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Commitment to Serve: Motivational Factors and Undergraduate Male Elementary Teacher Pre-Serve Preparation

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Commitment to Serve: Motivational Factors and Undergraduate Male Elementary Teacher Pre-Serve Preparation

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by

Agustín Cervantes

2021

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Commitment to Serve: Motivational Factors and

Undergraduate Male Elementary Teacher Pre-Serve Preparation

by

Agustín Cervantes

Doctor of Education

University of California, Los Angeles, 2021

Professor Lucrecia Santibañez, Chair

This qualitative study explored the career motivational factors of undergraduate, pre-service male elementary teachers attending a regional comprehensive university in Los Angeles. I conducted a basic interpretive qualitative investigation into the experiences, worldviews, relationships, and personal motivators that resulted in enrollment into an undergraduate elementary education program, under a conceptual framework comprised of the FIT-Choice (Factors Influencing Teaching Choice) theory, funds of knowledge (FoK), and funds of identity (FoI) collectively. I interviewed 14 participants, all currently enrolled male students in an

undergraduate Integrated Teacher Education Preparation (ITEP) program, to understand the motivations of individuals deciding to pursue a career in elementary teaching, as well as their impressions and opinions of this preparation program that they are currently enrolled in. Participants indicated the reasons behind their interest in teaching as a career, general perceptions of gender in the classroom, as well as reflections and opinions of their preparation program and teacher recruitment. Investigating the forces that propel the very few males that have enrolled in an undergraduate elementary education program can help inform post-secondary preparation program recruitment strategies that can adversely affect the gender imbalance in teaching and curve the shortage as a whole. Implications and recommendations based on findings share directions for future research on undergraduate preservice preparation and supports, as well as education, cross-system partnerships in the interest of developing teacher career pathways grounded in cultural and community relevancy.

The dissertation of Agustín Cervantes is approved.

Cecilia Ríos-Aguilar

Karen Quartz

Frederick Uy

Lucrecia Santibañez, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2021

DEDICATION

To Isela and Mathias, Lala and Tata emigrated from México to the United States with nothing but the undeniable ability to dream. "*Quién no lo hace?*" is the Chumato aphorism in the form of a question that continuously gave me the resolve in these academic pursuits and work in education. And here we are, with this terminal degree, del pueblo al doctorado. Esta es mi contribución a ese legado. Espero que ustedes hagan muchísimo más, ya que el sueño se hace a mano y sin permiso. Embrace your future. Be just like Lala and Tata: honest, kind, curious, and always come at everything you do from a place of love.

To my siblings, thanks for the vote of confidence. Ana, embracing your many roles with grace has been a huge inspiration and motivator to me. Thanks for pushing me to do more and be a better human. Alejandro, continue to inspire and mold future generations with your devotion and care in the classroom. It does it for me. Nancy, thanks for always speaking your truth and for being a force that keeps us together, especially during moments of uncertainty. Joseph, thank you for your counsel and commitment to all of us. Your ability to understand and empathize is gold. Fortalecen con sus palabras y presencia.

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CHAPTER 1: THE PROBLEM

Overview

The topic of education reform is on many national agendas, and a common challenge during an era of reform is the recruitment of K-12 teachers (Kass & Miller, 2018). According to the Learning Policy Institute (LPI), California is experiencing a teacher shortage affecting more than 80 percent of its school districts (Sutcher, Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2018). Increased demand for K–12 teachers in California comes at a time when the incoming supply of new teachers (i.e., enrollment in educator preparation programs) has declined by over 25 percent from 2011 to 2018 (U.S. Department of Education Title II Higher Education Act, 2020), below the estimated demand for teacher hires by school districts and organizations across the state (Darling-Hammond, Sutcher & Carver-Thomas, 2018).

Contributing to the state's teacher shortage is the underrepresentation of males working in the classroom. While the importance of men in education has long been recognized, little has changed in their representation as a part of the teacher workforce in the last century. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), women held approximately 76 percent of all teaching positions in public schools in 2017-2018 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021). The numbers are drastically worse at the elementary school level, with men only accounting for 11 percent of those teachers. The elementary teaching profession is expected to grow by 7 percent in the next decade (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021). As such, there are many opportunities for men in education.

This disproportionality by gender in the teaching profession is not unique to California nor the United States. Several countries with decreasing numbers of men choosing teaching careers have launched national efforts to recruit more men into the profession, but these programs have fallen short of their goals (Skelton, 2009).

Men play a critical part in improving education systems when they become teachers. In a profession where women are the majority, male teachers diversify the education workforce and augment the types of role models available to children in schools. The research suggests that both male and female teachers contribute to a well-rounded education and a child's social-emotional development (McGrath, Moosa, Van Bergen & Bhana, 2020). Sometimes, the mere presence of men in the classroom can be helpful for students as they navigate schooling and socialize. According to studies cited by the Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE), having male and female teachers contributes to children's gender knowledge, allowing children to learn from others they perceive as similar. Having men in the classroom can create a space for children to understand how to interact with adults who are different from themselves. Furthermore, more males would drastically diversify the elementary teacher workforce, enhancing the decision-making processes within school systems and prospectively improving job satisfaction all around (Johnson, 2008; McGrath et al., 2020). Lastly, the presence of male teachers may help promote alternative versions of masculinity, helping break down the polarized differences that foster gender inequalities and the persistent workforce gender disparity. As Johnson (2008) contended, "programs for more men in education should embrace goals of gender equity and social justice within the broader society" (p. 3). On that notion, gender asymmetries within the teacher workforce pose a challenge and encroachment on the democratic

and egalitarian values schools are set to promote, and as long as this disparity continues, researchers find that children continue to be exposed to new forms of sexist gender relations in schools daily (Johnson, 2008; Lahelma, 2000). Thus, addressing the lack of men in teaching through effective recruitment positively affects the teacher supply while enhancing the culture of learning for children who will now see more males teaching in elementary.

Statement of the Problem

Although studies have investigated factors that attract individuals to the teaching profession, there is still an overall lack of empirical evidence regarding differentiating factors between genders. Little attention has been directed toward undergraduate males enrolled in elementary education majors, where they have been historically underrepresented (Stewart, Coombs & Burston, 2016). Research suggests that both male and female teachers are primarily driven by intrinsic motivations to teach. However, extrinsic factors, notably low salaries, and low prestige compared to other professions, present barriers to career choice, particularly for men (Mullola, Ravaja, Lipsanen, Alatupa, Hintsanen, Jokela & Keltikangas-Järvinen, 2012). The lack of critical research specifically focused on motivations for the few males enrolled in this unique teacher preparation program and its effects on the recruitment and retention of future teachers provided an opportunity for an unexplored study.

Purpose of the Study

This study attempted to fill a critical research gap focused on undergraduate, pre-service male elementary teachers attending a regional comprehensive university in Los Angeles. To gain this understanding, I conducted a basic interpretive qualitative investigation into the experiences, worldviews, relationships, and personal motivators that result in enrollment into an

undergraduate elementary education program. I interviewed 14 participants, all currently enrolled male students in an undergraduate Integrated Teacher Education Preparation (ITEP) program, to understand the motivations of individuals deciding to pursue a career in elementary teaching. I wanted to understand these factors to ascertain how they can inform teacher recruitment initiatives targeting males while also understanding the effects of enrollment in an undergraduate program on their professional teacher identity development.

Conceptual Framework

This study was situated in a framework comprised of the following theories: the FIT-Choice (Factors Influencing Teaching Choice) theory (Watt & Richardson, 2007), funds of knowledge (FoK) (Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzalez, 1992), and funds of identity (FoI) (Saubich & Guitart, 2011). This study will dive into how career interest is developed and sustained in an academic context for a traditionally underrepresented space. The FIT-Choice (Factors Influencing Teaching Choice) framework is grounded on Eccles's (2000) expectancy-value theory. It offers a thorough standard to guide research into people's motivations to choose a teaching career (Richardson & Watt, 2006). The FoK approach complements this intention, for it assumes male pre-service elementary students are competent and have knowledge and skills developed through life. The approach is recognized as an essential aspect of culturally responsive education (Hogg & Volman, 2020), a key outcome of the undergraduate, integrated teacher education program. As a great complement to the FoK approach, the FoI concept draws attention to FoK that students themselves experience as meaningful to their identity and self-understanding. For males going into a space where they are predominantly in the minority, it will be important to understand their self-efficacy beliefs, including what they feel properly

equips them to navigate teacher preparation and early career development. Because both FoK and FoI fundamentally reject deficit theorizing and reliance on negative assumptions and stereotypes, drawing on Community Cultural Wealth will ground the study to explore unrecognized forms of cultural capital from an appreciative standpoint (Yosso, 2005). Uncovering these forms of capital can be instrumental in developing strategies for success in the program, which includes diversifying its student population makeup and promoting all its students' academic, professional, and personal success as future elementary school teachers.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided my study:

1. What motivates males to pursue enrollment in undergraduate elementary education programs?
    a. When do male students begin thinking about a career in teaching, and how do they arrive at their decision to enroll in an undergraduate elementary education program?
    b. What and who do these individuals describe as having a strong influence on their career decision-making process?
    c. In what ways do they expect a career in teaching to contribute to their life goals?
2. What impressions/opinions do male participants have of the integrated teacher education preparation (ITEP) program, and what effects, if any, does the program have on the career choice of these participants?
    a. What, if any, are areas of strength of the ITEP Program?
    b. What, if any, are areas of improvement of the ITEP Program?

c. What, if any, is the emerging teaching philosophy male pre-service teachers develop through the program?

Gap in Research

The current research literature around male teachers offers a range of varied reasons for why we need to attract and keep more males (Cruickshank, 2012), and reasons for the low and declining numbers of male elementary teachers (Cushman, 2007). While the literature tends to focus on the reasons why men are not going into teaching (e.g., the feminization of the profession, preconceived gender notions tied to working with youth, and general appeal, etc.), studies investigating the motivation of those who chose to pursue a career in the profession are less common. This study focuses on the forces that affect the enrollment of males in an integrated undergraduate program in elementary education can help investigate this trend. Furthermore, in the research on male teachers, the focus has been chiefly on the experiences of those teachers already employed (in-service teachers) instead of those in preparation programs (pre-service teacher) (Weaver-Hightower, 2011). By focusing on those male students who are interested in teaching from an early stage in their academic careers, I can seek to identify and understand the factors and reasons behind innate career interest in teaching, as well as the forms of capital that students can access in themselves as resources to support educational outcomes and career development. An understanding of these motivators and the prospective assets brought forth by candidates can inform recommendations on improving and enhancing recruitment into elementary education programs, reducing attrition, and positively supporting the progression of those males into the field of elementary education.

Research Design

To investigate these research questions, I will use a qualitative phenomenology research design for this study. The study aims to understand why the male students decided on elementary teaching as a career and how they begin constructing their identity as prospective teachers. Because their interest came early into a career that very few in their gender select, I decided to understand why this is so. This understanding would include their views and discernments on their career choice and the undergraduate program selected to reach those professional goals, and a qualitative, phenomenological approach will be the most appropriate to capture the voices, experiences, and identities of undergraduate, upper-division male students enrolled in an integrated, teacher preparation program in elementary education. The study will include an intake form and individual, semi-structured interviews of all participants.

Significance

As a student service administrator for a college of education at a public university, I want to know why men choose to teach as a profession to design effective recruiting efforts for the Integrated Teacher Education Preparation (ITEP) program. In particular, I would like to address the recruitment concern in the program, where less than 20 percent of all new students in each of the last three years have been males. Before creating or enhancing recruitment programs targeting males, one must first understand what factors may have led males in our programs currently and if any of those factors are unique to males. In doing so, one can improve our recruitment effort and perhaps enhance the onboarding and engagement experience for male students joining our elementary education program while also validating through this experience the career choice in teaching.

Intrinsically tied to their undergraduate experience in an integrated teacher education program is the professional identity formation as future teachers. It is important to impact the number of individuals preparing themselves to teach and the number of males joining the profession, given the benefits of a diverse teacher workforce in student performance. This dissertation will analyze what factors drive the current enrollment of men in an undergraduate, integrated teacher preparation program and the connection between this experience and the male students' attitudes towards their career selection and initial identity formation as future elementary teachers.

Summary

Gender disparity prevails in the teaching workforce, particularly significant in the elementary education arena. Such disparities adversely affect underserved communities, particularly inner-city urban epicenters. There is limited research on male elementary pre-service teachers, particularly those attending the nation's largest regional comprehensive university system and the largest supplier of pre-service teachers in California- the California State University (CSU). Based on national recruitment and retention numbers, it is clear that men who choose teaching careers have encountered unique challenges related to cultural gender stereotypes (Sargent, 2005). Knowing why men decide to teach, and if any of those factors are unique to males, can help inform recruitment initiatives and policy proposals, especially towards integrated teacher education programs that seek to accelerate a pathway towards the profession. Equally important is the effect these program pathways have on the choice in teaching and pre-service preparation. Preserving and pursuing a gender-diverse workforce of teachers, now and

into the future, is ultimately in the best interests of all school stakeholders. This chapter explains the background of this study's topic, providing rationale and an impetus for this study.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

This study seeks to understand why men entered elementary education and selected an integrated teacher education program in multiple subjects. Much of the literature exploring the male elementary teacher status underscores that many males are either choosing to leave the profession or are simply not attracted to it in the first place, compared to their female counterparts (Cushman, 2007; National Center for Education Statistics, 2019).

This literature review first summarizes the male teacher shortage at the national and state levels and its reasons. Included will be statistical information on the dearth of men in teaching, followed by a review of the factors that detract males from teaching. Next, we will review the motivations males have shared for teaching, followed by the research on why males in teaching matter and the proposed justifications for male teacher recruitment. I will then analyze the link between professional identity formation and teacher pre-service programs, which hopefully lead to efficiency in the classroom and affect the perception of the profession, an important aspect of teacher recruitment. The last section reviews the FIT-Choice Theory and Funds of Knowledge, Funds of Identity, and Community Cultural Wealth as the theoretical framework for this research. This amalgamation of theories can be used for understanding the motivation of male undergraduates pursuing careers in elementary teaching.

Male Teacher Shortage

According to research by the Economic Policy Institute (EPI), the teacher shortage in the United States could reach 200,000 by 2025, up from 110,000 in 2018 (Garcia & Weiss, 2019). In California, which has the largest number of public school students in the US, 80

percent of districts reported a shortage of qualified teachers in 2017-2018, and nine out of 10 of those districts said the situation was worse than the previous school year (Sutcher et al., 2018). Shortages are more pronounced in particular subject areas, including special education, mathematics, and science generally (Darling-Hammond, Furger, Shields & Sutcher, 2016), extending to other subject areas like English and elementary education in high-need schools (Podolsky & Sutcher, 2016).

At the elementary level, male teachers have historically and consistently been in the minority. Johnson (2008) argues that even in the 1800s, only 29 percent of teachers at the secondary and elementary levels were men. Current data in the United States suggests that the participation of males by percentage in the area of elementary and middle school education has remained constant for the past ten years (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). In 2009, of the 2,862,000 elementary and middle school teachers, only 19.1 percent were male. By 2019, the percentage consistency remained, with males comprising 19.5 percent of the 3,604,000 elementary and middle school teachers. The figure drops to less than 3 percent of the preschool and kindergarten teachers, another percentage that has remained consistent in that period (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019).

One of the most decisive factors driving the emerging teacher shortage is declining teacher preparation enrollments (Sutcher, Darling-Hammond & Carver-Thomas, 2016). The U.S. Department of Education Title II data on teacher preparation programs report that between 2010 and 2017, total enrollment nationwide in teacher preparation programs has declined by more than one-third (U.S. Department of Education Title II Higher Education Act, 2020); this decline has occurred in the context of increasing enrollment in bachelor's degree programs nationwide over

the same period. In California, during this same period, there was a 26 percent decline in the number of students completing teacher preparation programs (U.S. Department of Education Title II Higher Education Act, 2020).

Alongside the slow growth in the US public school teacher workforce, statistics show a steady decline in the ratio of men to women in its ranks. In the 2015-2016 school year, of the almost 1.9 million elementary school teachers, a mere 11 percent were men, two percentage points lower than in 1999–2000 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021). Most male teachers are found in the secondary (36 percent of the 1.9 million secondary school teachers), where status is higher and social acceptability greater (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021; Sanatullova-Allison, 2010). In California, the Department of Education finds that fewer than 27 percent of K-12 teachers are male, while 51 percent of school-aged children in California are boys. Only 3.2 percent of kindergarten and preschool teachers are men (Brown, 2017).

Deterrents to Teach

The research literature on the dearth of male teachers cites several causative factors behind the gender disparity in the teacher workforce. Male teachers face unique challenges during their educational careers' recruitment, preparation, and implementation phase (Brookhart & Loadman, 1996; Gosse, Parr & Allison, 2008; Ponte, 2012). Gender-based misconceptions, stereotypes, and social biases have been intrinsically tied to the persistent, major gender asymmetries in elementary teaching (Johnson, 2008; Spilt, Koomen & Jak, 2012). Understanding the notion of teaching as a feminized profession is at the core of the male teacher dilemma.

Research from western countries, for example, has indicated that elementary education teachers, in general, must embody a level of nurturing that is often perceived as "feminine" or "women's work" (Drudy, 2008; Stewart et al., 2016). Teaching is associated with care and nurturance, firmly placing teaching outside the normative boundaries of acceptable masculine practices (Skelton, 2003). This impact is most pronounced in early childhood education, where teaching is perceived as an extension of mothering (Cushman, 2005a; Sargent, 2005; Skelton, 2003). From a feminist perspective, Skelton (2003) concluded that despite recruitment efforts to attract more males to elementary teaching, the "interrelationship between (hegemonic) gender and (hetero) sexuality" would continue to slate elementary teaching as a career that is not "suitable" for men (p. 40). For those who decide to work with children, the experienced scrutiny requires them to face multiple layers of identity construction and renegotiation. While all teachers must learn how to interact with families, community members, and colleagues, male teachers find themselves in a position of defending themselves against categorizations of being "feminine, gay, or sissy" (Malaby & Ramsey, 2011). Thus, joining the elementary teaching profession challenges social norms that lead to negative scrutiny within the larger society, making many men reluctant to work with children (Skelton, 2003).

Beyond the feminization of the teaching profession, additional explanations about the profession have been alluded to, contributing to its current demographic makeup. For instance, compared to those of other occupations requiring the same educational investment, teacher salaries are pervasively cited as a key reason for the failure to attract an ample number of males to the profession (Cushman, 2007; Johnson, 2008). Low salaries relative to those in other occupations may be why more intrinsic rewards are highlighted when it comes to teaching, such

as making a difference in the lives of children and giving back to one's community (Johnson, 2008). Cruickshank (2012) found that salary considerations might have a differential effect on men because of the perception of being a primary wage earner in the home. Men are also paid more than women in the labor market, making the opportunity cost of entering teaching may be higher. Tied to this is the unintended consequence to what Johnson (2008) described as the "glass escalator effect," where men in education quickly realize that moving into administration leads to earning more and being less in the classroom, or the "feminized" space. These issues of salary, however, also dissuade women from entering teaching.

Another reason is the lack of status of teaching as a profession (Johnson, 2008). Drudy (2008) describes how the external control to which teachers have traditionally been subjected contributes to the debate on whether teaching constitutes a true profession or should be excluded from the classic definition of a profession. Waves of ongoing education reforms have left many teachers feeling deprived of professional autonomy (Johnson, 2008), while also contributing to the departure of many seasoned teachers from the profession (Tye & O'Brien, 2002). Many men and women report that others try to dissuade them from a career in teaching by describing the excessive demands and low pay (Cushman, 2005; Johnson, 2008). In a similar light, Foster and Newman (2005) adopted the term identity bruising to describe the unanticipated "knock back" experienced by male teachers. In a described incident, a student expressed the desire to be a teacher. Upon sharing this with his mother, the mother told the teacher, "Oh no, he's not—that's not a good enough job—and not paid enough" (Foster & Newman, 2005, p. 348). This statement reflects a gender stereotype propagating how teaching is not a suitable career for a man.

One pervasive issue in the literature is the constant worry of child abuse allegations. The narratives of men who teach young children are replete with descriptions of how they must be alert to any semblance of indiscretion, which adds to job stress and even prevents them from providing young children with the nurturing care expected of female teachers (Carrington, 2002; Foster & Newman, 2005; Sargent, 2005). For instance, Hansen and Mulholland (2005) found that part of this scrutiny based on preconceived gender practices required male teachers to develop alternative ways of providing care and nurturance toward their students for fear of allegations of pedophilia and child protection issues. Most male teachers are told explicitly not to touch the children and are reprimanded if they do so, even to comfort a crying child. Sargent (2004) described, "having to work with children under a cloud of suspicion" as the "single greatest impediment" to men working in early childhood education (p. 178). The paradox is that the scrutiny of males pushes those in the profession to avoid behaviors that are a natural part of the job and are, ironically, listed as motivating factors for males entering teaching. Despite these prospective impediments, men do go into the profession. It is important to understand what has been uncovered as motivating factors for this career choice and the justifications for why men should be recruited into the profession in general.

Motivations to Teach

Exploring the motivating factors of those men who, despite many challenges faced, still choose to become elementary teachers is pivotal to improving the recruitment and retention of men in teaching. In general, males' motives for selecting an education major are mainly altruistic and intrinsic and have very little to do with extrinsic reasons such as salary or status.

The literature powerfully highlights this motive: a desire to work with children and make a difference in their lives (Cushman, 2005b; Mulholland & Hansen, 2003). This altruistic reason is the main one identified in most literature for pre-service candidates selecting teaching as a career, with no significant difference when it comes to gender (Azman, 2013; Johnston, McKeown & McEwen, 1999). In a focus group study of undergraduates in an education major (survey to 390 students, 64 males, and 326 females), Montecinos and Nielsen (1997) found that 62 percent of males identified the main reason for deciding to become a teacher as the commitment to children (i.e., wanting to make a difference in children's lives and loving children). Stroud, Smith, Ealy and Hurst (2000) found that the changes in majors towards the education major for males were predominantly influenced by the desire to make a difference in children's lives.

Cruickshank (2012), in his review of literature on male teacher motivation, found that male teachers often cite childhood experiences with male role models and teachers as motivators that propelled them to pursue and develop professional identities as teachers. Bernard, Hill, Falter and Wilson (2004) found a similar response in the male participants in their study. A majority of their participants stated that they could remember one or more male teachers who had made substantial differences in their lives, often because they could relate better to their male teachers over the female ones. Similarly, Montecinos and Nielsen (1997) found that (31 percent) of males cited the desire to follow exemplary teachers' steps in their schooling experiences. About a third also cited influential family role models as another factor in their decision. Similarly, Stroud et al.'s (2000) study of pre-service male education majors noted that the most important factor for males choosing early childhood and elementary education majors

was the influence of a positive role model or mentor during their time as students. Participants in their study stated that they knew they wanted to be a teacher before they had finished school because of their positive interactions with a professional educator (teacher, principal, and counselor) who served as a role model. They were able to identify one teacher worthy of imitation. Manuel and Hughes (2006) found that 73 percent of pre-service male teachers agreed that there is, or has been, a significant teacher or mentor who influenced the decision to become a teacher.

Prior effectiveness in working with youth was another reason cited as a motivating factor for male elementary teachers. In their study of male participants in their final year of a Bachelor of Education program, Mulholland and Hansen (2003) found that most participants cited their experience of working with children as sports coaches or during work experience, as well as the perceptions of parents and peers that they were good with children, as motivations for wanting to become teachers. These education major students were motivated to continue with their degree through their positive experiences on fieldwork and school-based placement. Similarly, Stroud et al., (2000) found that the value of interacting with young children encouraged and reinforced the choice of men to go into the profession. This included substituting and coaching. Similarly, Manuel and Hughes (2006) found that pre-service teachers identified a correlation in their qualities with those they would attribute to effective teaching.

