual framework will be discussed. Implications for practitioners will be presented and my thoughts on future research will also be shared.

### **Discussion of Findings in Relation to the Research Questions**

The overarching research question for this study, “What are the experiences of underrepresented teachers at suburban secondary campuses in the Greater Houston area with diverse student populations but low teacher diversity?” was designed to examine the lived experiences of minority teachers who have the unique experience of serving as educators on campuses in which the teaching population is not reflective of the student population. The question was divided into two sub questions to explore the recruitment and retention of the eight individuals who participated in the study. The analysis of their experiences yielded five themes with multiple subthemes.

The first major theme that emerged from interviews in this study was *Pathway to Education*. Within this theme, three sub themes emerged: (a) *Experiences in Schools*, (b) *Mentorships*, and (c) *Family Influence*. The second major theme was *Challenges*. Within this theme two sub themes emerged: (a) *Social Isolation* and (b) *Responsibility*. The next theme was *Support*. Embedded in this theme were the subthemes (a) *Teacher Support* and (b) *Administrative Support*. The fourth major theme was *The Reasons Why*. Within this theme were the sub themes of (a) *Representation of Students* and (b) *Relationships and Student Growth*. The final theme of the study was *Recommendations*. This theme included the sub themes of (a) *Cultural Diversity Training*, (b) *Recruiting*, (c) *Retention*, and (d) *Transparent Preparation*. These themes were examined through the lens of

Career Choice Theory and Resilience Theory to establish a composite description for the overarching research question.

### ***Sub Question 1***

The first sub question was, “How do underrepresented teachers in these schools describe their entry into the education profession?” This question was designed to explore how each of the participants began their journey as secondary teachers. The primary theme related to their recruitment into the profession was *Pathway to Education*.

All the participants shared specific instances of what brought them into the profession. Phrases such as “I’m just here following in those footsteps,” “why don’t you teach,” and “I fell in love with it” were common significant statements participants shared regarding entering the profession. For some teachers it was a family history of educators who encouraged them to enter the profession. For others it was a mentor who helped guide them in making the decision. Although not a primary theme, multiple participants referred to education as a “calling.” They were very clear that they felt led to teaching even when they had no initial desire to become educators. The initial career paths and aspirations for some of the participants were to become doctors, scientists, and lawyers; however, the circumstances in their lives drew them to entering the classroom as they realized they could help mold the future generation as teachers.

For most of the participants in the study their path to becoming teachers was simple. They had the support of friends, family, mentors, and their preparation programs to guide them through the certification process. When entering their current campuses all participants felt some pressure to prove themselves or to work harder to gain respect and recognition in environments in which they were one of a few or the only one from their

racial/ethnic background. Over half of the participants faced stereotypes and biases from colleagues about their race, ethnicity, or cultural background in the early years of their careers.

### ***Sub Question 2***

The second sub question was, “How do underrepresented teachers in these schools describe their reasons for persisting in the teaching profession?” This question was designed to explore the factors that have led each of the participants remaining in their current positions. The experiences of the participants related to this question yielded the themes *Support* and *The Reasons Why*.

Support was a repeated factor in the retention of the teachers in this study. Throughout each conversation the level of support the participants received on their campuses from colleagues and administrators proved to influence the decision to stay on their respective campuses. The teachers in this study looked to their colleagues to provide a community of support when working on lesson plans and when they needed to decompress from the stresses of their jobs. An important aspect of building this community was having a person similar to them in close enough proximity so it was not difficult to get support when they needed it. The support from campus administration was also a leading indicator for the reason all the participants have persisted. The individuals in this study described their administrators as individuals who wanted to see them be successful. The teachers appreciated that they have the trust of their administrators, and they also appreciated the open door policies their campus administrators have if they ever need anything from them.

Another key reason for the retention of underrepresented teachers was their strong sense of purpose in their positions. A consistent theme in the transcripts was a belief that teaching is a way to make a difference in their communities. These individuals have a strong desire to see the next generation of students, and especially minority students excel. The teachers described feeling a sense of responsibility to be positive role models for students from underrepresented groups. For some of the underrepresented teachers in this study, they also saw teaching as a way to address social justice issues and to advocate for equity and inclusion in education.

