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Human Resource Officer's Perspectives on Recruitment and Hiring Practices of Diverse Candidates

Tara Kelton McDaniel
Old Dominion University, mcdanieltk@longwood.edu

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HUMAN RESOURCE OFFICER'S PERSPECTIVES ON RECRUITMENT AND

HIRING PRACTICES OF DIVERSE CANDIDATES

by

Tara Kelton McDaniel
B.S. May 1999, Virginia Tech
M.S. December 2001, Longwood University

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Approved by:

Karen Sanzo (Chair)

Petros Katsiouloudis (Member)

Rachel White (Member)

ABSTRACT

HUMAN RESOURCE OFFICER'S PERSPECTIVES ON RECRUITMENT AND HIRING
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Tara Kelton McDaniel
Old Dominion University, 2022
Chair, Dr. Karen Sanzo

A wealth of research supports the positive impact minority teachers have on all students, but especially minority students. Benefits include an increase in academic achievement, an increase in educational engagement, and an overall sense of self-efficacy and autonomy. Unfortunately minority teachers and teachers of color are significantly underrepresented in the United States teaching workforce compared to their White counterparts. Challenges for diversifying the teaching workforce include historical factors of racism and suppression, the Whiteness of educator preparation programs as the prevailing ideology, and the presence of toxic work environment conditions during field placements and employment. While many historical and contemporary factors regarding recruitment and retention have been investigated, the perspectives from those individuals primarily responsible for recruitment and hiring are missing from the literature. This study investigated the perspectives of human resource officers from small-rural school divisions in a middle Atlantic state, and explored how and to what extent their recruitment and hiring practices support a diverse teaching workforce.

The methods used to complete the study incorporated a phenomenological qualitative design utilizing a semi-structured interview format. The participant recruitment was based on the specific criteria of human resource officers who are employed and serve in divisions identified as rural. Data collected through the interviews were coded, analyzed, and clustered into themes

using phenomenological reduction and bracketing. Several themes emerged from the data analysis: participant pathway to the position of HRO, division internal structures and processes for recruitment and hiring, characteristics prioritized when selecting and hiring candidates, barriers and successful strategies identified for recruitment and hiring diverse candidates, and strategies and initiatives identified as needed in order to increase diversity within schools. The overall findings were synthesized utilizing the Critical Race Theory, with a predominant focus on counter-storytelling and permanence of racism. An analysis of the interview testimonies by participant's race reveal several important and distinct themes which provide a unique, culturally relevant perspective: the overall importance of diversity, the significance of diversity recruiting diversity, and the cultural differences in interactions between administrators and diverse teachers. In addition, the permanence of racism was a common thread revealed through all of the interviews where multiple examples were provided of evadism racism, "antiracist" racism, and everyday racism.

Keywords: diverse teacher recruitment, critical race theory

I dedicate my dissertation to my children, who were the three reasons I finally finished, as I had to lead by example: never quit or give up on something you truly want. And to my life partner who has supported me through every phase of my adult life and every endeavor I have tackled, whether in agreement or not. I believe that is the true definition of love: unconditional support and companionship.

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CHAPTER 1

Nature of the Problem

Minority teachers and teachers of color are significantly underrepresented in the United States teaching workforce. Approximately 18% of educators are considered minorities compared to more than 50% of students who are identified as such (National Center for Education Statistics NCES, 2020). Currently, an overwhelmingly White teaching force is teaching the majority of a non-White student population. This phenomenon is not new and since the 1980s, researchers have reported the demographic misalignment between teachers and students of color. In 1972, the U.S. Department of Education collected its first demographic data and students of color accounted for 22% of the student enrollment, with teachers of color accounting for only 12% of the teaching workforce. While schools have seen a significant increase in the number of minority students, this trend is in stark contrast to the minimal increase of diverse teachers. At this rate, many students will not experience a minority teacher during their educational career, and 40% of schools do not have minority teachers employed. Teachers of color are leaving the profession at a rate far greater than their White counterparts and the growing enrollment of students of color far surpasses the current workforce of teachers of color. This gap has only widened over the last five decades creating a significant education, social, and political issue: the shortage of a diverse teaching workforce.

Minority teachers are critical to the education community as they serve as important role models for both minority and non-minority students and provide a much needed perspective on the challenges and barriers encountered by minority students. Minority teachers are likely to sympathize and empathize with minority students and have a greater understanding of their cultural backgrounds and experiences (Villegas & Irvine, 2010). In addition, minority students

perform better academically when a teacher of their own race/ethnicity provides instruction. Academic achievement for minority students has historically been lower than other groups of students; however, minority students who were instructed by a minority teacher had significantly higher academic achievement (Villegas & Irvine, 2010; Villegas, Strom, & Lucas, 2012). Furthermore, research supports the positive influence minority teachers have on the academic achievement of minority students by establishing a greater classroom connection, improved interactions, and increased engagement (Dee, 2005; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Scott & Alexander, 2019). Moreover, minority teachers are also likely to be better equipped to teach disadvantaged students as well. Minority teachers tend to commit to teach in schools that are hard-to-staff or socioeconomically challenged, where a large percentage of minority students attend.

As a result of the significant shortages, states have implemented policies and practices to restructure teacher preparation programs, redesign routes to licensure, create financial incentives such as sign-on bonuses, scholarships, loan forgiveness programs, and tuition support, and strengthen induction programs and mentoring. In response to this growing need, several workforce initiatives were created and designed to recruit teachers of color into the teaching profession, such as teacher cadet programs, two-year and four-year college transfer agreements, and paraprofessional growth options. These recruitment and retention efforts, while appeared to meet immediate needs, have not provided a long-term solution as evidenced by the continued discrepancy between minority and White teachers.

Several important factors have affected the minority teacher pipeline: teacher preparation, salary and financial incentives, on the job support and mentoring, and organizational structure and the culture and climate of the school. The quality of teacher preparation programs are

critically important to retention as teacher attrition is significantly higher for those teachers who enter the profession without adequate preparation. While traditional teacher preparation programs have witnessed a decline in minority candidates, alternate routes were created to reduce barriers to entry and to enable teachers to complete coursework more quickly. While alternate routes are more appealing to candidates because they offer flexibility in coursework and sequence, when compared to traditional routes to licensure, alternate routes are associated with lower retention rates than those candidates who completed a traditional program (Podolsky, Kini, Darling-Hammond, & Bishop, 2019).

Financial compensation is a second critical factor that affects the recruitment and retention of teachers. Teacher's salaries nationwide fall far below that of other professions with commensurate education, certifications, and degrees. A large body of studies have shown that teachers' salaries significantly affect the supply of teachers in terms of quality and quantity of individuals preparing to be teachers (Podolsky et al., 2019; Shuls & Maranto, 2014). In addition to salaries, other forms of monetary incentives include sign-on bonuses for specific critical shortage areas or hard to staff schools, and performance pay. Many divisions offer sign-on bonuses to attract teachers for a specific critical shortage area such as special education, math, and science areas where there is a severely high need, or high turnover. While promising, these incentives have not been shown to improve retention over time.

Scholarship loans and loan forgiveness have also served as a popular incentive for recruitment of candidates into a teacher preparation programs as well as increase retention. Scholarship incentives and scholarship loans are provided to candidates who meet specific academic and demographic requirements such as teaching in a high-needs area, subject area, or identify as a minority candidate. Candidates are given a scholarship for tuition in exchange for

agreeing to pay back through service by teaching in a specific area for a specified amount of time. While scholarship loans attract candidates into the teaching profession, they do not serve well for retention, while many teachers repay the loan through the required years of service and then ultimately leave the profession (Henry, Bastian, & Smith, 2012).

Mentoring and teacher induction have been shown to be effective methods for recruiting, but more importantly for retaining teachers. Beginning teachers who were provided with multiple mentoring supports are less likely to transfer to another school or leave teaching altogether and teachers who received induction and mentoring support during the first five years of teaching predicted less teacher migration and attrition (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004; Ronfeldt & McQueen, 2017). Coupled with mentoring and induction, some scholars argue the most important piece to recruitment and retention of quality teachers is the organizational structure and climate of the school and school division. While positive school climate has shown to improve recruitment and retention, many schools lack leadership and administrative support (Hughes, 2012; Wynn, Carboni & Patell, 2007).

In summary, the importance of minority teachers and the demographic data supporting the critical shortage is well documented in the literature, in addition to the positive impact they have on *all* students, not only minority students. Because of the challenges of recruiting minority teachers, several initiatives have focused on increasing the pool of candidates; however, these initiatives have resulted in short-term gains. The shortage of minority teachers continues to grow with minimal long-term, effective solutions for recruitment and retention.

Problem Identification

With the growing increase in teacher shortages across the country, this phenomenon is compounded exponentially by the shortage of minority teachers. This had led to unequal access

to adequately qualified teachers and the quality of teaching particularly in poor, urban public schools serving predominantly minority students. The unintended consequences are further increasing the discrepancy between educational opportunities, achievement, and outcomes between White and minority students. This only perpetuates the cycle of inadequate and inequitable educational services for minority students, which leads to an increase in negative school experiences and perspectives of teaching and teachers. These negative experiences (or lack of positive school experiences) do not support or encourage minorities to view teaching as viable career option, only perpetuating the already existing shortage of minority teachers.

Scholars have investigated the challenges and barriers of diversifying the teaching workforce. Historically, since *Brown v. Board of Education* the minority-teaching workforce never fully recovered as thousands of Black teachers were displaced. It is noted that the decline in minority teachers has persisted because of an inadequate labor supply pipeline into the teaching occupation since that time (Andrews, Castro, Cho, Petchauer, Richmond, & Flooden, 2019; Foster, 1995; Irvine, 1988; Madkins, 2011; Tillman, 2004). Furthermore, as career options available to minorities have increased in recent years, there has been a sharp decrease in minority candidates entering the teacher preparation programs. For those minority candidates that commit to entering a teacher preparation program, an often times unforeseen and unintended barrier are standardized professional readiness exams. Licensure exams often contain implicit biases which result in teachers of color failing to meet assessment benchmarks in order to gain entrance into teacher preparation programs. In addition, teacher preparation programs historically tend to replicate the current demographic qualities of the teaching profession which are White, middle-class, Christian, and female. Minority teachers, who choose to attend predominantly White

institutions (PWI), tend to encounter various obstacles such as the ideologies of Whiteness and often times racism.

The shortage of teachers entering and remaining in the profession has increased across the country as the gap between White teachers and teachers of color continues to widen. Current recruitment and retention methods vary, with minimal effectiveness for all teachers, and have shown to be even less effective for minority teachers. As a result, the minority teacher shortage continues to remain in a critical state with minimal viable solutions available. Current research has analyzed the effectiveness of recruitment and retention methods employed by state departments, school divisions, and partnerships with institutions of higher education, but the effectiveness varies and is dependent upon many variables which has led to mixed results. While the larger concepts of teacher preparation and recruitment and retention efforts have been analyzed and researched, the shortage and gap continue to widen, and the strategies appear to be superficial and a short-term fix to a long-term problem. Teacher preparation programs continue to experience a decrease in minority candidates and school divisions continue to struggle to increase their pool of minority teachers. In addition, universal recruitment or retention efforts have not been identified that would provide some much needed direction and guidance.

Recently, scholars have begun exploring critical race theory through the perceptions and experiences of teacher education candidates and current teachers. Although emerging, relatively little research exists on the personal experiences and narratives of school and division leaders (Bernal, 2002; Kauchak & Burbank, 2003; Lander & Santoro, 2017; Pham, 2018). While the problem is clearly supported in literature, little research is available investigating the recruitment and hiring practices of schools and specifically the role of the human resource officer (D'Amico, Pawlewicz, Earley, & McGeehan, 2017). Demographics and trends in statistics have certainly

painted the dismal picture, and consequences, barriers, and challenges minority teachers encounter have been highlighted as well. However, what is missing from the literature are the experiences and perspectives of HROs. It is a critical time to investigate the experiential knowledge through the narratives of HROs, as they possess an overlooked and underutilized insight.

Conceptual Framework

In order to capture the perspectives and perceptions of HROs, a phenomenological research design will be used, utilizing the critical race framework. Edmund Husserl developed phenomenological research as a means of researching "pure phenomena" as the aim of phenomenology is to capture concrete phenomenon, as the individual perceives it. The goal of phenomenological research is to describe as accurately as possible the phenomenon, refraining from any pre-conceived framework, but remaining true to facts (Groenewald, 2004). The goal of phenomenologists is to understand the phenomena from the perspectives of the individuals involved.

Critical race theory (CRT) challenges the hegemonic system of Whiteness as the norm with the ultimate goal of bringing about social justice change. CRT includes the following tenets: counter-storytelling, the permanence of racism, Whiteness as property, interest convergence, and the critique of liberalism. CRT grew out of Critical Legal Studies, but has expanded in the education discipline since 1995. However, CRT is still new in the education field and researchers have only begun to utilize CRT to its fullest (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004).

Through this framework, counter-storytelling is a method of telling a story that aims to cast doubt on the validity and accepted cultural norms of the majority, "Whitestream" (Burciaga & Kohli, 2018). Counter-storytelling exposes and critiques normalized stereotypes that

perpetuate racism, inequality, and racial equities (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Counter-storytelling and counter-narratives give individuals the opportunity to critically reflect on their experiences and gives voice to those marginalized populations as a method of exposing and challenging normalized ideas, thoughts, and actions that perpetuate racial stereotypes. Through the lived experiences, CRT emphasizes the importance of counter-narratives which recognize the experiential knowledge of HROs as "legitimate, appropriate, and critical" to understand and teach about racism in education (Nash, 2013). CRT challenges the majoritarian view of Whiteness and White privilege that is prevalent in our educational system. Counter-storytelling can be a highly effective tool in challenging the dominant discourse that frequently ignores and silences the reality of people of color (Dixson, Anderson, & Donnor, 2016).

Utilizing storytelling and narratives through the lens of CRT integrate experiential knowledge drawn from an analysis and synthesis of experiences and perspectives, developing a CRT analytical standpoint. Perspectives provide the necessary parameters and context for evaluating, understanding, and interpreting a particular phenomenon, in this case the shortage of minority teachers as presented by the perspectives of those who have primary responsibility for recruiting and hiring a diverse teaching workforce. These stories synthesized into a common framework, give voice to the phenomenon. The voice provides a way to communicate the experiences and realities and is crucial for the understating of the educational system, because the dialogue of people of color have been traditionally silenced (Ladson-Billings, 1998).

While policy makers and practitioners have focused on methods and specific strategies for recruiting and retaining teachers, the teacher shortage continues to grow and even more critically for minority and teachers of color. Recruitment and retention of qualified teaching candidates and perspective teachers is fraught with many challenges and barriers which is

compounded by the scarcity of minority teachers. CRT provides a conceptual framework for the analysis of historical and contemporary barriers and challenges for recruiting teachers of color. Through this lens, policymakers and educational leaders can identify comprehensive and realistic solutions to address the critical minority teacher shortage and thus increase the pipeline and pool of qualified candidates.

While CRT is growing as an analytical tool with which to evaluate and critique education, only a small amount of research is focused on minority teacher recruitment through the voice of the individual. This perspective can be viewed through the lens of CRT with the ultimate goal of providing policy and practical recommendations for increasing strategies to recruit and retain diverse, based on information provided by those who have lived these experiences. Efforts to recruit and retain teachers of color are rarely accompanied by policy and programmatic changes that adequately address their unique learning needs in preservice teacher preparation programs. Teacher preparation programs continue to produce mainly White female teachers who are not well equipped to teach racially, ethnically diverse populations (DeAngelis, Wall, & Che, 2013; Miller & Endo, 2005; Zhang & Zeller, 2016).

CRT is an important framework used to analyze and evaluate the challenges of recruiting and retaining minority candidates. However, additional research and analysis is needed regarding the experiences of division leaders who have first-hand knowledge of the challenges, barriers, and obstacles of recruiting and hiring minority teachers.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to investigate the lived experiences and perspectives of HROs in rural school divisions in a middle Atlantic state, regarding the recruitment and hiring practices of diverse teachers and how and to what extent these processes support a diverse

teaching workforce. This study sought to understand the structural and cultural barriers within the school division that support or hinder diverse hiring. These testimonies provided overall themes and implications for school divisions supporting minority individuals choosing teaching as a profession. Using CRT as the analytical tool allowed an analysis which provided concreate actionable methods to counter the current shortage with the ultimate goal of increasing recruitment and stability in retention, while challenging and ultimately changing the current paradigms and structures that have perpetuated the current crisis.

Research Questions

This research study utilized a qualitative phenomenological research design and the following research question were explored:

(1) What are the experiences and perceptions of HROs as it relates to recruitment and hiring practices?

(2) How and to what extent do the recruitment and hiring practices support a diverse teaching workforce?

To gain a greater understanding of the historical and contemporary factors regarding the shortage of minority teachers, a thorough review of literature has been conducted and is organized into the following themes: background and historical context of minority teacher shortages, the importance of minority teachers, current recruitment and retention efforts, current trends in hiring practices, and utilizing critical race theory as the conceptual framework. Following the review of a literature, the methodology is described and includes the purpose and research questions, research design, population and sample, instrumentation, data collection and data analyses procedures. Then the findings and themes are presented, along with the implications, recommendations, and conclusion

CHAPTER 2

Review of Literature

Background and Historical Context of Minority Teacher Shortages

Over 60 year's worth of research has resulted in the same conclusion, minority teachers and teachers of color are significantly underrepresented in the United States teaching workforce. Approximately 18% of educators are considered minorities compared to more than 50% of students who are identified as a minority (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020). Currently, an overwhelmingly White teaching force is teaching the majority of a non-White student population. This racial gap is not new and since the 1980s, researchers have reported the demographic misalignment between teachers and students of color. A wealth of research exists regarding the need to increase teachers of color, particularly Black teachers, in order to keep pace with the fast-growing minority demographics in public schools (Brown & Butty, 2000; Case, Shine, Ingebretson, & Spiegal, 1988; Guarino, Santibanez, & Daly, 2006; Villegas & Irvine, 2010; Villegas et al., 2012). This trend has continued, and in 2017-2018, White teachers made up 79% of public school teachers and while most teachers of other races experienced an increase in hiring, Black public school teachers experienced a decrease (NCES, 2020; NCES, 2022). Many students will not experience a minority teacher during their schooling, and 40% of schools do not have minority teachers employed (NCES, 2020; NCES 2022).

Scholars cite several examples illustrating the consequences that legislation and policy development has created, significantly affecting the recruitment and retention efforts of teachers of color. The lack of racial and ethnic diversity in schools today is a direct result of the consequences of the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision to integrate schools (Andrews et al., 2019; Foster, 1995; Irvine, 1988; Madkins, 2011; Tillman, 2004). As a

result, large numbers of Black and African-American teachers were uprooted and displaced which led to a decrease in the number of minority teachers. It is noted that the decline in minority teachers has persisted because of an inadequate labor supply pipeline into the teaching occupation since that time. Scholars have identified several factors contributing to the disproportionate number of teachers of color in schools and ultimately attrition, but the greatest single event was desegregation.

During segregation, Black teachers taught Black students, in separate but unequal facilities, and teaching was a reputable profession particularly for Black women. By 1950, approximately half of all Black professionals working in the U.S. were employed as teachers (Cole, 1986; Foster, 1995). After *Brown v. Board of Education Topeka,* approximately 40,000 Black teachers in 17 states lost their jobs between 1954 to 1965 (Madkins, 2011). Those teachers that remained were subjected to disrespect, disregard, and blatant racism. By 1978, the population of Black teachers dropped 12% across the nation (NECS, 2020).

Importance of Minority Teachers

Several important themes emerged from research regarding the benefits to having minority teachers and teacher so color. First, teachers of color are important role models for both minority and nonminority students. This supports the underlying assumption that the racial makeup of the teaching force should reflect that of the student population, implying that race matching leads to an increase in student performance when students are taught by teachers of their own race (Cherng & Halpin, 2016). The role model theory supports the idea that schools do not just teach academics, but serve a powerful socialization function. When students do not see or view minorities in professional positions and instead see the majority of positions held by White teachers, this implicitly teaches them that only White people are in positions of authority

and reinforces further social inequalities (Mercer & Mercer, 1986). Another important component supporting the role-model concept is that many minority children come from economic disadvantaged communities and observing teachers of their own ethnically and race gives them exposure encourage students to explore teaching as a professional position (Egalite, Kisida, & Winters, 2015; Ingersoll, May, & Collins, 2019; Villegas et al., 2012).

