AN EXPLORATION OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF BEGINNING LATINO TEACHERS: AN EXAMINATION OF NEW TEACHERS WITH LESS THAN THREE YEARS OF EXPERIENCE AND NEW TO THEIR POSITION

By

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To the Faculty of Washington State University:

The members of the Committee appointed to examine the dissertation of MIGUEL ANGEL VILLARREAL find it satisfactory and recommend that it be accepted.

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To my father and mother, Jerry and Delia, who have always valued hard work and education, thank you. To my brothers and sisters—Becky, Tony, David, Benjy, Danny, and Laurel—thanks for always being there to support me in my goals. Families are forever!
The purpose of this study was to examine beginning Latino/a teachers’ perceptions of recruitment and retention. A qualitative research approach was used to gain insight into how Latino/a beginning teachers viewed their personal recruitment to the education profession.

Using an open-ended interview process, the researcher selected twenty participants from school districts representing Eastern Washington State schools. These twenty beginning teachers, as defined as less than three years of experience and currently in their first year of a new assignment or new to the teaching profession, provided the researcher with details and experiences they had prior to entering education and current perceptions of what they believe influences their decision to remain in the teaching profession.

Results from the study yielded two general core themes: (a) supporting and encouraging experiences from family and significant adults to enter education (recruitment) and (b) personal affirmation and support within the school setting to assist in their stability (retention). The data further revealed beginning Latino/a teachers relied on supporting/encouraging experiences from parents, teachers, and family in their decision-making process to enter and remain as an educator.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dedication</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTERS</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Problem</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement of Purpose</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Research Methods</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Study</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting for the study</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Questions</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidentiality and Ethics</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization of the Study</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. LITERATURE REVIEW</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers of Color in Education</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment to Education</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Departure from Education</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate Academic Preparation</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attraction to Other Careers</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsupportive Working Conditions</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Cultural and Social Support Groups</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Increased Standards and Competency Testing ......................... 21
Financial Considerations ................................................................. 21
High Attrition Rates among Minority Teachers ......................... 23
Teachers of Color ............................................................................. 25
Retention Strategies and Suggestions .............................................. 27
Program Components Identified as Elective ................................. 29
Conditions That Help to Support and Sustain Induction Efforts .... 31
Potential Benefits of Induction Programs ......................................... 32
The Role of Induction in Bridging System Gaps ......................... 35
The Role of Research ......................................................................... 36

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN ....................... 38

Research Methodology ................................................................. 38
Site Selection ............................................................................... 39
Participant Selection .................................................................. 39
Participants .................................................................................... 41
Data Collection .............................................................................. 41
Data Analysis ................................................................................ 42
Validity/Credibility ....................................................................... 43
Confidentiality and Ethics .............................................................. 43
Ethics ................................................................................................ 44
Delimitations and Limitations ....................................................... 44

4. ANALYSIS .................................................................................. 46
Participants .................................................................................... 46
Alpine .............................................................................................46
Murray............................................................................................46
Rose Park .......................................................................................47
Bountiful ........................................................................................48
Jordan .............................................................................................48
Waco ..............................................................................................50
Ferris ..............................................................................................51
Coding...............................................................................................52
Supportive/Encouraging Experiences (Recruitment) ..................52
Parents ...........................................................................................53
Teachers .........................................................................................56
Personal/Family Experiences......................................................58
Personal Affirmation (Retention) ..................................................59
Relationships .............................................................................59
Career Competence .................................................................61
Personal Ownership .................................................................63
Sense of Acceptance ...............................................................64
Chapter Summary .........................................................................66

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS .........................68
Conclusions ..................................................................................68
Influenced by Adults .................................................................69
Relationships .............................................................................71
Support from Colleagues and Administration .........................71
Recommendations..............................................................................................73

Universities and Colleges...............................................................................74

Local Districts .............................................................................................75

State Policy Changes..................................................................................76

Retention ......................................................................................................77

Compensation ..............................................................................................77

Changing Landscape ..................................................................................78

REFERENCES ................................................................................................80

APPENDICES

A. Latino/a Interview Guide ..........................................................................89

B. Research Assistant/Transcriber Confidentiality Agreement ....................90

C. Washington State University Consent Form .........................................91
Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to all those who have chosen the noblest profession of all—a teacher. Through the art of teaching we change the world and find that true joy comes from serving our fellow men. May we never forget who we are.

“Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our Light, not our darkness, that most frightens us. We ask ourselves: Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented and fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small doesn’t serve the world. There’s nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won’t feel insecure around you. We were born to make manifest the Glory of God that is within us. It is not just in some of us; it is in everyone. And, as we let our own Light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our fear, our presence automatically liberates others.” Marianne Williamson
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

The American educational system has come under increased scrutiny in recent years with the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act. Teachers and students are faced with rigorous state assessments, and teachers are required to be highly qualified. The focus on hiring highly qualified teachers, while ensuring teachers of color are recruited, has increased the importance of personnel decisions (Oliva & Staudt, 2004).

While state and national standards for teachers are increasing, a corresponding decrease in the number of students of color entering postsecondary education is occurring. This decline is most pronounced for teachers of color, especially Latino/a educators (Oliva & Staudt, 2004). The student population in the U.S. is becoming increasingly diverse, which should make the low numbers of teachers of color in the system a concern for districts with high concentrations of minority students.

Currently, of the 47 million school-age children in the U.S. public schools, approximately 39 percent are linguistic or racial/ethnic minority children (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). Correspondingly, of three million K-12 educators, only 13 percent are people of color (U.S. Department of Education, 1996). Universities find that minority student enrollments are declining and not providing enough candidates for teacher preparation programs. For example, at the University of Texas, a state university with a student enrollment of 50,000 students, the teacher preparation program had student enrollments that were 10 percent Hispanic and 3.6 percent African-American (Farrell, 1990).

The lack of minority teachers entering the field poses a challenge to districts looking for highly qualified minority role models for a student population that is on the rise (Oliva &
Increasing the number of people of color in the teaching force has many benefits (Ayalon, 2004). Teachers of color are likely to provide positive role models to children of color (Clewell & Villegas, 1998); empower children of color to succeed in school (Cummings, 2001; Nieto, 1999); build bridges and cultural understanding between the students’ homes and the schools (Garcia, 1995; Lee & Slaughter-Defoe, 1995; Tyron, 2001); and are more likely to be willing to work in urban settings than white teachers (Darling-Hammond & Sclan, 1996).

Research Problem

A current portrait of Washington’s student enrollment illustrates that in Washington in the past ten years, the student population has risen from 974,504 to 1,031,846. Elfers and Plecki (2009) reported through the Center for Strengthening the Teaching Profession that nearly 57,000 teachers worked in Washington in 2007–2008 school year, up from slightly more than 50,000 in 1996.

In Washington State, an increased student enrollment has surfaced a more diverse student population. Elfers and Plecki (2009) found in 2007, one-third of Washington’s students (33.8 percent) represented racial and ethnic minorities, while 92.5 percent of the state’s teachers were white. The Elfer and Plecki (2009) report noted that students of color in Washington have increased more than tenfold over the past ten years, while the percentage of teachers of color increased by only one percentage point over this same period. In the same study, Hispanic students represented 14.7 percent of all students while 2.7 percent of all Washington State teachers were Hispanic. Such an imbalance of Latino teachers in Washington warrants a study that describes and analyzes new Latino/a teachers’ experiences prior to entering the teaching field, especially those that were perceived as lures to the
profession. Research is lacking that specifically focuses on the working lives of, and challenges faced by, new Latino/a teachers in Washington. Given the current educational reform movements taking place nationally and in Washington, research is needed on how Latino/a teachers perceive their experiences and how these experiences are affecting their desires to stay in the teaching profession. The knowledge developed in this study can help policymakers, states, schools and school districts recruit and retain minority teachers.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenology narrative study is to explore the lived experiences and perceptions of new Latino/a teachers teaching in Eastern Washington. The target teachers for the study were beginning Latino/a teachers who have less than three years of experience and are new to their teaching positions. Understanding how new Latino/a teachers find meaning in their experiences can provide insight into current recruitment and retention practices. The study will serve to expand on the Guarino, Santibañez, and Daley (2006) review of empirical literature on teacher recruitment and retention. Guarino et al., (2006) found that such a review of the research is important to education policymakers, school districts, and teacher preparation programs.

While many factors contribute to the successful education of children, there is a strong consensus among the experts that the effectiveness of their teachers is the single most important educational determinant. Studies by William Sanders and June Rivera (1996); Ronald Ferguson (1991); and Steven Rivkin, Eric Hanushek, and John Kain (2001) all support the primary importance of good teaching. Sanders and Rivera (1996), for example, found that students who had strong teachers for three years in a row made reading gains that
were 54 percent higher than their fellow students who began at the same level, but who had weak teachers for three consecutive years.

There has been widespread recognition by policymakers, educators, and the American public that all children do not have the top-notch teachers they need to realize their full potential as learners. High-poverty, low-performing schools suffer from severe teacher turnover, which increases the atmosphere of failure.

Addressing these concerns requires (1) a thorough and accurate understanding of the characteristics of the teacher workforce and the impact those characteristics have on teachers’ decisions to enter and remain in teaching and their success in the classroom; and (2) a repertoire of effective strategies for recruiting, supporting, and retaining an adequate supply of good teachers and deploying them in to all classrooms.

To address this educational issue, the Education Commission of the States (2005) completed an exhaustive meta-analysis of the current research on teacher recruitment and retention. The report focused on examples of over ninety current empirical research studies. The studies offered evidence that came through systematic observations rather than from articles that were based on opinions. The criteria for the comprehensive review were as follows: peer-reviewed publications by organizations with well established peer-review processes, original studies, current studies published since 1980, addressed precisely the research questions asked, and used appropriate the research design and analysis for the study.

In the search to determine the characteristics of teachers, the empirical research found the nation’s teacher workforce continues to be predominantly white (86 percent) and female (79 percent) (Education Commission of the States 2005). The research also showed evidence that most intellectually able women decide to enter careers other than teaching now that more
career opportunities are open to them. With regard to the low percentage of minorities in the teaching profession, there is evidence that one of the reasons is the barrier that teacher certification examinations pose to minority teacher candidates. The research revealed that consistent patterns of teacher attrition are most severe among beginning teachers; however, the likelihood of a teacher leaving declines significantly after he or she has been in the classroom for four to five years. The Education Commission of the States (2005) found roughly 50 percent of teachers leave their initial assignment. The study also found that schools and districts most likely to be successful in recruiting and retaining teachers typically do not have severe student and community poverty. Consistent with common perceptions, the research showed that teacher turnover is greater in schools with relatively higher proportions of low-income, minority and academically low-performing students. Also, the study found that the qualifications of teachers in such schools tend to be inferior to the qualifications of teachers in other schools.

Addressing the working conditions of teachers, the study found that schools with greater administrative support and teacher autonomy had lower teacher attrition. The study concluded that the higher the minority enrollment of a school, the higher the rate of teacher attrition, at least among white teachers. Consequently, the researchers found evidence that attrition is greater in schools with higher levels of student poverty and also in schools with low student achievement. Analyzing the area of teacher compensation, the study found increasing teacher compensation tends to increase the rate of teacher retention. Additionally, the research evidence was inconclusive as to whether limited career-advancement opportunities in teaching contribute to attrition.
In The Education Commission of the States (2005), the review of effective induction and mentoring programs found limited evidence that induction and mentoring increases teacher retention. There is diversity among the induction and mentoring programs discussed in the literature, however, and the difficulty of distinguishing between the specific effects of induction and mentoring and those that might be attributed to other factors means the literature is inconclusive as to what precisely makes such programs successful.

Educational Research Methods

This study describes, analyzes, and interprets the experiences of beginning Latino/a teachers who have less than three years of experience and are new to their positions in Washington State. There are multiple ways to classify educational research studies. This study utilizes qualitative, phenomenologically oriented research methodology as outlined by Seidman (1991), Creswell (2003), and Rubin and Rubin (2005). The decision to use qualitative research was made with the understanding that the goal was to provide a written account of the social phenomena that new Latino/a teachers experience. This ethnographic study is bounded by phenomenology, thus illustrating the perceptions, ideas, and thoughts of new Latino/a teachers and their experiences in making the adjustments in their new careers. Essentially, this phenomenological approach is based on the concept that reality consists of the meaning of experiences of those being studied. Wiersma and Jurs (2005) indicate that “the phenomenological approach emphasizes the meaning of reality is, in essence, in the ‘eyes and minds of the beholders’, the way the individuals being studied perceive their experiences” (p. 243).
The Study

Current national trends indicate that many states are dealing with increasing populations of students of color; that school districts have teachers of color proportionately well below the student of color enrollment; and that the numbers of teachers of color nationally is disproportionately lower. Student enrollment projections indicate that by the year 2020 approximately one-third of elementary and secondary students in the United States will be ethnic minorities (Jones, 1997). In order to meet the educational needs of a growing minority student population, gaining insight on the recruitment and retention of new Latino/a teachers and knowledge of some of their early experiences can shed new light on potential best practices and strategies in the field. For many school districts located in isolated areas, Latino/a teachers may be difficult to recruit and retain. The purpose of this qualitative research study was to understand and analyze the experiences and perceptions of new Latino/a teachers in school districts in Eastern Washington State. This study gathered and examined perspectives and perceptions from such teachers currently in their first teaching assignment, but with three or less years of teaching experience. Through the study, teachers expressed their underlying motivation for entering the teaching profession and helped identify sustaining structures they encountered that supported their desire to remain in the classroom. The survey data collected from this study will provide valuable insight for districts that currently are struggling with new teacher recruitment and retention of beginning Latino/a teachers.