### **Discussion of the Findings in the Context of the Literature Review**

The findings of this study were consistent with existing literature. The review of the literature included topics such as (a) value of underrepresented teachers, (b) recruitment and entry into the teaching profession, (c) barriers and obstacles in the teaching pipeline, (d) and retention of underrepresented teachers. These topics were consistently present in the data collected from the interviews with the participants in this study.

All participants believed there is value in a teaching workforce that is representative of the student population served in a school. The teachers in this study were in alignment with the literature on the academic, social, and behavioral benefits of having a diverse teaching force. The participants regularly referred to the high expectations they hold for all students while making specific references to the high standards they hold for students with a racial match to them (Bristol & Shirrell, 2019; Fox, 2016; Villegas & Irvine, 2010). The teachers shared that they do not want minority students to believe that statistics set the standard for what they can achieve, and the



teachers encouraged their students to dream without limits (Villegas & Irvine, 2010). The teachers in this study also felt obligated to attend to the social emotional needs of diverse students and serve as their role models (Bristol & Mentor, 2018).

In terms of entry into the profession the participants in this study were split evenly between traditional preparation and alternative certification. Those who pursued a traditional pathway were often the only person of color in their program. Those who pursued alternative certification had more diversity in their programs. Their experience with program diversity is in alignment with literature that suggests alternative programs are more diverse (Castro & Edwards, 2021; Perkins & Arvidson, 2017; Van Overschelde & Wiggins, 2020). Most of the participants, regardless of method of certification, did not feel prepared to enter the classroom after completion of their certification programs (Kohli, 2019; Pham, 2018). All participants would have preferred more hands-on learning in classroom settings compared to the methods-based instruction they received (Pham, 2018).

The financial burden of becoming and continuing to work as an educator was present in the literature and with the participants of this study. Participants advocated for scholarships and increased salaries to improve the recruitment and retention of underrepresented teachers. These suggestions were in line with prior research regarding the financial obstacles that create a barrier for many minority individuals who would otherwise consider education as a profession (Bergey et al., 2019, Robinson et al., 2003; Scott & Alexander, 2019; Wallace & Gagen, 2020).

Unfortunately, multiple participants also reported having to combat deficit ideology among colleagues on their campuses (Tyler, 2016; Yarnell, 2018). The teachers

felt they had a responsibility to bring voice to issues and policies minority students face because of these deficit perspectives (Aydin et al., 2017; Gorski, 2019; Tyler, 2016). Although culturally responsive pedagogy and culturally relevant teaching were not explicitly related to this study, participants brought up aspects of these practices and their benefits throughout the interviews. The teachers worked diligently to create places for students to belong by forming cultural clubs and organizations and offering their rooms as safe spaces for diverse students (Glazewski & Ertmer, 2020).

Results from this study are in alignment with prior research identifying the importance of emotional support and mentorship for underrepresented teachers (Ahmad & Boser, 2014; Gist et al., 2017; Goe & Roth, 2019; Tyler et al., 2011; Wallace & Gagen, 2020). Participants spoke to being isolated at times in their preparation programs and while on their current campuses. One of the common reasons given for persisting were the connections the teachers have made with colleagues, particularly those from the same race or ethnic background as them.

Supportive relationships between underrepresented teachers and administrators were deemed important in prior research (Boyd et al., 2011; Campoli, 2017; Stanley, 2020) and administrative support proved to be important among the participants. The teachers in this study felt their administrative teams trusted them to teach the curriculum, the administrators supported the teachers when it came to student discipline, and the teachers have seen an effort over the last few years by campus administrators to diversify the staff.

## **Discussion of the Findings in Relation to the Conceptual Framework**

Two conceptual frameworks guided this study. Resilience theory provided a framework from which to investigate the reasons for underrepresented teacher retention. Career choice theory provided a viewpoint on the reasons individuals choose to become educators.