Why Male Teachers Matter

These shortages of qualified teachers disproportionately affect schools serving historically disadvantaged students: students of color and students from low-income families (Darling-Hammond et al., 2018). In response to this impact, these low-income, minoritized

districts are looking to recruit and retain more teachers and simultaneously add diverse teachers to their workforce, whether by gender or background (Carver-Thomas, 2018). A shortage of diverse teacher candidates has more damaging consequences, for it leads to significant increases in the hiring of underprepared and untrained individuals to fill positions as "emergency" hires, in underserved, minority school district staffing, where minority teachers tend to work (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2018; Podolsky & Sutcher, 2016). Consequently, a significant increase in the hiring of underprepared and untrained individuals to fill positions as "emergency" hires in underserved, minority school district staffing, where minority teachers tend to work (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2018; Podolsky & Sutcher, 2016).

This problem of a qualified yet diverse teacher workforce has damaging consequences on children and schools. When it comes to the dearth of male elementary teachers, the need to close the gender diversity gap is essential for social, psychological, and societal reasons (McGrath et al., 2019). First, male and female teachers contribute to children's gender knowledge and gender identity development (Johnson, 2008). While female teachers alone can model both "feminine" and "masculine" traits, children's gender knowledge can be enhanced and expanded when they observe men demonstrating these traits and interacting with women in a school setting (McGrath et al., 2020). This combats the gender division in the profession that propagates elementary teaching as work better suited to women, teaching children a form of sexist gender relations. (Johnson, 2008). Consequently, children conditioned to traditional gender stereotypes develop a skewed understanding of who is responsible for their growth and learning (Brownhill & Oates 2017).

The presence of both male and female teachers in classrooms also allows students to learn how to form interpersonal relationships with teachers who they perceive as being similar to themselves (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001). This may promote feelings of school belonging, which can reduce disruptive behavior. This follows the principle of homophily, or the predisposition for an individual to find it easier to relate to others who have similar demographic and social characteristics (McPherson, Smith-Lovin & Cook, 2001). For some students, the presence of male teachers may support understanding of how to interact with adults who are different from themselves and promote positive relationships between men and young children. McGrath and Sinclair (2013) found an overall perceived social need for more male elementary school teachers by parents and students for this very reason. In their study of the perspectives of 97 parents and 184 sixth-grade students from Sydney, Australia, via semi-structured focus group interviews, it was found that male primary-school teachers are considered important for both boys and girls by parents and students (McGrath & Sinclair, 2013).

Just like in any other sector, workforce diversity (of age, gender, ethnicity, religion, etc.) in teacher education is frequently pursued to foster inclusivity, mirror broader society, and enhance job satisfaction and performance (McCuiston, Wooldridge, & Pierce, 2004; McGrath & Sinclair, 2013). Research has shown the benefits associated with diversity in the teaching workforce, including boosts in academic performance and test scores of underserved students (Carver-Thomas, 2018); cognitive, social, and emotional educational benefits (Wells, Fox & Cordova-Cobo, 2016); and positive student perceptions of teachers from diverse backgrounds as role models (Goldhaber, Theobald & Tien, 2015). At the organizational level, the underrepresentation within a group leads to differentiation in interactional experience. When

describing the underrepresentation of women in workplaces, Kanter (1977) identified three phenomena that are experienced by the identified minoritized or "token" group: token visibility (tokens receive greater awareness than do dominant members of the group), polarization (exaggeration of the differences between the tokens and the dominant members), and token assimilation (perceptions of tokens are misconstrued to fit generalizations). The consequences of being tokenized can lead to feelings of isolation and otherness (McGrath et al., 2020). This can be experienced by the few men in elementary teaching and can affect both recruitment and retention in the profession. Thus, increasing gender diversity can potentially increment the number and positively enhance the experience for those currently in the profession.

Finally, and more broadly, the presence of male teachers may help promote gender-equitable versions of masculinity and promote egalitarianism in professional career choices. Simply put, male teachers help challenge stereotypical roles by men behaving outside of the conventional masculine style, normalizing caring and nurturing traits, and destigmatizing what it means for men to be a part of the lives of young children (McGrath et al., 2020; Warin, 2019). An overrepresentation of women over men in teaching restricts and contradicts democratic principles of equal opportunity, access, and self-determination based on gender in a free and open society (Johnson, 2008). While not all career decisions are based on what is considered appropriate to a particular gender, the status of the teacher workforce may be encouraging women into teaching who would not consider it while having the opposite effect on males who might be predisposed to teaching by being deterred from it. By working in roles that are typically viewed as appropriate only for women, men can help break down the polarized differences that foster gender inequalities and help alleviate socially espoused sexist perspectives on who is

encouraged and has equal career opportunities based on gender in an open society. In this next section, I will review the perceived reasons behind the low number of males in elementary teaching.

Regardless of the reasons males share for going into teaching or the reasons males in the classroom matter, the call for male teachers by policymakers and the education sector is typically driven by two main justifications with faulty arguments. The first has to do with what has been referred to as the 'boy crisis' or the 'boy turn' in educational reform movements (Weaver-Hightower, 2003). It is a pro-male backlash from the 1990s, where its proponents argue that policies tackling educational inequities have narrowed the gender academic achievement gap benefitting girls. This comes at the expense of boys, who are consequently considered at risk (Johnson, 2008). In reality, female students made gains, while male students remained the same. While the gender achievement gap was diminishing, data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) show that the actual difference is the margin by which girls outperform boys in reading and writing when compared to that of boys over girls in mathematics and science (Vanneman, Hamilton, Anderson & Rahman, 2009). To "backlash proponents," boys have become the "new educationally disadvantage," citing male higher dropout rates and increases in behavioral issues as evidence to support this categorization (Kimmel, 2006). Proponents call for "boy-friendly" teaching strategies to counter the feminized environment not suited for reaching boys' minds in public schools (Johnson, 2008). Thus, the premise of this argument is that only men can teach boys makes male elementary teachers the adequate solution to boys' underachievement in schools (Johnson, 2008; Skelton, 2009).

The second argument driving the push for male teachers is that young boys need strong, positive role models (Johnson, 2008). This argument runs on the assumption that gender achievement gaps (girls outperforming boys), along with boys' "anti-learning and anti-school attitudes and behaviours," are due to the absence of male teachers and result in boys not being able to develop a healthy masculine identity (Skelton, 2009, p. 39). As perceived, stable academic role models, male teachers are sought after to prevent higher dropout rates and poor achievement (Carrington & Skelton, 2003). Knight & Moore (2012) explored this notion of gender construction among male teachers within the context of what they refer to as "the crisis of masculinity" that many male pupils face because of the lack of male role models in the home (p. 61). They address the importance of supporting male teachers early in their careers for retention's sake. The experience of a male early childhood educator in England highlights the perception surrounding the situation of being a male role model (Foster & Newman, 2005). The teacher recalled how the parents and school administrators were overjoyed to have a male teacher. In particular, one mother approached him, saying, "It would be great if my son was in your class; he really needs a male role model" (p. 348). Male teachers themselves consider this a powerful justification for their presence in teaching. They often cite the desire to mentor young boys and "assist with providing children with a good balanced education" (Cruickshank, 2012, p. 3).

However, much of the rationale for these justifications run on assumptions of what constitutes "healthy masculinity" and that modeling it leads to positive school performance. The outcry over an alleged "boy crisis" has many female teachers pointing out that there was no public outrage when boys outperformed girls (Johnson, 2008; Martino & Kehler, 2006). Female

teachers feel frustrated and offended by the implications that they lack sufficient competency to teach boys. Some researchers argue that the assumption that male teachers will more effectively connect with male students is inaccurate (Weaver-Hightower, 2011). Moreover, researchers have also found that female teachers are simply being used as scapegoats for flawed educational systems (Drudy, 2008). Spilt et al.'s (2012) study of 649 elementary school teachers, including 182 men, and 1,493 students (685 of which were boys), found that female teachers reported relationships that were less conflictual, closer, and less dependent compared to their male counterparts. Additionally, both male and female teachers experienced relationships that are more conflictual with boys than with girls. Female teachers, however, did report having closer relationships with female students than males.

Regarding the role model premise, Johnson (2008) found that its advocates are generally unaware of a lack of empirical support for their position. He found that the notion of what constitutes a masculine role model is ambiguous. Much of the literature on the positive impact of male role models on boys' performance in the classroom is questionable (Carrington, Tymms & Merrell, 2008; Johnson, 2008). In his work on the socialization of gender identity in your people, Pleck (1981) found no evidence supporting the effectiveness of male role modeling (Johnson, 2008). To this end, Sargent's (2005) study on male teacher perception uncovered that the type of role model that parents desire in male teachers embodies a stereotypical masculine image that can run counter to how male teachers perceive themselves. One male third grade teacher in the study related the following:

> I've had so many parents, especially single moms, come in and tell me how happy they are that their son is going to have a male teacher. I asked one woman why that made her so happy and she told me she was becoming concerned because her son

> was getting into art and poetry a little too much. I love poetry and try to get all my students hooked on it. I didn't know what to say to her (p. 254).

The school principal at this site, who happens to be female, further confirmed that mothers are looking for male teachers to model "solid, responsible male behavior," stating that, "most of the moms who come in and ask about the male teachers make it clear that they want the teacher to be a traditional male" (Sargent, 2005, p. 255). In effect, the accepted representation of a male teacher is of an authority figure who is a classroom disciplinarian interested in sports over the creative arts. However, both male and female teachers typically envision an effective male teacher as a model of healthy androgyny instead of a conventional model of "healthy masculinity" (Foster & Newman, 2005; Sargent, 2005).

Beyond the assumption that the male teachers will make adequate role models with a healthy type of masculinity, the second assumption of positive male role models is that they are linked to improving the academic performance of boys in school. Dee's (2006) findings supported that assumption using data from the National Educational Longitudinal Study of 1988 generated considerable attention. However, these findings contrast with an earlier study, which suggested that, for the most part, that a teacher's particular gender, race, and ethnicity characteristics did not affect how much students learned between the 8th and 10th grades in four subject matter areas. Only on a few occasions did these characteristics influence 10th-grade teachers' subjective evaluations (Ehrenberg, Goldhaber & Brewer, 1995). Similarly, Luschei (2012) also found a lack of effectiveness of male primary teachers from two Mexican states. He found that the pupils of male teachers scored lower on standardized exams than did their female counterparts. It is important to note, however, that the student outcomes of the male teachers may have been impacted by the fact that they were disproportionately placed in high-poverty urban

schools or low-achieving rural ones. Most studies have found a lack of solid data or the inability to draw a causal connection between the gender of a teacher and student, which factors into academic performance (Carrington & Skelton, 2003; Weaver-Hightower, 2011).

The Alliance for Excellent Education explicitly posited that a high-quality teacher's teaching overrides all other factors in improving students' academic performance (Francis, Skelton, Carrington, Hutchings, Read & Hall, 2008). The impact of an excellent teacher is especially pronounced for underperforming and minority students who have traditionally been disadvantaged by the school system benefit most (Darling-Hammond, 2008). Thus, examining the factors affecting male participation in teacher preparation programs is essential. The two key barriers impacting this recruitment and retention of male teachers are: the college completion obstacles for males and minorities - these adversely affect the recruitment pipeline to a teaching credential; second, challenging classroom conditions and issues in teacher preparation programs undermine retention in teaching.

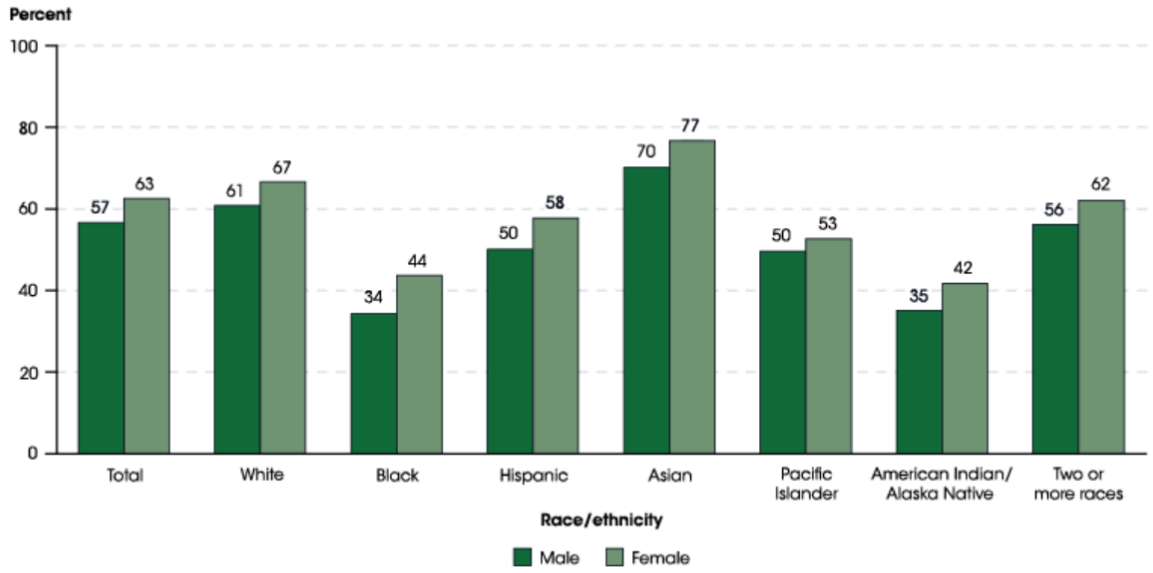
Male Teacher Recruitment Barriers

College Completion Obstacles

Recruitment challenges begin in the academic pipeline, starting at the K-12 level (Carver-Thomas, 2018). Underprepared, diverse students experience low college completion rates. The U.S. Department of Education data found that the 6-year graduation rate (150 percent graduation rate) in 2016 was 60 percent for first-time, full-time undergraduate students who began pursuing a bachelor's degree at a 4-year degree-granting institution in fall 2010. In comparison, 41 percent of first-time, full-time undergraduates seeking a bachelor's degree received them within four years, and 56 percent received them within five years. The 6-year graduation rate was higher for

females than for males overall (63 percent vs. 57 percent) and within each racial and/or ethnic group (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). The table below shows the 6-year graduation rates from the first institution attended for first-time, full-time bachelor's degree-seeking students at 4-year postsecondary institutions, by race/ethnicity and gender.

Figure 23.2. Graduation rate within 6 years (150 percent of normal time) for degree completion from first institution attended for first-time, full-time bachelor's degree-seeking students at 4-year postsecondary institutions, by race/ethnicity and sex: Cohort entry year 2010



NOTE: Data are for 4-year degree-granting postsecondary institutions participating in Title IV federal financial aid programs. Graduation rates refer to students receiving bachelor's degrees from their initial institutions of attendance only. The total includes data for persons whose race/ethnicity was not reported. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded estimates. SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Winter 2016–17, Graduation Rates component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2017*, table 326.10.

This gender achievement gap in education is far wider for socioeconomically disadvantaged people and people of color. New research indicates that boys are more sensitive to disadvantage, particularly those from Black, Latino, and immigrant families (Miller, 2015). In addition to lacking adequate college preparation, students of color attempting to complete bachelor's degrees face other challenges. Increased financial burdens also create barriers for college completion among students generally, as students work more and take fewer classes

(Santos & Haycock, 2016). Students of color and first-generation college students commonly work full time while attending college, given student loans and family dependence on their income (Bers & Schuetz, 2014). Furthermore, they experience low academic self-esteem (feeling underprepared for college-level coursework), and difficulty adjusting to college (Stephens, Hamedani, & Destin, 2014). Research has found that when students of color, especially men, find themselves in learning environments and people that do not mirror their culture or lived experiences, the context can discourage degree completion (Stewart, Lim & Kim, 2015). Data on the teacher shortage and the achievement gap indicate the need for credentialing programs that recruit and support male students interested in a teaching career.

Challenging Classroom Conditions

These difficulties in recruitment for credentialing programs carry into retention within the teacher profession, primarily through the anticipated challenges in the workplace or the classroom conditions. Once men enter the classroom, the teaching conditions they encounter can discourage them from staying at the same school or even staying in the profession. Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2017) found that teachers who leave the profession create 90 percent of open teaching positions. Furthermore, more than 20 percent of classroom teachers leave their positions within the first three years of teaching (Fideler, 2000). In urban schools, up to 50 percent of all new teachers leave teaching within the first five years (Claycomb, 2000). Similarly, teachers of color work in the quartile of schools that serve the most students of color, who often struggle with a range of trials, including accountability pressures, insufficient resources, and administrative support (Simon & Johnson, 2015). In these schools, teachers, especially male teachers of color, were more than twice as likely to leave the teaching profession

altogether (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Ingersoll & May, 2016). Teacher attrition, especially of those rarely found on school sites, is a particularly troubling problem as it directly affects the supply of prepared teachers in times of a shortage.

This is particularly troubling given that research confirms that the most important in-school influence on student achievement is a qualified teacher followed by onsite support (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). Students with teachers who stay in their classrooms for more than five years have higher achievement levels than do students of teachers with less than three years of experience (Fideler, 2000). Relatedly, 70 percent of prepared teachers remain after five years of teaching (Darling-Hammond, 2002). Similarly, once they become teachers, men and women express the same concerns about their day-to-day teaching experiences and the impact of educational policies on their professional expertise and autonomy (Skelton, 2009). Irrespective of gender, teachers place the most significant importance on the relationships with their students, students' classroom behaviors, good collegial relationships among faculty, and effective leadership at their schools. Similarly, regardless of gender, all teachers are troubled by educational policies that emphasize test performance, with "the subsequent implication that teachers cannot be trusted to do their jobs," and classroom disruptive behaviors (Skelton, 2009, p. 43). Research also shows that male teacher candidates in elementary have the highest attrition rates, report the lowest job satisfaction, and often feel less prepared than other groups (Brookhart & Loadman, 1996; Sanatullova-Allison, 2010).

Undergraduate Pre-Service Elementary Teacher Preparation

Pre-service preparation becomes key for teacher recruitment and retention because of its tie to teachers' professional identity development. Bullough (2002) stressed the importance of

paying attention to identity as critical to teacher education practice. According to his findings, "teacher identity – what beginning teachers believe about teaching and learning and self-as-a-teacher-is of vital concern to teacher education; it is the basis for meaning-making and decision making" (p. 21). This understanding is a complex, emotionally challenging process that affects a teacher's professional life and personal life (Meijer, Graaf & Meirink, 2011). What is clear is that quality teacher training heightens identity formation, which is evident in enhanced teacher practice, classroom effectiveness, and career commitment (Eren & Tezel, 2010). These positive effects towards teacher retention stemming from quality teacher training can affect future male teacher recruitment, heightening the need to understand the challenges universities face with the efficacy of pre-service teacher preparation programs.

This perception of the teaching profession goes hand in hand with the foundational thinking on pre-service teacher preparation programs. It focuses on its practical nature, which aligns with American philosopher John Dewey's theory of experience. In *Experience and Education*, Dewey (1938) suggests that learning must be based on true-life experiences. These must be interactive, experimental, and purposive. Learning theorist and philosopher Donald Schon expanded on Dewey's model by further emphasizing the importance of reflective practice, where an individual engages in critical introspection of past experiences to guide future learning and practice (Schon, 1996).

Pre-service programs typically consist of coursework covering the theoretical knowledge about teaching and field-based practice or "practicum" (Muzaffar, Rahim & Jessee, 2011). Academic coursework exposes teacher candidates to collaborative inquiry, current research, educational philosophy, theory, and pedagogy as a foundation for their work as educators. The

practicum promotes school setting experiences that may include observing and shadowing an experienced teacher (Allen & Wright, 2014). These accreditation processes ensure that programs are aligned with the policies and standards governing teacher certification and licensing. In California, student teaching is a required component of every Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC)-approved teacher preparation program. Every program must provide a minimum of 600 hours of clinical practice (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, n.d.). Candidates also complete a student teaching experience under the guidance of a master teacher and a program supervisor. Except for some residency programs (defined below), student teaching/clinical experience is typically undertaken without pay in this model of teacher preparation.

This delineated framework for pre-service teacher education programs is part of what scholars of teaching call a continuum of learning to teach (Schwille, Dembélé, Schubert & Planning, 2007). As part of this continuum, the pre-service programs are also regarded as foundational building blocks for career-long professional development (Darling-Hammond, 1996). For pre-service candidates to effectively embark on this "learn-to-teach" process, Hammerness, Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2005) identified three overarching benchmarks. First, pre-service teacher candidates need to understand and recognize their preconceptions about teaching based on their years of experience in classroom settings. Second, students need to develop a deep understanding of theory and practice and put both into action in a forthcoming practicum setting (student-teaching). Finally, to navigate the complexities of teaching, pre-service teacher candidates need to control their learning.

While most university-based teacher education programs now include multiple field experiences over the length of the program, the alignment between what students are taught in campus courses and the opportunities for learning to enact these practices in their school placements is often nonexistent (Zeichner, 2006). Research shows that these clinical practice experiences must be carefully planned like any college or university course within the teacher education program (Darling-Hammond, 2000). The call to action, then, is to move away from the traditional model for field experience as "sink-or-swim," where university faculty would just "send [students] out there to pick up what they need to learn by the process of osmosis" (Zeichner, 2006, p. 334). It is not surprising, then, that approximately 62 percent of new teachers report that their teacher preparation program left them unprepared for when they first entered the classroom (Brenchley, 2014). This is especially true for males going into teaching. Studies have found that many male teachers recognize the need for maturity before embarking on a demanding career such as teaching (Cushman, 2005b). Cushman (2005b) also found that male teachers valued recognition and respected the profession, wanting to obtain teaching jobs because of their preparation, work ethic, and professional achievements. Thus, the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom depends on and reflects the quality of the training imparted from the pre-service teacher education program.

Formative experiences in the preparation program become a critical factor for the retention of teachers in the profession. An opportunity to subject and expose credential candidates to the realities of the workspace is essential for recruitment and retention. This is highly critical for the male elementary teacher situation, for much of the literature on men in primary education is quick to point out that they are either not attracted to the profession in the

first place or choose to leave it because of dissatisfaction with the context of it (Cushman, 2007). Perhaps the efficacy in the preparation program can directly lead to job satisfaction that builds an appealing reputation for the profession. Thus, there is a need for a preemptive, intentional approach to address these concerns to diversify teacher recruitment and retention. Since knowledge, skill, and professional identity are developed in the process of learning to practice (Grossman & McDonald, 2008), it will be important to examine how current undergraduate pre-service preparation programs and pathways, which enroll future teachers much early in their academic careers, are effectively recruiting and are uniquely designed to target male teacher candidates and develop their identities as future elementary school teachers.

From a larger perspective, pre-service teacher education programs are part of what scholars of teaching call a continuum of learning to teach (Schwille et al., 2007). As part of this continuum, the pre-service programs are also regarded as foundational building blocks for career-long professional development (Darling-Hammond, 1996). The potential of enhancing pre-service programs, and recruitment for them, can come by way of creatively re-designed preparation pathways.

Grow Your Own (GYO) Pathways

One of the prominent recommendations to address the teacher shortage is the Grow Your Own (GYO) teacher pathway. GYO teacher programs seek to prepare "homegrown" teachers by engaging in various strategies to recruit teachers from the local community and prepare them to teach within it (Valenzuela, 2017). They, in effect, create local pipelines into the teaching profession, which can include high school and community college career pathways and paraprofessional career ladders (Podolsky & Sutcher, 2016). GYO programs are cited in recent

policy briefs (Albert Shanker Institute, 2015; Podolsky & Sutcher, 2016) as viable pathways for addressing shortages and increasing the racial/ethnic and gender diversity of teachers, given that they offer access to the profession for people from varied class, social, and linguistic backgrounds (Gist, Bianco & Lynn, 2019). These strategies respond to the research demonstrating that teachers often prefer to teach near where they grew up and attended high school (Reininger, 2012).

Because of these features and the intentional focus on local recruitment, GYO programs are viable recommendations and part of the solution to addressing the shortage of teachers in hard-to-staff schools (Podolsky & Sutcher, 2016). The GYO strategy has identified ways of targeting males. The Black & Hispanic/Latino Male Teachers Initiative Networked Improvement Community of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE), for instance, aims to enhance diversity in the teacher workforce (American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 2019). Similarly, the California State University (CSU) campuses utilize GYO strategies to recruit candidates from local communities in high-need regions. Across the CSU, more initiatives have cropped up aimed specifically at preparing male teachers of color. For example, the Future Minority Male Teachers of California (F2MTC) project recruits high school male students for CSU teacher education programs. In these programs, students can tap into a network of other male teachers and fellow students, find a mentor, and get help with enrollment and scholarships, among other resources (Beall, 2020).

