

Diversifying the American Teacher Workforce: Problematizing the Past and Building the Future

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Abstract

Equity in the education profession is of grave importance. The current socio-political conditions have elevated matters of social and racial justice in society broadly. As the number of students attending America's P-12 schools has grown more diverse across racial and ethnic groups, racial parity within the teacher workforce continues to lag. Many stratagems have been employed to expand teacher diversity across the nation with varying effects. I explore the historical and contemporary contexts of teacher diversity and outline considerations to advance racial parity in the teacher workforce beginning with preparation. Specially, I discuss how university-based teacher preparation programs may continually improve through principles of knowledge, cultural, policy, and structural building.

Keywords

racial parity, teacher workforce, minoritization, teacher diversity

Attention to racial parity between teachers and students in the U.S. has gained steady momentum across many states. This issue is seen largely as a matter of educational equity that influences both policy and practice. Many initiatives have taken hold within the traditional higher education model for teacher preparation. These are not limited to pathway programs with high schools and community colleges, paraprofessional preparation, and scholarship and grant awards to grow the minority teacher pipeline. In addition, alternate route programs, including those housed within institutions of higher education, continue to prepare a large percentage of minority teachers (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Yet, despite progress made with signs of innovation to address the gap, deep racial disparities persist.

Currently, teachers of color make up approximately 20% of United States' total teaching force. In stark contrast, racially minoritized students account for more than half of all public-school students in

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America. Moreover, while the rate of racial parity between teachers and student populations varies across states, Schaeffer (2021) cites there is no state where teachers are less likely to be White in comparison with students. And while the focus is on teachers' racial parity, school principals are also more likely to be White (eight-in-ten). Bartanen and Grissom's (2019) research across Missouri and Tennessee reveals that Black principals are more likely to lead schools with a greater percentage of Black teachers. Equally, when school principalship changes from White to Black, the number of Black teachers hired increases. The opposite is true when school principalship changes from Black to White.

The change in student demographics is the result of the national trend for Americans in general. The Pew Research Center (2015) projects that by 2065, no single racial or ethnic group will be a majority. As such, this demographic shift challenges the notion of what it means to be a racialized minority group. One perspective follows from the socio-political paradigm of power and supremacy, whereby the struggle to preserve one's group identity, prominence, strength, and power position comes at the expense of another. Whether through policy (Gillborn, 2005) or other processes, I more accurately understand this socio-political paradigm as minoritization, or the active process of subordination that marginalizes certain populations as minoritized (Benitez, 2010; Harper 2015). The shift in demographic balance substantiates the term minoritized within the context of current and ongoing tendencies to describe students of color as racial/ethnic minorities.

Writing on behalf of the National Education Association (NEA), Dilworth and Coleman (2014), poignantly explain why parity among the nation's teaching force and its diverse student population is important. The authors contend "A teaching force that represents the nation's racial, ethnic, and linguistic cultures and effectively incorporates this background and knowledge to enhance students' academic achievement is advantageous to the academic performance of students of all backgrounds, and for students of color specially." (p. 1) In sum, the issue of racial parity, is part and parcel of a greater commitment to equity—equity of composition and cultural representation, equitable access to a high quality and effective education, and lastly, equitable learning outcomes for minoritized P-12 school communities that have long been marginalized. From this perspective, I address teacher workforce parity as a matter of educational equity and improvement.

I do so by addressing the benefits of a diversified workforce for minoritized communities specifically. While I recognize that racial and cultural parity within the workforce also requires attention to hiring practices as well as workplace retention, I explore the conditions of diversification anchored within a discussion of educational equity and the role teacher education plays in developing equity. I begin by sharing research on the benefits of student-teacher matching by race drawn from current research; I examine historical conditions that inform the current day status of teacher diversity, followed by current approaches occurring across the nation for diversifying the profession through teacher education. Lastly, I extrapolate lessons to be learned from racial matching, historical conditions, and contemporary attempts to increase the number of future teachers of color with implications for policies and practices in teacher preparation. The discussion of lessons learned reflects working principles to foster greater equity regarding teacher workforce parity.

