PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENTS OF COLOR ENROLLED IN A PRE-SERVICE TEACHER PROGRAM

WESTERN CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY

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PURPOSE STATEMENT

The purpose of this study is to explore the college experiences of students of color in an education program at a university in the Northeast.

RATIONALE

There is a scarcity of students of color obtaining college degrees, but also of pursuing degrees in education (NCES, 2019; Tate, 2017). Within 6 years, 45.8% of Hispanic/Latino and 38% of Black/African American students graduate from college (Tate, 2017). These percentages are low when compared to 62% of White students who complete college within 6 years (Tate, 2017).

Studies have shown academic and social benefits for all the students, but specially for students of color to have a teacher of color (Alvarez & Paters, 2021).
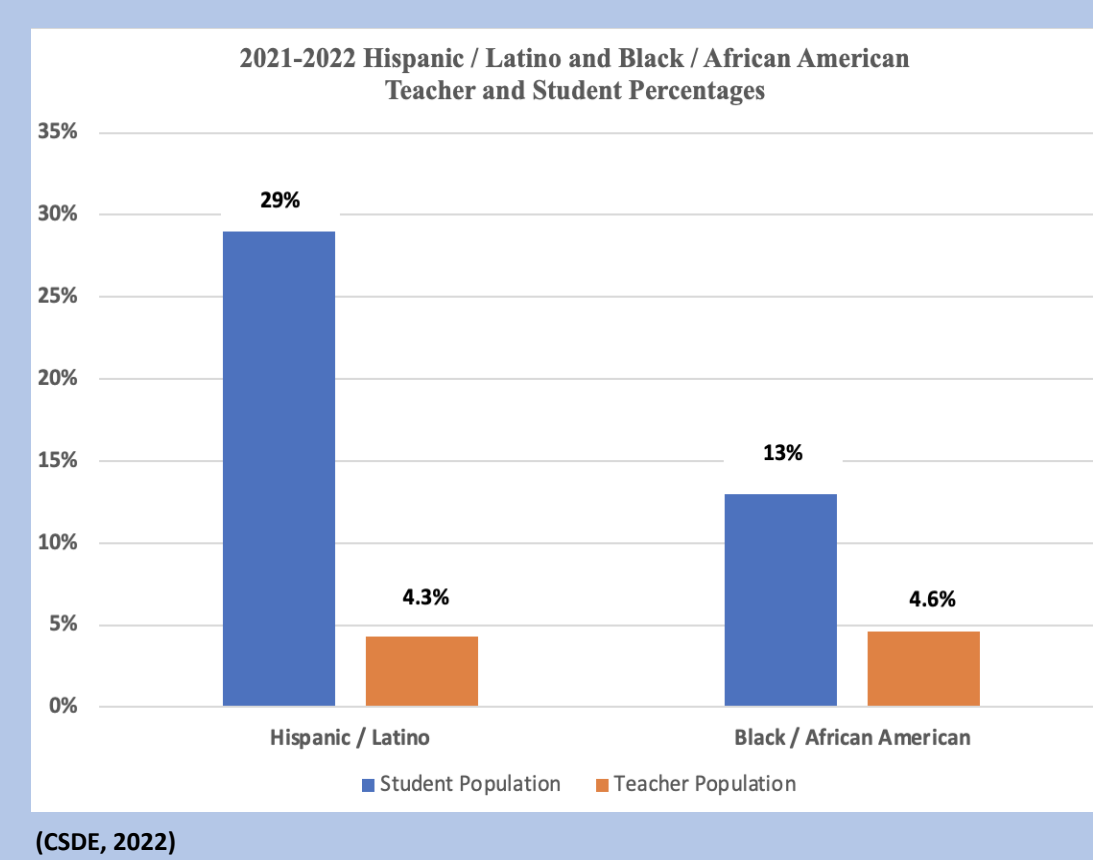
Teachers of color tend to have more positive perceptions of students of color and reduce the referral of students of color to special education programs (Liu et al., 2017).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

There is gap between teachers of color and students of color.

For the 2021-2022 academic year, the state of Connecticut served 513,615 students of which 148,744 (29%) students identified as Hispanic/Latino and 64,898 (13%) identified as Black/African American (CSDE, 2022).

The current population represents 42% students of color, yet, only 4.6% of Connecticut teachers identified as Black/ African American and 4.3% of teachers identified as Hispanic/ Latino (CSDE, 2022).