Despite the promise with GYO programs, research on these programs are still in their infancy (Gist et al., 2019). GYO programs focus on community-based teacher recruitment, yet standard metrics do not apply across these programs, making it difficult to draw comparisons

about program effectiveness (Valenzuela, 2017). This also makes them difficult to replicate, and consequently, scale beyond their immediate context. These difficulties in duplication perhaps suggest that addressing the lack of diversity in the teacher workforce and the general shortage will require the enhancement and viability of all existing teacher education pathways and pipelines, including the unique integrated (blended) teacher education programs.

Integrated (Blended) Teacher Education Programs

The CSU has introduced various programs to attract and prepare men of color to become K-12 teachers, including recruiting at high schools and middle schools and creating clear educational pathways from community college to a CSU campus for elementary school teacher preparation. The most notable intentional pathway is the Integrated Teacher Education Programs that incorporate credentialing into the four-year degree, blending the subject matter preparation and teacher preparation by offering coursework in both areas concurrently and in a connected manner during the undergraduate years. (Beall, 2020; California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2004). The integrated or blended teacher preparation model is specifically designed for undergraduates who have decided relatively early to teach multiple subject candidates and offers a clearly defined pathway for those who decide to teach early in their collegiate years (California Community Colleges – Chancellor's Office, 2018). In 2003-04, more than 2,700 candidates enrolled in blended programs. Most of these are elementary teachers matriculating through the California State University System. They tend to be tightly structured programs that require frequent and accurate candidate advice to be successful. Nearly all who choose this route are admitted and those who need extensions of time to complete requirements receive this assistance. This flexibility makes them attractive to nontraditional students similar to

the ones targeted by this study (predominantly first-generation commuter males at a large public university).

By the 2018-19 academic year, the Schools and Colleges of Education at the California State University will offer 40 Integrated Teacher Education Programs on 20 campuses (The California State University, n.d.). Across the CSU system, half of the undergraduate students are community college transfers; on several campuses, this figure exceeds 60 percent. System-wide, community college transfers in teacher education programs have comprised, on average, 65 percent of the ITEP student population over the past decade (California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, 2018). This study will pull its participants from this population.

The Study

I am interested in investigating the factors that affect the enrollment of males in undergraduate programs in elementary education and how enrollment in these programs begins to construct the professional identity of these prospective teachers. To investigate these trends, I will seek to identify what motivated and affected the enrollment of male students in El Sereno State University's Integrated Teacher Education Preparation (ITEP) Program. It is essential to impact the number of individuals preparing themselves to teach and the number of males joining the profession, given the benefits of a diverse and qualified teacher workforce in student performance. The study provides insights on recruitment strategies for pre-service male teachers and perhaps discern how teacher preparation programs can ensure that beyond preparing male candidates with methods and strategies, they are also helping men negotiate their voices, experiences, and identities as future elementary school teachers. The program can make teaching a more appealing career choice for males and be a coveted recruitment tool for males into the

profession. The study, then, must employ a conceptual framework grounded in the teacher labor market while accounting for the motivational and professional identity formation factors tied to career choice.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study will be comprised of the amalgamation of the following theories: The FIT-Choice (Factors Influencing Teaching Choice) framework (Richardson & Watt, 2006), funds of knowledge (FoK) (Moll et al., 1992), and funds of identity (FoI) (Saubich & Guitart, 2011).

Watt and Richardson (2007) developed the Factors Influencing Teaching Choice (FIT-Choice) framework for a study of first-year pre-service teacher education candidates at a university in Sydney, Australia. It is grounded on Eccles' (2000) expectancy-value theory and offers a thorough standard to guide research into the motivations of individuals choosing a career in teaching (Watt & Richardson, 2007). Vroom's expectancy-value theory proposes that two factors determine motivation for a given behavior or action: (a) expectancy, being successful in a task, and (b) value, having a value for engaging in the task (Hulleman, Barron, Kosovich & Lazowski, 2016). Wigfield and Eccles (2000) extended Vroom's model and argued that expectancy and value are affected by task-specific beliefs (how difficult the task seems) and the individuals' self-schema (derived from past experiences) and goals, which in turn are influenced by the beliefs of others around them, socialization, and personal past achievement experiences. These theorists identified four components of task value: (1) how much it is enjoyed (intrinsic value), (2) how important it is for the individual to do well in a given task (attainment value), (3) how good of a fit it is with current goals (utility value), and (4) "relative cost," including

required effort, negative affect, and lost alternative opportunities (Studer & Knecht, 2016). They also state that expectancy and value, equal to motivation, directly impact performance, persistence, and choice.

Watt and Richardson (2007) share these extensions of expectancy-value in the FIT-Choice Theory formulation. They identify success expectancies and task valuation as pivotal factors behind career and academic decisions of those interested in teaching as a career. The common intrinsic rewards of teaching are the teaching profession's social value and the aspirations to improve society and make a difference in the next generation. To this end, the FIT-Choice Theory encompasses the intrinsic and extrinsic rewards associated with teaching (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Watt & Richardson, 2007). Intrinsic motivation refers to doing something because it is inherently interesting or enjoyable and results in high-quality learning and creativity, reflecting the natural human propensity to learn and assimilate (Ryan & Deci, 2000). On the other hand, extrinsic motivation refers to doing something because it leads to a separable outcome. It has been typically characterized as an inferior form of motivation compared to the intrinsic one (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The most frequently mentioned extrinsic motivators of the teaching profession are job security, family time, and career development (Kass & Miller, 2018; Watt & Richardson, 2012). Therefore, this model derived from expectancy-value theory by Watt and Richardson (2007) provides a targeted motivational framework for studying the reasons and influencers on males pursuing a career in teaching.

Because socialization and background experiences related to the teaching profession are touched on in the FIT-Choice Theory, it was particularly important to expand and include in the framing of the study more on the socio-cultural context of the study participants. Given the

dearth of male pre-service teachers, it is important to understand the social, cultural, and family influences in the decision to teach, especially those in a diverse, urban setting. These influences can drive and determine values, expectations, and beliefs within individuals. To this end, the theories of funds of knowledge (FoK) (Moll et al., 1992), funds of identity (FoI) (Saubich & Guitart, 2011), and community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005) support the research questions of this phenomenological study. In seeking to understand what motivated and drove the decision-making process of men pursuing elementary education, an employment area in which they are tremendously underrepresented. In looking at motivational factors, it is important to acknowledge the "virtual backpacks" (Thomson, 2002) students bring into the program, for they will affect the professional identity construction of these students as future teachers. Moreover, grounding the study in such a manner will inform the undergraduate, integrated teacher education program on validating, nurturing, and drawing on diverse identities as assets to teaching and learning (Hogg & Volman, 2020). In doing so, the program can support equitable school outcomes and early professional development for its students.

Moll et al. (1992) defined funds of knowledge (FoK) as "historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being" (p. 133). FoK is a theory of human identity from a Vygotskyan social-historical psychology perspective, where resources and cultural practices facilitate the development of thinking and learning (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014). It is rooted in anthropology, education, and psychology and is an essential aspect of culturally responsive education (Hogg & Volman, 2020). The idea is to counter deficit theorizing by rejecting reliance on negative stereotypes of students "lacking" or needing to be "fixed" while assuming that

students are competent, have knowledge and skills developed through life experiences outside of school. Funds of knowledge, then, vary by individual and are ever-changing as adaptation takes place into new environments and contexts. Therefore, educators must get to know their student populations to effectively draw on those bodies of knowledge, skills, and information available in students' communities and households and use them for pedagogical purposes. This is particularly important to this study as the dearth of male students may require the program to tap into students' backgrounds deliberately, and in doing so, develop respect for students in the program (Hogg & Volman, 2020).

To apply funds of knowledge in higher education, Rios-Aguilar and Kiyama (2012) provided examples of how FoK as a theoretical framework in higher education to study college preparation, college access, and development career aspirations. In the ITEP program context, it is important to understand that embedding a framework that values FoK is two-fold. On the one hand, the college of education can deliberately include FoK in its curricular and extracurricular ITEP program components, which would validate the knowledge, skills, and information available in the communities and households of male students enrolled in the program. On the other hand, the visibility of the application of FoK can be direct modeling of culturally responsive teaching for future teachers. Johnson (2008) describes the importance of incrementing the number of male students because education is "a venerable social institution responsible for transmitting culture and democratic values to future generations," (Johnson, 2008, p. 3). This direct experience in the pre-service "learn-to-teach" process (concept, practice, and reflection) taps into funds of knowledge to impart culturally relevant preparation. Since the study also aims to ascertain motivational factors for males pursuing a career in teaching, it will

be important to see the correlation between an individual student's particular FoK and their reasons for pursuing teaching as a career. In this manner, FoK serves as a framework essential to understanding what is in the "virtual backpacks" that drive interest towards teaching, which can be used to validate and affirm the career choice and be used as a resource to support professional development as culturally competent elementary teachers.

In further developing and complementing the theoretical framework of FoK, Saubich and Guitart (2011) introduced the concept of funds of identity (FoI). The FoI concept draws attention to FoK that students themselves experience as meaningful, for "understanding our identities requires comprehending the history, society, and culture that affects the specific ways we define ourselves" (Esteban-Guitart, 2016, p. 43). FoI are FoK that individuals themselves define as important to their identity and self-understanding (Saubich & Guitart, 2011). FoI theory also takes an approach where human development is found in culture. Through our everyday interactions, activities, and experiences, "individuals consume, use, and create funds of identity, that is, distributed semiotic resources that mediate human identity" (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014). Further, these identities or "self-lived experiences" are part of a collective narrative that includes different types of FoI such as geographical, practical, cultural, social, and institutional. Identity, then, is constructed through these experiences and may include anything individuals find meaningful from an experiential standpoint in any context they belong.

In the case of the participants of this study, it will be important to see how prior experiences with mentors and exemplary teachers affected the decision to become teachers. Moreover, this can include experiences working or interacting with youth, whether in an instructional capacity, as mentors, coaches, or in a familial interpersonal dynamic (father,

brother, uncle, etc.). Both FoK and FoI can be seen as resources that impact and influence human behavior in support of educational outcomes (Subero, 2020). This study can reveal opportunities to connect with pre-service male teachers to both attract them to the program and profession and begin to tap into those lived and current experiences and the dispositions adopted that can be deliberately utilized to form the professional identity of these future teachers.

Applying the FoI concept involves learning about individual students and what matters to them. This is particularly important in this study because the participants, pre-service male elementary teachers, represent a minoritized grouping. In following the FoK and FoI framework, the approach will be to avoid assumptions of the group and to operate with a heightened awareness of stereotypes related to gender and an intersection of race and ethnicity. Similarly, a focus on FoI will assist in surfacing motivational factors for pursuing the program and profession. This, in turn, can inform how the program and curriculum could be enhanced to lead to program completion and yield higher pre-professional satisfaction levels. Both of these can potentially support recruitment efforts into the undergraduate elementary education program, and by direct consequence, into the teaching profession. Using their students' own lived experiences and ways of knowing to make learning accessible to the student populations they serve, the Integrated Teacher Education Preparation program can make the learning experience transformative for pre-professional teachers. For this study, FoI can help understand how students view themselves as teachers and as a way to identify their own FoK but also how that can impact their future professional work with students. The study’s qualitative approach can inquire about how students view their respective identities, including how their FoK help form those views and help them interact and engage with their academic program. Through funds of

knowledge, male students will be able to recognize meaningful experiences that led them to pursue the undergraduate, integrated preparation program and begin to see themselves as future teachers.

The funds of knowledge and funds of identity intersect and draw from Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth. Yosso (2005) defines community cultural wealth as "the accumulated assets and resources in the histories and lived experiences of communities of color," (p.77). This framework is conceptualized as a "critical race theory challenge to traditional interpretations of cultural capital," offering an asset-based framework that can transform the process of schooling (Yosso, 2005, p. 70). In applying critical race theory (CRT), Yosso expands the default assumptions around cultural capital to reflect the unacknowledged wealth that stems from the experience of being a historical minority. Cultural wealth also sees communities of color as "holders and creators of knowledge" (Delgado-Bernal, 2002, p. 106) in an educational system that, we believe, sees students of color as being deficient and lacking critical knowledge. The framework examines six forms of cultural capital students of color experience in college from an appreciative standpoint: aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, and resistance. These forms of capital will be important to examine with the study participants, as the male students (majority students of color) begin to own their identity as future teachers and start to build a sense of understanding on how they will work with students in school from the local communities. The units of observation of both questions will focus on reasons behind decisions and the types of motivations (altruistic, intrinsic, and extrinsic), affirmation and validation in the program, and professional identity construction. The study will be at a large comprehensive university, where most students come from local urban school districts and community colleges

nearby. Acknowledging the intersectionality of race and ethnicity, gender, and identity will be critical to understanding the formative experiences of pre-service teacher preparation in an urban context.

Since Yosso's model explores the talents, strengths, and experiences that nontraditional, minoritized students bring with them to the college environment, the manifestation of these forms of capital and how their talents begin to unfold in the undergraduate, integrated teacher preparation program. In the case of my study subjects, and based on the reviewed literature, the context of elementary education can potentially pose obstacles to pursuing a career in it for men. This could result from the lack of males in the field, the perceived and expected scrutiny of working with young children, or status and compensation. Furthermore, decision-making can be constrained by other aspects such as economic need, family pressures, cultural values, or social limitations. In such instances, people may need to compromise their interests and make more pragmatic, pressing, or culturally acceptable choices (Lent, Brown & Hackett, 2000). In this study, considering that most subjects will be in and around the East Los Angeles area, it will be important to identify the effect the different levels of support, barriers, and opportunities available to male undergraduates can have on career-related choices. Thus, for this study, understanding household and community contexts and ecology and the cultural capital brought forth by students can guide the investigation of career choice for male students, including early career development and success in it, and the ability to face challenges competently in pursuance of academic goals.

Thus, grounding the study in a framework that encumbers motivation and sociocultural ecology of study participants can enhance the understanding of how career interest in teaching is

developed and, because the program bundles the academic degree with the "learn-to-teach" process, the affirmation of motivational factors to enroll in it are intrinsically tied to the construction of a professional identity. I intend to use these asset-based frameworks in combination to understand how male pre-service teachers in elementary education became interested, willing, and able to enroll in an undergraduate, integrated teacher education program in elementary teaching while contextualizing this interest in a space of gender asymmetry.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Despite efforts by school districts, colleges, and universities to attract more men into teaching positions, California continues to have a proportionally lower number of male teachers than females, with males comprising only 26.6 percent of the teaching population (California Department of Education, 2020). This gender gap in qualified teacher demographics is more pronounced at the elementary education level. Current data suggests that the participation of males in elementary education has remained low and relatively unchanged.

The key to enabling programs to recruit male teachers lies in understanding the individual and societal factors that underlie the decision to teach. Sanatullova-Allison (2010) offered an apt explanation:

> Many men come to teaching because they conclude that there is congruence between the needs of the profession and their own needs for self-actualization. In addition, it is likely that these men actually discover that they do not represent the danger to children we have all been raised to accept (p. 39).

Exploring this congruence in addressing needs and matching profession with professionals is the impetus of this study. Moreover, it is an area rarely studied with pre-service male teachers pursuing a career in elementary education (Weaver-Hightower, 2003). I engaged in a qualitative study of current undergraduate male students from one comprehensive regional university in Los Angeles to probe this inquiry. My study was centered on the following research questions:

1. What motivates males to pursue enrollment in undergraduate elementary education programs?

a. When do male students begin thinking about a career in teaching, and how do they arrive at their decision to enroll in an undergraduate elementary education program?
b. What and who do these individuals describe as having a strong influence on their career decision-making process?
c. In what ways do they expect a career in teaching to contribute to their life goals?

2. What impressions/opinions do male participants have of the integrated teacher education preparation (ITEP) program, and what effects, if any, does the program have on the career choice of these participants?
    a. What, if any, are areas of strength of the ITEP Program?
    b. What, if any, are areas of improvement of the ITEP Program?
    c. What, if any, is the emerging teaching philosophy male pre-service teachers develop through the program?

Research Design

To address the aforementioned research questions, this study required a qualitative phenomenological research design. Since the goals of the study are to gain a deeper understanding of the career choice by prospective male teachers, a qualitative approach via a focus group, brief reflection letter, and a semi-structured interview will be the most appropriate to capture the voices, perceptions, and insights of the male students (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Phenomenology is an approach to qualitative research that focuses on the commonality of a lived experience within a particular group. The fundamental goal of the approach is to arrive at a description of the nature of the particular phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). This approach will

allow me to focus on the experiences and perspectives within this particular group of men who selected teaching as a career. The fundamental goal is to arrive at a description of what it is like for males to decide early in their academic careers to become elementary teachers by looking at their post-secondary experience. The focus group as well as interviewing can reach this objective with this unique population.

While other research instruments and quantitative tools can capture surface-level thoughts and perceptions of male students in this program at this university, they would not be the most appropriate. A quantitative approach would limit the variety of unique responses shared through learning about individual experiences and their perceptions of their career selection. A survey or questionnaire, for instance, could not capture or reach the unique experiences of an individual who came into the program because these are far too complex for contextual quantification. A quantitative study also does not provide the opportunity to take a more holistic approach in delving deeply to understand prospective male teachers and their experiences, beliefs, and reactions as they now have enrolled into an academic program that directly leads their career choice. As Bertaux (1981) stated, “if there is such a thing as sociological knowledge, the way to reach it is not through quantitative methodology” (p. 30). Documenting the reasons and forces behind male students’ choice towards a career few of their gender select falls precisely in this scope. Therefore, phenomenology as a qualitative method does not oppose the quantitative method but simply asks a different question to explain the meaning of the phenomenon further.

Site Selection

Under the Every Student Succeeds Act and the No Child Left Behind Act before it, the federal government has required districts to write plans on how they would eliminate disparities in staffing in largely low-income, Black, and Latino schools and move toward hiring fully qualified teachers (Fensterwald, 2019). With new California credentials remaining constant at 11,500 since 2013–14, there continues to be a projected annual demand for new teacher hires to exceed 20,000 (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). Shortages disproportionately affect low-income and minority students, and teacher turnover is worse in urban areas. Consequently, in 2018, 374 California school districts qualified for assistance from county offices of education because one or more marginalized groups (ethnic, racial, or student group [most often students with disabilities]) received the lowest ratings on many dashboard indicators (Fensterwald, 2019). As the most populous and diverse state across the United States, understanding teacher staffing patterns can help increase the supply of quality and diverse teachers and curve the current disparity.

Of the three systems of higher education in California – California State University (CSU), University of California (UC), and Private/Independent colleges and universities – the CSU system prepared nearly half (48.9 percent) of the new teachers in the fiscal year 2017-18 (Teacher Supply in California, 2019). Based on the CSU's contributions to the teacher supply, the chosen site for the study is El Sereno State University, a CSU system campus representing a large, urban public university in the state. El Sereno State University was chosen for several reasons to make the results both relevant and useful. First, it is the only university in the El Sereno State University system with the most unique integrated teacher education program

structure under four separate undergraduate program majors. Second, El Sereno State University's demographics reflect the demographics of Los Angeles, which makes the findings a more impactful contribution to the literature on male teacher recruitment in an urban setting. As a Hispanic-Serving Institution, over 69 percent of the student population at El Sereno State University identify as Latino/Hispanic. Currently, Latinos make up the largest ethnic group in the city and county of Los Angeles, with 48.6 percent of the population ("United States Census QuickFacts," n.d.). The campus has a student population of 26,342 students, with only 5.4 percent (1,429) classified as white ("Fall 20 Fact Sheet," 2021). The CSU and El Sereno State University do invoke a policy that provides a preference for freshman and transfer admission to applicants who are considered "local" ("Local Area for Transfer Applicants," n.d.; "Local Preference for Freshmen," n.d.). Since research promotes Grow Your Own initiatives and the preparation of local talent for teacher positions (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017), understanding the previous academic history, experiences, perspectives, and motivations of the individuals in El Sereno State University's integrated program would provide insights on how to recruit and then support those males who have chosen teaching as a career early in their academic trajectory.

Sample

I identified 14 individuals who self-identified as men who are a part of the integrated teacher education program at El Sereno State University for this study. The individuals ranged in grade/year status within the program, and all volunteered to participate. I interviewed members who represent a cross-section of academic and pre-professional experiences (See Table 1).

Table 1. **Demographics of Participants**

Pseudonym	Age	Ethnicity	Residence	First-Generation College Student (Y/N)	Transfer Student (Y/N); If Y, where?
Jonathan	25	Latino	Los Angeles, CA	Yes	Yes; ELAC
Alberto	24	Latino	Ontario, CA	Yes	No
Ramiro	29	Latino	Los Angeles, CA	Yes	Yes; LACC
Norbert	22	White	Lodi, CA	Yes	Yes; San Joaquin Delta College
Carson	30	Biracial	Los Angeles, CA	No	Yes, ELAC
Jaime	31	Latino	Los Angeles, CA	Yes	No
Roger	29	Latino	Los Angeles, CA	Yes	Yes; ELAC
Elmer	24	Latino	Los Angeles, CA	Yes	Yes; LATTC
Edgar	35	Latino	Pomona, CA	Yes	Yes; Mount San Alejandro College
Anthony	21	White	Pasadena, CA	No	Yes; Pasadena City College
Alejandro	28	Latino	Los Angeles, CA	Yes	Yes; Pasadena City College
Gabriel	27	Latino	Whittier CA	Yes	Yes; LACC
Raymond	39	Asian	El Monte, CA	No	Yes; Rio Hondo College
David	20	Latino	Norwalk, CA	Yes	No

To evaluate the program's effect on its current participants, I assessed individuals who have had the opportunity to begin to take preliminary teacher education courses. This target population was critical to my study because very little is known about motivations for enrollment into an undergraduate integrated teacher education program and the career choice in elementary education of males attending El Sereno State University. Given the low number of enrolled male students (approximately 35) in the program, the sample obtained was representative of the university's demographics and the general academic journey make-up of students in the

integrated teacher education program. This study ultimately allowed for an exploration of the factors influencing the career choice of the few male students who decided to become teachers and enroll in this specific program in a comprehensive university in Los Angeles while also ascertaining how the program has affected this specific choice.

Access and Role Management

As an administrator at El Sereno State University, I am the Director of Student Services for the College of Education. While I do not administer this specific program, I supervise academic advisors that assist students in the program with support service needs on an ongoing basis. My role as a researcher took precedence over my role as a university administrator throughout my entire study. I identified potential leads in the population largely through faculty and advisors in the college of education. In the email, I introduced myself to those interested in participating, explained the purpose and requirements of my study, and included my contact information. I received nine initial responses, and the faculty referred an additional five. I offered $50 Amazon gift cards to all participants. Participants were asked to complete an approved intake form that specified that their involvement was voluntary, and no harm would be inflicted upon any of them. They did not have to provide any other names to participate in my study. Anonymity throughout the entire process was honored, and unique participant identifiers (i.e., pseudonyms) were assigned to each individual. My data reached a conceptualized point of saturation after 14 participants' 60-minute in-depth interviews.

Data Collection

My data collection consisted of a 60-minute voluntary interview with every participant. Each participant completed an intake form, which was used to collect background information

and preliminary questions on their respective academic journeys and motivations towards a career in teaching. The individual semi-structured interviews with 14 participants lasted 60 minutes and concretely contributed to my research's depth of topical understanding. The method aims to obtain data from a purposely selected group of individuals rather than a statistically representative sample of a broader population (O. Nyumba, Wilson, Derrick & Mukherjee, 2018). The intake form allowed me to preliminarily probe into the personal and professional experiences and influences that brought the individuals to El Sereno State University, contributing to my framing of questions for the semi-structured interview. Allusions were made to the intake responses in the interview, which were ultimately intended to dive in deeper and pivoted towards questions around motivations to pursue the career and the experience in the program preparing them for it. Any thoughts shared around pre-service preparation holistically. The methods allowed me to collect data, analyze, and synthesize findings in the study.