### ***Resilience Theory***

Resilience theory provided insights into how underrepresented teachers can overcome the challenges they may face in the teaching profession and succeed despite adversity. Resilience theory suggests that resilience is a dynamic process that involves the ability to adapt, cope, and thrive in the face of adversity. Polidore's resiliency theory (2004) consists of eight themes: moral/spiritual support, deeply committed, bias toward optimism, belief that one can control events, flexible locus of control, enjoys change, strong positive relationships, and education viewed as important. The transcripts from this study provided evidence for all eight themes, however, three themes were dominant: deeply committed, positive relationships, and education viewed as important.

The educators in this study were deeply committed to the profession. The commitment of these teachers was rooted in their belief that they make a difference in the lives of their students every day. The teachers were committed to serving as role models and described a deep desire to provide their students with the support and guidance they need to succeed.

When asked if they intend to remain in the classroom or pursue a different path, only one teacher reported they were seeking to leave the profession. This teacher had a recent life changing event and needed to seek a career with better pay and less stress.

Four of the teachers intend to remain in the classroom setting, while three plan to seek positions in education that they feel will have a larger impact on the students they hope to continue to inspire. Those seeking positions expressed that if they do not reach those goals soon, it only means their work is not yet done in the classroom.

The second dominant theme related to resilience theory was positive relationships. Resilience theory suggests that social support and a sense of belonging can help underrepresented teachers thrive in the teaching profession. The participants sought out relationships to help them process and get through the unique challenges they face as underrepresented individuals in the teaching profession. The mentors, role models, and colleagues they have made connections with provide a means to address issues such as discrimination, bias, and cultural misunderstandings.

The teachers have also developed positive relationships with their students. The educators thrive on seeing their students grow and report back to them on their accomplishments. All of the teachers shared stories of the successes of former students who have helped them see the difference they make and these ongoing connections with former students encourage the teachers to persist.

Finally, the teachers in this study viewed education as a way of life. Even outside of their work as teachers in schools, the participants in this study were involved in education in the community. The participants also considered education to be the primary way minority students can change the trajectory of their lives. They believed that they can influence and assist their students in making decisions that lead to students reaching their full potential. The underrepresented teachers in this study also practice what they preach in terms of education. The eight teachers in this study hold a total of seven

advanced degrees and three of the teachers were pursuing advanced degrees at the time of their interviews. Resilient underrepresented teachers view education as an important avenue to change their lives and the lives of their students.

### ***Career Choice***

Career choice theory was the second framework for this study. Career choice theory can help one understand the factors that influence diverse individuals to pursue a career in teaching. Holland (1962) determined career decisions were influenced by social class, peers, culture, and hereditary traits. Much of Holland's (1997) more recent work was centered on the concept of a work environment being a personal fit for individuals. The primary career choice factors for the participants in this study were family/peer influence and education being a fit to their individual values.

Most of the participants in the study were drawn to education due to family connections or a connection from a mentor. Three of the teachers had multiple educators in their families. Two of the educators felt a career in education would be a good fit for their growing families in terms of being able to be off work when children are out of school. Five of the underrepresented teachers were influenced by a mentor working in education to pursue education as a profession. Having been exposed to positive role models who were teachers, the teachers in this study pursued careers in education.

All of the participants were drawn to education as a career that was in alignment with their values. The teachers felt they needed to have careers in which they could help others and could make a difference. A career as a teacher fulfilled the desire to make a positive impact on their communities and to serve as role models for students from underrepresented groups. The teachers described teaching as a way to challenge

themselves, to learn and grow as professionals, and to find meaning and purpose in their lives.

### **Recommendations for Practitioners**

Research (Carey, 2020; Cherng & Halpin, 2016; Cooke & Odejimi, 2021; Gershenson et al., 2021; Rafa & Roberts, 2020; Wright et al., 2017) is clear that representation in the teaching force is important. As the demographics of the United States continue to move in the direction of a majority minority, it is necessary to determine how to recruit and retain underrepresented teachers. The findings of this study suggest recommendations for school administrators, teacher preparation programs, and the overall recruitment of teachers.

