



## Disappearing Diversity and the Probability of Hiring a Nonwhite Teacher: Evidence from Texas

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# **Disappearing Diversity and the Probability of Hiring a Nonwhite Teacher: Evidence from Texas**

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## **Abstract**

*This study investigates whether a principal's likelihood of hiring a teacher of color is sensitive to the racial composition of students in the school. We used an administrative dataset from Texas including 59,157 principal observations and 662,997 teacher observations spanning 2000 to 2017 in order to consider whether or not the disappearing diversity from a majority white school is a factor in principals' decisions to hire teachers of color. We examined the hiring patterns of principals within schools where 50% of the students were white and compared the probability that a nonwhite teacher would be hired as the homogeneity of the student body increased (that is, as increasing proportions of the student body were white). We found that white principals were less likely to hire teachers of color as the proportion of white students approached 100%. This study provides initial evidence that teacher hires are not only sensitive to the principal's race but also to the racial composition of the student body. Specifically, as the diversity of the student body disappears, so too does the principal's likelihood of hiring a teacher of color.*

**KEYWORDS:** *teacher diversity, school diversity, educator pipelines, principal hiring, teachers of color, relational demography*

While there are more nonwhite teachers in schools now than there were thirty years ago, educators of color face systemic barriers to inclusion and promotion at every major juncture in the teaching profession. These barriers are especially evident at the point of hire, in rates of turnover, and in the ways that people of color experience delayed promotions from the assistant principalship to the principalship (Bailes & Guthery, 2020). Schools in the United States remain segregated by race and socioeconomic class at every level: students, teachers, and administrators (Frankenberg, et al., 2019). Principals are a “key” driver for school improvement and for the diversification of the teaching profession (Bryk et al., 2010, p. 47; Grissom, Egalite, Lindsay, 2021). Principals possess wide autonomy to identify and hire candidates who meet the needs of their organizations and so the principalship has recently been spotlighted for its potential to influence the diversity of the teacher labor force through hiring (Guthery & Bailes, 2019). Specifically, effective principals engineer the academic improvement of their schools through a number of managerial tactics like hiring teachers to meet the needs of the school organization. In many American schools, principals are positioned as human resource managers for the organization and thus have a unique capacity to shape the diversity and stability of their organizations (Guthery & Bailes, 2021).

While prior research has explored both principal-and teacher-focused dynamics as they pertain to school staffing patterns (e.g., principal preferences and teacher job-seeking behavior), fewer studies examine the contextual factors in which hiring takes place. While researchers have found that nonwhite principals are more likely to hire nonwhite teachers (Bartanen & Grissom, 2019), those findings also suggest teacher sorting by race may be driven in part by teachers’ preferences and professional networks. Research is more limited regarding the features of the school context that may inform teachers’ job-seeking behaviors; for example, one contextual factor that remains uninvestigated in hiring is the diversity of a school’s student body. We therefore aim to identify whether a principal’s likelihood of hiring a teacher of color is sensitive

to the demography of the student body in a school. That is, as the proportion of white students in a school approaches 100%, are principals less likely to hire a teacher of color? This line of research stands to inform the current conversation regarding the contexts that shape principal hiring decisions and, ultimately, what factors influence the diversity of the teacher workforce.

### **Main findings and contribution**

Studies of relational demography in schools attest to the value of diverse teacher workforces as well as the challenges associated with hiring and retaining teachers of color (e.g., Simon, Johnson, & Reinhorn, 2015). Typically, research questions pertaining to relational demography require longitudinal datasets which link principals and teachers in schools. Using Texas data, we assembled a dataset which allows a novel exploration of student race in schools and the resulting association with teacher hires.

In order to investigate that probability that a nonwhite teacher is hired as a school's student population becomes increasingly white, we calculated the marginal effect of disappearing student diversity on the likelihood of a nonwhite teacher hire. We found that hiring a nonwhite teacher is sensitive to the composition of the student body. That is, as a school gets whiter by proportion and eventually reaches 100%, nonwhite teachers are less likely to be hired in that school. Teacher sorting by race is an established pattern that has nonetheless been attributed differently depending on the study's focus. Teacher-focused literature has recently attributed teacher sorting to teacher preferences, individual networks, and geography (e.g., Player et al., 2017). On the other hand, principal-focused human resources studies may understand teacher hiring as a function of demography, geography, organizational need, and managers' tendencies to self-replicate (e.g., Normore & Jean-Marie, 2008). This study offers a synthesis of both literatures: relational demography appears to matter not only for student

outcomes but for human resource outcomes. Further, the demography of a school's student body may both represent and shape the extant community factors that play a role in teacher hiring. The composition of a student body, then, may inform both teacher job-seeking preferences and principal hiring preferences and thereby contribute to further faculty segregation in schools.

