

DROPOUT RATE DIFFERENCES IN TEXAS ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION
CAMPUSES OF CHOICE: A STATEWIDE ANALYSIS

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family – To my husband and my best friend, Dane, thank you for supporting me, my career, and my passion for education over the last seventeen years. Without your undying love and support, I would not have reached this milestone. To my boys, Kai and Rhys, thank you for letting me be selfish and have Wednesday nights over the last two and a half years to pursue my dream. I hope my accomplishments serve as a reminder to you, that you can do ANYTHING you set your mind to regardless of your circumstance or means. I thank God daily that I get to be your mom and that He blessed me with the two of you. I love you both with all my heart. To my parents in Texas, Paul and Debbie, THANK YOU. Thank you for always being there to support me. For always being available to “fill in” as needed to ensure Kai and Rhys never missed out on anything because of my career or academic pursuits. Your presence in our lives means more than you will ever know. Lastly, to my parents in Missouri, Rick and Debbie, while you may not be right by my side, I thank you both for always being a listening ear and an unconditional support to my family and me.

ABSTRACT

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Purpose

The purposes of this journal-ready dissertation were to provide a descriptive analysis of the demographic characteristics of students and teachers in Texas Alternative Education Campuses of Choice, recognized as Dropout Recovery Schools, during two 5-year school spans (i.e., 2005-2006 through 2009-2010 and 2014-2015 through 2018-2019) and to provide statistical analyses of archived data between the 2016-2017 and 2018-2019 school years on the campus dropout rates of students enrolled in these schools, as well as, by student ethnicity/race and student economic status.

Method

For the first research study, a descriptive research design, involving the analysis of multiple years of data, was present (Johnson & Christensen, 2020). For the second and third research studies, inferential statistical analyses on archival data for campus dropout rates, ethnicity/race, and economic status of students enrolled in these schools for the 2016-2017 school year and the 2018-2019 school year were conducted.

Findings

Established in this journal-ready dissertation were clear inequities by student and teacher ethnicity/race, student economic status, and teacher gender in all school years. By the 2018-2019 school year, 50% of student enrollment were Hispanic followed by White, Black, and Asian. Also, Asian student enrollment had decreased to 0.65%. Black student enrollment increased to 11.66%. Hispanic student enrollment increased to 52.84%.

Lastly, White student enrollment decreased to 32.23%. Additionally, two-thirds of students enrolled were students in poverty, which was an increase in enrollment of students in poverty of 23.71% throughout the 14-year span. Nearly 60% of teachers employed at Alternative Education Campuses of Choice were White, followed by Hispanic teachers at 20%, Black teachers at 5%, and Asian teachers at 2%. Furthermore, 60% of teachers were female.

Dropout rates by student ethnicity/race and economic status of students enrolled in the 2016-2017 and 2018-2019 school years were also addressed. Hispanic students had the highest decline in dropout rate at 2.04%, then Black students at 1.73%, and then White students at 1.26%. During the same years, the dropout rate of Alternative Education Campuses of Choice declined by 1.14%. The dropout rate of students in poverty declined by less than 1%, from 8.97% to 8.51%.

Keywords: Alternative high school; Alternative schools; Alternative programs; At-risk; Alternative Education Campus of Choice; Dropout rate; Economic status; Poor; Poverty; Economically disadvantaged; Black; Hispanic; White

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I have always had an innate desire to obtain my doctoral degree. However, in what field to pursue my doctorate had alluded me for many years. It was not until I had the privilege of creating and implementing a second at-risk high school, that I felt the urge to pursue my Doctorate in Educational Leadership. Being around colleagues of like-minded ideals, many of whom had already obtained their doctorate and were in leadership roles where they were making a positive difference in lives of their students both personally and academically, became very appealing to me. Knowing that I had the fortitude to work alongside them as well as their respect as a leader myself, greatly influenced my decision to obtain my doctorate.

I would like to thank Dr. Sandra Labby for mentoring me as a young educator nearly twenty years ago and instilling in me a desire to continue my education. Watching her pursue her doctorate with persistence, determination, and positivity, provided the example I needed to know that I could accomplish anything that I set my mind to. To Dr. Julie Combs and the professors at SHSU for taking a chance on me and accepting me into the doctoral program two and a half years ago, thank you. To the best Dissertation Committee Member EVER, Dr. John R. Slate. I could not have worked as smoothly and as efficiently without your guidance and dedication to this dissertation process. With humble gratitude, thank you. I will always be grateful to you and how you have assisted me in achieving my dream. To my Dissertation Chair, Dr. Lunenburg, and my Dissertation Committee Member, Dr. Hemmen, thank you for your support throughout this dissertation process. Lastly, thank you to my classmates in Cohort 44. The best cohort EVER!

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The high school dropout rate in the State of Texas has been a concern for the past 27 years and remains so to this day (Texas Education Agency, 2020a). In an attempt to reduce the dropout rate, the State of Texas created an option for school districts to implement Alternative Education Campuses of Choice to decrease student misbehavior and to provide an alternative pathway to a high school diploma for students identified as at-risk (Texas Education Agency, 2020a). More recently, due to the implementation of House Bill 3 through the 86th Texas Legislature in 2019, the Texas Education Agency delineated an additional category of Alternative Education Campus of Choice to address dropout recovery, namely, an Alternative Education Campus of Choice defined as a Dropout Recovery School (Alaniz, 2019). Currently, more than 475 Alternative Education Campuses of Choice are accredited and recognized as high school programs available to students identified as being at-risk and seeking a nontraditional route to earning their high school diploma (Texas Education Agency, 2020b).

The creation and implementation of an Alternative Education Campus of Choice occurs based upon school district student level data such as test scores, graduation rates, and dropout rates (Texas Education Agency, 2018a). Although the physical layout, curriculum needs, and administrative functions may differ from program to program, the research studies conducted on these programs reflect how they have influenced student successes and limitations in obtaining their high school diploma. To date, however, very little published information has been determined on their efficacy regarding student

dropout rates. Moreover, the existing research literature is sparse regarding the demographic characteristics of students enrolled in these schools, as well as teachers employed at these schools. Are Alternative Education Campuses of Choice recognized as Dropout Recovery Schools positively influencing student dropout rates specifically by ethnicity/race and economic status? In this journal-ready dissertation, three empirical investigations were conducted in an attempt to address these questions.

Review of Literature for Texas Alternative Education Campuses of Choice

“For some, not completing high school can have disastrous consequences” (Robinson, 2016, p. 22). Such consequences for many students who drop out of high school are welfare, homelessness, unemployment, criminal mischief, and poor health (Robinson, 2016; Rumberger, 2011, 2013). Students who drop out of high school and choose to engage in criminal activity often end up in jail more than students who graduate from high school. Almost 67% of males who are incarcerated do not have a high school diploma (Robinson, 2016). Consequently, Robinson (2016) noted that the yearly cost to educate one student is \$11,000, yet it costs taxpayers almost \$20,000 annually to house a criminal in prison (Amurao, 2015; Robinson, 2016).

In the 2019 school year, the high school dropout rate in the United States was 5.1% (Hussar et al., 2020). This statistic is much better than the high school dropout rate of 8.3% in the 2010 school year (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021a). Based on these data, the national high school dropout rate has decreased steadily over the last decade (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021a) and has resulted in a decrease in the number of high school dropouts in the United States from six million people ages 16-

24 in the 2009 school year to two million people ages 16-24 in the 2019 school year (Center for Labor Market Studies, 2009; Kamrath, 2019; National Center for Education Statistics, 2021a).

With respect to the state of interest for this article, Texas, the overall dropout rate decreased during the decade spanning the 2009 school year through the 2019 school year, however, not as dramatically as the overall dropout rate for the United States (Center for Labor Market Studies, 2009; Kamrath, 2019; McFarland et al., 2018; National Center for Education Statistics, 2021a; Texas Education Agency, 2010, 2011, 2019). The annual dropout rate in Texas for the 2009 school year was 2.9% (Texas Education Agency, 2010) and by the end of the 2019 school year was 1.9% (Texas Education Agency, 2020c). Established through the 2021 Texas Education Agency Fall Membership Survey data was that in the 2019-2020 school year, Texas high schools failed to graduate 86,789 students and had lost almost four million student enrollments in Texas public schools (Johnson, 2021).

The dropout rate in the United States has decreased approximately 9% from the 1976 school year to the 2019 school year (Center for Labor Market Studies, 2009; Kamrath, 2019; McFarland et al., 2018; National Center for Education Statistics, 2021a; Schneider et al., 2000; Wang et al., 2019). This decrease in dropout rate has been linked to the alternative high school reform and to the school choice movement which occurred in the United States during the 1960s (Kamrath, 2019; McFarland et al., 2018; National Center for Education Statistics, 2021a; Schneider et al., 2000; Wang et al., 2019). Over the next several decades, the alternative high school model has become a popular option

for students determined to be at-risk to obtain their high school diploma (Jordan, 2021; Kamrath, 2019). In the 2002 school year, 10,900 alternative schools and alternative programs were available to students at-risk nationally (Kleiner et al., 2002). By the 2016-2017 school year, 5,375 alternative schools (not including alternative school programs) located throughout the United States were available for students at-risk, with a total student enrollment of 475,015 (Wang et al., 2019).

Following a review of literature spanning the last 30 years, researchers (Conley, 2002; De La Ossa, 2005; Foley & Pang, 2006; Kelly, 1993; Perzigian et al., 2017) have provided evidence that the alternative high school model has benefits for students who are at-risk. Lang and Lehr (1999) documented that the students in their study, who completed the school year, had higher attendance rates and were more satisfied with the alternative program model than those students who dropped out of the alternative high school setting. Their findings were commensurate with the available literature on alternative high school models (De La Ossa, 2005; Foley & Pang, 2006; Lang & Lehr, 1999; Perzigian et al. 2017).

The State of Texas began to see an increase in alternative high school programs during the 1960's alternative schools reform movement taking place in the United States (Schneider et al., 2000; Wang et al., 2019). In the 1993 school year, the Texas Legislature enacted school accountability legislation that required the development of an accountability system for all public schools in Texas. This new legislation included accountability for the alternative high schools operating in Texas (Texas Education Agency, 2020a). In response to the beliefs from educational leaders that an alternative

high school accountability model was warranted separate from the traditional public school model, the Texas Legislature established an alternative accountability ratings system in 1994 and implemented it during the 1995-1996 school year for schools that were serving students defined as at-risk (Texas Education Agency, 2020a). Schools were recognized as alternative high schools (Alternative Education Campuses) if they served one or more of the following student populations, (a) at-risk of dropping out, (b) recovered dropouts, (c) pregnant or parenting, (d) adjudicated, (e) severe discipline problems, and (f) expelled (Texas Education Agency, 2020a).

In the 1999-2000 school year, the Texas Education Agency had split Alternative Education Campuses into schools of choice, Disciplinary Alternative Education Campuses and Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Programs. Discipline campuses were no longer permitted to register as an Alternative Education Campus (Texas Education Agency, 2020a). By the 2005 school year, the Texas Education Agency had established registration criteria for each Alternative Education Campus which included serving students defined as at-risk of dropping out of high school. The Texas Education Agency determined that a student could be defined as a student at-risk of dropping out of high school based upon 13 indicators outlined by the Texas Education Code (TEC) §29.081 (Texas Education Agency, 2020a).

Although published articles could be located about alternative education high schools in the United States, only a limited number could be located about alternative education high schools, specifically in Texas. Researchers (Franklin et al., 2017) who conducted investigations about the alternative high school model in the State of Texas

have focused primarily on student attendance rates and student performance rates and their effect on students identified as at-risk, and their graduation rates from the alternative high school model. In the review of literature that was conducted for this article, the effectiveness of the alternative high school model as a school choice option in relation to reducing high school dropout rates in the State of Texas was even further limited.

Accordingly, research studies are justified regarding the alternative high school model, in the State of Texas, and their efficacy, or lack thereof, as related to high school dropout rates and the demographic characteristics of students enrolled in these schools, as well as the demographic characteristics of teachers employed at these schools. Information would be helpful regarding the degree to which changes might have occurred in the demographic characteristics of students and teachers from the 2005-2006 school year, when such data began to be reported to the Texas Education Agency, through the Alternative Education Accountability system, to the 2018-2019 school year, reported through the Texas Academic Performance Reports.

Review of the Literature for Dropout Rate in Texas Alternative Education

Campuses of Choice as a Function of Student Ethnicity/Race

Each day in the United States, approximately 7,000 students drop out of high school (Robinson, 2016). A consequence of this action is that high school dropouts are more likely to live in poverty than their peers who complete high school (Belfield & Levin, 2007; Rumberger, 2013). As documented by Rumberger (2013), students of color, who were from families in poverty, dropped out of high school almost three times the rate of White students who were from families in poverty. The high school dropout rate has

been demonstrated to be cyclical among students of color who are from families in poverty (Rumberger, 2013).

In the United States, approximately six million people ages 16-24 were categorized as high school dropouts in the 2009 school year (Center for Labor Market Studies, 2009; Kamrath, 2019). In the 2010 school year, the overall high school dropout rate for the United States was 8.3% (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021b). Over a 10-year span, from the 2009 school year through the 2019 school year, the overall high school dropout rate in the United States has steadily declined (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021b). In 2019, based on the results of the American Community Survey, two million high school dropouts ages 16-24 were present in the United States, with an overall dropout rate of 5.1%. This dropout rate was a decrease compared to the 5.3% high school dropout rate in 2018 and a 3.2% decline from 2010 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021b).

With respect to the state of interest for this article, Texas, the overall dropout rate for the same 10-year span revealed a decline as well (Texas Education Agency, 2010, 2019). The annual dropout rate for the State of Texas was 2.9% in the 2009 school year (Texas Education Agency, 2010) and decreased in the 2010 school year to 2.4% (Texas Education Agency, 2011). This decline continued through the 2019 school year, with a 1.9% annual dropout rate for the State of Texas (Texas Education Agency, 2020a).

Although the statistical data (Center for Labor Market Studies, 2009; Kamrath, 2019; National Center for Education Statistics, 2021b; Texas Education Agency, 2010, 2011, 2019, 2020a) supported an overall decline in dropout rates across the United States

and in the State of Texas, the dropout rates of ethnic/racial groups varied over the same 10-year span in the United States (Center for Labor Market Studies, 2009; Kamrath, 2019; National Center for Education Statistics, 2021a). In 2009, 30% of high school dropouts were Hispanic students and approximately 19% of high school dropouts were Black students (Center for Labor Market Studies, 2009; Kamrath, 2019). Disparities were present in dropout rates in the 2013 school year, as Hispanic students accounted for 27% of the national high school dropout rate, and Black students accounted for 31% of the national high school dropout rate, an increase from the 2009 school year (Kamrath, 2019; Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2015). Then from the 2010 school year through the 2019 school year, a decline was present in dropout rates for White students from 5.3% to 4.1%, Hispanic students from 16.7% to 7.7%, and Black students from 10.3 % to 5.6 % (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021a, 2021b).

The annual dropout rates in the State of Texas during the 10-year span from 2009-2019 for Black students, Hispanic students, and White students also showed a similar trend of decline in dropout rates (Texas Education Agency, 2010, 2019, 2020d). In the 2009 school year, the annual dropout rate for Black students was 14.8%, Hispanic students was 12.4%, and White students was 4.5% (Texas Education Agency, 2010). The annual dropout rate for the 2019 school year for Black students was 8.8%, Hispanic students was 7.1%, and White students was 3.3% (Texas Education Agency, 2020d).

Clearly, the high school dropout rate in the State of Texas has been and remains a concern for the past 27 years (Texas Education Agency, 2020a). In an effort to try and reduce the dropout rate, the State of Texas created an option for school districts to

implement Alternative Education Campuses of Choice to decrease student misbehavior and to provide an alternative pathway to a high school diploma for students identified as at-risk of dropping out of high school (Texas Education Agency, 2020a). With the decrease in dropout rates during the last decade, in both the United States and the State of Texas, the alternative high school model has been credited by many educational researchers (Conley, 2002; De La Ossa, 2005; Foley & Pang, 2006; Kelly, 1993; Perzigian et al., 2017) as being an effective, additional option for students at-risk of dropping out of high school to earn their high school diploma.

From a review of literature on alternative high school models, researchers (De La Ossa, 2005; Foley & Pang, 2006; Gilson, 2006; Perzigian et al., 2017) have provided data through various quantitative and qualitative approaches and formats such as longitudinal studies, phenomenological studies, guiding question protocols, appreciative inquiry approach, theory of learning communities approach, semi structured interviews, questionnaires, statistical analyses, and surveys (De La Ossa, 2005; Foley & Pang, 2006; Gilson, 2006; Perzigian et al., 2017). These researchers have discovered common pedagogical themes and characteristics present within the alternative high school model that create successes and limitations for high school students determined to be at-risk. These themes and characteristics include: (a) smaller school size, (b) smaller class sizes, (c) at-risk student population, (d) schedule flexibility, (e) student self-awareness, (f) school leader autonomy, (g) positive student/teacher relationships, (h) student motivation, and (i) student choice (De La Ossa, 2005; Foley & Pang, 2006; Gilson, 2006; Perzigian et al., 2017). Additionally, De La Ossa (2005) reported that students at-risk preferred the

alternative high school model to the traditional high school model because of the following alternative high school model characteristics: (a) student-driven school operations, (b) individualized student attention, (c) unique graduation requirements, and (d) flexible curriculum requirements (De La Ossa, 2005).

De la Ossa (2005), Foley and Pang (2006), Gilson (2006), Lang and Lehr (1999), and Perzigian et al. (2017) have conducted studies in which they focused on established alternative high school models located within the northern central states of the United States, including Illinois, Iowa, and Minnesota specifically. These researchers' findings are consistent with surrounding states regarding characteristics and pedagogical themes of productive and effective alternative high school models. Additionally, Gilson (2006) determined that teacher choice, student choice, and learning style were all positively related to student retention and graduation rate (Jordan, 2021). Conversely, Lang and Lehr (1999) concluded that about 50% of students who were at-risk enrolled in such programs dropped out (p. 178). Of the 50% of students who dropped out, less than 10% of these students transitioned to another educational program (p. 190).

Although published articles could be located about alternative education high schools in the United States, only a limited number could be located about alternative education high schools in the State of Texas. The published research articles that could be located were about students identified as at-risk and the effect of attendance and student performance on graduation rates (Franklin et al., 2007). Furthermore, the effectiveness of the alternative high school model in reducing high school dropout rates in the State of Texas was even further limited in the review of literature that was conducted.

Alternative high school models have been used to provide students at-risk with an additional pathway to earn a high school diploma (Jordan, 2021). Because the traditional high school model has not demonstrated to be successful for these students, many students have sought the alternative high school model as a second attempt to achieving their high school diploma (Jordan, 2021; Kamrath, 2019). Although educational leaders have promoted the ideal that alternative high school models “satisfy the need to provide choice and diversity within a monopolistic bureaucratic giant of public education” (Conley, 2002, p. 177; Kim, 2006). Kleiner et al. (2002) established that a disproportionate number of alternative schools were located in districts with students of color. Perzigian et al. (2017) noted the presence of disparities for students of color and the model of school that they chose to attend. Additionally, Perzigian et al. (2017) determined that the enrollment of Black students within the alternative high school models was higher than the enrollment of Hispanic students and White students. Conversely, the enrollment of White students in traditional and innovative alternative schools was higher than the enrollment of Black students and Hispanic students (Perzigian et al., 2017).

The alternative high school model has been examined by many researchers (Conley, 2002; De La Ossa, 2005; Foley & Pang, 2006; Kelly, 1993; Perzigian et al., 2017) throughout the last three decades. The pedagogical themes and characteristics that have emerged through these examinations have revealed to be beneficial to students at-risk and who are wanting to earn their high school diploma. However, additional investigative research regarding student ethnicity/race and Texas high school dropout

rates in relation to the alternative high school model and its effectiveness, is recommended.

Review of the Literature for Dropout Rate in Texas Alternative Education

Campuses of Choice as a Function of Student Economic Status

The high school dropout rate in the United States is of concern because students who drop out of high school are more likely to become adults who live in poverty (Rumberger, 2013). In 2019, adults who did not have a high school diploma accounted for 23.7% of the adults reported as living in poverty, compared to 11.5% of adults with a high school diploma reported as living in poverty (Shrider et al., 2021). Often those adults who live in poverty find it more difficult to find employment, rely on public assistance, engage in criminal mischief, and seek health care more frequently due to health conditions created adversely by their lifestyles (Rumberger, 2011, 2013). Adults who had dropped out of high school are likely to raise families in poverty that often live within a poor community. As such, their children's social and academic development, due to a lack of available resources, are negatively influenced, and those children in poverty are five times more likely to drop out of high school (Kena et al., 2016; Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000; Rumberger, 2013). A societal concern are the costs placed on taxpayers to provide public assistance and healthcare for these adults who had dropped out of high school. Such costs are greater for adults who had dropped out than for adults who did graduate from high school (Belfield & Levin, 2007; Rumberger, 2013).

The high school dropout rate in the United States has steadily declined since the late 1970's (Center for Labor Market Studies, 2009; Kamrath, 2019; McFarland et al., 2018; National Center for Education Statistics, 2021c). Over a 45-year span, 1976-2019, the high school dropout rate has decreased by a total of 9% (McFarland et al., 2018; National Center for Education Statistics, 2021c). In the 1976 school year, the high school dropout rate for the United States was 14.1% (McFarland et al., 2018). By 2009, six million people ages 16-24 were categorized as high school dropouts (Center for Labor Market Studies, 2009; Kamrath, 2019). At the conclusion of the 2010 school year, the high school dropout rate was 8.3% (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021c) and in the 2016 school year, the high school dropout rate was 6.1% (McFarland et al., 2018). In 2018, the high school dropout rate was 5.3% and in the 2019 school year, based on the results of the American Community Survey, two million high school dropouts ages 16-24 were reported in the United States, which accounted for a national high school dropout rate of 5.1% (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021c). With respect to the state of interest for this article, Texas, the overall dropout rate declined, although not as much as the dropout rate for the United States (Center for Labor Market Studies, 2009; Kamrath, 2019; McFarland et al., 2018; National Center for Education Statistics, 2021c; Texas Education Agency, 2010, 2011, 2019). The annual dropout rate in 2009 for the State of Texas was 2.9% (Texas Education Agency, 2010) and decreased in 2010 by 0.5% to 2.4% (Texas Education Agency, 2011). This decline continued through the 2019 school year, with a 1.9% annual dropout rate for the State of Texas (Texas Education Agency, 2020a).