### ***Implications for School Administrators and School Districts***

Participants in this study had several recommendations for how administrators and school district personnel could work toward diversifying the teaching force. The role of school leaders is critical to the recruitment and retention of underrepresented teachers. School leaders should create inclusive and supportive work environments in which teachers feel valued for their contributions to the school community. School administrators should be proactive in addressing biases on their campuses by providing training for all staff on issues of equity and inclusion. Administrators should also be responsive to the needs of their staff. Gaining an understanding of staff needs begins by making a conscious effort to be present throughout the building and being available to listen for understanding to teachers when they bring their concerns to administration.

It is important for teachers to have the ability to share their ideas on recruitment and retention. Diversifying existing committees or establishing committees of

underrepresented teachers on campuses and in human resource departments would assist in gaining insight from this population as plans are developed for recruiting and hiring a more diverse workforce. A part of these committees could include hosting stay interviews in which retained teachers are asked about their experiences to bring light to what is working within a campus or district to retain teachers (Snyder et al., 2023). Strategies and policies that are identified as factors in retention can then be replicated and improved upon. With open dialogue and a seat at the table in committees, the desired effect would be improved recruitment and retention of diverse teachers.

Another important factor for school leaders to consider is to combat social isolation through mentorship and cohort models. Mentors serve an important role throughout the teacher pipeline. All the participants in this study referred to mentorship as beneficial to their growth in the profession as both a mentee and mentor. In addition to one-on-one mentors, participants suggested the establishment of cohort models for new teachers. The cohorts would meet on a regular basis for the first three years of teaching, meeting most often in the first year. Cohorting the teachers would provide an opportunity to have tailored conversations that support where the teachers are in their journey as educators. A cohort model also helps a campus administrator see more clearly if there are issues with retaining staff in their first few years in the building. The development of a system that combats social isolation is an important step to improving the retention of teachers. An environment in which minority teachers can find connection with others helps to retain the teachers and create a sense of belonging.

A final recommendation for school districts is to recruit the best underrepresented teachers in the district to serve as administrators. Participants in this study repeatedly

referred to the need for the administrative staff to reflect the population of their campuses. Administrators largely make the decisions pertaining to hiring and the policies that students must adhere to on campuses. The inclusion of diverse perspectives at the decision-making level might combat the deficit ideology described by participants in the study and improve the environment in which underrepresented teachers work.

### ***Implications for Teacher Preparation Programs***

An investigation to determine systemic barriers prohibiting diversity exists is one of the first steps preparation programs can take. Program leaders should analyze the demographics of their staff and student populations to determine if the program is reflective of the larger population. They should identify if test scores or costs are a barrier to admission for diverse applicants. If these areas prove to be barriers, preparation programs should consider adjusting admission criteria, provide scholarship options, and inform applicants of potential loan forgiveness programs. Program leaders should place less emphasis on requirements to enter a teacher preparation program and place more emphasis on the preparation for those entering the classroom.

Another way teacher preparation programs can better prepare teachers is to provide more in class experiences prior to teachers having their own classrooms. Many traditional preparation models conclude with a student teaching semester but do not include much additional time in the classroom interacting with students. Alternative certification programs often require some observation hours, but do not require any student teaching. In addition, more culturally responsive training should be embedded in preparation programs. Prospective teachers should be prepared to work with diverse student populations. To prepare teachers to be effective at delivering instruction,



managing classroom behaviors, and working with colleagues on lesson planning, teachers in training need to be doing this type of work throughout their preparation programs.

### ***Implications for the Recruitment of Underrepresented Teachers***

Considering the benefits of a diverse teaching force, teacher preparation programs and school districts should be more aggressive in the recruitment of minority teachers. School districts and preparation programs should develop partnerships with local community colleges and recruit from diverse communities such as Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Hispanic Serving Institutions. In addition, publications from programs and school districts should be updated with pictures of diverse individuals so prospective underrepresented teachers know the district or program is a place they will be welcomed. Districts and preparation programs could also develop a pipeline from which the typically diverse paraprofessional staff currently working in schools could work on their certification. As part of the recruitment process scholarships could be offered to diverse individuals seeking a career in education.