In addition to serving as positive role models for minority students and students of color, a second argument for the benefit of minority teachers is the view that minority teachers are likely to sympathize or empathize with minority students, having a first-hand understanding of the students' cultural backgrounds and experiences. Cultural synchronicity holds that minority students benefit from exposure and instruction by minority teachers because minority teachers are likely to have personal knowledge due to similar life experiences and cultural backgrounds (Ingersoll & May 2011a; Irvine, 1989; Villegas & Irvine, 2010). Compared to their White counterparts, minority teachers are more likely to understand their students' cultures, backgrounds, and experiences to a greater degree (Milner, 2006: Villegas & Irvine, 2010; Villegas et al., 2012). Cultural synchronicity views minority teachers as having a positive impact on various outcomes for both minority and nonminority students. Students may respond to demographically similar role models by raising their motivation and personal expectations and by engaging in school more fully than if their teacher was White (Sleeter & Thao, 2007). Culture is an important aspect in minority communities and teachers of color draw on the cultural backgrounds of students to facilitie their learning and celebrate the differences and unique opportunities.

A third argument suggests that minority students perform better academically and behaviorally when a teacher of their own race/ethnicity teaches them. Math and reading

achievement scores for students of color have shown to be positively influenced by the race/ethnicity of their teacher (Egalite et al., 2015). Academic achievement for Black and minority students has historically been lower than other groups of students, but when paired with a minority teacher, minority students' academic achievement increase significantly (Dee, 2005; U. S. Department of Education, 2016). In addition, research supports the positive influence minority teachers have on the academic achievement of minority students by establishing a greater classroom connection, improved interaction, and engagement (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Scott & Alexander, 2019). Furthermore, the effects of race matching for students and teachers have a more significant impact on lower-performing Black and White students than on average to above average performing (Egalite et al., 2015). Minority students who are taught by teachers of color show a decrease in disciplinary incidences, less special education referrals, and an increase in gifted referrals (Farrell, 1990).

While minority teachers are regarded as better equipped to teach minority students, a fourth benefit is that they are also likely to be better equipped to teach disadvantaged students as well. Minority teachers tend to commit to teach in schools that are hard-to-staff or socioeconomically challenged, where a large percentage of minority students attend. Researchers have shown that minority teachers are more likely than non-minority teachers to take teaching positions in low-income, urban schools with predominantly minority students (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Quiocho & Rios, 2000). This provides the added benefit of filling vacancies in hard-to-staff schools where teacher shortages are critically high.

While research supports and outlines the need to increase the significant shortage of teachers of color as well as the advantages and benefits, there are clear disadvantages for not. With the growing increase in teacher shortages in general across the country, this shortage is

compounded exponentially by the shortage of minority teachers. This had led to unequal access to adequately qualified teachers and the quality of teaching particularly in poor, urban public schools serving predominantly minority students. The unintended consequences are further widening the achievement gap and decreasing educational opportunities for students of color (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Ingersoll & May, 2011a; Ingersoll et al., 2019). In addition, scholars have argued the personal insight teachers of color possess regarding racial and ethnic inequalities in society, gives them more credibility with students of color than White teachers. As a result, teachers of color are better able than their White peers to challenge students of color to critically examine the consequences of lack of academic engagement and the benefits of actively participating in their education process (Villegas et al., 2012).

Understanding the critical need for increasing the number of minority teachers has been well documented in literature. Researchers have presented several themes supporting the need for minority teachers in positions that teach minority students and the benefits of having minority teachers in the classroom. It is important to analyze the policies and practices that have served to perpetuate this phenomenon as a means to identify new approaches to increase recruitment and retention efforts of minority teachers and teachers of color with the ultimate goal of supporting quality, culturally responsive, and equitable instruction for minority students.

Factors Influencing the Shortage of Minority Teachers

Historically, diversifying the teaching workforce has faced many challenges and barriers including inadequate educational opportunities, expanded career choices, teacher preparation challenges, and cultural and community perspectives of teaching. Most notably, legislation and policy that has created "pushout" and "keep out" processes for recruiting and retaining teachers of color. Secondly, obstacles and barriers exist within the teacher preparation programs that

cultivate a negative and often hostile environment for minority candidates. Third, the cultural and community perspectives of the teaching profession significantly influence the selection of teaching as a career. Lastly, operational and organizational conditions that create toxic climates within their schools and school divisions cause challenges with recruitment and ultimately retention.

In addition to historical legislation, students of color have traditionally been the recipient of inadequate educational opportunities, often tracked into lower-level courses and therefore not academically challenged (Bianco, Leech, & Mitchell, 2011; Miller & Endo, 2005). The lack of opportunities for minority students results in less exposure to rigorous college-ready coursework and less preparation for college and teacher education. Not only are students of color not afforded equal educational opportunities compared to their same age White counterparts, those fortunate enough to meet the academic requirements of college, are additionally challenged by the financial burden of paying for higher education.

Furthermore, as career options available to minorities have increased in recent years, there has been a sharp decrease in minority candidates entering teacher preparation programs. Once minority candidates commit to entering a teacher preparation program, an often times unforeseen barrier exists in the form of standardized professional exams. Licensure exams contain implicit biases which result in teachers of color unable to meet the minimum benchmark in order to gain entrance into teacher preparation programs (Boyd & Lankford, 2008; Tillman, 2004). In addition, teacher preparation programs historically tend to replicate the current demographic qualities of the teaching profession which are White, middle-class, Christian, and female. Techer preparation programs continue to teach the "euro-centric" perspective and do not include the cultural and educational backgrounds of the minority students into consideration.

Minority teachers who choose to attend predominantly White institutions (PWI), tend to encounter various obstacles such as the ideologies of Whiteness and often times racism. In addition, teacher preparation programs fail to adequately prepare teachers of color to negotiate their racial identity within the school context (Andrews et al., 2019; Arai & Kivel, 2009; Phillip, 2011; Villegas & Davis, 2007).

Obstacles not only exist within the teacher preparation programs, but during field and work experiences where pre-service teachers also experience similar challenges. Challenges include racial identity and assimilation, lack of mentors, support, and collaboration with other teachers of color, and lack of respect and voice concerning the curriculum and instruction decisions, and leadership advancement. Teachers of color have reported that they experience racial tensions and aggressions when they do not assimilate or behave in ways that are viewed as White (Goings & Bianco, 2016). Teachers of color often times role play daily in an attempt to present themselves and shape how Whites interpret their non-White identifies (Goings & Bianco, 2016; Lynn, 2006; Lynn & Parker, 2006). All too often, teachers of color are viewed as "aggressive" or in disapproving views and the negotiation is a difficult balance between the competing loyalties of the individual's culture and those expected in the Whitestream culture that permeates P-12 schools (Gordon, 2002b).

An additional challenge, cited by minority candidates, is the lack of cooperating teachers and mentors who identify as minority as well. Minority candidates felt more comfortable with a minority cooperating teacher, but due to the significant shortage, one was not always available (Scott & Alexander, 2019). This notion is also supported by minority teachers who report a need to collaborate with colleagues and supports with other minority peers and mentors who were culturally similar to them. Strategies to increase recruitment and retention efforts of minority

candidates should focus on support systems, mentoring, and providing a network of fellow minority colleagues.

A final challenge faced by many minorities is the stigma and cultural perspective of the teaching profession. The image of the teacher has significantly changed over time and not for the better. What once was a respected and revered profession is now viewed as low status employment. This negative image has been cited as a deterrent to the profession (Gordon, 1997). Considering the teaching force is predominantly White female, this had led to a significant decrease in respect for the profession among communities of color. The selection criteria for teacher preparation programs and other methods of recruitment continue to perpetuate the White stereotypes of teaching based on the typical teacher as White and middle-class, and in a suburban school setting.

Not only do minority teachers face greater barriers and challenges with regards to *entering* the teaching all together, but for those that do overcome these obstacles, they continue to face significant challenges within the school, which ultimately leads to attrition. Rates of attrition are approximately 50% higher in high needs, predominantly minority schools (Lau, Dandy, & Hoffman, 2007). Similar to the pre-service teachers, in-service teachers experience institutional racism, discrimination, and negative interactions with their White counterparts (Basit, McNamara, Roberts, Carrington, Maguire, & Woodrow, 2007). In addition, teachers of color are less likely to advance to positions of administration, except in instances of what Miller refers to as "White sanction" (Miller, 2020). White sanction is the practice of advancement of teachers of color, but only with the support of and endorsement of White colleagues. In addition, teachers of color report less supportive and less culturally competent leadership that does not value their input or voice concerning curriculum development (Ingersoll & May, 2011b).

Current Recruitment and Retention Efforts

Research has highlighted several areas for promoting teacher diversity and increasing the pool of minority candidates in the teaching workforce. Researchers have evaluated state policies promoting teacher diversity and found the majority of the states currently have recruitment polices in place specifically targeting racial and ethnic minorities teachers (Gagnon & Mattingly, 2015; Gist, Bianco, & Lynn, 2019). The analysis revealed that states use five categories of policy strategies: financial incentives, government mandates, specific recruitment programs, recruitment centers, and alternative certification programs. The most common policy used by states were financial incentives in the form of scholarships, grants, and loan forgiveness programs. One specific strategy is the use of forgivable loans where the candidates agree to spend three years or more teaching within the state, hard-to-staff schools, and/or in a specific subject area. It is noted that the majority of states with financial incentive policies are targeted for candidates of color as recipients (Clewell, 2000).

In response to this growing need, several workforce initiatives were created and designed to recruit teachers of color into the teaching profession. By the late 1980s, two important organizations, the Carnegie Task Force on Teaching as a Profession and the National Commission for Excellence in Teacher Education, began the initial stages of creating alternative pathways and special programs to recruit teachers of color (Bowling & Ball, 2018; Ingersoll et al., 2019). In the early 1990s, The Education Commission of the States called for a more comprehensive initiative to significantly expand the pool of candidates of color, not only recruit candidates who were already enrolled in college, but expand recruitment of other possible individuals (Villegas & Clewell, 1998). Several strategies emerged as possible options; teacher cadet programs, two-year and four-year college transfer agreements, paraprofessional growth

options, and financial incentives (sign-on bonuses, scholarships, and loans). As a result, states began instituting policies aimed at increasing the diversity of the teaching force. While minority teachers had increased between 1987 and 2007, the policies and programs aimed at diversifying the teaching force could not keep up with the enormous growth of minority students (Villegas et al., 2012).

In an effort to increase recruitment efforts and attempt to increase the pipeline of minority teachers, several organizations, the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education and the National Collaborative on Diversity in the Teaching Force implemented a wide range of initiatives designed to recruit minority candidates into teaching. These efforts included high school programs aimed at future teachers, collaborating with community colleges and four-year institutions of higher education, career ladders for paraprofessionals, and alternative certification programs (Ingersoll et al., 2019). These strategies have been employed by states as a means of diversifying the teaching workforce such as career ladder options for paraprofessionals and community college agreements, creating centers that oversee and manage efforts related to recruitment, placement and retention of teachers of color, and encouraging the recruitment of teachers of color through alternate routes.

In an effort to expand the literature review to identify current practices for recruitment and retention of teachers in general and to draw additional implications for minority recruitment and retention, an analysis of recent research, both nationally and internationally, on effective overall teacher recruitment and retention polices and strategies was reviewed. These strategies can best be categorized into four domains: teacher preparation programs and routes to licensure, salaries, fringe benefits, and financial incentives, induction support and mentoring, and school working conditions.

Teacher preparation programs are divided into *alternative* and *traditional* pathways. Growing evidence demonstrates that attrition is far higher for those teachers who enter the profession without adequate preparation than for those who are comprehensively prepared (See, Morris, Gorard, Kokotsaki, & Abdi, 2020). First year teachers who feel they were well prepared, are much more likely to stay in the teaching profession than those who feel they were not, thus the quality of the programs are critically important for retention. To reduce barriers to entry and to enable teachers to complete coursework more quickly, alternate routes were created (DeAngelis et al., 2013). While alternate routes can be more appealing to candidates because they offer flexibility in coursework and sequence, when compared to traditional routes to licensure, alternate routes are associated with lower retention rates that those candidates who completed a traditional program (Clewell, 2000; Podolsky et al., 2019).

Teacher's salaries nationwide fall far below that of other professions with commensurate education, certifications, and degrees (Podolsky et al., 2019). While studies have shown that individuals enter the teaching profession out of purely altruistic, and not individualistic, motives there is little debate regarding whether potential teachers are influenced by the availability of better and higher-paying jobs (Shuls & Maranto, 2014). A large body of studies have shown that teachers' salaries can affect the supply of teachers in terms of quality and quantity of individuals preparing to be teachers (Podolsky et al., 2019). For that reason, many states and divisions attempt to compete with salaries of neighboring divisions to attract and retain candidates.

In addition to salaries, other forms of monetary incentives include sign-on bonuses for specific critical shortage areas or hard to staff schools and performance pay (Colson & Satterfield, 2018). Many divisions offer sign-on bonuses to attract teachers for a specific critical shortage area such as special education, math, and/or science areas where there is a severely high

need. This is also true for urban, socioeconomically disadvantaged schools who have high turnover (Strunk & Zeehandelaar, 2011). In addition, performance pay in the form of bonuses for increased student achievement on standardized tests had a positive overall effect on the recruitment and retention of teachers (Hill & Jones, 2020).

Scholarship loans and loan forgiveness have also been shown to increase the recruitment of candidates into a teacher preparation programs as well as increase retention. Scholarship incentives and scholarship loans are provided to candidates who meet specific academic and demographic requirements such as teaching in a high-needs demographic area or teaching area, or identify as a minority candidate (Henry et al., 2012). Candidates are given a scholarship for tuition in exchange for agreement to pay back through teaching service in a specific area for a specified amount of time. While financial incentives appear to be successful for recruitment, they do not improve the retention as teachers typically leave after the loan is forgiven.

Mentoring and teaching induction have also shown to be effective methods for recruiting, but more importantly for retaining teachers. Beginning teachers who were provided with multiple mentoring supports were less likely to transfer to another school or leave teaching altogether and teachers who received induction and mentoring support during the first five years of teaching predicted less teacher migration and attrition (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004; Ronfeldt & McQueen, 2017). Ingersoll and Strong (2011) conducted a critical review of empirical studies on teacher induction and mentoring and found that the majority of studies reviewed provided evidence that supports assistance for beginning teachers had a positive impact on teacher commitment and retention, instructional practices, and student achievement. The most promising forms of mentoring and induction were pairing the new teacher with a mentor teacher in the same teaching area and in close proximity. While mentoring is an important overall support for

all teachers, minority teachers benefit specifically from have minority mentors, and this is a seldom occurrence due to the critical shortage.

The fourth area, and some argue the most important piece of recruitment and retention of quality teachers, is the organizational structure and climate of the school division and school. School climate is the strongest indicator for teacher retention (Hughes, 2012; Wynn et al., 2007). The primary cause of teacher shortages lies in the working conditions of the school. Studies of first- and second- year teachers show the number one reason for the leaving the profession was related to school climate (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003, Wynn et al., 2007). Organizational and administrative barriers contributing to attrition and negative school climate include increased workload, excessive paperwork, lack of adequate planning, school morale, and lack of administrative support and leadership.

An important component of recruitment and retention are current trends in hiring practices for school divisions. An analysis of research reveals several areas of interest with regards to hiring and recruitment practices of diverse candidates. First, human resource officers (HROs) have an important role in diversifying the teaching workforce, but scant research is available regarding their roles in recruiting and hiring diverse teachers (Goings, Walker, & Cotignola-Pickens, 2018). The role of school and district-based leaders is a critical component of the recruitment and hiring process as HROs ensure that diverse candidates are recruited, hired, and given opportunities in particular schools with regards to placements. Current trends in hiring practices and processes reveal that HROs are the first-line, "gate-keeper", of the application process and have direct oversight over the selection, screening, and interview processes (Ingle, Rutledge, & Bishop, 2011; Jacob, 2007; Madkins, 2011).

HROs play a prominent role in recruiting candidates at job fairs and develop and implement policies and procedures that can support or hinder efforts to diversify the workforce (Goings, Walker, & Wade, 2021). Harris, Rutledge, Ingle, and Thompson (2010) found that when making selections to provide a pool of candidates to principals, diversity was not always a primary factor when making hiring decisions. Principals typically prioritized content knowledge, communication and enthusiasm. Due to the significant shortage of teachers in general, HROs and principals are forced to hire the most available candidate, and diversity is not a factor (Papay & Kraft, 2016). While ensuring proper fit and hiring racially diverse teachers is important, due to teacher shortages, and particularly in rural areas, HROs are sometimes put in compromising positions where they have to fill positions with what little availability they have (Goings et al., 2021). An analysis of current hiring practices reveals inconsistencies that can best be described as "moderately decentralized" and can also hinder diverse recruitment practices (DeArmond, Gross, & Goldhaber, 2010; Papay & Kraft, 2016).

While policy makers and practitioners have focused on methods and specific strategies for recruiting and retaining teachers, the teacher shortage continues to grow and even more critically for minority and teachers of color. Recruitment and retention of qualified teaching candidates and perspective teachers is fraught with many challenges and barriers and this is only compounded by the scarcity of minority teachers. Critical Race Theory provides a conceptual framework for the analysis of historical and contemporary barriers and challenges for recruiting teachers of color. Through this lens, policymakers and educational leaders can identify the root causes that have led to the phenomenon as well as identify possible solutions to remedy the shortage.

Utilizing Critical Race Theory as the Conceptual Framework

Critical race theory (CRT) was conceived in the 1970s out of Critical Legal Studies (CLS) to adequately address the effects of race and racism in the justice system (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004). CRT was developed from the work of Derrick Bell, Alan Freeman, and Richard Delgado and focuses directly on the effects of race and racism and hegemonic system of White supremacy. CRT scholars focus heavily on specific principles or tenets of interest of CRT, but a central commonality is the repeated view of racism as systemic, oppressive, and pervasive in reality and policy and is widespread and ingrained in society (Ladson-Billings, 1999; Milner & Laughter, 2015). CRT includes five major tenets: counter-storytelling, permanence of racism Whiteness as a property, interest convergence, and the critique of liberalism (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Taylor, 1998). The first tenet, *counter-storytelling* is a method of telling a story that aims to debunk socially accepted beliefs, premises, and myths, held by the majority (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Counter-storytelling is a method of exposing and challenging normalized ideas, thoughts, and actions that perpetuate racial stereotypes and provides a voice for marginalized and suppressed groups (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004). The second tenet, *the permanence of racism,* is the idea that racism is a permanent component in our society and way of life and infiltrates all political, economic, and social domains. The third tenet, Whiteness as property, holds that Whiteness in education has led to educational inequity through limited or no access to rigorous curriculum such as gifted, honors, or duel enrollment courses for minority students (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). This form of tracking and re-segregation has allowed Whiteness to continue to receive the best public education has to offer while segregating from minority students who are not able to meet selection and admission requirements for these programs. The fourth tenet, *interest convergence*, holds that societal gains made my minority

communities, are only encouraged or accepted by Whites when these gains do not disrupt normalcy (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). These gains are only celebrated when they converge with the self-serving interests of the White population. The fifth tenet of CRT, *critique of liberalism*, includes the beliefs of liberal ideology of colorblindness, the neutrality of law, and incremental change. CRT scholars challenge these beliefs as harmful and discrediting to minority groups who have suffered persecution and racism historically.

Gloria Ladson-Billings and William Tate are credited with introducing CRT to education as a lens with which to view educational racism and phenomenology, calling for the authentic narratives and voice of minorities and posing critical questions regarding education. CRT is an emergent framework in the field of teacher education, recruitment, and retention, and is a powerful framework for synthesizing research regarding minority and teachers of color (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Gillborn, 2015). A synthesis of current research utilizing CRT as a framework reveals many areas of study including preservice programs, teacher education, teacher dispositions, and teacher recruitment and retention, school climate, and policy formation and implementation. In addition, CRT has also been studied along the intersectionality of poverty, race, class, gender, and disability in education.