2021-2022 Hispanic / Latino and Black / African American Teacher and Student Percentages

(CSDE, 2022)

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH

This study may help higher education administrators make decisions based on recommendations and experiences of current students of color enrolled in a pre-service teacher program.

Additionally, the study may bring to light the resources, programs, and policies that already support the students of color in a pre-service teacher program.

KEY TERMS

1. *Students of color* typically encompass those students who are Black, Hispanic, Asian, Pacific Islander, American Indian/Alaska Native, and of two or more races (U.S. Department of Education, 2021).

2. *Full-time students* carry at least 75% of an undergraduate student load (U.S. Office of Education, 1968).

3. *Retention* refers to the rate at which students continue in college (Robbins, Oh, Le, & Button, 2009).

4. *A Pre-service Teacher Program* is designed to provide education and training to students who are interested in education during college (Liu et al., 2017).

5. *Critical Race Theory* is a framework to explore racial inequalities by looking at the curriculum, instruction, assessment, school funding, and desegregation in education (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Ladson-Billings, 1998).

6. *Cultural Relevant Pedagogy* is a way to provide opportunities for students to maintain their cultural integrity and be successful academically (Ladson-Billing, 1995, 2006).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Empirical Research – Critical Race Theory

Authors	Findings
Brown, 2014	* Race plays a role on preservice **teacher choices** for their career as they develop a social justice stance. * Lack of support in preservice teacher programs and lack of preparation in developing them as culturally responsive educators.
Burns & Thomas, 2014	* School districts did not take a **holistic approach** when hiring teachers of color. * There is a need for a more **radical rethinking** on the policies regarding hiring and accreditation.
Bell & Busey 2021	* The intersection of race, class, gender, and language oppression, played an important role in the cohort model, curriculum, and program structure.
Dodo Seriki, Brown, & Fasching-Varner, 2015)	* There is a need for teacher candidates to **engage** in critical self-reflection, self-awareness, and willingness to act on the face of racism.

Empirical Research – Significance of Teachers of Color

Authors	Findings
Blazar, 2021	* Classrooms with a teacher of color had an **increase of students' outcomes**, higher test scores, and frequent school attendance.
Cherng & Halpin, 2016	* Black and Latinx teachers make connections with all students but serve as **role models** for Latinx and Black students. * Teachers of color had **higher expectations** from their students and help them navigate systems and obstacles in the society.
Griffin, 2018	* Students reported that Latino and Black teachers, more than their White teachers, were clearer, held high academic standards, and **supported their efforts.**