### **Review of Relevant Literature**

To contextualize our study of nonwhite teacher hiring in schools with varying levels of diversity, we first review the state of the teacher workforce as it pertains to racial diversity. We then summarize some relevant factors that shape diversity within the teacher labor force: principal hiring practices and the experiences of people of color in education careers.

### **Preparing Diverse Teachers**

The share of nonwhite teachers in the educator labor force has remained largely unchanged for almost thirty years (United States Department of Education, 2016). This is in part attributable to the influx of Asian-American and Hispanic<sup>1</sup> educators. Black teachers' share of the workforce has increased 34% since the 1987-1988 school year, yet that is a smaller increase than any nonwhite group except Native Americans (Ingersoll & May, 2011). According to a 2016 United States Department of Education (USDOE) report, the pipeline for teacher recruitment and retention begins with enrollment into postsecondary programs, and extends through enrollment in education preparation programs, postsecondary completion, and entering the workforce before concluding with teacher retention. That same report indicates that "diversity diminishes at each point" of the educator pipeline (USDOE, 2016, p. 9). Ample

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<sup>1</sup> We use the Texas state designation of "Hispanic" which represents individuals who self-identify as either Hispanic or Latino in the Texas Education Agency data. In cases where other authors use "Latino", we use that descriptor.

research has addressed the causes of homogeneity in the teaching profession, which include candidates' parents' professions (Jacinto & Gershenson, 2020), preparation programs (Dilworth & Coleman, 2014), and certification or credentialing systems (Petchauer, 2018). In this study, we investigate one juncture in the teacher career pipeline: the point of hire. Specifically, we investigate the degree to which school segregation—that is, the proportion of white students— influences the decision to hire a nonwhite teacher.

While more than one-third of teacher preparation candidates each year are nonwhite, just 14% of all first-year teachers are nonwhite (Dilworth & Coleman, 2014). Researchers have examined reasons why teachers of color are not hired into the profession at rates that are proportional to their enrollment in education preparation programs. This discrepancy is likely related to several factors: experienced candidates of color may feel unsupported by their preparation programs; PWIs (predominantly white institutions of higher education) may fail to represent their experiences or meet their unique needs in the preparation process; and hiring processes leave many candidates without a placement (Amos, 2010; Montecinos, 2004). Research indicates that some of the racial discrepancy in teacher hiring is also attributable to sorting mechanisms in the hiring process. For example, teachers of color pass credentialing exams at lower rates than do their white counterparts (Ahmad & Boser, 2014; Jackson & Kohli, 2016). Specifically, white teacher candidates who take the Praxis I and II exams (used as a licensing tool by most states) outperform all other racial groups, even when controlling for a host of individual characteristics like “GPA, household income, parents’ educational attainment, and other variables” (Ahmad & Boser, 2014, p. 12).

### **Hiring Diverse Teachers**

While individual states vary, principals have more autonomy in the hiring process now

than they did 30 years ago (Engel, Cannata, & Curran, 2018). In Texas, the site of this study, almost 90% of teachers apply directly to a school and receive offers from that school's principal (CREATE, 2012). Texas principals thus have a great deal of agency in terms of hiring, but a number of systems which influence the teacher pool remain outside of the principal's direct control. Those include the agencies which certify and prepare teachers, the mechanisms that districts use to initially sort and distribute applications to principals, and teachers' own preferences regarding the schools to which they apply. Teachers of color have been found to employ some race-match seeking behavior in their decisions about where to submit applications (D'amico, Pawlewicz, Earley, & McGeehan, 2017). That job-seeking behavior may be attributable to their perceived sense of safety or belonging in a school led by a same-race or different-race principal. However, that job-seeking behavior does not account for all the variation in principals' disproportional hiring of white teachers. These numbers paint a stark picture which indicate that there are likely either pushout or pullout factors that affect the longevity of teachers of color in the profession (Guthery & Bailes, 2021).