To gain a comprehensive understanding of how CRT has been utilized as a framework for teacher education, a thorough review of literature was conducted to determine themes within each tenet. The majority of the articles focused on pre-service teachers and teacher preparation programs, followed by in-service teachers and school climate, and lastly how CRT can be analyzed with other factors such as race, gender, disability, and policy. An examination of each tenet reveals the majority of research focused on the concepts *Whiteness as property*, with *interest convergence* as the least utilized component.

Counter-storytelling, or experiential knowledge, by people of color challenge dominant ideologies and knowledge systems based on the White worldviews. CRT is a useful theoretical tool for evaluating minority teacher preparation and supporting minority preservice teachers through counter-storytelling and the permanence of racism (Cook, 2014). Through this lens, educators are encouraged to revise and focus the preservice curriculum based on the narratives and stories of teachers of color. CRT holds that those individuals who understand racism best are not its perpetrators, but those who have lived it (Sleeter, 2017). Emerging research has gathered narratives from minority teacher candidates in predominantly White institutions (PWIs) to provide a context for their voice and lived experiences. While these candidates went into the teaching profession to serve their communities, they all experienced similar challenges in their teacher programs: curriculum and field placements that were not culturally relevant, professors and instructors were not receptive or appearing aloof to the phenomenon, and fear of further isolation by speaking out (Sleeter, 2017). Research supports improvements and revisions to teacher preparation programs and early field experiences and the implementation of policies and practices within schools to improve the retention rates of not only teachers of color, but all teachers. Implications include utilizing the expertise of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) to guide PWIs in decision and policy making concerning curriculum and clinical experiences so candidates can engage in authentic, meaningful practice. Similarly the tendency for multicultural education and diversity courses that are included in teacher preparation programs tend to focus on White needs and not those of minorities (Cook, 2013). The curriculum in teacher preparation programs predominantly were developed by and taught entirely by White faculty and professors, and typically reflect the cultural values and norms of Whitestream (Lander & Santoro, 2017). In order to capture the minority experiences and stories,

it is important that minorities are given respect as preservice teachers and provided the opportunity to expand the content of the curriculum in courses by intentionally incorporating knowledge, experiences, and perspectives of diverse populations. In addition, create a space that encourages critical questioning and active listening and strengthen the pipeline for students of color by improving and enhancing university-school partnerships (Cook, 2013; Sleeter, 2017). It is imperative that the experiential knowledge of those who have authentic stories are heard, but more importantly valued and used to created sustainable changes.

The second tenet of CRT, *Permanence of racism,* holds that racism is systemic and pervasive, and using this as a framework for education policy and analysis reveals that the current education system is not designed for Black students and by extension Black teachers (Sandles, 2020). Racism is deeply entrenched in our "deeply dysfunctional" education system which has historically failed to educate minority children (Sandles, 2020). Racism in education is pervasive and many Black teachers report behaving "White" to avoid persecution (Allen, 2015; White, Woodward, Graham, Milner, & Howard, 2019). Structural and institutional commitments and changes must focus on helping all teachers build consciousness regarding their own identity and the identity of others. This includes challenging long held beliefs such as refusing to acknowledge the racial background of students and teachers and believing that race is irrelevant and does not matter (Milner & Laughter, 2015).

The third tenet of CRT, *Whiteness as a property* was by far the most utilized concept. In public education, Whiteness as property is a symbol of the beneficiaries of education through the value of the property owned, as communities with more valuable property (White individuals) funded schools at higher rates, with more resources, greater access to rigorous curriculum, and funding of elite private schools (Annamma, 2015). In public education, Whiteness as property

has the ability to exclude others from the benefits of Whiteness, and maintaining inequitable distribution of resources, such as zoning of neighborhood schools or admissions into gifted, honors, or dual enrollment programs that historically are predominantly White students. Annamma (2015) examined teacher dispositions with minority students and students with disabilities and found that the constructs "ability" and "innocence" were predominantly viewed more favorably for students who were White. This has great implications for divisions needing to offer professional development and training in theories of race, racism, and inequities. Kohli (2018) analyzed over 200 narratives of urban teachers of color through the lens of Whiteness as a property and found that despite serving majority students of color, the majority of schools operate in a hostile racial climate. Viewed through the lens of Whiteness as property, schools historically and currently have not been structured to serve communities of color. In teacher preparation programs, the majority of candidates and therefore teacher educators are White women, having been taught White curriculum, and received White clinical placements: teacher preparation is a property of Whiteness. Using CRT, Sleeter (2017) identified various structures and processes that perpetuate Whiteness, but are so normalized that they are usually taken for granted and are no surprise.

Interest Convergence, was the least used vehicle for analyzing CRT and education and holds that White individuals support and encourage the interests of minority populations only when it converges and benefits White interests (Milner & Howard, 2013). In addition, White people fear that systemic changes will threaten them in personal ways and interpret gains made of people of color as losses for Whites (Sleeter, 2017). The majority White faculty in teacher preparation programs hold all of the power with regards to how and when curriculum is taught and the process for how new faculty are recruited, hired, and supported. This concept is directly

defined by White interests: White faculty prepare candidates (the majority are White) who become teachers who teach White curriculum with White norms and values. Interest convergence reveals how the racial composition of teacher education faculty and the relationships between teacher education and the rest of the university tend to maintain the status quo, while accommodating only small changes or advances for minorities such as adding a cultural competency course or hiring a minority faculty (Milner & Howard, 2013; Sleeter, 2017).

Critique of Liberalism, or the challenge to the dominant ideology, includes the constructs of color blindness, neutrality, and meritocracy and holds that these concepts inflict harm and continue to perpetuate racial injustices by ignoring race and masking White privilege and power. CRT challenges these ideologies. Colorblind positions of faculty and teachers make it difficult to recognize institutional, systemic, and classroom practices like disproportionate referrals for special education or gifted (Milner & Laughter, 2015). In addition, colorblind conceptions of quality teaching, by failing to account for ways race matters in education, support the continued Whiteness of teacher education (Arai & Kivel, 2009). Furthermore, color blindness refuses to acknowledge the costs and benefits associated with one's racial and cultural identity and offers protection to Whites (Sandles, 2020). With regards to the critical shortage of minority teachers and even more detrimental shortage of male minority teachers, Sandles (2020) reports that the construct of color blindness and meritocracy alleviate White people from confronting the truth regarding the shortage: that Whiteness and racism have excluded these minorities from teacher preparation.

CRT challenges the experiences and narratives of Whites as the normative standard and is grounded in the unique experiences of minorities (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Taylor, 1998). CRT holds that the experiential context of racial inequities is crucial for understanding the

racial dynamics and is grounded in the realities of the lived experiences. Analyzing recruitment and retention of minority teachers through the lens of CRT and specifically through the telling of stories, is a powerful means of challenging the dominant cultural norm of Whitestream. While CRT is growing as an analytical tool with which to evaluate and critique education, only a small amount of research is focused on minority teacher recruitment and retention through the voice of the individual (Kohli, 2008; Kohli, 2012).

Through the counter-*storytelling and counter-narrative* lens of CRT, the importance of the lived experiences of the individuals faced with racial inequitable practices and policies can be uncovered with the ultimate goal of providing policy and practical recommendations for increasing strategies to recruit and retain teachers of color. CRT challenges the experiences and current narratives of accepted racism and the normative standard of Whiteness and Whitestream and provides a voice for the distinctive experiences of people of color (Taylor, 1998). It is through the lens of storytelling with which this study is framed, asserting that the social and experiential context of racial injustice can be best understood through the realities of the lived experiences of division leaders, specifically HROs. HROs are in a prime position to provide critical perspectives on multiple factors including challenges and barriers with recruitment and hiring of diverse teaching candidates.

Kohli (2012) calls for a critical consciousness, based on the works of Paulo Freire, supporting the concept that to create social change people must have a critical consciousness of social inequality and understand their role in that inequality in order to take action and produce change. Supporting this idea through the CRT lens adds value to the experiential knowledge and the power to the individual's story. Educational research utilizing the critical framework, views

the experiences and narratives of people of color when attempting to understand and analyze social injustices (Kohli, 2012; Kohli, 2019).

Summary

In conclusion, since the inception of the seminal work of Gloria Ladson-Billings and William Tate in 1995, *Towards a Critical Race Theory in Education*, critical race theory has become an emergent tool with which to analyze and research the educational injustices in the United States. Topics include the impact of racism on minority student achievement and opportunities, school culture and climate, educational leadership, policy legislation, and teacher preparation and retention. Scholars have investigated the negative impacts on student of color, characteristics of successful schools, the evaluation of teacher preparation program, and research focusing on the recruitment and retention of Black male teachers specifically. The use of CRT narratives adds a pivotal dimension to the purpose of educational research: personal experiences and narratives of challenges diversifying the teaching workforce. While recruitment and retention research is beginning to emerge and focus on the experiences of P-12 students, pre-service teachers, and in-service teachers, much more is needed to add to the breadth and depth of research as a collective repertoire to ultimately create what Marvin Lynn and Laurence Parker (2006) refer to as a critical *race praxis*. Critical race praxis calls on the collaboration of scholars and political and community activists to bring consensus among multiple racial groups to find common ground, lobby, and advocate for improvements in community and schools. While there is growing literature focusing on the perspectives of preservice teachers of color and teacher preparation programs and experiences, minimal research is available regarding the perspectives, lived experiences, and narratives of division leadership (Burciaga & Kohli, 2019; Kohli, 2008; Kohli, 2018; Lander & Santoro, 2017). While there is little denial on the importance and need to

diversity our teaching force, little focus has been on the perspectives of division leaders whose primary role is to recruit and hire teachers of color. HROs can provide insightful perspectives and further research is needed to identify division processes and procedures for recruitment and hiring (Goings & Bianco, 2016; White et al., 2019).

Viewing the recruitment and retention of minority teachers through the critical race praxis lens, requires an investigation of collective experiences. Traditional education research has failed to take into account the concerns of the marginalized groups, and often implements culturally inappropriate methods of investigation and exploration (Parker & Lynn, 2002). In addition, research tends to frame, conduct, and analyze data through the lens of Whiteness, as the intersection of race and qualitative research. If the ultimate goal is recruit and retain teachers of color, additional research and analysis is greatly needed regarding the experiences, perspectives, and perceptions of those responsible for hiring diverse teachers. Narratives are a critical component to provide the necessary context for understanding, feeling, and interpreting the historical and contemporary context of racial injustice in P-12 education (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

CHAPTER 3

Methods

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the research methods selected for this qualitative study and is divided into seven sections. First, the purpose and research questions are described, followed by the methodology and research design. Then, the population and sample are presented, including a description of the sample population and sampling methods. Next, I provide the data collection and data analysis processes of the study. The research ethics and human subject protections are discussed in the following section including the IRB approval process, informed consent process, and strategies used to reduce research bias. The following section describes the instrumentation used and reliability and validity of the instrumentation, and the final section identifies possible limitations of the study and to what extent those limitations may have impacted the results of the study.

Purpose and Research Questions

Human Resource Officers (HROs) are the primary entry point of contact for perspective candidates and play a prominent role in recruitment efforts, establishing hiring timelines, policies and procedures, and finalizing hiring decisions (Goings et al., 2021). HROs are typically the first division representative that candidates encounter during the recruitment initiatives and activities and are often referred to as the "gatekeeper" of employment, responsible for coordinating the application process, screening, and interview selection (Goings, Hotchkins, & Walker, 2019). In addition, HROs have direct oversight of recruitment efforts, screening processes, selection of candidates for interviews, and in many cases the final hiring decisions.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the lived experiences and perspectives of HROs in rural school divisions in a middle Atlantic state, regarding the recruitment and hiring practices of

diverse teachers and how and to what extent these processes support a diverse teaching workforce. By focusing on the perspectives and experiences of HROs, this study sought to provide greater insight into how recruitment and hiring decisions are made and the factors that impact these decisions. In addition to, it is the goal of this study to provide implications to practitioners, educational preparation programs, and division-level leaders, through identifying a structured and systematic means for recruiting and selecting diverse, perspective employees.

HROs are in a unique position which requires a combination of management skills and school-based leadership knowledge and are able to provide perspectives on recruitment and hiring of diverse candidates within their division. An additional point of focus for this study is to study school divisions identified as rural, as rural school divisions tend to have a greater difficulty recruiting and hiring candidates due to geographical and economic factors (Boyd & Lankford, 2008; Holloway, 2002; Little & Miller, 2007). Given the increased focus and importance of diversifying the teaching profession, and the scant research conducted on HROs specifically, it is a critical time to study and consider the perspectives of HROs.

This research study utilized a qualitative phenomenological research design and the following research question were explored:

(1) What are the experiences and perceptions of HROs as it relates to recruitment and hiring practices?

(2) How and to what extent do the recruitment and hiring practice support a diverse teaching workforce?

Methodology and Research Design

A phenomenological qualitative research method was used for this study to investigate the recruitment and hiring practices of HROs in rural school divisions in a middle Atlantic state

through in-depth, semi-structured interviews. A phenomenological research design is the study of a phenomenon from the perspective of the individual (Creswell, 2013). The aim of phenomenological research is to describe accurately the phenomenon of interest (Creswell, 2013). Phenomenological research was first originated with the work of Hurrsel's philosophy of phenomenology, which focuses on the experience itself, and how experiencing something is transformed into consciousness (Cresswell, 2013). Phenomenologists are interested in understanding the world as the individual experiences it *pre-reflectively* (Groenewald, 2004). In addition, phenomenological research focuses on the lived experiences and the essence of a shared experience that is understood through a phenomenon commonly experienced (Groenewald, 2004; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The product of phenomenological research is a composite description that presents the "essence" of the phenomenon, called the essential, invariant structure (Creswell, 2013). The description is the culmination of the experiences investigated.

The primary method of data collection for phenomenological research, and the method selected for this study, was the phenomenological interview. The research design included the following components: selection of interview questions and pilot testing; conducting the interviews; transcribing the interview dialogue; coding and bracketing; and synthesizing and summarizing themes from the raw interview data. In addition to, I identified themes that emerged through the interviews using constant comparisons. Based on the results of the coding and thematic concepts that emerged, I wrote a summary of findings, implications, and recommendations.

Population and Sample

Purposeful sampling was used to identify potential participants and was based on the assumption that the goal of the researcher is to discover an insight from a select sample of "consultants". I located a list of HROs in rural schools divisions from the states' Department of Education website and selected the individuals who were identified and served as the primary HRO or director for the division. The power of purposeful sampling is due to the emphasis placed on in-depth understanding of specific and information rich cases. In this study, the cases are individuals who have lived the experience of the very essence of the investigation, the lived experiences and perspectives of HROs in rural school divisions as it pertains to diversifying the teaching workforce.

Using criterion-based selection, the participants met specific criteria as an HRO, and possessed the experiences related to the phenomenon to be researched. I selected a sample size of 16 to create a comprehensive and rich repository of information. I secured a list of all school divisions identified by the state's Department of Education as "rural" which aligns with the definitions of rural as defined by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2020; NCES, 2022). NCES divides rural into 3 categories: *fringe census,* defined as a rural territory that is less than or equal to 5 miles from an urbanized area, as well as rural territory that is less than or equal to 2.5 miles from an urban cluster; *distant census* defined as a rural territory that is more than 5 miles but less than or equal to 25 miles from an urbanized area, as well as rural territory that is more than 2.5 miles, but less than or equal to 10 miles from an urban cluster; and *remote census* defined as a rural territory that is more than 25 miles from an urbanized area and is also more than 10 miles from an urban cluster. For purposes of this study, I selected 16 school divisions identified as "rural" by the state's Department Education for the 2020-2021 school

year. I organized and numbered each division by average daily membership (ADM), from least to greatest, into the corresponding region and selected the lowest and highest ADM from each region.

Data Collection and Data Analysis

Prior to the interview, I evaluated my own biases, viewpoints, and assumptions. Through this process of *epoch* or bracketing, I bracketed, or set aside my personal views to ensure they did not impact the research process and results. This required a reflection on my part and an analysis of my personal preconceived ideas and beliefs on the research topic. All of my teaching and administrative experiences have been in rural school divisions, therefore, I listed any biases identified to ensure I was cognizant of these biases prior to conducting the interviews.

Introductory emails were sent to the HROs from the 16 rural school divisions selected including background information, purpose of the study, and a request for participation. Once I received confirmation from the participant, I sent an interview poll to select an interview date and time. Once confirmed, interviews were scheduled via zoom for 14 of the interviews and by telephone for two of the interviews. I provided a brief overview of the purpose of the study, interview protocol, and review the ethical considerations and informed consent. I received verbal intent for the participation in the study. After verbal contact was made via phone call, I followed-up with an email summarizing the conversation, the research study, and included the informed consent document for the participants to sign. Four of the HROs did not respond to the interview request and two declined. I selected an alternate school division from the region needed and the next division in the sequence for the six additional participants.

At the onset of the interview, I reviewed the agenda for the interview and I explained that the interviews will be recorded, and asked permission for such, so that the interviews could later

be transcribed. Next, I addressed several important topics: the nature and purpose of the study, the procedures and steps taken to ensure privacy and confidentiality, and I explained the participant's rights regarding informed consent. I asked the participants if they had any questions at the onset prior to beginning the interview. Then, I explained the format of the interview protocol. The first set of questions were demographic in nature, and then were followed by a semi-structure with open-ended questions related to the participants experiences as an HRO with regards to recruitment and hiring of diverse candidates and preparation.

Once consent was obtained, I began with the semi-structured interviews starting with the structured demographic questions, and then leading to the less structured, open-ended questions pertaining to the phenomenon. At the conclusion of the interviews, I asked if the participants had any other information they would like to share pertinent to the study.

After the interview, I saved the audio recordings of the interview to my password protected hard drive with identifying files, and each participant's number. Each interview was assigned a code, with the specific date. After each individual interview, I listened to the audio/video recordings and made notes. These recordings were used to construct transcripts to evaluate themes and concepts that emerged. The audio recording was especially important because it captured the entire conversation and all data components for reference at a later date. Another benefit of listening to the recordings was I was able to make adjustments and improve interviewing skills.

Once the interview was complete, the transcription process began. Verbatim transcription of the recorded interviews provided the best database for analysis and I transcribed the interviews immediately after the conclusion of the interview using an electronic transcription platform. I then read through the transcripts while listening to the audio to ensure items were not

omitted or missed and to ensure consistency. The transcripts and audio recordings were saved in a specific folder by participant name, password protected, and on a computer with ant-virus protection. The format of the interview transcript was structured to enable analysis with the top of the first page listing the identifying information of the participant, date, and time and the remainder of the body of the transcripts included line numbers on the left-hand side of the page. The transcript was single spaced between lines, but double spaced between speakers, and margins were left open on the right-hand side to leave room for taking notes and coding. The interview questions were bolded.

I utilized several versions of field notes; observation notes taken during the interview, theoretical notes to derive meaning during reflection of the interview, and analytical notes, which focused on reminders or summaries of progress reviews. I created a master file for each participant on the computer, with the following items saved within: the informed consent agreement, the field notes, the interview transcriptions, and communication documentation between the participant and the researcher.

Data collection and analysis are simultaneous processes that start with the creation of interview questions to align with the research purposes and goals. The method of data collection used was the semi-structured interview with each participant. Once the interview was conducted per participant and once the transcripts were completed, they were sent to the participants for feedback. The transcripts served as the primary source of data in order for data analysis to take place. Data analysis is the classification and interpretation of linguistic material to make statements about implicit and explicit dimensions and structures of meaning-making in the material and what is represented (Flick, 2009). The much-preferred method for analyzing data in a qualitative study is to complete it simultaneously with the data collection; otherwise, it can

become unfocused and overwhelming. Coding of the interview transcripts was used to organize and manage the data as themes and concepts emerge. In addition, coding was also used in field notes, organized and labeled specifically to match the interview transcripts. A separate hard copy and electronic copy of each were saved independently of the set of data used for data analysis to ensure a backup copy.