Participant Intake Form

Each participant was required to complete an intake form to collect general demographic information, including age, race/ethnicity, previous college attended, credential option interest, residence, and how they generally became interested in elementary education as a career. This data will inform what prior experience led students to choose this career and to see if their background and academic history are associated with this choice. It also served as a point of reference launch point for the semi-structured interviews.

Semi-Structured Interviews

A semi-structured approach allows the researcher to focus the questions around the study while allowing each participant to share their narrative rather than be confined to a structured

box (Maxwell, 2012). The semi-structured interview method was appropriate because it allowed some flexibility for me as the researcher and the participants to explore responses on a deeper level, thereby making the final product a more authentic representation of their experiences. Seidman (2006) describes that the purpose of interviewing is not to test hypotheses, evaluate, nor get answers to questions, but to understand "the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience" (p. 9). I want to understand what influenced their decision to join this program to obtain a degree and credential and how their experiences have affected that choice. Semi-structured interviews will invoke the inductive qualitative research process that will allow hypotheses about how these students see teaching as a career and its preparation. Interviews will generate the opportunity to probe for more responses and generate additional, rich data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Moreover, the interviews would humanize the research by asking for the perceptions these students have on what factors have affirmed and validated this career choice, as well as any impression they have on the program's ability to allow them to negotiate their voices, experiences, and identities as future elementary school teachers. These data are important in understanding what factors motivated in-service male teachers, an underrepresented and unique segment of the professional teacher population. I used a general interview protocol but incorporated probing questions as needed. In addition, using the intake form as a point of reference and launch pad during the interview will help contextualize inquiry on motivations and influences towards the program and career choice, followed by questions around any effects of enrollment in the program related to career development and pre-service preparation. This data is needed because most studies focus on why men do not go into teaching instead of investigating the reasons for the few that are or the efficacy of programs in

helping in-service students feel comfortable with the career choice made. The data, then, can begin to offer recommendations and suggestions on how to improve and enhance the academic program, services, and recruitment strategies to attract diverse individuals into the teaching profession.

I plan to conduct 60-minute, in-depth interviews with male students who identify as male in this integrated teacher education program. Both will be semi-structured to lend themselves to more open-ended responses by participants. In compliance with Los Angeles County Department of Public Health Covid-19 guidelines, the interviews were conducted via videoconferencing technology (Zoom). I video-recorded the interviews. Confidentiality and anonymity were held to the highest standard. I will review the professional transcriptions within 24 hours of their return and check them against my recordings and notes. I will not send the interview questions before. Participants will be reminded that their answers will be kept confidential and their identities anonymous. After the data collection, I established a follow-up plan should it be needed.

The objective of this interactive activity was to examine a historically underrepresented group of people in the elementary education teaching profession whose reasons for joining the profession are understudied in literature. In doing so, I addressed both primary research questions, which explore motivation and career choice for male future elementary educators and the effects of the integrated teacher education program on these choices and pre-professional preparation. This ultimately allowed me to either substantiate, refute, or provide more nuance to the existing literature. Typical interest cited in research identifies the desire to serve as role models, work with children, and make a difference in their lives as primary motivations for men entering the profession. In addition, literature cites previous work experience with children, the

satisfaction and recognition of this work, and having had a teacher make a difference in their lives influenced them to select teaching as a career (Cruickshank, 2012). I want to see if this holds for these male students because we can consider what elements of the program can deepen the commitment to the profession in its design. In addition, given the dismal number of men in elementary teaching, I will also inquire into the appeal of elementary teaching and its reasons, which begin to get at the core of the research questions. Stroud et al. (2000) also noted the importance of strong family support and the value of interacting with young children to encourage and reinforce the choice by males towards the teaching profession. The questions hope to uncover whether these perceptions are congruent with the motivation of the men in the integrated program and the opportunity to identify if the participants perceive any additional benefit beyond what research has uncovered of having men like themselves in the classroom.

The interview also sought to understand the rationale for choosing the integrated teacher education program in particular. According to the CSU, these innovative programs include partnerships with community colleges that offer articulated pathways at the lower-division academic level. I want to learn from the male students if they experienced this as they transitioned within or into El Sereno State University, whether from high school as lower-division students or as transfer students. Understanding if formative experiences in previous coursework and institutions can be telling of opportunities to strengthen partnerships across systems. Additionally, offering the credential coursework at the undergraduate level involves and integration of content and pedagogy in classes that are to result in "new teachers who are well-prepared beginners helping to address the state's critical teacher shortages" ("Four-Year Integrated Teacher Education Programs & Teacher Shortage Fields," n.d.). I want to see if the

students have the same curriculum expectations and if they see and have a sense of how this program is a part of this bigger, statewide initiative. I also want to see if there is a confluence on their intention and goals with the university and the system they have chosen to complete them.

Data Analysis

The data collected through the intake form, semi-structured interviews were examined and analyzed for themes and patterns related to the constructs of the research questions. The qualitative nature of this study called for data to be analyzed as it was collected (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I used a combination of coding and thematic analysis for both research questions. The codes were developed inductively throughout the analysis process, predominantly relying on open coding (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Through open coding, I analyzed and compared the experiences, events, and influences shared by participants with each other. I coded the qualitative responses, creating and grouping them into broad categories and subcategories. This process of carefully comparing and grouping data by similarities was meticulously employed to avoid researcher biases and enable a deliberate focus on what participants shared through their responses (Straus & Corbin, 1998). I coded the qualitative responses, grouping them into broad categories and subcategories. I developed a codebook of my findings for the research questions.

Collected data was managed, coded, and analyzed via Microsoft Word and Excel. I used "in vivo" coding vis-à-vis video and audio recording within 24 hours of the interview to ensure reliability and honor each participant's respective voice (Saldaña & Omasta, 2016). I transcribed my interviews using the Temi advanced speech recognition software. After each interview, I manually coded and organized my emerging themes and subthemes. Additionally, I created a table aligning quotes with themes and designating the appropriate research question to the

prospective findings. Next, I manually read the transcripts, labeled and assigned pertinent codes, and created categories by amalgamating codes as connections were identified. This combination of codes identifies what categories were most relevant and connected, including any hierarchies found among categories.

Per the aforementioned process, I derived codes based on the categories that lend to developing a set of themes and sub-themes around motivational factors for career selection, validation through prior academic and professional experiences of career selection, experiences, and impact of the program and pre-service professional development. I coded responses by looking for trends in participants' attitudes towards their interest in teaching as a career. This included analyzing the journey based on the steps taken to get into El Sereno State University and the perception of how the ITEP program has affected this transition. Per the literature review, I am anticipating motivation factors to career to include the influence of personal experience and values. Aspects of resiliency in academic persistence will emerge, as well as student-centered service and supports.

The primary categories examined are motivation factors into teaching (RQ 1 categories: professional self-actualization from educational experiences; altruistic, intrinsic, and extrinsic rewards; the influence of former teachers and mentors; meaningful and effective experiences with children and youth; appreciation for role models/modeling and making a difference; management and discipline efficacy; fatherly/family experience; community responsibility and care) program effects on pre-professional identity and career choice (RQ 2 categories: student self-efficacy through career development, connected and concurrent curriculum [theory to

practice], household resources towards college access, coursework experiences that pushed students to consider teaching).

Copious notes were kept as interviews were reviewed and analyzed, which helped identify prospective findings. An additional researcher conducted a limited, independent review and code of a transcript for inter-rater reliability. Study participants were allowed to read their respective transcripts, validate the accuracy, and provide clarity or additional information to any responses. No participants made any additions or corrections to the transcripts. Four participants added additional information for clarity sake on a couple of questions. This part of the data analysis process enhanced validity by allowing participants to view transcripts, themes, and case analyses for review, clarity, and confirmation (Creswell, 2012). Through this process, I was able to address the research questions.

Ethical Issues

In all communications about this study, I deliberately positioned myself as a researcher first instead of an administrator at El Sereno State University as they have known me on campus. This included using an email address and phone number in my written communications not affiliated with El Sereno State University and deliberately requesting that all communication related to the study go through these communication channels. Moreover, I ensured I used an electronic signature that identified me as a researcher in a doctorate program. Because students know the role I play in the college, it was imperative to develop a mutual understanding of the purpose of the study and the rationale for their participation to develop trust and rapport. Each potential participant engaged in this study on a purely voluntary basis. Furthermore, I ensured confidentiality and anonymity to the site and participants using pseudonyms and unique

participant identifiers. I kept all personal data on password-protected devices and deleted it after my dissertation was completed. I backed up my data by keeping everything on my laptop and copies on Google Docs. No ethical issues emerged from this study, as all participation was voluntary. To ensure the information recorded was accurate, I provided an opportunity for check-ins with participants to review their transcripts before I reported my findings.

Positionality

I was born and raised in Los Angeles and currently live in Los Angeles County, close to El Sereno State University. I am a self-identified Latino, son of immigrant parents, brother of a male El Sereno State University alumnus and teaching credential completer, and an employee of the California State University (CSU) System. This set of characteristics could have affected how I interacted with the participants and interpreted the findings. While I do not design or organize curriculum, my work in the college includes outreach and recruitment for the programs within the college, including the integrated teacher education program. I staunchly believe in Grow Your Own teacher recruitment—the idea that identifying teachers from the community for the community is imperative to effective teaching and learning of local K-12 students and their academic success. Moreover, I chose to work at El Sereno State University because I believe in the campus mission and personally identify and connect with its students. As a first-generation college student from the inner city, I experienced first-hand the transformative power of higher education in changing life circumstances for my family and myself. Students at El Sereno State University walk with a similar disposition. For students seeking a career in the education sector, I would argue there is an altruistic commitment to public and community service to advance communities they intricately understand and would like to protect and support innately. The

connection that I feel could have led me to make faulty assumptions and operate with blinders coming from my disposition in my work. Still, I ensured reliability by practicing proactive reflexivity (heightened awareness of influence over responses and validity of inferences over them) and over-reactivity (researcher influence on participants) (Maxwell, 2012). This includes being vigilant and cognizant that answers are not phrased in ways participants assume I may want to hear them. The intake form provided a means to track, corroborate, and preliminarily inform me about the participants before the interviews. Furthermore, I constantly reflected on myself as a researcher to provide a more effective and impartial analysis (Creswell, 2013). As such, I examined and consciously acknowledged that as a researcher, I brought certain assumptions and preconceptions that could have potentially shaped the outcome of my study. The most obvious example is that I am a male in the higher education sector working and supporting students within a college of education. In my personal and professional life, I am guided by the fact that I have experienced spaces and places as a minoritized individual; whether it be by race, age, or gender in the higher education ecosystem (heightened awareness for the intersectionality of these identifiers persists based on lived experiences). Given that this study is on the motivational factors and experiences of current male students in the education sector, it was imperative to deliberately detach and create a means to objectively observe and effectively analyze data tied to the participants' responses. Having documents and transcripts was the best way to approach an unbiased space for analysis and synthesis.

Credibility and Trustworthiness

Along with my positionality and my reactivity to findings, the most pervasive concern challenging the credibility and trustworthiness of my study was my role as a college

administrator at El Sereno State University. To minimize the effects, I positioned myself as a researcher first. I took on a reflective process of journaling personal thoughts, emotions, and reactions as I conducted interviews. Keeping a journal and jotting reactions next to responses was pivotal to acknowledging my preconceived notions, biases, assumptions, and any reactivity (Creswell, 2018). On these same tenets of checking biases and my role with participants, clarity and coherence with participants became a prerogative. I separated my role as an administrator from a researcher, by clearly informing participants about what would be encompassed topically in the interviews. They were provided with an overview of how a semi-structured interview would flow. I scripted instructions and indications with uniformity for all participants and was mindful of generating consensus before proceeding. Actively journaling and adhering to this protocol allowed me to modify and make enhancements as I moved forward with my findings and their implications to the study.

Limitations

Despite the careful study design to collect pertinent data on a unique segment of the prospective teacher population, this study is not without its limitations. First, this study focuses on male students' experiences through a single, specialized program within a comprehensive public university in Los Angeles. While a call for participation is issued to all students meeting the criteria (male students in the ITEP program), participation will be optional and voluntary. This may affect the amount of data accessible for collection. Moreover, because of Covid-19, there is a need to collect data virtually. Consequently, methods may be limited in efficacy, and collected data may not fully represent the views of the entire research population.

My overall objective was to contribute to the limited literature on male students in an undergraduate elementary education program. Given the nature of my phenomenological qualitative research and the very small number of qualified participants for this study, the findings are not generalizable. Still, the discussion provides an in-depth look at the lived experiences, understanding, and viewpoints of current male students and how they feel affected by the undergraduate program as they prepare to become teachers. It would be valuable to explore male students' motivational factors and experience in other university systems, including other public and private schools in California. Additionally, it would be useful to see how satisfaction in this program compares to other integrated programs within the CSU system on males and their attitudes and experiences towards becoming teachers.

This study can provide opportunities for future studies to curve the limitations identified. Comparing participation and shared experiences of males in other integrated teacher education programs in the CSU would be an easy next step. Another future study can include post-baccalaureate and graduate male students who are also trying to become teachers and see how their experiences in their teacher preparation programs compare to those in this integrated program. Lastly, because this is an academic program, additional studies can be conducted to include the perspectives of faculty, staff, and program coordinators on the student experience of a minoritized population by undergraduate majors and career aspirations.

Summary

Using the lens of the FIT-Choice (Factors Influencing Teaching Choice) theory in compilation with Funds of Knowledge and Funds of Identity, this qualitative phenomenological study sought to understand career choice motivational factors for prospective male elementary

teachers, centering on the perspective of current undergraduate students in an integrated teacher education program at a comprehensive public university in Los Angeles. The qualitative approach of my study allowed for my findings to be inductively analyzed and categorized. The intake form and semi-structured interviews provided qualitative reliability throughout the study (Maxwell, 2012). Focusing my research on the few pre-service male teachers in this unique undergraduate program helped address a distinct gap in the existing literature that often drives policy and grant initiatives. Per results, I also plan to submit recommendations to the college that may enhance the programmatic components that may support the recruitment and retention of males into the program and, by extension, the teaching profession.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter reports the finding of a phenomenological qualitative research study that focuses on 14 male students who enrolled in the Integrated Teacher Education Preparation (ITEP) program of one regional comprehensive institution, El Sereno State University, with aspirations to become elementary school teachers. The interviews and data collection was conducted between late February and March of 2021; and these 14 individuals described the motivational factors that drove them to choose teaching as a profession, their impressions of the ITEP program, and what roles these motivations and the program have played on their professional identity development. I utilized the interviews and a preliminary intake form to gain a deeper understanding of their lived experiences, the influences that propagated the academic and career choice in teaching, and the effects the integrated teacher education program has on this career choice. The sources produced findings that identified motivations and influences. These spoke about the academic program's impact in validating their career choice and helped me understand how those in the minority perceive gender disparity in the profession. FIT-Choice (Factors Influencing Teaching Choice) Theory, along with Funds of Knowledge and Identity, framed both the planning of my study and provided analytic guidance as I aimed to understand what drove these male students to enroll in a very specific program for a career in elementary teaching, and the effects the program and personal experience has had on this career choice.

I sought to address the following two research questions and related sub-questions:

1. What motivates males to pursue enrollment in undergraduate elementary education programs?
    a. When do male students begin thinking about a career in teaching, and how do they arrive at their decision to enroll in an undergraduate elementary education program?
    b. What and who do these individuals describe as having a strong influence on their career decision-making process?
    c. In what ways do they expect a career in teaching to contribute to their life goals?
2. What impressions/opinions do male participants have of the integrated teacher education preparation (ITEP) program, and what effects, if any, does the program have on the career choice of these participants?
    a. What, if any, are areas of strength of the ITEP Program?
    b. What, if any, are areas of improvement of the ITEP Program?
    c. What, if any, is the emerging teaching philosophy male pre-service teachers develop through the program?

Principal Findings

The qualitative analysis conducted in my study revealed the interrelationships between people and influencers, including other individuals and experiences, and how an academic teacher preparation program factors into career choices made by individuals from a historically underrepresented group in a professional space. Analysis of data produced five principal findings in response to my original research questions. First, participants affirmed that their social and lived experiences, particularly positive ones with children and effective in a learning context,

have had the greatest influence on their decision to enroll in the ITEP program at a regional comprehensive university. Participants decided to become elementary school teachers early during their higher education careers, predominantly for altruistic and intrinsic reasons. Second, participants affirmed that while gender in the elementary classroom mattered, they did not feel swayed or dissuaded to become an elementary teacher because of it. While they acknowledge the prospective benefits that male teachers can bring to children, the classroom, workforce, and society, the consensus for pursuing teaching was based on interest in the profession and making a difference in the lives of children. Third, participants credited the ITEP program for allowing them to pursue their career choice in an accelerated manner that provided pertinent and supportive pre-service teacher preparation. Theory and practice components were confirmed as strong components of this process and did affirm the career choice for these male students through coursework. Fourth, despite the affirmation and connection to motivation, participants identified concerns with the social community and curriculum coherence in the ITEP program. They believed the program did not address curriculum coherence fully in its structure and could build a stronger sense of community for its students as they progressed through the ITEP program. In addition, students confirmed that they were not treated differently in the program because of gender. Lastly, the participants reported no particular strategies to recruiting males into teaching, as many of them did not attribute their pursuit of teaching as related to their gender. Consequently, participants believed that the program could be more community-centric and tap into the cultural capital of students via a critical conscious approach. My study participants revealed a complex assessment, both affirmative and critical, of their reasons for

wanting to become elementary school teachers and the effects of an integrated teacher education preparation program at El Sereno State University.

The following sections will demonstrate my findings in greater depth.

Finding 1: ***Participants' social and lived experiences, particularly positive ones with children and effective in a learning context, have had the greatest influence on their decision to become elementary teachers.***

The first finding was based on what participants shared as motivators for pursuing a career in teaching. Their social and lived experiences represented the influencing factors that affected decisions in pursuing a career in teaching and enrolling in the integrated teacher preparation program at El Sereno State University. All of the participants agreed that their circumstances and prior experiences with children and youth ultimately played a defining factor in pursuing a career in elementary teaching. Their narratives as current students at the university provided a window of opportunity for the local higher education organizations and for programs like the ITEP program to understand the people interested in teaching early in their academic journeys.

Participants were encouraged through a series of questions to consider what had been a factor in their decision-making process and think of what continued to push them towards completing this particular program. Familial, social, and environmental factors were sources of motivation, with the most salient ones being previous interaction and work with young students, and effectiveness in it, as a great source. For many, the questions had not been directly asked before, so I became an observer in creating their introspective research, which included individuals ascertaining their funds of knowledge and identity towards the decisions that brought them to El Sereno State University. In documenting their raw and descriptive responses about

themselves, I understood the experiences, memories openly, and beliefs relayed by the participants. In doing so, I understood better the participants' personal lives and local neighborhoods concerning the professional and academic choices made that now included El Sereno State University and the ITEP program.

Motivations were multilayered and bifurcated. In recognition, I developed four sub-categories to share participant responses: Motivations to Become a Teacher, When Teaching Became a Real Option, Influencers: People and Other Factors, and How Teaching Contributes to Life Goals. These align with the first research question and sub-questions.

Motivations to Become a Teacher

Participants cited altruistic or intrinsic motivations based on academic or work experiences as primary motivations for pursuing a career in elementary teaching. The most common words used in describing the interest in teaching were *passion*, *help*, *give back*, and *work with students*. For example, David, Raymond, and Anthony described a desire to help people as their primary motivator. Teaching happened to be a career that allowed them to do that. David described this succinctly by stating that teaching is "a career I could be proud of because I could help people."

Nine of the participants cited their work experience as paraprofessionals or instructional assistants as spaces with high exposure to and affirming the value of the teaching profession. For example, Carson understood the effects of intervention strategies by working with students with special needs; Gabriel and Roger both described the value of seeing students understand a new concept through their teacher assistant work. Based on his teacher assistant experience, Jonathan described the comfort of working with students. Ramiro felt his previous work as an

instructional assistant opened an understanding of how a teacher could make a difference in the students' lives. Norbert proudly affirmed how "working in education as an instructional assistant with students in the classroom constantly rewarded him with amazing memories and new-comings." The direct experience in the classroom setting was important to familiarizing with what a teacher does and ascertaining the impact and difference that could be made through the work itself.

When Teaching Became a Real Option

Regardless of the main motivators, a key finding for all participants was that arriving at their decision to enroll in the ITEP program happened after they thought about a career in teaching. When asked if other careers were considered, four knew from the onset, six were undecided, one switched out of a different sector for teaching, and three considered careers in counseling and human services. David, Anthony, Elmer, and Alberto knew they wanted to become teachers since grade school; hence, becoming a teacher became a real option when they finished high school and enrolled in college. Selecting the ITEP program was intrinsically tied to this career choice.

For everyone else, the decision to enroll in the ITEP program correlated with work or volunteer experience in the education sector or after taking a course related to education in a higher education setting. When they started college, both Carson and Norbert worked as assistants in school settings and selected a major based on their work. Then there were Gabriel, Raymond, Roger, and Jonathan, who all landed jobs in school settings with no intention of becoming teachers but appreciated the experience. This led to them picking the program to complete their studies. Edgar and Alejandro credited an introductory child development course

when they started college, which piqued their interest in teaching. Alejandro retold his story of becoming interested in teaching through early childhood education: “Taking my first, the first course in child development, um, I just connected it to, with the mission statement of the discipline, which is to help children develop socially, emotionally, and other branches of education, whatnot. Um, so I just took it upon myself to research more and see where my drive and passion will be the best input.” In addition, both had volunteer work experience with youth and developed an understanding of the experiences of diverse students.

Overcoming adversity also contributed to motivation and solidifying the career option in teaching. For Jaime, growing up as an English Learner was difficult and made schooling a frustrating experience. It was not until his fourth-grade teacher decided to work additionally with him that he felt cared for; he attributed to this experience the interest to want to do better in school and pursue teaching because he saw how it transformed him. Ramiro and Alberto were initially discouraged from attending college altogether due to their undocumented status. Upon working with youth in different capacities and advancing academically through their general education coursework, the decision to transfer to enroll at El Sereno State University made sense due to financial and physical limitations. A change in their immigration status helped them move closer to owning the choice to teach. Regardless of when teaching became an option, each participant described a search for the integrated teacher educator preparation program rather than being actively recruited for it. Nonetheless, they found that the program provided a clear track towards the career and was picked with ease.

Influencers

Participants reported family members, significant others, former teachers and mentor teachers, and youth they had worked with as primary influencers in choosing teaching as a career. Alberto and Raymond cited their respective spouses as encouraging them to pursue a career they were passionate about. Similarly, a former partner introduced Gabriel to the education space via an employment opportunity and nudged him towards teaching. The mothers of Carson and Anthony worked in teaching, and they influenced them towards their career choice. Jaime credited a cousin who assisted in getting him back into college as an influencing factor in persisting in the program. For the rest, former and mentor teachers played a pivotal role as influencers. Alejandro, David, and Elmer acknowledged great schoolteachers that instructed them as role models to emulate as they pursue teaching credentials. Ramiro, Norbert, and Roger were strongly influenced by school settings and those teachers they worked for as instructional assistants. Ramiro, for instance, stated, "the greatest influence in my career-making process was the fact that I was a part and involved in a school environment, where I got to see how things work in education. In addition, teachers encouraged and pushed me to follow an education career path." Moreover, they, along with Jonathan and Edgar, found the grade school students they directly worked with as influencers to look at teaching beyond their paraprofessional role because they noticed their work's positive effect on students' learning. Edgar acknowledged his El Sereno State University professors as also influencing and solidifying his decision based on his progress and class performance.