The strongest indicators in determining whether students will graduate from high school or drop out of high school are their combined socioeconomic background and educational background (Orr, 1987; Suh et al., 2007). Reviewing high school dropout data specifically for students who were economically disadvantaged in the United States over the last three decades, Jordan et al., (1996) using the National Educational Longitudinal Study of 1988, established that 82% of all early dropouts (i.e., students who dropped out between Grades 8 and 10) were from families in poverty. By the 2016 school year, the dropout rate for students ages 15-24 years, who were from families in the lowest 25% of the income bracket, was 7.2%, a figure that is almost twice the dropout rate for students ages 15-24 years, who were from families in the highest 50% of the income bracket. Their documented dropout rate was 3.7% (McFarland et al., 2018).

Students who were economically disadvantaged in the State of Texas have been determined to have higher dropout rates than their peers who were not economically disadvantaged from the 2008-2009 school year through the 2018-2019 school year (Texas Education Agency, 2010, 2019). During the 2008-2009 school year, 10.9% of students who dropped out of high school were economically disadvantaged (Texas Education Agency, 2010). By the 2014-2015 school year, the dropout rate for students who were economically disadvantaged had declined to 2.5%. Of note is that the dropout rate for students who were not economically disadvantaged was much lower, at 1.5% (Texas Education Agency, 2020d). In the 2018-2019 school year, the dropout rate for students who were economically disadvantaged remained the same at 2.5%, whereas the

dropout rate for students who were not economically disadvantaged continued to show a decrease to 1.2% (Texas Education Agency, 2020d).

The continued decline in national and state high school dropout rates may be due to the alternative schools' reform movement in the United States. This reform movement dates to the early 1960's with the rise of school choice options (Schneider et al., 2000; Wang et al., 2019). Nationally, 10,900 alternative schools and alternative programs were available to students at-risk in 2002 (Kleiner et al., 2002). In the 2010-2011 school year, 6,197 alternative schools were available to students at-risk. In the 2016-2017 school year, 5,375 alternative schools were available to students at-risk, a decline of more than 800 alternative schools (Wang et al., 2019). Similarly, student enrollment numbers declined during this 7-year span, with alternative school enrollment being 563,449 students in the 2010-2011 school year and 475,015 students in the 2016-2017 school year (Wang et al., 2019).

School districts located in the Southeast United States, as well as school districts with high poverty and high minority populations, were more likely to have alternative programs and alternative schools available for students at-risk in comparison to school districts located elsewhere with low poverty and low minority populations (Kleiner et al., 2002). Kleiner et al. (2002) established that 39% of public school districts provided an alternative school or program as an option for students at-risk. In the 2007-2008 school year, 64% of school districts in the United States were determined to provide an alternative school or alternative program to students identified as at-risk (Carver & Lewis, 2010).

In the 2000-2001 school year, 45% of school districts with alternative schools and alternative programs had more than 20% of their students from families in poverty. Conversely, 31% of school districts with alternative schools and alternative programs had less than 10% of their students from families in poverty. Compared to the 2007-2008 school year, the percentage of school districts with alternative schools and alternative programs available to students increased. Of these school districts, 68% of them had more than 20% of their students from families in poverty, whereas 62% of these school districts had students located in areas of poverty with less than 10% of their students from families in poverty. In the 2007-2008 school year, school districts in the United States had 217,700 students enrolled in an alternative setting located in areas of poverty of 20% or more, whereas 140,100 students were enrolled in an alternative setting located in areas of poverty of less than 10% (Carver & Lewis, 2010).

Alternative high schools have been described as “warehouses for academically underprepared sons and daughters of working-class families or single parents receiving welfare” (Kelly, 1993, p. 3; Kim, 2006). This quotation from Kelly (1993) on the perception of the alternative high school model, though blunt, is reflective of many investigations that have been conducted over the last three decades. Researchers (Kelly, 1993; Kim, 2006; Kleiner et al., 2002; Perzigian, 2017) who have conducted these investigations determined that the enrollment of many students at-risk are also students in poverty. A disproportionate number of alternative schools are located in districts with high poverty zones across the United States (Kleiner et al., 2002). Perzigian et al. (2017) established that 80% of the students who attended the alternative high schools in their

study received free or reduced lunch (i.e., were economically disadvantaged). Moreover, the locations of the alternative high school campuses they attended were in areas of high poverty (Perzigian et al., 2017).

Notably, students defined as at-risk and in poverty are attending alternative high schools at a higher rate than students defined as at-risk and not in poverty (Kelly, 1993; Kim, 2006; Kleiner et al., 2002; Perzigian, 2017). Alternative high schools, or Alternative Education Campuses of Choice, were established by the State of Texas to provide an additional option in obtaining a high school diploma for students identified as at-risk of dropping out of high school (Texas Education Agency, 2020a). With the decrease in dropout rates during the last decade, in both the United States and the State of Texas, the alternative high school model has been determined to be a positive choice for students at-risk of dropping out of high school to earn their high school diploma (Conley, 2002; De La Ossa, 2005; Foley & Pang, 2006; Kelly, 1993; Perzigian et al., 2017).

From a review of literature, De la Ossa (2005), Foley and Pang (2006), Gilson (2006), Lang and Lehr (1999), and Perzigian et al. (2017) have conducted studies in which they focused specifically on the northern central states of the United States including, Illinois, Iowa, and Minnesota and the influence of the alternative high school model on students at-risk. However, very little published research literature could be retrieved on alternative schools and alternative programs located in the Southeast United States. Similarly, very little published research literature is available regarding school districts with high poverty and high minority populations where they were more likely to

have alternative programs and alternative schools available for students identified as at-risk (Kleiner et al., 2002).

Researchers (De La Ossa, 2005; Foley & Pang, 2006; Lang & Lehr, 1999; Perzigian et al. 2017), nonetheless, are consistent in their findings with respect to southern states and the characteristics and pedagogical themes of productive and effective alternative high school models. Lang and Lehr (1999) documented that those students who completed the school year, had higher attendance rates and were more satisfied with the alternative program model than those students who dropped out of the alternative high school setting. Moreover, Lang and Lehr (1999) reported findings concerning attendance rates and student satisfaction with the alternative high school model that were consistent with previous researchers (De La Ossa, 2005; Foley & Pang, 2006; Lang & Lehr, 1999; Perzigian et al., 2017).

Although published articles could be located about alternative education high schools in the United States, only a limited number could be located about alternative education high schools in the southern states, specifically, in the State of Texas. The published research articles that could be located were about attendance and student academic performance rates and their effect on the graduation rates of students identified as at-risk (Franklin et al., 2007). The effectiveness of the alternative high school model in reducing high school dropout rates in the State of Texas was even further limited in the review of literature that was conducted. Accordingly, research studies are warranted regarding alternative high schools, in the State of Texas, and their efficacy, or lack thereof, as related to high school dropout rates by student economic status.

Statement of the Problem

Alternative Education Campuses of Choice, also known as alternative high school programs, have provided Texas high school students an alternative to the traditional high school model when seeking to earn their high school diploma. Since 1995, the Texas Education Agency has recognized and registered between 340 to 475 Alternative Education Campuses of Choice each school year (Texas Education Agency, 2005, 2018b, 2020b) with the expectations that these alternative high schools would serve as a dropout recovery option for students identified as at-risk. These programs would be responsible for providing credit recovery opportunities, as well as, upholding the rigor of the State of Texas high school graduation requirements for all students (Alternative Education Accountability Task Force, 2020; Texas Education Agency, 2020a). Consequently, with this alternative high school model being an option to high school students at-risk of dropping out, researchers have conducted investigations concerning the effectiveness of these high school programs, regarding dropout prevention. To date, however, many of these researchers have focused primarily on alternative high schools located outside the State of Texas (Gilson, 2006; Perzigian et al., 2017). Hence, research studies are needed on the effectiveness of these school programs located in Texas beginning with student demographic data, teacher demographic data, and dropout data, more specifically, data disaggregated by ethnicity/race and by economic status.

Purpose of the Study

The purposes of this journal-ready dissertation were to provide a descriptive analysis of the demographic characteristics of students and teachers in Texas Alternative

Education Campuses of Choice, recognized as Dropout Recovery Schools, during two 5-year school spans (2005-2006 through 2009-2010 and 2014-2015 through 2018-2019); to provide statistical analyses of archived data between the 2016-2017 and 2018-2019 school years on the campus dropout rates of students enrolled in these schools, as well as, by student ethnicity/race and student economic status.

Research Questions

For this journal-ready dissertation, five overarching research questions, followed by subquestions, were addressed: (a) What are the demographic characteristics of students enrolled in Texas Alternative Education Campuses during the 2005-2006 school year through 2009-2010 school year and the 2014-2015 school year through the 2018-2019 school year?; (b) What are the demographic characteristics of teachers employed in Texas Alternative Education Campuses during the 2005-2006 school year through 2009-2010 school year and the 2014-2015 school year through the 2018-2019 school year?; (c) What is the difference in dropout rates between the 2016-2017 school year and the 2018-2019 school year by the ethnicity/race of high school students?; (d) What is the difference in campus dropout rates of Alternative Education Campuses of Choice between the 2016-2017 school year and the 2018-2019 school year?; and (e) What is the difference in dropout rates between the 2016-2017 school year and the 2018-2019 school year by the economic status of high school students? Following these determinations, the degree to which trends were present with respect to student and teacher demographic characteristics, and dropout rates by ethnicity/race and by economic status was addressed.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this journal-ready dissertation was to provide educational researchers, educational leaders, policymakers, and legislators with an up-to-date analysis of the student demographic characteristics and dropout rates of high school students enrolled in Texas Alternative Education Campuses of Choice, recognized as Dropout Recovery Schools, by student ethnicity/race and by economic status prior to the pandemic. Another purpose was to provide information about the demographic characteristics of teachers employed in Texas Alternative Education Campuses of Choice prior to the pandemic. Findings from the descriptive study and statistical analyses conducted may provide evidence of disparities between student demographic characteristics and teacher demographic characteristics at the implementation of the Alternative Education Accountability procedures and prior to the COVID Pandemic and dropout rates by student ethnicity/race and economic status across three school years. Results from these studies also increased the body of literature available on Texas Alternative Education Campuses of Choice, student and teacher demographic characteristics, and dropout rates. Furthermore, findings from the three research studies conducted in this journal-ready dissertation may be used to assist educational leaders with the descriptive and statistical evidence needed to promote change for all students identified as at-risk enrolled in Alternative Education Campuses of Choice, recognized as Dropout Recovery Schools, regardless of ethnicity/race and economic status.

Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework for this journal-ready dissertation was grounded in John Dewey's experiential learning theory. Dewey (1938) ascertained that the most efficient method of cognitive learning for students is through social experiences and reflection of new social experiences on previously acquired knowledge. Abderrahim and Gutiérrez-Colón Plana (2021) and Talebi (2015) determined that learning is a socially interactive and collaborative process, which is supportive of Dewey's experiential learning theory (Abderrahim & Gutiérrez-Colón Plana, 2021; Dewey, 1938; Talebi, 2015). The construction of knowledge occurs when a child interacts with the environment. Two processes, assimilation and accommodation, together, work to fill in the gaps of knowledge that a child may possess. This development is considered a mature form of knowledge acquisition which assists with the gaps of knowledge (Carpendale, 1997; Piaget, 1970). Lastly, Dewey (1938) noted that although knowledge comes from experiences which must be meaningful and important to a person to be influential to cognitive acquisition (Kumar & Gupta, 2009).

Dewey (1938) argued that public schools do not aim to develop students as individual, autonomous, and reflective thinkers. Instead, public schools aim for students to master a set of predetermined skills and content (Abderrahim & Gutiérrez-Colón Plana, 2021; Talebi, 2015). Dewey's beliefs concerning public school structure and the predetermined set of skills and content required to be taught to students, is still reflective of public school teaching today with the current core curriculum and standards required by the State of Texas (Texas Education Agency, 2022c). "...for education to be most

effective, content must be presented in a way that allows the student to relate the information to prior experiences, thus deepening the connection with this new knowledge” (Abderrahim & Gutiérrez-Colón Plana, 2021, p. 39; Talebi, 2015, p. 5). This quotation is indicative of the purpose of the alternative high school model. The alternative high school model was created to give students an opportunity to receive individualized content and curriculum to support knowledge acquisition that is sympathetic of their unique life situations and to fill in gaps of knowledge that the traditional high school model has been unsuccessful at doing (Alternative Education Accountability, 2007).

Definition of Terms

The key terms for the three research studies of this journal-ready dissertation are provided for the reader below.

Alternative Education Accountability Procedures

The Alternative Education Accountability procedures is the accountability system developed and implemented in 2005 under the No Child Left Behind act to evaluate Alternative Education Campuses in the State of Texas annually for Adequate Yearly Progress (Texas Education Agency, 2020a).

Alternative Education Campus of Choice

An Alternative Education Campus of Choice is defined as an alternative education program which provides individualized supports and instructional services at an accelerated rate to students identified as at-risk (Alternative Education Accountability, 2007, p. 109).

Alternative High School

The definition of an alternative high school is any school learning community that does not conform to the traditional high school model. De La Ossa (2005) used this term to describe “a school not located within or attached to a mainstream school, that students in the public school district can choose to attend at no additional cost” (p. 25). This term was used interchangeably with Alternative Education Campus of Choice throughout this journal-ready dissertation.

At-Risk

A student defined as at-risk by the State of Texas must meet one or more of 13 criteria established by the Texas Education Agency as being conditions that place a student in jeopardy of not graduating with a high school diploma from an accredited Texas high school within four years of entering Grade 9 (Texas Education Agency, 2008).

Dropout

A dropout is defined by the Texas Education Agency as a student enrolled in public school Grades K-12, who does not return to a public school the following fall and who has not received their diploma, General Education Development certificate, continued school outside of public school, began college or has died (Texas Education Agency, 2008).

Dropout Recovery School

A dropout recovery school is defined by the Texas Education Agency as an Alternative Education Campus of Choice which has an at-risk student population of 50%

or more age 17 years or older, with a focus on recovering students who have already been coded as high school dropouts by the State of Texas (Texas Education Agency, 2020b).

Economically Disadvantaged

A student who is defined as economically disadvantaged qualifies for free or reduced-priced school lunch based upon their guardians determined annual income through the National School Lunch and Child Nutrition Program (Texas Education Agency, 2008).

Ethnicity

The U.S. Census Bureau defines ethnicity as an individual's Hispanic origin. Two categories for ethnicity have been established: Hispanic or Latino and Not Hispanic or Latino. Hispanics and Latinos may be of any race. (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2014).

Poverty

The United States Census Bureau defines poverty as; "if a family's total income is less than the family's threshold, then that family and every individual in it is considered in poverty" (United States Census Bureau, 2021, p. 1).

Race

The U.S. Census Bureau recognizes a social definition of race rather than attempting to define race. "In addition, it is recognized that the categories of the race question include race and national origin or sociocultural groups." The five groups recognized are: White, Black or African American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, and Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2014).

Texas Academic Performance Reports

Texas Academic Performance Reports are a conglomeration of data on student performance for each Texas school and district. The reports, available yearly, provide disaggregated teacher data and student data by student groups including, ethnicity/race and economic status (Texas Education Agency, 2022b).

Texas Education Agency

The Texas Education Agency is a state organization that oversees public education in the State of Texas. Headed by the Commissioner of Education, the organization provides leadership, policy regulation, and support to all school systems (Texas Education Agency, 2022a).

Literature Review Search Procedures

For this journal-ready dissertation, the literature regarding alternative high school programs, or Alternative Education Campuses of Choice was reviewed along with teacher demographic characteristics and student demographic characteristics of ethnicity/race and economic status. The electronic database literature search was limited to studies discussed through peer-reviewed journal articles. Articles were identified through the Educational Administration Abstracts, Google Scholar, Education Source, Education Full Text, Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), APA PsychInfo, APA PsycArticles, Academic Search Complete, eBook Academic Collection, Psychology and Behavioral Sciences Collection, and EBSCO Host databases. The articles retrieved were published between 1987 and 2022. Keywords used during the extensive search were alternative high school, alternative schools, alternative programs, students identified as

at-risk, at-risk, students at-risk, Alternative Education Campus of Choice, dropout rate, economic status, poor, poverty, economically disadvantaged, Black, Hispanic, White, and student choice.

Delimitations

The three research studies contained in this journal-ready dissertation were be limited to Grades 9-12 Texas public school students enrolled in an Alternative Education Campus of Choice defined as a Dropout Recovery School only. Data on students who were enrolled in an Alternative Education Campus of Choice not defined as a Dropout Recovery School; or a traditional, private, or charter high school were not used in this journal-ready dissertation. Data were obtained from the Texas Academic Performance Reports for the 2016-2017, 2017-2018, and 2018-2019 school years on the dropout rates of Black, Hispanic, and White students and by student economic status. Additionally, the demographic characteristics of teachers employed at an Alternative Education Campus of Choice was limited to data obtained from the Alternative Education Accountability procedures and the Texas Academic Performance Reports for the 2004-2005 school year through the 2018-2019 school year and the 2014-2015 school year through the 2018-2019 school year. Data utilized were pre-pandemic to reflect archival student data and teacher data not influenced by unforeseen conditions presented by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Limitations

In this journal-ready dissertation, the demographic characteristics of students enrolled in, and the demographic characteristics of teachers employed at Alternative Education Campuses of Choice were addressed. Another purpose was to determine the

degree to which dropout rates of students determined to be at-risk and who were enrolled in Alternative Education Campuses of Choice were influenced by ethnicity/race and by economic status. As a result, key limitations are present. Data analyses were limited to Grades 9-12 high school students enrolled in a Texas Education Agency recognized Alternative Education Campus of Choice, defined as a Dropout Recovery School, specifically, Black, Hispanic, and White students, and students identified as economically disadvantaged in the 2016-2017, 2017-2018, 2018-2019 school years. Student demographic data and teacher data were limited to the 2005-2006 school year through the 2009-2010 school year and the 2014-2015 school year through the 2018-2019 school year. Data were not analyzed for Texas Alternative Education Campuses of Choice not recognized as a Dropout Recovery School, or a Texas traditional, private, or charter high school.

Descriptive and quantitative data were analyzed in the three studies in this journal-ready dissertation. Given that data on only Texas students and teachers were analyzed herein, the extent to which findings may be generalizable to students in other states is not known. Consequently, given that the data on Texas Alternative Education Campuses of Choice recognized as Dropout Recovery Schools, may vary from year to year, the findings reflected 130 campuses which were accredited by the Texas Education Agency during all three years. Finally, only preexisting data were examined. As such, cause-effect relationships between enrollments at Alternative Education Campuses of Choice recognized as Dropout Recovery Schools, dropout rates, student demographic characteristics, and teacher demographic characteristics cannot be made.

Assumptions

The major assumption for this journal-ready dissertation was that the datasets provided from the Texas Education Agency through the Alternative Education Accountability procedures and the Texas Academic Performance Reports were accurate. Any errors reported in relation to student ethnicity/race, economic status, dropout rates, student demographic characteristics, and teacher demographic characteristics could negatively affect the results.

Organization of the Study

In this journal-ready dissertation, three manuscripts were generated. In the first article, student demographic data and teacher demographic data for the 2005-2006 through the 2009-2010 school years and the 2014-2015 through the 2018-2019 school years were addressed. In the second article, dropout rate data by ethnicity/race (i.e., Black, Hispanic, and White) for the 2016-2017, 2017-2018, and 2018-2019 school years were examined. In the last article, dropout rate data by economic status for the 2016-2017, 2017-2018, and 2018-2019 school years were investigated.

This journal-ready dissertation is composed of five chapters. Chapter One contains the background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, significance of the study, definition of terms, delimitations, limitations, and assumptions of the three research investigations. In Chapter Two, the framework for the first investigation was about student demographic characteristics of Grades 9-12 students enrolled in an Alternative Education Campus of Choice and teacher demographic characteristics of teachers employed in an Alternative Education Campus of Choice. In

Chapter Three, the second journal-ready dissertation article was an analysis of the dropout rate data by ethnicity/race of Grades 9-12 students enrolled in an Alternative Education Campus of Choice recognized as a Dropout Recovery School. In Chapter Four, the third investigation was regarding the dropout data by economic status of Grades 9-12 students enrolled in an Alternative Education Campus of Choice recognized as a Dropout Recovery School. Summarized in Chapter V will be the results of the three articles.

CHAPTER II
TEXAS ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION CAMPUSES OF CHOICE: A
LONGITUDINAL DESCRIPTIVE STUDY

This dissertation follows the style and format of *Research in the Schools (RITS)*.

Abstract

Ascertained in this research study was the breakdown of student demographic characteristics and teacher demographic characteristics by ethnicity/race (i.e., Asian, Black, Hispanic, and White), student economic status, and teacher gender during two, 5-year spans (i.e., the 2005-2006 school year through the 2009-2010 school year and the 2014-2015 school year through the 2018-2019 school year). Descriptive statistics revealed the presence of inequities by student and teacher ethnicity/race, student economic status, and teacher gender in all school years examined. By the 2018-2019 school year, Hispanic students were half of the student enrollment of Alternative Education Campuses of Choice, followed by White, Black, and Asian students. Students in poverty were two-thirds of the students enrolled in Alternative Education Campuses of Choice. The majority, nearly 60%, of the teacher workforce was White, followed by Hispanic, Black, and Asian in the 14-year time span analyzed. Lastly, female teachers were 60% of the teachers in Alternative Education Campuses of Choice. Implications, as well as recommendations for future research, were made.

Keywords: Alternative Education Campus of Choice; Ethnicity/race; Asian; Black; Hispanic; White; Economic status; Gender

TEXAS ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION CAMPUSES OF CHOICE: A LONGITUDINAL DESCRIPTIVE STUDY

“For some, not completing high school can have disastrous consequences” (Robinson, 2016, p. 22). Such consequences for many students who drop out of high school are welfare, homelessness, unemployment, criminal mischief, and poor health (Robinson, 2016; Rumberger, 2011, 2013). Students who drop out of high school and choose to engage in criminal activity often end up in jail more than students who graduate from high school. Almost 67% of males who are incarcerated do not have a high school diploma (Robinson, 2016). Consequently, Robinson (2016) noted that the yearly cost to educate one student is \$11,000, yet it costs taxpayers almost \$20,000 annually to house a criminal in prison (Amurao, 2015; Robinson, 2016).