The point of hire is one potential example of pushout. Referring to a teacher's point of hire, Ingersoll and May (2016) assert that, "the academic literature is scant on documenting and investigating the experiences of novice teachers of color at this critical phase in their career" (p. 3). Broad workforce literature from education and other industries finds that managers—or, in the case of schools, principals—exhibit some tendencies to hire candidates similar to themselves (e.g. Baker & Cooper, 2005). These can be demographic or preparation characteristics and include the candidate's educational background, employment history, or race. Black teachers are less likely to receive job offers for teaching positions. Over the course of their careers, Black teachers are 24% more likely than white teachers to leave the profession (Achinstein et al., 2010;

Elfers, Plecki, & Knapp, 2006; Ingersoll & May, 2011). However, Hispanic teachers are more likely than any other demographic to leave teaching altogether (Gaurino, Santibanez, & Daley, 2006).

### **Retaining Diverse Teachers**

School climate may be another pushout factor for nonwhite teachers. Limited findings have established that, when teachers of color enter a school, they face an altogether different context than do their white counterparts. Nonwhite teachers are likely to be isolated from other teachers of color, unsupported by administrators, or both (Hinkley & McCorkell, 2019; Kohli, 2019; Villegas & Irvine, 2010). Because teachers of color tend to be isolated in organizations, they are often burdened with the responsibilities of serving as experts on race or racialized experiences (Mabokela & Madsen, 2007). Moreover, due to the “overwhelming presence of Whiteness” in schools—in terms of both personnel and culture—teachers of color receive minimal support for the ways in which they must navigate a multitude of socio-cultural mores (Sleeter, 2001, p. 101).

Once in teaching positions, teachers of color occupy a unique position within the teacher workforce and within their schools. Only about 20% of all teachers are nonwhite yet teachers of color are less likely to turnover (either to teach elsewhere or to leave the profession) than are their white counterparts (Nguyen et al., 2020). Moreover, teachers of color offer significant academic and socio-emotional benefits to students of color. Students of color tend to be more frequently assigned to gifted programming and less frequently disciplined in schools when they are assigned to teachers of color (Grissom, Rodriguez, et al., 2017; Meier, 1993). Finally, teachers of color tend to evince a humanistic commitment to their students, especially to students of color, and take on a disproportionate share of anti-racist work in their schools. Such work may



take the form of reducing teacher shortages in hard-to-staff schools, serving as student role models, especially for minoritized students, and sharing cultural understandings with students of color (Villegas & Irvine, 2010; Jackson & Kohli, 2016). Taken together, these studies show that teachers of color report entering the profession in order to support students of color, which means that they may be more prone to work in schools with a high proportion of minoritized students, poor students, and insufficient resources (Jackson & Kohli, 2016). However, they are less likely to have access to the kinds of supports and professional development opportunities that are essential for the success of new hires (e.g., mentoring).

### **Research Questions**

Well-established in the literature are the benefits to both school faculty and students of a diverse teacher workforce. However, a diverse teacher workforce requires equitable hiring practices for nonwhite teacher candidates yet the factors and processes associated with teacher diversity are still emerging in research literature. This study therefore investigates the likelihood that principals of different races hire nonwhite teachers given varying levels of racial homogeneity in the student body. We ask the following research questions:

*R1: Is the hiring of nonwhite teachers sensitive to the homogeneity of a school's student population? And, if so, how does the likelihood of a nonwhite teacher's hire change as the student body becomes increasingly white?*

*R2: Is the principal's likelihood of hiring a teacher of color moderated by the principal's race after accounting for student body composition?*

### **Data and Demographics**

To answer these research questions, we examined the hiring patterns of principals

within schools where 50% of the students are white and compared the probability that a nonwhite teacher would be hired as the homogeneity of the student body increased (that is, as increasing proportions of the student body were white).

## **Data**

We used Texas data spanning 17 years, 2000 to 2017, in order to consider whether or not the percentage of nonwhite students is a factor in principals' decisions to hire teachers of color. We used teacher files to identify new hires in every school in every year. We then aggregated teacher demographics to count how many total hires were in every Texas school and the race and gender of the teachers hired. We then merged administrative data which linked each principal to a school each year and matched principal assignment to teacher hires. Finally, we aggregated and calculated the number of teachers hired by race and gender attributed to each principal in each year of the principal's leadership.

