

THE RETENTION OF HISPANIC/LATINO TEACHERS IN SOUTHEASTERN RURAL  
ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

A Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the

Degree of Doctor of Education

with a

Major in Educational Leadership

in the

Department of Graduate Education

Northwest Nazarene University

by

Oscar Rodriguez

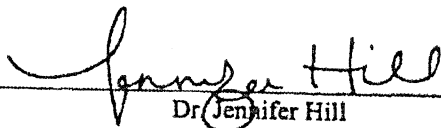
April 2017

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AUTHORIZATION TO SUBMIT

DISSERTATION

This dissertation of Oscar Rodriguez, submitted for the degree of Doctor of Education with a major in Educational Leadership and titled THE RETENTION OF HISPANIC/LATINO TEACHERS IN SOUTHEASTERN RURAL ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS has been reviewed in final form. Permission, as indicated by the signatures and dates given below, is now granted to submit final copies.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to start by expressing my most sincere and thankful appreciation to all those who by any way, shape or form through their knowledge and dedication helped me accomplish this goal.

I would like to present my appreciativeness to all the faculty and staff at Northwest Nazarene University Education Department. First and foremost I would like to acknowledge Dr. Heidi Curtis, my dissertation advisor, for her understanding, guidance, educational knowledge, and effective editing skills in the composition of this study. I sincerely appreciate Dr. Curtis constant encouragement to continue to move forward with this topic and always allow me to understand and identify the areas for improvement of my dissertation. I have enjoyed the opportunity to research an issue that can positively impact and change the quality of Hispanic/Latino teacher retention in my Home of Sampson County.

To the other members of my committee, Dr. Jennifer Hill, Dr. Adria David and Dr. Marna McMurry thank you for your advice orientation, corrections, and assistance. A special and very well deserved thank you is extended to my NNU Cohort family for all your guidance and keeping our group together from the beginning to the end through the good and stressful times.

Finally, I dedicate this paper to my family, without their support, dedication and understanding this dream would have never transpired. To my wife Zoe and my two children Oscar and Emma, without their encouragement and unconditional love this change would not have been possible.

To my parents for providing me with my first educational steps in life, their foundation has allowed me to complete this new stage in my life.

## DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my wife Zoe and children Oscar Alexis and Emma Sophia. May you understand that without the three of you this journey in education can't be used as an agent of life change.

## ABSTRACT

This qualitative study reviewed reasons so few Hispanic/Latino teachers remain employed with rural county public elementary schools. The study evaluated issues that present high retention and attrition concerns for Hispanic/Latino teachers in rural schools. In addition, the dissertation offered suggestions on ways to increase the representation of Hispanic/Latino teachers in rural elementary schools. The results of the study included lack of resources, lack of support, teacher isolation, heavy work load, and residency issues as barriers to Hispanic/Latino teachers' retention in rural school communities. Suggestions to mediate the barrier included improving school leadership, utilizing alternative funding sources, such as grants, promoting collaboration through Professional Learning Communities, developing diversity programs, and teachers evaluating their professional and personal goals.

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## **Chapter I**

### **Introduction**

Across the United States, minorities are underrepresented in every educational area of public schools, including rural communities (Chang, Sharkness, Hurtado, & Newman, 2014). Immigrants are settling in southern states, with the predominant Hispanic/Latino culture being from Mexico (Passel & Cohn, 2017; Sox, 2009). However, states are ill-prepared to address the growing needs of the diverse Hispanic/Latino cultures entering the school system at increasing rates (Gozdzia et al., 2005; Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2017). Bilingual teachers have not increased at a comparable rate to the rise in the Hispanic/Latino student population (Belinda & Ellen, 1997; Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2017). The result is some states offering temporary teaching certificates in critical areas, also known as emergency teacher certification (Gardner, 2006; Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2017).