The process of horizontalization, which is the process of laying out all of the data for examination and treating the data as having equal weight, ensures all pieces of data have equal value in the initial data analysis state. These data were then organized into clusters or themes and nonrepetitive "constituents of experience" were linked thematically and a full description was completed (Moustakas, 1994). To analyze the data, I utilized the following procedure: bracketing and phenomenological reduction; delineating units of meaning; clustering of units of meaning to form themes; summarizing each interview; validating and modifying where needed; and extracting general and unique themes from all the interviews and making a composite summary. Bracketing and phenomenological reduction is the process of bracketing out the researchers perspectives and opinions that may affect the research study (Creswell, 1998). This is done through repeatedly listening to the audio recording of each interview to understand and appreciate the unique experiences of the research participants. Delineating units of meaning is the process of extracting the concepts that begin to emerge from the researched phenomenon. These concepts are isolated, and redundant units are eliminated. Next, I clustered the units of meaning to form themes, typically formed by grouping units of meaning together, identifying significant topics, and units of significance (Groenewald, 2004). In addition, I summarized each interview, validated and then modified if necessary by returning to the interview and conducting a validity check to ensure the essence of the interview has been captured. As the final piece to

data analysis, I identified themes that emerged through the interviews using constant comparisons. Based on the results of the coding and thematic concepts that emerge, I wrote a summary of results, findings, implications, and recommendations.

Research Ethics and Human Subject Protection

This research study adheres to the APA Ethics Code and standards set forth when conducting research with humans. I provided participants with informed consent documentation and asked that they certify their understanding of the purpose of the study and nature of the interview process. I took all necessary procedures to ensure the safety, security, and confidentially of participants personally identifiable information as well as the data collected.

At the onset of the interview, I reviewed with the participants the informed consent, which includes the following: voluntary consent to participate, informed consent, privacy and confidentiality, the right to withdraw from participation without penalty, and any potential risks associated with the study. In addition, I provided information to the participants on data collection and storage procedures and the steps taken to ensure anonymity and confidentiality, as researchers are prohibited from disclosing confidential and personally identifiable information. Furthermore, no conflicts of interest were identified between myself or any division with which the participant is employed.

Instrumentation, Validity, and Reliability

The instrumentation selected for this study was the semi-structured interview format with a selection of open-ended interview questions guided by the issue and topic explored. Interviews are designed as a process in which a researcher and participant engage in a conversation focused on questions related to a research study and is often referred to as a conversation with a purpose (Dexter, 1970). Interviews seek to understand and gain insight from an individual's thoughts,

beliefs, experiences, and perspectives. The interview is a critical component of qualitative data research. The semi-structured interview questions are a list of questions with some structure, but allow for flexibility based on the interviewee's responses. This format allows the researcher the flexibility to make adjustments during the interview, but also to stay within the scope of the research topic.

The interview questions contain background and demographic questions, opinion and value questions, and knowledge and experience questions to glean responses from participants. In addition, the questions are open-ended to illicit descriptive data regarding the phenomenon and may include probes depending on the responses provided by participants. The interview protocol was pilot tested to determine the validity of the questions and to ensure the questions provided the data necessary to investigate the research questions. In addition to ensuring the validity of the instrument, pilot testing provides feedback from the mock participants regarding clarity, format, and protocol of the interview as well as the quality of the questions.

In qualitative research, the concepts of credibility, transferability, and consistency have begun to emerge within the last 20 years, as the nature and underlying assumptions of qualitative and quantitative research paradigms differ (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). To capture the *trustworthiness* of qualitative research, the following terms and concepts have been substituted; *credibility* is used instead of internal validity, *consistency* is used instead of reliability, and *transferability* is used in place of external validity.

Internal validity is the extent to which the research findings are congruent with reality and ensure the study is measuring what it is intended to. In qualitative research, *credibility* is a more appropriate measure, as a researcher can never fully capture the "reality" as one of the underlying assumptions of qualitative research is its multidimensional and ever-changing

dynamic (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In order to increase credibility, I immersed myself and engaged in the data collection fully, to the point of saturation. Once I began to observe and note similar responses, patterns, and themes emerge from the data, I knew saturation had occurred when no new information was presented to counter. A second method for ensuring credibility was to *member check* and utilize respondent validity. Once I finalized the analysis of the data gleaned from the interviews, I shared the preliminary findings with a sample of my interviewees to ensure the accuracy of the data has been captured with no misinterpretations, from the information provided in the interviews. This process ensured I had captured the phenomenon intended and was used to evaluate whether my biases and perceptions influenced or skewed the data.

Reliability refers to the extent to which research findings can be replicated, while this is problematic for qualitative research studies, a more appropriate measure is to assess whether the results were consistent with the data collected. Methods I used to increase consistency were an audit trail and peer examination. I created an audit trail to capture the processes and procedures for data collection, identification of themes and concepts, and reflections, questions, and decisions made regarding the analysis of the data. In addition, I sought a preliminary peer review from colleagues to assess whether the conclusions were appropriate for the context of the study.

External validity measures the extent to which the finding of one study are generalizable to other situations. In qualitative research, transferability more appropriately measures the concept of generalizability to identify other applications of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). These applications, or *extrapolations,* are speculations of the applicability of the findings to other similar situations (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). To increase the transferability of this study, I created rich, thick descriptions to capture the interview dialogue.

Limitations

Possible limitations of the study include the sample population, as the sample selected was based on the ADM of each division. I originally selected the smallest and largest for each region and then subsequent divisions in descending order of ADM. The population may not be representative of other rural divisions with smaller or larger populations in the same region or state. I did not take into account previous administrative experience or years of experience of the HROs selected as this may have impacted the overall procedures or processes for recruitment depending on the varying employment experiences of each HRO. Additionally, the sample selected did not account for the ethnicity of the HROs and HROs who identify themselves as minority may employ different methods for recruitment and hiring. While I took every precaution to ensure that my own personal biases and perspectives did not influence the interview process, my experiences and knowledge on the topic prior to conducing the study did guide my selection of the conceptual framework and methodology.

CHAPTER 4

Findings

The purpose of this study was to investigate the lived experiences and perspectives of HROs in rural school divisions in a middle Atlantic state, regarding the recruitment and hiring practices of diverse teachers and how and to what extent these processes support a diverse teaching workforce. This study sought to understand the structural and cultural barriers within the school division that support or hinder diverse hiring. This chapter will describe the data collected, organized, and analyzed, the characteristics of the HROs interviewed and their respective school divisions, and themes that emerged from the data.

This research study utilized a qualitative phenomenological research design and the following research question were explored:

(1) What are the experiences and perceptions of HROs as it relates to recruitment and hiring practices?

(2) How and to what extent do the recruitment and hiring practices support a diverse teaching workforce?

Participants

HROs were interviewed and described their perspectives through their lived experiences as an HRO in a rural school division in a middle Atlantic state. The participants were recruited equally from eight regions in a middle Atlantic state: South Central, North Central, South Eastern, South Western, North Eastern, North Western, Northern Plains, and Southern Plains. Six of the original 16 participants did not participate, two declined and four did not respond to the invitation. Subsequently, I selected six additional participants to ensure equal representation from the eight regions (two from each region) with a total of 16 participants. The participants

were recruited from rural school divisions as defined by the state's Department of Education and ranged in age from 31-65 with various levels of background and experience. The majority of the school divisions have a White teaching majority with only one division have the majority of non-White teachers. The majority of the HROs were natives of the division they currently work in or natives of an adjacent division. The demographics of the HROs include four Black females, two Black males, six White females, and four White males. Table 1 provides an overview of the study's participants and the division's teaching diversity in terms of percentage of non-White teachers.

Table I

Participant Overview

Participant	Division Teaching Diversity	Region	Years in HRO Position	Years in Education	Route to HRO	Race	Gender
Ms. Raye	9%	South Central	14	14	C	B	F
Ms. Alexander	10%	North Western	4	27	D	B	F
Ms. Scott	8%	Southern Plains	1	21	D	B	F
Ms. Collin-Werth	82%	Northern Plains	3	25	D	B	F
Mr. Samuel	14%	Southern Plains	5	19	D	B	M
Mr. Alfred	12%	South Western	7	26	D	B	M
Ms. Alan	4%	South Central	29	35	C	W	F
Ms. Gerrard	17%	North Central	2	18	D	W	F
Ms. Froland	6%	South Eastern	2	21	D	W	F

Ms. Layne	20%	North Eastern	7	15	C	W	F
Ms. Luther	10%	South Western	5	35	D	W	F
Ms. Pearl	7%	South Eastern	2	2	C	W	F
Mr. Carlton	9%	North Central	4	26	D	W	M
Mr. Redmond	8%	North Eastern	20	35	C	W	M
Mr. Jansen	15%	Northern Plains	4	15	D	W	M
Mr. Piper	3%	North Western	32	36	D	W	M

Note. C = Corporate; D = Division; B = Black; W = White; F = Female; M = Male

Purposeful sampling and criterion-based selection was used to select the participants. The power of purposeful sampling is due to the emphasis placed on an in-depth understanding of specific and information rich cases. I located and identified a list of HROs in rural schools divisions from the state's Department of Education website who were identified and served as the primary HRO or director for the division. The participants met specific criteria as an HRO, and possessed the experiences related to the phenomenon to be researched. I selected a sample size of 16 to create a comprehensive and rich repository of information. In this study, the cases were individuals who have lived the experience of the very essence of the investigation; the lived experiences and perspectives of HROs in rural school divisions as it pertains to recruitment and hiring practices of diverse teaching candidates.

I utilized semi-structured interviews using open-ended questions to gain a greater understanding of the HROs experiences and perspectives as it relates to recruitment and hiring of diverse teaching candidates. These data capture each participant's individual perspective based on their experiences as an HRO and composite themes were drawn from this research. The semi-structured interviews provided an overall framework of questions, while still allowing flexibility for participants to elaborate and expand on specific topics of interest. The interviews lasted approximately 45-60 minutes each and were conducted using telephone and Zoom. The interviews were recorded and transcribed for additional analysis.

Overview of Analysis

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to investigate and explore the experiences and perspectives of HROs as it relates to recruitment and hiring practices and how and to what extent the division's recruitment and hiring practices support a diverse teaching workforce. This study sought to capture the experiences of the phenomenon based on the

perspectives of the participants in order to gain a greater breadth and depth of understanding. The interview protocol was aligned to the research questions and pilot tested to ensure validity. Once the interviews were completed and transcribed, I reviewed the video and/or audio concurrently with the transcription to create rich, thick descriptions of the data to prepare for the analysis. Phenomenological reduction in the process of investigating and understanding the phenomenon's meaning while allowing the overall themes to emerge organically. Utilizing phenomenological reduction, delineating and clustering units of meaning, and summarizing each interview, I created a composite summary of the analysis to include a summary of individual interviews, as well as a synthesis of themes that emerged from the data.

Human Resource Officers' Interview Summaries

HRO Ms. Raye

HRO Ms. Raye came from a corporate industry in the human resources field as a human resource officer specialist. As a Black female, diversity has always been an integral and important component of her job and responsibilities, particularly in a predominantly White school division. Coming from corporate, and having no experience as a public school teacher or administrator prior to her role as an HRO, Ms. Raye views recruitment and hiring practices through a much different lens. "I think with my background in corporate, the processes for hiring are much more structured and in place, not like when I first came to my division. I believe my experience in corporate has helped me have a greater sense of equity and need for equity when we recruit." Recruitment of diverse candidates is a priority of the division and senior leadership, and the division has created and implemented a division wide recruitment plan which includes specific steps for recruiting diverse candidates. Although the demographics of the division are the majority White students, Ms. Raye stated, "I can count on two hands the number of minority

teachers in our division and it is definitely not representative of the whole [student population]."

Ms. Raye believes the challenges with recruitment and ultimately hiring diverse candidates are

indicative of the community that houses the schools. "When I think about our division, I don't

think of it as being very diverse and where there is diversity, that pocket of the population,

they're not teachers." When asked her perspectives on why diverse candidates do not select their

division for employment, she recalled one candidate who was offered a position. "The candidates

honestly said, it's uncomfortable to say, they didn't feel welcome or wanted by the community

because of the lack of diversity. I have made offers to diverse candidates, some of whom I really

believed would accept, but when they declined I always try to ascertain the reason. A few said

they didn't feel that they belonged in a majority White community and majority White teaching

staff, they wanted to be among more diversity and so they took jobs in divisions that had that

make-up."

HRO Ms. Alexander

Ms. Alexander's career path started as a teacher and reading specialist, she then worked

as assistant principal, and principal in the same school that she taught. After serving as a

principal for seven years, she then became Director of Human Resources. She loved teaching and

serving as the assistant principal and then principal and was not looking for career advancement

beyond that. As a principal and Black female in a predominantly White school division, she

recognized the benefits and need for diverse teachers and the consequences of not. This was a

primary focus when she hired for her vacancies within her school and her efforts did not go

unnoticed. "Although the division has more White students as whole, my school was more

diverse. I seemed to have better luck hiring Black teachers and I believe it was because they saw

that diversity in the leadership here. I would go to the recruitment fairs and have a lot more

Black teachers come to my table and not as much with the White principals. Personally I think it's a culture issue, they [Black teachers] don't feel that they fit in with the culture of a majority White school, but if they see color in the school's leadership, I think they sends a strong message that the division supports diversity and diverse leadership. I think that's why I have been good at hiring Black teachers because I am Black myself." Her superintendent approached her with the opportunity to serve as the HRO for the division when the position became vacant through a retirement. "He came to me said, 'we need you to lead our human resources department and strategic recruiting process,' I wasn't looking to move from my principal role, but I felt I could have a greater impact on students through hiring the best candidates for all of our students."

As a native of the division, she was cognizant of the challenges with recruiting diverse candidates, as she had experienced these challenges in her prior positions. Ms. Alexander's division borders a larger division where they tend to lose candidates. She believes one primary reason is that larger, more suburban and urban divisions with cities and a "night life" are more attractive to younger teachers just graduating from college, in addition to the competitive salaries that smaller divisions cannot match. Specifically with diverse candidates, she believes larger divisions appear to have more diversity and that it is a "powerful recruitment tool." Prior to her taking the HRO role, the division did not have centralized recruitment or hiring practices, or a division wide recruitment plan. Since her leadership, they have created a strategic recruitment plan with diversity as a primary focus. When asked about the challenges with recruiting diverse candidates, she reported that, "Our diversity is not shown in the teaching staff at all, we just do not have the candidate pool to choose from, we wish we did, but we don't." One strategy that she began implementing is the use of recruitment videos illustrating their diversity. "I don't have the data to prove it yet, but I believe this will lead to an increase is diverse applicants."

HRO Ms. Scott

Ms. Scott is a Black female who was strategically recruited to serve in her role. Ms. Scott is a native of the division and started teaching in the same school she served as an assistant principal and then principal. As a principal in a predominately White school division, with minimally diverse teachers, she was the only Black administer within the entire division. Recognizing the lack of diversity within the division, the superintendent approached her to lead a Diversity and Equity taskforce with the goal of recruiting and hiring diverse candidates. "He reached out to me during the summer of George Floyd, and said, 'we really need to kind of circle back around and look at what we're doing for equity'. The equity lead for the district was of course, a Caucasian lady, and he said, you know, 'if we really want to take a peek behind the curtain, we really need to have somebody who's leading it who can give us some perspective'. Once I took on the role, I started breaking down the data and I realized we had some schools with no one of color teaching, which was very eye opening." Ms. Scott noted several other challenges with recruiting diverse candidates including principal autonomy with hiring and school boards that do not prioritize diversity or recognize its importance. "Our school board is predominantly White and they do not see the value in hiring diversity." Ms. Scott reported researching diversity hiring trends nationally and stated that, "Color recruits color and that really resonated with me. I truly saw how people flocked to me when I went to our recruitment fairs." Ms. Scott continued as a principal and led the Diversity and Equity Task Force which included teachers, administrators, parents, and community members. After two years, the superintendent asked that she transition into human resources to serve as interim HRO, which ultimately lead to a permanent position as HRO. Ms. Scott continues to lead the task force, but has noted challenges including community and school board buy-in and support, and restructuring the

procedures for hiring to include a more structured approach for all principals to utilize. She reported that there is inconsistencies between principals hiring and one of her primary goals is to create division-wide recruitment and hiring practices.

HRO Ms. Collin-Werth

Ms. Collin-Werth is also a native of her division and began her career as a teacher, assistant principal, truancy officer, and then principal and has served in her current role as Director of Human Resources for 3 years. The school division is considered diverse with over 75% of Black students and approximately 10% Hispanic. When asked what strategies does the division implement to recruit and hire diverse candidates, she stated, "What is your definition of diversity? I believe that's a key question and an important piece to recognize that diversity is different for everyone, some schools may have more Hispanic, or White, or less Black, but I think we need to define diversity, what is means for us and the benefits of it." For Ms. Collin-Werth, diversity means recruiting and hiring more White teachers. Ms. Collin-Werth reported that it is difficult to attract White candidates to their division because it is so significantly diverse and White teachers tend to not apply or accept teaching offers from their division. "The majority of our teachers are from the division and grew up here, those that are White were born here and stayed. It is hard to attract White teachers who aren't from here, but the ones who are here stay." Characteristics she looks for in a teacher are predominantly, "Are they a good fit and do they care about kids? Diversity honestly is not the primary factor for us because we are so diverse already. I do think we need more White teachers to be balanced, but when I talk to my colleagues in other divisions they have the opposite problem. I think some of the reasons White teachers don't apply here is the same as why Black candidates don't apply to mostly White schools. I think it has a lot to do with the welcoming piece, you know do they feel welcome by the opposite

race, it can be intimidating. Do they see others like them, will they fit it, and will they be discriminated against and treated differently? I think these are all factors, you know that teachers look at when selecting a job. And it's hard to counter that, I have had a really hard time recruiting White teachers, they just don't want to come to a low-income, mostly Black school and the ones that do either aren't certified or they leave."

HRO Mr. Samuel

Mr. Samuel also began as a teacher and then became an assistant principal in a smaller neighboring division. He had an opportunity to apply and was hired as the principal of a high school. He served in this capacity for 10 years before transitioning to Director of Support Services which includes human resource responsibilities 5 years ago. "In a small division you have many responsibilities and human resources is only one of my roles, but one that I take great pride in and one that I take very seriously." Mr. Samuel is a Black male and as a teacher and building level administrator he witnessed the scarcity of Black men in education and has made this a priority for their division. "Black kids need to see Black teachers and especially our males who need good, solid role models to show them how to be successful in school and build strong character." The school is 57% Black and 36% White, with a small percentage of Hispanic, but the teaching staff does not reflect the diversity of the students. "Our division did not have a strategic recruitment pan and that was one of the things I tackled when I first started. I had heard about recruitment programs with colleges that focus on Black males, and wanted to get involved with that, also I wanted to reach out to our Black colleges and partner with them on recruiting some diverse candidates into our division. I was able to make some connections and talk to the colleges around us. We are in the process of creating a cohort of Black males. I don't have hard data, but I think these are steps in the right direction, but we have a long way to go." Mr. Samuel

notes challenges with the pool of applicants and that COVID has significantly impacted their recruitment efforts for all candidates, not just diverse candidates. "There aren't diverse applicants, I may have a few here and there, but overall Black teachers and Black men are very, very hard to get applicants from. I would hire them if they would apply, but they just aren't there."

HRO Mr. Alfred

Mr. Alfred is a native of his school division and began his teaching career as a high school teacher and coach. "I knew I was the minority because I was a minority growing up here, there weren't very many Black teachers to begin with, much less Black men. I can't think of a Black male teacher that I had in school, but that's one of the reasons I went into teaching because I knew I would make a difference, or I hoped I did anyway." Mr. Alfred had an opportunity to serve as Director of Technology and Facilities after serving as assistant principal at his high school and then transitioned into the role of Human Resource Officer 7 years ago. The division is approximately 60% White, but the demographics of the teaching force do not align. The division is small with less than 2000 students and the principals have complete autonomy when selecting and hiring candidates. "I have been trying to transition to a more central system of recruiting and hiring, but have faced some challenges as this is how it's always been, you know, living in a small town and you hire who you know, not necessarily because they are the best candidates, and I'm not saying diverse candidates are always the best or most qualified, but they do deserve at least a chance to apply. The principals have always had freedom to interview and hire who they choose and they just give our office the names and we do the background, licensure check and so on, but we don't necessarily have a pool to choose from. I think we need some consistent practices across the schools."