A Case for a Diversified Teacher Workforce

Educational equity is a core tenet of professionalizing the education profession and teacher education (Easley, 2018). Specifically, when equity work seeks to address and dismantle the systemic and structural barriers that place minoritized communities at risk for academic failure, as well as risk for

diminished professional attainment, teacher education furthers its professionalization. In the U.S. context, race, gender, and national origin have long been root causes for disenfranchisement—undergirded by policies and social practices that undermine access to economic mobility, social integration, and equitable educational opportunities. Several researchers (Brown, 2014; Haddix, 2017; Schwitzman, 2019) add that inequitable access to education in the U.S. can be attributed to the imbalance between a growing racial and ethnically diverse P-12 student population and a predominantly White teacher workforce. Racial parity within the teacher workforce is a complex and multivariant enterprise and encompasses the full professional pathway—recruitment (of which preparation is a complementary component), selection for hiring, workplace retention, and the broader career ladder. There is no doubt that educational equity through educator parity has a positive impact on student learning, school cultures, and the profession at large. To illustrate positive impact, I begin by describing research findings on well-being, academic achievement, and school renewal.

Well-being

The body of research on the effects of teacher diversity on educational effectiveness and P-12 student learning continues to grow. Every good teacher knows that positive, in-school, academic outcomes are predicated on a strong socio-emotional foundation developed by classroom relationships between teacher and students. This is especially significant for students who have experienced limited success in school, who have struggled academically, and who have experienced marginalization. The overall well-being of P-12 students has equally gained much attention within the profession. Elsewhere I discuss (Easley, 2011) research on educational innovation in the urban context to posit that “teaching and learning is contextualized by relationships between students and teachers” (p. 35) and that teachers’ nurturant relations expand their capacity to support well-being in the classroom. This issue, though not always associated with racial parity between students and their teachers, is the topic of many educational research conference sessions, blogs, and articles both nationally and internationally. Contemporary works by authors like Paul Tough (2012) address the neurological impact of stress and nurturing relationships on children’s socio-emotional development and learning. The Organisation for Economic and Cooperative Development (OECD, 2018) espouses a vision for Education 2030 that underscores the need for broader, international education goals that attend to individual and collective well-being. In doing so, OECD clarifies “. . . well-being involves more than access to material resources, such as income and wealth, jobs and earnings, and housing. It is also related to the quality of life, including health, civic engagement, social connections, education, life satisfaction and the environment.” (pp. 3-4) Well-being for all learners is the keystone of how students learn to see themselves as learners in school. Well-being is an anchoring condition of equitable learning outcomes. Positive well-being is also a research finding in support of a diversified teacher workforce.

Teacher workforce parity advances the scope of cultural competence, belonging, and dignity needed to maximize the benefits of learner diversity in U.S. schools. Data suggest that compared with their peers, teachers of color are more likely to have higher expectations of students of color, as measured by higher numbers of referrals to gifted programs for example (Grissom & Redding, 2016). Teachers of color are positioned to serve as culturally congruent role models for minoritized student populations. As role models, they are suited to confront issues of racism, serve as advocates and cultural brokers, and develop more trusting relationships with students who share the same or similar cultural backgrounds (Villegas & Irvine, 2010). Furthermore, Cherng and Halpin (2016) report that students

of all races are reported to hold more favorable perceptions of minority teachers compared to their White teachers. For example, students believe minority teachers to hold higher academic standards and provide relevant supports.

Academic Achievement

Learning is the central priority of education and is the core variable for measuring educational effectiveness. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), or The Nation's Report Card, has been administered since 1969 to measure student outcomes at grades 4, 8, and 12. A recent Brown Center report by Hansen, Levesque, Quintero, and Valant (2018) discusses the persistent achievement gap that has shown a slight, yet bumpy, decline in the reading and mathematics gaps since the 1970s. The White-Black and White-Hispanic gaps in grade 4 since 2004 are equally down 0.15 standard deviations. Similarly, the White-Black gap decreased 0.11 standard deviations for grade 8, while the White-Hispanic gap decreased 0.20 standard deviations. Even still, the achievement gap based on income, as measured by free and reduced-price lunch (FRPL), has virtually stalled. Since 2003, this gap has decreased 0.03 and 0.02 standard deviations for grades 4 and 8, respectively. These results reveal there is still much work to be done to ensure equitable access to high quality education and equitable outcomes for racially minoritized and low-income student populations.

Further examination of equity data confirms that education in the U.S. remains largely racially segregated. Concomitantly, the racial composition of schools corresponds with NAEP outcomes. One study (Bohrnstend et al., 2015), highlights that nationally, Black students attend schools that are 48 percent Black. Conversely, White students attend schools that are only 9 percent Black.