A final recommendation at the policy maker and school district level would be to consider a change in teacher compensation. An improved salary schedule could establish a more representative teaching force. Many individuals do not consider education as an option because they can earn more in other careers. With high costs of tuition and rising costs of living, education is not considered to be a career path that provides financial stability for those who might incur debt as a part of their certification. Consideration should be given to improving teacher salaries, so education is an option for more underrepresented individuals to pursue.

## **Recommendations for Future Research**

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of underrepresented teachers in suburban secondary schools with student diversity but low teacher diversity. This study was conducted with participants from one school district in the suburban Houston area. Eight individuals participated in individual interviews as a part of this phenomenological study. The delimitations and findings from this study provide opportunities for future research.

The sample size of this study was relatively small. Future research might be conducted with a larger segment of the selected population and could include a focus group as a part of the data collection process. With the inclusion of more participants a deeper understanding of the experiences of underrepresented teachers might be garnered. A focus group could lead to more in depth discussion as participants share their experiences among people who have walked the same path thereby establishing a community of shared experiences. The data from the focus group could identify additional themes and recommendations for practice.

A delimitation of this study included limiting participation in this study to teachers at secondary campuses. A future study could be conducted in which the perspective of underrepresented elementary teachers was sought. Research (Gershenson et al., 2021; Wright et al., 2017) has shown the importance of student-teacher racial match as early as kindergarten. An investigation into the recruitment and retention of diverse elementary teachers might help identify best practices for the elementary level.

A limitation from this study was the participation of individuals from two racial/ethnic groups. The perspective of Black and Hispanic teachers were the only

perspectives included. It would be of interest to conduct research to provide voice to Asian teachers to determine what obstacles may exist in the recruitment and retention of teachers in this population. There is limited research on the perspective of Asian American teachers in diverse schools.

A final recommendation of research would be to explore the difference in the experience of underrepresented teachers from a lens of their positionality. It would be interesting to see if perspectives were different based on some aspects of a teacher's background. Research could explore if educational background such as completing a degree at a Historically Black College or University or a Hispanic Serving University versus a predominately White institution is connected to the experiences of underrepresented teachers in suburban schools. It would also be of interest to explore how teachers who began as paraprofessionals in the classroom describe their experiences of recruitment and retention. Other aspects of positionality that could be investigated include exploring the experiences of specific groups (e.g., racial/ethnic groups, sex, religion) to identify if there are different challenges or observations based on these positions.

## **Conclusion**

Diversifying the teaching workforce is crucial to ensuring that all students have access to role models and mentors who represent diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences (Billingsley et al., 2017; Carey, 2020; Gershenson et al., 2017; Ingersoll, 2015; Villegas & Irvine, 2010). Underrepresented teachers have high expectations, close achievement gaps, and reduce discipline disparities (Egalite et al., 2015; Grissom et al., 2020; Williams III et al., 2020), however, minority teachers are underrepresented in

classrooms throughout the United States when compared to the racial/ethnic diversity of the student population (Gershenson et al., 2017; Kena et al., 2015; Rafa & Roberts, 2020). The goal of this study was to gain an understanding of the lived experiences of underrepresented teachers in diverse suburban secondary schools. Knowledge about the experiences of underrepresented teachers could help increase awareness of the recruitment and retention efforts that have allowed them to persist in the field.

Overall, minority teachers' descriptions of their entry into the education profession highlight the importance of creating a more inclusive and supportive environment for underrepresented teachers. Action steps to providing a conducive environment for a diverse teacher workforce include addressing systemic barriers and biases, providing mentorship and support, and promoting diversity and inclusion in hiring and promotion practices. The teachers' descriptions of their reasons for persisting in the teaching profession highlight the importance of supporting and valuing diverse teachers and creating an environment that promotes equity, inclusion, and belonging for all students and educators.