Setting for the Study

The setting for this study was in public school districts located in Eastern Washington State. All the teachers who participated in the study were of Latino/a descent and were
currently in their first teaching assignment with no more than three years of experience. This qualitative study used open interviews collected through face-to-face visits and direct phone calls.

**Research Questions**

Two guiding questions framed the research:

1. What were the influences on Latino/a teachers that helped them decide to enter education?
2. What support structures do Latino/a teachers identify as influential in supporting their decisions to remain in education?

**Confidentiality and Ethics**

Because of my current administrative position in my district, I made sure that all the participants understood the purpose of the study. Furthermore, I made sure that all participants were fully aware they did not have to participate. All participants had the chance and were encouraged to ask questions or get clarification on any issues pertaining to this study before they consented to participate as a partner.

Participants signed an informed consent form (see Appendix C) that was approved by the Institutional Review Board to help address the issues of confidentiality and ethics. Once it was signed, a copy was given to each of the participants for their records. This helped to assure participants that no harm would come to them and that the information they provided would be kept confidential. All data collected for this study was kept in locked files that were only accessible by the researcher. The researcher used pseudonyms for the names and districts for all the participants in this study.
Organization of the Study

This qualitative research study is organized into five chapters. Chapter One provides the introduction to the study. Several areas of the literature are reviewed, analyzed, and examined in Chapter Two: (a) an historical overview of teacher recruitment and retention nationally, (b) the recruitment and draw to education, (c) departure from education, (d) the role of minority teachers, and (e) recruitment and retention strategies. Chapter Three provides a detailed narrative account that outlines the study and what transpired. It also describes the researcher’s positionality, the role of the literature review, the analysis, and methods for the collection of the data. Chapter Four provides an analysis of the findings. Finally, Chapter Five discusses the conclusions drawn from the findings of the study. Additionally, this chapter provides recommendations for school districts as they look to recruit and retain Latino/a teachers.
CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

Both in Washington State and nationally, the number of students of color entering schools is growing. At the same time, the number of teacher of color continues to remain small and stagnant (Elfers & Plecki, 2009). This literature review examines research on recruitment and retention of Latino/a teachers, with a focus on why first-year teachers selected education as a career and what factors influenced their decision to continue teaching beyond their initial year.

Teachers of Color in Education

According to Collison (1988) most states with large numbers of students of color have a disproportionate number of teachers of color. This prevailing condition—in which students of color represent over one-third of the school enrollments, yet teachers of color represent merely one-tenth of the nation’s teacher force (Clewell & Villegas, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 2005)—is important, yet rarely considered factor amid past teacher shortages. The number of minorities entering the teaching profession continues to remain low; hence, most new teachers entering into the field are members of the majority group (Clark & Flores, 2001). White teachers comprise approximately 80 percent of all teachers, while minority students comprise approximately 40 percent of students (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2005; National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, 2003). The trend is not likely to change in the future without recruitment of minority teachers. According to Faber (1991), Black and Latino students make up more than 25 percent of the 40 million children enrolled in public schools. The National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (1997) stated that at least two million teachers will need to be hired over the next ten
years, and current faculty development programs are simply not producing sufficient numbers of new teachers to meet the demand. The roots of this schooling crisis are found in two macro-demographic trends: increasing student enrollments and increasing teacher turnover due to a “graying” teaching force.

Researchers such as Kirby, Berends, and Naftel (1999) pointed out that while the enrollment of minority students in public schools was expected to increase dramatically in the following 10 to 20 years, the recruitment of minority individuals into the teaching profession did not keep pace in the 1980s and early 1990s. Additionally, they concluded that new teachers continued to be predominantly white. A number of studies reviewed have attempted to illuminate the reasons why there is not greater minority representation in the teacher workforce. Several studies (Dometrius & Sigelman, 1988; Gitomer, Latham, & Ziomek, 1999; Murnane, 1991) have provided evidence that teacher certification examinations may be a barrier for the entry of minority candidates into the teaching profession, specifically those who are African-American. The literature clearly indicates, however, that national trends do not necessarily reflect local trends. Kirby, Berends, and Naftel (1999) focused on the state of Texas, where they found the percentage of Hispanic teachers rose from 11 percent in 1981 to 15 percent of all K-12 teachers in Texas in 1996, while the percentage of African-American teachers declined from 11 percent to 8 percent during the same period.

Researchers continue searching for reasons why minorities are not adequately represented in the current student demographic populations. J. A. Gordon (1994) conducted a descriptive study of 140 minority teachers in California in the early 1990s. At least one-fourth of the respondents in the study identified the following factors as contributing to the
low percentages of minorities in the teaching profession: (a) poor minority high school
graduation rates, (b) negative experiences in school, (c) lack of student discipline and respect
in the classroom, (d) absence of preparation to deal with inner-city classrooms, (e) low status
and pay associated with teaching, (f) image of a teacher as a “nice,” white, middle-class
female is inconsistent with the self-image of minorities, and (g) ready availability of more
lucrative and prestigious jobs.

Supporting research conducted by Henke (2000) found the following ethnic and racial
pattern among 1992–1993 bachelor’s degrees candidates: 36 percent of white recipients
entered the teaching pipeline within four years of graduation, as did 45 percent of African-
American degree recipients, 42 percent of Latino degree recipients, and 18 percent of
Asian/Pacific Islander degree recipients. The implications for the research reviewed for the
efforts to recruit and retain minority teachers are unclear. However, reports such as the one
completed by the National Collaborative on Diversity in the Teaching Force (2004) note that
minority teachers may serve as important role models for minority students and may increase
their motivation, confidence, and sense of safety. Also, important to consider is the reality, in
spite of the emphasis many districts put on the need to recruit a greater percentage of
academically talented individuals into teaching, that teaching competes with law, medicine,
engineering, and other skilled professionals for high-achieving individuals.

Recruitment to Education

With the teacher shortage affecting hiring practices and the filling of crucial teaching
positions in schools, recruiting teachers of color looks to be challenging. Kirby, Berends, and
Naftel (1999) concluded that in Texas, the major hurdles for minorities entering the teaching
profession are high school graduation and college enrollment. Researchers Kirby, Berends,
and Naftel (1999) contend that the challenge of creating a racially and ethnically diverse teaching force for our nation is not merely one of influencing the occupational decisions of Black, Latino, and Native American college graduates. Instead, the critical challenge is to increase the high school graduation, college enrollment, and college graduation rates of Black, Latino, and Native American youth. Progress in solving this problem is the key to creating a racially and ethnically diverse, academically talented teaching force in the future.

The general response to the national teacher shortage has been for teacher educators to focus on recruiting; however, the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future report (NCTAF, 2003) identified teacher retention as a national crisis. Supporting reports by Cochran and Smith (2006) provide evidence that the teacher shortage is due to early attrition as opposed to the low number of people entering teacher training, and that retention problems are most severe in schools with large numbers of poor and minority students.

In recent years, a wide range of initiatives has been implemented to recruit new candidates into teaching. Among these are career-change programs, such as “troops-to-teachers,” designed to entice professionals into mid-career moves to teaching, and Peace Corp-like programs, such as Teach for America, designed to lure the “best and brightest” into understaffed schools. To assist these programs, states have instituted alternative certification programs, which allow college graduates to earn teacher certifications while teaching. Financial incentives such as signing bonuses, student loan forgiveness, housing assistance, and tuition reimbursement have all been instituted to aid in teacher recruitment (Hirsch, Koppich, & Knapp 2001; Feistritzer, 1997; Kopp, 1992).

The numbers of teachers of color have been declining since the growth of Affirmative Action in the 1970s, largely because the incentives and opportunities afforded by Affirmative
Action made it easier for people of color to find professional advancement in fields other than education (Watras, 2001). Prior to the Affirmative Action regulations, minorities and women were frequently discriminated against based on their race, religion, sex, or national origin. The passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 mandated adoption of diversity programs to help end segregation and discrimination, thus providing minorities and women with more opportunities in different careers areas. The American Council on Education (1988) cites the popularity and accessibility of careers in law, medicine and other health professions, computer science, and engineering as influential factors in career choices of minority students. Furthermore, education—once the most frequently chosen degree option for people of color—has slipped to third, after business and social science.

In 1987, the American Association of College Teacher Educators conducted a Minority Teacher Education Enrollment survey in Washington, D.C. The purpose of the survey was to gather information about current programs and activities related to recruitment of minority students into teaching and teachers into administration. The survey indicated that certain activities and methods did attract minorities into education. Those activities and methods included (a) providing information about scholarships, grants and loans; (b) providing counseling, tutoring, and other related services; (c) offering cooperative programs with colleges/universities; (d) providing information about career opportunities in education; (e) providing related work experiences in teaching; (f) providing information about testing entrance requirements; (g) providing information about teacher training; and (h) providing linkage with friends in teacher training. An understanding of recruitment strategies and practices will be critical to gain ground on the decreasing numbers of minority teachers in the teaching profession.
Additionally, the challenge of recruiting minorities to education is layered. With regard to teacher recruitment, then, what is known about the general intellectual proficiency of those entering the teaching profession? Many states have established a variety of measures to determine intellectual competency and capacity. Such measures include college entrance examination scores, grade point average, class rank, selectivity of the college attended, IQ tests and ultimately teacher licensure examination scores. Dometrius and Sigelman’s (1988) work surrounding minorities in education draws attention to the use of admission exams to teacher preparation programs, particularly in the state of Texas. Their simple descriptive study employed a mathematical model to analyze data on 169,608 public teachers in Texas in 1982. The surveys were obtained from the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission from public school teachers in 1978, 1979, 1980 and 1982. The study found that, of these teachers, 11.7 percent (19,876) were African-American and 12.2 percent (20,610) were Latino. The research found the percentage of African-Americans and Latinos who failed the Texas Examination of Current Administrators and Teachers (for certification) or the Pre-Professional Skills Test (for admission to a teacher education program) was significantly higher than for prospective white teachers. Using the model to predict the proportion of African-American and Latino teachers by 1996, the study found that, other things being equal, the higher failure rates on the tests would lead to a decline of roughly 13–42 percent in the proportion of African-American teachers in the Texas workforce and 15–31 percent in the proportion of Latino teachers.

A study conducted by Gitomer, Latham, and Ziomek 1999 (as cited by Allan, 2005) reviewed over 360,000 records on individuals who took the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) or American College Test (ACT) college entrance examinations from 1977–1995 and also
took the Praxis I or Praxis II tests. The study found that, of the 88,567 people who took the Praxis I, white candidates passed with the highest rate (87 percent), while 77 percent of Latino and 55 percent of African-American candidates passed. Of the 272,064 teacher candidates taking the Praxis II test for licensure during the same period, white candidates again passed at the highest rate (92 percent), while 68 percent of Latino and 65 percent of African-American candidates passed. The researchers noted that the teacher candidate pool was overwhelmingly white even before testing (85 percent), so the likely effect of testing was to increase the proportion of white teachers even further.

Departure from Education

According to the Education Alliance at Brown University (2004), there are seven reasons why there is underrepresentation of minority teachers. These are (a) inadequate academic preparation, (b) attraction to other careers, (c) unsupportive working conditions, (d) lack of cultural and social support groups, (e) increased standards and competency testing, (f) financial considerations, and (g) high attrition rates among minority preservice teachers. Each reason will be discussed in the following section.

Inadequate Academic Preparation

Urban and rural schools have the hardest time recruiting and retaining qualified teachers. As a result, under-qualified teachers with emergency certificates are placed in high-risk and poverty classrooms (U.S. Department of Education, 1998). Thus, students attending such public schools typically find themselves underprepared for higher education. According to the report Recruiting New Teachers (2000), although poverty is not a problem unique to racially and ethnically diverse populations, almost half of the children from racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse families in the United States are poor. Many minority
children attend poor, underserved schools where poverty and dropout rates are high and achievement is low.

In 2002, Loeb, Lankford, and Wyckoff found that teachers newly hired in 1993 who transferred between districts in New York State between 1993–1998 tended to move to districts in which the proportion of poor and non-white students was about 50–60 percent smaller than in their old districts. For teachers in the New York City area who changed districts, their new districts had an average of one-third the proportion of poor students and one-half the proportion of minority students. For within-district transfers statewide, schools to which teachers transferred had on an average of 4 percent fewer poor students and 2 percent fewer non-white students. The study also found that schools with larger proportions of poor, minority or low-performing students tended to have teachers whose qualifications were substantially inferior to those of teachers in other schools. Lack of certification, failure on general knowledge examinations, and graduation from less-competitive colleges also contributed to less-skilled teachers in poor schools.

Attraction to Other Careers

The demand for talented people in private industry contributes to chronic teacher shortages in some fields, such as math and the physical sciences (Claycomb & Hawley, 2000). Many minority students find themselves attracted to business, science, or math degrees that can lead to lucrative jobs in the future. The American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (1992) found that interest among minority students in a teaching career declined from 19.3 percent in 1970 to 6.2 percent in 1985. Supporting research conducted by Murnane and Olsen (1989) found that a quarter of the 8,462 teachers in North Carolina, 7,785 teachers in Michigan and 1,377 teachers in Colorado who began teaching
between 1975 and 1982 and quit their first teaching assignment returned to teaching within five years of quitting. Teachers who taught mathematics, chemistry, and physics were most unlikely to return to teaching. The lure of other professional jobs kept the teachers with mathematical and science backgrounds from returning to classrooms.

