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# Examining Curriculum Requirements of Undergraduate Teacher Preparation Programs to Gauge Educator Knowledge of Trauma-Informed Education Frameworks

Laura Grace King

## INTRODUCTION

Statistics show that many pre-K–12 students in the United States are exposed to adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) or potentially traumatic events (PTEs). According to the National Survey of Children’s Exposure to Violence, 60.8% of children experience at least one exposure to potentially traumatic episodes (Finkelhor et al., 2015). The effects of trauma and adversity on school and academic experience are multifaceted: children exposed to violence are associated with having memory and language deficits; children with above average traumatic test scores are shown to have lower academic performance; and maltreated youth are more likely to exhibit problem behavior and experience disciplinary action at school (Perfect et al., 2016).

A preliminary review of the literature on trauma-informed education (i.e., curriculum and programs designed to mitigate the negative effects of trauma) highlighted many teachers’ lack of confidence in combatting issues within student populations affected by adversity and trauma; the research also indicated that teachers with knowledge of trauma/adversity and its implications are crucial to effectively educating at-risk children and adolescents. However, policies addressing trauma-informed professional development for teachers varies among states, indicating that many teachers do not receive trauma-informed training after completing their licensure program (NASBE, 2019).

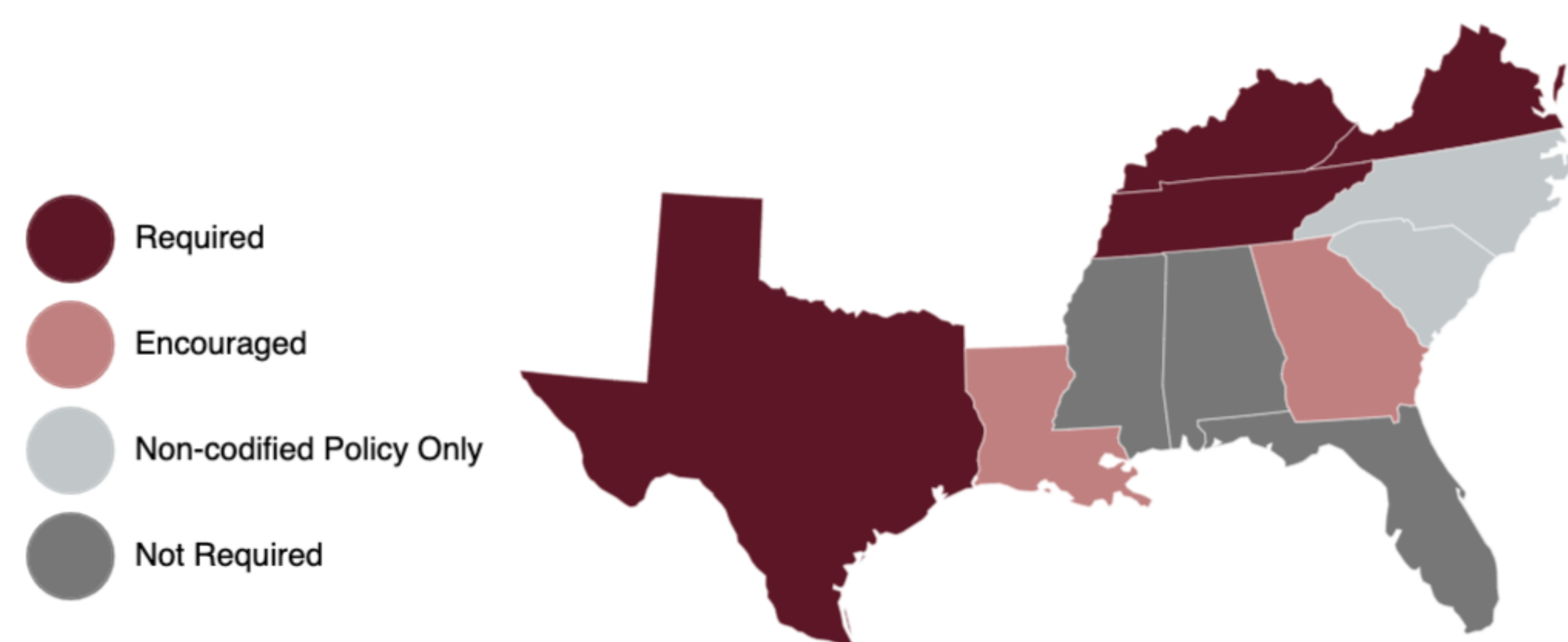


Figure 1: Professional Development for Trauma (adapted from NASBE, 2019)

The current study examined the required curriculum of 119 SACS-accredited postsecondary elementary and secondary education teacher education programs (TEPs) in the Southeastern United States to investigate teacher preparedness to support students with trauma experiences.