When looking at Black student density across four categories—0-20% (lowest), 20-40%, 40-60%, and 60-100% (highest)—, most White students (86 percent) attend schools in the lowest-density category of 0 percent to 20 percent. For Black students, only 24 percent attend low Black density schools. This gap increases for schools with the highest Black density (60 percent to 100 percent). Correspondingly, 35 percent Black students attend Black high-density schools, while White student attendance is approximately 1 percent. Achievement based on Black student density and school segregation tells a poignant story as well. In 2011, NAEP-based achievement was lower for both Black and White students attending the highest Black density schools compared to their peers attending lowest Black density schools. The overall Black-White achievement gap, however, remains significantly unchanged across both highest and lowest Black density schools.

Teacher Diversity and Student Achievement. The positive effects of teachers of color on minoritized students' executive function, sense of well-being, belongingness, and other attributes (sometimes referred to as passive benefits) are well documented. Empirical evidence on the academic effects of same race pairing between students and teachers is still nascent, though promising. Early work by Dee (2004) on K-3 students' participating in Tennessee's Project STAR program demonstrated when assigned to one's own race, both Black and White students' math and reading scores increased between 0.06 and 6.0 percentile points. Egalite et al. (2015) conducted a longitudinal, seven-year study on the academic effects on own-race pairing across 2.9 million students in grades three through ten. Their findings revealed that own-race/ethnic teacher-student pairing had a positive effect for reading achievement on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) for both Black and White students. Significant math achievement was reported for Black, White, and Asian/Pacific Island

students. Moreover, for those with a history of low performance, a positive academic impact for both Black and White students was demonstrated after only one year of own-race pairing.

The long-term, academic effects of having a minority teacher have also been examined. Gershenson et al. (2017) researched students entering third grade and recorded their educational trajectories through senior year in high school. The findings indicate that for Black male students exposed to at least one same-race teacher in grades 3 through 5, their long-run academic attainment increased. This was found to be particularly true for low-income students. For both low-income Black male and female high school graduates, having at least one Black teacher in elementary school increased their postsecondary expectations to attend college. Additionally, the study illustrates a positive effect for reducing Black male dropout rates in response to having at least one Black teacher in grades 3 through 5.

School-Wide Renewal

Growing empirical evidence on the positive impact of racial parity on students' overall well-being and academic achievement is not without its limitations. And indeed, more information regarding the long-term effects on academic achievement of minoritized students, as well as the achievement for all learners, including those with diverse abilities, is welcomed. Even still, these findings can be extrapolated in support of school-wide renewal by virtue of restoring equitable practices that benefit all students, particularly those who are placed at a disadvantage for reaping the full benefits of education. Greater diversity of the teacher workforce leverages the opportunity for the advancement of cultural congruence between the school's curriculum and the lived experiences of students. The result is curricular relevance that facilitates authentic learning. The result is a culture that can facilitate deep learning (Fullan & Langworthy, 2013); that is, a learning system that encourages learners to "develop their own visions about what it means to connect and flourish in their constantly emerging world[s, (their home communities and broader communities alike)], and equip them with the skills to pursue those visions" (p. 2).

This vantage of authentic and deep learning is the result of what others (Irvine, 1988; Villegas & Irvine, 2010) call "cultural synchronicity" between the shared cultural experiences of teachers and students. Cultural synchronicity serves as a tool that shapes curriculums, pedagogy, and school culture in ways that permit historically underserved learners' access to the cultural and social capitals needed to fully unlock the merits of education in ways not possible before. Cultural synchronicity undergirds deep learning in its facilitation of learners' positive view of themselves and their abilities to contribute to school curriculum, as well as their current and future roles in society.

Using language as an example, Villegas and Irvine (2010) suggest that a diversified teacher workforce is likely to attract culturally responsive teachers who use students' home language as a viable means of communication in the classroom. By capitalizing on the students' language resources, teachers can engage students in tasks they might have otherwise rejected. Cultural synchronicity can bridge gaps between home language, concepts from the home culture, and the standard curriculum in meaningful ways to serve learning. By integrating the use of students' home language, teachers send a message to students that they are valued and respected in school, thereby supporting the development of positive cultural identities, authentic learning, as well as a positive school culture.