The researcher Murnane (1991) conducted a National Longitudinal Survey with teachers from North Carolina that specifically examined minority representation in the teaching profession. The study found that minority representation in the national teaching force declined dramatically from the 1960s to the 1980s. Approximately 60 percent of African-Americans who graduated from college in 1967 entered teaching within five years of graduation, compared to approximately 38 percent of white 1967 graduates. By 1984, those figures had declined dramatically for both groups: only 11 percent of African-Americans who graduated in 1984 entered teaching and only 12 percent of white graduates. Mirroring the national trend, the study found the representation of black college graduates among teaching licensees in North Carolina declined from approximately 20 percent in 1977 to 10 percent in 1982. The study attributed the decline in the proportion of African-American teachers to three factors: (a) the introduction of more stringent testing requirements for teachers, especially standardized testing; (b) expanded alternative labor market opportunities for minorities during the decades in question; and (c) inferior high school preparation for African-American students that resulted in lower college attendance and completion rates.

With regards to the lure of other professions, a particular study conducted by Henke (2000) found that graduates who had become teachers and who had college entrance examination scores in the top quartile were twice as likely to have left teaching as those with scores in the bottom quartile. In addition, among those who were teaching four years after
graduation, only two-fifths of those in the top quartile reported they expected to be teaching three years later, in contrast to three-quarters of teachers with scores in the bottom three quartiles.

Unsupportive Working Conditions

Poor conditions, low salaries, crowded classrooms, and students’ lack of respect for teachers discourage minority and white students alike from the teaching profession (Darling-Hammond, Pittman, & Ottinger, 1987, as cited in Fenwick, 2001). Teachers in urban and rural areas often experience the lowest student achievement levels, the highest dropout rates, the fewest teacher resources, the highest number of discipline problems, and the lowest levels of teacher control over curricular and pedagogical decisions (Torres, Santos, Peck, & Cortes, 2004).

Rivkin, Hanushek, and Kain (2001) combined a simple descriptive study and regression analysis in their study of 378,790 Texas teachers between 1993 and 1996. The study found that school characteristics played a large role in influencing teacher movements across schools and exits from the system. Schools serving academically disadvantaged students and high minority enrollments had greater difficulty retaining teachers than high-achieving, low-minority schools. This was apparently mainly due to the movements of white teachers (the majority), who appeared to gravitate toward schools with non-minority, higher-income students. The study also revealed that African-American teachers, on the other hand, tended to move into schools with a greater proportion of black enrollment than the schools they left.

One particular study looked at the distribution of teacher qualifications across different types of schools and districts as related to attrition and unsupportive working
conditions. Researchers Carroll, Reichardt, and Guariano (2000) performed a regression analysis of data on over 107,000 K-12 teachers from a sample of 738 school districts in California who were employed in 1994 or 1995 and data on some 36,500 teachers who were newly hired by those districts in 1995 or 1996. The study found higher attrition and vacancy rates in high-minority districts. The higher the percentage of African-American students in a teacher’s school, the greater the likelihood the teacher would leave the district. Within a district, the higher the percentage of African-American and Latino students in a teacher’s school, the greater the likelihood that the teacher would transfer to another school district with a lower percentage of minorities. Also, districts serving a very large number of Latino students were found to have the greatest difficulty filling teaching vacancies. Similarly the likelihood that a newly hired teacher had a teaching credential was found to decrease as the percentage of African-American and Latino students in a school increased.

_Lack of Cultural and Social Support Groups_

Additionally, for new teachers, social and cultural support groups are vital. The lack of support in rural and suburban placements often causes minorities to leave the community after one or two years (Pesek, 1993). Fenwick (2001) states that communities without minority associations or a strong minority presence in the teaching ranks often have difficulty attracting new minority teachers. Fenwick (2001) also argues that teachers coming directly from college expect to enjoy some sense of bonding with colleagues of their own culture.

Lack of cultural and social support for some minorities is the determining factor why potential teachers don’t choose education as a profession. Research conducted by King (1993) found that beginning African-American, Caribbean-American and African teachers from a particular institution of higher learning expressed the reasons why their peers did not
choose education as a career choice. The study participants cited lack of prestige and respect, low salaries, social isolation, difficult working conditions, and other career options for minorities as the main deterrents.

*Increased Standards and Competency Testing*

Torres, Santos, Peck, and Cortes (2004) contend that increased standards and competency testing for teachers have contributed to the minority teacher shortage. Data suggests that minorities consistently score lower than whites on standardized tests for entry into teacher preparation and teacher licensure programs (Gitomer, Latham, & Ziomek, 1999). Gitomer, Latham, and Ziomek (1999) found that the group of individuals who passed the Praxis I test for admission to schools of education had math scores comparable to the average scores of all college-bound seniors (514 versus 511) and verbal scores higher than the average scores of all college-bound seniors (525 versus 505). Teacher candidates who passed the Praxis II teacher licensure test had SAT scores that were lower than the average for college graduate (507 versus 542 in math and 522 versus 543 for verbal section). In contrast, those who passed Praxis II for an academic content area had higher SAT verbal scores than college graduates in general, and those pursuing licensure in mathematics or science had higher SAT math.

*Financial Considerations*

Low salaries affect both the recruitment and retention of teachers and may discourage the most academically talented college graduates from pursuing careers in teaching (Torres et al., 2004). Teachers’ salaries and benefits are considerably lower than those of other careers that attract college graduates, and the salary gap widens with years of experience. Darling-
Hammond (1996) suggested that increased opportunities and financial incentives lure talented and qualified minority students away from the teaching profession.

Several studies that looked at the impact of compensation on recruitment in general illustrated that potential future teachers are aware of the financial impacts for livelihood. Evans (1997) investigated the attitudes of 98 engineering freshman at a medium-sized Midwestern university in 1983 toward science or mathematics teaching as a career choice. On the basis of a survey questionnaire, Evans distinguished those students who expressed interest in teaching at some point and took some action to explore that interest from those who were not interested in teaching. Both teaching-oriented students and non-teaching-oriented students ranked low salaries first among the reasons that discouraged them from pursuing a teaching career. The second and third most discouraging factors for teaching-oriented students were the perceived monotony and lack of job security the students associated with teaching.

For district administrators, ensuring that salaries are competitive with other surrounding districts is often an important factor in whether a teacher accepts a teaching assignment. Reed and Busby (1985) conducted a study specifically on teacher recruitment and retention in rural schools. It analyzed results from a survey of 67 superintendents in rural districts in Virginia. The study found that 78 percent of the new rural hires reported overall were made in districts offering high level of incentives. Such incentives were not necessarily in the form of salary, though all were financial. Sixty-three percent of the districts reported offering starting salaries that were competitive; 96 percent reported offering health insurance, life insurance, or good retirement or leave plans as recruitment incentives; 47 percent offered assistance finding housing; and 3 percent provided assistance with moving expenses.
High Attrition Rates among Minority Teachers

Over the last 10 years the attrition rate for minority teachers has averaged about 10 percent annually, and in 1995–1996 the average age of teachers was 46 (Torres et al., 2004). At the same time, 30 percent of African-American teachers were over 55, suggesting that attrition is likely to rise at a higher rate for them than other teachers. The aging of the teacher workforce implies that the demand for new teachers is likely to increase dramatically in the next few years as retirement exacerbates the teacher shortage (Kirby, Berends, & Naftel, 1999).

Studies on teacher retention demonstrate that some new teachers are both resilient and persistent, remaining in the profession despite being confronted with the same challenges and obstacles of those who leave (Yost, 2006). In a survey of literature on teacher resiliency, Bobeck (2002) found that five primary factors are responsible for teachers remaining in the field despite challenges they face: (a) relationships (mentoring programs; administrative and parental support); (b) career competence and skills; (c) personal ownership of careers (ability to solve problems, set goals, and help students); (d) sense of accomplishment (experience success); and (e) sense of humor. As administrators begin to understand the experience of being a first-year Latino/a teacher, they can begin to build resources to recruit and retain teachers of color and thus ensure new generations of ethnically diverse students opportunities for educational success.

Ingersoll (2003) has suggested that nearly half of all teachers abandon the teaching profession by the end of their first five years of service. The research has pointed to various reasons for the departure, including dissatisfaction with their jobs due to low pay, lack of support, and limited decision-making power. Teachers are leaving teaching much earlier in
their careers than are professionals from other fields (Dove, 2004, p. 8). Since the early 1990s the number of teachers leaving the profession has surpassed the number of those entering the profession (Darling-Hammond, 2003).

Such attrition rates come at a high cost to teacher education programs, school communities, and student achievement. For example, teachers’ limited knowledge of the culture and community of their students often results in teachers approaching minority students from a deficit perspective. This places barriers to their development of close relationships with minority students (Monzo & Rueda, 2001). This may be especially problematic given that effective learning is dependent on social mediation on the part of the teacher and contextual appropriateness for the student (Monzo & Rueda, 2001). As such, teacher education programs can look to prepare teachers to work with minority students and can address the problem of minority teacher retention by incorporating perspectives of teachers from diverse backgrounds into the curriculum (Villegas & Lucas, 2004).

The Alliance for Excellent Education 2004 (as cited by Whisnant, Elliot, & Pynchon, 2005) conducted considerable work to address the nationwide attrition rate among teachers. The researchers found that nearly 6 percent of the teaching force is likely to leave the profession within the first teaching year, totaling over 200,000 teachers. The same report stated that the rate of attrition is roughly 50 percent higher in poor schools than wealthier ones, and teachers new to the profession are more likely to leave than their seasoned counterparts. The study concluded that resources and expertise are key factors that influence whether a teacher stays in the profession.

Connolly (2000) reported that between one-third and one-half of new teachers leave by their seventh year. When interviewed, 19 percent of new teachers indicated that they
intended to leave teaching within five years. O’Brien and Tye (2002) followed 551 teachers for seven years after they completed their certification programs, only to find that 49 percent were no longer teaching at the end of the seven-year period.

Many studies have examined the acculturation of a teacher or administrator in school sites. It has been found to rarely be an easy process even under the best of circumstances (Matthews, 2003). Very little has been written, however, about how the larger cultural discontinuity between the first-year teacher’s ethnicity and the dominant race at the school might make acculturation even more difficult.

Teachers of Color

Teachers of color play a range of roles in public school classrooms. According to Vygotsky (1978), “Learning occurs in the context of social interactions, with the learner engaging in culturally meaningful activities, with a more competent other who is responsive to the need for assistance.”

Several scholars (Adair, 1984; Graham, 1987; Stewart, Meir, Lafollette, & England, 1989) have called attention to the need for representative role models for children and youth. The decline in the number of teachers of color has serious consequences for all children. According to Jacullo-Noto (1991) teachers of color are necessary role models for children as they develop their own ideas concerning which individuals can hold roles of authority and influence.

Minority teachers are needed because of their many roles, perspectives, and practices. Teachers of color provide useful insights into the difficulties faced by students of color because they naturally tend to be more aware of the nature and nuances of these problems (Mayes, 2004). In addition, schools benefit from a diverse faculty in curricular decision
making. Diversity in the school personnel allows different views to be heard and considered when decisions are made about instruction and curriculum (The Education Commission, 1990).

In light of the increasing numbers of students of color populating the nation’s schools, the escalating societal ills confronting students, and the urgent need for an increased presence for teachers of color, the research on the presence of the teaching of philosophy and pedagogy of minorities suggests that the voice of minority teachers needs to be heard (King, 1993). Minority teachers serve as role models for all students. The research shows minority teachers are important in many ways for minority students. This perspective supports an assumption that students of color need teachers of color in their learning environment to ensure that their aspiration levels (Smith, 1998), achievement levels (Holmes, 1986), and sense of worth will be advanced rather than diminished.

Many minority teachers have the experience and ability to allow all students to develop an appreciation of diversity and cultural difference. Without sufficient exposure to minority teachers throughout their education both minority and non-minority students will characterize the teaching profession and the academic enterprise in general as better suited for non-minorities (Loehr, 1988). If students do not experience minority teachers throughout their schooling, the message may be that teaching is not a career option for minorities. The very presence of minority teachers proves to minority students that they could become teachers.

Minority teachers are able to communicate with minority students about personal values, the collective power and political gains of choosing academic achievement, and the consequences of failure. Such communication processes involve students in exchanges,
which help students to become empowered and involved in their education (Foster, 1990). This communication process also includes helping minority students make the connection between what they know and live and what is unfamiliar.

While shared cultural background does not guarantee that teachers will be successful with students, there is an unspoken belief that teachers from similar backgrounds may be able to relate to students’ experiences, understand their motivations, and forge productive alliances with parents (Joint Center for Political Studies, 1989). Foster (1990) suggest that minority teachers serve as liaisons between home and school, making linkages that are trusted and credible in minority communities.

It may be that the role of the teacher in the lives of students of color is far more important than the teacher’s role in the lives of middle-class Caucasian-American youth (Irvine, 1997). Increasing the number of minority teachers is critical because they are usually the professional role models having the earliest and most prolonged contact with children.

The Education Commission of the States (1990) reported that because schooling provides the earliest exposure to children to life outside their home, a diverse teaching force allows all students to understand people who come from backgrounds different from their own and to see persons of different cultures in leadership positions.