The dataset includes observable characteristics of principals (race, gender, educational attainment, salary, years of experience) as well as school-level demographic variables (racial composition of students in the school, percent free and reduced lunch, and urbanicity). The final panel includes 59,157 observations of principals in Texas schools and the demographics of the 662,997 teachers they hired over 17 years.

## **Demographics**

We examined the characteristics of the schools and principals in our study by the proportion of white students in the school. Table 1 presents descriptives of principals in four categories of schools:

- a) White students comprised less than 50% of the student body

- b) White students comprised 50-74% of the student body
- c) White students comprised 75-89% of the student body
- d) White students comprised 90% or more of the student body

For each category listed above, Table 1 illustrates the demographic characteristics of both the school.

**Table 1**

*Principal and School Setting Descriptives*

Table 1. Principal and School Setting Descriptors

Less than 50% White Students		50%-75% White Students		75-90% White Students	
mean	sd	mean	sd	mean	sd
10.38	9.49	9.84	9.57	7.60	6.72
38.59	25.37	41.37	25.16	41.15	26.85
19.60	22.87	22.35	23.47	25.02	25.27
<b>School Demographics</b>					
662.00	484.28	620.00	512.64	466.88	364.43
17.37	21.08	9.29	8.00	4.01	4.09
62.34	27.19	23.80	10.44	11.61	4.90
64.45	26.10	39.26	19.81	34.04	18.40
<b>Urbanicity</b>					
9,361	24.64%	427	3.43%	76	1.04%
19,583	51.55%	6935	55.64%	3,556	48.81%
6,958	18.32%	4784	38.38%	3,547	48.68%
2,088	5.50%	319	2.56%	107	1.47%
37,990		12465		7,286	
<b>Principals</b>					
18.08	8.21	18.18	7.82	17.84	7.82
<b>Gender</b>					
13,568	34.94%	5,336	42.28%	3,675	50.00%
25,269	65.06%	7,285	57.72%	3,674	50.00%
38,837		12,621		7,349	
<b>Urbanicity</b>					
19,237	49.53%	11,260	89.22%	7,040	95.79%
6,497	16.73%	519	4.11%	56	0.76%
12,349	31.18%	558	4.42%	111	1.51%
754	1.94%	284	2.25%	142	1.93%
38,837		12,621		7,349	

There are less than 5 and the exact number is masked for privacy

We find that majority white schools in Texas tend to be smaller. A school with less than 50% white enrollment has on average 662 students; by contrast, a school where more than 90% of the student body is white has an average of 339 students. The larger and more diverse schools have almost double the proportion of students eligible for free and reduced-priced school lunches. A larger school with less than 50% white students has on average 64.45% of the students enrolled in free and reduced lunch, whereas a 90% white school has an average of 16.80% of students enrolled in the program.

In schools where less than 50% of the students are white, there are 10.38 teachers hired on average every year. Schools that are at least 90% white hire 6.18 teachers on average each year. Principals in the larger, more diverse schools (where 50% of students are white) hire 4.20 more teachers every year. This is likely due to two factors. First, the average school with less than 50% white students has 662 students, while the 90% white school has on average 338.73 students. So, the more diverse schools are larger and likely need more teachers. Additionally, the average school with less than 50% white students retains 19.60% of its teachers for at least five years. The 90% white school on average retains 28.03% of its teachers for at least five years. The higher turnover rate in the more diverse school likely necessitates more hires every year. The mean three-year retention rate of teachers is 38% in schools where less than 50% of the students are white, and 41% for the average school where 90% or more of the students are white. Consistently, increases in the proportion of white students are associated with higher five-year teacher retention rates.

The race of the principal leading the school tends to mirror the racial composition of the school. In schools with less than 50% white students, the principals are 50% white and 50% nonwhite. In schools where the proportion of the students has increased to 90% white,

96.84% of the principals are white. Out of the 1,426 principal observations in schools with more than 90% white students, fewer than 5 are Black, 14 are Hispanic and 27 are all other nonwhite ethnicities. We find that two-thirds of the schools that are majority white are located in a rural area. Urban schools are almost exclusively comprised of a diverse student body and the majority of observations situated in urban areas are in schools with 50% or less white students.