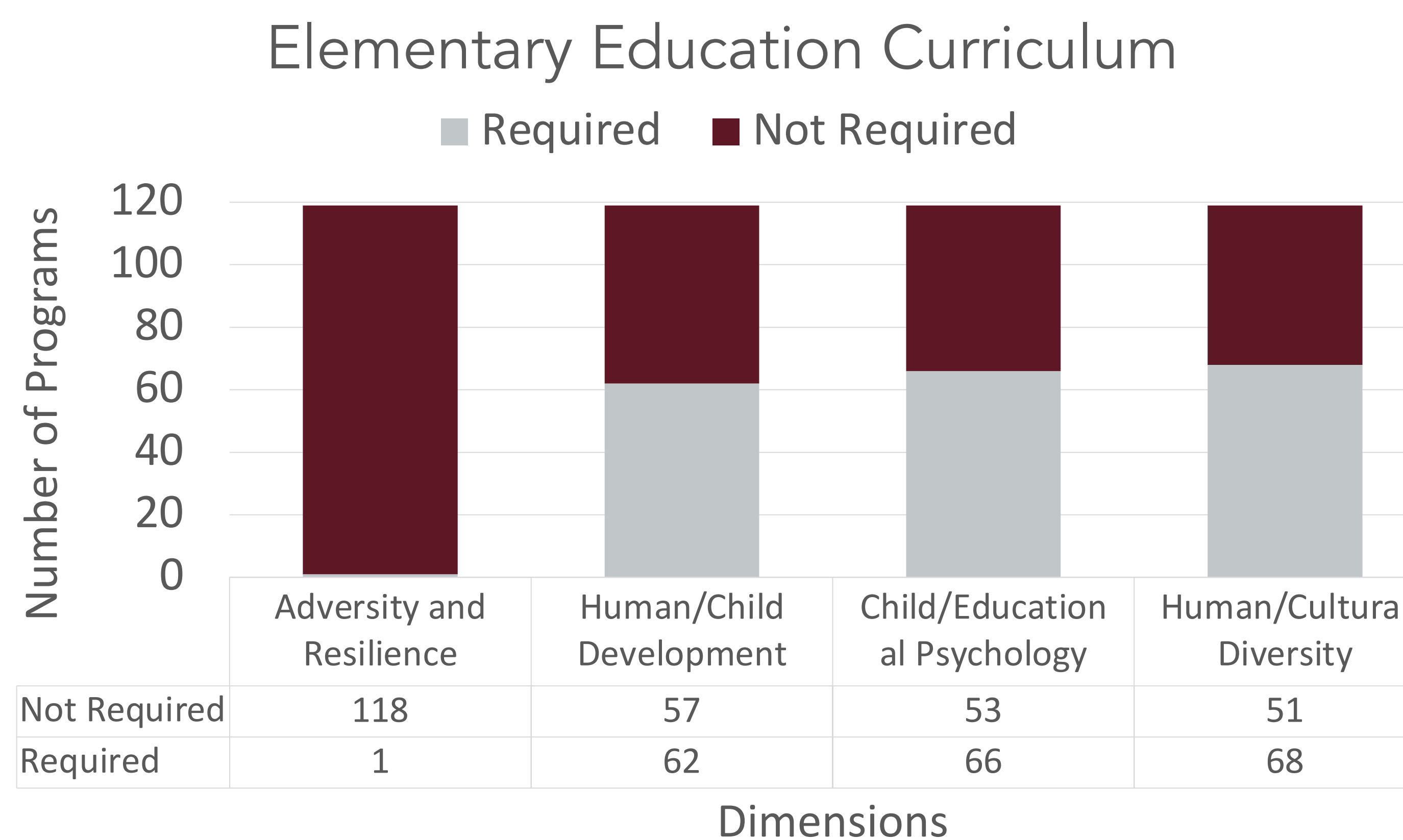
## METHODS

### Measures

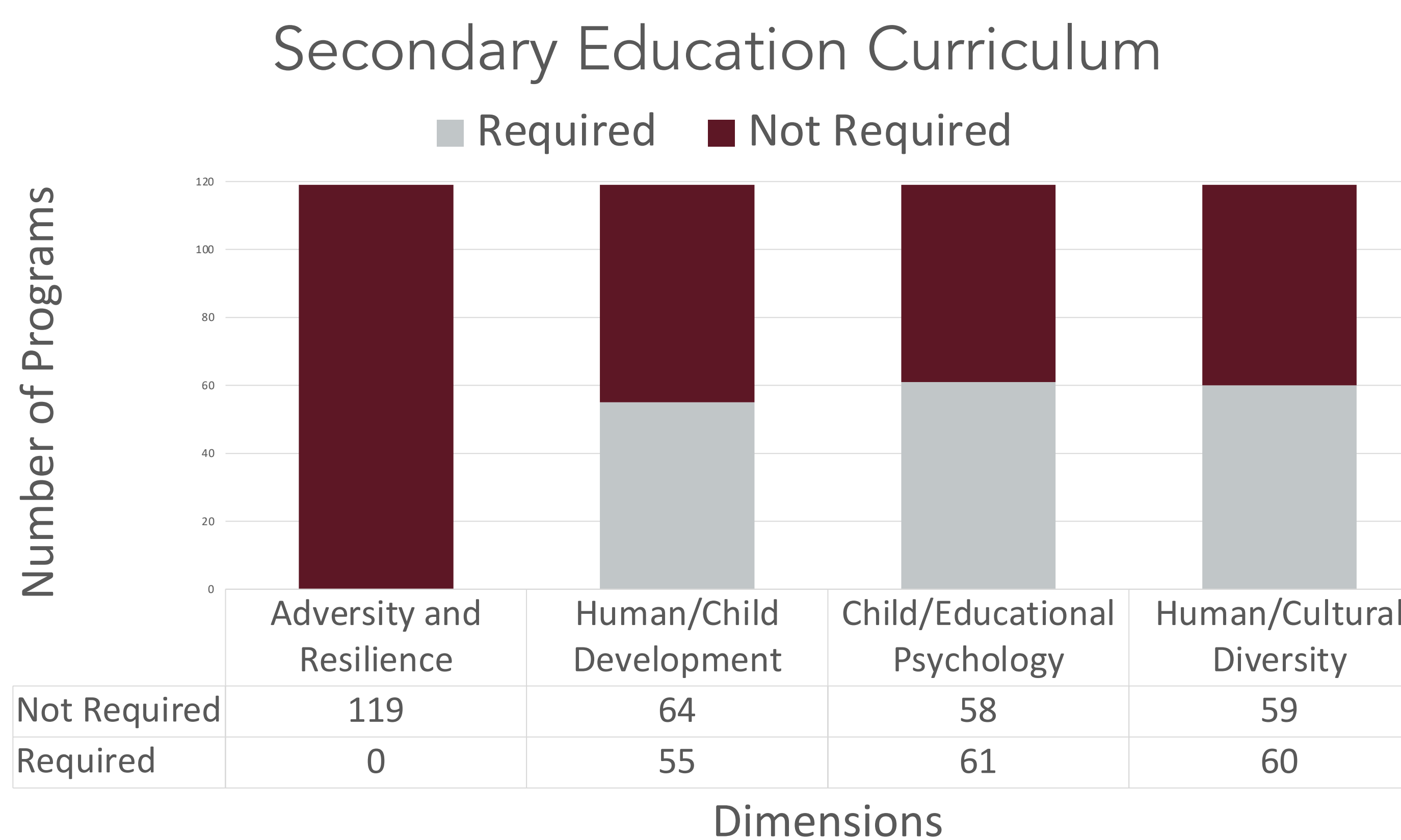
- Courses primarily focused on the following dimensions:
  - Adversity and Resilience
  - Human/Child Development
  - Child/Educational Psychology
  - Human/Cultural Diversity

### Procedure

- 119 elementary and secondary TEPs accredited by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparedness (CAEP) were examined separately for inclusion of each dimension in required curriculum.



Graph 1: Results from Elementary Education Programs



Graph 2: Results from Secondary Education Programs

## DISCUSSION

The results suggest a gap in the trauma-informed content taught to future educators during their TEP. This indicates a need for additional adversity and resilience training and professional development for educators, especially given the prevalence of child traumatic stress and the growing number of policies and initiatives promoting trauma-sensitive schools. Directions for future research:

- Examining perceived teacher self-efficacy with and use of trauma-informed practices in the pre-K–12 classroom.
- Analyzing pre- and post-training effects in school-based intervention programs that implement adversity and resilience training for teachers.
- Developing accessible trauma-informed continuing education and professional development programs.

## REFERENCES

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