Retention Strategies and Suggestions

Ingersoll (2003) suggested the following areas of concern in retaining teachers in the field: Increasing salaries, student discipline (teacher support), decision-making influence, class size reduction, and teacher mentoring. The data suggest the probability of turnover of first-year, inexperienced teachers who did not participate in any induction and mentoring program was 40 percent. In contrast, those who participated in some mentoring/induction
program had turnover rates of 28 percent, and those who were involved in a full mentoring program experienced a turnover rate of 18 percent.

In a further study, Ingersoll & Smith (2004) examined nationwide data on schools and induction programs to determine their effectiveness. They found that it was not enough to simply label a teacher as having been “inducted.” Rather, induction includes several key elements: mentor programs, new teacher seminars, common planning times, teacher networks, reduced workloads, and extra resources. He discovered that those teachers who received no induction support were 40 percent more likely to leave the profession. If a teacher experienced three induction components, their turnover probability was 28 percent. If they participated in six induction practices, this rate dropped to 24 percent. The more support a new teacher received, the more likely he or she would stay in the profession.

The importance of teacher mentor programs for teacher training and retention has been well documented (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004; National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, 2003). A variety of mentoring philosophies and strategies exist. One such method is the collaborative approach, in which mentors and new teachers are equal partners (Glickman, 1990) and democratic pedagogy is employed (Freire, 1970).

Studies provide clear evidence of the rising number of beginning induction programs under development at state and district levels. Two factors make it difficult to make statements about effective teacher induction. The wide variability of factors in programs of beginning induction (elective vs. mandatory participation and one or two component vs. multiple component programs) derails researchers who attempt to gauge impact (Fiedeler & Haskelkorn, 1999). Furthermore, many researchers report that few teacher induction programs include a rigorous outcomes-based orientation that measures changes in teachers’
practice or, even more significantly, gains in student achievement (Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004).

Despite the varying models to teacher induction, a study conducted by Whisnant, Elliott and Pynchon of the Center for Strengthening the Teaching Profession (2005) identified four key areas that reveal promise and potential pitfalls of induction programs: (a) program components identified as elective; (b) conditions that help to support and sustain induction efforts; (c) potential benefits of induction programs; and (d) the role of induction in bridging systems gaps.

*Program Components Identified as Elective*

As is true of much of the teacher induction literature, current studies do not conclusively establish the program components that have the greatest potential to affect the quality and retention of beginning teachers. While research is needed to verify which aspects of programs are the most productive, some effective programs components have begun to be identified (Lopez, 2004). Two recent papers drawn from different sources—Recruiting New Teachers and the Alliance for Excellent Education (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2004; Fideler and Haselkorn, 1999)—identify and describe nearly identical criteria for establishing comprehensive programs of new teacher induction. They recommend that schools and districts incorporate the following components into their processes for inducting new teachers.

**Table 1**

*Comprehensive Components*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMPONENT</th>
<th>FUNCTIONS/STRUCTURE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Orientation Program</td>
<td>• Address building and district norms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Identify available resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality, Structured Mentoring</td>
<td>• Select mentors according to rigorous criteria</td>
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</table>
| Common Planning Time | • Establish provisions for time, support, and stipends  
| | • Assure the mentor/mentee matches have a common instructional focus  
| Intensive and Ongoing Professional Development | • Focus on lesson design and curriculum  
| | • Use student assessment data to guide planning  
| | • Promote collaboration  
| External Network of Teachers | • Identify the teaching needs of the beginning teacher and the mentor  
| | • Expand content knowledge  
| | • Address diversity in learning and culture  
| Standards-Based Evaluation | • Enable mentors and novices to gather in like groups  
| | • Encourage reflective dialogue  
| | • Match established standards to practice  
| | • Support demonstrations of performance  
| | • Encourage peer review  


Of the significant components to quality beginning teacher induction programs, mentoring has generated the most discussion, description, and research (Whisnant, Elliot, & Pynchon, 2005). Early literature and studies on mentoring focused on the mentor’s function as a support to the transition into and survival of a novice teacher’s first year. The emphasis was on practical, short-term and often emotional needs of the beginning teacher (Feiman-Nemser, 1996). Whisnant, Elliot, and Pynchon (2005) conclude that over the last decade, program developers and researchers have to begun to explore the potential of mentoring to serve as a tool to strengthen teachers’ capacity throughout their careers and advance reform agendas. Wang and Odell (2002) conducted a review of mentoring as it relates to learning to teach in reform-minded ways. They found that current mentoring assumption for teachers (humanistic, situated apprentice, and critical constructivist) all have “limitations in
developing teacher mentoring into a substantial and effective support for novices learning standards-based teaching” (p.532). Consequently, a re-conceptualization of teacher mentoring may be required to meet current reform agendas.

Conditions That Help to Support and Sustain Induction Efforts

The review of teacher induction research suggests another critical reality: without some essential supporting conditions, the most comprehensive and complete program of new teacher support will not have an impact on retention efforts. As with the program components, there is beginning to be a shared understanding of conditions across major research studies and reports reviewed (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2004; Fideler & Haselkorn, 1999; Knapp, 2004; PEN, 2003; Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2000).

Enabling conditions:

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Critical Supporting Conditions</th>
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<tr>
<td>A view of induction that is multi-year and developmental</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alignment between induction, classroom needs, and professional standards</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strong principal leaders who understand the needs of beginning teachers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tight coordination of efforts and cooperation with unions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High-quality providers of the induction program with dedicated staff resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adequate and stable source of funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional support for new teachers with little preparation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A commitment to an outcomes-rich evaluation model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incentives for novice and veteran teachers to participate induction activities</td>
</tr>
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</table>


Careful consideration to the supporting and sustaining conditions may prove to be beneficial to any district that implements or designs a mentoring program.
Potential Benefits of Induction Programs

Whisnant, Elliot and Pynchon (2005) argued that the complexities of and gaps in induction research base are laid bare when one seeks to examine the potential benefits of programs for new teachers. Consequently, they found five areas of impact of induction programs: (a) reduction in teacher attrition from the profession, (b) reduction in costs of attrition, (c) increased teacher satisfaction, (d) enhanced professional growth, and (e) development of tiered professional career model.

The largest share of impact literature is linked to the implications of new teachers’ participation in induction programs. Britton (2000), citing from Education Week’s “Quality Counts” reported the following finding: Twenty-three percent of teachers leave the profession within their first three years of teaching; the brightest novice teachers, as measured by their college entrance exams, are the most likely to leave teaching; and beginning teachers who did not participate in an induction program are twice as likely to leave teaching.

Ingersoll and Smith (2003), who advocate attention to teacher retention, suggested that spending to recruit new teachers to meet staffing shortages is a lot like putting water into a leaky bucket if these teachers leave in a few short years. Berry (2004) stated, “With new teachers turning over at astronomical rates, school and district resources are withered away as more dollars have to be spent on preparing a constant new crop of novices who arrive with little teaching knowledge and leave before they become skilled” (p. 5). The Alliance for Excellent Education (2004) estimated the cost of recruiting, hiring, and training a new teacher as approximately 30 percent of the leaving teacher’s salary.
In Washington State where approximately 500 new teachers are replaced yearly, using the standard business calculation for employee replacement—150 percent of a new teacher’s salary—it requires $42,000 of taxpayer money to replace every new teacher who leaves the profession. In Washington State, that’s $21 million lost every year. Providing the same 500 teachers with a quality, sustained professional development program would only cost $1.75 million, as well as provide an investment in the stability to students and schools (Whisnant, Elliot, & Pynchon, 2005).

Surveys have been widely used to measure novice teachers’ perceptions of the impact of mentoring or induction programs on their practice, job satisfaction, and decision to stay in the teaching profession. In a study of positive and negative influences of such programs conducted by the Public Education Network (2005), mentoring and peer/support were rated among the top five positive influences on teaching satisfaction. Ingersoll and Smith (2004) in a analysis of the 1999–2000 Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), found that almost 9 in 10 new teachers reported that their mentors were helpful (p. 690).

Recent research is changing, or perhaps broadening, the focus of the national agenda regarding student outcomes. Whereas the spotlight once clearly illuminated the student within his or her family context, the spotlight now highlights the student within his or her teacher context. Higher levels of teacher preparation and certification are associated with higher levels of student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2005). Whisnant, Elliot and Pynchon (2005) state that no research has been found on outcome-based studies that directly link levels of participation in teacher induction practices with a rising state of student achievement among the students they serve. However, they do agree that numerous papers,
surveys, and articles document the positive influence a mentor/mentee relationship has on the teaching practice of both participants in the equation.

Several reports on beginning teacher induction programs highlight the development of a tiered professional career model. The Career in Teaching Program of Rochester, NY serves as such example. It identifies the following four professional levels on a career ladder.

Table 3

**Career Ladder**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional Level</th>
<th>Requirements</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intern Teachers</td>
<td>Teachers who have completed a teacher preparation program with a practicum and are in the first full year of teaching within their certificate area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident Teachers</td>
<td>Teachers who have successfully completed their intern year; they are evaluated by both a peer review and a supervisor; resident teachers who meet criteria within five years move to the next level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Teachers</td>
<td>Teachers receiving tenure who are reviewing using a Performance Appraisal instrument that includes interviews, observations, and student data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lead Teachers</td>
<td>A voluntary leadership opportunity program open to highly qualified teachers with at least five years in the RCSD system; duties may include adjunct positions at schools of education, mentoring roles, or positions as demonstration teachers (Fideler &amp; Haselkorn, 1999).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Accordingly to Johnson (2005) the research that explores the effectiveness of career ladders and differentiated roles as an incentive to remain in teaching and as an influence in teacher satisfaction is both dated and inconclusive.
The Role of Induction in Bridging System Gaps

The most quantifiable, compelling, and worrisome consistency in the literature dealing with beginning teacher induction emerges from the statistics that compare rates of retention, attrition, certification levels, teacher attendance rates, and among other indicators, student performance in schools serving low-income students as compared with schools serving high-income students (Whisnant, Elliot, & Pynchon, 2005). Johnson (2004) and her colleagues studied hiring practices, relationships with colleagues, and curriculum and found evidence of what they termed the “support gap.” They examined rates and quality of mentor-new teacher interaction and the appropriateness of mentor match (same grade, same school, etc.) and found a statistically disquieting variation for all three points. In their study, 61 percent of the teachers in high-income schools were matched with mentors at the same grade level as compared with only 28 percent in low-income schools. The evidence from the studies of Johnson (2004, 2005) is clear: new teachers working in schools with large numbers of low-income students often do not receive the support needed to do their first jobs well. Given that the research shows that new teachers are more likely to feel successful when they feel supported in their early years of teaching and thus to remain in their school and in the teaching profession, this “support gap” is cause for alarm.

Findings from an Education Trust study cited by Johnson (2004) are similarly troubling:

No matter which study you examine, no matter which measure of teacher quality you use, the pattern is always the same—poor students, low-performing students, and students of color are far more likely than other students to have teachers who are inexperienced, uncertified, poorly educated, and under-performing. Many of those
teachers demonstrate most or all those unfortunate qualities all at the same time.

(Carey in Johnson, 2004, p. 2)

The Role of Research

Collaborative action research aims to create social change, is frequently community-based, and is carried out by practitioners in the field (Stringer, 1996). A collaborative model for mentoring does not occur unless it is based on mutual respect and learning (Udelhofen & Larson, 2003). Beginning teachers benefit from help in addressing curriculum standards and assessment, as well as from support in learning about alternate, culturally-relevant methods to meet the needs of diverse student populations (Villani, 2002). In Middleton’s (2000) study of collaborative mentoring teams, all team members benefited from participating. In particular, the beginning teacher’s enthusiasm was combined and specifically developed for a particular context and the benefit of students (Middleton, 2000). The group formed a community of learners and moved beyond the hierarchies of power present in mentoring models. Collaborative mentoring, in this experience, was highly successful for the new teacher and professionally rewarding for the university faculty (Podsen & Denmark, 2000).

Mentoring models can influence teaching, encouraging new teachers to learn from their students and continuously engage in action-research as problems are identified within the classroom. Based on this review, the need for teachers of color entering the teaching profession is definitely a growing concern for districts across America. The studies on new teacher recruitment and retention have been citing concerns for many years. The attitudes and perceptions gathered from this study will contribute to a better understanding of Latino teacher recruitment and retention. Such information will prove to be beneficial for
administrators and encourage policy change within districts that are looking to retain Latino teachers.

In summary, the literature review surfaced a growing need to understand the needs of beginning Latino/a teachers and their experiences.
CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

The purpose of this chapter is to outline the research methods used to select participants and collect and analyze data for this study on new Latino/a teacher experiences in Washington State. This chapter will discuss research methodology, site selection, participant selection, participants, data collection, data analysis, validity/creditability, confidentiality/ethics, ethics, and delimitation and limitations.

