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Information Technology Career Choice: A Comparative Study of Diversity Issues

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TREO Talk Paper

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Abstract

The shortage of Information Technology (IT) professionals and recommendations for addressing the problem have been investigated for decades. Yet, organizations are still struggling to fill IT positions (Mearian, 2023) and the diversity gap continues to grow with "[m]en holding over 75% of technical jobs, [and] white and Asian mak[ing] up over 83% of the tech workforce" (Carlton, 2023). While most studies in this research stream explore IT professionals in the job market, in this TREO, we build on the work of Deng, Zaza and Armstrong (2022) by examining the potential source of the IT workforce pipeline: college students - from different backgrounds and universities- who will enter the workforce after graduation.

We plan on adopting a critical case sampling method to maximize the generalizability of our findings (Patton, 1990). We will sample three large US public universities – one in the South (predominately white), one in the mid-west (predominately Black), and one in the west (predominately Hispanic serving institution). We will develop a survey and target undergraduate students in the college of business. We will collect demographics and perspectives on *why* they would choose an IT career (open-ended question). We plan to collect approximately 200 [usable] responses per university that reflects each university population.

Looking at the role of Trauth's (2017) environmental factors (e.g., university characteristics) and individual differences (e.g., race, gender, first generation), we will showcase the comparative variations of factors influencing students' decisions to pursue a career in IT. We hope to shed light on the inter-group and intra-group differences, shaped by their lived experiences. We hope to extend the model that Deng et al. (2022) offered by exploring boundary conditions (i.e., different student populations), and provide more nuanced guidance for institutions tailoring diversity initiatives.

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