At times, the altruism and intrinsic motivation stemmed from wanting to give back to their childhood communities. For instance, Ramiro and Edgar both described how their career

choice was initially not fixed on teaching but on their desire to work in underrepresented communities like the ones they came from. Similarly, Elmer grew up in South LA. He described a desire to improve communities that were familiar and closely linked to him, which are urban, low-income, and predominantly Latino. Alberto described the lack of males of color in education as a primary motivator because he felt his identity would allow him to reach students in ways others may not know or be able to. Others gave credit to their home upbringing and a personal commitment to change the outcome of community members they grew up around. Lastly, Alejandro, Jaime, and David acknowledged it was their strong respect for teachers and educators at home and in their local community that finally contributed to solidifying their career choice.

Self-Efficacy

Although it was pervasive throughout the sub-categories, this notion of self-efficacy, especially when working with youth, continuously stood out as a major factor when participants described motivations for teaching. In developing FIT-Choice factors, the simplest construct mapping was for "self-perceptions of ability" (Watt & Richardson, 2007, p. 172). For the participants in this study, their positive perceptions of their teaching abilities were intrinsically connected to their motivation to pursue a teaching career. For values, Ramiro, Alejandro, and Roger described the positive feedback shared by supervisors on how well they worked with students. Roger, in particular, was told he had a gift and was able to pick up strategies to work and assist with students very quickly. In his recounting of an experience as a paraprofessional with an elementary teacher, Roger described how that teacher described his understanding:

> She told me, um, this is your career. This is your craft. Like you are a natural teacher. You understand curriculum. You're able to dissect curriculum and write your own curriculum. She would give me the free range to do it under her supervision. So she's like, when you alter my curriculum, you're doing it. And you're implementing things that I didn't see that work. She's like, it's very hard to do that. It's very hard to be creative and think about things on the spot. She's like, so I think this is your career. So after that, I was just like, I want to be a teacher.

Similarly, Jonathan described getting comfortable as a paraprofessional and, over time, being given more responsibilities by his teachers. He shared an experience with a parent of a female student at his elementary school, where he received direct feedback:

> She really likes being here because you are one of the few people who is able to talk to her. She is very private about her life. And that's the thing about working at a school, like, it's kind of nice, um, like hearing when students come to you with their concerns. They just want to talk to you. I feel like when they do that, and you are able to reach them like no one else, you feel more connected.

Jonathan credited his upbringing in East Los Angeles and understanding of home dynamics as the source equipping him for success in this regard.

How Teaching Contributes to Life Goals

The participants predominantly reported that teaching would give them the opportunity towards a career that allowed them to give back and make a difference in the lives of others. The career choice felt right because they could help others, give back, and serve as role models. Jonathan, Alejandro, Roger, and Anthony did include extrinsic contributions that teaching could

bring, such as the ability to hold a stable lifestyle and to have opportunities for continued professional growth through work, but this was supplemental to the life goals of contributing to serve and give back to the next generation of students. Roger described the relationship between teaching and life goals by sharing that, “A career in education will keep me going because every class and every student is different, and it will keep me consistently growing. Knowing I will be doing this work enriches me. It keeps me wanting to learn new strategies to build my efficacy and be able to help the students in my career.”

The participants shared experiences on motivations reflected and coincided with the existing literature. The FIT-Choice measure, derived from the expectancy-value model of Wigfield and Eccles (2000), provides a useful framework to understand why people choose to pursue a teaching career. The primary motivations to become a teacher for study participants were intrinsic value and social utility (altruism) values. This was followed by working and making a difference in the lives of children and by making a difference in the communities they were familiar with based on their upbringing. Moreover, the participants were influenced and encouraged not only by family members but also through experiences with former teachers and current teachers with whom they now work and collaborate. These findings correlate with existing literature on Grow Your Own teacher pathways (Valenzuela, 2017) and the frameworks for the Funds of Identity (Saubich & Guitart, 2011). Moreover, each participant in my study was either a person of color, a first-generation student, a transfer student, an immigrant, an adult learner, or usually a combination of these descriptors. These identifiers were influential in the decision to pursue a teaching career based on the funds of knowledge (FoK) (Moll et al., 1992), as they were able to tap into their FoK to be effective with youth in educational and community-

based settings. The enrolled students at El Sereno State University were characterized as individuals who experienced working with children because they felt a commitment to teaching and learning out of a desire to help others. Because these reasons conferred with those in the literature for pre-service teachers, I wanted to focus on how participants perceived gender in elementary education. In doing so, I wanted to see how this faired with existing literature while also understanding if it affected, in any way, their career choice in teaching.

Finding 2: ***Participants affirmed that while gender in the classroom mattered, they have personally not felt swayed or dissuaded to become an elementary teacher because of it.***

In the second finding, data indicated the participants' awareness of gender disparities in the ITEP program at El Sereno State University and the teaching profession, particularly as it affected workforce diversity and the socialization of children. Given the recognized shortage of male primary school teachers (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2011), a crucial focal point of this study was to understand how the effects of this gender disparity in the profession influenced the motivation to join and persist in teaching careers. As Ponte (2012) shared, "Understanding male-gendered ways of experiencing the teaching profession might help us address the current shortage of male diversity in teaching" (p. 44). Participants were asked gender dynamics in their experience to ascertain if this demographic identifier affected their motivation and experience, and if it did, what that effect on them was. In particular, I wanted to explore the arguments and justifications made to promote males into teaching and how the thoughts and opinions of undergraduate males were on gender in elementary teaching. Moreover, because research has maintained that male teachers were needed for social (McGrath & Sinclair, 2013), psychological (McGrath & Van Bergen, 2017), and societal reasons (Bhana & Moosa, 2016), I wanted to see if these were both recognized and a

part of the motivation for the interviewed participants in their pursuing a career in elementary school teaching.

Call for Male Teachers: Assumptions and Justifications

Reports discussing the need for more men in elementary education typically cited two primary justifications that served as a backlash to the longstanding perception that women were better suited to teach young children. In many of these accounts, authors noted that it was and continued to be difficult for boys to develop healthy masculinity against a preponderance of women teachers and increasing rates of absent fathers (Johnson, 2008). These justifications had been flagged as faulty arguments running on gender stereotypes, for work on the socialization of gender identity reports that there was a lack of empirical evidence supporting the effectiveness of males as better teachers and role models for boys just because of gender symmetry (Johnson, 2008). Furthermore, the literature maintained that quality teaching and positive relations based on gender sensitivity were more important than a teacher's gender. Despite knowing facts, policy proposals and program initiatives to recruit male teachers still ran on these premises (Johnson, 2008; McGrath & Sinclair, 2013; Skelton, 2003). I wanted to see if the call for male teachers and the justifications put forth were connected, if at all, to the motivational factors for the participants in the study.

When specifically asked about gender in teaching, all participants shared that gender did matter in the classroom; however, the reasons shared were not tied to academic achievement. Six participants acknowledged social and societal reasons for representation in the teaching ranks, but being prepared to teach was the important factor to impact academic achievement. Jaime recalled that the teacher who assisted him most in elementary was a female and that her

care and assistance of him as an English Learner made the difference. Carson described his training as a paraprofessional and his growing understanding of intervention strategies, especially special education situations. "I want to become an elementary teacher because the process of early identification and early intervention has shown to be important in students' career learning. In other words, I want to work with an age group that is possibly the most important time in their lives, in terms of their academic careers." These responses correlated with Carrington, Francis, Hutchings, Skelton, Read and Hall (2007), which found that a teacher's gender did not affect students' academic motivation and engagement. Students valued teachers who were consistent, even-handed, and supportive. Because social and societal reasons were cited, I inquired about the notion of role modeling.

Male Role Models

Role models are often suggested to motivate individuals to set and achieve ambitious goals, especially for members of stigmatized groups in achievement settings. Under the Motivational Theory of Role Modeling framework, role models influence goals and motivation by acting as behavioral models, representing what is possible, and being inspirational (Morgenroth, Ryan & Peters, 2015). In a profession where women are the majority, the call for male teachers is to have these impacts on children. Although some male teachers are comfortable with being called role models, research suggests that others reject the idea saying that their main role was to educate and not to be a parent substitute (McGrath & Sinclair, 2013). A majority of participants in this study reported they appreciated the notion of being a role model. For many, this was a motivating factor to pursue a career in teaching. For instance, during his interview, Elmer pointed at pennants hanging in his back wall that showcased the colleges and universities

he attended. When he met with students via Zoom, he made sure these were visible so that students knew that they, coming from south LA, too could go to college just as he did. Similarly, Edgar, Roger, Alberto, Jaime, and Ramiro talked about role modeling in relation to the community they knew. They highlighted the following: seeing themselves as success stories, expressing themselves in a different language but as professionals, and looking at how their respective backgrounds were valued in the classroom. For example, when asked about role modeling as a teacher, Edgar shared: "If you have a good male role model, you get to see more professional role models. Children get to see how much you care for them, and they mimic you. Understanding the communities that we come from and how I'm still part of the community now, but I'm able to be a professional, matters a lot." Similarly, Ramiro stated, "I don't see teaching at this level as something I cannot do because I happen to be a male. My focus is to become the best teacher I can, and if that ends up making me a role model, especially in the Salvadoran Corridor, I am happy that is the case."

When asked about role modeling, Roger described himself as an openly out, gay Latino male. "You know students look at you regardless," he stated. "It comes with the job. I know that is there, and you do your work with it in mind. It is important to model good behavior, but I am not thinking of it from a gender standpoint. I just want to be ready to teach." When Alejandro was asked about role modeling, he shared that "being an out, male, gay, Latino, and tattooed educator" came with an opportunity to break stereotypes and be an ally to families. This view shared by participants went against Smith's 2005 finding that the notion of being a role model places "unrealistic and confusing expectations on men in teaching." Foster & Newman (2005), who conducted interviews with 48 male pre-service, or trainee, teachers over four years

to determine traits common to the trainees, found similar findings as Smith on this role reconciliation. Contrary to the findings in these prior studies, the participants in this study neither labeled teaching as women's work nor felt they were intentionally supposed to model a particular type of masculinity for students.

When it came to the popularized notion that male teachers were needed to act as father figures, particularly for children from single-parent families, none of the participants ever saw or anticipated their role as teachers to manifest itself in this regard. For example, Ramiro shared growing up in a single-parent home. "This lived experience has equipped me with a general understanding of what a single-parent house can be like, but each home is different," he stated. "And remember that just because a child is in a two-parent household, it doesn't mean it's better." Alejandro talked about the importance of normalizing different types of households. As a gay male, he shared being in a circumstance where he was co-parenting with another gay male. He said, "Schools should continue to build a sense of awareness of different homes and train their teachers to be able to engage comfortably." Unlike the literature, none of the participants felt that "fatherless" children require compensatory male teachers (Martino & Kehler, 2006). For example, Jaime stated, "The role of a teacher is very different from a parent. I think you need to make sure you are not trying to do more than what you are supposed to. I also don't think a student without a parent needs a teacher to be that for them." Participants reported a need for a more nuanced understanding of home and family life, which also included distinguishing this from the role of a teacher in the classroom.

Benefits of Males in Elementary Teaching

Beyond role modeling, the literature cited the contributions of male teachers in the areas of children's gender knowledge, interpersonal relationship development in the classroom, workforce gender diversity, and in displaying alternative versions of masculinity (McGrath, et al., 2020). Because the primary motivators for teaching included high confidence in their abilities in working with youth, an intrinsic interest in teaching, and a belief in the social utility of the job, I wanted to understand if there was any connection between these motivators and the identified benefits of males in elementary teaching found in the literature. In trying to understand the motivations of participants for selecting teaching as a profession further, I coded for how these benefits found in existing literature appeared in motivational factors. Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) highlighted three variables: self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations, and personal goals that, along with environmental factors, could affect how educational interests might be developed and career choices might be made. When self-efficacy and outcome expectations were interrelated, goals were set to guide the outcomes of the personal goals (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1996). This theory would fit within the comprehensive motivational framework of FIT-Choice (Factors Influencing Teaching Choice) Theory and allowed me to explore if any findings were connecting these areas of true contribution by male elementary school teachers (children's gender knowledge, interpersonal relationship development in the classroom, workforce gender diversity, and alternative versions of masculinity) to the motivation of participants.

Children's Gender Knowledge

Social cognitive theory identified gender as a "product of complex interactions between the social construction of gender knowledge and individual motivational and regulatory systems." One aspect of this development included how boys and girls learn preferred gender-specific interactional styles through their observations of others (Martin, Ruble, & Szkrybalo, 2002). Raymond and Edgar shared examples of students observing them while doing their work. Raymond described how he took his position as an instructional assistant as an "opportunity to put his teaching skills to practice." He added, "when they are looking at me, I make sure I sound confident and secure while modeling what they are supposed to be doing." Similarly, Edgar described students "watching him and looking in his direction." While he thought that part of it had to do with his visible tattoos, he also had a sense that it had to do with his role as the assistant ("they see me almost like they do the teacher"). McGrath et al. (2020) described how children's gender knowledge was extended when they observed men also demonstrating and modeling both "feminine" and "masculine" traits. Building from this idea, eight participants recognized the importance of observable behavior for children. Ramiro had become very aware of "how I talk and behave in the classroom. They are always looking at you, so knowing how you are coming across is key." Similarly, Jaime became aware of how he might have come across when supervising and participating in sports activities with youth. "I wanted to make sure both boys and girls were included, and it was on me to make sure that happened. With sports, I focus on teamwork, and I lead by example. I will pass the ball or coordinate a play that includes all students on the team." Three participants, though, only hinted at contributing to observable gender performances as part of their motivation. For example, Roger stated, "I know I bring

diversity, not just color, but like identity, gender, like different types of diversity, and this shows kids that when you get out into the real world, you're going to see all these different faces. I like that I add to that." Through the interviews, there was a consensus that schools should represent a range of gender identities both between and within genders. Thus, participants did acknowledge in different ways the contributions males can make to children's gender knowledge by being in the classroom.

Interpersonal Relationships and Homophily

While teacher gender played a role in constructing children's gender knowledge, it was also linked to classroom dynamics and ecology. Participants reported that as elementary teachers, they would influence how students would associate with each other, with adults, and could impact attitudes and beliefs. "How I talk to other adults in the schools as a whole, and how I present myself in the classroom matters so much because you know students are watching. They are impressionable. I don't think there is one way to behave, but I do think students relate to teachers." When asked if they felt boys related better to a teacher of the same gender, Jonathan shared: "This has happened, no doubt, but I have also had girls reach out to connect. I once had a parent talk to me and thank me for talking to her daughter because the girl is very quiet and doesn't share much. I appreciated knowing that I had made it possible for her to see that she had someone to talk to."

The principle of homophily is the tendency to be drawn to and associate with people who have similar social and demographic characteristics to one's self (McPherson, et al., 2001). More commonly applied in network research, evidence of this principle was frequently observable in children's friendships; peer relationships that form around commonalities such as age, gender, or

ethnicity are typically more stable than other peer relationships (Farmer & Farmer, 1996; McPherson et al., 2001). Twelve of the participants described experiencing this in the classrooms they had observed and worked in. Roger tied this principle of homophily to recruitment into the teaching profession. He shared:

> If there are more male teachers young boys and young men can visually see themselves teaching in the future. I truly believe the want to teach comes from within. It's as natural as wanting to become a businessman, a doctor, or a construction worker. So if there are more male teachers, it breaks the stigma of being a "women's profession" and becomes one that is highly respected.

For Alberto and Ramiro, being bilingual allowed them to connect with students who were English Learners. Alberto described that the connection went beyond the students and included the parents. "I remember a parent walking into the classroom to talk to the teacher. I was immediately called over to help translate for the parent. She shared that this was the first time in the school that there was someone who spoke Spanish. It was very gratifying for me to know that me being there had made this a better interaction for her." Carson shared a story working with a male student with special needs who would describe him as his "friend" first, and then "big brother." He described building a connection through this association to provide intervention work, and he recognized it as a contribution to the student's success in the classroom. Similarly, Jonathan shared the importance of male teachers in the school context despite acknowledged concerns with males in the elementary setting:

> A lot of parents may not feel as comfortable having a male taking care of their children, but they need to understand that it is necessary for children to be exposed to both female

and male teachers. A lot of students look to their teachers as role models, someone they can relate to and learn from. I believe this is a great way for teachers, especially males, to be those role models.

Anthony noticed that the boys would only hang out with the boys during a lunch play activity, so he would play and engage with them to get the boys to play with the girls. "When the boys saw that I was easily able to be around everyone, they followed suit. The teacher and two other instructional aides were female and had been teaching in the classroom for years. When I joined the team, they told me how different the children acted with a male figure in the class." This example showed how through homophily, Anthony was able to affect social perceptions and gender knowledge with all the boys in his group.

Gender Diversity in the Teaching Workforce

Diversity in the teaching workforce was typically discussed in terms of benefits for students, its potential to foster an inclusive workplace for all teachers, and ensuring that the school organization was reflective of the broader community it served (McCuiston, Ross Wooldridge & Pierce, 2004). Diversity in the workforce has positively affected employees' job satisfaction and performance (Pitts, 2009). When asked about gender in the classroom, nine participants responded by connecting gender mattering in the school setting to being tied to diversity. For Carson, men in elementary teaching "bring another perspective to the educational realm." He further added, "I grew up with so many different ethnic groups, so many different people, and I think that diversity is great for teaching. And I think that it's important to be inclusive of everybody and appreciate and value everybody's culture." Roger described his own experiences in grade school tied to his perception of diversity in the workforce:

> In my academic journey pre-college, I only had six male teachers. Most were in Middle school and High school. I think it's important to change the narrative so that society can see that teaching is one of the most important and diverse professions in the world. That diverse teachers are a benefit because students have more opportunities to feel a sense of cultural relevance and make strong connections.

This amalgamation of gender and culture was pervasive in reported responses by ten participants. In addition to understanding how workforce diversity influences policy output and student outcomes, considering how workforce gender composition shaped teachers' experiences (and pre-service teachers) at the organizational level. Anthony, Ramiro, Jonathan, and Jaime shared feedback from teachers and principals who acknowledged their male presence as contributing positively to the school experience. When asked about diversity in the teaching profession, Elmer shared it motivated him because:

> It matters to the degree of providing different dynamics, not just from the students and their backgrounds but also from the teachers themselves. It is important that the children interact with individuals of similar backgrounds or beliefs and different ones. One possible dynamic a male teacher provides is a possible relationship with a male individual that can be very positive and supportive when it comes to teamwork or other similar dynamics.

Similarly, Edgar recalled an experience where he made contributions attributed to being effective because of his gender.

> The school had no males onsite, really. My effectiveness was brought up to my attention by female teachers. I recall a teacher explaining to me that a student of hers appeared to

gravitate to me. She explained to me the home environment, there being no males around him, and that she believed my presence and engagement with him had lead the student to be engaged with his education.

While Grissom, Kern & Rodriguez's (2015) literature review identified connections between the demographic composition of the staff body and students' disciplinary outcomes and academic outcomes, I was interested in seeing if there was any tokenism shaping the experiences of study participants.

Tokenism

Kanter's focus on tokenism in the workforce from a 1977 study indicated that when a proportional imbalance existed within a group, interactional experiences were fundamentally different (Kanter, 2006). Token visibility, polarization, and token assimilation were phenomena that might be experienced by male teachers in a space lacking gender diversity. While not an essential focus of my study, it was imperative to understand if tokenism adversely affected the motivation for a teaching career for these preservice male teachers. Nine of the participants provided a statement or mention of tokenism, mostly on visibility and assimilation. Ramiro, Alberto, Norbert, and Anthony highlighted a direct story from teachers in the school about greater awareness of them in the program or work setting because of gender. For Jaime, David, and Jonathan, instances where sports came up in school work settings or classes, were attributed to them being males and having an inclination for sports. David described a "funny trend" that he associated as "experiences as a male" in the program. "So, for example, I'm like really big in sports and like all sports. So sometimes when sports questions will come up or a question that involves sports, I like know it, and these become the questions I answer for the group as the guy

in the room." When asked how this affected their progress, no individual described it dissuading or questioning their commitment to the profession. For example, Carson said, "I think you just know this walking in. I didn't go into the program thinking of myself as just a male going into teaching. My main focus is to be a good teacher, so who I am by gender is something I know, but it doesn't mean it will be the only thing that determines how my teaching will go." Thus, workforce gender diversity, including tokenism, were aspects that the male participants' studies saw but were not positioned as risk factors to dissuading them from pursuing their career in teaching.

Alternative Forms of Masculinity

Beyond the classroom setting, a broader consideration for having males in schools was to challenge heteronormative roles and destigmatize the participation of men in the lives of children (Elliot 2016; McGrath & Sinclair, 2013). When describing the lack of men in education as an important problem, Johnson (2008) stated:

> Deep gender divisions in the teaching profession go against the democratic and egalitarian values schools are expected to promote. As long as this disparity continues, new generations of children daily learn sexist gender relations. Such relations continue to feed a preponderance of women into teaching and men into administrative or managerial positions, reinforcing the powerfully corrupt idea that men rule women and women rule children.

Males working with children and embodying non-stereotypical gender roles and behavioral traits could normalize the work with children and prospectively impact interest in it for other men who otherwise would not have looked into it. Ten participants saw themselves as role models for

future teachers; this was part of what motivated them. Edgar, Ramiro, Jaime, and Elmer talked about seeing themselves as men doing what was not done in the communities they grew up in. Jaime described himself as not having anyone to look up to but two male cousins who worked in education, and this reality inspired him. "They weren't my role models on purpose, but I did appreciate the conversations we had about teaching. This got me comfortable with going for the credential. Once I am a teacher, I am definitely going to talk to students about my career."

There was a consensus with participants that an increment of male teachers in the profession could change the understanding of the career for other males that would not have looked into the career. For example, Gabriel credited an ex-partner with introducing him to teaching: "The fact that he was a gay male teacher made it so much easier for me to see this as a possibility." The literature did describe how the reinforcement of hegemonic masculinity at the societal level pressured heavily male elementary teachers to uphold dominant forms of masculinity, which consequently deterred some men from entering the profession (Mills, Haase & Charlton, 2008; McGrath & Sinclair, 2013). To this point, Roger described the intersection of gender and sexuality in his identity:

> Gender is one thing. Right. But my identity is another thing. So for me, it was always like, yes, this is a female-dominated profession. There aren't a lot of examples of men as educators. So for me, it was just like, I want to work at the elementary level because that's where the foundations are. And I feel like I can really get in there to prepare them now, get them the idea on how to learn. But also for me, it was like, will I be accepted as a male? Like, will I be trusted? But not only that. Will I be trusted as a gay male?

Nonetheless, Roger decided that he would continue with his career pursuit in teaching: “If there are more male teachers, it breaks the stigma of being a woman’s profession.” Similarly, Alejandro responded to how males can impact the elementary school setting and profession as a whole:

> Typically, we don't think of men as elementary school teachers, much less preschool or daycare workers. Still, as we've learned throughout our coursework, children form their identity and learn do's and don'ts at very young ages. Having more male elementary school teachers, that teach children with passion, respect, and dedication can help future men enter adolescence and adulthood with positive core values and an interest in education that may lead them to success.

Alberto also cited the need to break gender stereotypes through representation in the profession: “With more male elementary teachers students can have male role models that are not violent, demonstrate compassion.” The participants’ shared experiences with role models and the intersection with gender dynamics in the teaching profession highlighted the power representation has for the children, the classroom, the workforce, and society.

Finding 3: ***Participants credit the integrated teacher education program for allowing them to pursue their career choice through an accelerated, pertinent and supportive pre-service preparation experience.***

The Learning Policy Institute found that 70 percent of districts identified providing incentives for greater articulation between community colleges and teacher preparation programs as a policy initiative that could help reduce teacher shortages (Sutcher, Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2018). Initiatives like these focused on teacher recruitment and retention and developing new teaching pathways (Loewenberg Ball & Forzani, 2009). These findings would

go hand in hand with the increased efforts in improving teacher quality through pre-service teacher preparation programs. The ITEP program at El Sereno State University belonged to this category of a new pathway to teaching, as it uniquely integrated undergraduate degree with a post-baccalaureate teacher credential curriculum. Moreover, the College of Education at El Sereno State University revamped the program as the university went through a Quarter-to-Semester calendar conversion in 2016. From that point, the program has undergone program modifications, mainly rewriting courses and rearranging the sequence. Because of this context, I wanted to understand if the program and its components had any effects on the career motivations of the participants in the study.