Research Methodology

This study utilized a qualitative, phenomenological research design in order to “make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (Creswell, 1998, p. 15). In the spirit of exploration, it viewed the phenomena through the lenses of the participants. The phenomenological approach was appropriate for this study in that it highlighted the perceptions of multiple individuals rather than report on a life history or a single subject matter. It is through the phenomenological approach that emphasis is placed on the meaning of reality in the eyes and minds of the participants. This study allowed new Latino/a teachers in Washington to describe their perceptions and to explore the phenomenon of new teacher attrition in such schools (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

Phenomenological interviewing allowed the participants to describe their experiences, explore their perceptions, and attach meaning to these experiences. While other research methods fill a valuable role, to achieve the purpose of this study, the stories and perspectives of individuals needed to be taken into account. Qualitative interviewing was the primary means of data collection. Recommendations and practices suggested by Seidman (1991) and Creswell (1998) have proven to be helpful and were utilized throughout this study.
Site Selection

Since the participants of the study were new Latino/a teachers, it was established that school districts in Eastern Washington with the largest potential need for Latino/a teachers would be included in this study. According to the U.S. Census Bureau 2010, Washington, Murray, Jordan, Heber, Ira, Allen and Philbrook (Pseudonyms) Counties are where the majority of Latinos reside in the state of Washington. Latinos make up 35 percent of the total population of the above counties; hence, the individual school districts represent the highest Latino student population in the state.

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Counties and Latino Population Demographics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Washington</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. From U.S. Census Bureau 2010

Participant Selection

The participants for this study were Hispanic/and or Latino/a teachers currently in their first teaching assignment within the selected school districts located in Washington State with less than three years of experience. The researcher extended an invitation to the school districts that typically recruit Latino teachers to fill teaching vacancies. Twenty teachers responded affirmatively for participation in this study. Each of the Latino/a teachers was contacted by the researcher through a personal phone call and given a brief overview of the study. For the study, a snowball sampling approach was used to locate additional participants. Snowballing included asking participants to recommend other teachers who were willing to participate in the study (Creswell, 2003). Not all individuals contacted were
interested in taking part in the study. Some believed they had nothing to share or could not find time to participate. However, in most cases, the educators who were interviewed were strongly inclined to share their experiences of being a Latino/a teacher. Information regarding years of experience, district, and assignments are displayed in Table 5. Where it was possible, face-to-face meetings took place in each of the teachers’ own classrooms or an agreed upon location.

Table 5

*Teachers, Assignments, and Years of Experience*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant (Pseudonym)</th>
<th>District (Pseudonym)</th>
<th>Level (Pseudonym)</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Years Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Donna</td>
<td>Alpine</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mimi</td>
<td>Murray</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jose</td>
<td>Murray</td>
<td>Middle School</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brandon</td>
<td>Rose Park</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elissa</td>
<td>Rose Park</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yessenia</td>
<td>Rose Park</td>
<td>Middle School</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melissa</td>
<td>Rose Park</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omar</td>
<td>Bountiful</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patty</td>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Josh</td>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>Middle School</td>
<td>ESL Teacher</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rumalda</td>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>Speech Therapist</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
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<td>Brisa</td>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>Middle School</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luis</td>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>Middle School</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allan</td>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>Middle School</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noemi</td>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rose</td>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Favi</td>
<td>Waco</td>
<td>Middle School</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roberto</td>
<td>Waco</td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephanie</td>
<td>Ferris</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>ESL Teacher</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Participants

Of the twenty participants, seven were male and thirteen were female. The participants came from a variety of educational and community backgrounds, adding diversity to the study. Throughout this report, pseudonyms will be used in identifying these individuals. District names have also been changed to protect the participants.

Data Collection

Open-ended, semi-structured interview questions were used as the main instrument for gathering information. Rubin and Rubin (2005) describe the interview process as a conversation with a partner or responsive interviewing. The rapport between the researcher and the participant becomes like a friendship. This approach allowed for flexibility in the interview process and allowed the researcher to follow the lead and ideas that emerged as the interview progressed. Wiersma and Jurs (2005) describe the interview process as an interview with an expert. The researcher assumed no knowledge or preconceived ideas and sought to learn from the participant. Both approaches blended together to create an interview protocol that provided the necessary context for eliciting deep and meaningful responses.

Each interview question drew on the perceptions and personal statements that triggered deeper conversations of the participants’ personal stories. Each of their pathways of becoming a teacher was recorded with special attention to what influences recruited them to education and the perceived retention practices that are keeping them in the teaching profession.

The interviews took approximately one hour to complete and were conducted in their current school district. The interviews were audio taped and transcribed to include the details and any nuances in the voice tone and expression. Where more detail or clarification was
needed, probing questions were asked, to gain deeper meaning and rich descriptive responses. This approach provided the researcher with the opportunity to explore themes and ideas presented by the participants. Follow-up questions emerged from the interviews themselves. Notes were taken during the interview process in order to capture specific ideas and possible follow-up questions. After each individual interview was conducted, the recorded interview was transcribed and reviewed. Following the interview strategies and techniques suggested by Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995), memos regarding themes, concepts, or ideas were jotted in the research journal/folder. Both the researcher and each research participant read interview transcripts multiple times to ensure accuracy. Each participant was contacted by phone, email, or in person for clarification of statements received during the initial interview.

**Data Analysis**

Each transcript was individually read using an open coding process. Initial themes or categories were recorded. The procedure for data analysis was based on the work from Glaser and Strauss (1967) that uses a constant comparative method to generate two basic kinds of theory: “substantive” and “formal” (pg. 32). Substantive theory is developed for a substantive, or empirical area of sociological inquiry; formal theory is developed for a formal, or conceptual area of sociological inquiry. Both substantive and formal theories must be grounded in data. In this regard, the researcher reviewed each line, sentence, and paragraph segments of the transcribed interviews to determine what codes fit the concepts suggested by the data. Each code was constantly compared to all other codes to identify similarities, differences, and general patterns. Through the process, the researcher pulled the data together into emerging themes and categories. From these themes the researcher looked
for interconnectedness and any contradictions. The final results produced data that represents a view of perceptions and experiences of new Latino/a teachers.

**Validity/Credibility**

The researcher was an instrument in the study, and the human experience was a desired and critical aspect to qualitative research. Validity was addressed in this study through member checking and asking participants to read his/her transcript for accuracy, thus addressing the threat of inaccurate or incomplete information (Creswell, 2003). Researcher biases were a potential threat in this study, as the researcher is Latino and was a classroom teacher. Further compounding this potential threat is the very nature of qualitative research, as the researcher is the data-collecting instrument. To address this potential threat, the researcher strived to remain neutral during the interview process, suspending predetermined or preconceived ideas about the participants’ experiences and potential outcomes. The researcher practiced reflexivity during the interview process (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). To maintain validity during the research process, the researcher conducted member checks to systematically solicit feedback during the interview process. This provided the participants an opportunity to clarify and verify thoughts and statements being shared during the interviews. Participant feedback was encouraged throughout the process.

**Confidentiality and Ethics**

The researcher made a conscientious effort to talk and build a relationship of trust with each participant. This was done through phone conversations, electronic emails, and informal conversations prior to the actual interview. The added contact with each participant allowed for a baseline of trust that facilitated an open and free interview. The researcher shared with each participant that all conversations will be kept confidential. This proved to
be important for participants because it allowed them to be more comfortable about sharing their perceptions concerning teacher recruitment and retention. To preserve confidentiality, all research participants were assigned a pseudonym along with changing the district locations and teaching assignments.

Ethics

This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board of Washington State University. All participants were given an informed consent form (see Appendix C). The participants were provided a detailed description of the study purpose and design. Each participant was asked to sign a consent form prior to the interview. Included in the informed consent process is the assurance that a participant can withdraw from the study at any time without consequence and the anticipated amount time required. Signed consent forms will be kept on file with the researcher along with notes and materials related to the study (Wiersma & Jurs, 2005). Anonymity was assured in this study through pseudonyms of names and school locations.

Delimitations and Limitations

Qualitative research is not designed to be generalized. It is designed to illuminate a particular issue, person, or context. The lack of scientific rigor is a criticism of qualitative research (Wiersma & Jurs, 2005).

A delimitation to the study was there was no triangulation of the data. Each teacher responded to the questions based on individual experiences and perceptions. The study potentially could have been strengthened by including additional participants, such as principals and other district personnel who work closely with the new teachers. However, such personnel may have been compelled to speak only of their experiences, and many of
them are not Latino/a and have been out of the classroom as a teacher. Such responses could limit the analysis and interpretation of the study.
CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of recruitment and retention of new Latino/a teachers. This chapter will discuss briefly who the participants were and the themes and concepts that emerged while analyzing the qualitative data collected through interviews with the teachers described in Chapter Three (see Table 5).

Participants

Alpine Participant

Donna is currently serving as a third grade elementary teacher in the Alpine School District. Donna has been teaching in the same assignment for four years. While Donna has several years of experience, she came to the profession in an unconventional manner. Donna first started working for the district as an instructional assistant and was granted a conditional teaching waiver so she could teach at the elementary level. It took Donna two years to fully complete her elementary education program. Donna grew up in Alpine and understands the community’s Latino students’ needs.

Murray Participants

Mimi is currently teaching second grade at an elementary school in the Murray School District. Mimi is completing her first year as a teacher. As the first in her family to attend college and graduate, Mimi recognizes the impact she has on her students, especially the Latino/a students.

Jose also works for the Murray School District. Jose has been teaching at a middle school successfully for four years. Jose’s participation on different school curriculum and
leadership teams has influenced the way he works with his peers and administration. Jose enjoys his peers and looks to possibly enter an administrator program.

Rose Park Participants

This is Brandon’s first year of teaching. He teaches fifth grade and has loved his time in the classroom. He is new to the community but isn’t a stranger to working in a small community. Brandon completed his student teaching practicum in a small, rural district. Brandon speaks limited Spanish. Brandon’s mother was Anglo and though his father is Mexican, Spanish wasn’t spoken in home enough for him to become fluent. Brandon has really taken on many responsibilities as a new teacher such as grade-level representative, safety patrol director, and assessment team leader.

Elissa is in her second year of teaching in the Rose Park School District. Elissa participates in all district and building meetings and feels comfortable in her building. While learning the curriculum and state grade level expectations has been a challenge, she values the student accountability piece of education reform.

Yessenia is a second-year teacher and is reflective about her opportunity to be a teacher. While she finds classroom management a challenge at times, she looks for help wherever possible. Yessenia’s upbringing comes from humble starts, which she believes is an asset when she works with her students. Yessenia is able to relate positively with her middle school students, and this allows for the building of trust.

Melissa has already completed her second year of probationary status. Completing her third year of teaching has been a challenge in the area of peer relationships. Melissa has struggled with her peers and has found that she teaches in isolation. Melissa has started to work on her Masters of Education degree and looks to be done in two years.
Bountiful Participant

Omar was the single participant from the Bountiful School District. Omar is in the second year of probationary status and up to this point has been successful. Omar enjoys his profession and has a positive outlook towards education. While Bountiful is remote, Omar recognizes the challenges of working in a small district with limited funding. Omar expresses that he is looking for leadership opportunities in his building, but doesn’t know how he fits into this building.

Jordan Participants

Patty is completing her first year as a first-grade teacher. Teaching first grade comes with many responsibilities, especially for learning specific reading programs. Patty has been able to learn multiple programs and be involved in instructional strategies planning sessions. Patty values the Professional Learning Community meetings that are scheduled during the month. While Patty is learning from her peers, she has received little support from any mentoring program. Patty is the first in her family to attend college.

Josh teaches at the high school and is completing his second year of teaching. Josh grew up in a small community in Eastern Washington and has a good understanding of the students he teaches. Josh’s ability to establish relationships with his students is invaluable. Josh works with students with very specific academic needs and also uses his Spanish daily in his classroom. Josh’s relationship with his peers is strong, to the point that Josh helps other teachers with parent conferences as a translator.

Maria teaches English as a Second Language at the middle school. While her second year has been easier than the first, Maria still struggles with learning the curriculum and managing the specific language acquisition program. Maria is full of energy and provides
hope to her students with her personal stories of struggle and achievement. Maria shares her “real world” views with her students and often finds herself taking on the role of a guidance counselor.

Rumalda is completing her second year as the district speech therapist. As a support to the elementary staff, Rumalda enjoys the opportunity to work with kids with speech needs. Rumalda is limited in her ability to speak Spanish fluently, which at times makes her feel uncomfortable. Rumalda works hard to teach staff about her skills as a therapist. At times Rumalda believes that the staff work against her and are not supportive.

Brisa is in her third year as a teacher in the middle school. Her current teaching assignment allows her to reach out to Latino students. Brisa has high hopes to continue to become a better teacher. She has come to believe she needs more time to become a successful teacher. At times, the pacing of subject areas is a challenge for her and her students. Brisa does believe that her ability to impact Latino students can play a positive role in promoting teaching as a profession. Brisa is fluent in Spanish and is very open and willing to use her talent to translate for non-Spanish-speaking teachers and parents.

Luis comes to the district after spending time on the substitute circuit in local districts. Luis’s current assignment has him teaching Language Arts at the middle school. Because of Luis’s mixed heritage, he doesn’t believe that being a Latino teacher has had any impact on his ability to teach or relate to students. Luis does not speak Spanish and feels his greatest influence was his mother, a former teacher. While Luis doesn’t speak Spanish, he shares concerns about his ability to reach his English Language Learner students.

Allan is a proud teacher with four years of teaching experience at the middle school. Allan’s motivation to become a teacher comes from former teachers that “hooked” him into
learning. Allan has a deep connection to his immediate family and believes that his mother, who is a former high school teacher, paved the way for all his siblings to attend school and value education. Allan values learning and actively participates in all staff development opportunities. Allan believes in the power of influence and works to influence his students to value education.