Though it is not possible to generalize the findings of this study to all underrepresented teachers, the findings of this research highlight specific barriers and catalysts to attracting underrepresented teachers, organizational conditions that support underrepresented teachers, and recruitment and retention strategies that could help increase the number of underrepresented teachers in suburban schools. Results from this study might assist school leaders and policymakers in becoming more proactive in the recruitment and retention of diverse educators.

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## APPENDIX A

### INFORMED CONSENT

## Sam Houston State University

### Consent for Participation in Research

#### KEY INFORMATION FOR EXPERIENCES OF UNDERREPRESENTED TEACHERS AT CAMPUSES WITH DIVERSE STUDENT POPULATIONS

You are being asked to be a participant in a research study about *the experiences of underrepresented teachers at campuses with diverse student populations*. You have been asked to participate in the research because you are *currently working on a campus with a diverse student population and may be eligible to participate*.

#### WHAT IS THE PURPOSE, PROCEDURES, AND DURATION OF THE STUDY?

*The purpose of this phenomenological study will be to describe the experiences of minority teachers at secondary schools in the Greater Houston area with diverse student populations but low teacher diversity.*

By doing this study, I hope *to identify reasons why underrepresented teachers enter the field of education and remain in schools in which the teacher population is not reflective of the student population*. Your participation in this research will *last about two hours*.

#### WHAT ARE REASONS YOU MIGHT CHOOSE TO VOLUNTEER FOR THIS STUDY?

*As someone who has worked on a diverse campus with limited teacher diversity for at least five years, you can provide insight into what circumstances keep underrepresented teachers in the classroom.*

For a complete description of benefits, refer to the Detailed Consent.

#### WHAT ARE REASONS YOU MIGHT CHOOSE NOT TO VOLUNTEER FOR THIS STUDY?

*You may choose not to participate in this study due to a lack of time or interest. If you are unable to participate in an interview, questions can be provided in written format and responses can be returned in written format*

For a complete description of risks, refer to the Detailed Consent.

#### DO YOU HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY?

If you decide to take part in the study, it should be because you really want to volunteer. You will not lose any services, benefits, or rights you would normally have if you choose not to volunteer.

#### WHAT IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS, SUGGESTIONS OR CONCERNS?

The person in charge of this study is Victoria Brinkman of the Sam Houston State University Department of Educational Leadership who is working under the supervision of Dr. Julie Combs. If you have questions, suggestions, or concerns regarding this study or you want to withdraw from the study the contact information is located below. If you have any questions, suggestions, or concerns about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs – Sharla Miles

# Sam Houston State University

## Consent for Participation in Research

### DETAILED CONSENT FOR EXPERIENCES OF UNDERREPRESENTED TEACHERS AT CAMPUSES WITH DIVERSE STUDENT POPULATIONS

#### Informed Consent

My name is *Victoria Brinkman*, and I am a student of the Educational Leadership Department at Sam Houston State University. I would like to take this opportunity to invite you to participate in a research study of *Experiences of Underrepresented Teachers at Campuses with Diverse Student Populations*. I hope that data from this research will identify reasons teachers remain in schools in which the population of teachers is not reflective of the student population. You have been asked to participate in the research because you currently work on a campus with a diverse student population.

The research is relatively straightforward, and we do not expect the research to pose any risk to any of the volunteer participants. If you consent to participate in this research, you will be asked to take part in a one-on-one interview of approximately one hour in length. Any data obtained from you will only be used for the purpose of identifying reasons why underrepresented teachers remain in schools in which the teacher population is not reflective of the student population. Under no circumstances will you or any other participants who participated in this research be identified. In addition, your data will remain confidential.

This research will require about one hour of your time. Participants will not be paid or otherwise compensated for their participation in this project. Interviews will be audio recorded and only the researcher will have access to the recordings. Once the audio recording has been transcribed, you will have an opportunity to review the transcript of the interview and make any changes you feel are necessary. A pseudonym will be assigned to your transcript to increase privacy. The audio recording will be destroyed when the transcript is finalized. Transcripts will be kept for a period of 3 years then destroyed.