Existing Strategies to Recruit Students of Color

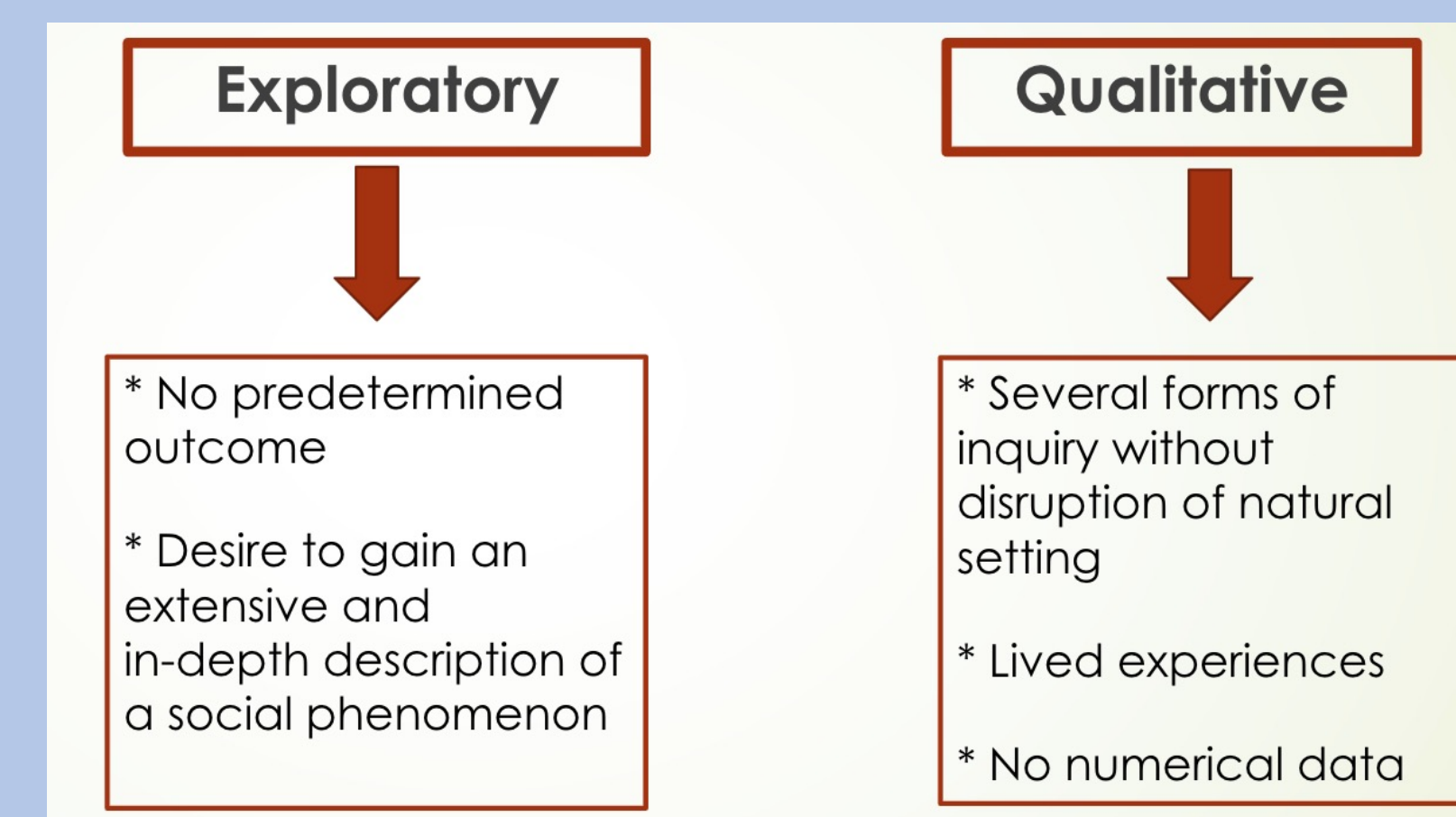| Category	Description
Financial Initiatives	* Minority Teacher Incentive Grant Program for full-time college juniors, seniors, and students in the Alternative Route to Certification (ARC). * Ethnic Minority Future Teacher Scholarship for high school students * Loan reimbursement up to 10% (Teach Connecticut, 2022).
Teacher Requirements	*Award provisional certification to teachers out-of-state. * Memorandums for free retake of the licensure exam and change in guidelines regarding cross endorsement for initial certification and out-of-state teachers (Walker, 2022).
Educator Rising Academy	* Grow Your Own Programs to help high school students explore teaching as a college career (Carver-Thomas, 2019). * Expansion of the Educators Rising Academy curriculum into 10 school districts across Connecticut to provide high school students hands-on experiences in teaching and earn college credits (State of Connecticut, 2020).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

RQ1: What are the perceptions of students of color for staying in a pre-service teacher program?

RQ2: What factors influenced their decisions to pursue a career in teaching?

RQ3: What recommendations do students of color give to help recruit, support, and retain students of color in pre-service teacher programs?