HRO Ms. Alan

Ms. Alan is a White female is a predominantly White division (approximately 80% White and 6% Black) and has served as the Human Resources Director for the last 5 years. Ms. Alan started in a corporation as an administrative assistant and then began working for the division as the licensure specialist for the division. When the HRO retired, she began in that role. Serving in this capacity, she admits that the division does not have a recruitment plan. With less than 4000 students, the division is small and rural, but in close proximity to several major suburbs. Ms. Alan cited losing teachers to more suburban, urban localities as the greatest challenge they face with recruitment and retention of diverse candidates. Ms. Alan reported that it is difficult to recruit to their division, "because the division is predominantly White and we don't have much diversity, so we don't see a lot of diversity in our applicant pool. I don't think minority candidates want to work and teach in a division where they don't see teachers like them. Maybe they feel like they won't be supported or mentored, but I do think it's a factor. I have talked with candidates over the years and minority candidates tend to get better offers in the city and that's where they want to be. It is a shame because if we can get them here, they will stay, they will see the benefits to working in a small community with a family feel, but we have to get them here first and that's the challenge."

HRO Ms. Gerrard

Ms. Gerrard is a White female is a small, rural school division with less than 1000 students. The student demographics are 56% White and 25% Black and 9% Hispanic. Ms. Gerrard is a native of the school division and started her career as a school counselor, then assistant principal, principal, and now currently Director of Human Resources. Ms. Gerrard has been in this role since COVID and explained, "I have no idea what this position is supposed to

be like normally outside of a pandemic." Ms. Gerrard's school is so small that the coordination of recruiting and hiring is entirely her responsibility. The principals do have input, but she recruits and provides the pool of applicants to the principals for review. When asked about whether her division supports diverse recruitment and hiring, she report that she believed they did not, and noted that the majority of their applicants are White female. "We are making adjustments to our recruitment and have been more purposeful with our recruiting such as going to HBCU job fairs and making those connections. We also do have a recruitment plan that we are the process of rewriting because it doesn't address diversity, but it is six years old, and schools are much different now, very outdated plan. One recruitment method we have used is to take our diverse staff with us when we recruit because I think that sends the message that diversity is important and you are welcome in our division. It is tough in really small division because teachers haven't really ever heard of our division and it's hard to put us on the map." When asked about the greatest challenge they face with recruitment and hiring of diverse candidates, Ms. Gerrard reported that the pool of candidates has decreased significantly, especially since COVID, and that it is very hard to recruit young teachers to the area because it is so rural. "We have one stop-light and two gas stations. Unless you are from here, it is really hard to convince outsiders that we are great place to work. That's why we have really focused on promoting within as well. Folks that are already aides or substitutes that are from our area and want to be teachers, we try to find a way for them to do that. Also our recruitment materials we have tried be purposeful and make them include diversity. You aren't just selling the division and school, you are selling the community. If they [diverse teachers] don't see themselves living here, there is no way they will come teach."

HRO Ms. Froland

Ms. Froland is a White female in a predominantly White school division, with approximately 6% Black students and 9% Hispanic. Ms. Froland is a native of the division and has been with the division for over 20 years. She began her education career as a teacher, then assistant principal, principal, and then Special Education Director. She had an opportunity to serve as the Human Resources Director and has been in that role for a little over two years. She reported that the structure for recruitment and hiring is centralized, with her office responsible for working with the principals, posting vacancies and then selecting a pool for interviews. She provides the pool of candidates to principals with which to select for interviews. Ms. Froland reported that their division does have a strategic recruitment plan of which diversity is mentioned, but not acted upon. She does not consider the division diverse. She reported the teacher demographics are not proportionate to the student demographics with regards to diversity, but she didn't feel that was a hindrance on their education. "We have a recruitment plan, but we don't address diversity because diversity is not really a factor for us, we have great teachers regardless of their race and ethnicity and they teach all students with that same level of quality regardless of the children's race. Our number one challenge is the pool of candidates doesn't exist at all, not like it used to be. We are fortunate to be nearby to several colleges and we used to go to job fairs where teachers were lined up for miles, but that just isn't the case anymore. I think COVID impacted this sure, but I saw this problem before COVID. I think it is hard for all smaller division to recruit and hire for any teaching position right now, without focusing on diversity, which just make it's more difficult."

HRO Ms. Layne

Ms. Layne is a White female is a school division with approximately 54% White and 22% Black, and 15% Hispanic. The school division is one of the larger divisions out of this data

set with less than 6000 students. Ms. Layne came from a corporate industry and did not begin her career in education. She worked as a human resource specialist where her primary responsibilities were recruiting, hiring, and onboarding. She transitioned into education 8 years ago and has served in this capacity ever since. She reported the division does have a strategic recruitment plan with an emphasis on diversity. The structure of the recruiting and hiring is centralized to her department where they are responsible for posting vacancies and screening candidates prior to principals conducting interviews. When asked about strategies their division employs to increase diverse teaching staff, she said their goal is to reach all candidates and "sell" their division. "It is very difficult in a smaller division who is surrounded by two larger divisions with larger salaries. "It is hard to compete with larger divisions where minorities aren't the minority. I do think we focus and have heavily tried to recruit diverse candidates, but the applicants are not there, they walk right by us at job fairs and to the other tables of larger divisions. I think the biggest challenge is showing how our community is welcoming to minorities. I don't think minorities feel like this is a great place to live because we just don't have the diverse demographics." When asked what strategies are needed to increase diversity recruitment and hiring, she mentioned partnerships with local community colleges to recruit high school students with a two-plus-two program where they provide tuition assistance. She also reported that grow-your-own programs have been successful, "A lot of our diversity lies in our paraprofessionals and many want to go back to school to become a teacher so we work with them on applying to the community college and providing them with tuition support and mentorship."

HRO Ms. Luther

Ms. Luther is a White female in a small rural school division with less than 2000 students, and 83% White student population. Ms. Luther has 35 years of education experience as a guidance counselor, principal, Director of Instruction, and Director of Human Resources. The teaching demographic is predominantly White with only "a few" Black teachers that she was able to recite by name. Ms. Luther reported that although the teaching demographics are mostly White females, her superintendent and school board have prioritized diversity recruitment for years, even before COVID. Although not included in the division wide comprehensive plan, the division does have a recruitment policy and diversity is a component. "Our superintendent feels very strongly that diversity is beneficial to all students and this has been a focus since she joined us a few years ago. One thing we have done was reach out to HBCUs across the state and even out of state to schedule visits so we can come talk to their candidates about our division, we also reach out to divisions in our regions that are larger and in more cities and see if they have candidates that may want to come to our division. I would say that hiring teachers right now in general is such a challenge, finding good quality teachers, but it is also difficult to find diverse candidates because the applicant pool is just not there. It's not a question of whether we would hire them, it is just that they aren't applying and it's hard to get them here."

HRO Ms. Pearl

Ms. Pearl is a White female who worked in a corporate industry for over 20 years in the human resources area before taking a job as the Director of Human Resources in a small, rural division with less than 3000 students. She has served in this role for a little over two years. The division demographically is divided approximately equal with White and Black students, but the teaching staff is "mostly all White female and some minority teachers." The division has a strategic improvement plan which does identify diverse recruitment and hiring as a priority and

since she began in this position, they have begun centralizing the recruitment, hiring, and on-boarding of candidates. "I started right before COVID hit, but prior to COVID it was the very disconnected and not a lot of consistency with recruiting and hiring. Principals could interview and hire who they wanted and only once they made their final determination was our office involved. We have started transitioning, you know how transitioning goes, to our office selecting the candidates for interviews after we do an initial screening, the plan is to then provide the principals candidates they can choose from to interview. I think this will increase our consistency and especially with what we are looking for in candidates to make sure it aligns with our division strategic plan." She reported they are focused on recruiting diverse candidates and she is in the beginning stages of launching a minority recruitment campaign. "It is a priority for me to push candidates that will bring some new talent, new perspective into the workforce. So I see it as my responsibility to drive as much diversity to that application portal as possible so the principals don't have any way to control that one way or the other. I have direct oversight over the pool and then the principals can do the rest. This consistency is key I think and something we haven't had before." When asked the most significant challenges for recruiting diverse candidates, she reported that it is just hard to find good teachers overall. "We have to do a better job of matching our teaching demographics to our student population, all students deserve to see themselves as a teacher, not just White females, it's kind of funny, you know men are a minority too. I do think we are on the right track, we have a lot of work to do, but we are focused and dedicated to diversifying our schools."

HRO Mr. Carlton

Mr. Carlton began his career in education as teacher in a neighboring small, rural school division and then became a principal with in the division before taking a job as Director of

Special Education, he served in this role for many years before applying for his current position as Director of Human Resources. With his rich background in special education, he knew diversity and equity would play a large role in his new position. "As a special education director, you are constantly advocating for the rights of your students, this is very similar for me with regards to diversity within education and the need for diverse teachers in our schools. Mr. Carlton is a White male in a division that is approximately 18% Black students and 10% Hispanic. Mr. Carlton reported a growing Hispanic population, but predominately White student and teacher body. Mr. Carlton reported that the division does have a recruitment plan which includes diversifying the teaching workforce. "Prior to COVID, we created a Diversity and Inclusion committee which is made up of teachers, administrators, parents, community members, college faculty, and school board members. Our superintendent had a vision to create a committee to begin work on strategically planning how to actively recruit diverse candidates to our division because we were really struggling in that area. The groundwork was laid, but then COVID happened and our efforts were put on hold because at the time we were just trying to recruit *any* candidate. Now that we have opened up more, I have been actively attending HBCU teaching fairs, but quite frankly the pool of candidates are not just not what they used to be." Mr. Carlton notes that the challenges he faces as a small, rural division, "Candidates just don't want to come to the country, if you aren't from here, you aren't really going to come here. There isn't any business or industry to bring young teachers. It is a great place to raise a family, but not for young single adults who want a Target and Starbucks. We need to really sell the community in order to sell the division, it isn't just a division diversity problem, it is a community issue too and we need them to help us solve it."

HRO Mr. Redmond

Mr. Redmond did not follow traditional education pathway to becoming an administrator. He came from higher education before going back to school to get his doctorate in higher education. He held various administrative positions in higher education before he landed in the human resources field. He started in his division 20 years and has held the same position ever since. The division is small and rural with under 4000 students and he reportedly "wears many hats." "Somedays I am a bus driver, some days I substitute and other days I am the Director of Transportation." When asked about the division's recruitment and hiring practices, he reported that they did not have a strategic recruitment plan, nor did they have any initiatives to hire diverse candidates. Mr. Redmond is a White male is a division with 92% White students. "It is great to have diverse teachers, but that is not our primary focus, we are focused on getting good teachers first regardless if they are diverse or not. We want good teachers and it's hard to get good teachers to come to a rural division anyway, much less worry about if they are diverse. I don't care what color they are as they are good and treat kids good, that's our main priority. It doesn't matter if you are White, Black. So diversity isn't really a factor for us."

HRO Mr. Jansen

Mr. Jansen served in the human resources department at a neighboring suburban division for 13 years prior to his current role with a small, rural school division with under 2000 students. Mr. Jansen began as a teacher and then assistant principal in a large urban division before teaching in the suburban division. As a result Mr. Jansen has a breadth of experience in multiple divisions and brought to his current role as Director of Human Resources, a wealth of experience with regards to recruitment and hiring of diverse candidates. Mr. Jansen, a White male in a division with approximately 45% Black and White students equally, but not an equal proportion to the teaching force, developed the division-wide strategic recruitment plan to increase diversity

within the division. "When I started here, I asked and I looked and there was a recruitment plan, but it hadn't been revised in like 10 years and it was really just goals, such as, we will recruit the most highly qualified, we will be fully staffed, etc. The plan didn't address how we were going to recruit or on-board candidates and it didn't specifically address the diversity at all, there was no mention of diversity or anything with diverse teachers. I started having conversations with the superintendent who was also new and we put together a diversity team to help us draft goals and action steps to accomplish. We met monthly, but then COVID derailed all of our efforts. We were at a point where we needed candidates, *any* candidates. I think COVID has pushed back our efforts with diversity and I think we are just now seeing it resurrect." When asked what the most significant challenge is with regards to recruitment and hiring, Mr. Jansen reported, "Hands down the single greatest challenges is there are so few candidates in the pipeline who want to become teachers." When asked about what strategies have worked, Mr. Jansen reported that word of mouth and personal contact has been one of the best ways to recruit, "I can't just post it and wait, to have to get out there, networking, the personal connection, we are marketing our community just as much as the division."

HRO Mr. Piper

Mr. Piper has been the Human Resources Director for over 20 years with a small rural division with less than 1600 students. Prior to serving in this role, Mr. Piper was a high school teacher. During Mr. Piper's tenure as Human Resources Director, he has observed, "education swing from pendulum to another." Mr. Piper a White male in a majority White division, reports that diversity is important to the division, "but that is not the only factor we look for. We certainly want diverse candidates to apply and join our team, but they have to be a good fit and have the quality characteristics we are looking for. The first priority is that they are certified, or

can be certified, and are a good teacher. We aren't looking at race or ethnicity as a determining factor, we look at everything, the whole person, what kind of person they are, what kind of references that received, do they care about kids and want to build relationships with kids. We are fortunate to have started the year with minimal vacancies and we are actively recruiting now." When asked if he felt his division supported the recruitment and hiring of diverse candidates, he readily said yes and confirmed the division did have a recruitment plan which outlines methods for recruiting and hiring diverse candidates. He explained that word of mouth is the best method for recruitment. When asked what the greatest challenge is with regards to recruitment and hiring of diverse candidates, Mr. Piper reported that the pipeline of candidates wanting to go into the teaching profession has decreased and that the pool of diverse candidates is almost non-existent. "It is really hard to recruit diverse candidates when none apply to your division, you may have a few here and there, but the pool of candidates is zero, zilch. One strategy we have implemented with surrounding divisions is sort of a consortium where we share candidates. If I have an applicant who is endorsed in say, Math, but I don't have a need for that teacher, I will share my list of applicants with my neighbors in the region in case they may need them, and vice versa. We are all in this shortage together and helping each other is critical. I have hired several candidates through our consortium and it's a wonderful partnership."

Summary of Findings and Identification of Themes

A synthesis of the 16 interviews with HROs revealed the following six themes: (1) pathway to current HRO position, (2) the structure of current recruitment hiring practices, (3) factors and characteristics of candidates the division's prioritize, (4) challenges of recruiting and hiring diverse candidates, (5) successful strategies for recruiting and hiring diverse candidates,

and (6) strategic initiatives needed to increase recruitment and hiring of diverse candidates. Table

2 illustrates the themes and subthemes generated from the research.

Table 2

Themes and subthemes

Pathway to current HRO position

    (a) Corporate employment

    (b) Educational background and experience as a teacher

Structure of current recruitment and hiring practices

    (a) Centralized

    (b) Decentralized

    (c) Semi-Centralized

Characteristics of candidates the division prioritizes

    (a) Ability to build relationships

    (b) A "good fit"

    (c) Soft skills, communication skills

    (d) *Diversity*

Challenges of recruiting and hiring diverse candidates

    (a) Pipeline of teachers entering into teaching profession

    (b) Diversity of the community

    (c) COVID – 19 pandemic

    (d) Local school boards

    (e) Less resources

Successful Strategies for Recruiting and Hiring Diverse Candidates

(a) Diversity and equity task force

(b) Grow your own programs

(c) Word of mouth

(d) Consortiums with neighboring divisions

(e) College partnerships (HBCUs, community colleges)

(f) Mentorships programs

Strategic Initiatives Needed to Increase Recruitment and Hiring of Diverse Candidates

(a) Create a diversity taskforce

(b) Build partnerships with community colleges and IHEs

(c) Increase the presence of diverse leadership

(d) Provide training and professional development to HROs and building level administrators

(e) Create a robust system of mentorship support to use as a recruitment tool.

Pathway to Current Position

Participants fell into one of two categories: either they began as a teacher and followed the administration career pathway or they came from a corporate employment as a human resource officer and transitioned into education. Five of the 16 HROs were from a corporate industry outside of education and did not hold any teaching endorsements. All five had bachelor's degrees, four had master's degrees, and one had earned a doctoral degree in an unrelated field. Eleven HROs began as teachers or guidance counselors and then advanced to administration through serving as an assistant principal and then principal. Several were directors in another field such as special education, prior to transitioning to human resources. The HROs that began in education, the majority of the participants were asked by senior level administration to serve in the HRO role. This was the case for the three of the four Black female HROs, as they were asked to serve in this capacity and provide direct leadership over the diversity efforts. All three Black female HROs reported that they were selected in part because of their identification as a diverse female.

HROs were asked if they had any specific training in human resource management or if their division provided any training or professional development regarding recruitment and hiring. Four of the HROs reported that they had specific training, but these participants were from the corporate employment. None of the HROs that came through the educational track reported any official human resource management training, training in recruiting and hiring practices, or in any diversity and equity training. This finding aligns with what Goings et al. (2019) identified when they conducted interviews on HROs and found they had not receive adequate training in their educational leadership program or on workforce diversity or hiring. Another thread identified was the learning curve experienced by the HROs who were not in

education prior to serving as the HRO. Ms. Raye and Ms. Pearl echoed similar comments, Ms. Raye stated, "My previous company although trained me in HR processes and responsibilities, I was not prepared to enter in education, it was very different. I feel I was more prepared in some areas like dismissals, performance plans, and improvement plans, but there definitely is a learning curve with public education, much more red tape to process." Ms. Pearl reported that she wasn't properly trained because there wasn't anyone there to train her. "I was thrown in here and then COVID hit and I was reinventing and creating everything from scratch. I wish I had a mentor and I relied heavily on other HROs in my region."

The Structure of Current Recruitment and Hiring Practices

School division's recruitment and hiring practices fell within one of three categories; centralized, decentralized, or semi-centralized. Five divisions utilized *Centralized* recruitment and hiring practices which are categorized as having a centralized process for recruitment and hiring, typically housed in the central office or school board office of the division. The human resource office provides the leadership and coordination of advertising vacancies, recruitment campaigns, initial screening and licensure check, and the final responsibility for hiring. The centralized model emphasizes consistency across all hiring practices, where principals have a role and provide input, but the HRO is responsible for recruiting and finding a pool of qualified individuals for the principals to choose from. In addition the HRO conducts an initial screening and licensure check to determine if the candidates meets minimum licensure qualifications before the principals are provided the pool of applicants. Centralized practices provide consistent and equitable recruitment and hiring procedures, but it does reduce principal autonomy with regards to hiring.

The *Decentralized* model is characterized by individual principal autonomy to recruit and select candidates for employment. This model is less consistent, as there are no centralized mechanisms for recruitment and hiring processes. Six of the divisions employed this method of recruitment and hiring. The division human resources office is responsible for posting the vacancies through various platforms such as Indeed, Frontline, and social media, but the principals have the ability to select which candidates they want to interview based on the applications received. The HRO does not conduct any pre-screening or licensure check and the principals provide the HRO with the names of the candidates they wish to hire *after* the interview has been conducted. Several divisions have recently transitioned, or were in the transition process, from decentralized to centralized and reported challenges with the decentralized model such as lack of established processes for recruitment and hiring and lack of consistency between principals. In addition, the HROs conduct the licensure check after the interviews are conducted, which reduces efficiency, as licensure issues that may arise could be identified prior to the interview.

Five division's employed a third model, *Semi-Centralized*, where processes are centralized and the HRO has the primary responsibility for recruiting and providing the pool of candidates to the principals, but the principals also have the ability to provide names to the HRO of "word of mouth" candidates or those that fall in unique situations, such as not fully licensed in one area, but are licensed in another endorsement, or candidates who want to move within the division laterally. The principals have the ability to provide the names to the HRO and add them to the overall pool of candidates. This model provides the consistency and structure of recruitment and hiring practices, while incorporating the principal's input as well.

Divisions with more centralized processes for recruitment and hiring tend to be more cognizant of diversity than those whose principals have more autonomy in selecting candidates. The HROs with centralized processes reported they sought out and heavily recruited for diverse candidates so that the pool for principals to interview would include some diversity. Two HROs noted that the decentralized model allowed for principals to select favorites, or friends. Mr. Alfred stated, "The candidates may not be the best qualified [selected by principals]. You run into that quite a bit in a small-town where everyone knows everyone. Just because you know them, doesn't make them a great teacher and it doesn't always mean they are diverse. Diversity takes a back-seat when principals select who they know or they already have an idea that they want to hire, they don't even want to interview anyone sometimes because they already have made up their mind without looking at the pool of applicants."