### Method of Analysis

We examined the demographics of principal hires within schools with 50% white student populations and estimated the probability that a nonwhite teacher would be hired as the percentage of white students increased. We used a linear probability model to estimate the likelihood that a nonwhite teacher would be hired. In order to most efficiently address this question, we aggregated teachers of all races into a binary variable of white and nonwhite, because the sample size was too small in every year to calculate the hire rate for all categories of teacher race. The outcome variable of interest,  $y_i$  is the probability that a nonwhite teacher was hired, which we measured as a binary variable of 0 or 1.

Model 1:

$$P(y_i = 1|x_i) = \alpha_i + \beta_1(\%White_{ist}) + \beta_2(Principal\ Race_{ist}) + \delta x_{ist} + \varepsilon_{it}$$

To test for a possible association between the composition of the student body and the probability that a nonwhite teacher would be hired, we tested the variable of interest,  $\beta_1$ .

Model 1 tests this association by measuring the percentage of white students as a continuous variable.  $\beta_1$  is the percentage of white students for principal  $i$ , for school  $s$ , in year  $t$ . We also included the hiring principal's race with the categorical covariate,  $\beta_2$ , which includes the time invariant principal race as Black, white, Hispanic and all additional nonwhite races.  $\delta$  is a

vector of coefficients and  $x_{ist}$  is a matrix of time varying controls (% FRL, school level, campus rating, principal race, principal years of experience, principal pay, principal gender, total number of teachers hired, and numbers of years in that school).  $\alpha_i(I=1\dots n)$  is the intercept for each principal. We also tested the interaction of the principal's race and the disappearing percentage of diversity in a school to calculate the probability that a principal hires a nonwhite teacher.

Model 2:

$$P(y_i = 1|x_i) = \alpha_i + \beta_1(82: 88\% \text{ White}_{ist}) + \beta_2(89: 94\% \text{ White}_{ist}) + \beta_3(95: 100\% \text{ White}_{ist}) + \beta_4(\text{Principal Race}_{ist}) + \delta x_{ist} + \varepsilon_{it}$$

Model 2 also tests the association between the percentage of the student body that is white and the probability that a nonwhite teacher is hired, while controlling for principal and school demographics as described above in Model 1. Model 2 differs from Model 1 in that it tests the highest percentage of the student body that is white as a categorical variable instead of the continuous measure used in Model 1. We used Model 1 to calculate the average marginal effect for increasing student whiteness. However, to interpret the extremes of the data, we used categorical variables that split schools into distinct categories for analysis. For Model 2, we measured the percentage of white students in four categories: 75-81%, 82-88%, 89%-94% and 95%-100%. Schools with 75-81% white students served as the reference group and  $\beta_1$  was the percentage of white students between 82%-88% for principal  $i$ , in school  $s$ , in time  $t$ .  $\beta_2$  was the percentage of white students between 89%-94% for principal  $i$ , in school  $s$ , in time  $t$ ,  $\beta_3$  was the percentage of white students between 94%-100% for principal  $i$ , in school  $s$ , in time  $t$ .

## Main Findings

Using the equation detailed in Model 1, we calculated the average marginal effect of disappearing student diversity on the likelihood of a principal hiring a nonwhite teacher. We found that the probability of a principal hiring a teacher of color was negatively associated with an increasing percentage of white students (Table 2).

Table 2

*Average marginal effect on the probability of hiring a nonwhite teacher*

Average Marginal Effect of Decreasing Student Diversity on the Probability of Hiring of Nonwhite Teacher							
	Model 1			Model 2			
	50% > White Student Continuous (mean 62%)			% White Students quartiles above 75			
	75%	85%	95%	75-81%	82-88%	89-94%	95-100%
Increasing %White Students	-3.974***	-7.172***	-10.37***	50.2%****	-10.30***	-19.40***	-15.90***
Principal Race							
<i>Black</i>	12.67%	14.01%	15.36%	34.7%***	27.52%***	22.93%***	X
<i>Latino</i>	16.16%***	16.36%***	16.56%***	21.47%***	16.28%**	11.69%**	X
<i>Other</i>	10.30%	10.67%	11.04%	13.81%	8.62%	4.03%	5.79%
<i>Observations</i>		27,216				4,355	
<i>R2</i>		0.358				0.362	
<i>Adjusted R2</i>		0.357				0.358	