DESCRIPTION OF SETTING & PARTICIPANTS

Welby University (pseudonym)
Northeastern United States
Pre-Service Teacher Preparatory Program
Undergraduate / Full-time
119 Full-time students have declared education as their major
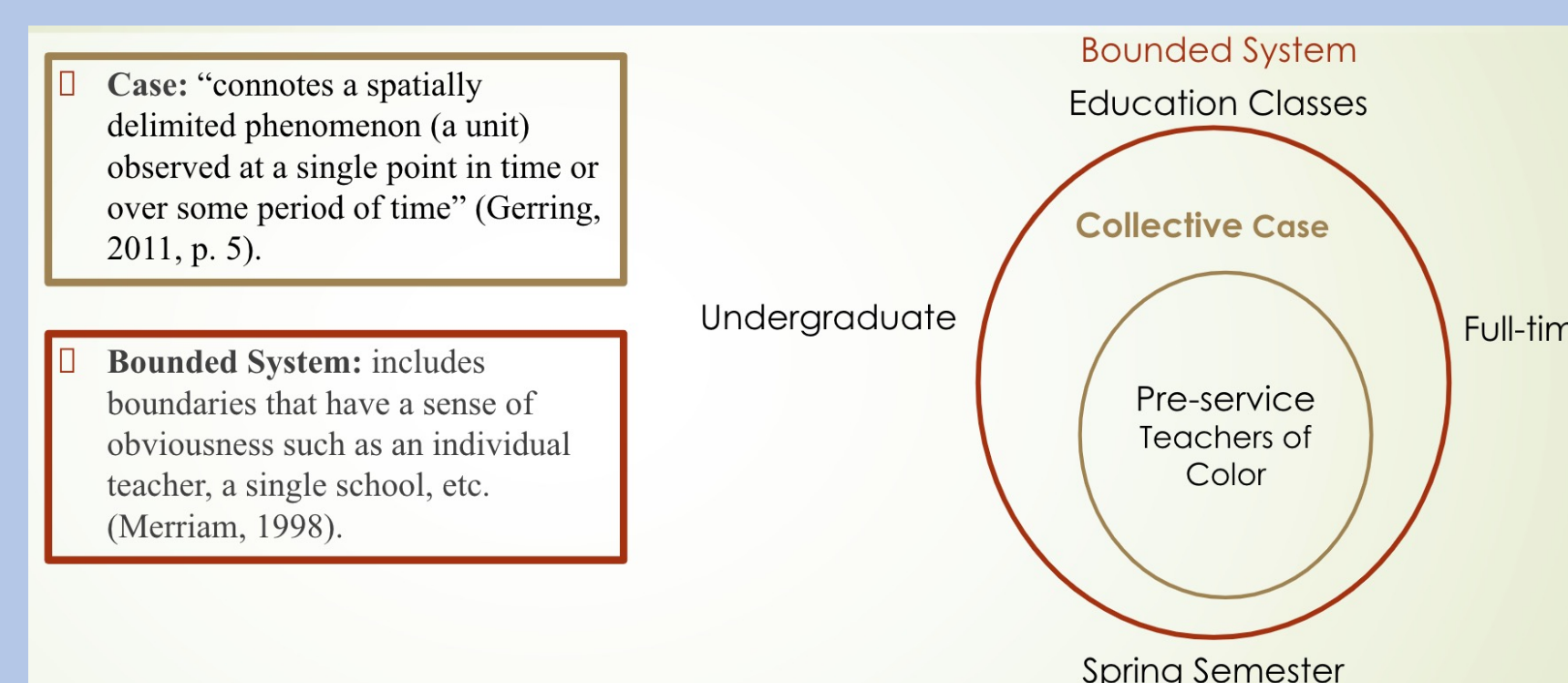Pre-service Students of Color
$n = 25$

RESEARCH DESIGN

Exploratory Qualitative Collective Case Study (Merriam, 1998)

Exploratory
* No predetermined outcome
* Desire to gain an extensive and in-depth description of a social phenomenon

Qualitative
* Several forms of inquiry without disruption of natural setting
* Lived experiences
* No numerical data

In this qualitative study, a collective case study approach is utilized to gain an in depth understanding of a group of students of color enrolled in a pre-service teacher program in one of the universities in the Northeast.

The case includes students of color enrolled in a pre-service teacher program bounded by being full-time undergraduate students taking education classes in the spring semester.

Case: "connotes a spatially delimited phenomenon (a unit) observed at a single point in time or over some period of time" (Gerring, 2011, p. 5).

Bounded System: includes boundaries that have a sense of obviousness such as an individual teacher, a single school, etc. (Merriam, 1998).