Characteristics of Candidates Prioritized by Divisions

A third theme that emerged throughout the data analysis, were characteristics of candidates prioritized by school divisions. The number one characteristic echoed by all 16 divisions was the ability to build relationships with students and to possess an innate caring for each student. A second characteristic reported by seven divisions was whether candidates were a "good fit" for the division. Divisions defined "good fit" differently, and some were unable to define it all. As Mr. Carlton noted, "Good fit is, you just know if they are going to mesh with the division, mesh with community, it's just those characteristics in a person you look for. Do they care about kids, can they make a lasting positive impression, are they are hard worker?" Ms. Gerrard reported, "I just can't put into words what 'good fit' means, but you know it when you see it".

When asked where diversity ranked on the list of most desired characteristics, the responses varied. Seven divisions reported that diversity was a priority, but not at the expense of

characteristics such as caring, compassion, and building relationships. "During this time, during this critical shortage of teachers in the pipeline and in our applicant pools, we can't be too choosy and send good teachers away just because they aren't a certain race. We have to focus on recruiting diversity within our division and then the selecting the best candidates no matter the demographic. I can remember at one point in time we could be more selective because we had some influx of teachers, but that's not the case now," stated Ms. Froland. Five divisions reported that diversity was a critical component and one they focus on heavily, and five divisions remarked that diversity was not a factor at all.

Soft skills and communication skills were also ranked as a priority characteristic. Seven divisions reported they prioritized candidates who are able to communicate effectively and have solid problem-solving skills. In addition, it is interesting to note that content knowledge and licensure area were not characteristics mentioned or ranked by any of the divisions as important.

Challenges Recruiting and Hiring Diverse Candidates

The most significant challenge identified by all 16 HROs were the lack of candidates who are entering the pipeline to become teachers: all candidates in general, but particularly for diverse candidates. HROs reported that ten years ago, job fairs were filled with a surplus of student teachers preparing to graduate seeking employment. That is in stark comparison to current trends, where there are fewer and fewer candidates who are entering and graduating from teacher preparation programs. In addition, HROs reported that their current numbers of student teachers have significantly decreased over the last ten years. "We are not seeing the pipeline of candidates from high school to teacher prep programs back to our school divisions. Fewer and fewer kids are going into teaching and even fewer Black or male students are going into teaching," reported Ms. Scott.

The diversity of the community was the second most reported challenge for recruiting and hiring diverse candidates. This challenge was honestly and transparently reported by all of the Black HROs and eight of the White HROs. The diversity of the community, particularly for the small, rural, predominantly White school divisions and predominantly White communities, does not send a welcoming message to diverse candidates. Ms. Scott reported that "color attracts color" and the diverse candidates that do apply, do not want to live in majority White communities. Ms. Alexander reported that the candidates do not feel welcome and they are fearful and afraid of discrimination. "In our community you see a lot of political signs and confederate flags. Those don't necessarily scream, 'we welcome diversity here,' so can you blame them?" Several HROs reported that in order to overcome this challenge, they must partner with community organizations, school boards, and Board of Supervisors, to create advertising campaigns highlighting the community as welcoming and wanting diversity within. "This is the only way we will be successful within our division to recruit and hire, but ultimately retain diverse teachers, they have to feel that they belong in the community in which they serve and where many live," stated Ms. Layne.

A third challenge for recruiting diverse candidates into the teaching profession was the COVID pandemic. Ten HROs reported that what little gains they had made pre-pandemic, were halted, paused, and in some cases reversed due the school closures caused by COVID. "COVID lead to a lot of teacher burnout and early retirements that wouldn't have happened pre-COVID. We lost a lot of good teachers and so trying to fill all of these vacancies while fighting the shortage and then wanting diverse teachers, it was just a recipe for disaster. We are slowly coming out as we finish our first full year of in-person instruction and in-person hiring, but COVID set us back and I know for our colleagues across the region as well," stated Ms. Pearl.

Local school boards were also reported as being a detriment and challenge for hiring diverse candidates. Ms. Scott stated, "We had one board member, you know they are all White and republicans, not saying all White or republicans are bad, but they weren't very open minded to a Black female HRO who wanted to bring in more teachers of color. One board member said, 'Oh, so we have to have a short person to teach all short kids, is that what this equity thing is' I couldn't believe it, I mean comparing diversity to height, they just don't get it." Eight HROs reported school boards hindering strategic efforts to create programs or initiatives aimed at diverse hiring, rationalizing that they needed to focus on all teachers, not just diverse teachers. One HRO reported that the school board did not approve the strategic plan because it included specific diversity targets. Mr. Jansen stated, "How are we supposed to do our job and recruit and hire diverse candidates when the school board blocks us at every turn? We try and we generate great ideas for recruitment, but they don't get approved. It's like they don't understand the importance of a diverse teaching staff." And one HROs reported that the school board approved the strategic plan, but only in name only. "Yes we have a strategic recruitment plan with diversity goals, but it is just so we don't get in trouble with the state. No action items are ever completed and it is just paying lip service. We have a plan, but we don't ever review it, nor do we take action on it. It's just there on paper to look good, a compliance measure really," reported Ms. Froland.

An additional challenge reported by five of the HROs was that smaller divisions and communities do not have the resources to compete with neighboring larger divisions who are more suburban or urban. HROs reported that the small-town communities lack industry and economic development to draw younger teachers to the area, especially diverse teachers who tend to prefer the urban locations. In addition, the HROs reported that many teachers who are in

their first years of teaching or have just graduated want to be closer to suburban areas where they have access to entertainment, social activities, restaurants, and night life. Smaller communities cannot offer these opportunities which attract younger teachers. Another challenge for smaller divisions is competing with larger divisions with regards to salaries and sign-on bonuses. Larger divisions have the financial resources to offer competitive salaries to their teachers and some even offer sign-on bonuses.

Successful Strategies for Recruiting and Hiring Diverse Candidates

Several strategies for recruiting and hiring diverse candidates were provided by the HROs: create a diversity and equity task force and subsequent diversity recruitment plan; grow your own programs, and grass roots, word-of-mouth recruitment; establish consortiums with neighboring divisions and specific diversity recruitment programs such as recruiting from HBCUs; recruiting student teachers and pre-service student teachers; and mentorship programs for diverse candidates.

Seven HROs who reported successful hiring of diverse candidates, had created and implemented a diversity taskforce and subsequent recruitment plan with strategic actionable items focused on diversity recruitment and hiring. HROs reported that the task force and committee served as an accountability measure and included members from the community, school board, board of supervisors, businesses, administrators, parents, and teachers. The equity task force or equity committee is responsible for drafting and revising the diversity recruitment plan and completing follow-through. In addition, having representation from all constituents generates buy-in and sends the message that the community and division are solid in their commitment to diversifying the workforce.

Grow you own programs were also reported by five HROs as a successful method for diversifying their teaching staff. Grow your own programs are founded on the premise of utilizing the talent within the division and supporting career advancement of paraprofessionals in in particular (Rogers-Ard, Knaus, Bianco, Brandehoff, & Gist, 2019). Ms. Layne stated, "The majority of aides in school divisions are Black. Black females tends to have the para- role and not the teacher role even though they do the same amount and the same type of work. Helping the aids out with licensure, we ultimately help our division because they are investing in our school and want to stay." Three HROs reported that they not only capitalize on their paraprofessional and substitute teacher pool, but that other community members approach them inquiring about earning a teaching license and one HRO advertises this service to the community. Utilizing this pool of applicants ensures their retention as well, as many are natives of the division and live in the community. "Our paraprofessionals are invested in our school system and they live here, they work here, and their kids go here. They want to be here and teach and we can help them do that," reported Ms. Layne.

All 16 HROs interviewed reported that "boots on the ground" word-of-mouth was one of the most successful mechanisms for recruiting diverse candidates. "In small, rural school divisions, you are selling the family feel, the community feel. The majority of my diverse hires come from word of mouth advertising, and someone who knew someone, who knew someone, who was a sister's cousin of so and so. Word-of-mouth is probably the best method for recruitment for all of our teachers, but especially for our diverse candidates who are relying on individual testimony of how great our division is," stated Mr. Carlton. One HRO noted that unfortunately the division is so small that many candidates have never even heard of it. "We can

advertise our vacancies all day long, but hearing first-hand from an employee what a wonderful place our division is to work, that is so much more powerful," stated Ms. Gerrard.

Partnerships and consortiums with neighboring divisions was mentioned by four HROs as a means of recruiting and hiring diverse candidate's together. "Several small divisions put together don't have the ADM that some our medium and larger divisions have, nor do we have the magnitude of vacancies, however, our vacancies hurt us a lot more because we are so small. To that end, a few of us got together and created a recruitment plan for hiring diverse candidates, but we also use it for other hard to staff vacancies such as math or special education," stated Mr. Piper. The divisions share vacancies and applicants with each other. For example, if one division has several diverse applicants for a particular vacancy, they will share the applications with the neighboring division.

Four HROs mentioned their partnerships and outreach with HBCUs and while successful in some instances, the pipeline of candidates has significantly decreased which has hindered this strategy. In addition, HROs reported programs specifically focusing on diverse candidates such as the Call Me Mister program and other diversity teacher preparation programs have shown to be successful. One HRO, Ms. Luther, described a recruitment campaign that they employ for their pre-student teaching and student teachers. They view these pre-service candidates as applicants for potential vacancies within their division and they reach out to them consistently, providing information and meetings with teachers and administrators in an effort to advertise their division. In addition, the local HROs make presentations to IHEs encouraging candidates to student teach in their division. One division has just started a recruitment program with a local IHE where the candidate agrees to student teach and teach in the division for two years and the division pays tuition for their final year in college. The candidate also receives a sign-on bonus

and mentorship and support from the IHE for the two years employed with the division. If the candidate stays longer than a second year, there is an additional sign on bonus, but not to exceed four years.

Strategic Initiatives Needed to Increase Recruitment and Hiring of Diverse Candidates

When asked what specific strategies or initiatives are needed to increase recruitment and hiring of diverse candidates, the HROs reported several items: create a diversity task force; establish partnerships with community colleges and IHEs; increase the presence of diverse leadership; provide training and professional development to HROs and building level administrators; and create a robust system of mentorship support to use as a recruitment tool. Chapter 5 will expand on each of these ideas in the recommendations section.

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Summary

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Chapter 4 provided a summary of the individual HROs' experiences and perspectives with regards to recruitment and hiring of diverse candidates. A synthesis of findings generated six major themes that emerged from the data: (1) pathway to HRO position, (2) division structure of recruitment and hiring practices, (3) characteristics of candidates prioritized by the division, (4) challenges of recruiting and hiring diverse candidates, (5) successful strategies for recruiting and hiring diverse candidates, and (6) strategic initiatives needed to increase recruitment and hiring of diverse candidates.

HROs fell within two categories with regards to pathway to position, either the educational route or corporate business route. Division structure of recruitment and hiring identified three models for recruitment and hiring: centralized, decentralized, and semi-centralized. Characteristics of candidates prioritized by divisions included a "good fit", ability to build relationships with students, candidate diversity, and soft skills. Challenges of recruiting and

hiring diverse candidates included a decrease of candidates in the pipeline, diversity of the community, COVID-19 pandemic, local school boards, and competition with larger divisions. Successful strategies for recruiting and hiring diverse candidates included creating a diversity committee, grow your own programs, word-of-mouth, consortiums with neighboring divisions, diversity recruitment programs with HBCUs, and recruitment campaigns for student teachers. Strategic initiatives needed to increase recruitment and hiring of diverse candidates include create a diversity taskforce create partnerships with community colleges and IHEs, create mentorship programs for diverse teachers, increase the presence of diverse leadership, and provide training and professional development to HROs and building level administrators.

The HROs interviewed for this study openly shared their experiences, perspectives, challenges and successes. The lived experiences and testimonies of the HROs are a critical component to the greater understanding of challenges divisions encounter with diversifying the teaching workforce. Their experiences provided the necessary data for analysis and synthesis with which to provide the subsequent implications and recommendations. Chapter 5 includes an overview of the problem and purpose statement, a review of the methodology, a summary of main findings through the Critical Race Theory framework, implications for HRO policy and practice, recommendations for future research, and concluding remarks.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusion

In this chapter I present an overview of the entire research process, including the problem, purpose statement, research questions, a review of methodology, and synopsis of major findings revealed from the data. Next, I provide a synthesis of the findings utilizing the CRT framework, implications for HROs and school divisions regarding recruitment and hiring of diverse candidates, offer recommendations for future research, and end with concluding remarks.

Overview of the Problem

The shortage of teachers entering and remaining in the profession has increased across the country as the gap between White teachers and teachers of color continues to widen. Current recruitment and retention methods vary, with minimal effectiveness, and have shown to be even less effective for minority teachers. As a result, the minority teacher shortage continues to remain in a critical state. Current research has focused on the effectiveness of recruitment and retention methods employed by state departments, school divisions, and partnerships with institutions of higher education, but the effectiveness varies and is dependent upon many variables which has led to mixed results. Teacher preparation programs continue to experience a decrease in minority candidates and school divisions continue to struggle to increase their pool of minority teachers. In addition, universal recruitment and retention efforts have yet to be identified that would provide much needed direction and guidance. While the larger concepts of teacher preparation, recruitment, and retention have been analyzed and researched, minimal research is available investigating individuals responsible for the recruitment and hiring within a division, the HROs.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perspectives and lived experiences of HROs in rural school divisions in a middle Atlantic state, regarding the recruitment and hiring practices of diverse teachers and how and to what extent division processes support a diverse teaching workforce. This study sought to understand the structural and cultural barriers within school divisions that support or hinder diverse hiring. The interviews and testimonies provided overall themes and explanations regarding minority teacher recruitment and hiring in rural school divisions. HROs were interviewed, and their perspectives and narratives were captured through their lived experiences.

This research study utilized a qualitative phenomenological research design and the following research questions were explored:

(1) What are the experiences and perceptions of HROs as it relates to recruitment and hiring practices?

(2) How and to what extent do the recruitment and hiring practices support a diverse teaching workforce?

Review of Methodology

A phenomenological qualitative research method was used for this study to investigate the recruitment and hiring practices of HROs in rural school divisions in a middle Atlantic state through in-depth, semi-structured interviews. A phenomenological research design is the study of a phenomenon from the perspective of the individual to describe accurately the phenomenon of interest (Creswell, 2013). Phenomenological research was first originated with the work of Hurrsel's philosophy of phenomenology, which focuses on the experience itself, and how experiencing something is transformed into consciousness (Cresswell, 2013).

Using purposeful sampling and criterion-based selection, the participants met specific criteria as an HRO, and possessed the experiences related to the phenomenon to be researched. I selected a sample size of 16 to create a comprehensive and rich repository of information. I secured a list of all school divisions identified by the state's Department of Education as rural which aligned with the definitions of rural as defined by the National Center for Education Statistics. I then organized each division into the respective regions and selected the division with the largest and smallest ADM from each region. Six divisions did not accept the invitation and I selected six additional HROs who were subsequent on the list.

I conducted 16 semi-structured, in-depths interviews to investigate the experiences and perspectives of HROs as it relates to the recruitment and hiring of diverse candidates. Throughout the data collection process, I conducted a thorough analysis and final synthesis of the data. The following primary themes emerged; pathway to the position of HRO, division structure of recruitment and hiring practices, characteristics of candidates prioritized by the divisions, challenges of recruitment and hiring diverse candidates, successful strategies for recruiting and hiring diverse candidates, and strategic initiatives needed to increase the recruitment and hiring of diverse candidates.

Summary of Major Findings

Six major themes emerged from the data analysis of the interviews. The first major theme identified was pathway to the position of HRO. The participants became an HRO through the educational track, as an employee in the school division typically a teacher or guidance counselor, or through the corporate business track in the human resources field. The second theme identified the division's internal structure and processes for recruitment and hiring: centralized, decentralized, or semi-centralized. The third theme illustrated the characteristics that

divisions prioritize when selecting and hiring candidates. The fourth theme identified the major

challenges and barriers with regards to recruiting and hiring diverse candidates. The fifth theme

illustrated the strategies that have been successful for divisions for recruiting and hiring diverse

candidates and lastly, the sixth theme provided strategies and initiatives that HROs identified as

needed in order to increase diversity within schools moving forward. Synthesizing the major

findings and themes that emerged from the data through the CRT framework provide a deeper

perspective and analysis with which to draw meaningful implications and recommendations for

HROs and school divisions. The following section provides an analysis of the data summarized

within each of the five tenets.

Synthesis of Findings through the CRT Framework

CRT includes five major tenets: counter-storytelling, permanence of racism, Whiteness as

a property, interest convergence, and the critique of liberalism (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Ladson-

Billings, 1999; Taylor, 1998). CRT was conceived in the 1970s out of Critical Legal Studies

(CLS) to adequately address the effects of race and racism in the justice system (DeCuir &

Dixson, 2004). CRT was developed from the work of Derrick Bell, Alan Freeman, and Richard

Delgado and focuses directly on the effects of race and racism. CRT scholars focus heavily on

specific principles or tenets of interest of CRT, but a central commonality is the repeated view of

racism as systemic, oppressive, and pervasive in reality and policy and is widespread and

ingrained in society (Ladson-Billings, 1999; Milner & Laughter, 2015). Each tenet is critically

necessary to fully understand the challenges and barriers associated with recruitment and hiring

of diverse candidates. CRT-conscious scholars in education believe: (1) race and racism must be

centered; (2) dominant perspectives must not only be challenged, but debunked; (3) commitment

to social justice must be made explicit; and (4) the experiential knowledge of people of color is

not only a legitimate source of empirical evidence, it is a strongly objective source in enabling more truly objective accounts of the world because of the unique positioning of people of color. As outsiders-within, they are able to see patterns of behavior that those who are immersed in and benefit from dominant group culture are unable or unwilling to recognize, or to sustain recognition of over time.

Through the counter-storytelling and counter-narrative lens of CRT, the importance of the lived experiences of the individuals faced with inequitable practices and policies can be uncovered with the ultimate goal of providing policy and practical recommendations for increasing strategies to recruit and retain teachers of color. CRT challenges the experiences and current narratives of accepted racism and the normative standard of Whiteness and Whitestream and provides a voice for the distinctive experiences of diverse individuals (Taylor, 1998). It is through the lens of storytelling with which this study is framed, asserting that the social and experiential context of racial injustice can be best understood through the realities of the lived experiences of division leaders, specifically HROs, as HROs are in a prime position to provide critical perspectives on multiple factors with regards to recruiting and hiring diverse candidates. In addition, utilizing a CRT-informed analysis of the findings from this study, reveal how current efforts to address teacher shortages that focus on recruitment as a separate entity, ignore racialized reasons leading to the shortages initially.

The following section is divided into the five tenets of CRT and provides an analysis of the data through the CRT lens. The two primary tenets most applicable to the study used to analyze the narratives of the HRO interviews were counter-storytelling and permanence of racism. Examples of counter-storytelling and permanence of racism were most notably apparent and are evident throughout the narratives and lived experiences of the HROs. Although examples

of the subsequent tenets, Whiteness as a property, interest convergence, and critique of liberalism were identified, they are woven through the two primary tenets which are explained in greater detail and provide a more in-depth analysis of the barriers and challenges associated with recruitment and hiring of diverse candidates.

Counter-storytelling

Counter-storytelling, or experiential knowledge, by people of color challenge dominant ideologies and knowledge systems based on the White worldviews. CRT holds that those individuals who understand racism best are not its perpetrators, but those who have lived it (Sleeter, 2017). Milner and Howard (2013) assert that counter-narratives offer a space "to complement, nuance, disrupt and counter storylines in teacher education that: (1) are under-researched; (2) represent people of color (teachers, students, parents) from a deficit ideology in teacher education; and (3) provide one-sided evidence and perspectives. The testimonies collected through the HRO interviews provide rich descriptions and narratives that result in a meta-compilation of data that can be utilized to counter the traditional narratives based on experiential knowledge. In addition, analyzing the data through the counter-storytelling lens provides an important and often overlooked viewpoint of educators of color regarding challenges they encounter. These narratives, when compiled and analyzed, provide an even greater depth resulting in implications, and recommendations for recruitment and hiring of diverse educators.