In the 2019 school year, the high school dropout rate in the United States was 5.1% (Hussar et al., 2020). This statistic is much better than the high school dropout rate of 8.3% in the 2010 school year (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021). Based on these data, the national high school dropout rate has decreased steadily over the last decade (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021) and has resulted in a decrease in the number of high school dropouts in the United States from six million people ages 16-24 in the 2009 school year to two million people ages 16-24 in the 2019 school year (Center for Labor Market Studies, 2009; Kamrath, 2019; National Center for Education Statistics, 2021).

With respect to the state of interest for this article, Texas, the overall dropout rate decreased during the decade spanning the 2009 school year through the 2019 school year,

however, not as dramatically as the overall dropout rate for the United States (Center for Labor Market Studies, 2009; Kamrath, 2019; McFarland et al., 2018; National Center for Education Statistics, 2021; Texas Education Agency, 2010, 2011, 2019). The annual dropout rate in Texas for the 2009 school year was 2.9% (Texas Education Agency, 2010) and by the end of the 2019 school year was 1.9% (Texas Education Agency, 2020c). Established through the 2021 Texas Education Agency Fall Membership Survey data was that in the 2019-2020 school year, Texas high schools failed to graduate 86,789 students and had lost almost four million student enrollments in Texas public schools (Johnson, 2021).

The dropout rate in the United States has decreased approximately 9% from the 1976 school year to the 2019 school year (Center for Labor Market Studies, 2009; Kamrath, 2019; McFarland et al., 2018; National Center for Education Statistics, 2021; Schneider et al., 2000; Wang et al., 2019). This decrease in dropout rate has been linked to the alternative high school reform and to the school choice movement which occurred in the United States during the 1960s (Kamrath, 2019; McFarland et al., 2018; National Center for Education Statistics, 2021; Schneider et al., 2000; Wang et al., 2019). Over the next several decades, the alternative high school model has become a popular option for students determined to be at-risk to obtain their high school diploma (Jordan, 2021; Kamrath, 2019). In the 2002 school year, 10,900 alternative schools and alternative programs were available to students at-risk nationally (Kleiner et al., 2002). By the 2016-2017 school year, 5,375 alternative schools (not including alternative school programs)

located throughout the United States were available for students at-risk, with a total student enrollment of 475,015 (Wang et al., 2019).

Following a review of literature spanning the last 30 years, researchers (Conley, 2002; De La Ossa, 2005; Foley & Pang, 2006; Kelly, 1993; Perzigian et al., 2017) have provided evidence that the alternative high school model has benefits for students who are at-risk. Lang and Lehr (1999) documented that the students in their study, who completed the school year, had higher attendance rates and were more satisfied with the alternative program model than those students who dropped out of the alternative high school setting. Their findings were commensurate with the available literature on alternative high school models (De La Ossa, 2005; Foley & Pang, 2006; Lang & Lehr, 1999; Perzigian et al. 2017).

The State of Texas began to see an increase in alternative high school programs during the 1960's alternative schools reform movement taking place in the United States (Schneider et al., 2000; Wang et al., 2019). In the 1993 school year, the Texas Legislature enacted school accountability legislation that required the development of an accountability system for all public schools in Texas. This new legislation included accountability for the alternative high schools operating in Texas (Texas Education Agency, 2020a). In response to the beliefs from educational leaders that an alternative high school accountability model was warranted separate from the traditional public school model, the Texas Legislature established an alternative accountability ratings system in 1994 and implemented it during the 1995-1996 school year for schools who were serving students defined as at-risk (Texas Education Agency, 2020a). Schools were

recognized as alternative high schools (Alternative Education Campuses) if they served one or more of the following student populations, (a) at-risk of dropping out, (b) recovered dropouts, (c) pregnant or parenting, (d) adjudicated, (e) severe discipline problems, and (f) expelled (Texas Education Agency, 2020a).

In the 1999-2000 school year, the Texas Education Agency had split Alternative Education Campuses into schools of choice, Disciplinary Alternative Education Campuses, and Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Programs. Discipline campuses were no longer permitted to register as an Alternative Education Campus (Texas Education Agency, 2020a). By the 2005 school year, the Texas Education Agency had established registration criteria for each Alternative Education Campus which included serving students defined as at-risk of dropping out of high school. The Texas Education Agency determined that a student could be defined as a student at-risk of dropping out of high school based upon 13 indicators outlined by the Texas Education Code (TEC) §29.081 (Texas Education Agency, 2020a).

Although published articles could be located about alternative education high schools in the United States, only a limited number could be located about alternative education high schools, specifically in Texas. Researchers (Franklin et al., 2017) who conducted investigations about the alternative high school model in the State of Texas have focused primarily on student attendance rates and student performance rates and their effect on students identified as at-risk, and their graduation rates from the alternative high school model. In the review of literature that was conducted for this article, the effectiveness of the alternative high school model as a school choice option in relation to

reducing high school dropout rates in the State of Texas was even further limited.

Accordingly, research studies are justified regarding the alternative high school model, in the State of Texas, and their efficacy, or lack thereof, as related to high school dropout rates and the demographic characteristics of students enrolled in these schools, as well as the demographic characteristics of teachers employed at these schools. Information would be helpful regarding the degree to which changes might have occurred in the demographic characteristics of students and teachers from the 2005-2006 school year, when such data began to be reported to the Texas Education Agency, through the Alternative Education Accountability system, to the 2018-2019 school year, reported through the Texas Academic Performance Reports.

Statement of the Problem

Alternative Education Campuses of Choice have provided Texas high school students an alternative option to the traditional high school setting when pursuing their high school diploma. The expectations for each Alternative Education Campus of Choice are to provide dropout recovery services, provide credit recovery opportunities, and uphold the mandated State of Texas high school graduation requirements for students enrolled in their program (Alternative Education Accountability Task Force, 2020; Texas Education Agency, 2020a). However, the dropout rate in Texas remained the same during the 2016-2017 school year through the 2017-2018 (Texas Education Agency, 2019), and the literature available on the Texas alternative high school model and how it has evolved over time to meet the needs of the students and reduce the dropout rate is limited (Alternative Education Accountability Task Force, 2020; Texas Education Agency,

2020a). In addition, few published articles are available about Texas Alternative Education Campuses of Choice, and as educational leaders, it is important to know the demographic characteristics of students enrolled in these schools, as well as the demographic characteristics of teachers employed at these schools from their inception in the 2005-2006 school year through the 2018-2019 school year.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this descriptive study was to determine the demographic characteristics of students who were enrolled in an Alternative Education Campus of Choice in the beginning five years of their inception (i.e., between the 2005-2006 school year and the 2009-2010 school year). A second purpose was to ascertain these same student characteristics for the last five school years (i.e., between the 2014-2015 school year and the 2018-2019 school year), up to the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. A third purpose was to determine the demographic characteristics of teachers who were employed in the initial five school years (i.e., between the 2005-2006 school year and the 2009-2010 school year). A fourth purpose was to identify the demographic characteristics of teachers who were employed in the last five school years (i.e., between the 2014-2015 school year and the 2018-2019 school year), up to the beginning of the current pandemic.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this research study was to provide educational researchers and educational leaders with a longitudinal descriptive study of the demographic characteristics of students enrolled in Texas Alternative Education Campuses of Choice by student demographics, as well as the demographic characteristics of teachers

employed at these campuses, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Results from this descriptive study may be used to assist educational leaders with the evidence needed to promote organizational changes for students identified as at-risk, enrolled in Alternative Education Campuses of Choice regardless of student demographics. Findings of this multiyear research study will increase the available literature pertaining to Texas Alternative Education Campuses of Choice located in the State of Texas.

Research Questions

In this article, the following research questions were addressed: (a) What are the demographic characteristics of students enrolled in Texas Alternative Education Campuses of Choice between the 2005-2006 school year and the 2009-2010 school year?; (b) What are the demographic characteristics of students enrolled in Texas Alternative Education Campuses of Choice between the 2014-2015 school year and the 2018-2019 school year?; (c) What are the demographic characteristics of teachers employed in Texas Alternative Education Campuses of Choice between the 2005-2006 school year and the 2009-2010 school year?; and (d) What are the demographic characteristics of teachers employed in Texas Alternative Education Campuses of Choice between the 2014-2015 school year and the 2018-2019 school year?

Method

Research Design

For this research study, a descriptive research design, involving the analysis of multiple years of data, was present (Johnson & Christensen, 2020). This design was suitable for this study because archival data were analyzed. Specifically addressed was

the identification of student demographic characteristics and teacher demographic characteristics at Texas alternative education schools spanning the 2005-2006 school year through the 2018-2019 school year. The archival data that were analyzed herein were retrieved from the Alternative Education Accountability system and the Texas Academic Performance Reports on each of the Alternative Education Campuses of Choice identified in this sample reported by the Texas Education Agency. Furthermore, the archival data were campus-based data; specifically, by student demographics and teacher demographics.

Participants and Instrumentation

The research study that was conducted herein was on 82 of the 300 Alternative Education Campuses of Choice registered with the Texas Education Agency for the 2020-2021 school year (Texas Education Agency, 2020b). The 82 schools examined in this research study were selected based on upon the availability of student and teacher demographic data for the Alternative Education Campus of Choice for each school year addressed. This field of schools was narrowed using the following guidelines: (a) Alternative Education Campuses of Choice registered with Texas Education Agency for two, five-year school year spans (i.e., the 2005-2006 school year through the 2009-2010 school year and the 2014-2015 school year through the 2018-2019 school year); (b) Alternative Education Campuses of Choice categorized as Dropout Recovery Schools by the Texas Education Agency; and (c) The preexisting data used were on student and teacher demographic information for the Alternative Education Campuses of Choice examined. The 82 Alternative Education Campuses of Choice registered with the Texas

Education Agency for the 2020-2021 school year (Texas Education Agency, 2020b) met the predetermined guidelines.

The archival data that were used herein were obtained from the Texas Education Agency's annual publications of the Texas Academic Performance Reports and the Academic Excellence Indicator System. Specifically downloaded were the Alternative Education Campuses of Choice identified in the sample process for the 2005-2006 through the 2009-2010 school years and the 2014-2015 through the 2018-2019 school years. The variables on which data were obtained from the annual reports were (a) teacher demographic data and (b) student demographic data.

Results

The first two research questions addressed in this study involved the demographic characteristics of students enrolled in Alternative Education Campuses of Choice. Data for the 2005-2006 school year through the 2009-2010 school year were examined in the first research question. Data for the 2014-2015 school year through the 2018-2019 school year were examined in the second research question. Of the four major ethnic/racial groups of students (i.e., Asian, White, Hispanic, and Black) enrolled in Texas public schools in these two, five-year school spans (i.e., the 2005-2006 school year through the 2009-2010 school year and the 2014-2015 school year through the 2018-2019 school year), Hispanic students were almost half of the student enrollment in each school year in the Texas Alternative Education Campuses of Choice. The remaining 50% consisted of approximately 30% to 40% White students, followed by 8% to 12% of Black students, with the percentage of Asian students being at 1% or less.

Insert Table 2.1 about here

Following the 2005-2006 school year, Hispanic students became the major ethnic/racial group of students enrolled in Texas Alternative Education Campuses of Choice. Hispanic student enrollment increased from 44.56% in the 2005-2006 school year to 52.84% in the 2018-2019 school year. This difference reflected a gain of 8.32% in Hispanic student enrollment over the 14-year school span.

The 2005-2006 school year was the only school year in which White students were the majority of the student enrollment at Alternative Education Campuses of Choice. After this school year, White student enrollment continued a steady decline from 44.56% in the 2005-2006 school year through the 2018-2019 school year with a reported White student enrollment of 32.23%. These enrollment percentages reflected a loss of 12.84% in White student enrollment over this 14-year school span.

Insert Tables 2.2 through 2.4 about here

In the 2005-2006 school year, Black students were the third largest ethnic/racial group of the student enrollment at Alternative Education Campuses of Choice. Black student enrollment was 8.48% in the 2005-2006 school year and increased to 11.66% in the 2018-2019 school year. This difference reflected an increase of 3.18% in Black student enrollment over this 14-year time period.

In the 2005-2006 school year, Asian students were the ethnic/racial group with the lowest percentage of the student enrollment at Alternative Education Campuses of Choice. Asian student enrollment has varied in enrollment percentage from year to year. The lowest percentage of Asian student enrollment, 0.45%, was in the 2006-2007 school year analyzed. The highest percentage, 1.03%, of Asian student enrollment was in the 2007-2008 school year. Tables 2.1 through 2.4 contain the descriptive statistics of student ethnicity/race at Alternative Education Campuses of Choice.

Student economic status was also addressed in the analysis of student demographic characteristics of students enrolled in Alternative Education Campuses of Choice. The percentages of students who were determined to be economically disadvantaged (Texas Education Agency, 2008) and enrolled in Texas Alternative Education Campuses of Choice during these two, five-year school spans, were identified. In the 2005-2006 school year, 43.68% of students enrolled in Alternative Education Campuses of Choice were economically disadvantaged. The percentage of students who were economically disadvantaged increased to 61.25% by the 2014-2015 school year. This percentage stayed relatively consistently in the 2015-2016 school year. Following the 2016-2017 school year, the percentage of students who were economically disadvantaged increased to 67.39% in the 2018-2019 school year. These percentages reflected an increase in poverty of 23.71% over this 14-year time period. Readers should note that over two-thirds of the students enrolled in Texas Alternative Education Campuses of Choice were students in poverty.

Insert Tables 2.5 and 2.6 about here

The last two research questions addressed in this research study involved the demographic characteristics of teachers employed at a Texas Alternative Education Campus of Choice during the two, 5-year school spans (i.e., the 2005-2006 school year through the 2009-2010 school year and the 2014-2015 school year through the 2018-2019 school year) analyzed. Data for the 2005-2006 school year through the 2009-2010 school year were examined in this third research question. Data for the 2014-2015 school year through the 2018-2019 school year were examined in the fourth research question. Of the four major ethnic/racial groups of teachers (i.e., Asian, Black, Hispanic, White), White teachers were approximately three-fourths of the teachers employed at Alternative Education Campuses of Choice in each school year. The remaining one-fourth of teachers employed at Texas Alternative Education Campuses of Choice consisted of nearly 15% to 25% Hispanic teachers, followed by 5% of Black teachers, with the percentage of Asian teachers being at 1% or less.

Insert Table 2.7 about here

White teachers were the majority of teachers employed at Alternative Education Campuses of Choice in the 2005-2006 school year at 78.08%. This percentage remained relatively the same during the 2006-2007 school year and then began a decline through

the 2018-2019 school year where the percentage of White teachers employed at Alternative Education Campuses of Choice was 67.82%. These percentages reflected a decrease, 10.26%, in the percentage of White teachers employed at these campuses over this 14-year time period.

In the 2005-2006 school year, the percentage of Hispanic teachers employed at Alternative Education Campuses of Choice was 14.09%. This percentage increased through the 2018-2019 school year to 22.07%. This difference reflected a gain of 7.98% in Hispanic teacher employment over the 14-year school span.

Black teachers were 4.02% of teachers employed at Alternative Education Campuses of Choice in the 2005-2006 school year. By the 2018-2019 school year, Black teachers were 5.94% of teachers employed at Alternative Education Campuses of Choice. These percentages reflected an overall increase of 1.92% of Black teachers employed at Alternative Education Campuses of Choice throughout the 14-year time period analyzed.

In the 2005-2006 school year, Asian teachers had the lowest percentage, 0.76%, of teachers employed at Alternative Education Campuses of Choice. The percentage of Asian teachers employed at these campuses varied from school year to school year. The lowest percentage of Asian teachers, 0.75%, occurred in the 2007-2008 school year and the highest percentage was 2.34% in the 2007-2008 school year. These values reflected a slight increase in the percentages, 1.59%, of Asian teachers who were employed at Alternative Education Campuses of Choice throughout the 14-year school span. Tables 2.7 through 2.10 contains the descriptive statistics of teacher ethnicity/race at Alternative Education Campuses of Choice.

Insert Tables 2.8 through 2.10 about here

Teacher gender was also addressed in the analysis of teacher demographic characteristics during these two, 5--year school spans (i.e., the 2005-2006 school year through the 2009-2010 school year and the 2014-2015 school year through the 2018-2019 school year). In the 2005-2006 school year, female teachers who were employed at Alternative Education Campuses of Choice were 59.35% of the teacher employment percentage. This school year was also the lowest percentage of teachers who were female. The highest employment percentage for female teachers employed at Alternative Education Campuses of Choice was in the 2014-2015 school year at 66.31%. By the 2018-2019 school year, female teachers were 61.75% of the teachers at Alternative Education Campuses of Choice. Overall, the percentage of teachers who were female and employed at Alternative Education Campuses of Choice continued to be about 60% of the teacher employment percentage through the 14-year time period. Readers are referred to Tables 2.11 and 2.12 for the descriptive statistics of teacher gender at Alternative Education Campuses of Choice.

Insert Tables 2.11 and 2.12 about here

Discussion

In this multiyear research investigation, the demographic characteristics both of students and of teachers at Texas Alternative Education Campuses of Choice in two, five-year school spans (i.e., the 2005-2006 school year through the 2009-2010 school year and the 2014-2015 school year through the 2018-2019 school year) were determined. In this multiyear statewide analysis, the breakdown of students and teachers by ethnicity/race, student economic status, and teacher gender yielded troubling results. The disparities that were clearly present in each demographic characteristic were reflective of only limited change in the 14-year time span. Provided below are the results of student and teacher demographic characteristics by school year.

From the 2005-2006 school year through the 2009-2010 school year, Hispanic students were nearly half of the students enrolled in Alternative Education Campuses of Choice over this 14-year time period. White students were nearly 40%, Black students were almost 10%, and Asian students were around 1% of the total student enrollment. The overall trends were an increase in the percentage of Black student enrollment and a decrease in the percent of White student enrollment by the 2018-2019 school year. Depicted in Figure 2.1 are the enrollment percentages averages for Asian, Black, Hispanic, and White students by school year across this 14-year time period.

Insert Figure 2.1 about here

Data on student economic status were also analyzed to determine the extent to which changes might have occurred in the percentages of students who were economically disadvantaged and who were enrolled in Texas Alternative Education Campuses of Choice. In the 2005-2006 school year. The percentage of students who were economically disadvantaged was 43.68%. This increased to 67.39% of students who were economically disadvantaged in the 2018-2019 school year. These percentages reflected an increase in the percentages of students in poverty of 23.71% throughout the 14-year time period. Shown in Figure 2.2 are the percentages of students who were economically disadvantaged and who were enrolled in Alternative Education Campuses of Choice by school year across the 14-year time period.

Insert Figure 2.2 about here

Next addressed was the ethnicity/race of teachers in Alternative Education Campuses of Choice. In contrast to the results for student ethnicity/race, White teachers were employed 40% more often than were Hispanic, Black, and Asian teachers. By the 2018-2019 school year, almost 60% of teachers were White, followed by Hispanic teacher at about 20%. Only about 5% of the teachers employed at Alternative Education Campuses of Choice were Black and about 2% of the teachers were Asian. Depicted in Figure 2.3 is the breakdown of teacher ethnicity/race by school year across the 14-year time period.

Insert Figure 2.3 about here

Lastly, data on teacher gender were analyzed. Overall, the percentage of teachers who were female were consistent at about 60% of the teacher employment percentage through the 14-year time period. Shown in Figure 2.4 are the data on the gender of teachers employed at an Alternative Education Campuses of Choice by school year across the 14-year time period.

Insert Figure 2.4 about here

Connections to Existing Literature

Existing literature on student demographics and teacher demographics of students enrolled in and teachers employed at alternative high schools is limited for the State of Texas. Nationally, researchers such as Perzigian et al. (2017) have determined that Black students were enrolled more often in alternative high schools than Hispanic students and White students. This statistic contrasts with the results delineated in this research study. Higher percentages of Hispanic students were enrolled than Black students and White students in Alternative Education Campuses of Choice. Additionally, Perzigian et al. (2017) reported that 80% of students enrolled in these schools were students in poverty. These data are similar to the data analyzed for this research study concerning students in poverty and enrolled in Alternative Education Campuses of Choice in the State of Texas.

For this research study, the demographic characteristics of students and teachers in Texas Alternative Education Campuses of Choice were examined to increase the extant literature available.

Connections to Theoretical Framework

Understanding teacher and student demographics in the alternative high school setting are crucial to the theoretical framework of this article which is grounded in John Dewey's experiential learning theory. As Dewey (1938) ascertained, most students learn through social experiences and reflection of new social experiences on previously acquired knowledge, most of which they receive from their culture community and home environment. Therefore, the demographic characteristics of school personnel should be similar to the demographic characteristics of the students they teach. In doing so, the parallels between ethnicity/race and gender of teachers and students provide the foundation for the connection and relation to new concepts needed for learning and acquiring new knowledge. Beyond relating information, students also must be able to relate and trust their teachers with providing the resources and background knowledge to learn the information. Being provided these tools from teachers who are of the same ethnicity/race, gender, and economic background provides a sense of trust and reliability for the students.

Implications for Policy and for Practice

Implications for policy can be supported from the results in this research study. First, educational leaders are encouraged to disaggregate student and teacher demographic characteristics at their own Alternative Education Campus of Choice. The

breakdown of ethnicity/race student and teacher, economic status by students, and gender by teacher will generate trends that school leaders can analyze for any inequities that they can then address on their campus. Second, educational leaders are encouraged to cross-reference student and teacher demographic characteristics with the overall student population served within the district to ensure the presence of equity among student groups being served at their Alternative Education Campus of Choice.

Furthermore, implications for practice can be supported from the results of this study. Enrolling students in and employing teachers at Texas Alternative Education Campuses of Choice more equitably by demographic characteristic may provide the foundation needed for students to connect prior learning and experience with new knowledge acquired. Also, employing teachers with similar demographic characteristics as the student population may have a positive influence on school climate and overall student performance.