Noemi is a fourth-year teacher teaching at the elementary school. Noemi entered education because of the influence of her parents. Noemi has a strong conviction of the power of influence. She looks forward to watching her former students graduate from high school. Noemi believes her opportunity to go to college played an important role in choosing education as a profession. Being a teacher allows Noemi to give back to the “teachers who helped” her find her person. Noemi has great desires to continue her education by pursuing a doctorate degree.

Rose spent fifteen years as an instructional assistant at a local high school and then decided to earn a teaching degree. Rose is currently completing her fourth year as an elementary school teacher. Rose’s experience as an adult college student taught her the importance of goals and being resilient. Facing challenges as a parent and student, Rose advocates for students and opportunities to learn. Rose believes she can be the difference in any child’s life. Rose is active in professional development opportunities and is concerned with how migrant students are often faced with many learning challenges. Rose has developed a voice in her staff that advocates for Latino students.

*Waco Participants*

Favi is hopeful as a second-year teacher in a middle school that she will be able to reach all her students. Favi vividly remembers a first-grade teacher who treated her with
respect, kindness, and authenticity as the critical decision to enter education as a profession. Favi was the first person in her family to attend high school and graduate from college. Favi has embraced her cultural background and shares this optimism with her students. Favi believes that being a Latina teacher is “everything” to her, as it relates to her ability to reach students.

Roberto is a third-year teacher at the high school. Roberto believes he can leave a legacy as a teacher. Roberto strives to establish relationships with his students and has success reaching them. Roberto recently completed his National Board Certification and comprehends the importance of being a lifelong learner. Roberto constantly is focused on providing a positive example in his classroom, staff, and community. Roberto is active in many different organizations in the community that advocate for Latino students. Roberto pushes his students to learn to the point where they don’t believe they could achieve by themselves. Roberto is interested in school administration and the potential to lead a school.

Ferris Participant

Stephanie is in her second year as an elementary English as a Second Language teacher. Stephanie is confident in her abilities as a new teacher and pushes her peers to find ways to reach out to second language students. Stephanie is often relied on her building for providing Spanish translation in parent meetings and community forums. Stephanie is concerned that Spanish-speaking parents are not often heard and are ignored when it comes to services offered in her elementary school. Stephanie is motivated by her desire to help students in poverty. Stephanie expects to grow professionally with the help of her staff and building principal.
Coding

The coding process began with an initial review of each completed interview transcript and a review of audio tape recordings of the interviews. The coding process continued by organizing the data into meaningful chunks, based on commonalities among the participants’ ideas, phrases, or use of language patterns. The data was then labeled according to defined categories. The open-ended interviews revealed two main emerging themes. The two core themes that surfaced were (a) supportive/encouraging experiences towards entering the teaching profession (recruitment); and (b) personal affirmation as a current teacher in the teaching profession (retention).

Each core theme surfaced specific experiences and perceptions that defined each participant as a teacher. While the themes are separate in purpose, the experiences of the participants were intertwined and often related interchangeably. The participants voiced connections between personal experiences leading them towards education and interactions that supported them in their teaching profession. Consequently, both themes are focal parts in this research study of Latino/a new teachers.

Supportive/Encouraging Experiences (Recruitment)

Each participant indicated that his or her decision to become a teacher was based on many outside influences along with a personal desire to become a teacher. These influences served as a recruiting springboard for each of the teachers. From the interviews surfaced such influences and included the following: parents, teachers, and pivotal personal/family experiences.
Parents

While the family structure was not the same for all of the participants, each participant openly shared his/her personal appreciation for their own parents. For many this was an emotional part of the interview often leading to tears of gratitude. It was evident that the drive to make their parents proud and be a help to the family was of great importance.

Brandon, a first-year teacher from Rose Park, expressed:

I just wanted something better for the entire family. I wanted my father to be proud of me, and all of his family. I wanted my brothers to be proud of me. You know, the family unit among Latinos is a big part of our soul, and who we become. We do everything for the family. My family rescued me from working a lifetime in the orchards.

Brandon also described his parental support: “I’m proud that my father came from a rancho in Mexico. My father always told me that he wanted to be a little bit sophisticated—to be able to learn, to be higher than he was.”

Such counsel and direction is what encouraged Brandon to attend and graduate from high school. Brandon entered college and found himself struggling with finances and direction. Consequently, after completing two years of college he found himself working in an orchard pruning fruit trees. In a moment of self-contemplation Brandon recalls his decision to return to school:

My younger brothers were growing up, and we were in a difficult financial situation. My father had gone to college in Mexico, but was never able to complete it in the United States. So, my Father was stuck working farm labor. One particular day I looked at my Dad and said to myself “What a waste. You know, what a complete
waste of knowledge in his head. What a waste of potential!” I then realized I was twenty years old and if I didn’t complete college, then it was my own fault. I would become a waste! I finished college and became a teacher. Never again did I want to work in the orchards.

Roberto, Elissa, and Jose also expressed the same importance of family. Similar insight from Allan’s father demonstrates the impact a parent has to influence a son to enter education as a career:

It truly means a lot to me. I will never forget my father and his comments that he made to me when I graduated as a teacher. He cried (of happiness) and told me that he was proud to be my father. My father worked in a potato plant and missed many of my achievements because of his swing shift schedule. He told me “that my life is truly happy because all my kids are educated. The name (last name) will only get better when my grandkids are even more educated than their parents.” My father’s hard work helped pave the road of success for me.

Similarly, Rose Park middle school teacher, Yessenia, related that her experiences of working alongside her parents in the fields greatly impacted the choices that lead her to become the person she is today. It was while working that conversations took place in which her parents encouraged her to become a teacher:

My family struggled financially as I was growing up. I worked out in the fields with my family when I was in grade school, fourth grade through eighth grade. We used to go out early in the mornings and work for about three hours with my parents. About 7:00 we had to leave to go get ready for school. I would usually get to school late and tired. Next day would be the same thing, as well as the weekends. Some summers we
would go down to the coast and stay at a camp and work in the strawberries. I guess this helped me learn what hard work was. My conversations with my parents were supportive and encouraging as they prompted me to go to school and become a teacher.

When prompted about why her parents encouraged her to become a teacher and not a nurse or other professional, Yessenia shared that as she traveled to different locations, all the teachers she had were very supportive and encouraging to her and her parents. The teachers were approachable and nonjudgmental of the lifestyle of being a migrant family. In their eyes teachers were seen as “good” individuals. Rumalda, Brisa, Patty, and Rose each expressed how their parents individually encouraged them to seek an education and not be lured to work in the fields.

When asked about motivation to become a teacher, Noemi from Jordan recalls that her parents were very supportive, and more importantly, reassured her that becoming a teacher was a “noble” profession.

Jordan teacher, Maria, recounts an experience with her mother that she believes pushed her down the path to becoming a teacher:

I have memory when I was about five years old, in which I almost died of appendicitis. I got real sick and my Mom wanted to cheer me up, so we would window shop. I remember walking by the old Western Auto Store. I told my Mom that I wanted the kids’ chalkboard that was showcased in the window. It was nice. It was magnetic on one side and it had the alphabet letters on the other side. My mom never bought it for me because she said it cost too much money. When I came home from the hospital I went to my bed, and there on the bed was my chalkboard. I was so
happy to have it finally. I would play for hours and hours with my teddy bears and dolls. I would teach them their ABC’s and numbers all day. I would even scold them with my ruler. So, I think I was born to teach.

All of the participants recognized the encouraging hand of their parents in some fashion as they reflected on their decision to enter education. Moreover, the positive influence of teachers was recognized by parents who found educators “noble and good,” which in some instances led to conversations from parents to their children on becoming a teacher.

*Teachers*

In addition to encouragement from parents, many of the participants received personal emotional support from teachers either as students, university students, or at the workplace. All had contact with teachers in their educational experiences that made a positive impact and ignited a curiosity to consider education as a career. Thus, positive experiences led to interest in the requirements to become a teacher. Mimi, a first-year teacher working in Murray explained:

I worked as a para-professional (teacher’s assistant) and I loved it. I had a really awesome experience with teachers. I had incredible teachers that I worked for. They made something for themselves. Becoming a teacher was a natural thing for me to do, and I wanted to do it.

The opportunity to work with a teacher in a positive working relationship proved to be a critical supporting factor for Mimi in her decision to enter education. Donna also had a positive experience working with a teacher that sparked her interest in education.

Another participant, Omar, expresses the fact that he didn’t recognize many Latino/a teachers in his community. He was encouraged by a high school teacher as he learned
English. This inspired in him the desire to help students that were like him. Omar, a second-
year teacher from Bountiful further states:

When I came here from Mexico, I felt that there weren’t many Hispanic teachers that I could relate to. That was one of the main ideas for me that encouraged me to become a teacher. I wanted to help students like myself that came directly from Mexico without knowing English. I’m trying to help them succeed in the classroom. My high school ESL teacher encouraged me to become a teacher.

In her own words, Waco’s Favi shared that becoming a teacher has meant everything to her. Favi was the first person in her family to attend college and graduate with a teaching certificate. Favi recognizes that her goal of becoming a teacher started when she was a young child not speaking any English and having a caring first-grade teacher:

My first-grade teacher was the reason I became a teacher. She treated me with respect, kindness, and authenticity even though I could not understand her, my peers, or the content due to the lack of knowing the English Language.

While the choice to become a teacher was a goal for some from the very beginning, not all new teachers came to education in the same format. Mimi spent some time working in preschools and doing volunteer work through the AmeriCorps program:

I first thought I wanted to be a pediatrician, and then I realized I really don’t like needles. But, I had a desire to work with children. I was able to get a job working as an instructional assistant at an elementary school and I loved every minute. I had many incredible experiences with the students and teachers.
The influence of a positive teacher either as a student or in the workplace proved critical in the decision to enter education as a profession. This finding is supported by the Minority Teacher Education Enrollment survey conducted by the American Association of College Teacher Educators (1987) that recognized “providing linkage with friends in teacher training and providing related work experiences in teaching” as valuable activities that recruited minorities to enter education.

Personal/Family Experiences

All participants’ parents were supportive in their own manner, but as the participants made decisions to pursue a formal education, important decisions along the way had to be made. At times this meant that the participants had to confront traditions and perceptions. The drive and determination for each participant depended on their own resolve about education.

Ferris teacher Stephanie shared an interesting insight of becoming a Latina teacher and confronting family beliefs from her Mexican heritage and family belief system:

A lot of women in our culture don’t go to college. They get married young or they have babies young. It’s a lot for a girl to actually go through college and actually have a career. In my family, it was expected that I wouldn’t even think about attending college. You never think about it.

Current employment assignments also were an influence for several of the teachers. Melissa and Patty affirm the same sentiment of influential teachers. Both participants overcame family views about becoming “educada”—educated.

Brandon expressed that the school district where he was working had a teacher financial assistance program that provided him the opportunity to pursue teaching as a career:
The fact is that the school district has really supported, you know, me as an individual teacher, Latino teacher. They offered me a job of a paraprofessional before I became a teacher. And they had a program called “Grow Your Own” where they paid for my college tuition. And for me, I didn’t have to take out any loans. I didn’t have to be in debt. You know, they kept reimbursing me for that money every quarter. Every semester they gave me a check and I just kept using that money and using it. I mean, that made it possible for me to finish.

The first core theme to surface from the participant group was the importance of supporting/encouraging experiences. Each of the participants experienced the power of communication and positive interactions prior to formally entering a teacher preparation program. The decision for the participants to tackle the task of becoming a teacher was just the beginning of a new journey that started with hopes and desires to become like the “noble” and “good” teachers they had known.

Personal Affirmation (Retention)

The second major theme to surface from the interviews of the participants was recognition and personal affirmation from within and from outside influences. The themes aligned with the research by Bobeck (2002) on teacher resiliency. Each of the teachers shared feelings on the following areas: (a) relationships, (b) career competence, (c) personal ownership, and (d) sense of accomplishment.

Relationships

For all the participants, relationships were critical in their acceptance as a new teacher in his or her school, district, and community. It was through relationships that the participants were able to evolve as a teacher and find their place in a new profession.
As a new Latina teacher working in her first classroom, Mimi valued the relationship with her peer teachers:

I really like having the teachers that I work with. They are very supportive. So, that’s made a big difference. I know I can e-mail. I know that I can call. I know that there’s always someone I can ask for help.

For Brandon, establishing a relationship with his first-grade class students and parents proved to be a challenge. Brandon expressed that when he began teaching first grade many parents were a bit reserved, especially non-Spanish-speaking parents. Brandon struggled to reach this particular group of parents. In Brandon’s words:

I really didn’t know how to interact properly with (Anglo) parents and students. Would they get those jokes that I, a Latino teacher and a kid from downtown Waco, get? Would they (students and parents) be the same? I found in myself that I created a barrier that was self-made. In my new relationships with the Anglo parents I realized that we all want what’s best for our kids. My relationships with all my parents are strong and we work together. I’m here for the kids.

Initially, Brandon struggled to identify with his students and particularly with the Anglo parents. Speaking with a noticeable accent, Brandon fought fear and acceptance that he believed didn’t make him a “good teacher.” It was only when Brandon realized that his barriers were self-made did he make progress and gain confidence in his teaching career.