Regardless of culture or race, teacher attrition and retention concerns faced by schools worldwide are increasingly evident in public school sectors (Ashiedu & Scott-Ladd, 2012; Collins, 2009; Player, 2015). Player (2015) indicated that administrators struggle to find qualified individuals to work in rural schools. Teachers' initial career commitment, further commitments, and teacher mobility are barriers (Player, 2015). Also, more than personality, commitment to teaching was influenced by early career experiences (Ashiedu & Scott-Ladd, 2012; Chapman & Green, 1986; Player, 2015). In 2004, two million teachers in the United States stopped teaching due to transitions to other careers. Teachers transitioned from teaching because of poor wages, poor classroom characteristics, or ineffective leadership practices (Feng,

2009). Other concerns for teachers that led to turnover included monetary concerns, poor working conditions, dissatisfaction with the job location, or poor organizational structure (Ashiedu & Scott-Ladd, 2012). The joy of teaching and comfort with and knowledge about children in the community are also predictors of teacher retention and turnover (Ashiedu & Scott-Ladd, 2012). Teachers remained committed to the job based on the security it provided, potential benefits, and educational experiences (Reback, Rockoff & Schwartz, 2014).

Job satisfaction is an important predictor of retention and attrition. Job satisfaction provides a positive impact on the promotion of teaching as a lifelong career (Brown & Wynn, 2007; O'Reilly, 2014). Researchers have questioned whether rewards and motivation lead to potential job satisfaction (Brown & Wynn, 2007; Kim & Loadman, 1994; O'Reilly, 2014). Research by Brown and Wynne (2007) explained that administrative support, school climate, and decision-making are all areas to be promoted by administrators to increase job satisfaction (Brown & Wynn, 2007). Buchanan, Prescott, Schuck, Aubusson, Burke, & Louviere (2013) emphasized six factors affecting teacher retention, to include the following:

- Understanding and effectively managing the demands of a full-time teacher
- Collaboratively working with colleagues
- Developing parental communication
- Accepting the school culture and community
- Meeting the goals and demands of pre-service teachers
- Understanding the day to day situations faced by in-service teachers

Collaboration, creative opportunities, professional career development, mentorship, financial benefits, and community engagement are cited as ways to have a positive impact on teacher retention (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Rodgers & Skelton, 2014). Brown and Wynn

(2007) found that teachers' ability to become more involved in the decision-making processes increased retention. For example, commitment and retention was achieved by becoming a principal, teacher trainer, or administrator.

### **Statement of the Problem**

It is suggested that a challenge to education is meeting the multifaceted workforce classroom teacher crisis (Vescio, Bondy & Poekert, 2009). The National Center for Education Statistics (2014) conducted research that noted that public and private school teacher attrition is reaching nearly eight percent. In addition, according to the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE), only 17 percent of K-12 teachers are minorities (Madkins, 2011). Multicultural education is about diversity or cultural plurality (Gay, 1994; Mostafazadeh, Keshtiaray, & Ghulizadeh 2015). Equality research exists to examine ethnic structures within diverse racial and cultural groups to allow everyone an equal educational experience and academic opportunity (Smith, 2009). However, as ethnic diversity increases within schools, school districts turn to their principals, those charged with hiring new faculty and creating a multicultural environment within their schools (Brooks et al., 2012). According to a study conducted by Mason and Schroeder (2010), when principals conduct effective hiring techniques, their hiring decisions can add value to or damage the culture within the school. Additionally, Mason and Schroeder (2010) indicated a concern with retaining minority teachers because of issues with student discipline, the lack of resources, such as classroom materials, or a lack of classroom autonomy.

To create multicultural teaching environment, it is suggested that school principals review their hiring techniques and their practices to retain a diverse body of teachers (Gardner, 2010). In addition, teachers are frequently transferred to positions for which they are ill-

prepared; many are unfamiliar with the cultural dynamics of teaching in culturally diverse or rural settings (Aragon & Wixom, 2016; Boe, Cook, & Sunderland, 2008). Ingersoll, May, and Consortium for Policy Research (2011) noted that the continuous growth of teacher migration could result in gains and losses for rural schools in the community. Ingersoll et al. (2011) asserted that minority teachers are more likely to be employed in high risk and high needs schools. This leads to increased pressure, a heavy workload, and potentially less job satisfaction. The barriers adversely impact retention and attrition rates of teachers.