Recommendations for Future Research

Based upon the findings of this descriptive investigation, several recommendations for research can be made. First, researchers are encouraged to examine the presence of potential inequities in the ethnicity/race of students enrolled in Alternative Education Campuses of Choice and high school dropout rates. Secondly, given the clear disproportionalities in the ethnic/racial makeup of students enrolled in Alternative Education Campuses of Choice, researchers can extend this study to explore possible inequities in the economic status of students enrolled in Alternative Education Campuses of Choice and high school dropout rates. Thirdly, researchers are encouraged

to examine potential inequities in the gender of students enrolled in Alternative Education Campuses of Choice. Finally, researchers are recommended to replicate this research study in other states to determine the degree to which results delineated herein might be generalizable outside the State of Texas. Readers should note that in all of the extant literature involving Texas Alternative Education Campuses of Choice, not a single research article could be located in which the researcher examined inequities of student and teacher demographic characteristics present among students enrolled in and teachers employed at these schools.

Conclusion

In this statewide multiyear investigation, student and teacher demographic characteristics of those students enrolled in and teachers employed at Texas Alternative Education Campuses of Choice were examined. Specifically determined were the ethnicity/race of students enrolled in and teachers employed at Alternative Education Campuses of Choice, as well as student economic status and teacher gender. First, across all 14 years, Hispanic students had the highest percentage of students who were enrolled in Alternative Education Campuses of Choice, followed by White, Black, and Asian students. By the 2018-2019 school year, almost two-thirds of the students who were enrolled at these campuses were students in poverty. In contrast to student ethnicity/race, White teachers were the highest percentage of teachers employed at Alternative Education Campuses of Choice, followed by Hispanic, Black, and Asian teachers. The majority of the teachers employed at these campuses were female, almost 70%. Inequities

were clearly present between the ethnic/racial makeup of student enrollment and the ethnic/racial composition of the teacher workforce at these campuses.

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Table 2.1

Descriptive Statistics for Students Enrolled in Texas Alternative Education Campuses of Choice as a Function of Their Ethnicity/Race Between the 2005-2006 School Year and the 2007-2008 School Year

School Year and Ethnicity/Race	<i>n</i>	<i>M%</i>	<i>SD%</i>
2005-2006			
Asian	82	0.98	2.03
Black	82	8.95	11.82
Hispanic	82	44.56	28.98
White	82	45.07	28.00
2006-2007			
Asian	82	0.45	1.02
Black	82	8.48	12.14
Hispanic	82	46.63	29.79
White	82	43.11	28.81
2007-2008			
Asian	82	1.03	2.22
Black	82	9.46	12.89
Hispanic	82	49.24	29.54
White	82	40.10	27.72

Note. The *n* refers to the number of school campuses on which data were analyzed.

Table 2.2

Descriptive Statistics for Students Enrolled in Texas Alternative Education Campuses of Choice as a Function of Their Ethnicity/Race Between the 2008-2009 School Year and the 2009-2010 School Year

School Year and Ethnicity/Race	<i>n</i>	<i>M%</i>	<i>SD%</i>
2008-2009			
Asian	82	1.01	2.16
Black	82	9.31	12.47
Hispanic	82	48.53	28.65
White	82	40.70	27.09
2009-2010			
Asian	82	0.89	1.66
Black	82	10.37	12.58
Hispanic	82	49.45	28.08
White	82	38.68	26.72

Note. The *n* refers to the number of school campuses on which data were analyzed.

Table 2.3

Descriptive Statistics for Students Enrolled in Texas Alternative Education Campuses of Choice as a Function of Their Ethnicity/Race Between the 2014-2015 School Year and the 2016-2017 School Year

School Year and Ethnicity/Race	<i>n</i>	<i>M%</i>	<i>SD%</i>
2014-2015			
Asian	82	0.82	2.00
Black	82	9.92	12.64
Hispanic	82	51.44	26.30
White	82	35.55	25.78
2015-2016			
Asian	82	0.89	1.90
Black	82	10.28	13.10
Hispanic	82	51.29	27.34
White	82	35.60	26.34
2016-2017			
Asian	82	0.69	1.45
Black	82	10.45	16.46
Hispanic	82	51.28	28.13
White	82	35.29	26.71

Note. The *n* refers to the number of school campuses on which data were analyzed.

Table 2.4

Descriptive Statistics for Students Enrolled in Texas Alternative Education Campuses of Choice as a Function of Their Ethnicity/Race Between the 2017-2018 School Year and the 2018-2019 School Year

School Year and Ethnicity/Race	<i>n</i>	<i>M%</i>	<i>SD%</i>
2017-2018			
Asian	82	0.82	1.56
Black	82	9.86	13.29
Hispanic	82	53.33	26.70
White	82	33.26	25.28
2018-2019			
Asian	82	0.65	1.30
Black	82	11.66	15.86
Hispanic	82	52.84	25.76
White	82	32.23	24.56

Note. The *n* refers to the number of school campuses on which data were analyzed.

Table 2.5

Descriptive Statistics for Students Enrolled in Texas Alternative Education Campuses of Choice as a Function of Their Economic Status Between the 2005-2006 School Year and the 2009-2010 School Year

School Year	<i>n</i>	<i>M%</i>	<i>SD%</i>
2005-2006	82	43.68	25.79
2006-2007	82	45.16	24.81
2007-2008	82	46.92	23.19
2008-2009	82	49.34	23.33
2009-2010	82	56.05	23.23

Note. The *n* refers to the number of school campuses on which data were analyzed.

Table 2.6

Descriptive Statistics for Students Enrolled in Texas Alternative Education Campuses of Choice as a Function of Their Economic Status Between the 2014-2015 School Year and the 2018-2019 School Year

School Year	<i>n</i>	<i>M%</i>	<i>SD%</i>
2014-2015	82	61.25	18.52
2015-2016	82	60.42	19.42
2016-2017	82	63.07	20.12
2017-2018	82	63.36	21.08
2018-2019	82	67.39	18.18

Note. The *n* refers to the number of school campuses on which data were analyzed.

Table 2.7

Descriptive Statistics for Teachers Employed at Texas Alternative Education Campuses of Choice as a Function of Their Ethnicity/Race Between the 2005-2006 School Year and the 2007-2008 School Year

School Year and Ethnicity/Race	<i>n</i>	<i>M%</i>	<i>SD%</i>
2005-2006			
Asian	77	0.76	3.36
Black	77	4.02	8.28
Hispanic	77	14.09	24.14
White	77	78.08	28.21
2006-2007			
Asian	77	0.79	2.68
Black	77	4.06	7.83
Hispanic	77	15.64	24.90
White	77	78.88	26.13
2007-2008			
Asian	77	0.75	2.56
Black	77	4.84	8.88
Hispanic	77	15.73	24.07
White	77	78.08	24.18

Note. The *n* refers to the number of school campuses on which data were analyzed.

Table 2.8

Descriptive Statistics for Teachers Employed at Texas Alternative Education Campuses of Choice as a Function of Their Ethnicity/Race Between the 2008-2009 School Year and the 2009-2010 School Year

School Year and Ethnicity/Race	<i>n</i>	<i>M%</i>	<i>SD%</i>
2008-2009			
Asian	77	0.98	3.18
Black	77	5.17	9.00
Hispanic	77	16.31	24.79
White	77	76.95	25.40
2009-2010			
Asian	78	1.06	3.18
Black	78	5.33	9.16
Hispanic	78	17.07	26.07
White	78	75.91	26.41

Note. The *n* refers to the number of school campuses on which data were analyzed.

Table 2.9

Descriptive Statistics for Teachers Employed at Texas Alternative Education Campuses of Choice as a Function of Their Ethnicity/Race Between the 2014-2015 School Year and the 2016-2017 School Year

School Year and Ethnicity/Race	<i>n</i>	<i>M%</i>	<i>SD%</i>
2014-2015			
Asian	81	1.41	3.64
Black	81	5.83	12.28
Hispanic	81	19.14	25.57
White	81	72.02	27.18
2015-2016			
Asian	82	1.29	3.70
Black	82	4.46	8.97
Hispanic	82	18.77	26.82
White	82	72.94	27.73
2016-2017			
Asian	79	1.94	4.75
Black	80	6.45	14.36
Hispanic	79	19.76	27.14
White	79	70.45	29.56

Note. The *n* refers to the number of school campuses on which data were analyzed.

Table 2.10

Descriptive Statistics for Teachers Employed at Texas Alternative Education Campuses of Choice as a Function of Their Ethnicity/Race Between the 2017-2018 School Year and the 2018-2019 School Year

School Year and Ethnicity/Race	<i>n</i>	<i>M%</i>	<i>SD%</i>
2017-2018			
Asian	80	1.99	4.86
Black	80	5.55	10.05
Hispanic	80	22.00	29.85
White	80	68.39	29.12
2018-2019			
Asian	80	2.34	6.25
Black	80	5.94	10.97
Hispanic	80	22.07	28.12
White	80	67.82	28.82

Note. The *n* refers to the number of school campuses on which data were analyzed.

Table 2.11

Descriptive Statistics for Teachers Employed at Texas Alternative Education Campuses of Choice as a Function of Their Gender Between the 2005-2006 School Year and the 2009-2010 School Year

School Year and Gender	<i>n</i>	<i>M%</i>	<i>SD%</i>
2005-2006			
Male	77	37.70	22.47
Female	77	59.35	24.19
2006-2007			
Male	77	39.38	20.79
Female	77	60.62	20.79
2007-2008			
Male	77	37.92	19.29
Female	77	62.07	19.29
2008-2009			
Male	77	38.16	19.94
Female	77	61.42	20.19
2009-2010			
Male	78	39.84	18.30
Female	78	59.36	18.74

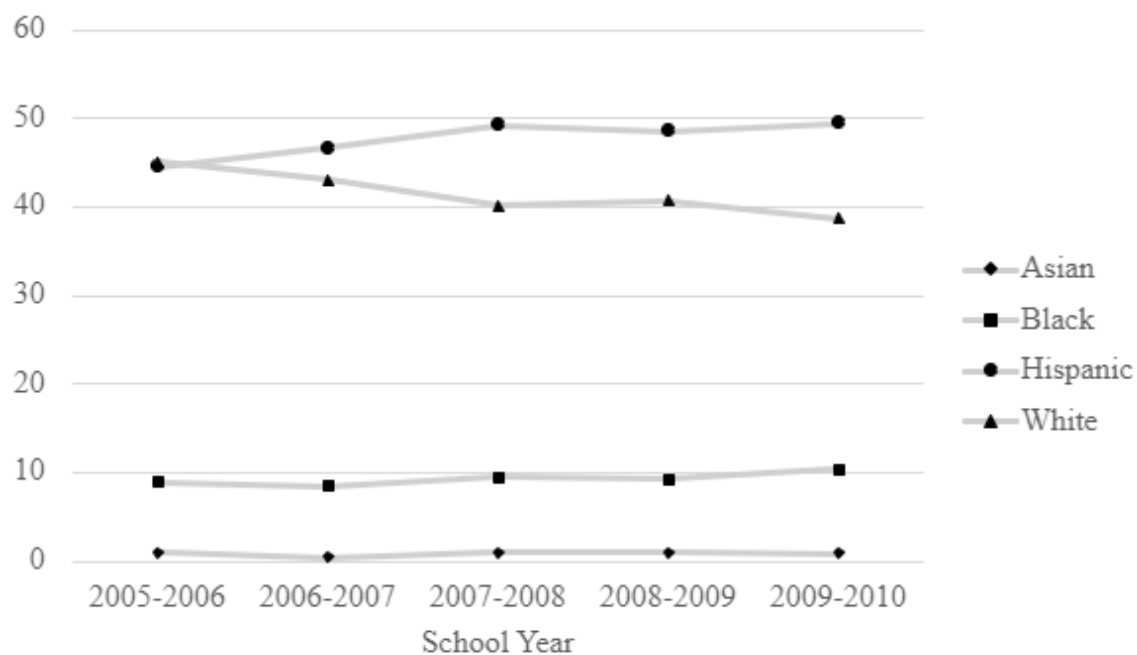
Note. The *n* refers to the number of school campuses on which data were analyzed.

Table 2.12

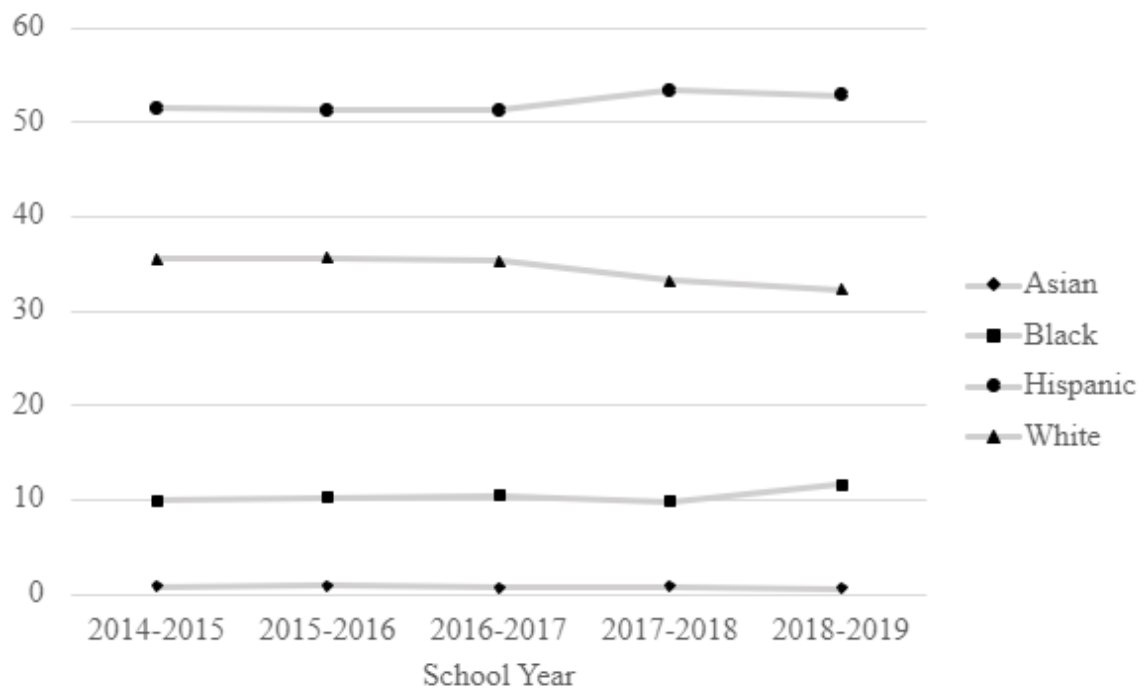
Descriptive Statistics for Teachers Employed at Texas Alternative Education Campuses of Choice as a Function of Their Gender Between the 2014-2015 School Year and the 2018-2019 School Year

School Year and Gender	<i>n</i>	<i>M%</i>	<i>SD%</i>
2014-2015			
Male	81	33.72	17.53
Female	81	66.31	17.51
2015-2016			
Male	80	35.08	18.61
Female	80	64.92	18.61
2016-2017			
Male	80	37.94	18.64
Female	80	62.07	18.64
2017-2018			
Male	80	36.58	19.52
Female	80	61.68	19.88
2018-2019			
Male	80	38.25	18.90
Female	80	61.75	18.90

Note. The *n* refers to the number of school campuses on which data were analyzed.

Figure 2.1*Enrollment Percentages by Student Ethnicity/Race*

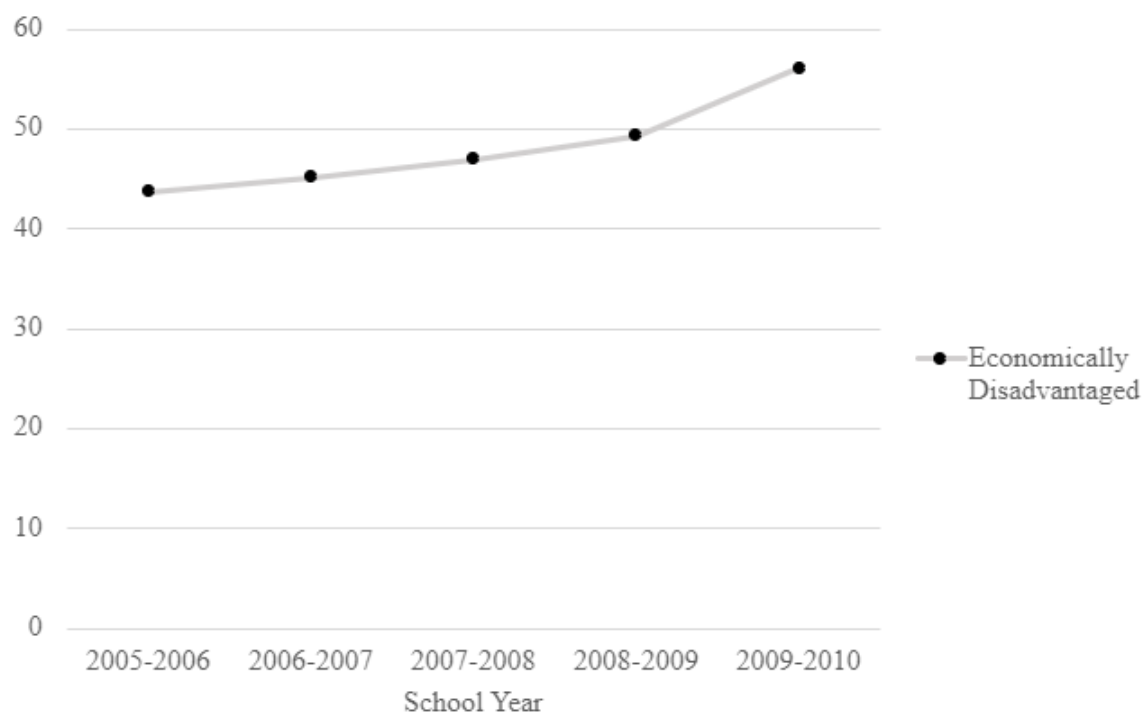
Note. Percentage of students by ethnicity/race enrolled in Alternative Education Campuses of Choice in the 2005-2006, 2006-2007, 2007-2008, 2008-2009, and 2009-2010 school years.

Figure 2.2*Enrollment Percentages by Student Ethnicity/Race*

Note. Percentage of students by ethnicity/race enrolled in Alternative Education Campuses of Choice in the 2014-2015, 2015-2016, 2016-2017, 2017-2018, and 2018-2019 school years.

Figure 2.3

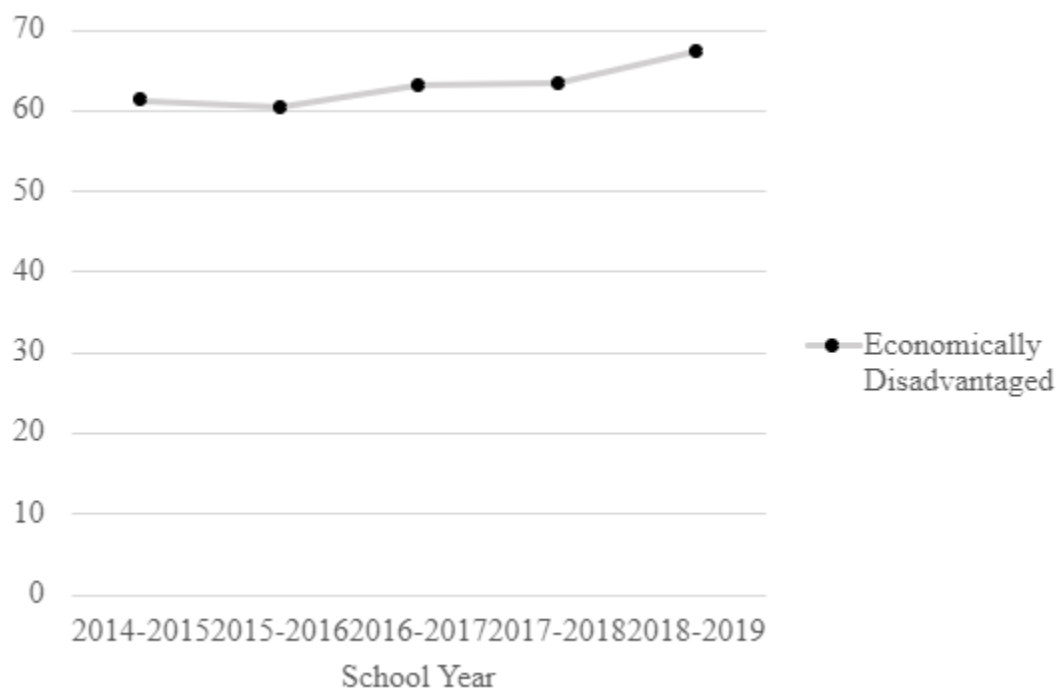
Enrollment Percentages of Students Who Were Economically Disadvantaged



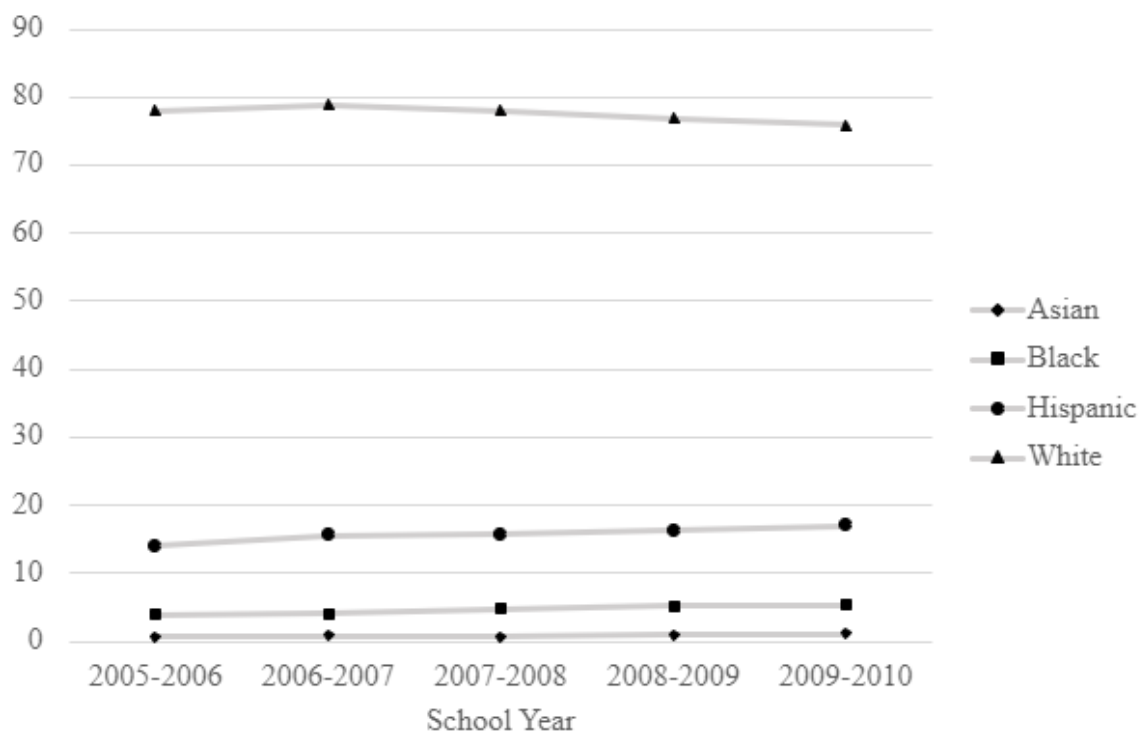
Note. Percentage of students who were economically disadvantaged and enrolled in Alternative Education Campuses of Choice in the 2005-2006, 2006-2007, 2007-2008, 2008-2009, and 2009-2010 school years.