Counter-storytelling is a critical component to understanding the perspectives of HROs regarding recruitment and hiring of diverse candidates, particularly when analyzing the data through the disaggregation of race. As members of the marginalized population, they have experienced first-hand the challenges with recruitment and hiring and are now in a primary position to provide insight and guidance. An analysis of the interview testimonies by participant

race reveal several important and distinct themes which provide a unique, culturally relevant perspective. Several differences emerged: the overall importance of diversity, the significance of diversity recruiting diversity, and the cultural differences in interactions between administrators and diverse teachers.

One area of differing perspectives between Black and White HROs was that of identification and recognition of the concept of diversity as an important factor. The six Black HROs clearly identified and articulated that diversity was highly valued to them personally and professionally, and was an important component of their recruitment plan. The importance was identified and conveyed, even though resistance to diversity was met concurrently within some divisions. When asked what factors were considered when making hiring decisions between candidates and what characteristics were prioritized, the six Black HROs collectively rated diversity as a top factor. Conversely and consequently, the responses from White HROs were not as unanimous, as five did not acknowledge diversity as an important component, nor a factor at all when recruiting and hiring candidates. Five HROs reported that diversity was not a factor because their division was not demographically or economically diverse. In addition, these reports were presented with reports that their applicant pools were not diverse either, citing lack of diversity within the division as the primary reason.

The rationale supporting the lack of importance of diversity was the lack of diversity within the division, which supported the lack of diverse applicant pool. This cyclical narrative justification removes the accountability from the division and community leadership and places the "blame" for lack of diversity on the diverse population for not applying, wanting to work, or wanting to live in that regional area. This lack of accountability and ownership for recruitment and hiring practices provides pseudo support to majority White divisions which continue to

perpetuate the belief that diversity is unimportant, and as a result, a lack of acknowledgement and lack of action.

In addition, the participant narratives represented a stark difference in perspectives between Black and White HROs, as the first step in diversifying the educator workforce of a division is to first acknowledge that diversity exists, is important and valued, and is a critical component of the division's policies and accountable actions. In absence of acknowledgement, clear direction is unattainable. The reports that "diversity is just not a factor" is a prime example of the cultural barriers of predominantly White divisions and minimal, if any, diverse teachers.

A second theme identified throughout the narratives, were the vastly differing perspectives regarding identification of challenges and barriers, with regards to recruitment and hiring of diverse teachers. One thread that was shared throughout the testimonies of Black HROs indicated that recruitment of diverse candidates can best be accomplished by diverse teachers and administrators. The CRT tenet of counter-storytelling supports the idea that teachers of color and administrators of color should be the individuals tasked with the responsibility for countering the stories of predominantly White divisions. Diverse employees of these divisions are in need of serving as the primary recruitment voice to change the narrative and "sell" their divisions. White teachers and administrators are at a disadvantage when recruiting diversity, because they are not recruiting from an authentic place of experience. Their experiences, narratives, stories, and perspectives as a White educator, are not parallel to those of a diverse population.

An observation by five of the Black and three of the White HROs was reported that prior to COVID-19, when attending recruitment fairs, they observed how divisions with Black division representatives had a much more diverse attendance at their division table than those

divisions that placed White representatives as recruitment agents. They noted that it appeared that diverse candidates tended to attend the tables with diverse representation much more than White representation. As reported by Ms. Layne, "As a White female, I felt that candidates just walked right by my recruitment table and bypassed our division for the more diverse divisions with a minority teacher recruiting for them. I actually witnessed this a few times. I wanted to scream, 'Hey we are a great division and welcome you and all of the diversity you bring', but I think candidates want to be able to see how they fit into the division and seeing diversity recruiting *for* the division is important for them to be able to see themselves there. It's a great selling tool".

In addition to the importance of diversity recruiting diversity, the construct of assimilation is relevant to the counter-storytelling narratives. When Black educators engage in assimilation into the predominant culture and climate of the school, they change their voices, disposition, and attitude, and hide their authentic self in an effort to appear less Black as a means of fitting in and "assimilating" into White culture (Goings & Bianco, 2016; Lynn, 2006; Lynn & Parker, 2006). Assimilation is a means of operating under different cultural norms in an effort to avoid negative interactions as a result of an individual's cultural background or race. The perspectives and experiences of HROs citing diversity attracts diversity, speaks to the critical need of diverse educators to authentically express who they are as individuals and as educators and no longer hide from their unique identities or be forced to assimilate into a culture not of their own. Colleagues of similar diverse backgrounds provide a sense of comfort and welcoming to diverse teachers. Diverse leadership in school divisions are in an even greater position to provide the message of inclusivity, authenticity, and welcoming of all teachers, but most important minority teachers who are already at a disadvantage.

A third theme that emerged from the interview data was that of mutual collaboration and respect for the knowledge base, experience, and leadership of diverse teachers within the division. Diverse teachers are the focus of recruitment for divisions, yet their expertise and knowledge is not always sought out, respected, or valued (Philip, 2011). Diverse educators do not feel that their voice is heard, their expertise is wanted, and often times their identity is stifled through assimilation (Villegas & Davis, 2007). That was the case for Ms. Scott, "I had an opportunity to leave the division I am in and move to a neighboring division in the same role, but with much more respect. Here they aren't valuing my opinion and I can't make the progress I want to, every time I bring up diversity, I am not taken seriously. The division that hired me is larger and more suburban and more diverse. I hate to say it, but this why diverse teachers don't come to smaller divisions because they aren't treated with respect and their opinion isn't valued. They would rather go to a more diverse division."

Testimonies from five of the Black HROs identified a lack of administrative recognition and support for their knowledge base, life experiences, and leadership skills. They reported that initiatives and ideas presented were not valued or taken into consideration when making decisions regarding diversity. The HROs felt unappreciated and under-valued as a result. In addition, a collective theme identified several challenges regarding building-level administrators interactions with diverse teachers including a lack of support and appreciation of diverse teachers and a feeling of isolation as a result. As the HRO of the division, their primary role is to provide direct leadership over the recruitment and hiring processes, but often times this was challenged or halted by the building-level administration. Examples were provided where principals were resistant to changing recruitment and hiring procedures to a more centralized model, where the HROs provided more direct leadership with regards to recruiting diverse candidates. This

example illustrates the desire for building-level administrators to retain ultimate autonomy and control over their hires, to ensure they are able to hire the "best" candidate or the candidate that exhibits a "good fit" for the division. The idea of "good fit" is highly subjective and is viewed through the perspectives and beliefs of the individual. In schools divisions it is often times through the lens of a White administrator or HRO who is in the process of hiring a teaching candidate. Thus "good fit" could be interpreted implicitly or explicitly through the cultural lens of the White educator with minimal diversity. Making recruitment and hiring decisions based on a subjective set of requirements that vary across individuals is not an equitable, culturally consistent practice.

Although this research study focused on recruitment and hiring practices, retention and attrition play an integral role as the decrease in retention and increase in attrition directly impact the already limited pool of diverse candidates. Coupled with the challenges diverse educators encounter, these experiences significantly impact the recruitment and hiring of diverse candidates. The extant research on diverse educator attrition describes how the overall lack of support diverse educators receive has a major impact on their retention in the profession, thus impacting the overall pool. School climate and culture, largely attributed to the example set by school leadership, are major determinants to all teachers, but especially diverse teachers when deciding to continue in their positions within a school, transfer to another school, or opt to leave teaching altogether (Boyd, Grossman, Ing, Lankford, Loe, & Wyckoff, 2011). For diverse educators, their relationships with their school principal, other school administrators, and teaching colleagues are central to their sense of welcome, belonging, and appreciation (Simon & Johnson, 2015). Black teachers in particular take note of White school leaders who they recognize to be more comfortable hiring White teachers with whom they can more easily

'relate.' School leadership play an especially integral leadership role in nurturing and sustaining culturally affirming and inclusive school communities that, therefore, enable teachers of color to feel that they are valued and respected as people and as professionals (Minarik, Thornton, & Perreault, 2003).

In summary, analyzing the narratives and interview data through the CRT tenet of counter-telling, disaggregated by the race of the HROs, provides an authentic perspective of recruitment and hiring diverse candidates through the lens of diverse individuals. These testimonies provide a critical insight into the challenges and barriers associated with recruiting and hiring diverse candidates and provide implications for practitioners on both ends of the spectrum: divisions that are actively seeking and recruiting diverse candidates, as well as those divisions who have ignored the importance of diversity.

Permanence of Racism

Permanence of racism holds that racism is systemic and pervasive, and viewing education policy through this lens reveals that the current education system is not designed for Black students and by extension Black teachers (Sandles, 2020). Kohli, Pizarro, and Nevarez (2017) identified several categories of racism in schools: (1) evadism, where equity-explicit discourse is absent from institutions (this type of racism is often to avoid, to silence, or presents as invisible racism), (2) "antiracist" racism, racially inequitable policies and practice are actually masked as the solution to, and (3) everyday racism, where the racism manifests on a micro or personal level, and thus is often unrecognized or viewed as insignificant. Examples of everyday racism include reports by diverse teachers of the racialized nature of the school environment described as not safe, toxic, lonely, offensive, scary, and unwelcoming (Kohli et al., 2017). In addition, Kohli et al., (2017) identified how race was not only a factor, but *the* determining

factor, in the teacher's experiences of being ignored, marginalized, unacknowledged, unrecognized, and underrepresented in school spaces. Diverse teachers shared their struggles to survive and thrive in schools where, regardless of student demographics, the culture and climate reflected Whiteness in terms of who the teachers and school leaders were, and what the curriculum covered, conveyed, and was expressed by mostly White teachers. These struggles made them feel uncomfortable and unimportant (Kohli et al., 2017). Racial discrimination and racial incidents are prevalent in schools and broader society, and there is strong evidence that diverse educators experience high-stress levels and exposure to traumatic events as related to both overt and covert racism in the school setting. These traumatic experiences are heightened when diverse educators experience racial macro- and micro-aggressions on multiple levels simultaneously (Husband, 2016). As a result, while diverse educators seek empirical significance through their intellectual, creative, and relational work as teachers, instead they end up feeling isolated and stressed due to pressure to conform to White professional norms, so-called 'work ethics', and individualistic work expectations (Husband, 2016).

The examples provided that support the permanence of racism are collectively a composite counter-story that is drawn from research data (Cook & Dixson, 2013). According to Smith, Yosso, and Solorzano (2007) composite counter-stories are a method of merging data analysis to recount experiences of racism, both individual and shared, summarizing, and highlighting patterns of racialized inequality. The composite counter-story is grounded in real life and actual accounts of racialized experiences that occurred (Smith et al., 2007). Critical race theorists argue that the majority of racism remains hidden and masked as normality and it is only the more obvious forms of racism that are seen as problematic by the majority (Gillborn, 2015).

The permanence of racism was a common thread revealed through the HRO interviews where multiple examples were provided of evadism racism, "antiracist" racism, and everyday racism.

Examples of evadism, described as an absence of recognition and dialogue of diversity, were identified through the analysis of the data. Five HROs of predominantly White divisions reported that diversity was simply not a factor because their division was not diverse and furthermore their pool of teacher applicants was not diverse. These divisions had not developed or implemented a strategic recruitment plan which identified diversity as an important component, nor did the division engage in dialogue or communications with leadership and teachers identifying diversity as a priority. An example of evadism is when diversity discussion is absent from policy, practice, and implementation. Race is socially constructed and racial difference and diversity is based on individual and community perspectives, perpetuated and reinforced by the society in which it lives. Therefore, divisions identified as participating in evadism, are not cognizant of the effects of racism, as they do not view it as racism to begin with. They interpret and perpetuate a continuous cycle of rationale why the division demographics of teachers have remained unchanged because "diversity isn't a factor for us." Identifying evadism is the first-level of triage when identifying barriers and challenges with recruiting and hiring diverse candidates as action and progress cannot be made without first acknowledging the phenomenon. Consequently, ignoring the discussion has reinforced the lack of acknowledgement because it has perpetuated the heterogeneous make-up of the divisions for so long.

In addition to evadism racism, Antiracist racism is described as racially inequitable policies and practices that are actually masked as the solution to racial equity. Such examples provided through the interviews were candidly revealed when asked: (1) do you feel your

division's recruitment and hiring practices support diverse candidates and (2) how and in what ways does your division's recruitment and hiring practices support diverse candidates? Five HROs reported that their division supported *all* candidates equally and not specifically diverse candidates. In addition, the HROs stated their priority was to hire quality, effective teachers, and diversity was not always identified as a priority, regardless of the candidate's race or gender. These "equitable" practices of recruitment and hiring through the color-blind lens only masks the inequitable policies and practices that parade as a solution. Stating that all teachers are supported, prioritized, recruited, and hired in equal fashion is a refusal to acknowledge the costs and benefits associated with one's racial and cultural identity. In addition, it perpetuates and reinforces the division's lack of effort to address the lack of diversity within their division and community. Ullucci & Battey (2011) assert that this form of racism offers protection for Whites, and supports their maintenance of the illusion and ignores their collusion in racist practices. Furthermore, antiracist racism allows people to hold racist or biased views while normalizing the racial disparity and disadvantages that Black individuals experience as a Black problem. Through this vein, predominantly White divisions subscribe to the story that race is not a significant factor in the selection of high-quality teachers (Ullucci & Battey, 2011).

The third category of racism, every day racism, is the most unrecognized as it manifests on a micro, personal, or individual level. Through the testimonies of the HROs, several examples were revealed including one school board member's comments equating diversity to height and implying that hiring short teachers for short students was equally important as hiring diverse teachers for diverse students. An additional example of every day racism provided by three of the HROs cited superintendents who refused to acknowledge or take seriously the creation of diversity and equity taskforces. Furthermore, four HROs noted examples where school boards

authorize and approve strategic diversity recruitment plans in name only and subsequent equity components of strategic recruitment plans are only included for compliance purposes and to avoid punitive actions by governing bodies. This passive, lack of response to initiatives presented by Black HROs, when any mention of diversity is addressed, only supports the very real and very prevalent acts of every day racism.

In conclusion, the permanence of racism is apparent throughout the testimonies of HROs reporting school and division-level barriers and community barriers such as racially offensive flags and signs posted throughout the community. Racism in any form, evadism, antiracist racism, and everyday racism, are consistent reminders that racism is present and pervasive in our schools and is serving as a severe deterrent for diverse educators.

Whiteness as a Property

A CRT perspective suggests that the ability, will, and fortitude of Whites to negotiate and make difficult decisions in providing more equitable policies and practices, means that they have to lose something of great importance to them in exchange, including their power, privilege, esteem, social status, linguistic status, and their ability to reproduce these benefits and interests to their children and future generations (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). In addition, there is tension in the idea that institutions and schools, through their organization, structure, and curriculum (both formal and hidden), aid in the maintenance of hegemony by acculturating students to the interest of the dominant group as the students are encouraged and instructed, both explicitly and implicitly, to make those interests their own (Milner, 2008). This idea relates to Ladson-Billings and Tate's (1995) notion that curriculum represents a form of intellectual property and that intellectual property must be undergirded by "real" property" (Milner, 2008).

In public education, Whiteness as property is a symbol of the beneficiaries of education through the value of the property owned, as communities with more valuable property (White individuals) funded schools at higher rates, with more resources, greater access to rigorous curriculum, and funding of elite private schools (Annamma, 2015). In public education, Whiteness as property has the ability to exclude others from the benefits of Whiteness, and maintaining inequitable distribution of resources, such as zoning of neighborhood schools or admissions into gifted, honors, or dual enrollment programs that historically are predominantly White students.

Examples of Whiteness as a property include the predominantly White schools with predominantly White teachers, with minimal movement or impetus to diversify. Five HROs reported that diversity was not identified as a factor. "Diversity just isn't a factor for us because we are not diverse at all, I mean I would like to hire diverse candidates, I would love to have a Black or Hispanic teacher, but they aren't around. So for us, it isn't really a goal. Our division is not diverse, we have mostly White students, our community is mostly White. We have very few Black or Hispanic individuals, and that's not a necessarily a bad thing, it's just the nature of the community we live in," reported Mr. Redmond. According to NCES, more affluent schools tend to have demographics with the majority White students, in White communities. In addition, smaller schools with less 1000 students tend to predominantly be White. Very few, rural school divisions are predominantly Black (NCES, 2020; NCES, 2022). The majority of Black schools tend to be in urban and suburban divisions. This is an example of school segregation by locale and Whiteness as property. The Supreme Court decision in *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District No. 1 (PICS),* found it unconstitutional for a school district to use race as a factor in assigning students to schools in order to bring its racial composition

commensurate with the composition of the district as a whole. This decision serves as an example of the ways through which the educational system operates to ensure that access to quality public education is the property of White people (Dixson et al., 2016). According to Dixson et al., (2016), the Supreme Court's application of a colorblind paradigm does nothing more than protect White people and their self-interests, serves as a barrier to the educational opportunities of White students and their families, and reinforces the American racial hierarchy.

Other scholars have also applied the concept of Whiteness as property to understand issues surrounding the preparation and professional development of teachers. One of the most consistent findings across much of the literature reviewed was the overwhelming culture of Whiteness that pervades preservice teacher education programs. Whiteness operates as a form of property and standard that preservice teachers must adhere to and only those that possess the experience, perspectives, knowledge and dispositions which align with the dominant White society find success (Brown, 2014).

Interest Convergence

Interest convergence can offer teacher education added dialogue and tools to discuss race, its presence, its pervasiveness, and its consequence in the field. Among other important realities, inherent in the tensions of convergence between Whites and others are matters of self and systemic interests and a loss–gain binary (Milner, 2008). Lopez (2003) asserts that racism always remains firmly in place, but social progress advances at the pace that White people determine is reasonable and judicious. Change is often purposefully slow and at the will and design of those in power (Lopez, 2003).

Whites support and encourage interests of minority populations only when it converges and benefits White interests (Milner & Howard, 2013). In addition, White people fear that

systemic changes will threaten them in personal ways and interpret gains made of people of color as losses for Whites (Sleeter, 2017). Within teacher education, Milner (2008) posited that until interests authentically and transparently converge, it will be difficult to have policies and practice that place race, racism, and equity on any agenda. Recruiting and hiring diverse candidates is an example of interest convergence. Such efforts to recruit and retain more teachers of color reflect socially just goals and objectives, however through the process, White interests are maintained as a measure of ensuring compliance and following prescribed state and federal mandates (Brown, 2014). In addition, interest convergence is not necessarily viewed as a negotiation process. Rather, the impetus for diversity recruitment is not out of altruistic means, but the outcome of political pressure by state and federal mandates (Brown, 2014; Milner 2008).

The testimonies provided by the HROs provided insight into the fundamental beliefs of HROs, superintendents, and school board members. One theme that emerged was the notion that school boards adopt a diversity recruitment plan in name only, with no action taken to address the diversity. In essence, they are "supporting" diversity because they have "adopted" a recruitment plan for diverse candidates, but there is no follow through or action. The division is only adopting a superficial approach to approving a plan as a means of adhering to compliance (benefits White interests). Another example of interest convergence are alternate pathways for licensure created for paraprofessionals who are predominantly Black. Divisions are eager to provide assistance and support to paraprofessionals, substitutes, and community members when it serves their interest such as developing diverse candidates, but these efforts are serving the dominant interests of filling vacancies, maintaining compliance, and maintaining the façade of supporting diversity.

The Critique of Liberalism

     Critique of Liberalism, or the challenge to the dominant ideology, includes the constructs of color blindness, neutrality, and meritocracy and holds that these concepts inflict harm and continue to perpetuate racial injustices by ignoring race and masking White privilege and power (Milner & Laughter, 2015). CRT challenges claims of neutrality, color blindness, and meritocracy in policies and practices which are created and shaped around the dominant White ideology (Sleeter, 2017). Colorblind positions that educators subscribe to make it difficult to recognize institutional, systemic, and classroom practices and realities like disproportionate referrals for special education or gifted. In addition, colorblind conceptions of quality teaching, by failing to account for ways race matters in education, support the continued Whiteness of teacher education (Arai & Kivel, 2009). Furthermore, CRT holds that claims of neutrality and color blindness mask White privilege and power.