Your participation in this research is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which the subject is otherwise entitled, and the subject may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which the subject is otherwise entitled. If you have any questions, please feel free to ask me using the contact information below. If you are interested, the results of this study will be available at the conclusion of the project.

If you have any questions about this research, please feel free to contact me, *Victoria Brinkman*, or *Dr. Julie Combs*. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as research participants, please contact *Sharla Miles*, Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, using her contact information below.

<i>Victoria Brinkman</i> <i>SHSU Department</i> <i>of Educational Leadership</i> Sam Houston State University Huntsville, TX 77341 E-mail:	<i>Dr. Julie Combs</i> <i>SHSU Department</i> <i>of Educational Leadership</i> Sam Houston State University Huntsville, TX 77341 Phone: E-mail:	Sharla Miles Office of Research and Sponsored Programs Sam Houston State University Huntsville, TX 77341 Phone: Email:
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I understand the above and consent to participate.

I do not wish to participate in the current study.

#### **AUDIO/VIDEO RECORDING RELEASE CONSENT**

As part of this project, an audio/video recording will be made of you during your participation in this research project for transcription purposes only. This is completely voluntary. In any use of the audio/video recording, your name will not be identified. A *pseudonym will be assigned to your transcript to increase privacy. Once the audio recording has been transcribed, you will have an opportunity to review the transcript of the interview and make any changes you feel are necessary* The audio recording will be destroyed when the transcript is finalized. Transcripts will be kept for a period of 3 years then destroyed. You may request to stop the recording at any time or to erase any portion of your recording.

I consent to participate in the audio/video recording activities.

I do not wish to participate in the audio/video recording activities.



## APPENDIX B

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

#### Interview Protocol: Experiences of Underrepresented Teachers on Diverse Campuses

##### Teaching Experience Background:

1. Please state your title, where you are currently employed and how long you have been in this position.
2. Why did you choose K-12 education as a profession?

##### Current Campus

1. What has been the most rewarding experience in your current role?
2. When you think of your experience as an underrepresented teacher on your campus, what comes into your mind?
3. What challenges have you experienced as an underrepresented teacher on your campus?
4. What supports have you had as an underrepresented teacher on your campus?
5. What supports do you feel are lacking on your campus for underrepresented teachers?
6. How have other teachers on your campus impacted your experience?
7. How has administration impacted your experience on your current campus?

##### Recruitment and Retention

1. In your PK-12 experience as a student, did you have any educators who were representative of you?
2. What is your philosophy on diversity within the teaching force?
3. What could school districts and teacher prep programs do to improve the recruitment and retention of underrepresented teachers?
4. Would you encourage other underrepresented teachers to enter the profession? If not, why? If so, how?
5. What reasons would you attribute to the lack of minority representation in the K-12 teaching workforce?

6. What, if anything, do you think needs to be done to increase representation in the teaching workforce?
7. Has your experience in the classroom made you want to move to administration or another position within education, leave the teaching field, or remain in the classroom?
8. Underrepresented teachers leave education at a higher rate than other populations. Why do you think underrepresented teachers leave the profession?
9. How well did your education background prepare you for a career as a teacher?
10. What can school leaders do to assist individuals who enter the profession from ACP programs? (For ACP teachers only)

Is there something you would like to add that I did not ask about?

#### Demographics

1. Ethnicity (Race)
2. Gender
3. Grade Levels Taught
4. Years of Experience

## APPENDIX C

IRB-2022-318 - Initial: Limited IRB Review Determination

do-not-reply@cayuse.com <do-not-reply@cayuse.com>

Tue 11/8/2022 11:58 AM

To: Combs, Julie <JPC002@SHSU.EDU>; Brinkman, Victoria <vlb026@SHSU.EDU>

**CAUTION:** The sender of this email is not from SHSU.  
Any links or attachments may be dangerous. To report this email as suspicious, forward it to [abuse@shsu.edu](mailto:abuse@shsu.edu).