All participants described a sense of affirmation towards their career choice in teaching when they found ITEP. Concerning the ITEP program at El Sereno State University, the high number of transfer students generally holds; and for this study, eleven out of the fourteen participants (78.6 percent) were transfer students. In addition, what was significant for the study was that the majority of students were navigating undergraduate courses to transfer and investigating and identifying academic programs in a new higher education institution that would help them reach their career goals. Because of the complicated nature of higher education academic progress in general, I wanted to see the impact that this navigation can have on motivation toward a career.

Overall, despite the majority of study participants not knowing the intricacies of the ITEP, by consensus, they believed that the ITEP program had the potential to affect their collegiate experience towards a career in teaching favorably. For pre-service teachers, the literature articulated the “learn to teach” process involved theoretical knowledge, practicum, and

reflection components (Muzaffar, Rahim & Jessee, 2011; Hammerness, Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). This calls for participants in an integrated, teacher education preparation program to partake in this process in an accelerated manner. Understanding the program's effects and its components had on self-efficacy beliefs (Lent, Brown & Hackett, 1994) could shed some light on how participants' motivation carried on as they approached their first full-fledged teaching experience in the classroom. Participants highlighted three aspects related to the ITEP: acceleration to credential, faculty, and instruction, and the "learn to teach" process in coursework. Discussions of these three aspects follow below.

Acceleration to Credential

The main attraction of integrated teacher education preparation programs at the undergraduate level was the acceleration towards the credential. All participants cited the benefits of completing both the undergraduate degree and a preliminary teaching credential faster as one of the main reasons for selecting the program. Most notably, applying to the credential program and directed-teaching were cited by all participants as solidifying their commitment to the career choice. Ramiro, Carson, Elmer, and Anthony alluded to a particular entry-level course that walked them through the internal application for the teaching credential part of the program. Upon receiving the acceptance letter to the teaching credential program, Ramiro stated, "it is on now, and we are locked in to finish." Similarly, Alberto described the reassurance admission into the credential program provided him, "Getting accepted was a great moment for me. My fiancée had encouraged me to switch my major and do what I am passionate about. This confirmed that for me, and I was excited to finish." Participants found this part of admission as an affirmation of acceleration towards their career. To this end, Jaime stated, "Getting into the program before

graduating was great because I knew I was saving time and money. But more than that, it mattered to me that I was getting closer to teaching, and I was just in my junior year. I guess it feels like you are successful when you are in classes with students who already have their [bachelor] degrees." Moreover, directed-teaching, the culminating experience of the ITEP program, also correlated with and confirmed the motivation to reach the teaching career. Jaime and David described looking forward to directed-teaching because for Jaime, "this is getting to the end of [the program], but it will be my first chance at teaching students." Similarly, David, while acknowledging this was moving fast and, at 20, he was still young, but "can't wait to learn from students and a mentor teacher." This finding bolstered the move towards a practice-focused curriculum in teacher education (Loewenberg Ball & Forzani, 2009). Overall, participants found acceleration as a strong motivation due to its correlation with program completion and affirmation of career access.

Quality Faculty and Instruction

Twelve of the participants reported having positive experiences with faculty that motivated them to persist and continue. Participants described the professors and lecturers as "good," "knowledgeable," and "attentive." Students described the instruction as appropriate, and those who worked in education-based settings felt their work experiences complemented courses very well. Participants provided examples of courses that required critical thinking and reflection, as well practice-based learning. As an example, Ramiro described, in general, his class interactions with instructors: "I was able to experience, you know, hands-on experiences from all these different professors who are already in the field and they got to share their experience with me, and I'll be like, Oh, I want to strive for that." When recalling teaching

skills, he has learned, Gabriel shared: “I think showing compassion is a big skill. It is a skill that I picked up on from professors.” Another example came from Alberto, who vividly described an in-class experience with a faculty member teaching an educational foundations course:

> I remember this one time [the professor] came into the classroom with a MAGA hat on, and then everyone was like, what the heck? Like, how can you wear that? And then I remember that the whole class was reacting to him. We didn’t know that he was making us think about the assumptions we make when we see something we don’t expect. He played along and was keeping a serious face. After a while, he took it off, and he had us share our reactions. Then he talked about confirmation bias.

Moreover, the participants also reported a supportive environment created by the coordinator of the ITEP, Dr. Valdez (pseudonym). Participants shared appreciation for his accessibility outside of the class and for the resources he provided to engage them in their pre-service preparation. One participant, David, took a class with Dr. Valdez and described the following:

> At El Sereno State University, they teach you specifically about teaching in an urban environment. Dr. Valdez teaches a class where a lot of the projects focus on understanding the communities close to El Sereno State University. And when I started to get these assignments, I started realizing that I could pick the community I grew up in, and I started really thinking about it. And I thought it would be nice to teach in the community I grew up in because not only do I have the same experience as the students, but also I get to work where I'm from. So it seemed very interesting and like something I would want to do.

Literature found practice-based teacher education for preservice teachers beneficial in transitioning from theory to practice (Ball & Cohen, 1999). This transition could be supported in both formal (PK-12 classrooms) and informal (community-based sites like parks, neighborhoods, libraries, etc.) learning settings (Hamilton & Margot, 2019). Community-based sites, in particular, function as a "third space" for teaching and learning (Zeichner, 2010). Participants acknowledged the value of such experiences for growth and development as future teachers. For example, Anthony described his experience with Dr. Valdez:

> I was not completely sure of everything in the program at El Sereno State University until my second week when I met Dr. Valdez. He shared a lot about urban communities and the need for quality teachers. He really welcomed us in through those projects. He also told us about what to expect in the program, when we would have to submit different things, and what was coming up. This all happened the first semester. And I was kinda like, Whoa, it's like, I'm starting it now.

When asked about his program experience, Norbert first mentioned the following:

> Yeah, the professors are pretty great. I mean, in my college experience, so far, the professors have been pretty good. But specifically, in this program, Dr. Valdez is super relatable. We share a lot of the same views on education, and he and the other professors are really helping me develop my own understanding and views through what they're teaching. The curriculum that they're providing is just super helpful. Participants finding direction and relatedness with faculty in the ITEP program and opportunities to socially construct their learning in the local context are identified as a source of motivation in their pursuit of a career in teaching.

Learn-To-Teach Process in Coursework

In their responses, the participants also mentioned the value of the "learn-to-teach" process. Five participants brought up Vygotsky, and six others mentioned the importance of practicing what they were learning in courses. When speaking of their preparation, nine participants shared having doubts about their abilities at this time, but understanding, as Elmer put it, "it is a process that will take time." Alberto described his reflection process during a practicum course:

> Like during my observations, I am like, I messed up here. I messed up here. I already know I messed up here. And even when I'm doing my lesson plans or instructing, like, okay, I messed up here. So I just go back and try it again. I can do this better by doing this. And then I used to reflect on myself, like, you're your own biggest critic. So you want to improve yourself? You can do this better next time.

Similarly, David shared what transpired in fieldwork settings: "I knew I was not perfect. I need to continue to get better. But I am both learning how to teach and also seeing what I can incorporate. There are some assignments that I see in the classes I am doing fieldwork in that are things that I would love to do in my own classroom. And there are things that I haven't thought about. But it is encouraging to learn and pick up more."

When asked about their understanding of what was meant by the ITEP program, less than half of the participants were able to discuss on a more specific level what it meant for the program to be integrated or that content was offered at the same time as pedagogy. Most, however, did recognize the differing purposes of classes in simplified categories. For example, participants knew when they were taking a credential class over a solely undergraduate one but

were unclear about how they were connected. Ramiro described his roadmap in the following way: Like there were philosophy classes, then these methodology classes and hands-on classes. I really enjoyed the philosophy aspect of it was there. I get it. Sometimes I didn't see all the connections, but now I am focused on developing my teaching philosophy and my pedagogy." Overall, despite most participants not being able to fully articulate the in-class connectivity across the whole curriculum, participants felt taking their credential courses was a reflection of how close they were to reaching their career goals.

When it came to describing the purpose of the practicum, Alejandro described the following: "We take courses that prepare us to deal with children with special needs, with disabilities, with parents, with adoptive parents who are in prison or just serving things. And now this is where we have to apply it." I did inquire if it would matter to do fieldwork practicum with male teachers in the elementary setting. While an acknowledgment of gender disparity was generally made, participants cared less about the teacher's gender and more about quality experiences with a good teacher. Anthony mentioned, "Gender did not matter. I guess I had a great experience cause the teachers I worked with at the elementary were very good. I got a better idea of what to expect from the teachers, and I've received awesome strategies, and a lot of what they've shared with me has helped me form my teaching philosophy." This finding confirmed the notion that practice must be at the core of teachers' preparation, entailing comprehensive attention to the work of teaching and the development of ways to train people to do that work effectively (Loewenberg Ball & Forzani, 2009). I explored feedback on the program to ascertain how this could affect persistence towards completion and motivation of participants towards the career.

Personal Teaching Philosophy Development

While not an essential focus of this study, developing a teaching philosophy was important for my participants. I decided to include this because it was inherently tied to what motivates them to finish the preparation program. Participants discussed how they were approaching the teaching and learning of children. A personal teaching and learning philosophy was regarded as one of the most desirable attributes in pre-service teachers (Sheridan & Moore, 2009). It encompassed what teachers believe, where they would base their decisions and value about teaching. Literature supported the notion that pre-service teachers needed to develop their views on teaching and not simply follow an accepted course of action or beliefs in their work (Soccorsi, 2013). Because of its importance in teachers' professional identity development, I wanted to see how this came about for the study participants.

All participants had developed a semblance of a teaching philosophy that was developing through the program. The sharing of philosophy included aspects from their experiences with youth and the classroom, tied to their career motivations. Among the more notable aspects shared on teaching philosophy were the following: the need for differentiated instruction, being there for every student, understanding your role above instruction, and appreciating teaching as a craft that requires an ongoing developmental process for improvement. To start, Anthony stated that, "good teachers know how to differentiate. I think they care about you as a person. I think that's important." Raymond shared how he saw teaching for himself:

> The classroom is a space where I must be a problem solver. I need to figure out how to reach each student by understanding the abilities they each have. Perhaps I can pose questions and create something that requires a whole community of students to solve. A

> teacher needs to know the students and get better at reaching them. I also have to understand social and emotional learning. I think that is sort of one of the full-on teaching philosophies that will work in almost any situation is to get people to problem solve and work together towards the same goal…I also know I have so many areas of improvement to my teaching.

Participants connected their teaching philosophy to their lived experiences, and in most cases, touched on aspects of themselves to reflect on why they believed in what they do. To this, Norbert shared, “I think I've had like really bad experiences in some classes where it's just straight out of a textbook, you know, and just reading and taking notes versus the teachers who, you know, tried to help kids understand. So that was another situation where I felt like I barely knew my teachers, even if they were good people.” Similarly, David encountered teachers where “there were times where I just, I had teachers who were very nice, who I just never connected to. Never really knew the teachers as individual persons or never really felt comfortable sharing myself with them. It didn't mean that they were bad teachers. It just meant that I just didn't have that.”

Eight participants reported that work experiences with youth, even before the credential program, have attributed to why they believe in what they do. Alejandro talked about the "3-mile radius", “where children from specific communities do not venture out from what has been normalized for them, and I believe teachers can instill a passion and hunger for knowledge to show these children that they can aspire to become more.” Moreover, seven participants alluded to how their ability and effectiveness in making a strong connection with children and their families enhanced an understanding of how to approach teaching. Roger and Gabriel, for

instance, both stated that the importance of enjoying "what you do"; and for them, it started with their engagement with children in their own families. "Being good with them showed me that I can contribute to the learning of others like them," stated Gabriel. "This is what teaching means for me. This is why I am doing this." Thus, the ITEP, with its programmatic structure, instructors, and pre-professional development, has generally supported and contributed to the existing motivation of its male participants.

Finding 4: ***Participants identified concerns with the design of the program, including the need for a stronger social community, enhanced curriculum coherence, and arduous program expectations in the ITEP.***

Despite the general agreement of the program's positive impact on their career trajectory, interviews with participants indicated that the program still had areas of improvement in the eyes of current students. One of the earliest identified concerns was the promotion, visibility, and community knowledge of ITEP. For instance, Anthony, Norbert, Ramiro, and Alberto "stumbled" or "found by chance" the program once they got to campus. Moreover, participants described a lack of a social community and messages around curriculum coherence as two significant areas of improvement.

Lack of Social Student Community

Participants reported a need to build a sense of community in the integrated teacher education preparation program. Vincent Tinto's academic and social integration framework suggested that students were more likely to remain enrolled in an institution if they connected to that institution's social and academic life. His model theorized that students who socially integrated into the campus community increased their commitment to the institution and were more likely to graduate (Tinto, 1975). All of the participants, transfer students or not, indicated

that attending their orientation and registration session was this first opportunity to connect with new students at their new campus. For example, Jonathan described making his first couple of friends at the orientation. He recalls, "it felt like we were a part of a cohort," and was expecting more social activities to connect with other students in the program, but these opportunities never came. Jaime and Alejandro shared how connecting with educators and practitioners in the field was helpful, and finding this connection on campus with other students could make a difference. Anthony would like to see more "community building in classes," and David felt "a little bit isolated" with the pandemic and "does not have a whole lot of friends in the program." When asked if this lack of social community in the program affected his motivation, Alberto stated, "I think it makes a huge difference to have connections with other students. It helps to know which professors are good and to know things, like, where they did student-teaching, and things like that." He also added, "But I also know that everyone is going through the program their own way. I still know I am going to get through it, but this can help."

When asked about gender and building a social community in the ITEP program, six participants highlighted it as important to connect with other males. Raymond described knowing most males he has had in classes, and on occasion, being drawn to work in class projects based on this social connection. Jaime described commonalities with other male students when it came to interests outside of school, like sports and movies, but it was more significant to share experiences working in school settings. Moreover, a couple of participants described connecting with other males because of conversations in courses that highlighted shared experiences as males. When asked about how interactions with males in his classes went, Ramiro stated, "There was typically only one or two other guys in the class. There were a couple

of times when we would find ourselves either agreeing with each other or carrying a conversation about what it was like to be a male in a school setting. I don't think it was intentional, but it has happened from time to time." David described instances of a separation in a class to work in small groups that accounted for gender. To him, this was not a concern, but he noticed it happened. However, participants did specify that their motivation was not affected by the program's lack of a social community. Thus, finding ways to enhance the opportunities for the ITEP program students to socialize, whether by gender or in general, is not a deterrent to completion of the program but is an area participants would like to see more of.

Curriculum Coherence Concerns

Curriculum coherence was not an intended focus of the study; however, I soon realized it was a pervasive concern for participants. Nine students mentioned issues related to the program's structure, including curriculum coherence, lack of alignment in the curricular road map, and overall program requirements for completion. When it came to curriculum coherence, ten participants felt gaps in both the instruction and the connections between and among classes. Coherence, by its definition, was a systematic method to align specific content and depth to help develop the integrated understanding in students (Schmidt, Wang & McKnight, 2005; Shwartz, Weizman, Fortus, Krajcik & Reiser, 2009). Raymond and Norbert were concerned that they would not finish on time and had taken too many courses, not counting towards anything or exposing them to fieldwork experience. Alejandro, Jonathan, and Jaime experienced a need to adjust to the higher rigor and expectations of credential courses, including fieldwork requirements. Participant concerns with the curriculum of an integrated, teacher education preparation program mirrored the concerns for proponents of practice-focused curriculum (Ball

& Bass, 2003; Loewenberg Ball & Forzani, 2009). A shift from focusing on what teachers know and believe conceptually to a greater focus on what teachers do would be required.

It is important to highlight that this lack of cohesion was particularly pronounced once students took credential courses. Nine undergraduate males in the ITEP program felt a social disconnect with the post-baccalaureate students. This led to feelings of inadequacy and doubt over preparation for those credential courses with a practicum component. While enrolled in student-teaching, which is the culminating course in the program, Alberto immediately noticed that his university supervisor "did not know any of the previous classes taken in preparation for it. What I was asked to do in student-teaching was very different and did not connect." On this notion of communication among professors and lecturers, Ramiro shared: "There were some professors that we all connected with. Some professors did not know how their class fit into the program. I was like, okay, what are we learning from you?" Furthermore, Roger experienced filling in the gap for a fellow student lost in a course: It was a lesson plan, but it was like a continuous lesson plan. And she's like, what is all this? And so I kind of explained it to her." Two other concerns with coherence were the redundancy of content and coursework roadmap alignment in the program. Elmer described classes feeling "out of order" and "new classes not fitting with previous ones." Alberto shared how "sometimes we'll do assignments that were kind of similar to previous assignments." It would be important "for the professors to collaborate more because there was this time where we saw this video, like five times." Thus, participants report a need for faculty and instructors to work collaboratively and have a cohesive class flow.

Lastly, participants reported concerns about meeting all expectations of the program promptly. Candidates needed to meet California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC)

requirements to pass tests of basic skills and subject matter knowledge, in most cases before admission to the program. Moreover, passing the competency exam in reading instruction and the teaching performance assessment was obligatory before obtaining the licensure. Unfortunately, failure rates on the overall set of tests eliminated at least 40 percent of individuals who start the process of becoming a teacher (Darling-Hammond, Sutcher & Carver-Thomas, 2018).

Because students in an ITEP program needed to fulfill a baccalaureate major, credential program courses, and other state requirements, the participants reported a great, immediate need to set expectations more clearly and more deliberately. Ramiro wanted students to understand the difference between the classes, the university expectations, and the state's expectations. He said, “Once something that you have to do with the state and the state tests, I think students need to know to get these taken care of immediately.” Edgar described wanting to “work already” and not knowing all the “rules” of and in the program hindered him from doing that. He would have wanted the program to be more explicit and to provide all options available to students early on. Jaime gave a recount of his experience trying to balance the demands of the classes with those additional requirements outside of them: “I found it overwhelming trying to focus on classes cause I haven't passed the CSET. So, um, that balance between passing this exam and maintain a 3.0 minimum is the hardest part.” However, these concerns did not dissuade the participants from persisting in the program. Carson, Norbert, David, and Edgar all recalled why they joined the program in the first place, and the difficulties they encountered were minor compared to completing the program. Jaime and Jonathan reported in their responses that the concerns were shared in the hopes that the program would improve for future participants in the ITEP program.

Based on these responses, participants reported the need for the program to enhance communication on program requirements.

Finding 5: ***Participants confirmed that there was no strategy to recruit males specifically into teaching, as many of them did not attribute their recruitment into the program as having anything to do with a strategy around gender.***

Participants did not offer specific strategies to promote the recruitment of males into the program and the teaching profession. Most students searched or were referred to the ITEP, as opposed to the program finding them. Once they decided on teaching as a career, Raymond, Norbert, Edgar, Ramiro, Alejandro, and Alberto found the academic program on their own through searches. When they were on campus, the option to pursue a unique program was clarified through academic advisors. For David, the search was direct: I knew I wanted to do elementary teaching, and the interest got solid in high school. Once at El Sereno State University, I looked for a program that had a teacher credential. It was everything I wanted." Raymond and Elmer had similar experiences finding the program after applying to transfer. For Gabriel and Jaime, teaching was initially a backup plan to other careers in human services. As the interest grew, they selected the program for the completion of their studies. Anthony, Jonathan, and Carson heard about the integrated program through word of mouth (colleagues and contacts). Thus, study participants searched and found the program versus being recruited for it.

When asked for specific strategies to recruit male students to teaching, particularly in elementary school teaching, the participants described this as a "difficult question" or as "hard to answer" or a direct "I don't know." The participants credited their experience as the source for joining the program, and they did not anticipate that there would be many places to do an outreach strategically. David stated it as, "I don't think you can recruit someone to become a

teacher, but for those that do want to go into teaching, the program is an attractive option." When speaking about recruitment, Carson shared, "I honestly don't know how to get people attracted to education. It's something that you're just gonna want to have. I mean, it's a difficult question because I feel like it stems from their initial willingness to pursue the career." Five participants alluded to reaching out to schools and districts to promote this program to paraprofessionals, but nothing described was very substantive. The participants suggested some recruitment strategies, which included having testimonials for prospects to hear and see, or promoting via word of mouth on the career by those in it. Ramiro described how when recruiting males to the teaching profession; you can "plant a little seed in their head that they might want to be a male teacher as well. And eventually, they can decide to become a male teacher. But that's a tough question." Prior experiences in education, finding teacher work, and working with youth were the biggest attractors to both the profession and the program for participants. "The program can inform people in general of how it helps you get your bachelor's and credential faster than others," said Jaime. "But the choice to join has more to do with your love for teaching than anything a recruiter can tell you."

By and large, participants believed that recruitment efforts into the profession matter more than into the program. While academic programs focused on education and teaching for interested individuals were available, it also would be important to find sources and spaces for those who expressed no interest yet but could explore the career choice further. Outside of paraprofessional outreach and information sessions at local community colleges and high schools for the sake of simply introducing El Sereno State University's ITEP, participants did not believe there was any specific strategy that would have attracted males to the teaching career in general.

Altruistic and intrinsic motivations were the primary reasons, confirming what the literature has indicated (Cushman, 2005a; Cruickshank, 2012; Mulholland & Hansen, 2003). As a contributor to the teacher workforce's production, El Sereno State University's collaborative work with community establishments to provide learning and engagement opportunities in the education sector proved more critical and urgent than ever. Moreover, partnership work can perhaps be the most imperative strategy to teacher recruitment initiatives for universities like El Sereno State University.

Summary

This chapter reported the findings from interviews with 14 undergraduate male students enrolled in an integrated teacher education preparation program at a regional comprehensive university. These findings described the reasons behind what motivated them to pursue a career in teaching, specifically in elementary school teaching, and how they viewed their academic journey and career trajectory in the ITEP. From a career trajectory standpoint, these students were pre-service elementary education teachers. Because of the dearth of male elementary teachers in the profession, identifying the most comprehensive factors influencing the choice to teach was important. It would give rise to implications for teacher education. These implications would include planning, curriculum design, recruitment initiatives, and current enacted policies to curb teacher shortage and diversify the profession in the interest of youth and local communities.

Under the FIT-Choice scale developed from the basis of the expectancy-value theory, the study identified motivations for male pre-service elementary teachers to be based on intrinsic and social utility (altruism) values, while also including perceived teaching ability as the highest

influences on the choice of a teaching career. These were followed by effective paraprofessional work and positive experiences with youth. While gender was acknowledged to matter from a diversity and inclusion standpoint, the participants affirmed that they have not felt being swayed or dissuaded to become an elementary teacher because of being males. Moreover, a positive correlation existed for participants between their motivations for choosing to become teachers and the contributions males can make to the elementary education setting, including children's gender knowledge, interpersonal relationships in the classroom, teacher workforce diversity, and alternative masculinity representation.

In addition, integrated teacher education preparation programs allowed male candidates to affirm their motivations by letting them pursue their career choice through an accelerated, pertinent, and supportive pre-service preparation experience. Both faculty and the learning to teach process have supported students in developing a teaching philosophy that influenced and affirmed their commitment to the career. However, not all aspects of the program were rosy. The participants also identified specific concerns with the pre-service student social community and curriculum coherence in the ITEP. They expressed that the ITEP program was not doing enough to address the lack of connections among students, redundancies and alignment among courses, and the need to better support students with all the requirements for a credential beyond coursework. Participants also confirmed the absence of particular strategies to recruit males specifically into teaching. Many of them did not attribute their recruitment into the program as having anything to do with outreach strategies around gender. For instance, most of the participants searched for the program once they had confirmed that teaching was their career choice. Community-based and education partnerships were identified as notable for identifying

candidates and practicum opportunities in teacher preparation. These findings and observations were imperative to gender diversity in the education sector and further explored in Chapter 5 of this study.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Introduction

The purpose of my study was to examine the career motivational factors of male undergraduate students enrolled in an Integrated Teacher Education Preparation (ITEP) program for elementary education at a regional comprehensive university. Through an intake form followed by an in-depth, semi-structured interview process, I gathered data that led to a better understanding of the perspectives of undergraduate male students enrolled in an ITEP program that seeks to prepare individuals for careers in elementary teaching. I also examined some of the differences and similarities between the reasons shared by the participants as to why they are interested in teaching, as well as their perceptions of the ITEP program and its effects on their progress towards their teaching careers. I compared the reported views, beliefs, and opinions to the existing research and limited literature on the motivations of males in teaching. Moreover, I explored any ties between assumptions and justifications calling for males in the classroom and the motivational factors of my study participants, as well as concrete contributions that could be made in the elementary classroom settings by males and any cross these might have with those motivations. Lastly, understanding motivations towards the teaching career opens up opportunities to explore how policy proposals and recruitment initiatives should be framed and crafted. Understanding what truly drives these individuals to the career, along with the concrete benefits their presence can have in school settings for school personnel, youth, families, and communities, should guide this policy and programmatic work around teacher recruitment.