Figure 2.4

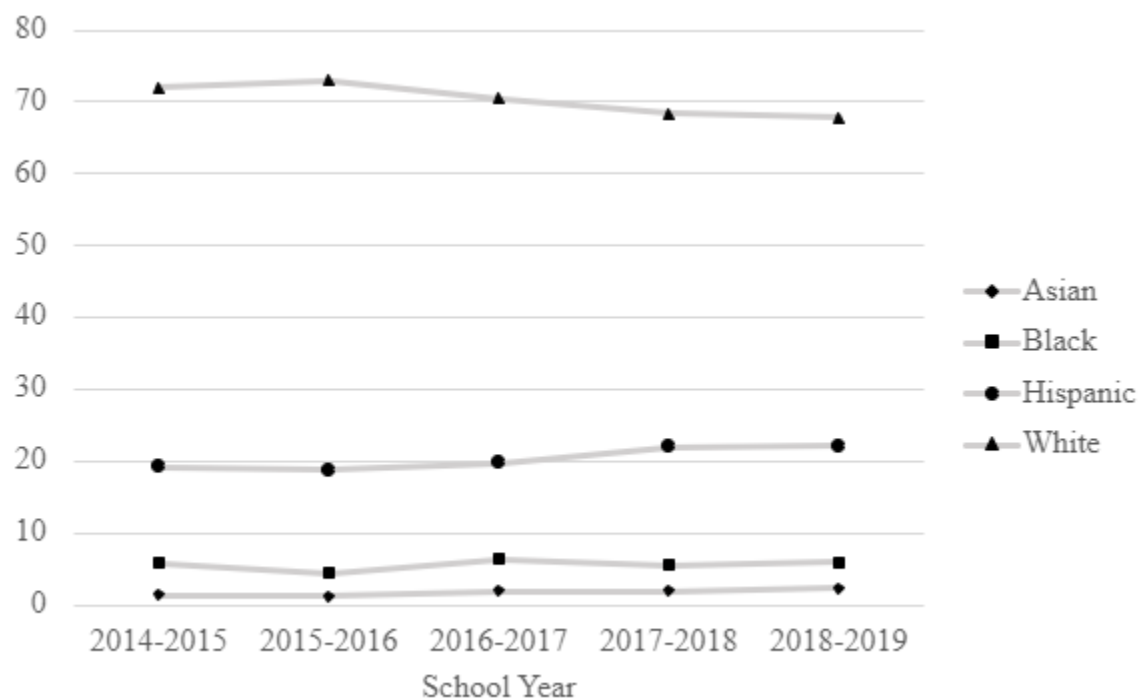
Enrollment Percentages of Students Who Were Economically Disadvantaged



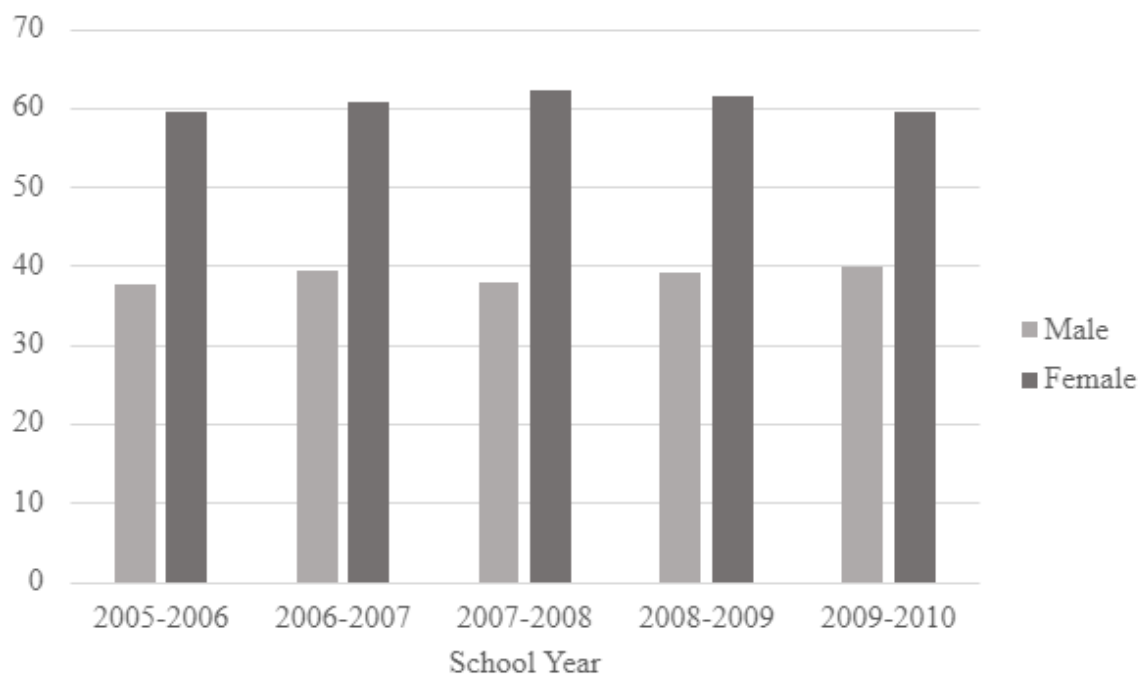
Note. Percentage of students who were economically disadvantaged and enrolled in Alternative Education Campuses of Choice during the 2014-2015, 2015-2016, 2016-2017, 2017-2018, and 2018-2019 school years.

Figure 2.5*Employment Percentages by Teacher Ethnicity/Race*

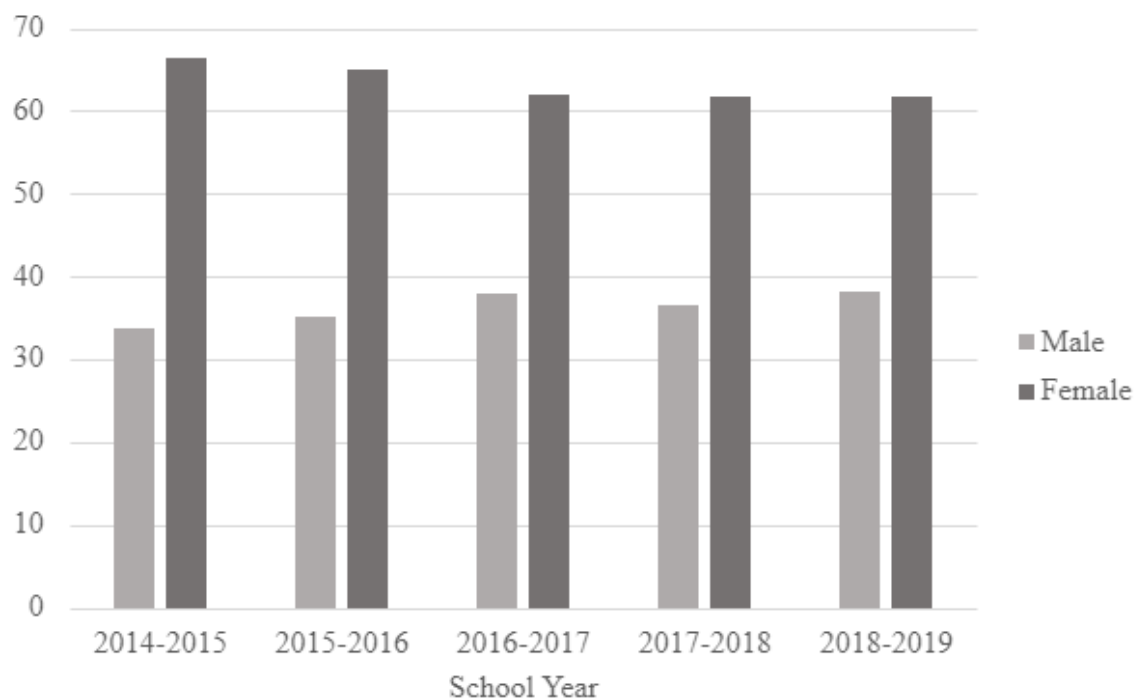
Note. Percentage of teachers by ethnicity/race employed in Alternative Education Campuses of Choice during the 2005-2006, 2006-2007, 2007-2008, 2008-2009, and 2009-2010 school years.

Figure 2.6*Employment Percentages by Teacher Ethnicity/Race*

Note. Percentage of teachers by ethnicity/race employed in Alternative Education Campuses of Choice during the 2014-2015, 2015-2016, 2016-2017, 2017-2018, and 2018-2019 school years.

Figure 2.7*Employment Percentages by Teacher Gender*

Note. Percentage of teachers by gender employed in Alternative Education Campuses of Choice during the 2005-2006, 2006-2007, 2007-2008, 2008-2009, and 2009-2010 school years.

Figure 2.8*Employment Percentages by Teacher Gender*

Note. Percentage of teachers by gender employed in Alternative Education Campuses of Choice during the 2014-2015, 2015-2016, 2016-2017, 2017-2018, and 2018-2019 school years.

CHAPTER III

DROPOUT RATE DIFFERENCES IN TEXAS ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION CAMPUSES AS A FUNCTION OF STUDENT ETHNICITY/RACE: A STATEWIDE ANALYSIS

This dissertation follows the style and format of *Research in the Schools (RITS)*.

Abstract

Ascertained in this research investigation were the high school dropout rates of Black, Hispanic, and White students enrolled in Texas Alternative Education Campuses of Choice in the 2016-2017 and 2018-2019 school years. By the 2018-2019 school year, the dropout rate of Hispanic students yielded the highest decline in dropout rate at 2.04% from 9.73% in the 2016-2017 school year to 7.69% in the 2018-2019 school year, followed by the dropout rate of Black students at 1.73% from 11.33% in the 2016-2017 school year to 9.60% in the 2018-2019 school year, and then by the dropout rate of White students at 1.26% from 8.93% in the 2016-2017 school year to 7.67% in the 2018-2019 school year. Implications of these results for educational leaders and recommendations for further research were discussed.

Keywords: Alternative Education Campus of Choice; Dropout rate; Ethnicity/race; Black; Hispanic; White

DROPOUT RATE DIFFERENCES IN TEXAS ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION
CAMPUSES AS A FUNCTION OF STUDENT ETHNICITY/RACE: A STATEWIDE
ANALYSIS

Each day in the United States, approximately 7,000 students drop out of high school (Robinson, 2016). A consequence of this action is that high school dropouts are more likely to live in poverty than their peers who complete high school (Belfield & Levin, 2007; Rumberger, 2013). As documented by Rumberger (2013), students of color, who were from families in poverty, dropped out of high school almost three times the rate of White students who were from families in poverty. The high school dropout rate has been demonstrated to be cyclical among students of color who are from families in poverty (Rumberger, 2013).

In the United States, approximately six million people ages 16-24 were categorized as high school dropouts in the 2009 school year (Center for Labor Market Studies, 2009; Kamrath, 2019). In the 2010 school year, the overall high school dropout rate for the United States was 8.3% (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021a). Over a 10-year span, from the 2009 school year through the 2019 school year, the overall high school dropout rate in the United States has steadily declined (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021a). In 2019, based on the results of the American Community Survey, two million high school dropouts ages 16-24 were present in the United States, with an overall dropout rate of 5.1%. This dropout rate was a decrease compared to the 5.3% high school dropout rate in 2018 and a 3.2% decline from 2010 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021a).

With respect to the state of interest for this article, Texas, the overall dropout rate for the same 10-year span revealed a decline as well (Texas Education Agency, 2010, 2019). The annual dropout rate for the State of Texas was 2.9% in the 2009 school year (Texas Education Agency, 2010) and decreased in the 2010 school year to 2.4% (Texas Education Agency, 2011). This decline continued through the 2019 school year, with a 1.9% annual dropout rate for the State of Texas (Texas Education Agency, 2020a).

Although the statistical data (Center for Labor Market Studies, 2009; Kamrath, 2019; National Center for Education Statistics, 2021a; Texas Education Agency, 2010, 2011, 2019, 2020a) supported an overall decline in dropout rates across the United States and in the State of Texas, the dropout rates of ethnic/racial groups varied over the same 10-year span in the United States (Center for Labor Market Studies, 2009; Kamrath, 2019; National Center for Education Statistics, 2021b). In 2009, 30% of high school dropouts were Hispanic students and approximately 19% of high school dropouts were Black students (Center for Labor Market Studies, 2009; Kamrath, 2019). Disparities were present in dropout rates in the 2013 school year, as Hispanic students accounted for 27% of the national high school dropout rate, and Black students accounted for 31% of the national high school dropout rate, an increase from the 2009 school year (Kamrath, 2019; Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2015). Then from the 2010 school year through the 2019 school year, a decline was present in dropout rates for White students from 5.3% to 4.1%, Hispanic students from 16.7% to 7.7%, and Black students from 10.3 % to 5.6 % (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021a, 2021b).

The annual dropout rates in the State of Texas during the 10-year span from 2009-2019 for Black students, Hispanic students, and White students also showed a similar trend of decline in dropout rates (Texas Education Agency, 2010, 2019, 2020b). In the 2009 school year, the annual dropout rate for Black students was 14.8%, Hispanic students was 12.4%, and White students was 4.5% (Texas Education Agency, 2010). The annual dropout rate for the 2019 school year for Black students was 8.8%, Hispanic students was 7.1%, and White students was 3.3% (Texas Education Agency, 2020b).

Clearly, the high school dropout rate in the State of Texas has been and remains a concern for the past 27 years (Texas Education Agency, 2020a). In an effort to try and reduce the dropout rate, the State of Texas created an option for school districts to implement Alternative Education Campuses of Choice to decrease student misbehavior and to provide an alternative pathway to a high school diploma for students identified as at-risk of dropping out of high school (Texas Education Agency, 2020a). With the decrease in dropout rates during the last decade, in both the United States and the State of Texas, the alternative high school model has been credited by many educational researchers (Conley, 2002; De La Ossa, 2005; Foley & Pang, 2006; Kelly, 1993; Perzigian et al., 2017) as being an effective, additional option for students at-risk of dropping out of high school to earn their high school diploma.

From a review of literature on alternative high school models, researchers (De La Ossa, 2005; Foley & Pang, 2006; Gilson, 2006; Perzigian et al., 2017) have provided data through various quantitative and qualitative approaches and formats such as longitudinal studies, phenomenological studies, guiding question protocols, appreciative inquiry

approach, theory of learning communities approach, semi structured interviews, questionnaires, statistical analyses, and surveys (De La Ossa, 2005; Foley & Pang, 2006; Gilson, 2006; Perzigian et al., 2017). These researchers have discovered common pedagogical themes and characteristics present within the alternative high school model that create successes and limitations for high school students determined to be at-risk. These themes and characteristics include: (a) smaller school size, (b) smaller class sizes, (c) at-risk student population, (d) schedule flexibility, (e) student self-awareness, (f) school leader autonomy, (g) positive student/teacher relationships, (h) student motivation, and (i) student choice (De La Ossa, 2005; Foley & Pang, 2006; Gilson, 2006; Perzigian et al., 2017). Additionally, De La Ossa (2005) reported that students at-risk preferred the alternative high school model to the traditional high school model because of the following alternative high school model characteristics: (a) student-driven school operations, (b) individualized student attention, (c) unique graduation requirements, and (d) flexible curriculum requirements (De La Ossa, 2005).

De la Ossa (2005), Foley and Pang (2006), Gilson (2006), Lang and Lehr (1999), and Perzigian et al. (2017) have conducted studies in which they focused on established alternative high school models located within the northern central states of the United States, including Illinois, Iowa, and Minnesota specifically. These researchers' findings are consistent with surrounding states regarding characteristics and pedagogical themes of productive and effective alternative high school models. Additionally, Gilson (2006) determined that teacher choice, student, choice, and learning style were all positively related to student retention and graduation rate (Jordan, 2021). Conversely, Lang and

Lehr (1999) concluded that about 50% of students who were at-risk enrolled in such programs dropped out (p. 178). Of the 50% of students who dropped out, less than 10% of these students transitioned to another educational program (p. 190).

Although published articles could be located about alternative education high schools in the United States, only a limited number could be located about alternative education high schools in the State of Texas. The published research articles that could be located were about students identified as at-risk and the effect of attendance and student performance on graduation rates (Franklin et al., 2007). Furthermore, the effectiveness of the alternative high school model in reducing high school dropout rates in the State of Texas was even further limited in the review of literature that was conducted.

Alternative high school models have been used to provide students at-risk with an additional pathway to earn a high school diploma (Jordan, 2021). Because the traditional high school model has not demonstrated to be successful for these students, many students have sought the alternative high school model as a second attempt to achieving their high school diploma (Jordan, 2021; Kamrath, 2019). Although educational leaders have promoted the ideal that alternative high school models “satisfy the need to provide choice and diversity within a monopolistic bureaucratic giant of public education” (Conley, 2002, p. 177; Kim, 2006), Kleiner et al. (2002) established that a disproportionate number of alternative schools were located in districts with students of color. Perzigian et al. (2017) noted the presence of disparities for students of color and the model of school that they chose to attend. Additionally, Perzigian et al. (2017) determined that the enrollment of Black students within the alternative high school

models was higher than the enrollment of Hispanic students and White students.

Conversely, the enrollment of White students in traditional and innovative alternative schools was higher than the enrollment of Black students and Hispanic students (Perzigian et al., 2017, p. 682).

The alternative high school model has been examined by many researchers (Conley, 2002; De La Ossa, 2005; Foley & Pang, 2006; Kelly, 1993; Perzigian et al., 2017) throughout the last three decades. The pedagogical themes and characteristics that have emerged through these examinations have revealed to be beneficial to students at-risk and who are wanting to earn their high school diploma. However, additional investigative research regarding student ethnicity/race and Texas high school dropout rates in relation to the alternative high school model and its effectiveness, is recommended.

Statement of the Problem

High school dropout rates for the United States and the State of Texas by ethnicity/race continue to decrease annually (Center for Labor Market Studies, 2009; Kamrath, 2019; National Center for Education Statistics, 2021b; Texas Education Agency, 2010, 2019, 2020b). However, disparities in high school dropout rates still remain by student ethnicity/race (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021a; Texas Education Agency, 2020b). Perzigian's (2017) recognition of ethnic/racial disproportionality with the location of the alternative program models and the enrollment in these programs is further supported by statistical data reported by the Texas Education

Agency (2010, 2019, 2020b), the National Center for Education Statistics (2021b), and the Center for Labor Market Studies (2009).

Many Texas high school students have the option to obtain their high school diploma through an Alternative Education Campus of Choice rather than through a traditional high school program. During the last 30 years, the Texas Education Agency has registered between 340 to 475 Alternative Education Campuses of Choice each school year (Texas Education Agency, 2005, 2018, 2020a). These campuses would be responsible for dropout recovery, for providing credit recovery opportunities, and upholding graduation requirements set forth by the State of Texas (Alternative Education Accountability Task Force, 2020; Texas Education Agency, 2020a). Researchers, however, who have conducted investigations into the effectiveness of these high school programs, regarding dropout prevention, have focused primarily on alternative high schools located outside the State of Texas (Gilson, 2006; Perzigian et al., 2017). Therefore, research studies are warranted on the effectiveness of these school programs located in Texas beginning with student dropout data, and more specifically, data disaggregated by ethnicity/race.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to provide a statistical analysis of archived data for the 2016-2017 school year through the 2018-2019 school year on the dropout rates of high school students identified as at-risk, and enrolled in Texas Alternative Education Campuses of Choice, recognized as Dropout Recovery Schools by ethnicity/race. Readers are directed to this Texas Education Agency website,

<http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/peims/standards/1314/e0919.html>, for more detailed information regarding the criterion indicators used by the State of Texas to identify students as at-risk. Results from the statistical analyses conducted in this article provided evidence regarding any discrepancies or trends that may be present for Black, Hispanic, and White students with respect to their dropout rates for each school year.

Research Questions

In this article, the following research questions were addressed: (a) What is the difference in dropout rates between the 2016-2017 school year and the 2018-2019 school year for Black high school students?; (b) What is the difference in dropout rates between the 2016-2017 school year and the 2018-2019 school year for Hispanic high school students?; and (c) What is the difference in dropout rates between the 2016-2017 school year and the 2018-2019 school year for White high school students?

Significance of the Study

The significance of this research study was to provide educational leaders with information about the dropout rates of high school students enrolled in Texas Alternative Education Campuses of Choice, recognized as Dropout Recovery Schools, by student ethnicity/race prior to the pandemic. Findings from this multiyear analysis may be used when proposing and implementing change regarding the Alternative Education Campuses of Choice located within school districts. Furthermore, results of this study increased the body of literature pertaining to Alternative Education Campuses of Choice located in the State of Texas by ethnicity/race among students.