Historical Conditions of Attracting and Preparing Diverse Teachers

Today's status of teacher diversity and culturally astute school renewal directly affects the teacher pipeline of tomorrow. Yet, diversity within the profession has a history that shapes today's conditions. For example, the aftermath of the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court ruling that forced the integration of schools resulted in greater inequity for the African American teaching force. Many lost their jobs. Black students were more likely to be transferred to majority White schools than were their African American teachers. In fact, more White teachers were hired to meet the demand of increased enrollment (Torres et al., 2004). Many African American teachers left in lower enrolled schools fell victim to job loss. Stewart et al. (as cited in Torres et al., 2004) explain that the displacement hinged largely on "White people's beliefs that African Americans were not qualified to teach their children" (p. 13). These beliefs translated into failed action, stereotyping, and economic conditions that further exacerbated inequitable opportunities in the teaching profession for generations.

DuBois and Schanzebach (2017), in their working paper on the effect of court-ordered teacher hiring, explain that decades after a 1969 desegregation lawsuit in Louisiana—*Moore v. Tangipahoa Parish School Board*, the school board failed to act accordingly until the courts ruled a reaffirming consent decree 35 years later. Only then did the board institute policies to ensure the hiring of racially diverse cohorts of new teachers. Additionally, the ruling required the district to justify its decision when a qualified Black applicant was not hired.

Research on racialized hiring biases demonstrates that discrimination has not substantially dropped post the civil rights era when many discrimination laws were outlawed. These findings address general hiring practices within the U. S. labor market (Quillian et al., 2017). These findings, along with incidents like that of the Tangipahao Parish School Board case, reveal that the commonsense notion that hard work and meeting the stated qualifications of a posted position does not readily translate into fair and equitable hiring outcomes. Rather, hiring practices void of explicit, intentional, and persistent efforts to diversify the teaching force are unlikely to close the parity gap. Returning to the effects of the Black principalship on the rising employment of Black teachers (Bartanen & Grissom, 2019), when occurring, the quality of Black teachers hired does not decrease when compared to those hired by White principals.

Villegas and Davis (2007) explain that recruiting students into teacher preparation programs has historically been a passive act until the passing of the Civil Rights act of 1964. Prior to this time, it was largely assumed that market needs would drive enrollment into the profession and, thusly, teacher preparation programs. Black women readily sought teaching as a career, given that it was one of the few professional roles made available to them. Professional career options for peoples of color expanded exponentially following the era of the civil rights movement to include many fields outside of education.

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) produce 50% of Black teachers with bachelor's degrees even though their enrollments represent only 4% of all college and universities in the U.S. (Irvine & Fenwick, 2011). Traditional university preparation programs housed in Predominately White Institutions (PWIs) continue to produce a majority of teachers (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). However, the distribution of Black teacher aspirants across PWIs makes their representation low at the individual program level. Villegas and Davis (2007) identify the low number of Black preservice teachers across individual PWIs as a challenge for Black teacher recruitment within said institutions.

Yet, a report by the Center for American Progress (Partelow, 2019) reveals that nationwide, enrollment in teacher preparation programs has decreased more than one-third over an eight-year period from 2010 to 2018. Additionally, the completion rate among aspirants declined 28 percent during the same period. In short, many institutions seeking to recruit and retain future teachers in their preparation programs are finding the task more daunting against the social, economic, and political clout of other professional areas such as business and the health science professions. For the first time since 1969 when polling on the subject began, many American parents are now dissuading their children from pursuing public school teaching, naming working conditions, salary, and the lack of public respect as the reasons (Stringer, 2018). This view is not evenly held along racial lines, however. The same study reveals that Hispanic and Black parents remain more likely to support teaching as a professional career option for their children compared to their White peers.

Setting gender aside, diversity in teacher preparation is on the decline as well. Enrollment has declined from 2010 to 2018 across all single-racial/ethnic groups, including White. On the contrary, enrollment among multiracial aspirants has increased 41.19% (Partelow, 2019). These odds are further troubled by a national teacher shortage in a post COVID-19 context. An NEA survey (Walker, 2022) reveals demoralization and burnout as significant factors attributing to 91% of teachers identifying pandemic-stress and 90% highlighting feeling burned out as serious problems. The same survey points to a disproportionate number of Black (62%) and Latinx (59%) teachers who intend to leave the profession. It is no small wonder that the recruitment of racially minoritized communities into the profession will remain a daunting task. I share an account of the various strategies taken to diversify the workforce.