**Sam Houston  
State University**

Date: Nov 8, 2022 11:58:30 AM CST

TO: Victoria Brinkman Julie Combs

FROM: SHSU IRB

PROJECT TITLE: Experiences of Underrepresented Teachers on Campuses with Diverse Student Populations

PROTOCOL #: IRB-2022-318

SUBMISSION TYPE: Initial

ACTION: Exempt - Limited IRB

DECISION DATE: November 8, 2022

EXEMPT REVIEW CATEGORIES: Category 3.(i). Research involving benign behavioral interventions in conjunction with the collection of information from an adult subject through verbal or written responses (including data entry) or audiovisual recording if the subject prospectively agrees to the intervention and information collection and at least one of the following criteria is met:

(C) The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by §46.111(a)(7).

**OPPORTUNITY TO PROVIDE FEEDBACK:** To access the survey, click [here](#). It only takes 10 minutes of your time and is voluntary. The results will be used internally to make improvements to the IRB application and/or process. Your feedback will be most appreciated.

Greetings,

On November 8, 2022, the Sam Houston State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) determined the proposal titled Experiences of Underrepresented Teachers on Campuses with Diverse Student Populations to be Exempt with Limited IRB Review pursuant to 45 CFR 46. This determination is limited to the activities described in the Initial application, and extends to the performance of these activities at each respective site identified in the Initial application. Exempt determinations will stand for the life of the project unless a modification results in a new determination. You may initiate your project.

### Modifying your approved protocol:

No changes may be made to your study without first receiving IRB modification approval. Log into [Cayuse Human Ethics](#), select your study, and add a new submission type (Modification).

### Study Closure:

Once research enrollment and all data collection are complete, the investigator is responsible for study closure. Log into [Cayuse Human Ethics](#), select your study, and add a new submission type (Closure) to complete this action.

### Reporting Incidents:

Adverse reactions include, but are not limited to, bodily harm, psychological trauma, and the release of potentially damaging personal information. If any unanticipated adverse reaction should occur while conducting your research, please log into [Cayuse Human Ethics](#), select this study, and add a new submission type. This submission type will be an adverse event and will look similar to your initial submission process.

**Reminders to PIs:** Based on the risks, this project does not require renewal. However, the following are reminders of the PI's responsibilities that must be met for IRB-2022-318 Experiences of Underrepresented Teachers on Campuses with Diverse Student Populations.

1. When this project is finished or terminated, a **Closure submission** is required (**NOTE:** see the directive above related to **Study Closures**).
2. Changes to the approved protocol require prior board approval (**NOTE:** see the directive above related to **Modifications**).
3. Human subjects training is required to be kept current at [citiprogram.org](http://citiprogram.org) by renewing training every 5 years.

Please note that all research records should be retained for a minimum of three years after the completion of the project.

If you have any questions, please contact the Sharla Miles at 936-294-4875 or [irb@shsu.edu](mailto:irb@shsu.edu). Please include your protocol number in all correspondence with this committee.

Sincerely,

SHSU Institutional Review Board

## **VITA**

**Victoria Brinkman**

### **EDUCATION**

Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

*Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, TX*

Dissertation: Experiences of Underrepresented Teachers on Campuses with Diverse Student Populations

Master of Education in Education Administration

*Lamar University, Beaumont, TX*

Bachelor of Science in Secondary Education

*Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA*

### **PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE**

Associate Principal, Conroe Independent School District

Assistant Principal, Conroe Independent School District

Teacher - US History, Conroe Independent School District

Teacher- World History, Spring Independent School District

Teacher- World History, Spring Branch Independent School District

### **PROFESSIONAL SERVICE**

Reviewer for 2022 Southwest Educational Research Association Conference

### **PRESENTATIONS**

Brinkman, V. L. (2022). *Experiences of Underrepresented Teachers on Campuses with Diverse Student Populations*. Research in progress presented at the annual conference of Southwest Educational Research Association (SERA), New Orleans, LA.