Method

Research Design

A non-experimental causal-comparative research design was utilized for this research study (Johnson & Christensen, 2020). This design was appropriate for this study because preexisting data were retrieved and analyzed. This research study was a multiyear analysis that was longitudinal and quantitative in nature. Preexisting data obtained were campus-based data; specifically, dropout rates by ethnicity/race, gathered and reported by the Texas Education Agency through the Texas Academic Performance Reports on each of the Alternative Education Campuses of Choice, recognized as Dropout Recovery Schools, identified in this article.

Participants and Instrumentation

The research study that was conducted herein was on 118 of the 300 Alternative Education Campuses of Choice registered with the Texas Education Agency for the 2020-2021 school year (Texas Education Agency, 2020a). The 118 schools analyzed in this research study were chosen based upon the availability of student demographic data and dropout data for the Alternative Education Campus of Choice for each school year examined. The field of schools was narrowed using the following guidelines: (a) Alternative Education Campuses of Choice registered with Texas Education Agency for three consecutive years (i.e., the 2016-2017, 2017-2018, and 2018-2019 school years), (b) Alternative Education Campuses of Choice categorized as Dropout Recovery Schools by the Texas Education Agency, (c) The preexisting data used, were on student demographic information (i.e. ethnicity/race) for the Alternative Education Campuses of

choice examined; and (d) The student ethnic/racial groups reviewed were Black, Hispanic, and White only. Asian student data were not analyzed due to the low percentage of Asian students who are enrolled in Alternative Education Campuses of Choice. The 118 Alternative Education Campuses of Choice registered with the Texas Education Agency for the 2020-2021 year (2020a) met the preset guidelines.

The archival data that were used herein were obtained from the Texas Education Agency's annual publications of the Texas Academic Performance Reports and the Academic Excellence Indicator System. Specifically downloaded were the Alternative Education Campuses of Choice identified in the sample process for the 2016-2017, 2017-2018, and 2018-2019 school years. The variables on which data were obtained from the annual reports were (a) ethnicity/race, (b) dropout rate by ethnicity/race, and (c) total dropout rate.

Results

The research questions addressed in this study involved the ethnicity/race (i.e., Black, Hispanic, and White) of students enrolled in Alternative Education Campuses of Choice and their high school dropout rates. Data for each of these student groups between the 2016-2017 school year and the 2018-2019 school year were compared. Prior to conducting inferential statistics to determine whether statistically significant differences were present in the dropout rate of students enrolled in Alternative Education Campuses of Choice by their ethnicity/race, checks were conducted to determine the extent to which these data were normally distributed. Though not all assumptions were met, Slate and Rojas-LeBouef (2011) contend that the paired samples *t*-test procedure is appropriate to

withstand violations of its underlying assumptions. Findings are presented by student ethnicity/race and by school year. Results will be discussed first for Black students, followed by Hispanic students, and then White students.

Regarding the 2016-2017 and the 2018-2019 school years for the extent to which differences were present in the dropout rate for Black students enrolled in Alternative Education Campuses of Choice, a statistically significant difference was not present, $t(62) = 1.33, p = .19$. As presented in Table 3.1, Black students had, on average, a 10% dropout rate in both school years examined.

 Insert Table 3.1 about here

For the 2016-2017 and the 2018-2019 school years regarding the extent to which differences were present in the dropout rate of Hispanic students enrolled in Alternative Education Campuses of Choice, a statistically significant difference was present, $t(117) = 2.51, p = .01$. This difference represented a small effect size (Cohen's d) of 0.23 (Cohen, 1988). The Hispanic student dropout rate was highest in the 2016-2017 school year at 9.73% and declined to 7.69% in the 2018-2019 school year. This result was reflective of a decrease in Hispanic student dropout rate of 2.04% from the 2016-2017 school year to the 2018-2019 school year. Table 3.2 contains the descriptive statistics for this analysis.

 Insert Table 3.2 about here

Concerning the 2016-2017 and the 2018-2019 school years for the extent to which differences were present in the dropout rate of White students enrolled in Alternative Education Campuses of Choice, a statistically significant difference was not present, $t(101) = 1.38, p = .17$. As presented in Table 3.3, the dropout rate for White students slightly declined from 8.93% to 7.67% during the three-time period analyzed. Of the White students enrolled in Alternative Education Campuses of Choice, on average, 8% of White students dropped out of high school.

Insert Table 3.3 about here

Discussion

In this research investigation, the dropout rates of Black, Hispanic, and White students enrolled in Texas Alternative Education Campuses of Choice were compared between the 2016-2017 school year and the 2018-2019 school year. In this statewide analysis, important results were revealed. The dropout rate of Black students declined by almost 2% between the 2016-2017 school year and the 2018-2019 school year. In the 2016-2017 school year the dropout rate of Black students was 11.33% and in the 2018-2019 school year the dropout rate was 9.60%. Depicted in Figure 3.1 are these dropout rate values of Black students enrolled in Alternative Education Campuses of Choice.

Insert Figure 3.1 about here

In the 2016-2017 school year, the dropout rate of Hispanic students enrolled in Alternative Education Campuses of Choice was 9.73% and in the 2018-2019 school year the dropout rate of Hispanic students was 7.69%. These numbers were reflective of a 2.04% decrease in the Hispanic student dropout rate from the 2016-2017 school year to the 2018-2019 school year. Results are shown in Figure 3.2.

Insert Figure 3.2 about here

Lastly, in the 2016-2017 school year, the dropout rate of White students enrolled in Texas Education Campuses of Choice was 8.93% and in the 2018-2019 school year was 7.67%. These dropout rates yielded a decline of 1.26% over the two school years of data analyzed. Depicted in Figure 3.3 are the dropout rates of White students enrolled in Alternative Education Campuses of Choice.

Insert Figure 3.3 about here

Connections to Existing Literature

Existing literature on high school dropout rates by student ethnicity/race of students enrolled in alternative high schools is limited nationally and more specifically, for the State of Texas. Nationally, Kleiner et al. (2002) for example, determined that many of the alternative schools were located in districts with a higher enrollment of students of color, but did not report on dropout rates by student ethnicity/race from these

schools. In the State of Texas, dropout rates have been discussed but very little research articles have been published on existing trends by student ethnicity/race longitudinally. For this research study, dropout rates by student ethnicity/race of students enrolled in Alternative Education Campuses of Choice were analyzed to add to the existing research literature.

Connections to Theoretical Framework

Knowing the breakdown of student ethnicity/race in the alternative high school setting is important to the theoretical framework of this article which is grounded in John Dewey's experiential learning theory. "...for education to be most effective, content must be presented in a way that allows the student to relate the information to prior experiences, thus deepening the connection with this new knowledge" (Abderrahim & Gutiérrez-Colón Plana, 2021, p. 39; Talebi, 2015, p. 5). The alternative high school model was created to give students an opportunity to receive individualized content and curriculum to support knowledge acquisition that is sympathetic of their unique life situations and to fill in gaps of knowledge that the traditional high school model has been unsuccessful at doing (Alternative Education Accountability, 2007). Therefore, understanding student ethnic/racial characteristics to support knowledge acquisition is crucial.

Implications for Policy and for Practice

Implications for policy can be supported from the results of this investigation. Educational leaders are encouraged to disaggregate dropout data by student ethnicity/race at their Alternative Education Campuses of Choice. The analysis of dropout rates and the

ethnicity/race of students over time will generate trends that school leaders can examine for any inequities that they can then address on their campus promoting equity in education for all students. Educational leaders are also urged to cross-reference student dropout rates in relation to student ethnicity/race with the overall student population served within the district to ensure the presence of equity among student groups being served at their Alternative Education Campus of Choice, which in turn, may decrease dropout rates among student ethnicity/race categories.

Furthermore, implications for practice can be supported from the results of this investigation. Creating a district-wide vision for Alternative Education Campuses of Choice can be effective in all school personnel understanding the goals and purposes of student learning and how to properly handle it. Finally, exploring inclusionary practices of teacher employment and retention by like ethnicity/race as the student population served at Alternative Education Campuses of Choice must be a priority to maximize student academic performance.

Recommendations for Future Research

Based upon the findings of this inferential research study, several recommendations for research can be made. First, researchers are encouraged to examine the presence of potential inequities in the ethnicity/race of students enrolled in Alternative Education Campuses of Choice and high school dropout rates. Secondly, given the clear disproportionalities in the ethnic/racial makeup of students enrolled in Alternative Education Campuses of Choice, researchers can extend this study to explore possible inequities in the economic status of students enrolled in Alternative Education

Campuses of Choice and high school dropout rates. Thirdly, it is recommended that further detailed information be collected and analyzed on an annual basis to determine any further trends present among dropout rates and student ethnicity/race. Finally, researchers are encouraged to replicate this research investigation in other states to determine the degree to which results delineated herein might be generalizable outside the State of Texas. Readers should note that in all the existing literature involving these schools, not a single research article could be located in which inequities of student ethnicity/race and dropout rates were examined for students enrolled in Texas Alternative Education Campuses of Choice.

Conclusion

In this statewide multiyear investigation, high school dropout rates of Black, Hispanic, and White students enrolled Texas Alternative Education Campuses of Choice were compared between the 2016-2017 school year and the 2018-2019 school year. Hispanic students were the only group of students to have a statistically significant difference in their dropout rates between the two school years examined. Black students had similar dropout rates in both school years, as did White students. Of the three student groups, Hispanic students had the largest decline in their dropout rates, from decreased 2.04% in the 2016-2017 school year to the 2018-2019 school year. The dropout rate of Black students decreased by almost 2%, and the dropout rate of White students declined by just 1.26% from the 2016-2017 school year to the 2018-2019 school year.

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Table 3.1

Descriptive Statistics for Dropout Rates of Black Students Enrolled in Texas Alternative Education Campuses of Choice for the 2016-2017 School Year and the 2018-2019 School Year

School Year	<i>n</i>	<i>M%</i>	<i>SD%</i>
2016-2017	63	11.33	12.02
2018-2019	63	9.60	9.13

Note. The *n* refers to the number of school campuses on which data were analyzed.

Table 3.2

*Descriptive Statistics for Dropout Rates of Hispanic Students Enrolled in Texas
Alternative Education Campuses of Choice for the 2016-2017 School Year and the 2018-
2019 School Year*

School Year	<i>n</i>	<i>M%</i>	<i>SD%</i>
2016-2017	118	9.73	9.65
2018-2019	118	7.69	8.63

Note. The *n* refers to the number of school campuses on which data were analyzed.

Table 3.3

Descriptive Statistics for Dropout Rates of White Students Enrolled in Texas Alternative Education Campuses of Choice for the 2016-2017 School Year and the 2018-2019 School Year

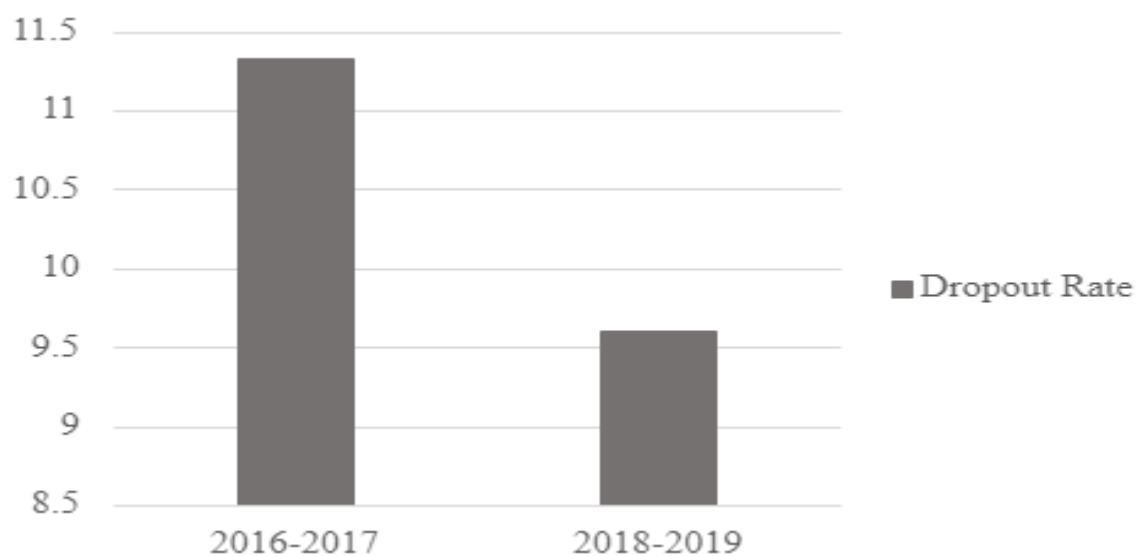
School Year	<i>n</i>	<i>M%</i>	<i>SD%</i>
2016-2017	102	8.93	10.10
2018-2019	102	7.67	9.49

Note. The *n* refers to the number of school campuses on which data were analyzed.

Figure 3.1

Dropout Rate Percentages of Black Students for the 2016-2017 and 2018-2019 School

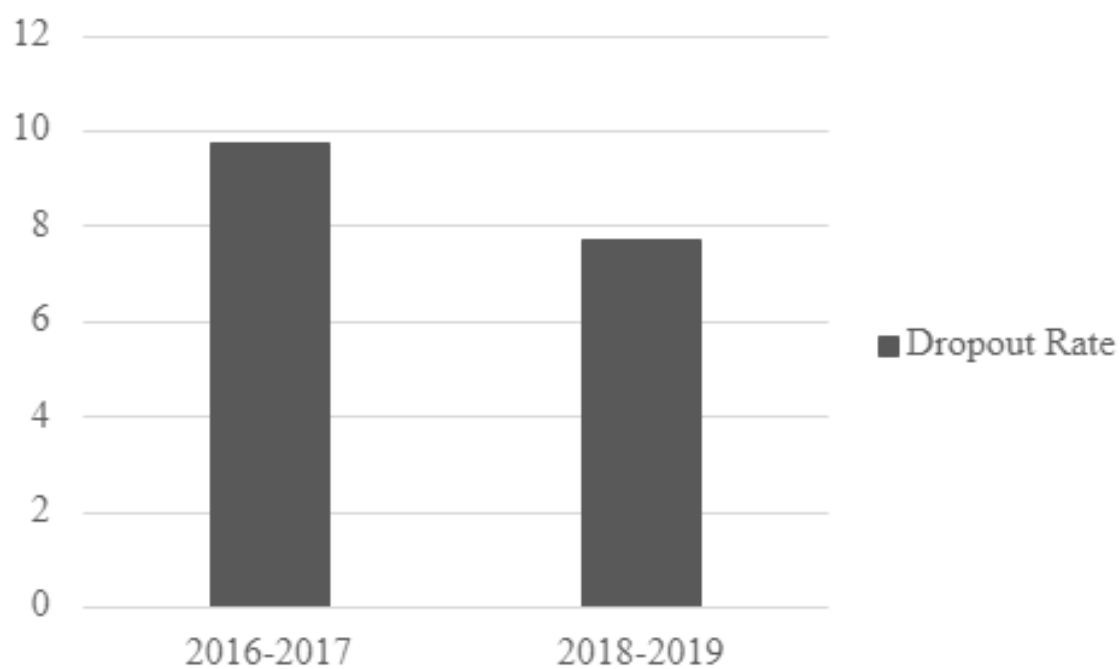
Years



Note. Black student dropout rates enrolled in Alternative Education Campuses of Choice in the 2016-2017 school year and the 2018-2019 school year.

Figure 3.2

Dropout Rate Percentages of Hispanic Students for the 2016-2017 and 2018-2019 School Years

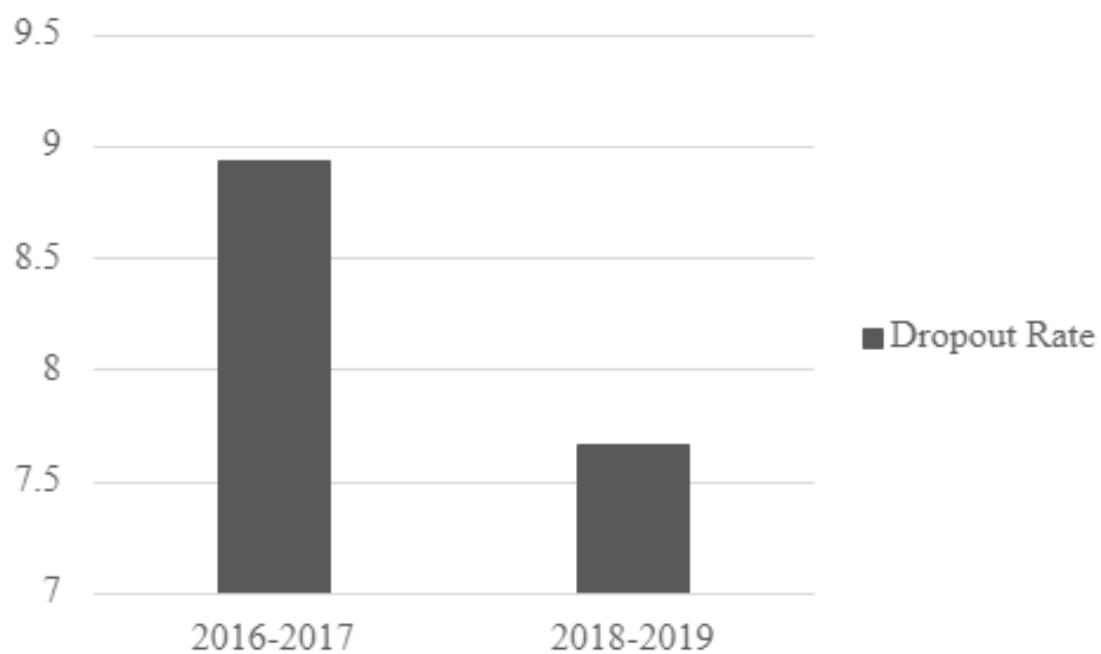


Note. Hispanic student dropout rates enrolled in Alternative Education Campuses of Choice in the 2016-2017 school year and the 2018-2019 school year.

Figure 3.3

Dropout Rate Percentages of White Students for the 2016-2017 and 2018-2019 School

Years



Note. White student dropout rates enrolled in Alternative Education Campuses of Choice in the 2016-2017 school year and the 2018-2019 school year.

CHAPTER IV

DROPOUT RATE DIFFERENCES IN TEXAS ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION CAMPUSES AS A FUNCTION OF STUDENT ECONOMIC STATUS: A STATEWIDE ANALYSIS

This dissertation follows the style and format of *Research in the Schools (RITS)*.

Abstract

Ascertained in this research investigation were the campus dropout rates of students enrolled in Texas Alternative Education Campuses of Choice and the dropout rates of students who were economically disadvantaged and enrolled in Texas Alternative Education Campuses of Choice in the 2016-2017 and 2018-2019 school years. By the 2018-2019 school year, the dropout rate of Texas Alternative Education Campuses of Choice yielded a decline in dropout rate at 1.14%. The overall dropout rate was 9.09% in the 2016-2017 school year and was 7.95% in the 2018-2019 school year. The dropout rate of students who were economically disadvantaged declined by .46% from the 2016-2017 school year. In this statewide analysis, important results were revealed. The overall campus dropout rates declined by almost 1% between the 2016-2017 school year and the 2018-2019 school year. In the 2016-2017 school year the overall campus dropout rate for Alternative Education Campuses of Choice was 9.09% and in the 2018-2019 school year the campus dropout rate was 7.95%. Recommendations for future research, as well as implications, were discussed.

Keywords: Alternative Education Campus of Choice; Campus dropout rate; Economic status; Economically disadvantaged

DROPOUT RATE DIFFERENCES IN TEXAS ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION
CAMPUSES AS A FUNCTION OF STUDENT ECONOMIC STATUS: A
STATEWIDE ANALYSIS

The high school dropout rate in the United States is of concern because students who drop out of high school are more likely to become adults who live in poverty (Rumberger, 2013). In 2019, adults who did not have a high school diploma accounted for 23.7% of the adults reported as living in poverty, compared to 11.5% of adults with a high school diploma reported as living in poverty (Shrider et al., 2021). Often those adults who live in poverty find it more difficult to find employment, rely on public assistance, engage in criminal mischief, and seek health care more frequently due to health conditions created adversely by their lifestyles (Rumberger, 2011, 2013). Adults who had dropped out of high school are likely to raise families in poverty that often live within a poor community. As such, their children's social and academic development, due to a lack of available resources, are negatively influenced, and those children in poverty are five times more likely to drop out of high school (Kena et al., 2016; Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000; Rumberger, 2013). A societal concern are the costs placed on taxpayers to provide public assistance and healthcare for these adults who had dropped out of high school. Such costs are greater for adults who had dropped out than for adults who did graduate from high school (Belfield & Levin, 2007; Rumberger, 2013).

The high school dropout rate in the United States has steadily declined since the late 1970's (Center for Labor Market Studies, 2009; Kamrath, 2019; McFarland et al.,

2018; National Center for Education Statistics, 2021). Over a 45-year span, 1976-2019, the high school dropout rate has decreased by a total of 9% (McFarland et al., 2018; National Center for Education Statistics, 2021). In the 1976 school year, the high school dropout rate for the United States was 14.1% (McFarland et al., 2018). By 2009, six million people ages 16-24 were categorized as high school dropouts (Center for Labor Market Studies, 2009; Kamrath, 2019). At the conclusion of the 2010 school year, the high school dropout rate was 8.3% (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021) and in the 2016 school year, the high school dropout rate was 6.1% (McFarland et al., 2018). In 2018, the high school dropout rate was 5.3% and in the 2019 school year, based on the results of the American Community Survey, two million high school dropouts ages 16-24 were reported in the United States, which accounted for a national high school dropout rate of 5.1% (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021). With respect to the state of interest for this article, Texas, the overall dropout rate declined, although not as much as the dropout rate for the United States (Center for Labor Market Studies, 2009; Kamrath, 2019; McFarland et al., 2018; National Center for Education Statistics, 2021; Texas Education Agency, 2010, 2011, 2019). The annual dropout rate in 2009 for the State of Texas was 2.9% (Texas Education Agency, 2010) and decreased in 2010 by 0.5% to 2.4% (Texas Education Agency, 2011). This decline continued through the 2019 school year, with a 1.9% annual dropout rate for the State of Texas (Texas Education Agency, 2020a).