Bounded System
Education Classes
Collective Case
Undergraduate
Full-time
Pre-service Teachers of Color
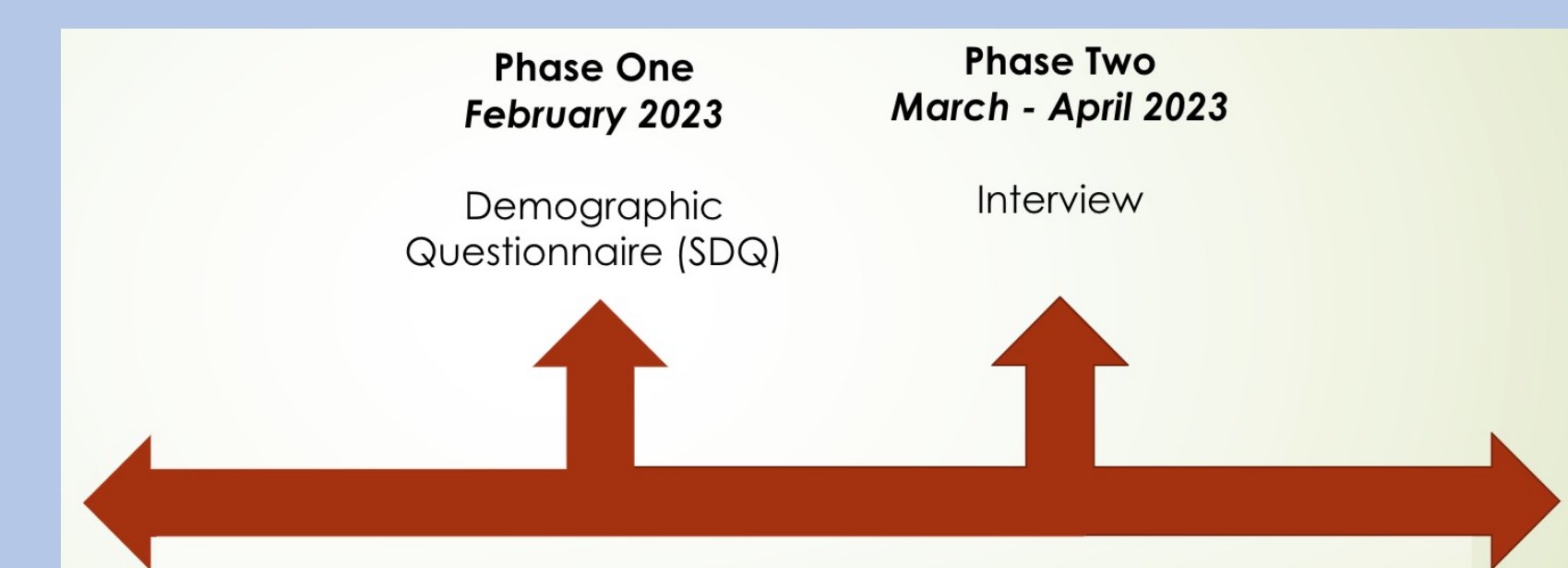Spring Semester

SAMPLING

This study follows a purposive sampling with a nonprobabilistic sampling strategy, as the goal is not to make statistical sense from the data (Merriam, 1998).
Furthermore, this study follows Patton's criterion guidelines for purposive sampling (Patton, 1990).

Target Population
Undergraduate Pre-service Teachers
N= 119

Criterion
Full-time
Identify as Hispanic / Latino or Black/African American

Sample
Purposive Sampling (Patton, 1990)
$n= 25$ 21%

INSTRUMENTATION

Student Demographic Questionnaire (SDQ)	Interview
Purpose: To provide a rich description of demographics of the participants. **Format:** - Multiple choice / one-word answers - Google Forms - 5 minutes **Items:** - 17 Questions	**Purpose:** To have the opportunity to learn from the participants' information about their experiences which cannot be observed. **Format:** - Semi-structured - In-person / virtual - 25-30 minutes - Recorded **Items:** - 9 Questions

DATA COLLECTION TIMELINE

Phase One
February 2023
Demographic Questionnaire (SDQ)

Phase Two
March - April 2023
Interview

DATA ANALYSIS OVERVIEW

Data Collection and Data Analysis will be done simultaneously (Merriam, 1998)

Demographic Questionnaire (SDQ)
- Descriptive Statistics
- Content Analysis for one-word answers

Interview
- Recorded data
- NVIVO
- Thematic analysis
    - six steps
    - recursive process

Step 1: familiarizing yourself with your data

Step 2: generating initial codes

Step 3 searching for themes

Step 4: reviewing themes

Step 5: defining and naming themes

Step 6: producing the report

(Braun & Clarke, 2006)

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PRE-SERVICE TEACHER PROGRAM

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Abstract

The proposed study explores the college experiences of students of color in an education program at a public university in the northeastern US. More than ever, there is a need for teachers of color due to the continuous increase of students of color in the country. This study follows an exploratory qualitative case study research design. Data were collected during the Spring 2023 semester. A sample included 25 full-time undergraduate education students who self-identify as Hispanic/Latino, and students who identify as Black/African American/Other at a teacher education university in the Northeast.

The instruments included a student demographics questionnaire and an open-ended interview. A thematic analysis approach was used to analyze the data. The results of this study may provide suggestions to recruit, support, and retain students of color in teacher education.

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