The results of this study added to the limited body of literature that specifically targeted pre-service elementary education male candidates enrolled in an ITEP program attending a

regional comprehensive university in Los Angeles. It also confirmed, to university practitioners, the community members, and especially male pre-service teacher perceptions', of the importance of truly understanding the reasons for pursuing a career where they were demographically identified as a minority. This study highlighted the voices of stakeholders typically not included in the existing literature: male students who enrolled in an ITEP program because they made their career choice well in advance. In examining the ITEP program from the perspective of its scarce male students, the findings here contributed to the voices and views of a particular segment of the population that educator preparation programs were drastically looking to recruit in higher numbers.

In this chapter, I discuss these key findings and explain this study's significance to the greater body of research on anchor institutions and its relationship to the FIT-Choice (Factors Influencing Teaching Choice) Theory, Funds of Knowledge, and Funds of Identity. I then identify the limitations of my study and present recommendations for practice and implications for future research. The research questions that guided this inquiry were:

1. What motivates males to pursue enrollment in undergraduate elementary education programs?
    a. When do male students begin thinking about a career in teaching, and how do they arrive at their decision to enroll in an undergraduate elementary education program?
    b. What and who do these individuals describe as having a strong influence on their career decision-making process?
    c. In what ways do they expect a career in teaching to contribute to their life goals?

2. What impressions/opinions do male participants have of the integrated teacher education preparation (ITEP) program, and what effects, if any, does the program have on the career choice of these participants?
    a. What, if any, are areas of strength of the ITEP program?
    b. What, if any, are areas of improvement of the ITEP program?
    c. What, if any, is the emerging teaching philosophy male pre-service teachers develop through the program?

Discussion

Research Question One

Research question one sought to understand what motivated undergraduate males to pursue a career in elementary education. The participants identified for this study selected a program to become teachers as undergraduates, meaning they decided to become teachers early by comparison to their traditional pre-service counterparts (most credential completers join a credential program as post-baccalaureates). The conceptual framework of this research helped structure the analysis of the data collected based on the Factors Influencing Teaching Choice Theory (Richardson & Watt, 2006); Funds of Knowledge (FoK) (Moll et al., 1992), and Funds of Identity (FoI) (Saubich & Guitart, 2011). The FIT-Choice Theory, which offers a systematic guide to study the motivations of preservice teachers and which was operationalized through the FIT-Choice scale as a measuring tool, does consider constructs and variables, such as socialization influences, task perceptions, self-perceptions, values, and fallback career (Richardson & Watt, 2006). During the interviews, it became apparent that the experiences lived by the participants were similar in most of their stories. The interviews also uncovered

participants' life narratives and how they saw themselves as emerging professionals in a career that very few males pursue. The participants in my study were driven to teaching due to their high confidence in their abilities in working with youth, an intrinsic interest in teaching, and a belief in the social utility of the job. These reasons coincide with those findings pervasively uncovered within studies framed around the FIT-Choice model and scale (Watt, Richardson & Wilkins, 2014). Moreover, participants generally felt that they came with the right disposition and wherewithal for the teacher role over a combination of their sociocultural background and pre-service experiences with children.

As such, the participants in this study gave significant meaning and value to their lived experiences. The people and places they worked in with youth, along with their perceptions of professional fit in teaching, mattered in their career decision-making process. The participants in this study gave significant meaning to their demographic identifiers- e.g., where and how they grew up, what and whom they were exposed to, and that particular physical and social settings are influential. Their testimonies showcased the power that academic settings, from a programmatic standpoint, also have had on building a strong sense of belonging and the impact on a person's consciousness and professional disposition. Participants were drawn to the teaching career because of their traits and experiences and described career choice as an expression of personality in work. Even though prior studies and literature on the lack of males in elementary education reasons it to be because the space is perceived or traditionally identified as a feminized one, in this study, it was uncovered that this was not necessarily a deterrent for those males that were motivated to join the profession. The career choice seems to depend less on the demographic composition of the space and more on the personality traits and personal

dispositions of the individuals seeking to join. The males in this study are attracted to a role that supplies a conducive professional environment that meets their needs and satisfaction. The ITEP program is much more than just a preparation program for male undergraduates; it serves as a career affirmation for personal and professional transformation.

Making the Choice: Experiences, Influencers, Goals, and Other Factors

All of the participants in this study decided on teaching based on pre-professional experiences with youth and the influence of those closest to them. They were candid about why they chose to attend El Sereno State University and enroll in the ITEP program; the biggest contributing factor to their decision was a strong desire to make a difference in students' lives. This particular insight mattered because it confirmed one of the strongest identified reasons identified in the literature (Cruickshank, 2012; Cushman, 2007; Watt & Richardson, 2007). . However, based on my in-depth study, participants did not see their gender as a driving factor nor reasons related to their gender as primary drivers. Rather, the sense of relatedness and familiarity with the education space through work experience catalyzes these individuals, presenting an opportunity to bring forth Grow Your Own (GYO) through the ITEP program and complement career motivations.

GYO pathways have been designed to strategically address multiple issues, such as persistent teacher shortages, disparity linguistic and racial/ethnic diversity of teachers, and the misalignment between teacher preparation and district-level needs (Gist et al., 2019; Valenzuela, 2017). The strategy focuses on *who* is recruited into teaching and *how* programs could remove barriers for individuals who often lacked access and support to persist in higher education (significantly reflective of the 1st generation, low-income student population attending El Sereno

State University). GYO offers an approach to teacher preparation grounded in community cultural wealth (CCW), so it can intricately meet the needs of candidates and local communities (Yosso, 2005). There is evidence of the effectiveness in recruiting and preparing teachers from the local community, including a positive correlation to career retention by equipping schools with well-prepared teachers knowledgeable about the needs of students and families in the community (Gist et al., 2019). Because a sense of efficacy based on prior knowledge was a pervasive motivating factor for our participants, pursuing a GYO strategy in the ITEP program could further affirm the choice in teaching and perhaps even attract others because of how responsive it would be in positioning the forms of capital of students in its design and structure.

Justifications for Male Recruitment in Elementary Education

My study revealed that participants believed gender in the classroom did matter, but not for the primary reasons cited by male teacher recruitment initiatives and policy proposals. Beyond their particular reasons for wanting to teach, the participants cited the value of diversity in the workforce and the importance of inclusion of different perspectives when questioned about gender. This unique discovery provided greater nuance to how males are approaching the education space versus the gendered stereotypes (need for male role models and the underachievement of boys in a "feminized" space) presented in these justifications that call on male teachers (Johnson, 2008). Participant responses to questions around gender showed an acknowledgment and a clear and deliberate revelation that old-fashioned and simplistic notions of gender were not top of mind. Participants favored egalitarianism, pro-feminist and democratic perspectives when it came to their inclusion in the teacher workforce. It was clear that the participants were freely choosing teaching as a career without thinking the dearth of men in the

profession should be a deterrent or somehow a barrier to entry. This discovery in this study embraced the notion; a demand for male teachers should embrace goals of gender equity and social justice within the broader society instead of being based on male role modeling and 'boy crisis' paradigms (Johnson, 2008). The participants certainly confirmed that access to educational spaces with youth that were not necessarily in place for them because they were males allowed them to learn and get better at working with youth, which encouraged them to pursue a career in teaching. The participants' experiences paralleled what the literature suggests: motivation is based on intrinsic and altruistic value. Participants did not see themselves as being more equipped because they were men either. This study helped heightened the fact that reasons listed to recruit males, as well as the reasons for why men did not join, were not particularly present as motivators or factors for those males that are seeking a career in teaching. Thus, it will be important to continue to focus on what is expected and valued by candidates when it comes to recruitment and preparation program design considerations.

Benefits of Males in Elementary Education

Participants did acknowledge and connect the benefits of males in elementary education to their motivations for wanting to teach. While the participants did not formally cite terms and concepts such as children's gender knowledge, homophily, tokenism, or "alternate versions of masculinity" to describe the concrete contributions they could make as males in the classroom. They did, however, use words and phrases like "role model for boys," "good example," "connecting with students," "diversity" in gender, and "being different" as ways to describe how they can contribute and be effective in the classroom. Universally, they all agreed that gender mattered in schooling, and most had an example to share about how gender positively affected

their pre-professional work with youth. This acknowledgment was important, for I wanted to see the place gender had in professional identity formation. The responses made it clear that the prerogative for the respondents was to focus on becoming good teachers instead of just focusing on the benefits they could bring to a classroom as males. Interestingly, all participants believed that any way to make a concrete difference mattered in the classroom as they prepared themselves to become teachers. In addition, participants mentioned that being effective or good with youth was an important factor in selecting the career, prompting them to consider different pathways that introduced males, in general, to work with youth. This strategic approach may allow males to see the contributions made firsthand and consider the teaching profession. This finding is increasingly pertinent not only for teacher recruitment but also for the acknowledgment and importance of perhaps re-introducing a career through kinesthetic learning or learning by doing. This approach has recently gained popularity through the high school reform effort called Linked Learning (Aka, 2021; Reese & Dunn, 2007). This study prompted the need to enhance the concept and activities of teacher academies or future teacher clubs in high school settings, which could provide exposure to work experiences that demonstrated how rigorous academics and technical education (in this case, teacher preservice preparation) complemented each other (Fitzgerald, Ottem & Hufford, 2016).

Research Question Two

Research question two examined how undergraduate male students described their experiences with the ITEP program, including strengths, areas of improvement, and its prospective impact on career motivation as emerging elementary educators. Framing my study with Factors Influencing Teaching Choice Theory (Richardson & Watt, 2006); Funds of

Knowledge (FoK) (Moll et al., 1992), and Funds of Identity (FoI) (Saubich & Guitart, 2011) offered an objective framework to assess the level of efficacy of the ITEP program in delivering its intended outcome to male undergraduates who selected the career early and deliberatively. It also provided insights into the ITEP program's effect on this career choice for male students going into a career where the presence of males is indeed small. In addressing this question, I first needed to understand the "lay of the land" of the program from the perspective of these students. I discovered that the program affirms and validates the career choice through its programmatic design, its instructors, and the embedded "learn-to-teach" process within its courses. However, there could be improvements to some aspects of the program, like student social community, curriculum cohesion and alignment, and better communication as to the program's expectations. Regardless, male students found that these identified deficiencies in the program did not deter them from completing it. Moreover, the most salient outcome from the ITEP program was the emergence of a teaching philosophy they each had begun to construct for themselves. Despite its complexities, I found that the program was able to contribute positively to an effective avenue for aspiring pre-service teachers to obtain the degree, credential, and necessary education preparation. More importantly, it is clear that the program effectively instilled a sense of confidence that complements the motivations of male students. This finding is pivotal. After all, it allows the ITEP program to capitalize on effective teacher preparation because its design and structure appeal to its enrolled students.

Integrated Teacher Education Preparation (ITEP) Programs

The discoveries that emerged in my study largely reinforce the very limited literature on the benefits of undergraduate pre-service teacher preparation programs. Existing scholarship

focused predominantly on the call for innovative teaching pathways to curve the shortage (Podolsky & Sutcher, 2016; Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, & Carver-Thomas, 2016). There is also literature stressing the need to re-conceptualization of teaching to increment the quality and diversity of pre-service teachers (Gist et al. 2019; Espinoza, Saunders, Kini & Darling-Hammond, 2018; Grossman & McDonald, 2008). Moreover, a convergence of data in the state indicated a severe teacher shortage due to an aging teaching force, new hires leaving the profession within the first three to five years, and a significant drop over the past four years in the number of students pursuing a career in teaching (Futernick, 2007; Sutcher, Darling-Hammond & Carver-Thomas, 2016). Especially alarming were gloomy estimates from the California Department of Education reporting 21,500 unfilled teaching vacancies. At the same time, the need for new teachers was close to twice the current graduation rate of teacher preparation programs (Darling-Hammond et al., 2016). The drastic situation was that the number of teachers hired in 2015 without completing their preparation reached one-third of all new credentials issued in California. The problem was most grave in special education, where barely half (52 percent) of new teachers are fully prepared. Further, the lack of qualified teachers continues to be more pervasive in schools serving more low-income students and students of color (Darling-Hammond et al., 2016).

In addressing these concerns, innovative teacher preparation pathways have emerged. In California's elementary education sector, we have seen the highest producer of teachers, the California State University system, establish such innovative pathways to address a number of these concerns in unison, including the diversification of the teacher workforce with locally-based commuter students through a blended approach that encumbers theory and practice when it

comes to teacher preparation. Whether or not the pathways by design have accounted for the multilayered dynamics present for rich and relevant local teacher preparation, the CSU has committed to continue to offer these programs in most of their campuses across the state (The California State University, n.d.). Moreover, across the CSU system, most students enrolling in these programs started their academic careers at a community college (California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, 2018). Suffice to say that the circumstances around how these programs have been situated call for community-based education partnership and articulation across systems that postulate the opportunity to bring into teaching individuals that may not have otherwise.

The findings in the study substantiated how participants easily recognized the ITEP program as an adequate pathway for aspiring teachers into the career. The responses reported from participants corroborated that the intended results of the ITEP program are visible and that their markers of success correlate with what is important for a pre-service teacher. Participants specifically noted acceleration, instruction, and their uncovered understanding of the "learn-to-teach" process within the ITEP program as strengths. As an umbrella to all of these were student support services that included advisement (both academic and career) and the orientation to the interworking of the program. These reported findings by participants did correspond and aligned to the four common themes that underlay successful blended programs from a 2004 CTC case study: continuous student advisement, collaboration in program design and implementation, connected and concurrent curriculum, and extensive field experiences (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2004). These themes aligned with college predictors of academic success, which included the following: a positive classroom experience, academic advising,

extracurricular activities, financial aid, and faculty involvement (Gifford, Briceno-Perriott & Mianzo, 2006). From an expectancy-value standpoint, participants made it evident that a program that can provide these supports in concert resulted in the greater motivation of enrolled students to complete and enter the career strong and self-assured. I even would venture in saying that clear and successful navigation enhanced the program's reputation, and this positive outcome, in turn, would create opportunities for students who might not have considered teaching as a career choice.

These themes were important and prominent to the study participants as they described the effects of the ITEP program in their pre-professional preparation and their motivation to pursue teaching. Blanton and Pugach (2007) identified an integrated model to teacher education that included the following principles in program development and implementation:

- There is intentional and coordinated overlap/interdependence in courses and field experiences at the program level.
- There is a common base (professional education core) of courses and field experiences for all teacher candidates; there are also specialization courses by credential type.
- Faculty collaborates to ensure an alignment of integrated program components. Teacher candidate performance assessment is aligned across teacher preparation areas.
- Teacher candidates are prepared to engage in collaborative instruction and school-wide support through a reduction in teacher preparation program dichotomy.

This model falls hand-in-hand with the tenets of California State University, Northridge's Accelerated Collaborative Teacher (ACT) Program, which was designed to reflect research and effective practices in the preparation of teachers for urban schools (Burstein, Czech, Kretschmer, Lombardi & Smith, 2009). El Sereno State University's ITEP program has a similar design structure for its integrated model towards urban teacher preparation. Still, in this study, it was revealed that it is particularly strong in its accelerated nature, the professors and quality of instruction, and its ability to help students embark on the "learn-to-teach" process.

Strengths in the ITEP Program: Acceleration, Instruction, and "Learn-To-Teach" Process

Teacher preparation in California is typically pursued at the post-baccalaureate level. Full-time credential candidates generally take a year and a half to complete a credential program, but with most attending part-time, often taking 2 to 3 years for program completion is not atypical. The ITEP offers acceleration that reduces this timeframe, with the hopes of attracting prospective teachers who might otherwise begin teaching with emergency certifications or who would not have considered it at all because of the cost-benefit analysis in obtaining a credential. In this study, this finding captured a key multi-part dynamic. Acceleration to the career did become a practical attractor simultaneously with a cost-benefit utility, but also an accompaniment to the existing motivation towards a career in teaching. Acceleration also becomes a type of restitution for time since many transfer students spent more time completing the transfer requirements than the time expected. The program allowed students to complete their degree and credential quickly enhanced the motivation to start work as a teacher, with the hope that this effect leads to higher persistence and retention in the career. In their study of the ACT program, a one-year full-time credential program in recruiting, preparing, and retaining elementary, secondary, and special education teachers for urban schools, Burstein et al. (2009) found that graduates reported satisfaction with their preparation and teaching careers and discussed the most helpful aspects of their preparation. In gathering six years of demographic and survey data from graduates of the program, the study found that the program recruited 554 candidates over six years, with 94 percent completing it; 43 percent were hired in the urban school district where they were trained; and at the end of five years of teaching, annual retention

rates averaged 74 percent. The ACT program was designed as a version of an ITEP program, where acceleration was identified in this study as a helpful aspect of the program design.

Another identified strength of the ITEP program was faculty and instruction. The participants reported that instruction and coursework during the pre-service program were helpful despite encountering issues with specific course-taking patterns and redundancy in content. According to his national study of university-based teacher education programs in 2006, Arthur Levine found that effective teacher education programs achieved "curricular balance," integrating "the theory and practice of teaching" by "balancing study in university classrooms and work in schools with successful practitioners" (p. 21). Participants reported this integration present but perhaps not as balanced exclusively by the program. This finding was congruent to the re-conceptualization of teaching that numerous teacher preparation educators, researchers, and policymakers recognized as needed in pre-service programs. Existing literature constantly cites the need for effective and relevant clinical practice and fieldwork as a best practice in the preparation of pre-service teachers (Levine, 2006; Whitcomb, Borko, & Liston, 2009). The recognition of the value of fieldwork by study participants speaks to an intricate understanding of teaching as a profession even though they are not in it yet.

This finding is interesting because it demonstrated the funds of knowledge students in the ITEP program at El Sereno State University possessed and how that strengthens motivation to pursue the teaching profession. By and large, most study participants came equipped with a wealth of experiences in the teaching field and with youth. This is critical, as their impressions of coursework were affected by background knowledge, which in this situation was a primary motivator, and one could further argue, a perpetual one that correlated with persistence in the

program. Kumar & Lauermann (2018) asserted that the utter amount of time spent in teacher education classes could make a difference in pre-service teachers' attitudes and beliefs about urban students. For study participants, one could see that because they came from the same communities as the students, they are being prepared to educate. The fieldwork experience, whether formal or not, was a catalyst to motivation, program recruitment, and retention of students. Nonetheless, it was a consensus that professors and instructors were positive based on the students' ability to connect the core classes with their direct experiences in the education sector and with youth. As a strength that complemented motivations to teach, this finding heightens the call to improve or adjust from where individuals are recruited. At the same time, professors and instructors could mindfully make curricular design changes based on student needs. This could help construct a supportive learning environment for future teachers, where programmatic decisions were driven by evidence through the collection of data program satisfaction and findings used to inform program practices.

Areas to Improve in the ITEP Program: Student Social Community, Curricular Coherence, and Requirements

When it came to enhancing the social community of undergraduate education students, I thought of two aspects of the profession: the dearth of males and the other male tokenism. Male teachers face the stereotype of elementary teaching as women's work (Johnson, 2008). The perception of elementary teaching as a feminine profession ran, and continue to run, deep in the history of the profession and has been identified as a prevalent obstacle that men needlessly navigate from the start to finish of their teaching careers (Brookhart & Loadman, 1996; Cushman, 2005a; Hansen & Mulholland, 2005; Martino & Kehler, 2006). The participants

interviewed in this study had endured reprisals for remaining in a female-dominated workplace over their careers and yet continued teaching at the elementary grades, at least for now. This finding goes against previous research findings and conclusions, which indicates that perhaps over time, gender dynamics do not hold a significant position for those males interested in the career. Perhaps intrinsic motivation and changes in perceptions of gender in professional spaces have created an opportunity to recruit males into elementary education teaching.

Tokenism, which was cited in the literature and experienced by the study participants at varying degrees, was not a deterrent towards program completion. While many participants acknowledged gender disparity and the importance of gender dynamics in teaching, very rarely did they sense being treated differently as the minority within their program. The minoritized status for most of the study participants was reflected more in how they described the importance of their ethnicity and respective backgrounds given the needs identified of urban schooling. Participants were less concerned with how they stood out by gender and reported being more motivated to improve the communities they came from. In fact, rather than highlighting their gender, study participants resorted to using identifiers that heightened their sense of relatedness to the communities they want to work with, such as their respective ethnic group, socioeconomic status, and 1st generation college status. It was clear that the participants described themselves as teaching professional representatives of the communities they came from and were motivated to serve those communities because their intricate understanding of them was based on upbringing and prior experiences with the youth in them.

In connecting this motivating factor to the ITEP program, I drew a connection between the social community need of the program and the prospective persistence and retention of pre-

service teachers in the profession. The Learning Policy Institute (LPI) found that one of the benefits of greater diversity in the teacher workforce is that "greater diversity of teachers may mitigate feelings of isolation, frustration, and fatigue that can contribute to individual teachers of color leaving the profession when they feel they are alone" (Carver-Thomas, 2018, p. v). The same claim could be made about what the program can do to build community among its students and increase social relations and networking. Enhancing the social interactions and creating a stronger social community might improve satisfaction for pre-service students as they approached the career, particularly those males of color in this study. I would make the case that students exiting an educator program with stronger social capital as emerging professionals could be a key contributor to persistence in the career; this was envisioned as helping curb teacher shortages and school staffing instability.

Study participants also cited the communication on the number of additional requirements to obtain a teaching credential as an area that could use improvement in the ITEP program. The study participants were concerned with the demands of completing both the coursework and the required external examinations or assessments as obligated by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing. While students did not feel this served as a deterrent to their career choice, they did acknowledge the bottlenecks, gatekeepers, and roadblocks this posed on timeline completion of credential requirements, which one can see as an entrance to the career. Ramiro cited two male students leaving the program because of their inabilities to complete these requirements. While independently, they might not seem demanding, but in unison and while attending and completing classes together with perhaps other responsibilities

external to academics, this compilation of state-mandated requirements could easily become arduous and toll taking.

When it came to coursework, it was imperative to understand what comprised an ITEP program in totality. California State University (CSU) policy maintained that each baccalaureate graduate should have completed a program of general education breadth requirements in addition to the major program of study. ITEPs, of course, also included a preliminary teaching credential program, which internal also had an admission process with a set of qualifying criteria, a specified list of teaching credential program courses for the particular credential of interest, and all state-mandated teacher licensure examinations as specified by CTC. Given that students identified curriculum coherence and redundancy in content within the ITEP program, my recommendation would be for the program director/coordinator to identify scope and sequence for all required courses and to identify select faculty perhaps to re-structure or re-design particular courses to complement the program of study for ITEP students. Doing so would increment and affirm the value students had for the career through the educator preparation program. In turn, this would validate the expectancy and value that encumbers the career motivation that brought these students to the ITEP program in the first place.