The strongest indicators in determining whether students will graduate from high school or drop out of high school are their combined socioeconomic background and

educational background (Orr, 1987; Suh et al., 2007). Reviewing high school dropout data specifically for students who were economically disadvantaged in the United States over the last three decades, Jordan et al., (1996) using the National Educational Longitudinal Study of 1988, established that 82% of all early dropouts (i.e., students who dropped out between Grades 8 and 10) were from families in poverty. By the 2016 school year, the dropout rate for students ages 15-24 years, who were from families in the lowest 25% of the income bracket, was 7.2%, a figure that is almost twice the dropout rate for students ages 15-24 years, who were from families in the highest 50% of the income bracket. Their documented dropout rate was 3.7% (McFarland et al., 2018).

Students who were economically disadvantaged in the State of Texas have been determined to have higher dropout rates than their peers who were not economically disadvantaged from the 2008-2009 school year through the 2018-2019 school year (Texas Education Agency, 2010, 2019). During the 2008-2009 school year, 10.9% of students who dropped out of high school were economically disadvantaged (Texas Education Agency, 2010). By the 2014-2015 school year, the dropout rate for students who were economically disadvantaged had declined to 2.5%. Of note is that the dropout rate for students who were not economically disadvantaged was much lower, at 1.5% (Texas Education Agency, 2020b). In the 2018-2019 school year, the dropout rate for students who were economically disadvantaged remained the same at 2.5%, whereas the dropout rate for students who were not economically disadvantaged continued to show a decrease to 1.2% (Texas Education Agency, 2020b).

The continued decline in national and state high school dropout rates may be due to the alternative schools reform movement in the United States. This reform movement dates to the early 1960's with the rise of school choice options (Schneider et al., 2000; Wang et al., 2019). Nationally, 10,900 alternative schools and alternative programs were available to students at-risk in 2002 (Kleiner et al., 2002). In the 2010-2011 school year, 6,197 alternative schools were available to students at-risk. In the 2016-2017 school year, 5,375 alternative schools were available to students at-risk, a decline of more than 800 alternative schools (Wang et al., 2019). Similarly, student enrollment numbers declined during this 7-year span, with alternative school enrollment being 563,449 students in the 2010-2011 school year and 475,015 students in the 2016-2017 school year (Wang et al., 2019).

School districts located in the Southeast United States, as well as school districts with high poverty and high minority populations, were more likely to have alternative programs and alternative schools available for students at-risk in comparison to school districts located elsewhere with low poverty and low minority populations (Kleiner et al., 2002). Kleiner et al. (2002) established that 39% of public school districts provided an alternative school or program as an option for students at-risk. In the 2007-2008 school year, 64% of school districts in the United States were determined to provide an alternative school or alternative program to students identified as at-risk (Carver & Lewis, 2010).

In the 2000-2001 school year, 45% of school districts with alternative schools and alternative programs had more than 20% of their students from families in poverty.

Conversely, 31% of school districts with alternative schools and alternative programs had less than 10% of their students from families in poverty. Compared to the 2007-2008 school year, the percentage of school districts with alternative schools and alternative programs available to students increased. Of these school districts, 68% of them had more than 20% of their students from families in poverty, whereas 62% of these school districts had students located in areas of poverty with less than 10% of their students from families in poverty. In the 2007-2008 school year, school districts in the United States had 217,700 students enrolled in an alternative setting located in areas of poverty of 20% or more, whereas 140,100 students were enrolled in an alternative setting located in areas of poverty of less than 10% (Carver & Lewis, 2010).

Alternative high schools have been described as “warehouses for academically underprepared sons and daughters of working-class families or single parents receiving welfare” (Kelly, 1993, p. 3; Kim, 2006). This quotation from Kelly (1993) on the perception of the alternative high school model, though blunt, is reflective of many investigations that have been conducted over the last three decades. Researchers (Kelly, 1993; Kim, 2006; Kleiner et al., 2002; Perzigian, 2017) who have conducted these investigations determined that the enrollment of many students at-risk are also students in poverty. A disproportionate number of alternative schools are located in districts with high poverty zones across the United States (Kleiner et al., 2002). Perzigian et al. (2017) established that 80% of the students who attended the alternative high schools in their study received free or reduced lunch (i.e., were economically disadvantaged). Moreover,

the locations of the alternative high school campuses they attended were in areas of high poverty (Perzigian et al., 2017).

Notably, students defined as at-risk and in poverty are attending alternative high schools at a higher rate than students defined as at-risk and not in poverty (Kelly, 1993; Kim, 2006; Kleiner et al., 2002; Perzigian, 2017). Alternative high schools, or Alternative Education Campuses of Choice, were established by the State of Texas to provide an additional option in obtaining a high school diploma for students identified as at-risk of dropping out of high school (Texas Education Agency, 2020a). With the decrease in dropout rates during the last decade, in both the United States and the State of Texas, the alternative high school model has been determined to be a positive choice for students at-risk of dropping out of high school to earn their high school diploma (Conley, 2002; De La Ossa, 2005; Foley & Pang, 2006; Kelly, 1993; Perzigian et al., 2017).

From a review of literature, De la Ossa (2005), Foley and Pang (2006), Gilson (2006), Lang and Lehr (1999), and Perzigian et al. (2017) have conducted studies in which they focused specifically on the northern central states of the United States including, Illinois, Iowa, and Minnesota and the influence of the alternative high school model on students at-risk. However, very little published research literature could be retrieved on alternative schools and alternative programs located in the Southeast United States. Similarly, very little published research literature is available regarding school districts with high poverty and high minority populations where they were more likely to have alternative programs and alternative schools available for students identified as at-risk (Kleiner et al., 2002).

Researchers (De La Ossa, 2005; Foley & Pang, 2006; Lang & Lehr, 1999; Perzigian et al. 2017), nonetheless, are consistent in their findings with respect to southern states and the characteristics and pedagogical themes of productive and effective alternative high school models. Lang and Lehr (1999) documented that those students who completed the school year, had higher attendance rates and were more satisfied with the alternative program model than those students who dropped out of the alternative high school setting. Moreover, Lang and Lehr (1999) reported findings concerning attendance rates and student satisfaction with the alternative high school model that were consistent with previous researchers (De La Ossa, 2005; Foley & Pang, 2006; Lang & Lehr, 1999; Perzigian et al., 2017).

Although published articles could be located about alternative education high schools in the United States, only a limited number could be located about alternative education high schools in the southern states, specifically, in the State of Texas. The published research articles that could be located were about attendance and student academic performance rates and their effect on the graduation rates of students identified as at-risk (Franklin et al., 2007). The effectiveness of the alternative high school model in reducing high school dropout rates in the State of Texas was even further limited in the review of literature that was conducted. Accordingly, research studies are warranted regarding alternative high schools, in the State of Texas, and their efficacy, or lack thereof, as related to high school dropout rates by student economic status.

Statement of the Problem

Alternative Education Campuses of Choice have provided Texas high school students an alternative to the traditional high school model when seeking to earn their high school diploma. Consequently, the dropout rate in Texas remained the same during the 2016-2017 school year through the 2017-2018 with discrepancies noted among economic status. (Texas Education Agency, 2019). These programs are responsible for providing credit recovery opportunities and upholding the rigor of the graduation requirements mandated by the State of Texas (Alternative Education Accountability Task Force, 2020; Texas Education Agency, 2020a). Notably, students who were in poverty have a higher dropout percentage than students not in poverty (Texas Education Agency, 2019). Hence, further investigation is needed on student economic status and dropout rates in relation to Alternative Education Campuses of Choice in the State of Texas.

Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this multiyear investigation was to determine the degree to which discrepancies were present in dropout rates for all students at-risk and then specifically for students in poverty between the 2016-2017 school year and the 2018-2019 school year. Readers are directed to this Texas Education Agency website, <http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/peims/standards/1314/e0919.html>, for more detailed information regarding the criterion indicators used by the State of Texas to identify characteristics of students who are at-risk. The secondary purpose was to determine the degree to which trends existed in the overall campus dropout rates of students at-risk and

enrolled in Alternative Education Campuses of Choice between the two school years of data.

Significance of the Study

Provided by the results of this research study are statistical analyses of Texas statewide data that were of importance to educational researchers investigating the alternative high school model, in the State of Texas, in relation to high school dropout rates by students at-risk and by economic status prior to the 2019-2020 school year. Additionally, findings from the statistical analyses expanded upon the scholarly literature available to educational leaders. Lastly, the presence of trends across school years on the effectiveness of Texas Alternative Education Campuses of Choice was determined.

Research Questions

In this article, the following research questions were addressed: (a) What is the difference in overall campus dropout rates of high school students enrolled in Alternative Education Campuses of Choice between the 2016-2017 school year and the 2018-2019 school year?; and (b) What is the difference in dropout rates of high school students enrolled in Alternative Education Campuses of Choice between the 2016-2017 school year and the 2018-2019 school year for students who were economically disadvantaged?

Method

Research Design

In this multiyear analysis, a non-experimental causal-comparative research design was utilized for this research investigation (Johnson & Christensen, 2020). This design was applicable to this study because preexisting data were retrieved comparing data

categories as dependent and independent variables. This investigation was longitudinal and quantitative in nature. The preexisting data downloaded were campus-based data; specifically, dropout rates by student economic status, gathered and reported by Texas Education Agency through the Texas Academic Performance Reports on each of the Alternative Education Campuses of Choice identified in this sample.

Participants and Instrumentation

The research study that was conducted herein was on 121 campuses of the 300 Alternative Education Campuses of Choice registered with the Texas Education Agency for the 2020-2021 school year (Texas Education Agency, 2020a). The 121 schools analyzed in this research study were chosen based upon the availability of student demographic data and dropout data for the Alternative Education Campus of Choice for each school year examined. The field of schools were narrowed using the following guidelines: (a) Alternative Education Campuses of Choice registered with Texas Education Agency for three consecutive years, (b) Alternative Education Campuses of Choice categorized as Dropout Recovery Schools by the Texas Education Agency; and (c) The preexisting data used, were on student demographic information (i.e., economic status) for the Alternative Education Campuses of choice examined. The 121 Alternative Education Campuses of Choice registered with the Texas Education Agency for the 2020-2021 year (2020a) met the preset guidelines.

The archival data that were used herein were obtained from the Texas Education Agency's annual publications of the Texas Academic Performance Reports and the Academic Excellence Indicator System. Specifically downloaded were the Alternative

Education Campuses of Choice identified in the sample process for the 2016-2017, 2017-2018, and 2018-2019 school years. The variables on which data were obtained from the annual reports were (a) total dropout rate (b) economic status, and (c) dropout rate by student economic status.

Results

The research questions addressed in this study involved the overall campus dropout rates and the economic status (i.e., economically disadvantaged) of students enrolled in Alternative Education Campuses of Choice and high school dropout rates. Data for this student group for the 2016-2017 school year and the 2018-2019 school year were compared. Prior to conducting inferential statistics to determine whether statistically significant differences were present in the overall campus dropout rate and the dropout rate of students enrolled in Alternative Education Campuses of Choice by their economic status, checks were conducted to determine the extent to which these data were normally distributed. Though not all of the assumptions were met, Slate and Rojas-LeBouef (2011) contend that the paired samples *t*-test procedure is appropriate to withstand violations of its underlying assumptions. The findings are presented first by campus dropout rates and second by dropout rates of students in poverty. Results will be discussed for overall campus dropout rates, then for students who were economically disadvantaged for the 2016-2017 school year and the 2018-2019 school year.

Regarding the 2016-2017 and the 2018-2019 school years for the extent to which differences were present in the campus dropout rates of students enrolled in Alternative Education Campuses of Choice, a statistically significant difference was present, $t(120) =$

2.06, $p = .04$. This difference represented a small effect size (Cohen's d) of 0.19 (Cohen, 1988). The overall campus dropout rate was highest in the 2016-2017 school year at 9.09% and declined to 7.95% in the 2018-2019 school year. This result was reflective of a decrease in the campus dropout rate of 1.14% from the 2016-2017 school year to the 2018-2019 school year. Table 4.1 contains the descriptive statistics for this analysis.

Insert Table 4.1 about here

With respect to the 2016-2017 and the 2018-2019 school years for the extent to which differences were present in the dropout rate for students who were economically disadvantaged and enrolled in Alternative Education Campuses of Choice, a statistically significant difference was not present, $t(118) = 0.73$, $p = .46$. As presented in Table 4.2, the dropout rate of students who were economically disadvantaged was highest in the 2016-2017 school year at 8.97% and only slightly declined to 8.51% in the 2018-2019 school year. This result was reflective of a decrease in the dropout rate of less than half of one percent from the 2016-2017 school year to the 2018-2019 school year.

Insert Table 4.2 about here

Discussion

In this research investigation, the campus dropout rates of Texas Alternative Education Campuses of Choice were compared between the 2016-2017 school year and

the 2018-2019 school year. In this statewide analysis, important results were revealed. The overall campus dropout rates declined by almost 1% between the 2016-2017 school year and the 2018-2019 school year. In the 2016-2017 school year the overall campus dropout rate for Alternative Education Campuses of Choice was 9.09% and in the 2018-2019 school year the campus dropout rate was 7.95%. Depicted in Figure 3.1 are these dropout rate values of Alternative Education Campuses of Choice.

Insert Figure 4.1 about here

In the 2016-2017 school year, the dropout rate of students who were economically disadvantaged and enrolled in Alternative Education Campuses of Choice was 8.97% and in the 2018-2019 school year the dropout rate of students who were economically disadvantaged was 8.51%. These numbers were reflective of a minimal 0.46% decrease in the dropout rate from the 2016-2017 school year to the 2018-2019 school year. Results are shown in Figure 4.2.

Insert Figure 4.2 about here

Connections to Existing Literature

Existing literature on campus dropout rates and dropout rates by student economic status is sparse in the State of Texas. Nationally, Perzigian et al. (2017) documented the presence of relationships between students in poverty, enrollment in alternative high

schools, and the dropout rate. Also, Orr (1987) and Suh et. al. (2007) determined that socioeconomic background and educational background were the strongest indicators in determining whether students would drop out of high school. The results discussed in this article concerning students in poverty and enrolled in Texas Alternative Education Campuses of Choice reflected a dropout rate of nearly 10% yearly.

Connections to Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this article is grounded in John Dewey's experiential learning theory. Understanding campus dropout rates and the breakdown of dropout rates by student economic status in alternative high school settings is a crucial first step in addressing the individual academic needs of students. "...for education to be most effective, content must be presented in a way that allows the student to relate the information to prior experiences, thus deepening the connection with this new knowledge" (Abderrahim & Gutiérrez-Colón Plana, 2021, p. 39; Talebi, 2015, p. 5). The alternative high school model was established to provide students with the opportunity to receive individualized academic support to achieve their high school diploma (Alternative Education Accountability, 2007). Therefore, understanding the students who are dropping out campus-wide, as well as, the economic status of each student, is necessary in supporting individual student academic success.

Implications for Policy and for Practice

Implications for policy can be derived from the results of this investigation. Disaggregating yearly dropout data of the Alternative Education Campuses of Choice located within each school district will be crucial for educational leaders to complete. The

assessment of dropout rates longitudinally, will produce trends that school leaders can analyze for any inequities that may be interfere with the education for all students.

Also, implications for practice can be made from the results of this investigation. Educational leaders are encouraged to create campus-wide and district-wide goals for their Alternative Education Campuses of Choice. In doing so, stakeholders can effectively implement strategies aligned to campus and district goals for improvement of student learning at each students' academic need and knowledge level.

Recommendations for Future Research

Several recommendations for research based upon the findings of this investigation should be considered. First, the potential inequities in the dropout rates of students enrolled in Alternative Education Campuses of Choice in the state of Texas should be considered as an area of needed analysis by researchers. Secondly, an extension of this study analyzing possible inequities in the ethnicity/race of students enrolled in Alternative Education Campuses of Choice and high school dropout rates is an area of needed exploration given the results provided in this investigation of the dropout rates of the students who were economically disadvantaged and enrolled in Alternative Education Campuses of Choice. Thirdly, it is recommended that further trends in dropout rates and student economic status of students enrolled in Alternative Education Campuses of Choice be examined annually. Finally, replicating this research investigation and extending it outside the State of Texas is recommended to determine the degree to which these results are generalizable among other states. Readers should know that in the current literature on Alternative Education Campuses of Choice, no

published articles were present about inequities of overall campus dropout rates, and student economic status and dropout rates present among students enrolled in these schools.

Conclusion

In this statewide multiyear investigation, high school dropout rates of Texas Alternative Education Campuses of Choice were compared between the 2016-2017 school year and the 2018-2019 school year. The high school dropout rates of students who were economically disadvantaged and enrolled in Texas Alternative Education Campuses of Choice were compared between the 2016-2017 school year and the 2018-2019 school year. The overall campus dropout rate statistically significantly decreased between the two school years. The campus dropout rate for Alternative Education Campuses of Choice showed a decline at 1.14% from the 2016-2017 school to the 2018-2019 school year. The dropout rate of students who were economically disadvantaged and enrolled in Alternative Education Campuses of Choice remained unchanged from the 2016-2017 school year to the 2018-2019 school year.

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Table 4.1

*Descriptive Statistics for Campus Dropout Rates of Students Enrolled in Texas
Alternative Education Campuses of Choice for the 2016-2017 School Year and the 2018-
2019 School Year*

School Year	<i>n</i>	<i>M%</i>	<i>SD%</i>
2016-2017	121	9.09	8.45
2018-2019	121	7.95	7.31

Note. The *n* refers to the number of school campuses on which data were analyzed.

Table 4.2

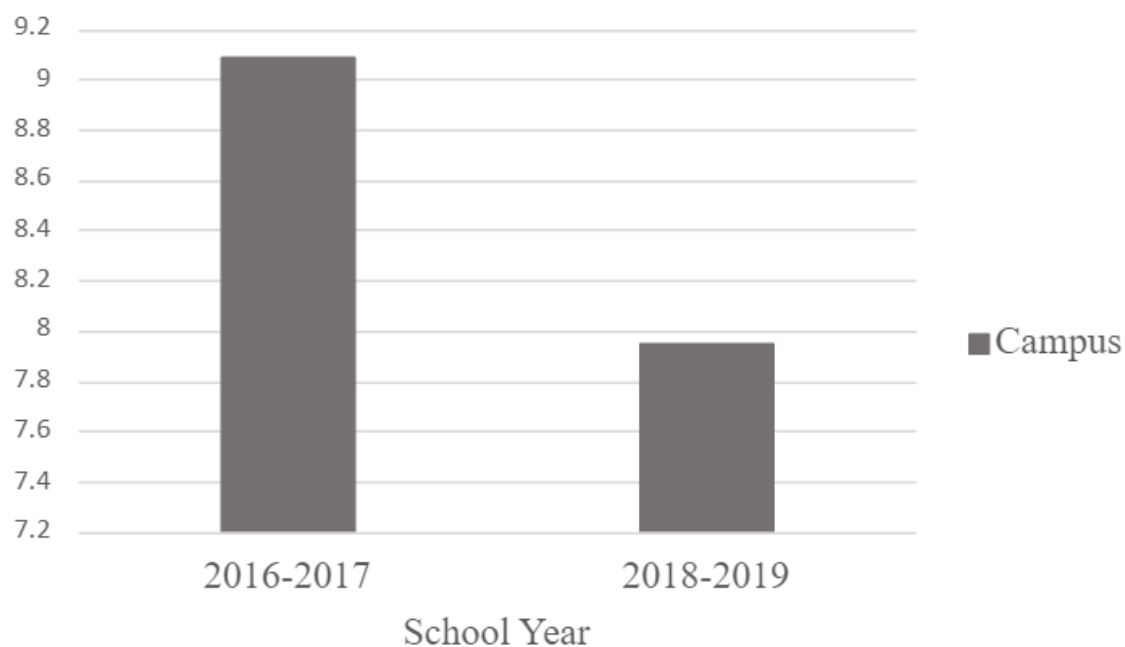
Descriptive Statistics for Dropout Rates of Students who Were Economically Disadvantaged and Enrolled in Texas Alternative Education Campuses of Choice for the 2016-2017 School Year and the 2018-2019 School Year

School Year	<i>n</i>	<i>M%</i>	<i>SD%</i>
2016-2017	119	8.97	8.33
2018-2019	119	8.51	7.53

Note. The *n* refers to the number of school campuses on which data were analyzed.

Figure 4.1

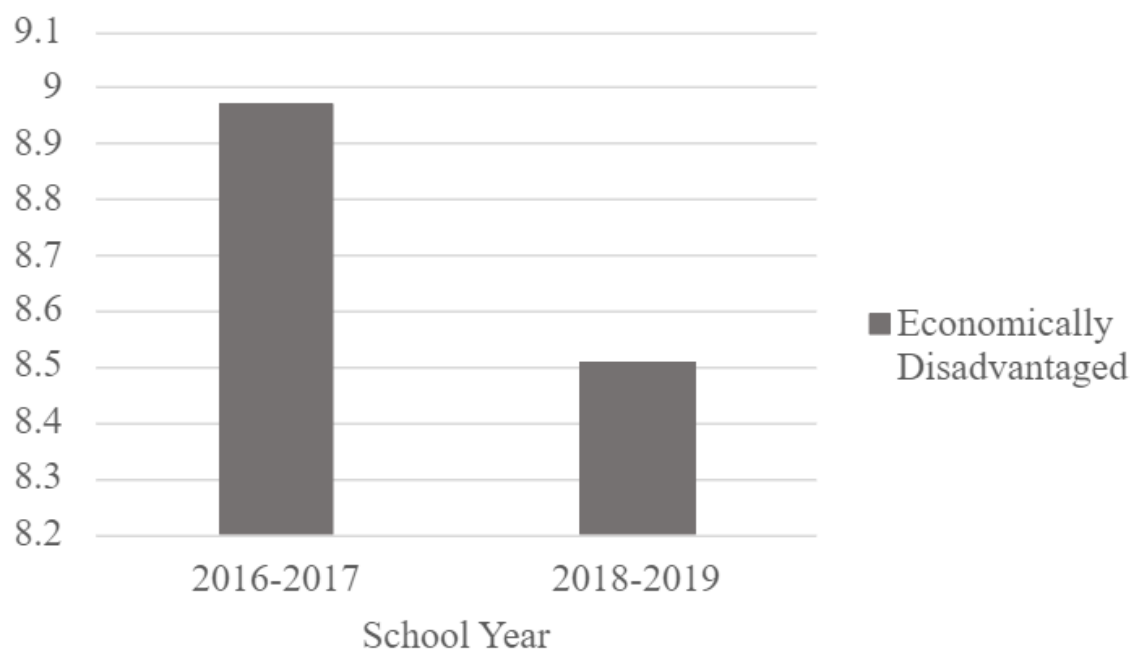
Dropout Rate Percentages of Alternative Education Campuses of Choice for the 2016-2017 and 2018-2019 School Years



Note. Campus dropout rates of students enrolled in Alternative Education Campuses of Choice in the 2016-2017 school year and the 2018-2019 school year.