Upon entering a new profession the challenge comes by way of learning “the work.” Learning the work of the teacher is often very overwhelming because it includes establishing classroom procedures and practices along with learning building and district procedures. The work intensifies in learning the designated curriculum. Each of the first-year Latino/a
teachers shared different levels of frustration about learning the new curriculum and becoming competent in instructional strategies. Relationships with their grade-level teachers kept them wanting to succeed in the classroom. Allan felt initial frustrations and found support from his teaching team:

I put a lot of preparation into my lessons, but sometimes I feel like I could do more. So, when you get a history test back and it’s not coming back like I want it to, I kind of just sit there and get . . . I am frustrated of what I can do to make sure that the kids are passing these tests. I really worry how I can better my game so the kids can get, you know, the results. I don’t like the students saying, “I didn’t learn anything.” That frustrates me, and I try to put that on myself and see what I can do better with my teaching strategies and curriculum. Mr. Jensen and Mrs. Grasher have been nothing but wonderful to me as a support. They made sure that I understood that teaching takes time and hard work. They didn’t let me give up.

The individual attention given to Allan proved to be critical especially where Allan was making an effort to be like his fellow teachers. Luis and Josh had similar experiences in their respective districts, but through positive relationships both were able to make gains as new teachers. Communication and a positive response kept Allan from giving up on the students and helped him better handle the challenges of teaching.

*Career Competence*

As the new teachers learned new curriculum, built relationships, and established procedures, recognition of being competent was very important for each of them. They wanted to feel as if they were making progress and contributing to their schools.
Omar shared his experience of not receiving appropriate training and the frustration of not feeling competent. This feeling of incompetence led him to seek help from his building principal which led him to gain crucial confidence in his building leadership and eventually with the curriculum. He reports:

When I came to the social studies curriculum and some of the writing... I didn’t receive any training on that, so I was clueless. I didn’t know where to start. I got confused. So, I talked to some of the other teachers and asked what they were doing. There wasn’t a place for me to start. So, it was hard to do my job. I didn’t feel comfortable. I asked my principal for help and she put a plan in place to get me the training. From that time I became a better teacher. Professional development is important.

Omar’s experience with his peers led him to seek guidance from his building principal. The principal recognized the situation and provided a professional development plan for Omar. This single act of guidance demonstrated to Omar the commitment his building principal had in providing a support for him as a new teacher. Consequently, Omar realized that he could ask for help and receive support.

Allan’s experience with learning a new science program has been a challenge, but with rewarding results that have led to greater confidence:

I’ve been going to a ton of trainings and I have been thrown into the fire as far as content. I think with me, it’s a matter of time before I understand it, you know. We have great science kits that are really “hands-on” for the kids. They love it. The training I got was very important. The training was for three days, thirty lessons. I really believe that I’m doing the best that I can. I can probably try harder, but I need
more experience. As a new teacher with more time, I think I’ll be able to teach better, to teach with better confidence.

New teachers traditionally are placed into multiple trainings that include a wide range of topics and purposes. The participants voiced the intensity and value of the trainings, but also expressed the need for support from their peers and building leadership. Such trainings helped participants to establish career competence and ownership to the profession.

**Personal Ownership**

The transition from developing a competence in the profession to a personal ownership evolved for each of the participants. As the first-year Latino/a teachers worked to build norms and procedures, each experienced a sense of personal ownership in their new profession. Personal ownership translated to decision making and intrinsic motivations. Mimi expressed her personal feelings of becoming a Latina teacher:

To me it means being a role model, ah, especially, I said, to Latino students. Um, for them to see that, you know, I grew up in a family that was, in my opinion, a pretty large family. And obviously we weren’t wealthy, but you know I went to school and did it. I went to college. Now I’m teaching. And so that was my goal and I reached it. So, I want my students to see that it is possible to set goals and reach them.

Brandon’s personal ownership was rooted in the fact that his father had received a degree in Mexico, but had to work in the orchards in the United States to provide for his family. Brandon recognized that in order to reach his goals he would have to make some changes in his life:

When I was growing up, my father went to the university in Mexico. So for me, it was, it was something natural that I had to do, and that I wanted to do. When we
moved up to the United States, it wasn’t like that for many people, especially my friends. They would ask me, “What are you doing after school?” I would ask myself, “Am I going to go home and study?” or, “Am I going to go over to my friend’s house?” I would then answer by going home to study.

I then would ask my friends what they were going to do after school. They never understood what I meant. “No, I mean, I’m talking about after you graduate and what are you going to do?” They would respond, “I don’t know. I’ll just probably work in the orchard.” I did graduate and go to college when I graduated from high school, but after several tough years, went back to orchards. The work was tough. You know, I worked in, the labor. It was something that was weird for me because I didn’t think I was ever going to be doing that again. To see my father with all his knowledge in his head, and not be able to use it was tough. I used to think “What a waste. What a complete waste of knowledge, potential.” I started to think to myself, “You’re twenty years old and a waste.” Soon after those moments I decided to return to college.

Brandon’s personal ownership and drive to become an educator is representative of all the participants and their resolve to become a teacher. Such deep commitment demonstrates an ownership at a very personal level and a retention experience.

*Sense of Acceptance*

Each Latino/a first-year teacher shared that being accepted in their new profession was important to them. Throughout the interviews the Latino/a teachers experienced moments where they were given praise and acknowledgement for their efforts as a new teacher. They perceived this to translate into acceptance from the staff, students, and
community; it definitely was a retention factor. Mimi described her staff acceptance in the following manner:

I think I would have struggled more if I didn’t have their support. If I didn’t have the support of the principal and my co-workers or the other staff, I think it would have been very hard for me. I think it would have pushed me away. I don’t think I could proceed in teaching. They worked with me and encouraged me.

Allan described being accepted by his students and parents in the following manner:

I’m able to talk to parents at least once a week. I believe I have good communication. When I see my students at Walmart, they say, “Hi.” They come up to me and give me a hug—“Hi, Mr. Allan. How are you doing?” And, it’s rewarding for me to be able to have good experiences with the kids out of school along with them in school. I’m told that most of these at-risk kids are doing better than last year. For me, that’s rewarding to see the different success stories. And, that’s why I teach.

Allan elaborated, sharing his views of acceptance and especially being able to reach his students and sense the growth of each student:

You know, and I, it feels good to be part of that growth. I mean there is no other place, there is no other profession out there that would give you that—that enjoyment, you know. Happiness to see a kid go from, you know, from basic symbol writing to producing a tangible story with a story line, with sequence words, with adjectives. You know it’s almost kind of magic. I like being part of that. Man, it’s just incredible!
Chapter Summary

The purpose of this study was to gather data to promote minority teacher recruitment and retention. This research study explored the experiences and perceptions of first-year Latino/a teachers in rural school districts in Washington State. This section discussed themes that emerged while analyzing the data. The data revealed two main themes: supportive/encouraging experiences and personal affirmation. Comments made in participant interviews were shared to illustrate their unique and common experiences.

The participants openly expressed how their particular journey to education was based on supportive/encouraging experiences. Such experiences were rooted in open discussions around education and a perceived value of obtaining an education. Parents, while not completely understanding complexities of a formal education, placed a high value on getting an education.

Another deciding factor was influential teachers at pivotal times in the participants’ lives. Each participant found guidance, role models, and encouragement from teachers with whom they had a positive relationship. For many of the participants, pivotal personal/family experiences influenced their desire to prove to themselves and to others the ability to get an education despite adversity and challenges. The participants used obstacles and challenges as stepping stones to achieve a teaching certificate.

The second core theme reviewed was personal affirmation (retention). The participants revealed the ongoing importance of establishing and maintaining positive relationships with their peers, students, building leadership and community. When the relationships were perceived to be weak, the participants felt insecure and looked to find
acceptance and approval. The relationships expressed were based on trust in a system that places many demands on a new teacher.

As the participants believed they had positive relationships in their respective positions, they began to establish a personal competence and sense of personal ownership. This competence and confidence allowed for the participants to take on more challenges within their classrooms and buildings. These contributions to the overall system proved to establish a mechanism for bringing self-worth to the new teachers.

This chapter further flushed out and surfaced the need for beginning Latino/a teachers to feel accepted in their positions. Each participant expressed a yearning to be accepted and recognized as a contributing member of a building team. The acts of acceptance were simple in nature, ranging from verbal acknowledgement to invitations to formal trainings. All in all, being accepted as a professional Latino/a teacher was important to all the participants.
CHAPTER FIVE
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study was conducted to explore the “lived experiences” and perceptions of new Latino/a teachers in Eastern Washington State. The principal research questions for this study were: (a) What do Latino/a teachers indicate influenced their decisions to enter education? (b) What support structures do Latino/a teachers identify as influential in supporting their decision to remain in education?

This qualitative study was an ethnography bounded by phenomenology, thus illustrating the perceptions and experiences of new Latino/a teachers in their first three years of teaching. Through a series of open-ended questions, the new Latino/a teachers recalled detailed accounts of their experiences prior to entering an education preparation program and their current perceived influential supports as a current classroom teacher. In analyzing the collected data, multiple themes arose, as discussed in Chapter Four. Some themes helped to portray the context of the study. Others surfaced as core themes. These core themes spoke to supportive/encouraging experiences and personal affirmation. This final chapter will discuss the conclusions, reflections and recommendations of the study.

Conclusions

The twenty participants of this study provided insightful and useful feedback to the researcher on what new Latino/a teachers in Eastern Washington State are currently experiencing in the field. Their feedback at many levels reiterates current research on recruitment and retention, but it also adds a strong voice to the often-silent numbers of quantitative research. The Latino/a participants described their personal influences in dramatic fashion, providing rich data and feedback on recruitment and retention.
From their young voices, three major conclusions surfaced: (a) New Latino/a teachers are heavily influenced by the adults in their lives, whether as a child or as an adult; (b) Relationships in/out of the education profession is valued; and (c) New Latino/a teachers need and desire time with and support from their colleagues and administration.

**Influenced by Adults**

New Latino/a teachers, like all new teachers entering the profession, had a story about how they reached their goal to become a teacher. While the courses to graduate are the same for all students, the new Latino/a teachers’ journeys were unique and filled with many crossroads.

Each participant had to make a conscious decision to enter an education program. For all the participants the decision was made with influences from an adult and/or parent. Thoughts of becoming a teacher came as early as elementary school for some of the study participants through family and community encouragement. Participants’ interests in teaching were strongly nurtured and encouraged by parents and pivotal personal/family experiences. For many of the participants, such pivotal personal/family experiences were based on facing some type of adversity and challenge to entering or completing an education path.

An additional perception that surfaced through the interviews was the value the parents had on education. If a parent’s prior experiences with teachers and schools were positive, then they more likely encouraged the participant to pursue a career in education. In Allan’s case, a proud father cried at this son’s graduation because of the potential of having an “educated family.” As shared by Noemi becoming a teacher was viewed as entering a “noble” profession.
The cultural dynamics of the Latino/a parents played an integral role as all the participants maintained a close relationship with their parents and family. The participants shared a sense of family pride of being able to attend college and more importantly becoming a teacher. In their eyes, it was a way to give back to their family and community.

Other adults that proved influential were former and current teachers. For many of the participants, a former teacher had impact on their decision to explore education as a profession. Interestingly, several of the participants that came to the United States from Mexico found themselves in language acquisition classrooms learning English. It was through positive and supporting relationship in such classrooms that Omar and Favi decided to become teachers and give back what they received as new students in the United States. Favi states:

My first-grade teacher was the reason I became a teacher. She treated me with respect, kindness, and authenticity even though I could not understand her, my peers, or the content due to the lack of knowing the English Language.

With some of the participants, the adult influence came from past work experiences in educational settings such as schools and service-related agencies like AmeriCorps. Given the opportunity to have education-related experiences, prospective Latino/a young men and women may consider education as a profession. The power of adult influence was evident with all the participants especially in attracting them to education.

In different fashions, each of the Latino/a teachers was influenced by those who they respected and valued. The relationships were based on trust and a willingness to listen to their counsel. This knowledge adds to the existing knowledge and research concerning the
power of mentoring. If conducted strategically, it could be a retention tool for young teachers.

Relationships

Each participant communicated that the relationships they have established in/out of teaching are an important part of their teaching experience. From the relationships established in college classes all the way to signing their first teaching contract, each participant established personal connections with fellow teachers. Through these relationships the new Latino/a teachers began to establish trust and gain confidence in learning their new profession. Through relationships the participants found acceptance and ownership of their craft.

In alignment with the research by Bobeck (2002) on teacher resiliency, each of the teachers shared feelings on the following areas: (a) relationships, (b) career competence, (c) personal ownership, and (d) sense of accomplishment. The participants valued relationships at all levels, especially if they were founded on trust and acceptance. The participants learned they needed to work and establish relationships early in their careers in order to be able to survive the expectations of being a new teacher. The relationship between peers was viewed as extremely important along with working to establish a relationship with the building administrator and community. It was evident through the actual interview process that the Latino/a teachers relied on what they believed to be strong connections between them and peers and supervisors.

Support from Colleagues and Administration

As the new Latino/a teachers started their careers in education, they quickly entered a profession that requires emotional and academic support. The participants expressed that they
valued their teaching colleagues for guidance and support. The new teachers are often overwhelmed with learning procedures at the classroom, building, and district levels. Only with support and a trusting environment did the participants feel they could ask for support from their peers. To the contrary, the young teachers quickly recognized if they had support in learning their new professions, they adapted quickly to the new environment. If not, there seemed to be misguidance and lack of trust in peers and the system.