## **Background**

Smith (2009) explained that multicultural education is the unification of all cultures. Multicultural education includes educators who aim to reform schools to allow diverse students an equal chance in school, in the job market, in communities, and in the world at large (Banks, 2006; Mostafazadeh et al., 2015). Multicultural education addresses education in terms of antiracism, a concept that is important for all students (Mostafazadeh et al., 2015; Nieto & Bode, 2008). Also, social justice is a necessary process in effective teaching (Nieto & Bode, 2008). Rural schools and districts often experience difficulties to attract and retain multicultural teachers who are qualified (DeAngelis, 2013; Goodpaster et al., 2012; Jorissen, 2002) when multiculturalism is not evident in the school culture.

Hiring multicultural faculty has been a long-standing problem in the education field (Brooks et al., 2017). Research on hiring was used to evaluate the severe deficits in recruitment of minority multicultural teachers (Brooks et al., 2017). Hiring surveys were used as a method to evaluate potential barriers to retention among teaching faculty (Frankenberg, 2009). In hiring surveys, questions posed to teachers helped gain an understanding of their views and beliefs about teaching. School leaders used the data from surveys to strategically plan and to mediate

potential barriers. However, hiring surveys may combine many variables together without addressing specific factors (Frankenberg, 2009). The results of surveys focus on a central theme, but there may be other specific variables that are not addressed. There are many variables that local schools and administrations can control or influence and there are other factors that they are unable to fully control when working with a multicultural teacher and student population (Frankenberg, 2009).

It is necessary to address the issue of hiring, because there are significant changes in immigration in the United States, which results in a change in the demographic of both teachers and students in school systems. Immigration from countries in Latin America represents 14.4 million of the total United States population (Brick et al., 2011). The increase in immigration occurred for many reasons. First, there was a need for labor in industrial and service-oriented sectors (Clotfelter, Ladd, & Vigdor, 2012). The increase in immigration was also evident in southeastern schools, where the 2000 census indicated a population of 4.7 percent Hispanics (Census Viewer, n.d.). By 2010, there was an increase in the Hispanic/Latino population to 8.39 percent, with school age children representing a total of 1,649,595 and 17.3 percent being under the age of 17 (Census Viewer, n.d.). Results from additional research revealed that Hispanic families in southeastern states experience lack of education, lack of English knowledge, and currently earn less than the median income (Clotfelter, et al., 2012).

Hispanics are one of the largest ethnicities who face hardships with education (Arriaga & Longoria, 2011). Regardless of family unity and understanding, the lack of parent education affects students' educational outcomes (Arriaga & Longoria, 2011). Scholarly research indicated that immigrant family's geographic location and educational competency influence their decisions about education (Arriaga & Longoria, 2011). Proximity to relatives, large ethnic



communities, and services contribute to immigration of Hispanic families (Arriaga & Longoria, 2011; Brooks et al., 2012; Garcia et al., 1996). Further, educational and cultural analyses of the curriculum and classroom activities contribute to the success of immigrant children (Brooks et al., 2012). Minority students in southeastern states present higher intrinsic value and positive attitudes in education due to high rates of first generation learners (Clotfelter, et al., 2012). Clotfelter et al. (2012) indicated that children from Hispanic families in southeastern states experience positive educational journeys; however, their families experience more disadvantages than Hispanic families in other states, to include racism and financial barriers.

Persistence in the educational system is one of the disadvantages Hispanic children face every school year, in addition to an increase in the dropout rates for children after the age of 16 (Clotfelter et al., 2012). Clotfelter et al. (2012) assisted in creating a supportive link between the retention of teachers and the hardships faced by Hispanic minority populations. The authors noted that Hispanics at the age of 16 present a dropout rate 50 percent higher than white students. They also noted that students increase in their desire to leave school if achievement tests are not satisfactory. Finally, lack of parental involvement and parental education increases the high school dropout rate of Hispanics in public schools (Clotfelter et al., 2012). Cosentino et al. (2005) conducted a study that reflected that 70 percent of the schools in the nation have students in need of limited English proficient programs. Their report indicated that limited English proficiency students are instructed by a higher rate of beginning teachers while in the educational system (Cosentino, et al., 2005). An understanding of the struggles and achievements by Hispanic children in southeastern states can enhance the understanding of minority teacher retention in rural counties (Clotfelter et al., 2012).