Contemporary Actions to Advance a Diverse Teacher Workforce

The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO, 2018), recently partnered with nine states to launch the Diverse and Learner-Ready Teachers Initiative to provide equitable learning for students by ensuring all teachers are prepared to meet the needs of every learner in their classrooms. One action item of the initiative focuses on building a diverse teacher workforce. In doing so, several barriers have been identified. These are not mutually exclusive nor germane only to the work of CCSSO, but reflect challenges faced by many involved in growing a diverse teacher workforce: cost of college, obstacles completing college, the cost of licensure, insufficient preparation, and challenging teaching conditions. Varied attempts are being made to mitigate these impediments. Inroads toward the mitigation of many challenges identified have seen traction to various degrees of success and are addressed below. The CCSSO initiative is likely the first of its kind to forge a comprehensive approach at the national level to address racial parity within the teacher workforce amid broader social, economic, and political conditions affecting the professionalization of teacher education. Unique and targeted attempts at parity can be seen around the country. Yet, comprehensive, coordinated, and interstate approaches remain far and few between. On par with the structure of the American educational system in which public education remains a reserved right of the state, most public authority initiatives toward teacher diversity remain highly localized. I share a few well-known approaches towards diversifying the teacher workforce across the U.S.

Service Scholarship and Loan Forgiveness Programs

Research on the correlation between financial incentives and teacher diversity (Hansen et al., 2018) found that school district loan forgiveness resulted in a nearly 4 percentage points increase in teachers of color hired. One successful program illustrating the impact of financial support on teacher diversity is the North Carolina Teaching Fellows Program. In response to strategic needs of the state, the program aimed to attract teachers for the fields of science, technology, and engineering, mathematics (STEM), and special education. The legislative sponsored program offers up to \$8,2500 per year in forgivable loans to be paid back over 10 years (Stancill, 2017). The program was relaunched after a brief hiatus due to budget constraints. Yet, from 1986 to 2015, the program recruited nearly 11,000 new teachers, with an aim to attract at least 20 percent teacher aspirants from underrepresented populations (Public School Forum of North Carolina, 2016).

Grow Your Own

In 2017, the Increase Teachers of Color Act created provisions to expand funding to “grow your own” programs throughout the state of Minnesota, as well as to continue the collaborative urban educator program (CUE), i.e., The Collaborative Urban and Greater Minnesota Educators of Color program (Minnesota Department of Education, n.d.). The legislation increased service loan forgiveness from \$1,000 to \$2,000 annually (to offset college loan debt) and clarified the provision for signing bonuses to teachers of underrepresented groups via the Alternate Teacher Pay System. The specific short-term goals were to double the percentage of American Indian teachers in the state from 4 percent to 8 percent by 2020, and to increase the overall number of ethnically diverse candidates in teacher preparation programs from 9 percent to 20 percent.

Programs targeted at the development of local talents such as high school students, local employees like Paraprofessionals and Teacher Aides, and local community members are often referred to as “grow your own.” The goal is to mobilize local resources. Many programs seek to meet the demand for qualified teachers in hard-to-fill areas with prospective teachers who know and live within the communities they are to serve. According to a study by Reininger (2012), most participants are locals, living within 20 miles of the high school they attended. Participants continue their training through district, state, and or university coursework to meet requirements for state teacher licensure.

The Connecticut RESC Alliance [Regional Education Resource Centers (2011)] reports on the High School Teacher Cadet Program of North Carolina as one of the most cited and replicated “grown your own” programs. Beginning in 1986, more than 60,000 students have participated in the program (Teacher Cadets, n.d.a). Comprised of high school students, the program seeks to recruit diverse candidates. Primary restrictions are the maintenance of a minimum 3.0 GPA, completion of coursework, field experience, and other assessments relevant to the profession of teaching. Data from the 2017-2018 cohort reveal a 31.9 percent participation rate among cadets of color (Teacher Cadets, n.d.b). Like a survey of southern New England high school students’ perceptions on positive attributes of the profession (Easley et al., 2017), 73.75 percent of cadets cite being able to influence the future of and working with young people as major reasons for their choice to become a teacher.