\* $p < 0.1$ ; \*\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.01$

As illustrated in Table 2 and in answer to our first research question, we find that the likelihood of a principal hiring a teacher of color is sensitive to the racial composition of the student body. The results from Model 1 indicate that as the diversity in a school disappears, the probability that a principal will hire a nonwhite teacher decreases. The average marginal effect of the student composition moving from a quarter of nonwhite students to less than 15% nonwhite students is associated with a 7.17% reduction in the likelihood that a principal will hire a teacher of color. As the student body becomes less diverse and almost exclusively white, the effect of the homogeneous school becomes amplified.



As a robustness check on these marginal effects, we employed Model 2 which uses categorical variables to measure the percentage of white students in the school starting at 75%. The results from Model 2 indicate that there is a 50.20% chance a nonwhite teacher will be hired in a school for the reference group (75-81% white students). When the student body is between 82% and 88% white, the probability that a principal will hire a teacher of color decreases by 10.30%. As the proportion of white students increases to 89%-94%, the probability of hiring a teacher of color decreases by 19.40%.

The race of the principal is a significant covariate in whether or not a teacher of color will be hired. Controlling for school demographic variables, having a nonwhite principal appears to mitigate the effect of the increasingly homogeneous white student body on teacher hires. Black principals are 15.90% more likely to hire a nonwhite teacher given the same student demographics and nonwhite/non-Hispanic principals are 16.64% more likely than a white principal to hire a nonwhite teacher. As the student population becomes almost entirely white, principals are less likely to hire a nonwhite teacher, but having a principal of color increases the chances significantly.

### **Limitations**

This study constitutes a first foray into the relationship between student demography and school-level personnel decisions, so we were limited in our ability to include all possible reasons for hiring. The dataset does not allow us to account for measures of teacher quality such as educational attainment or experience. Given the rate of turnover for nonwhite teachers, then, a veteran teacher may be more likely to be white (e.g. Ingersoll & May, 2011). Similarly, given the ways in which some credentialing exams exclude people of color from the teacher pipeline, a credentialed teacher may be more likely to be white (e.g. Jackson & Kohli, 2016). In these cases,

while our analyses show that principals are more likely to hire white teachers as the student body composition is increasingly whiter, we may be seeing instead principals' preferences for credentialed or experienced teachers. Finally, due to the very small number of Black principals in white schools, we were unable to calculate a marginal effect for a Black principal in a school with a nearly all-white student body.

### **Discussion**

We find that white principals are less likely to hire teachers of color as the percentage of white students in a school approaches 100%. This result holds for Black and white principals, although Hispanic principals do not appear to follow this pattern, which may be attributable in part to the fact that Hispanic principals comprise such a large proportion of Texas school leaders relative to the rest of the country. Principal race seems to be a factor and we find that the racial composition of the student body is another factor associated with the likelihood that a principal hires a teacher of color. First, Texas is unique in that 39% percent of school leaders are people of color (Texas Education Agency, 2019a) compared to the national average which is 13% (NCES, 2016). Critically, however, Black principals are still a very small minority of all school leaders in Texas. These findings may not extend to contexts where Black principals comprise the majority of school leaders or where Hispanic principals do not constitute as large a proportion of school leaders. Further, in states without principal licensure exams, schools may have different proportions of nonwhite principals and thus different patterns by which teachers of color are hired.

To our knowledge, this is the first study to examine whether or not principals' hiring patterns are sensitive to the proportion of white students in a school. However, the findings presented here are not without historical precedent. Thompson's (2017) study of schools from

1964 to 1972 estimates how Black teachers' employment changed in the wake of widespread school desegregation following the Civil Rights Act. Thompson finds that Black teacher employment in the south at that time was reduced by 25% and that "these reductions were a causal result of the student desegregation process itself" (p. 3). He goes on to assert that the costs of integrated schools "were in large part paid by African American teachers" (p. 27) because so many Black teachers lost jobs in previously segregated schools. Our study provides some evidence that nonwhite teachers still bear the costs of integrated schools and, in fact, the whiter the student body, the smaller the likelihood that any nonwhite teacher will be hired.