## Research Questions

The intent of this study was to collect and assess data on minority teacher shortages in rural schools (Ingersoll et al., 2012). Administrators need to promote an effective workplace if educators are expected to support the needs of students (Malloy & Allen, 2007; Rodgers & Skelton, 2014). Teachers reported that positive teaching conditions, collaboration, supportive conditions, and shared leadership are primary influences on an effective workforce (Brown & Wynn, 2007; O'Reilly, 2014). With these findings in mind, this dissertation answered the following research questions:

1. What are barriers to Hispanic teachers' remaining employed in rural schools?
2. What are strategies to mediate barriers to Hispanic teachers' remaining employed in rural schools?

## Definition of Terms

Listed below are key terms used in this dissertation. These terms guided key areas of focus regarding the retention of Hispanic/Latino teachers in rural schools.

**Attrition.** The rate at which a teacher or educator leaves the educational profession to pursue other educational or professional opportunities within the current system or a new organization (Gardner, 2010).

**English as Second Language (ESL).** A program of instruction to support English Language Learners (National Council of Teachers of English, 2008).

**English Language Learners (ELLs).** A K-12 learner of the English language who may benefit from language support programs. (National Council of Teachers of English, 2008).

**Hispanic/Latino.** A person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, South or Central American, or Spanish culture or origin (United States Census Bureau, 2011).

**Language conversion.** An individual's ability to write or speak a language and translate into another language (Colomer & Harklau, 2009).

**Multicultural.** People of different languages, races, ethnicities and diverse world cultures (Smith, 2009).

**Resiliency.** A teacher's ability to be effective regardless of the challenges faced (Malloy & Allen, 2007).

**Rural schools.** Schools located in less populated areas (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). Rural schools that are more than 25 miles from an urbanized area and more than 10 miles from an urban cluster are deemed remote (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). Rural schools defined as distant are between five and 24 miles of an urbanized area and between 2.5 and 9 miles of an urban cluster (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). Rural schools deemed on the fringe are less than five miles from an urban area and less than 2.5 miles from an urban cluster (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017).

**Supportive leadership.** Actions by school leaders to provide necessary support for teachers to effectively teach and meet objectives and goals (Mancuso et al., 2011).

### **Significance of the Study**

This study assessed the reason so few Hispanic teachers remain employed in a rural school district in a southeastern county school district, by addressing the impact of retention of Hispanic/Latino teachers and possible strategies to mediate this issue. Job satisfaction, working conditions, and school attributes are factors that impact teacher satisfaction within the profession (Gardner, 2010). Certo and Fox (2002) conducted a study in which effective factors for teacher

retention were presented. Areas of the study included open teacher interaction, supportive and appropriate working conditions, professional growth, and support for effective student discipline. Another key research study on the subject matter revealed that motivation and job satisfaction were factors that promoted effective job performance (Huysman, 2008). Rural school administrators should create strategies to promote retention with benefits, such as a high degree of involvement, attractive class size, and genuine personal relationships (Malloy & Allen, 2007; Rodgers & Skelton, 2014).

Research conducted by Guzman (2000) pointed out that the 21st century would see major changes in the workforce, with the continuous growth of the Hispanic population. The National Education Association (2005) emphasized that the challenging task in the school system, when facing diversity with educators, would be to treat all ethnicities equally to reduce the academic gaps in the educational system. United States residents aged five and older who speak a language other than English more than doubled since the 1980s, and fewer than half are proficient in English (Skinner et al., 2010). Educators are currently not only teaching, but they must also become advocates, translators, and liaisons for Hispanic students (Colomer & Harklau, 2009). Research corroborates that a lack of proper educational support can affect the performance of Hispanic students compared with other native English speakers (Chang, 2008). In addition, positive impact, resources, and making a difference in students' lives increased teacher job satisfaction (Moore, 2012; Wiebke & Bardin, 2009). A Hispanic educator's role needs to adhere to a cultural and linguistic approach to increase Hispanic/Latino children's opportunities for meaningful learning (National Education Association, 2005). Increasingly, Hispanic communities develop in the Midwest and Southern regions of the United States, exposing

schools' lack of resources for effective support for Hispanic/Latino learners, highlighting a need for strategies to support educators (Colomer & Harklau, 2009).