Speaking of additional requirements, respondents identified three concerns: a lack of clarity on the necessary examinations or additional requirements, the rigor and difficulty in completing these requirements, and the consequences of not meeting them. Of course, it was important to discuss how the perception students had of these licensure examinations affected their approach and behavior towards them. LPI found that these teacher licensure examinations disproportionately exclude teacher credential candidates of color despite having little evidence

that these exams predicted teacher effectiveness, which exacerbated the context for students like those at El Sereno State University. The college certainly not only could do more to communicate what was needed and by when but also perhaps could scaffold a timetable for completion of stated teacher licensure examinations. This timetable might be an overlay to academic coursework and would bring cohesion to the competencies the examinations were assessing students. It was equally important to note that as of June 2020, the state of California's newly approved state budget now allows teacher candidates to skip two of the tests that had been required previously to earn a teaching credential if they have taken approved coursework. This reform in teacher testing legislation came because of the ongoing teacher shortages. These tests were meant to measure readiness to begin teacher preparation, not a barrier that keeps teachers from learning to teach. Teacher candidates no longer needed to take the California Basic Skills Test (CBEST), or the California Subject Examinations for Teachers (CSET) to earn a credential. It has been found that 83 percent of teacher candidates took CBEST, and 81 percent took CSET multiple times to pass them (Lambert, 2021). Because these exams were required at particular points in the credential program, they could hinder program completion. With these state changes, the programs would now develop processes to validate competencies via coursework, which permitted programs like ITEP to focus on enriching the coursework and content. In turn, this presents an opportunity for program coordinators to enhance their understanding of what motivated candidates to join the program and effectively work in affirming and validating these reasons in their program design.

Emerging Teaching Philosophy

While not a focus of this study, it was evident that motivation and an emerging teaching philosophy were intrinsically tied for these study participants. The construction of a teaching philosophy within a teacher preparation program did affect the learn-to-teach process for the pre-service teachers (Minor, Onwuegbuzie, Witcher & James, 2002). In this study, the participants reported that the determinants of their teaching philosophy were rooted in their dispositions. Based on responses, the best definition of disposition would be the beliefs, values, commitments, and professional ethics that influenced them to pursue teaching and described their behaviors toward the students, families, and communities they are looking to serve. This finding connected well with literature that found that acquiring a teaching philosophy to be influential because it guides a teacher's practices in the classroom and how they perceive students and their teaching and learning (Soccorsi, 2013). The presence of this disposition was apparent in the responses of participants. It was clear that a teaching philosophy was important to each participant because it served as an essential and active element of the identity of a soon-to-be teacher. This finding was important and reflected well in the students and, potentially, the ITEP program. When thinking of training future educators, teacher education programs could certainly work to create an alignment between the motivation and dispositions of their students in enhancing the quality of the learn-to-teach process. In doing so, ITEP programs and other pre-service teacher pathways could ensure that the trained individuals would acquire the knowledge and skill to become effective teachers and could do so by harnessing the funds of knowledge students have to contribute to their emerging professional growth deliberately. Because the motivation came

from their disposition, seeing their background manifested as forms of capital for teaching would only affirm and encourage persistence in their careers.

Motivations & Male Elementary Teacher Recruitment

Despite participants describing their motivations for wanting a teaching career in elementary school settings, most did not feel there was a very assured source for recruiting male teacher candidates. As discussed in Chapter 4, participants could not come up with specific ways to recruit males. The lone suggestion was to target places that employed youth, but this clearly would not solely target males. Hence, identifying recruitment sources would be needed.

One potential source might be the community colleges. Community colleges were not seen as having a specified way to target individuals into teaching, despite a majority of study participants transferring from there. This was very telling given that many teacher recruitment initiatives do involve the targeting of males specifically. How and where these candidates were being recruited becomes a point to ponder, and perhaps the conversation should be more on how both the promotion and the exposure of these opportunities are shared. Moreover, it was important to realize that those few males who came were generally motivated for intrinsic reasons and valued the social utility teaching could impart in students and communities. The absence of others could be due to varying reasons and notions. It is important to remember that a return of investment needs had to be included in any recruitment proposition. Whether recruitment programs incentivize tuition reduction, acceleration, or incremental pay when entering the profession, these incentives should neither encroach nor overshadow the required dispositions aligned with the learn-to-teach process. Thus, recruitment initiatives must be

grounded and accountable for motivational factors, foreseen costs, identified barriers to completion, and ongoing pre-service preparation dynamics as shared by program participants.

Additionally, what was telling about this finding was that there had been a change and evolution in the motivating factors behind males pursuing careers in elementary teaching. During the teacher shortage of the 1950s and 1960s, and even during the surplus years of the early 1970s, most studies on the motives of choosing teaching as a career found that former teachers, followed by friends and relatives, were the most influential factors. They were followed by job security. It was not until Wood's study (1978) that a gradual shift was reported, from these noted influences to more intrinsic motivations. These findings carried forward into the next two decades (Ethington & Woffle, 1988; Johnston et al., 1999), with findings on career choice to be connected more and more to direct prior work and volunteer experiences with children, and the notion to serve as valuable. This present study correlated with most current findings, as the desire to work with children, impart knowledge, and make a difference were the major reasons these male candidates selected elementary school teaching as a career. Another important item to note was these answers had no discernable association by gender, which also were uncovered in more recent studies (Sanatullova-Allison, 2010; Sargent, 2001). While acknowledging the difference and prospective impact and value of a male presence in the classroom, the candidates in this study did not see themselves as being different from their female counterparts. Therefore, if there had been a continued call to recruit males into teaching, it would be best for programs like the Future Minority Male Teachers of California (F2MTC) project, among other initiatives (Beall, 2020), to focus on identifying programs and organizations that provided a service to youth and to hone recruitment there. Because the undergraduate

program has many cost benefits through its blended, accelerated model, ensuring student services are optimized to enable progress and navigation for its first-year, and transfer students without any impediments would be the next essential part. This allows the building of momentum and enhances motivation in the career decision-making process. Lastly, creating and fostering partnerships for recruitment (high schools, community colleges, and hiring organizations (school districts, county offices of education, charter school organizations, etc.) could both support recruitment into the programs plus program success by creating funnels and inroads for the hiring of candidates upon completion of the program.

Ultimately, should El Sereno State University aspire to move from offering credential programs to a truly transformative institution that would improve the lives of individuals wanting to teach in the local communities to make a difference in the lives of children as described in the literature and findings from the FIT-Choice (Factors Influencing Teaching Choice) Theory then it would be imperative for El Sereno State University to continue restructuring the program that would meet the social utility value and would motivate the students to join the program in the first place. This surely would require input from credentialed alumni in the workforce and its current students to look for ways to deliberately infuse and align the programmatic designs and priorities of the credential with the local community's needs. These needed to be the driving force for candidates to pursue teaching, and the alignment could only strengthen the community-based preparation necessary for future teachers to thrive locally in the profession.

Examining Gender in Teaching

While much of the existing literature regarding men's motivation for going into teaching suggested altruism and intrinsic reasons, much of the prior research is framed under a gender

binary scope. With it, many gender stereotype frames came, including the description of schools and classrooms. The literature consisted of language describing elementary teaching as a "feminized space," which was generally accepted. To the extent that gender stereotypes continued to drive the thinking around spaces, there was this possibility of research and preparation programs to succumb to the same thinking in their efforts to understand and affect teacher recruitment generally. Fortunately, the participants addressed questions around gender and provided some insights into how gender played a part in their respective journeys towards the ITEP program.

The participants' responses certainly showed a push to move away from gender binary perspectives affects how spaces with a preponderance of a particular gender represented are truly perceived. The research questions themselves stemmed from a position drawn from literature and teacher workforce demographics about a gendered space and, thus, prospectively being a deterrent for those from minoritized groups. Moreover, few studies have been conducted on occupations and academic majors where women served as the majority (Stewart et al., 2016). The lack of representation of male teachers in K-12 drew conjectures that maybe there would be a way to attract men to the profession or that the professional teaching space was somehow not welcoming to them. The reasons to recruit males also ran on assumptions and justifications that were socially constructed and unproven (McGrath et al., 2020). It is important to realize that program participants also did not warrant these justifications in their enrollment, so it will be important to move away from these gendered stereotypes and conventional framings of what it means to work in an elementary education setting.

The results of this study certainly called into question whether the concerns should be framed and reasoned around gender for the lack of representation, and if it would just be a matter of time for demographics to evolve in the space with many life-long teachers retiring (many of which might have inadvertently perpetuated the antiquated notion that the work with elementary children was a nurturing one where women thrived better than men). Stagnation in who was in the room also might have to do with the generational differences. Still, there might be an opportunity to bring about demographic changes with a new generation of prospective teachers. These, of course, might include changes that would elevate the profession, its status, its compensation, its professional development, as well as its working environment. In urban areas like Los Angeles, where there is already an unwavering high cost of living, the danger was the misalignment of gentrification with GYO. Moreover, in turn, this misalignment either would push people out of the area and the classroom, regardless of their respective gender, or whether they are or were a first-generation, low income, and place-bound, even with all of their socio-cultural competencies. Thus, it will be imperative to identify and implement public policy and fiscal initiatives that can support the stay of community-based teachers that come from the community, regardless of gender.

Additional recommendations to this end would be to continue making strides on extrinsic concerns, such as minimizing the cost of preparation (time and money) and incrementing entry-level compensation, while directly focusing on affirming the choice to teach through an acknowledgment of the forms of capital brought forth by novice teachers. The former served as a propeller that properly compensated the investment made by candidates in joining the teaching profession, potentially contributing to teacher retention. The latter would require educational

institutions to continue adopting culturally and community-relevant approaches that concretely asserted funds of knowledge and identity in teaching and learning practices. For urban teachers, this would serve as a validation of what motivated them to pursue the career in the first place: prior experiences with youth and the community wherewithal that made them agents of change in the classroom. Honing into the funds of identity here is a great strategy for recruiting future teachers by focusing on where they can be effective professionally based on their background.

Limitations

While the findings uncovered by this study could inform the work of regional comprehensive universities preparing male students for the teaching profession, a limitation on its lack of generalizability appeared. This study generated rich, in-depth data from self-identified male students connected to one regional comprehensive university in Los Angeles and were enrolled in a specific pre-service teacher preparation program. Although the findings were not generalizable to a broader audience, the findings highlighted the experiences of these individuals. They provided greater insight into the perspectives of perhaps other individuals in comparable situations. I attempted to make logical generalizations to a theoretical understanding of a similar class of phenomena rather than large-scale generalizations, say to anyone going into a profession where this individual would be in an extreme minority.

Another limitation of my study was the issue of reactivity. While I employed data collection and analytic methods to prevent bias, I was cognizant that my affiliation with the university and college of education, in particular, had imparted over the years with institutional knowledge of the student population, the ITEP program, and the efforts all around to provide outreach and recruitment in general. Moreover, I was also aware that gender stereotypes related

to occupations were far less prevalent today than in the past, especially from the time of much of the literature reviewed for this study. My positionality and the fact of being a male in the education sector could have potentially influenced my data collection and analysis.

Lastly, the recruitment of participants might have also been a limitation for this study. There were not many males completing an ITEP program in general (approximately nine males finished the program for the 2020-2021 academic year). Since participation was voluntary, it brought another limitation as I only captured participants' voices who agreed to participate in the study. Future studies might explore whether students not identified as males in the ITEP program would share these perspectives on motivation. Future studies and research could perhaps explore how these findings compared to those of males in a similar program at another university campus in the same system. Nonetheless, the findings in this study do provide insights into the motivations of males going into education and a window for future studies, with many opportunities to expand the framing of research around this topic.

Implications for Future Research

The following are recommendations for future research in the areas of motivation and recruitment of men into elementary education and the teacher workforce:

1. This study was limited to undergraduate male elementary pre-service teachers. Examining secondary pre-service teachers' practices and lived experiences will provide insight into additional practices and allow comparison of other ITEP programs' practices across primary and secondary school settings. High schools, middle schools, and elementary school settings experience similar barriers to the recruitment of male teachers, but the greatest disparity is in an elementary school setting.

2. The study participants all came from a particular ITEP program in one university. A future researcher may study other teacher preparation pathways such as residency, intern, or even a post-baccalaureate traditional program in a different university, even choosing a location very different from the one in this study.
3. Given the responses about the program, another study can be participatory action research where current students and alumni will work side by side with faculty and staff responsible for this ITEP program, the purpose of which is to co-create and re-conceptualize scope and sequence for curriculum and activities of the program.
4. Further research may be conducted to learn more about the characteristics and underlying reasons influencing males to refrain from teaching. Perhaps a study of students in particular majors, say Liberal Studies and other interdisciplinary ones closely related to elementary teaching, but who do not consider teaching as a career. Other studies can involve different discipline majors or even a focused study on undecided students by major.
5. Another study can certainly identify bottlenecks, gatekeepers, and roadblocks in the retention of male teachers at the elementary school level. Because we know what motivates the choice to join the profession, it will be equally important to see what dynamics prospectively disrupt this motivation.
6. This study used qualitative methods, which helped give voice to male undergraduate students who were motivated to become elementary teachers to a point where they enrolled in an integrated teacher education preparation program. Because motivation is the focus, further studies could expand on these findings by targeting male undergraduate

students who changed majors out of this option, particularly those that took credential courses. Furthermore, adding quantitative components, such as survey instruments (similar to the FIT-Choice scale, but perhaps accounting for particular sociocultural factors in the urban student population) to respond to related research questions or create larger-scale qualitative data collection.

7. Lastly, although research on males and the teaching profession has gained traction in recent years, there is still room to look at other factors that may be a part of the career decision-making process, including academic major selection in higher education, the quality of recruitment initiatives together with education system partnership work and those with diverse student populations.

Personal Reflection

I was a very young man when I recall my father first tell me, "*En este mundo, nada es imposible* [In this world, nothing is impossible]." Nearly 25 years later, I hold my father's aphorism as the main inspiration for my ongoing pursuit of academics and work in education. My parents emigrated to the United States from Mexico with nothing but the undeniable ability to dream. They formed a family and a home with children that all pursued careers in the education sector.

I am a product of Boyle Heights on the east side of Los Angeles. My neighborhood felt like a neglected void but inevitably was formative. It undeniably was and continues to be my first reflection of the good, the bad, and the ugly. Crime festered from street to street, houses cluttered with struggling families, and opportunities for many of my peers were squandered for the myopic rewards of better economic stability by any means. During my formative years, my

parents taught me the value of formal education and hard work. My neighborhood of Boyle Heights instilled in me the importance of remaining deeply grounded in the community that saw me grow and gave me shape. This resolve made me relentless in pursuing opportunities for personal and professional advancement. Teachers were the first positive professionals I had constant contact with growing up, and I pursued work in the education sector because I had experienced first-hand its transformative effects.

My foundation in education has resulted from an amalgamation of influences plus a good exploration of the forms of capital at my disposal. I grew up with very little (economic capital) but was surrounded by a strongly bonded family (social capital) with strong traditions impressed upon my character (embodied cultural capital). I quickly discovered an extremely limited formal recognition or value attributed to what I considered assets. Inevitably, I questioned why this was so. Over time, my curiosity in this regard heightened, and it became a search for validation of my embodied dispositions or habitus. This pursuit has directly transcended and permeated my professional identity. As a male working in the education sector, I want to continue questioning and challenging social stratification and inequality, focusing on education and equity. This transcends to what happens in the classrooms in our local schools.

This study allowed me to do just that. I looked at myself as one of the lone males in the professional space and thought about students like myself exploring professional development in the education sector. The value and expectancy I hold in this profession did produce the motivation to study and explore. The dearth of males in our teacher preparation program allowed me to do that. I would say that I have experienced personal difficulty related to those areas, encountering a lack of resolve throughout my career as a leader in different colleges and

universities. I can easily trace this back to when I was finishing high school. At that time, my aim was simply to go to college. It was the key to what could be found outside of Boyle Heights.

In the process of this study, I saw reflections of my upbringing in the stories shared by the study participants. Their stories are very much mine, and the fact that they are pursuing careers in education tightened the connection for me. Their reasons for wanting to become teachers were rooted in place and community. Learning individual perspectives through their generous narratives provided revealing characteristics about the participants' experiences, the places that formed their identities, and how these two can motivate a career that leads to work in support and service of that very community that shaped the individuals.

This study made it conspicuously obvious that contemporary, prospective male educators come to the teaching profession because they are grounded and rooted in the community they come from. Moreover, the identity that intrinsic motivation is connected to educator professional identity, and that experience with youth and education yields significant understanding and develops a familiarity that makes the teaching profession palpable and attractive. These background factors are much more important and present than any postulated notions around gender. Leveraging the different forms of capital, prospective teachers present a significant opportunity to address some of the most persistent challenges to teacher preparation. Through its current students, alumni, and faculty, El Sereno State University's college of education is poised to learn, develop, and address the preparation needs of K-12 educators in culturally relevant and community-based approaches that will make these future educators successful in the classroom. Their efficacy can lead to persistence in the profession and sector,

potentially creating vibrant communities and a mutually beneficial sustainable local ecosystem that professionally sustains the educational continuum.

APPENDIX A: Recruitment Email

Hope all is well. Are you a male in the Elementary Education Option of the program? If so, Agustin Cervantes, Director of Student Services for the Charter College of Education and current UCLA doctorate student, is interested in speaking to you about your experiences and interest in becoming a teacher for his doctorate study.

The proposed study will look to understand the motivational factors for males in joining an Integrated Teacher Education Preparation (ITEP) program to eventually become elementary education teachers. In addition, the study seeks to understand the professional teacher identity construction that takes place for males in the program.

Participation will take a total of approximately 1.5-2 hours. If you volunteer to participate in this study, the researcher will ask you to do the following:

- *Completion of an intake form (10-15 minutes in duration to complete)*
- *Participate in one Zoom interview (approximately one hour in duration)*

If you are interested in participating in the study, please email me at acg114@g.ucla.edu.

Thank you,

[Signature]

APPENDIX B: Intake Form

[Beginning of Intake Form]
Thank you again for agreeing to participate in the dissertation study. It is truly appreciated.

The dissertation study focuses on current undergraduate male students who are interested in becoming elementary education teachers. The proposed study will look to understand the motivational factors for males wanting to become elementary educators, as well as the professional teacher identity construction that takes place for undergraduate males in a credential program.

As a first step, I have an intake form for you to complete. It should take no more than 10-15 minutes to do so. Once submitted, I will follow up with an email to schedule the interview at a date and time that is most convenient for you.

Should you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to email me at: acg114@g.ucla.edu, or via text/cel: 323-574-8776.

Best,

Agustín Cervantes
Doctoral Candidate, UCLA Educational Leadership Program

Please provide the following information:

- Name: _____
- Best email to reach you at: _____
- Which of the following best describes you?
    - Asian or Pacific Islander
    - Black or African American
    - Hispanic or Latinx
    - Native American or Alaskan Native
    - White
    - Multiracial or Biracial
- City of Residence and Zip Code:
- Are you a first-generation college student? Yes/No
- Which high school did you graduate from (Ex: “Roosevelt High School, Los Angeles, CA”)
- What is your undergraduate major? _____
- What is your age? _____
- Did you transfer? If Yes, where did you transfer from? Please include the name of the organization, city, and state (Ex: "East Los Angeles College, Monterey Park, CA."
- Are You A Transfer Student? Y/N, If Y, which college did you transfer from?

- Please describe how you came to select your major and why you want to become an elementary education teacher.
- Do you think it matters that men become elementary school teachers? If yes, why? If no, why not?

[End of Intake Form]

Thank you for completing the intake form for the dissertation study. I will be following up shortly with an email to schedule your individual interview. It will take place via Zoom, and at a date and time that is most convenient for you.

Truly appreciative of your participation. Take care!

Best,

Agustín Cervantes
Doctoral Candidate, UCLA Educational Leadership Program
acg114@gmail.com

APPENDIX C: Interview Protocol
Semi-Structured Interview Questions

I am Agustín Cervantes and I will be conducting today's interview. Now that you have completed the intake form, I would like to ask you questions about your motivations for wanting to become an elementary education teacher and how you are experiencing the preparation program towards that goal. There is no right or wrong answer to any of the questions that I am about to ask. You can let me know if you would like me to repeat or rephrase a question. Before we get started, I want to let you know two things. First, the information we learn today will be compiled into a dissertation. That dissertation will include a summary of your comments. Secondly, you do not have to answer any questions that you do not feel comfortable with. This interview will also remain confidential. So please, do not say anything that you absolutely need to keep private. I will also allow you the opportunity to review the recording and to follow up with any additional information if you choose to. With your permission, I will be recording this interview. The recording will only be used to make sure my notes are correct and will not be heard by anyone else outside of this study. Do I have your permission to record this interview? (Yes or No).

[Approved questions + typical ad hoc questions that arose]

Let us begin by first talking about your answers in the intake form you just completed.

1. Thinking back, when do you remember starting to think about a career in teaching?
    a. What or who prompted the idea to consider teaching? How? Examples?
    b. Are there any particular experiences you remember prompting you to think about a future in teaching? If so, please describe them.
2. How did you come to consider a future as a teacher?
    a. Describe the moment when you decided to enroll in a teaching degree program?
    b. What qualities about yourself do you find in effective teaching?
    c. Do you see any rewards in teaching? If so, what are they?
    d. Describe how others (your family, friends, etc.) reacted when you shared your thoughts about becoming a teacher.
    e. Are there any other motivations you have towards becoming a teacher?
3. Please walk me through the process you went through in actually making the decision to pursue a career in teaching.
    a. Describe the process and any other career options you considered.
    b. Describe how you feel about that decision now.
    c. How do you expect the choice of a teaching career will affect your life? And support your life goals?
4. As you think back on the process of making this decision, please share who and what had the strongest influence on your decision?

a. What factors or individuals had the greatest influence? How?
b. What factors, circumstances, or individuals raised doubts about this career choice?
c. How did you overcome those doubts?

[Questions on ITEP Program]

5. Which semester of the program are you in. Overall, how would you say the semester is going for you?
    a. PROMPT: How well do you feel that you fit in at the college?
        i. In what ways do you feel that you fit in WELL here? In what ways do you feel that you do NOT fit well here?
        ii. What has been the hardest part about that first year at the college?
6. I know that in the program you apply to the credential. How did completing the credential admission application make you feel about becoming an educator?
    a. Does it in any way affect how your feelings about making progress?
    b. How did completing this application affect your feelings about one day becoming a teacher?
7. How prepared do you feel about your ability to succeed in the credential program? (Prompt for explanation)
    a. Is there anything in particular about your experience here that you feel particularly prepared to handle?
    b. Is there anything in particular that you feel not prepared to handle?
        i. How has the program supported you when you feel Unequipped?
8. How has the program made you more confident in your choice of becoming an elementary school teacher? If so, how?
9. If you had to describe the "typical" [emphasize quotations] student in the program, how would you describe him or her?
10. To what extent, and in what ways, do you perceive yourself to be similar or different from the other students in the program?
11. If you had to describe the "typical" [emphasize quotations] student in the elementary education program, how would you describe this student?
    a. To what extent, and in what ways, do you perceive yourself to be similar or different from the other students in the program? Do you feel you fall into this category?
12. In your opinion, how do you think male students are perceived in the elementary education program? Is this different from how women are viewed?
    a. IF YES: what has led you to believe that male students are perceived differently?
        i. (Prompt for thoughts on behaviors of fellow students, of faculty, or staff)
13. As a male student, what recommendations do you have for the program? What would make it better?
14. In thinking about your future career as a teacher, what challenges have you encountered with the program?
    a. How were you ever to overcome those challenges, if at all?

[Effects of ITEP Program on Career Choice/Professional Identity]

15. How has the program supported the development of your identity as a teacher?
16. Has the program in any way made you feel like your becoming a professional? If so, what are some skills you have seen yourself developing? Have you had any experiences where you were able to showcase these skills? If so, can you share those experiences? If not, what are you hoping the program can do.
17. Have you had any other experiences that have helped you feel like you are becoming a future teacher? If so, can you describe one for me?
18. What are the qualities that you see in effective teachers?
19. Thinking about your instructors and professors, generally speaking, how do you perceive them?
    a. Describe a recent experience where you interacted with instructors/professors.
20. At this point in your teacher preparation program, how are you thinking about the choice you made?
    a. What supports your motivation to continue in this direction?
    b. What, if anything, causes you to re-think that decision?
    c. How confident are you that becoming a teacher is the right choice for you?
21. As you reflect on our entire conversation today, what will be your greatest takeaway? In other words, what did you learn about yourself and your decision to become a teacher by participating in the interview today?
22. Is there anything that you would like to add, or anything that you think should be clarified?

Thank you for your time. It is truly appreciated.

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