Prior research has established that race-matches between principals and teachers increase the likelihood that a same-race teacher will be hired and retained (Bartanen & Grissom, 2021). Additionally, that likelihood of hiring a teacher of color further decreases in a high school and increases slightly in an elementary school relative to middle schools which served as our comparison group. Current studies, including this one, are limited by the structure of extant state and national data sources. These data sources do not allow researchers to discern whether the candidate pool was all white or whether a principal chose not to hire a minority applicant. We have begun to work with districts in order to solicit the data which would answer this important question. However, the current study advances the conversation about relational demography in schools and suggests that principal hiring decisions are not only sensitive to the principal's race but also to the racial composition of the student body. This research, then, contributes to an ongoing conversation regarding how principals make hiring decisions and what school contextual factors explicitly or implicitly shape those decisions. Specifically, as the diversity of the student body wanes, so too does the principal's likelihood of hiring a nonwhite teacher. We turn now to implications of these findings for research, policy, and practice.

## **Research**

Previous research has examined the influence of a principal's race on hiring decisions. While principal race has some influence on hiring nonwhite teachers, we find that the effect is smaller when controlling for the student body demographics. It is likely that school and principal attributes combine to influence the overall likelihood of a nonwhite teacher being hired. As further research explores the importance of context, it is likely that a host of factors will be significant for principals as they make hiring decisions to staff their schools. Even so, the research is clear: teachers of color are disadvantaged throughout their career trajectories. They are less likely to be traditionally certified or to graduate from university teacher preparation programs, to be initially offered teaching jobs, to be "tapped" for school leadership positions, or to be promoted from assistant principalships to principalships (Bailes & Guthery, 2020). Because this study is an initial inquiry into the relationship between student demography and human resource decisions—that is, the relationship between the whiteness of a school's student population and the race of teacher hires—we recommend that future researchers examine this relationship in a host of other contexts. Several research questions emerged for further investigation. For example, to what degree does student diversity shape teachers' job-seeking preferences or race-match seeking and, if the principal shares the candidate's race, does that moderate the job-seeking behavior? Our study offers preliminary evidence that the composition of the student body plays a significant role in hiring decisions.

## **Policy**

At least 36 states have existing policies that are designed to increase teacher workforce diversity by recruiting more teachers from minoritized groups (Villegas & Davis, 2008). The issue of diversifying the teacher workforce is not just one of recruiting and hiring teachers of

color but also one of expanding the pool of eligible teachers and the accessibility of the teaching profession. Given the challenges faced by people of color as they move through teacher preparation programs and into the workforce, states and districts would likely benefit from incentivizing teacher preparation programs, district induction programs, and schools which successfully place and retain nonwhite teachers in classrooms for at least 3-5 years.

### **Practice**

Additionally, states, districts, and schools would benefit from initiatives which facilitate people of color entering principalships and school leadership pipelines. While sitting principals may have little control over who enters teacher preparation, they can contribute to efforts which develop, mentor, coach, and support the professional trajectories of teachers of color should they be interested in school leadership positions. Doing so might not constitute an immediate change to the racial demography of teachers but retaining people of color in education careers is critical to a more diverse teacher workforce in the future. Identifying and cultivating those initiatives may serve to support people of color as they pursue school leadership through the educator pipeline.

This study contributes to the discussion around the effective preparation, recruitment and retention of nonwhite teachers. We find that the racial composition of the students in a school is a contextual variable not yet considered in previous research that is associated with hiring nonwhite teachers. Thompson (2017) previously observed this pattern and, given the historical legacy of race in schools, policymakers and school personnel may need to address multiple policies which perpetuate racial segregation. For example, forty percent of all schools in the United States do not employ a single teacher of color (Bireda & Chait, 2011), which means that the students in those schools do not see racial diversity represented among their teachers.

Disappearing diversity is a loss to all students. While the benefits of teachers of color are most pronounced for students of color, diversity benefits all students—including white students—in terms of non-academic outcomes like preparation for diverse job contexts and participation in a democratic society (Wells, Fox, & Cordova-Cobo, 2016). It is clear that no one point of intervention is likely to be effective if the full context of the problem of workforce segregation remains unaddressed. This study suggests that the homogeneity of the student body is an influential contextual factor in hiring nonwhite teacher. Thus, student racial composition should inform initiatives designed to increase the diversity of the teacher workforce.

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