### **Overview of Research Methods**

To effectively build the conceptual framework around the issues and concerns with Hispanic/Latino teachers within rural school districts, there was a direct need for qualitative analysis. Green (2014) explained a framework as the ability to make the findings in the research general and meaningful. The conceptual framework provided a coherent linkage of the findings. The conceptual framework helped the researcher in determining questions, design, and outcomes (Green, 2014). Green (2014) explained the benefits of the conceptual framework in the ordering of thoughts and data representation.

The conceptual framework provided information from theories and findings toward the establishment of the research (Green, 2014). To effectively address the concerns of a population, literature reviews and data are involved to illustrate the impact a given topic has on a population. Human Capital Theory was addressed in this study. With this theory, there is a focus on individuals' interpreting non-monetary or monetary factors determining their decision to stay in a profession. Teachers do more than consider salary when deciding whether to leave or remain employed in a school (Green, 2014; Wang, 2007). They consider non-monetary concepts, such as the working conditions, job stressors, and the environments where they teach. The theoretical framework provided the philosophy by which the researcher investigated the research problem (Green, 2014). The use of Human Capital Theory allowed the researcher to complement the research question, purpose, and literature review when achieving the operation of the design (Green, 2014).

To address the research questions, a generic qualitative research design was employed. The design was used because of its focus on understanding a phenomenon based on the worldview of the people involved (Creswell, 2009; Merriam, 1988). Qualitative methods assisted the researcher by providing the explanation for researchers and educators to gain a greater understanding of Hispanic students' backgrounds, needs, culture, experiences and concerns in rural schools. Qualitative research allowed the researcher to view reality in a subjective way (Creswell, 2009). Qualitative research provided the ability for participants to express their values and beliefs (Creswell & Miller, 2000). The qualitative research provided mechanisms to explain relationships on social phenomena (Creswell, 2009). The qualitative research and data also helped analyze the educational disparities between Hispanics and other ethnicities (Clotfelter et al., 2012). Creswell (2009) explained that qualitative methods assume that people construct the reality of the situation.

The procedure for this qualitative generic study included conducting open-ended interviews with a sample of 12 Hispanic teachers. The sample was determined with purposeful sampling methods from the population of Hispanic teachers in a rural school district in the southeastern United States. Further, after transcription of the interviews, data were analyzed with the assistance of NVivo software. Creswell (2013) suggested the use of software to assist with data analysis. Finally, data and reliability were considered by the researcher clarifying assumptions he might have at the outset of the study by using educators in the field to assess the validity of interview questions, by using audio-taped recordings of interviews to ensure participant perspectives were accurately obtained, and by relating the research to similar findings to assess theoretical validity (Merriam, 1998).

## **Chapter II**

### **Review of Literature**

#### **Introduction**

The rapidly growing Hispanic population has presented schools with the challenge of establishing and maintaining a teacher demographic that is representative of the local population (Guzman & McConnell, 2002; United States Department of Education, 2016). In the education system, the teacher position is often viewed as one of the most difficult because of the broad range of responsibilities teachers perform (Szilagyi & Szecsi, 2011). The overwhelming responsibilities involved with being a teacher can take their toll, especially for teachers who have a combination of inadequate leadership, poor school culture, and challenging students (Goodpaster, Adedokun, & Weaver, 2012; McKerrow, 1996). Goodpaster et al. (2012) found an estimated 9 percent annual teacher turnover rate, which presents a major challenge for rural schools. Teachers' and school leaders' ability to discuss change can provide the necessary information to create programs for educational school intervention (Split, Koomen & Thijs, 2011). Therefore, under the supervision of administration with styles of management conducive to the development of educators, teacher retention has the potential to increase (Gujarati, 2012). While management is a significant part of teacher job satisfaction, it is also recognized that school area communities present a significant role in the development of teachers (Goodpaster et al., 2012). In all, the establishment and maintenance of teachers in rural schools is not an easy task; however, it is suggested that there are feasible ways to address this problem (Malloy & Allen, 2007). This chapter will provide literature supporting the rationale for this study. The purpose of this research is to determine the reasons so few Hispanic/Latino teachers remain

employed in rural school districts. It is predicted that when effective strategies are used that are specific to rural school settings, teacher retention among Hispanic/Latino teachers will improve.