     In the same way that CRT scholars critiqued the critical discourse in Critical Legal Studies, CRT also provided a way to critique the liberal multicultural and diversity discourse in education and the leadership for social justice discourse in educational leadership (Lopez, 2003). These progressive discourses marginalize and perpetuate racism, in essence a critique of liberalism (Ladson-Billing & Tate, 1995). Examples of Critique of Liberalism were analyzed and described in detail within the tenet of permanence of racism, but a brief summary of examples provided during the interviews is explained. Examples of critique of liberalism include HROs who reported that race and diversity were not a factor for them and "didn't matter." Seven HROs reported that diversity was important, but not a priority for hiring. One reported that race should not impact teaching at all and that all teachers should be able to teach all children equally regardless of their race. While these five HROs reported that diversity was not important, this

view hides the fact that there is *no* diversity or efforts made to increase diversity within the division and is overshadowing the importance of minority teachers for all students, not just minority students.

<div align="center">**Implications for Policy and Practice**</div>

Based on the collective narratives of the HROs, specific strategies and initiatives were identified as needed in order to increase the recruitment and hiring of diverse candidates. The analysis of findings revealed from the interviews, coupled with a synthesis of the data through the CRT lens, provides the following implications and recommendations for policy and practice. The following themes emerged; create and employ a diversity committee; cultivate partnerships with community colleges and IHEs; enhance mentorship programs specifically for diverse candidates; provide leadership pathways and increase the presence of diverse leadership; and provide training and professional development to HROs and building level administrators regarding diverse recruitment and hiring.

Create a Diversity Committee

Diversity committees include key players that can contribute to strategic diversity leadership within a division (Leon & Williams, 2016). Leo and Williams (2016) contended that when diversity committees operate at their best, they can systematically create and move forward diversity plans by bringing diversity leaders together (i.e., students, faculty, administrators, alumni) with a rich array of skills, knowledge, and experience from across the division. In addition, they can play a pivotal role in breaking down institutional silos and can create an environment of intentionality and organization regarding diversity work.

Important tasks of the committee include developing a clear definition of diversity, the scope of operation, the importance of committee membership, the role and responsibilities of the

committee, and the permanence of the group. As reported by eight HROs, the diversity committee/task force serves as an accountability measure, ensuring that each member is fully vested. Responsibilities of the diversity task force include evaluating and analyzing applicant and hiring data to determine the number and frequency of diverse candidates applying to the division, identifying what practices and procedures within their division support or hinder diversity recruitment and hiring, and implementing recruitment and marketing campaigns focusing specifically on diverse candidates.

Cultivate Partnerships with Community Colleges and IHEs

Establishing partnerships with community colleges and IHEs is an important component to diversity recruitment. IHEs and community colleges are in an ideal position to foster partnerships with divisions to provide programmatic leadership, training opportunities, professional development grants, and development of specific initiatives for diverse candidates to help identify and recruit promising teachers of color (Gist et al., 2019). Examples of successful collaborations and pipelines with community colleges include grow-your-own, two-plus-two programs, and minority specific recruitment programs such as Call Me Mister. Grow-your-own programs support alternative pathways for paraprofessionals, school employees, and community members who do not currently hold a teaching license and two-plus-two programs are partnerships with community colleges that provide two years of course work which transfers directly to a four-year institution. In addition, programs specifically aimed at diversity candidates such as the Call Me Mister program, which focuses solely on recruitment and retention of Black males, has shown to be an effective partnership between divisions and IHEs.

Furthermore, upon gaining entry into classrooms, a bridge should connect teacher education programs and teacher induction programs. Working in partnership, teacher education and teacher

induction programs can provide adequate guidance to novice diverse educators in the early stages of their careers to reinforce the pipeline (Bastian & Marks, 2017). Furthermore, IHEs can provide programmatic and curricular professional development to reflect context-based leadership approaches, like culturally responsive school leadership, critical race theory, leadership for social justice, and case-based leadership (Gist et al., 2019). These approaches will help prepare current and prospective school leaders to better support diverse students and teachers.

Create Mentorship Programs for Diverse Candidates

Numerous empirical data supports the claim that induction for beginning teachers and teacher mentoring programs have a positive impact on recruitment and retention (Ingersoll & May, 2011b; Ingersoll et al., 2019; Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). Beginning teachers who participated in some form of induction reported higher satisfaction, commitment to the profession, and retention in the classroom. Likewise, for teachers' classroom practices, studies have shown that beginning teachers who participated in some kind of induction performed better at various aspects of teaching, such as keeping students on task, developing workable lesson plans, using effective student questioning practices, adjusting classroom activities to meet students' interests, maintaining a positive classroom atmosphere, and demonstrating successful classroom management (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011).

Although mentorship programs have been shown to have a positive impact for overall teacher retention, mentorship programs specifically focusing on diverse teachers paired with diverse mentors have shown to be a significantly effective recruitment tool as well (Carver-Thomas, 2018). Carver-Thomas (2018) identified proactive hiring and induction strategies as a factor influencing candidates' decisions to enter into the teaching force and a determining factor

for selecting employment. An example of diverse mentorship, The Black Teacher Project (BTP), is an organization whose mission is to recruit, support, and retain quality Black educators and leaders. The BTP provides personal and professional growth opportunities, mentorship and support, and fellowship programs to support Black teachers through Black teacher connections, based on the premise that Black educators best support Black educators.

Establish Pipelines to Increase Diverse Leadership

Numerous studies show that educators from racially and ethnically diverse backgrounds positively impact student and school academic outcomes, increase attendance rates for students of color, enable students of color to advance and enroll in more rigorous coursework, and hold higher expectations of students of color (Cherng & Halpin, 2016; Goldhaber, Theobald, & Tien, 2015; Gordon, 2002b). In addition school leaders with diverse cultural identities reduce high rates of turnover among teachers of color which has an even greater impact on students. By emphasizing teachers' unique cultural strengths, school leaders practice a form of culturally responsive school leadership, which enables principals to improve collegiality and the relational aspects of school leadership among teachers and staff (Farinde-Wu, Allen, & Lewis, 2016; Gist, 2016; Sanchez, Thornton, & Usinger, 2008). The importance of establishing pipelines for diverse teachers to then attain leadership positions, is paramount to the retention of diverse educators. In addition, diverse leaders within the division serve as a very powerful recruitment tool through recruitment campaigns, outreach, and job fairs.

Provide Training and Professional Development

The data gleaned from the interviews revealed that HROs who came through the traditional education pathway of preparation (i.e. teacher, assistant principal, principal, HRO) did not receive any formal collegiate preparation or professional development regarding the

recruitment and hiring of diverse candidates. Research also supports the finding that HROs receive limited and inadequate coursework in their formal education and leadership programs and have limited opportunities for relevant professional development within their division (Goings et al., 2018; Goings et al., 2019).

Gist (2018) argued that calls for a racially and ethnically diverse educator workforce will persist until school systems make substantive structural changes to increase and sustain a racially/ethnically diverse teacher workforce. One method to engage in the structural change needed to recruit and retain a diverse educator workforce is for educational leadership programs to implement coursework opportunities to engage with issues related to increasing educator racial diversity through recruitment and hiring practices (Goings et al., 2019). Educational leadership preparation programs should review their curricula to evaluate whether future leaders are being prepared to engage in equitable hiring practices. Coursework including cultural competency training for recruitment and hiring should be included in all educational leadership programs. In addition to coursework and program requirements educational leadership programs have a valuable opportunity to provide professional development around diversity recruitment and hiring that not only enhances HRO training, but all administrators including principals and assistant principals. Divisions with centralized recruitment and hiring practices ensure that the division is operating within fair and equitable hiring practices across the division.

Recommendations for Future Research

Several recommendations are provided for future research studies. First, the participant's race and ethnicity and years of experience as an HRO were not taken into account as a condition for selection as an interview participant. Future research that focuses on the perspectives of Black HROs only, as individuals experiencing marginalization, could provide a powerful source

of testimony. In addition, the current study focused only on small, rural school divisions. Additional research could take into account the differences comparatively with rural, suburban, and urban divisions. An additional area of recommended research is to investigate college-bound or first-year college students who are not enrolled in a teacher preparation program, to investigate reasons for selecting their particular major. Isolating a pool of candidates who were in a teacher preparation program, but withdrew or did not complete the program would be an additional ideal population to interview. Furthermore, diverse teachers who leave the teaching profession after a specified number of years would also provide robust narratives and interview data.

A final area of extension for study would be to draw parallels and conclusions from similar bodies of research. Current research exists investigating the recruitment and selection of superintendent candidates, identifying processes and procedures used to make candidate selections. Tallerico (2000) examined how particular elements of school board's routine practices, the professional norms of school administration, and dominant ideological and sociocultural values combine to increase the access of the superintendency to White candidates while limiting access to diverse candidates. The process for recruiting and hiring superintendents is dependent on how "best qualified" is defined, stereotyping and other cultural dynamics, and the role of "good chemistry" in determining interview success, or "good fit" (Tallerico, 2000). Similarly to findings of this study, where HROs reported intentions to hire the *best* candidate, not solely based on diversity, school boards who were tasked with hiring superintendents reported parallel ideologies of hiring candidates as they "see fit" or "best for the job" and diversity is not necessarily an important component. In addition Tallerico (2000) identified how participant's judgments about "good fit" are directly associated with how comfortable school board members

feel interacting with interviewees, which directly places diverse candidates and women at a disadvantage, another finding and theme from this study of similar construct related to the interactions between administrators and diverse teachers. In addition, hypervaluing "good fit" and "best for the job" place diverse candidates and women at a disadvantage because those responsible for hiring are typically white males.

Several extrapolations can be made through this finding to the current study, as those in primary positions of authority in school divisions, such as superintendents, school boards, and HROs, are predominantly White. The concept of "good fit" should be further investigated and expounded upon to identify underlying cultural and implicit biases that are apparent when making hiring determinations. The demographics of those responsible for the hiring (typically White), the presence of gut feelings and "good fit" chemistry, combined with the implicit and in some cases explicit biases, may provide a basis for deeper analysis of recruitment and hiring processes of diverse educators.

Concluding Remarks

In conclusion, the critical shortage and essential need for minority teachers is well-documented throughout literature and research. This study investigated the lived experiences and perspectives of the HROs responsible for the recruitment and hiring of diverse candidates to identify challenges and barriers, implications, and recommendations. The results revealed critical insight into the policies and practices of rural school divisions as it relates to recruitment and hiring practices of diverse candidates. The data gleaned from the research identified six major themes which were synthesized and summarized utilizing the CRT lens, specifically the counter-storytelling and permanence of racism tenet. Several important implications for policy and practice were identified: create a diversity committee, cultivate partnerships with community

colleges and IHEs, create mentorship programs for diverse candidates, establish a pipeline of diverse leadership, and provide training and professional development to HROs and division leadership.

Utilizing CRT allowed for a critical review of the narratives, findings, and central themes. One common thread throughout was the prevalence and permanence of racism, whether that be overt or covert, evadism, antiracist racism, or everyday racism. Institutional racism exists and is manifested in many forms within our public educational system; teacher preparation programs that teach White pedagogy, recruitment and hiring practices that benefit White applicants, division-wide practices that cultivate and encourage Whiteness, and policies and procedures that inhibit an inclusive and welcoming climate. While the Black HROs and the majority of the White HROs were able to identify and articulate the discrepancies and racial inequalities within their division that impact and stall recruitment and hiring of diverse candidates, alarmingly and more concerning are the divisions that did not. Five divisions reported that diversity was not a factor at all and eight divisions noted that school boards stalled and prevented diversity initiatives and plans, an alarming statistic that those in senior leadership positions continue to perpetuate the racial inequities and openly and comfortably share their position.

Division leaders must focus and identify the community and cultural barriers that are hindering their efforts, but this is not a task to be completed alone. The community of the division in which it is housed can either serve as a positive recruitment tool or a deterrent and unfortunately, for many small-rural school divisions, the community serves a deterrent. The reasons cited are economic in nature, as many small divisions do not have the industry to attract candidates, or housing availability and affordability, where minimal housing is available for

candidates and families. Additional reasons include the culture, the appearance of an unwelcoming community, offensive racial insignia visible in the community, or the lack, or absence, of diverse community members.

Although school divisions are tasked with recruitment of diverse educators, diverse educators are equally evaluating the division's ability and capability to provide a welcoming, safe, inclusive, and culturally friendly environment where they will be supported, respected, and valued as a professional. Key factors that influence and increase the chances of recruitment of diverse educators include the presence of diverse leadership, a diversity committee or diversity recruitment plan, and a welcoming, positive school climate, at a minimum.

Division leaders must enlist the help and support of community organizations and businesses, board of supervisors, town councils, local mayors, and other civic organizations. The first task is to recognize the importance of a strong and powerful teaching workforce that includes diversity, create and implement a plan of action, and continuously evaluate the effectiveness of initiatives. While divisions are experiencing an unprecedented shortage of qualified teachers and the impulse is to hire *any* teacher, we must not lose sight of the importance of diverse educators as the benefits go far beyond our diverse students.

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APPENDIX A

Interview Request Letter (Email)

Dear (participant's name):

My name is Tara McDaniel. I am a doctoral candidate at Old Dominion University in the process of conducting a study of school divisions recruitment and hiring processes, with a focus on diverse candidates. You have been identified as a Human Resource Officer serving in this capacity and are in an ideal position to help expand research in this domain.

This study will provide significant insight of schools division's recruitment and hiring practices of diverse candidates, including challenges and successes, with the overall goal of providing effective strategies for helping divisions enhance their recruitment and hiring efforts. Your experience and perspectives of recruitment and hiring practices is critical to enhance the body of current research regarding teacher recruitment.

You have been identified as a potential participant because you meet the criteria of being the Human Resource Officer within your division and as such I am requesting your participation in my study. Your participation will involve a 45 – 60 minute virtual interview at a time that is convenient for you between March 1, 2022 – April 30, 2022.

All human resource officers participating in this study will remain completely anonymous. Please be assured the interview will be completely confidential. No names will be attached to

any records from the interview. All information will remain in locked, password protected files accessible only to the researcher and the dissertation chair. No employer, supervisor, or district will have access to the interview information. Your participation would be greatly valued. If you have any questions you may reach me via telephone at 434-321-3438 or by email at Tmcda011@odu.edu. Thank you in advance for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Tara K. McDaniel

Doctoral Candidate

APPENDIX B

Informed Consent Documents

Title of Research: Human Resource Officers Perspectives on Recruitment and Hiring Practices of Diverse Candidates

Responsible Investigator: Tara McDaniel

Description and Purpose of the Study

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Tara McDaniel, a doctoral student from Old Dominion University, under the advising of dissertation chair, Dr. Karen Sanzo, Professor of Educational Leadership at Old Dominion University. The purpose of this study is to investigate school division's recruitment and hiring practices of diverse candidates through the perspectives and experiences of human resource officers. The findings of this study may be used to inform effective strategies and supports that may be useful to school divisions in their efforts to recruit and hire diverse teaching candidates. The potential participants are human resource officers within a school division.

Participant Expectations

Participants who agree to participate in the study will be asked to sign an informed consent document. Human resource officer participants will then complete an interview with researcher Tara McDaniel. Interviews will be audio recorded with participant consent. The audio recording can be paused or discontinued at any time by the participant without penalty. The researcher may also end the interview at any time without ramifications. Any artifacts and transcripts gathered

by the researcher will be kept strictly confidential and in a locked location only accessible to the

researcher and dissertation chair. Individual interviews will take approximately 45 – 60 minutes

and will be held virtually through zoom. The interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed.

The interview transcript will be sent to the participant for review and accuracy, and edits will be

made accordingly. The audio recordings and transcripts will be kept in a secured electronic file

on a password-protected computer, accessible to only the researcher and dissertation chair for

review of the conversation for validity of the responses.

Participant Benefits and Risks

Participants will not be compensated for their contribution, but will agree to participate on a

voluntary basis. Participants may feel rewarded knowing their contribution will add to the field

of research on school division's recruitment and hiring practices of diverse candidates. There is

minimal to no risk physically, psychologically, socially, or financially.

Confidentiality

 The researcher will keep all recorded interviews and artifacts in a locked location only

accessible to the researcher and dissertation chair. Pseudonyms will be used for all participants

except for the signed consent form to be kept secure by the researcher and then destroyed no

longer than three years after the research study is completed.

Voluntary Consent and Withdrawal from Study

Participants may withdraw from the study at any time prior, during, or after the interview has

taken place. By agreeing to participate in the study, the participants agrees to complete an

interview with researcher, Tara McDaniel. The interview will take approximately 45– 60 minutes and will be scheduled virtually. Completion of the interview will occur between March 1, 2022 and April 30, 2022.

I understand that:

1. There are minimal risks associated with the research. I understand the researcher will protect my confidentiality by keeping my interview transcript and recording in a password protected location accessible only to the researcher and dissertation chair.

2. A potential benefit of this study will include my contribution of knowledge through lived experiences of my position as a human resource officer of a school division. The findings of the study will be available to me at the conclusion of the study. I will not be compensated for my participation. I willingly participate on a voluntary basis. At any time I wish to discontinue my participation in the research, I can do so; however, I will need to contact Tara McDaniel to alert her of my discontinued participation.

3. If I have any questions or concerns, I can contact Tara McDaniel, researcher, at Tmcda011@odu.edu or by cell phone at 434-321-3438, the dissertation chair, Dr. Karen Sanzo at ksanzo@odu.edu or by phone at 757-683-6698. I have read the above and understand it, and I hereby consent to the procedures set forth.

_____ Printed Name of Participant & Role

_____ Signature of Participant & Date

APPENDIX C

Interview Questions

1. To start out, tell me a little about yourself. What path did you follow, starting with your undergraduate education through now, in your current position? (Follow-up questions if needed: How long have you served in this current position? Did you serve in this capacity in a previous position?)

2. Tell me a little bit about what your typical work-day looks like, what are your primary responsibilities?

3. Does your division have a strategic recruitment plan? If so, do you know when the plan was developed? When the plan was finalized, do you remember how the plan was communicated to administrators and stakeholders?

4. What types of professional development does your division provide, if any, to administrators regarding recruitment and hiring practices?

5. What are your division's current recruitment processes and procedures? Can you tell me where these processes and procedures are housed and if they are included in policy somewhere? Is there training on diversifying the workforce?

6. How are recruitment materials and teaching vacancies advertised?

7. Please describe your division's interview selection process. How are candidates selected for an interview? How and to what extent are building level administrators involved in the process?

8. Please describe your divisions' hiring protocols. How and to what extent are building level administrators involved in the hiring process? Does your division offer hiring incentives to candidates?

9. What factors are considered when making hiring decisions between candidates? What, if any, candidate characteristics do you think your division prioritizes? Which characteristics do you think are a lower priority in the hire decision making process?

10. Do you feel that your division's recruitment and hiring practices support diverse candidates? How and in what ways does your division's recruitment and hiring practices support diverse candidates?

11. What do you identify as the most significant challenges with regards to recruiting and hiring diverse candidates?

12. Do you feel these challenges are unique to your division, or do you have a sense that this is something challenging across all divisions?

13. What strategies have you found successful for recruiting and hiring diverse candidates?

14. Why do you feel these strategies have been successful?

15. What data, if any, does your division collect regarding diversity recruitment and hiring (i.e. total counts of applicants, total counts of new hires, etc.?)

16. Based on your experience, what supports or strategic initiatives are needed in order to prioritize the recruitment and retention teachers of color?

VITA

TARA KELTON MCDANIEL

Old Dominion University

Educational Foundations & Leadership

120 Education Building

Norfolk, VA 23529

Tara Kelton McDaniel is the Director of Teacher Preparation with Longwood University in Farmville, Virginia. Her research interests include teacher preparation, teacher recruitment, and teacher retention.

Education

Doctor of Philosophy: Educational Leadership, August 2022

Old Dominion University, Norfolk, Virginia

Master of Science: Curriculum and Instruction, December 2001

Longwood University, Farmville, Virginia

Bachelor of Science: Psychology

Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, Virginia