Figure 4.2

Dropout Rate Percentages of Students who Were Economically Disadvantaged for the 2016-2017 and 2018-2019 School Years



Note. Dropout rates of students who were economically disadvantaged and enrolled in Alternative Education Campuses of Choice in the 2016-2017 school year and the 2018-2019 school year.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The purposes of this journal-ready dissertation were to provide a descriptive analysis of the demographic characteristics of students and teachers in Texas Alternative Education Campuses of Choice, recognized as Dropout Recovery Schools, during two 5-year school spans (2005-2006 through 2009-2010 and 2014-2015 through 2018-2019); to provide statistical analyses of archived data between the 2016-2017 and 2018-2019 school years on the campus dropout rates of students enrolled in these schools, as well as, by student ethnicity/race and student economic status.

In the first study, student demographic characteristics of ethnicity/race and economic status of students enrolled in Alternative Education Campuses of Choice were determined, as well as teacher demographic characteristics of ethnicity/race and gender of teachers employed at Alternative Education Campuses of Choice. In the second article, the dropout rates of Black, Hispanic, and White students enrolled in Alternative Education Campuses of Choice were compared between two school years. In the third investigation, student overall dropout rates and the dropout rates of students in poverty of students enrolled in Alternative Education Campuses of Choice were compared between two school years.

Summary of Results for Study One

In the first study, an analysis of student demographic characteristics of students enrolled in Alternative Education Campuses of Choice during the 2005-2006 school year through the 2009-2010 school year and the 2014-2015 school year through the 2018-2019

school year was conducted. Then an analysis of teacher demographic characteristics of teachers employed at Alternative Education Campuses of Choice during the 2005-2006 school year through the 2009-2010 school year and the 2014-2015 school year through the 2018-2019 school year was conducted. Two 5-year school spans of archival data from the Texas Education Agency Public Education Information Management System were examined to determine the extent to which trends were present.

For the first 5-year span (i.e., 2005-2006 through 2009-2010), Asian student enrollment in Alternative Education Campuses of Choice ranged from 0.45% in the 2005-2006 school year to 1.03% in the 2007-2008 school year. In the 2009-2010 school year, Asian student enrollment was 0.89%. Black student enrollment increased from 8.95% in the 2005-2006 school year to 10.37% in the 2009-2010 school year. Hispanic student enrollment increased from 44.56% in the 2005-2006 school year to 49.45% in the 2009-2010 school year. White student enrollment decreased from 45.07% in the 2005-2006 school year to 38.68% the 2009-2010 school year (See Table 5.1).

Table 5.1

Summary Statistics of Students by Ethnicity/Race Enrolled in Alternative Education

Campuses of Choice for the 2005-2006 Through the 2009-2010 School Years

School Year	Asian %age	Black %age	Hispanic %age	White %age
2005-2006	0.98	8.95	44.56	45.07
2006-2007	0.45	8.48	46.63	43.11
2007-2008	1.03	9.46	49.24	40.10
2008-2009	1.01	9.31	48.53	40.70
2009-2010	0.89	10.37	49.45	38.68

As revealed in Table 5.2, for the second 5-year span (i.e., 2014-2015 through 2018-2019), Asian student enrollment fluctuated from 0.82% in the 2014-2015 school year to 0.89% in the 2015-2016 school year. By the 2018-2019 school Asian enrollment had decreased to 0.65%. Black student enrollment increased from 9.92% in the 2014-2015 to 11.66% in the 2018-2019 school year. Hispanic student enrollment also increased from 51.44% in the 2014-2015 school year to 52.84% in the 2018-2019 school year. White student enrollment continued to decrease from 35.55% in the 2014-2015 school year to 32.23% in the 2018-2019 school year.

Table 5.2

Summary Statistics of Students by Ethnicity/Race Enrolled in Alternative Education

Campuses of Choice for the 2014-2015 Through the 2018-2019 School Years

School Year	Asian %age	Black %age	Hispanic %age	White %age
2014-2015	0.82	9.92	51.44	35.55
2015-2016	0.89	10.28	51.29	35.60
2016-2017	0.69	10.45	51.28	35.29
2017-2018	0.82	9.86	53.33	33.26
2018-2019	0.65	11.66	52.84	32.23

For the first 5-year span (i.e., 2005-2006 through 2009-2010), the percentage of students who were economically disadvantaged and enrolled in an Alternative Education Campus of choice increased. In the 2005-2006 school year, 43.68% of students enrolled were economically disadvantaged increasing to 56.05% in the 2009-2010 school year.

Table 5.3 contains a summery of these results.

Table 5.3*Summary Statistics of Students by Economic Status Enrolled in Alternative Education**Campuses of Choice for the 2005-2006 Through the 2009-2010 School Years*

School Year	Economically Disadvantaged %age
2005-2006	43.68
2006-2007	45.16
2007-2008	46.92
2008-2009	49.34
2009-2010	56.05

For the second 5-year span (i.e., 2014-2015 through 2018-2019), the percentage of students who were economically disadvantaged and enrolled in an Alternative Education Campus of choice decreased slightly from 61.25% in the 2014-2015 school year to 60.42% in the 2015-2016 school year. In the 2016-2017 school year the enrollment percentage was 63.07%, a percentage that increased to 67.39% in the 2018-2019 school year. These results are provided in Table 5.4.

Table 5.4*Summary Statistics of Students by Economic Status Enrolled in Alternative Education**Campuses of Choice for the 2014-2015 Through the 2018-2019 School Years*

School Year	Economically Disadvantaged %age
2014-2015	61.25
2015-2016	60.42
2016-2017	63.07
2017-2018	63.36
2018-2019	67.39

For the first 5-year span (i.e., 2005-2006 through 2009-2010), Asian teacher employment at Alternative Education Campuses of Choice ranged from 0.76% in the

2005-2006 school year to 1.06% in the 2009-2010 school year. Black teacher employment increased from 4.02% in the 2005-2006 school year to 5.33% in the 2009-2010 school year. Hispanic teacher employment increased from 14.09% in the 2005-2006 school year to 17.07% in the 2009-2010 school year. White teacher employment decreased from 78.08% in the 2005-2006 school year to 75.91% the 2009-2010 school year. Contained in Table 5.5 are the descriptive statistics for this analysis.

Table 5.5

Summary Statistics of Teachers by Ethnicity/Race Employed at Alternative Education Campuses of Choice for the 2005-2006 Through the 2009-2010 School Years

School Year	Asian %age	Black %age	Hispanic %age	White %sage
2005-2006	0.76	4.02	14.09	78.08
2006-2007	0.79	4.06	15.64	78.88
2007-2008	0.75	4.84	15.73	78.08
2008-2009	0.98	5.17	16.31	76.95
2009-2010	1.06	5.33	17.07	75.91

As revealed in Table 5.6, for the second 5-year span (i.e., 2014-2015 through 2018-2019) examined, Asian teacher employment at Alternative Education Campuses of Choice increased from 1.41% in the 2014-2015 school year to 2.34% in the 2018-2019 school year. Black teacher employment stayed relatively constant from 5.83% in the 2014-2015 school year to 5.94% in the 2018-2019 school year. In the 2016-2017 school year, Black teacher employment was the highest at 6.45%. Hispanic teacher employment increased from 19.14% in the 2014-2015 school year to 22.07% in the 2018-2019 school year. White teacher employment decreased from 72.02% in the 2014-2015 school year to 67.82% in the 2018-2019 school year.

Table 5.6*Summary Statistics of Teachers by Ethnicity/Race Employed at Alternative Education**Campuses of Choice for the 2014-2015 Through the 2018-2019 School Years*

School Year	Asian %age	Black %age	Hispanic %age	White %age
2014-2015	1.41	5.83	19.14	72.02
2015-2016	1.29	4.46	18.77	72.94
2016-2017	1.94	6.45	19.76	70.45
2017-2018	1.99	5.55	22.00	68.39
2018-2019	2.34	5.94	22.07	67.82

For the first 5-year span, the percentage of teachers who were female and employed at an Alternative Education Campus of choice remained steady. In the 2005-2006 school year, 59.35% of teachers employed were female. The percentage of females employed only increased by .01% to 59.36% by the the 2009-2010 school year. Table 5.7 contains a summery of these results.

Table 5.7*Summary Statistics of Teachers by Gender Employed at Alternative Education Campuses**of Choice for the 2005-2006 Through the 2009-2010 School Years*

School Year	Female %age	Male %age
2005-2006	59.35	37.70
2006-2007	60.62	39.38
2007-2008	62.07	37.92
2008-2009	61.42	38.16
2009-2010	59.36	39.84

For the second 5-year span (i.e., 2014-2015 through 2018-2019), the percentage of teachers who were female and employed at an Alternative Education Campus of choice decreased by 4.56%. In the 2014-2015 school year 66.31% of teachers employed

were female. By the 2018-2019 school year 61.75% of teachers employed were female.

These results are provided in Table 5.8.

Table 5.8

Summary Statistics of Teachers by Gender Employed at Alternative Education Campuses of Choice for the 2014-2015 Through the 2018-2019 School Years

School Year	Female %age	Male %age
2014-2015	66.31	33.72
2015-2016	64.92	35.08
2016-2017	62.07	37.94
2017-2018	61.68	36.58
2018-2019	61.75	38.25

Summary of Results for Study Two

In the second study, the high school dropout rates for Hispanic, Black, and White students were compared between the 2016-2017 school year and the 2018-2019 school year. The 3-year school span of archival data were downloaded from the Texas Academic Performance Reports to determine the extent to which trends were present.

For the two school years analyzed, the dropout rates of Black students who were enrolled in Alternative Education Campuses of Choice were not different between the 2016-2017 school year and the 2018-2019 school year. The dropout percentages for Black students were consistent, at 11.33% in the 2016-2017 school year and 9.60% in the 2018-2019 school year. As delineated in Table 5.9, the dropout rate for Black students who were enrolled in Alternative Education Campuses of Choice decreased slightly by 1.73%.

Table 5.9

Summary of the Dropout Rate of Black Students Enrolled in Alternative Education

Campuses of Choice for the 2016-2017 and the 2018-2019 School Years

School Year	Statistically Significant	% age
2016-2017	No	11.33
2018-2019	No	9.60

For the two school years analyzed, the dropout rates of Hispanic students who were enrolled in Alternative Education Campuses of Choice were statistically significantly different between in the 2016-2017 school year and the 2018-2019 school year. The dropout rate for Hispanic students who were enrolled in Alternative Education Campuses of Choice decreased by 2.04% between these two school years. These results are provided in Table 5.10.

Table 5.10

Summary of the Dropout Rate of Hispanic Students Enrolled in Alternative Education

Campuses of Choice for the 2016-2017 and the 2018-2019 School Years

School Year	Statistically Significant	% age
2016-2017	Yes	9.73
2018-2019	Yes	7.69

For the two school years analyzed, the dropout rates of White students who were enrolled in Alternative Education Campuses of Choice were similar between the 2016-2017 school year and the 2018-2019 school year. The dropout rates of White students were 8.93% in the 2016-2017 school year and 7.67% in the 2018-2019 school year. As

such, the dropout rate decreased slightly by 1.26%. Table 5.11 contains a summary of these results.

Table 5.11

Summary of the Dropout Rate of White Students Enrolled in Alternative Education

Campuses of Choice for the 2016-2017 and the 2018-2019 School Years

School Year	Statistically Significant	%age
2016-2017	No	8.93
2018-2019	No	7.67

Summary of Results for Study Three

In the third investigation, the overall campus dropout rates of students enrolled in Alternative Education Campuses of Choice and the dropout rates of students in poverty of students enrolled in Alternative Education Campuses of Choice were compared between the 2016-2017 school year and the 2018-2019 school year. The overall campus dropout rates of students enrolled in Alternative Education Campuses of Choice were statistically significant different between the 2016-2017 school year and the 2018-2019 school year. The dropout percentages decreased from 9.09% in the 2016-2017 school to 7.95% in the 2018-2019 school year. As revealed in Table 5.12, the overall campus dropout rate for students enrolled in Alternative Education Campuses of Choice decreased by 1.14%.

Table 5.12

Summary of the Campus Dropout Rate of Alternative Education Campuses of Choice for the 2016-2017 and the 2018-2019 School Years

School Year	Statistically Significant	%age
2016-2017	Yes	9.09
2018-2019	Yes	7.95

For the two school years analyzed, the dropout rates of students who were economically disadvantaged and enrolled in Alternative Education Campuses of Choice were not statistically significantly different between the 2016-2017 school year and the 2018-2019 school year. The dropout percentages for students who were economically disadvantaged were consistent in both school years, 8.97% to 8.51%, respectively. These results are provided in Table 5.13.

Table 5.13

Summary of the Dropout Rate of Students who Were Economically Disadvantaged and Enrolled in Alternative Education Campuses of Choice for the 2016-2017 and the 2018-2019 School Years

School Year	Statistically Significant	%age
2016-2017	No	8.97
2018-2019	No	8.51

Connections to Existing Literature

Existing literature on the alternative high school model in the United States and in the State of Texas was reviewed for this multiyear journal-ready dissertation. The extant literature available over the last 30 years was very limited regarding the alternative high school model (Alternative Education Campus of Choice) in the State of Texas. Most researchers (Conley, 2002; De La Ossa, 2005; Foley & Pang, 2006; Kelly, 1993; Perzigian et al., 2017) provided evidence that alternative high school model has advantages for students who are at-risk. Very few research studies have been conducted, however, regarding the success of the alternative high school model on student dropout rates.

In the State of Texas, researchers such as Franklin et al., (2017) who conducted investigations into the alternative high school model have focused primarily on the effectiveness of the alternative high school model on student academic performance, attendance, and graduation rates. Even further limited was the efficacy, or lack thereof, of the Alternative Education Campus of Choice in relation to reducing high school dropout rates. Therefore, research studies are justified regarding the Texas Alternative Education Campus of Choice, as related to high school dropout rates and the demographic characteristics of students enrolled in these schools, as well as the demographic characteristics of teachers employed at these schools.

Connections to Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for journal-ready dissertation is grounded in John Dewey's experiential learning theory. As Dewey (1938) established, learned knowledge

is acquired through social experiences and connections of these new experiences on already attained knowledge, most of which is received from the home environment and the community in which a person resides. Hence, providing an alternative high school model, which is grounded in these ideals, as an option to the traditional high school model, is critical to meet the needs of all students. Therefore, understanding that congruency between the ethnicity/race and gender of teachers and students within the school is necessary for student success. Understanding overall campus dropout rates of this model and the analysis of dropout rates by student ethnicity/race and by student economic status, are important first phases to ensuring that the needs of all students enrolled in an Alternative Education Campus of Choice are being met with equity and fidelity.

Implications for Policy and Practice

Implications for policy can be supported from the results of this investigation. Educational leaders are encouraged to assess and disaggregate the dropout rates of their Alternative Education Campuses of Choice yearly to identify any trends or inequities present among student groups (e.g., ethnicity/race, economic status) which could be preventing all students from being educationally successful. Educational leaders are encouraged to disaggregate their teacher and student demographics and draw parallels with their overall student population to ensure there is equity among all students enrolled in their Alternative Education Campus of Choice which may decrease dropout rates among student groups analyzed.

Similarly, implications for practice can be supported from the results of this multiyear investigation. It is recommended that school district and campus administrators create district-wide and campus-wide visions and goals for their Alternative Education Campuses of Choice as well as, provide inclusionary practices for teachers of like ethnicity/race and gender of the overall student population being served. In doing so, school campus leaders can provide effective strategies aligned to the district and campus goals for student learning and a foundation of cultural equity needed for students to acquire new knowledge will be established.

Recommendations for Future Research

Recommendations for research based upon the findings of this investigation should be considered. First, researchers are encouraged to analyze the potential inequities in the dropout rates of students enrolled in Texas Alternative Education Campuses of Choice yearly. Secondly, given the disproportionalities present in the ethnic/racial breakdown of students enrolled in Alternative Education Campuses of Choice in the State of Texas, researchers are recommended to explore possible trends and inequities present in the gender and economic status of students enrolled in Alternative Education Campuses of Choice and high school dropout rates. Finally, replicating this research investigation outside the State of Texas to determine the degree to which these results are generalizable among other states is recommended. Readers should note that in the extant literature on Alternative Education Campuses of Choice in the state of Texas, no published articles were present concerning the trends and inequities of student demographic characteristics and teacher demographic characteristics present among

students enrolled in and teachers employed at these schools. Nor were articles present on the dropout rates by student ethnicity/race, overall campus dropout rates, or student economic status and dropout rates present among students enrolled in these schools.

Conclusion

In this multiyear journal-ready dissertation, first, student demographic characteristics and teacher demographic characteristics at Alternative Education Campuses of Choice were examined for trends of inequities present. Across the two 5-year spans analyzed, clear disproportionalities and a lack of parallelism were established in the ethnicity/race of students and teachers. Most troubling were the inequities in the percentages of White teachers employed in relation to the Black and Hispanic students enrolled in these schools. Similar disparities were present with respect to teacher gender. Nearly two-thirds of the teachers employed at Alternative Education Campuses of Choice were female. Second, the degree to which student ethnicity/race and student economic status were related to the high school dropout rate of students enrolled in these schools were addressed. For the two school years analyzed, even though dropout rates declined, Hispanic students had the highest dropout rates. Finally, the dropout rates of students in poverty continued to increase to almost 70% by the end of the 2018-2019 school year. The reliance on inclusionary practices of all student groups in Alternative Education Campuses of Choice by school personnel in Texas needs to be addressed with changes in campus and district visions and possible legislation of more effective accountability techniques that support student academic success and decreases high school dropout rates among all students.

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APPENDIX



Date: Jul 7, 2022 5:30:42 PM CDT

TO: Daniele Jordan Frederick Lunenburg

FROM: SHSU IRB

PROJECT TITLE: Dropout rate differences in Texas Alternative Education Campuses of Choice: A statewide analysis

PROTOCOL #: IRB-2022-162

SUBMISSION TYPE: Initial

ACTION: No Human Subjects Research

DECISION DATE: July 7, 2022

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,

In accordance with applicable federal law governing the use of human subjects in research the SHSU Institutional Review Board ("IRB") has reviewed your proposed project entitled "Dropout rate differences in Texas Alternative Education Campuses of Choice: A statewide analysis" and determined that this project does not meet the definition of human subjects research as defined in Title 45 Code of Federal Regulations Part 46 et al (also known as the "Common Rule") - specifically, secondary data analysis of a public dataset. Therefore, this project is not subject to further SHSU IRB oversight. Even so, please remember that you are responsible for ensuring that your study is conducted in an ethical manner and in accordance with applicable law and SHSU policies and procedures. You may initiate your project. Please contact the IRB office at irb@shsu.edu or (936)294-4875 if you need any additional information.

Sincerely,

SHSU Institutional Review Board

VITA

Daniele Jordan

EDUCATIONAL HISTORY

Doctor of Education – Educational Leadership, December 2022

Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, Texas

Dissertation: Dropout Rate Differences in Texas Alternative Education Campuses of Choice: A Statewide Analysis

Master of Science, Counseling, May 2005

University of Houston – Clear Lake, Houston, Texas

Bachelor of Arts, May 2002

Education, Emphasis in Social Sciences, Minor in Sociology

University of Nebraska – Kearney, Kearney, Nebraska

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Lead Counselor, Lake Creek High School, 2021- Present

Director, Huntsville Independent School District, 2019-2021

Founding Principal, Hornet Success Academy, 2019-2021

Summer School Principal, Mance Park Middle School, Huntsville Intermediate School, Summer 2019

Assistant Principal, Huntsville High School, 2017-2019

Licensed Professional Counselor-Supervisor, State of Texas, 2012-current

Licensed Professional Counselor, State of Texas, 2007-2012

National Certified Counselor, NBCC, 2005-current

Counselor, Montgomery High School, 2014-2017

Counselor, Willis High School, Counselor, 2010-2014 Lead, 2011-2014; College and Career, 2010-2011

Founding Assistant Principal/Counselor, Frederick A. Douglass Learning Academy, AEA recognized, 2008-2010

Counselor, Cleveland High School, 2004-2005; 2006-2008

Counselor, Kingwood 9th Grade Campus, 2005-2006

Teacher, Ross S. Sterling High School, 2002-2004

PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATES

Superintendent, EC-12

Principal, EC – 12

School Counselor, EC-12

Special Education Supplemental

English as a Second Language Supplemental

Classroom Teacher, Secondary Social Studies Composite, Grades 6-12

Licensed Professional Counselor-Supervisor, State of Texas

National Certified Counselor

T-TESS Certification

PDAS/ILD Certification

AWARDS/CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

Founding Principal of the Hornet Success Academy, Huntsville ISD, 2019

Huntsville High School FCCLA Honorary Member, 2018

Montgomery Leadership Institute, 2016

Twelve Stones, Inc. Recognition for Teens Helping Teens Avoid Drugs and Alcohol, 2012

Founding Asst. Principal of the Frederick A. Douglass Learning Academy, Cleveland ISD, 2008

TAKS US History Exam student passing rate 100%, 2003-2004

SERVICE TO THE PROFESSION AND COMMUNITY

K-12

Huntsville ISD District Advisory Committee - District Representative

Huntsville ISD District College Career Readiness Committee

Huntsville ISD Long Range Planning Committee

Montgomery Junior High PTO, Montgomery ISD

Madeley Ranch Elementary PTO, Montgomery ISD

Texas Association for Alternative Education Conference Committee

Texas Association for Alternative Education Scholarship Committee

Higher Education

Southwest Educational Research Association Conference Proposal Reviewer

PRESENTATIONS AND PUBLICATIONS

Jordan, D. A. (2021, February). *Texas Alternative Education Campuses of Choice and student dropout rates*. Paper presented at the annual conference of the Southwest Educational Research Association (SERA), held virtually.