Men of Color

The U.S. teacher workforce remains predominantly female (77%) and is only 23% male (Taie & Goldring 2018). Of the male teacher population, less than 2% are Black (U.S. Department of Education (2016). Though few in number, Black male teachers, like other teachers of color, often view the profession as a means to have a positive effect on society and in the lives of students by addressing issues of social injustice (Hudson, 1998; Su, 1997). The historical marginalization of the Black community coupled with troubling social and academic outcomes for their children directly influence the motivation of many Black teachers. As Griffin and Takie (2016) report from a study developed around listening to Black teachers, participants experience a driving, internalized compulsion to support the whole student. This means addressing learners' well-being, their sense of belonging, their dignity, as well as their academic needs. The authors explain, "Academically, Black teachers spoke about feeling a burden to serve Black students well because another teacher may not. Black teachers shared a fear that if they did not teach, Black children would not be held to high expectations or encouraged to reach academic success." (P. 6) Herein lies an internalized burden of responsibility experienced by Black teachers through racial/ethnic matching.

Call Me Mister (Mentors Instructing Students Toward Effectiveness Role Models) was established at Clemson University (South Carolina) in 2000. The program provides tuition assistance through college loan forgiveness to first-year men of color pursuing designated degrees leading to teaching careers. Academic support and mentorship are also provided. Upon completion, participants are assisted with job placement.

In 2012, 26.8 percent of the New York City teacher workforce was male. During the same period, teachers of color were more likely to teach in high poverty schools compared to their White counterparts (New York Independent Budget Office [IBO], 2014). The disproportionality between students of color and male teachers of color within New York City schools is not dissimilar to national figures. In 2015, Mayor Bill de Blasio, working with The Young Men's Initiative, launched a goal to recruit 1000 male teachers of color by 2018. The project, NYC Men Teach, is a partnership across The Young Men's Initiative, the New York City Department of Education, City University of New York, the Center for Economic Opportunity, and Teach for America. Based out of the City University of New York, the program offers financial incentives to participants, along with a metro card, a dedicated counselor, assistance with certification preparation and costs, and other benefits. All participants are required to attend a semester-long seminar focused on culturally responsive education (City University of New York, n.d.). Since the program's inception, the percentage of NYC teachers who are White dropped from 59% to 56% (Elsen-Rooney, 2020).

Discussion: Building on What We Know to Diversify the Teacher Workforce

Indeed, teacher workforce parity is a matter of social justice. Racial and ethnic parity between teachers and students in U.S. classrooms holds promise for educational equity in learning, not only for students of color, but for all students. Equitable learning outcomes are the results of equitable access to high quality and culturally responsive instruction and educational spaces that are affirming, spaces that nurture a sense of belonging and support one's overall well-being. These school learning conditions, along with equitable learning among all students, naturally support the notion that school-wide renewal is also in reach via parity, as is shown by growing data on racial parity in the education profession.

Yet, as is evidenced through the study of same-race matching among students and teachers, as well as historical and contemporary contexts of racial parity in the teacher workforce, it is clear that none of the initiatives alone is a panacea. The current conditions of schools are also a barrier. In a pilot study of high school students of color from a southern New England, metropolitan school district, students reported their perceptions on the value of teaching as a profession, as well as factors that would or would not make teaching an attractive profession for them (Easley, et al., 2017). High school students indicated that working in a school among culturally diverse peers would make the teaching profession more attractive, thereby advancing the profession-at-large, advancing the benefit of workforce parity. It follows that the lack of parity today, challenges efforts for parity tomorrow, both within the profession as well as for teacher preparation programs at PWIs (Villegas & Davis, 2007).

Drawn directly from research observations of the initiatives shared here, there are several considerations I propose for advancing racial and ethnic parity within the teacher workforce. Each aims at the continual transformation of traditional university-based teacher preparation programs that continue to produce a majority of the nation's teacher workforce. These are, in no order of chronological importance: knowledge building, culture building, structural building, and policy building. Just as none of the initiatives addressed in and of itself is a panacea, nor should these be taken up alone to further educational equity.

Knowledge Building

Knowledge building is predicated on the need to continually learn more about the effect of teacher workforce parity on student learning, as well as whole school renewal. In addition, research on the effectiveness of policy and programing efforts to recruit and prepare teachers of color is also crucial. More information is needed in this area. Research on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in higher education continues to focus largely on how PWIs do or do not address diversity in preparing White students to address their privilege (Schwitzman, 2019). Less is known about the preparation of teachers of color within minority serving instructions (MSIs) (Will, 2017), as well as PWIs. While rudimentary evidence such as enrollment and program completion rates exist, broader questions needed to advance the profession are also needed. For example, what policies are most cost effective for recruiting, hiring, and retaining teachers of color throughout the supply change? What practices specific to the ongoing development of teachers of color are most or least effective in preparing them to meet the needs of all learners? And what are the effects of teacher workforce parity on overall school effectiveness? These are a few questions that come to mind.

