

Chapter 65

Understanding the Attrition Rates of Diverse Teacher Candidates: A Study Examining the Consequences of Social Reproduction

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ABSTRACT

The National Center for Education Statistics has indicated that the vast majority of New York State teaching positions remain disproportionately reflective of and populated by members of the dominant culture even while student populations grow increasingly diverse. New York has experienced a dramatic increase in the number of racially and ethnically diverse students, including many immigrant groups, in nearly all regions of the state. Consistently, teacher education research has underscored the importance of having multilingual, multiethnic, and multiracial teacher candidates successfully enter the teaching profession. Yet it appears that too few teacher preparation programs have altered preparation practices to accommodate this need. While acknowledging the need for a more diverse teaching force, this chapter examines 5 years of teacher candidates' educational outcomes in an urban community college. The empirical data underscore a complicated and often exclusionary teacher preparation pathway. This pathway, inadvertently, often precludes racially and ethnically diverse teacher candidates.

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INTRODUCTION

Preparing racially and ethnically diverse students to become teachers is an issue at the juncture of ethnicity, race, social class, and social reproduction. Very few complicated problems have straightforward causes or, for that matter, solutions. This research project closely examined the educational outcomes of teacher candidates at one community college over a 5-year period. By examining both the data of the education program and the candidates' qualitative experiences, the authors found a pattern of opaque and sophisticated barriers that tended to preclude many diverse candidates from obtaining the academic capital, qualifying credentials, and adequate grades that are necessary to become teachers. The community college's teacher education program, aided by a strong teacher-testing emphasis from the No Child Left Behind (2002) and Race to the Top (U.S. Department of Education, 2009) initiatives, often forestalled students from continuing on the teacher education career path. Beyond the straightforward academic complications, the empirical data highlight class, racial, and even professoriate biases that may inadvertently exclude many qualified candidates.

This is a bold knowledge claim that requires a fuller exploration of the educational outcomes and experiences of teacher candidates at this community college. In this chapter, the authors explore teacher education candidates' outcomes at a large urban community college in New York City with an enrollment of more than 12,000 students. This study focused on teacher candidates who entered the teacher education track between fall 2012 and fall 2016, examining a total of 923 students over a 5-year period. Additionally, the research highlighted significant lack of alignment with current student skills and the undergraduate curriculum as measured by student performance. Although additional research needs to be conducted, part of the five-year period studied reported underachievement by this population as measured by student completion rates. Specifically, this research contributes to the literature on diverse teaching candidates in that it underscores the complicated, and often contradictory ways, that the population is inaccurately described, and therefore, underrepresented among potential teaching candidates. Additionally, the research frames how a critical theoretical lens, when applied more orthodoxly, paradoxically simplifies the complicated problem of recruiting, accrediting, and maintaining a diverse teaching population.

THE NEED TO REFRAME AND REPOSITION THE CURRENT CAREER PREPARATION DISCOURSE FOR DIVERSE TEACHING CANDIDATES

Let us follow the logic of things from the beginning. Or, rather, from the end: modern times. We are, as I am writing these lines, witnessing a complete riot against some class of experts, in domains that are too difficult for us to understand . . . and in which not only the expert is not an expert, but he doesn't know it. (Taleb, 2018, p. xiii)

This quote, as applied to the scholarship centered on diverse teaching candidates, underscores some of the complexity with this specific literature. It is challenging not to comprehensively critique, and perhaps even discount, some of the current literature on diverse teacher education preparation. In other words, the body of scholarship centered on culturally and linguistically diverse teaching candidates is not fully coherent, down to the very descriptions of the students. Additionally, based on this chapter's abstract, the reader might logically presume that this work would extend the well-worn path of critical race theory in education (CRTe) as Ladson-Billings (1995a, 1995b, 1999, 2001, 2009) and Ladson-Billings and

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