The new Latino/a teachers expressed the importance of having support from their building principal. They believed that through the building principal they could become better teachers. The participants were trusting and willing to take counsel and guidance from their principal. The principal’s role is one of facilitator and teacher for new teachers. This role is critical in the development of new teachers, especially as they tackle the challenges of a demanding profession. Teacher induction performed under the watchful eye of a principal will provide a new Latino/a teacher the opportunity to learn how to act and perform as a teacher, and thus begin to gain technical competence and skills. It is in this process where theory and application merge to offer support for the participants. The new Latino/a teachers recognized that their personal ownership and commitment to the profession was rooted in the manner in which they have been treated by their peers and building administrator.

As the research indicates, the building administrator plays an important role in “making or breaking” a young teacher. Fortunately for this research, the participants had principals who wanted to work with the young Latino/a teachers. The proper principal leadership can foster individual growth and help in the retention process. This notion was expressed from the teachers themselves.
This research study speaks to us about the importance of relationships and the power of supporting influences. Latino/a teachers are responsive to positive encouragement and if given support, are eager to learn their profession. For the participants in this study, they manifested a desire to serve and give back to their community. This notion of service seemed to be a natural characteristic of each of the teachers. Relationships need to be established with peers and principals. It is through careful attention and support that new teachers can maneuver through the challenges of first years as a teacher.

Without encouraging influences, the teachers risk becoming disillusioned about the real work of becoming a teacher and may find themselves not progressing as a teacher and possibly consider leaving the profession. The answers to teacher retention fall on the ability of administrators and peer teachers to make connections professionally and emotionally with each new teacher. It was that support that lured them to education; it will be that same support that keeps them in education.

Recommendations

The first recommendation of this study involves awareness. This study is intended to further discussion on new Latino/a teacher issues, specifically in the areas of recruitment and retention. It is clear that research specifically on Latino/a teacher recruitment/retention is thin when it is looking to capture their voices. It is recommended that further research be pursued, expanding across other regions and demographics that have high Latino/a populations. For change to truly happen, the voices of Latino/a teachers need to be heard.

For the school districts in Eastern Washington, recruitment and retention of “highly qualified” Latino/a teachers will continue to be a challenge until there is an awareness of where Latino/a teachers come from. This shortage of Latino/a teachers has the potential of
negatively impacting the academic, personal and social skills students will need to thrive and succeed in the multicultural future workforce. Many stakeholders are involved in increasing Latino/a teachers at the local, state and national levels.

Universities and Colleges

A sharper focus on university admissions processes needs to be undertaken in order to address the needs of prospective Latino/a students. While the use of entrance exams for screening is used to determine intellectual proficiency, it is the most common practice that limits minority students from attending institutions of higher learning. Higher education gatekeepers must use prudence, as intellectual proficiency does not necessarily translate to teacher effectiveness. Prospective Latino/a students need to be recognized by the education departments and targeted as potential teachers. This research study found that mentoring was very influential in persuading the Latino/a participants to pursue a career in education. Such efforts should be strategic and organized in a manner that students may see the benefits of education as a career.

Furthermore, Latino/a university and college faculty need to play a role in teacher recruitment to the education field. Faculty need to share their stories of how they became educators. Such conversations will prove beneficial by providing a role model and a link to the teaching profession. Additionally, summer ‘Teacher Camps’ for minority high school students need to take place on campuses across the nation. Such programs offer information about college entrance requirements, scholarships, financial aid, academic advisement, and the opportunity to see other minority teachers as role models.
Additionally, critical information needs to be gathered. A recommendation to universities and colleges will be to gather information on the following questions: (a) What percentage of individuals recruited in such targeted programs end up going into teaching? (b) What percentage of those who do enter teaching would have not been likely to go into the field had it not been for the programs? (c) What percentage of individuals in the targeted programs teach in underserved schools, and how long do they remain there? (d) Do the Latinos recruited through such programs remain in teaching for a significant time, or do a large percentage leave teaching to pursue other occupations? (e) How do the Latinos targeted through such programs compare with other teachers in terms of their qualifications and teaching success?

*Local Districts*

In order to ensure a “highly qualified” and diverse teaching staff, school districts must be aggressive in their recruitment and retention approaches. School districts need to seek out venues to discuss how Latino/a students are deciding to enter higher education and education as a profession. In light of the traditional teacher recruitment practices, it is necessary to look at alternative strategies to address the Latino/a teacher shortages. High schools that recognize the need may look to incorporate exposing more minority students to the teaching profession during the students’ high school careers. Moreover, discussions and further review of established “grow your own” programs as mentioned by one the participant needs to be explored. It is through such programs that young local students are able to overcome the burdens of finances and secure teaching positions in a district. In return, these new teachers are guaranteed employment with the possibilities of professional development, mentoring, and job security. Such programs are scarce in Washington State and are largely dependent on
funding, but consideration at a state and regional level should be investigated. This type of program is a long-range approach to meet minority teacher needs.

State Policy Changes

States play an important role in developing teacher recruitment and retention. Individual states must understand the complete picture they face with teacher recruitment and retention. States need to develop comprehensive data systems to provide information on teacher supply, teacher quality, and teacher mobility. This includes information about teacher preparation, licensure and employment history, and the achievement of teachers’ students. The collection of such information would require that state key players work together to develop this integrated system. This would ask that policymakers, higher education institutions, local districts, state employment agencies, and retirement systems work toward creating a database for future review of programs. Additionally, states must commit the financial and human resources necessary to develop and maintain such system. Through such a system, states could develop a unique identifying number for each teacher to provide accurate longitudinal data. From the data acquired, the states should make the data available for analysis (with appropriate safeguards to ensure confidentiality) and share results with policymakers, education leaders, and the general public. Understanding the current movement trends of all teachers, and especially minorities, is critical as it determines how/what districts address teacher retention. Creating a system of data collection will unify districts with recruitment and retention challenges and could lead to regional initiatives that will benefit districts and students.
Retention

Recruiting Latino/a teachers is just the first step in providing a diverse teaching staff for all students. Beyond recruitment is the issue of retention. The findings from this study suggest retention may be achieved through focused and intentional activities where positive relationships are established. The participants communicated that establishing relationships based on trust and communication was foundational to their needs in their first years as a new teacher.

As cited in previous research, mentoring of new Latino/a teachers can prove to be a retention mechanism if all systems are in place such as professional development, support from peers and administration, and links to their personal needs.

A recommendation for districts is to incorporate induction and mentoring for new Latino/a teachers for a minimum of three to five years. This would get new teachers well established in relationships, development of curriculum, classroom management, and personal confidence. The power of mentoring comes through the ability to relate professionally, socially, and emotionally with Latino/a teachers. From the voice of the Latino/a teachers, relationships were the keys in choosing education as a career and choosing to stay in the profession. Mentoring can be the avenue that allows Latino/a teachers to grow, develop, and refine their instructional skills in a safe environment and be guided by a trusted peer.

Compensation

Adding to the recruitment and retention research findings is the issue of compensation. The salaries of teachers have been variously compared to those of nurses, social workers, architects, engineers, lawyers, and others based on the assumption that
individuals with comparable education should be compensated similarly. Interestingly, even though teacher salaries might be perceived as low in comparison with salaries in other professionals nationally, low teacher salaries in a particular district are likely to be more acceptable if they are nevertheless no lower than salaries in neighboring or comparable districts. The Latino/a teachers who understood the current job market seemed to be grateful to have full-time employment in light of all state budget reductions that many districts are facing. Additionally, the teachers also acknowledged their worth to their schools and districts. As they took on the roles in their respective districts, many were asked to take on responsibilities of facilitators, translators, and liaisons for Spanish-speaking parents. Most districts were able to compensate the Spanish-speaking Latino/a teachers for their ability to communicate with the Latino community. Being bilingual was valued and seen as major asset to parents, building, and district. A recommendation for schools and districts is to use this ability to speak Spanish in a judicious manner. While most teachers were very willing to help and be involved in translating, at times the new teachers were pulled from their classrooms to translate for parents, often impacting their immediate assignment. Since Spanish-speaking teachers are at a premium, schools and districts need to establish practices internally to prevent abuse and detriment to new Latino/a teachers.

*Changing Landscape*

With the passage of Washington State’s House Bill 6696, teacher and principal evaluations will be facing major changes, and professional growth policies have changed the landscape for all teachers. Through state legislation all school districts will be required to develop models of teacher evaluation by 2013–2014. This change in past practice will definitely impact current models of teacher development and retention programs. As districts
implement the requirements of the bill, districts will find themselves unpacking teacher
development programs based on incremental teacher growth. Through this type of systemic
change, the voices of teachers and their needs will come to the surface and resonate in the
ears of districts across Washington State. Latino/a teachers play a critical part in the
educational playing field as they bring insight, experiences, and depth that all in education
can benefit from.

In conclusion, teacher recruitment and retention is the lifeblood of the teaching
profession. While the research recognizes various strategies to recruit teachers to the
profession, the positive personal connection to a teacher or someone who values the teaching
profession proves to be a powerful recruiting strategy. In order to recruit more Latino/a
teachers to the teaching profession, strategic personal attention is required by college
recruiters and current teachers in the public education system. Their personal influence and
testimonial has the power to move students into teacher preparation programs.

Consequently, Latino/a teachers who go through the rigors of teacher preparation
programs must find support for the first five years of their teaching careers to avoid departing
the profession. Only through focused support that addresses academic, social, and emotional
needs will the new teacher develop and mature as a teaching professional. Additionally, an
administrator who is sensitive to this will have an easier time seeing his or her new Latino/a
teachers successfully through their early formative years. It is hoped that the experiences and
feelings shared in this study will help move educators forward in these efforts.
References


American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education. (1992). *Academic achievement of white, black and Hispanic students in teacher education programs*. Washington, DC:


APPENDIX A

Question Guide

Name: _________________________________________ Date: ____________

- What are your hopes being a new teacher?
- What does it mean to you being a Latino/a teacher?
- What were your motivations to become a teacher?
- As a teacher, what’s working for you?
- Have you found teaching to be gratifying? If so, why?
- What have been the challenges or frustrations as a Latino/a teacher?
- What’s not working? Missing?
- What is missing, that you feel that you need to be successful in your teaching profession?
- Where will you be in the next 5–10 years?
- If you were leaving the teaching profession, what influences could possibly pushed you that way?
- On the contrary, what influences do you expect, to keep you in the teaching profession?
APPENDIX B

Research Assistant/Transcriber’s
Confidentiality Agreement

Study Title: Recruitment and Retention of Beginning Latino/a Teachers Who Have Less Than Three Years of Experience and Are New to Their Position

Principal Investigator: Miguel A. Villarreal

I, __________________, the Research Assistant/Transcriber understand that I will be hearing tapes of confidential interviews. The participants who participated in this research project have revealed information on these tapes on good faith that the information would remain strictly confidential. I agree to:

1. Keep all the research information shared with me confidential by not discussing or sharing the research information in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) with anyone other than the researcher(s).
2. Keep all research information in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) secure while it is in my possession.
3. Return all research information in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) to the researcher(s) when I have completed the research tasks.
4. After consulting with the researcher(s), erase or destroy all research information in any form or format regarding this research project that is not returnable to the researcher(s) (e.g., information stored on computer hard drive).

Any violation of this agreement would constitute a serious breach of ethical standards, and I pledge not to do so.

Research Assistant/Transcriber: ______________________
(Print name) (Signature) (Date)

This study has been reviewed and approved for human subject participation by WSU IRB.
If you have any questions or concerns about this study please contact:

Miguel A. Villarreal
735 S. Wind Hill Lane
Othello, WA 99344
509–488–6096

If you have questions regarding participant’s rights, contact IRB at 509–335–9661
APPENDIX C

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY

CONSENT FORM

Research Project----Recruitment and Retention of Beginning Latino/a Teachers Who Have Less Than Three Years of Experience and Are New to Their Position

Researchers: Miguel A. Villarreal.

Researchers’ statement

We are asking you to be in a research study. The purpose of this consent form is to give you the information you will need to help you decide whether to be in the study or not. Please read the form carefully. You may ask questions about the purpose of the research, what we would ask you to do, the possible risks and benefits, your rights as a volunteer, and anything else about the research or this form that is not clear. When we have answered all your questions, you can decide if you want to be in the study or not. This process is called ‘informed consent.’ We will give you a copy of this form for your records.

PURPOSE AND BENEFITS

The purpose of this qualitative interview study is to explore the experiences and perceptions of first year Latino teachers in rural school districts in Washington State. Data will be gathered through open-ended interviews with at least 5 first year Latino teachers. Participants will be asked to participate in face-to-face interviews to respond to a set of open-ended interview questions. Interviews will be audio-recorded and later transcribed.

PROCEDURES

We will ask you to answer several interview questions related to the research question stated above. We will audiotape the conversation. The interview will take about an hour. You may refuse to answer any question and you may stop the interview at any time. Your responses will be kept confidential.

RISKS, STRESS, OR DISCOMFORT

If you experience any discomfort or stress from the interview, you may stop it any time.

Miguel A. Villarreal

__________________________________________
Printed name of researcher

Signature of researcher     Date
Subject’s statement

This study has been explained to me. I volunteer to take part in this research. I have had a
chance to ask questions. If I have general questions about the research, I can ask one of the
researchers listed above. If I have questions regarding my rights as a participant, I can call
the WSU Institutional Review Board at (509)335–3668. I will receive a copy of this consent
form.

________________________________________________________________________

Printed name of subject

Signature of subject Date