Culture Building

Culture building refers to the process of developing educational contexts that nurture the successful recruitment and development of aspirant teachers of color. Culture building is essential throughout the continuum from teacher preparation to district hiring and retention. Taylor et al. (2016) culled contemporary research on student diversity in higher education resulting in a conclusion that policy and practices for meeting diversity goals are highly contextual. As such, the authors underscore the importance of campus culture, recognizing both "external forces (i.e., governmental policy, programs, and initiatives; socio-historical forces) and institutional forces (i.e., historical legacy of inclusion or exclusion; psychological climate, including perceptions and attitudes between and among groups;

behavioral climate characterized by the nature of intergroup relations on campus).” (p. 8) Institutional culture affects the general belonging and agency of individuals within the organization. Leggett (2020) surmises that research on Black teacher candidates at PWIs prominently reports on struggles they face during preparation programs. Such research describes isolation, micro aggression, and racism (Ndemanu, 2014; Thigpen & Reinking, 2021; Wilkins & Lall, 2011) as common experiences among Black students during teacher preparation at PWIs; and it is not uncommon for such experiences to continue once future teachers of color ascend to the workplace. The single most impactful internal force of institutions is an internalized commitment to foster cultures that value diversity and inclusion. Universities and their teacher preparation programs must address the unique needs of preservice teachers of color in ways that honor their cultural assets through inclusive practices, provide strong mentorship and nurturant relationships that dismantle isolation, embrace anti-racist curriculum and pedagogy, and support their professional identity development as teachers of color.

Policy Building

Policy building represents the political will and actions of formal institutional/public authorities that support the development of parity within the teacher workforce. Teacher preparation and licensure are highly regulated. Each state boasts its own polices. The challenge is to develop state and institutional policies that seek to unlock barriers to the profession for motivated aspirant teachers of color. Partelow et al. (2017), writing on behalf of the Center for American Progress profess, “policymakers at all levels must prepare current teachers and teacher candidates to best serve minority students while making policy changes aimed at diversifying the profession in the long term.” (p.13) Too often policies are written top-down, without sufficient input from the full-range of stakeholders that account for the system of preparation, recruitment/selection, hiring, retention, and promotion—i.e., the teacher pipeline and career ladder. When occurring, many unintended consequences have stymied the desired results. For example, policy-regulated entry into the profession and the financial costs shouldered by aspirants have been known to work against one another for diversifying the teacher workforce. For this reason, policy building requires an equity imperative to better understand its effect on marginalization and minoritization, along with mechanisms for timely self-correction. Moreover, policymaking aimed at diversifying the teaching force in the absence of diverse representation among rule makers undermines the equity imperative.

Structural Building

Structural building refers to the institutionalization of perspectives and systems for addressing teacher diversity. Structural building is undergirded by culture and policy, along with historical and interpersonal practices. Using a lens of race, power, and democracy, Collins (2009) describes the structural domain as the means through which practices are organized through social institutions, like schools and governmental agencies. As such, knowledge building, policy building, and cultural building converge to form structural building. Beyond policy and historical norms that have limited access for teachers of color to work in certain schools, structural building charges us to examine deep rooted causes stepped in institutionalized practices that (have) impede(ed) teacher workforce parity. These extend beyond recruitment and retention alone. Structural conditions that inform under-preparation among students of color to meet the minimum educational requirements for teacher preparation

program admissions criteria, for example, deserves continued attention. Preparation program admission, state licensure, and district hiring practices that implicitly or deliberately disenfranchise applicants of color are implicated at the structural level. Structural building for equity and diversity within the teacher workforce also seeks to dismantle conditions that continue to minoritize and or marginalize certain student populations, their communities, their histories, and their social conditions.

Final Thought. Race is indistinguishable from personal identity in American society. This fact is not likely to change in the immediate future. The research of Graeber and Setzler (2021) confirms the inextricable link between race (across groups) and one's internalized American identity. More concretely, Black Americans overwhelming attribute being Black as extremely or very important to their sense of identity (Cox & Tamir, 2022). As educators, policy makers, and advocates who continue to develop the conditions of schooling within teacher preparation for a diverse teacher workforce, we must not ignore the importance of race and culture. We must apply the lens of knowledge building, culture building, policy building, and structural building to examine, critique, and address the triumphs and shortcomings in our efforts to diversify the teaching workforce.

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