### **A Historical Overview of Hispanic/Latino Education in the United States**

Schools across the country are experiencing a population growth of Hispanic/Latino students. In 1848 with the end of the Mexican-American War, the United States incorporated a large Mexican region into its territory (Verdugo, 2006). The end of the war had several implications that impacted the United States and its education system. First, a large area was annexed, to include Texas, Arizona, New Mexico, California, Colorado, Nevada, and parts of Utah (Verdugo, 2006). The acquisition of these new lands included many Spanish-speaking individuals. Another implication was that Spanish-speaking people that decided to remain in the area were considered a part of the United States. This meant having the rights afforded to American citizens (Verdugo, 2006). Education was one of those rights. However, Mexican-Americans were considered conquered people, and with America's history of racial inequality, the education afforded Mexican-Americans was poor. Further, the education was primarily delivered in the English language. Over time, limited English proficiency within the Spanish-speaking community, paired with a lack of Spanish-speaking teachers, became a severe problem for the education system in the United States (Certo & Fox, 2002). As a result, the first Mexican-Americans opted to send their children to parochial schools where they would learn in their language (Verdugo, 2006).

In addition to the demographic changes that occurred after the Mexican-American War, urbanization played a critical role in the change in education for Hispanic/Latino students in the United States. During the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, the economy of the United States changed from agriculture to industry built on industrial manufacturing. The industrial revolution was a



contributor to this change in the economic system. As a result, more Hispanic/Latino families, like other families, flocked to urban areas where jobs could be found (Verdugo, 2006). This change resulted in an influx of Hispanic/Latino families in urban schools, many who spoke Spanish and were unfamiliar with the English language, which was the language being used in schools.

In addition to urbanization, the immigration of Hispanic/Latino families to the United States has had a historical impact on the educational attainment of this group (Verdugo, 2006). Traditionally, the United States has provided opportunity for people living in other countries. Hispanic and Latin families sought jobs in the United States to achieve more earnings than they could in other parts of Latin America (Verdugo, 2006). The United States immigration population, as of 2014, was nearly 11 million of the total population of the country (Warren, 2016). Though these immigrants came from all over the world, the majority came from Spanish-speaking countries (Koven, 2012). Terrazas and Batalova (2010) supported this claim, noting that Mexican-born immigrants accounted for nearly 30 percent of all foreign-born persons in the United States. The influx of Spanish-speaking immigrants has had a profound impact, increasing the communication barrier between English and Spanish-speaking communities (Ross et al., 2010). The nation's education agencies have felt the effects of this increase in Spanish-speaking citizens and immigrants and had to make adjustments to ensure the equitable and fair education of the varied groups (Ross, 2010; Wainer, 2004).

Yet another factor impacting the presence of Hispanic/Latino Americans in American schools is the increase in civil rights groups and legislation related to equitable education for all. The Supreme Court decision of *Brown v. Board of Education* (1952) and *The Elementary and Secondary Education Act* passed in 1965 had a profound effect on the education of minority

students in American schools (Verdugo, 2006). Further, groups such as the League of United Latin American Citizens and the American Civil Liberties Union provided an increased focus on the fair and equitable treatment of minority groups in the United States and its systems. The focus on equity also included a review of American's education system. Further, there is case law that sought to solidify the rights of Hispanic/Latino children in America's schools.

*Westminster v. Mendez* (1947) was said to have paved the way for *Brown v. Board of Education* (1952). In *Westminster v. Mendez* (1947), Hispanic parents sought entrance for their children into all-white public schools. The court held that segregating students of Mexican and Mexican-American descent was unconstitutional (*Westminster v Mendez*, 1947). Further, *Plyler v. Doe* (1982) found that Texas denied undocumented school-aged children a free and public education, therefore violating the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution. These children were not in the United States to any fault of their own, so the children were entitled to the same education that the state would provide for other citizens or legal residents. This was a ground-breaking case, calling for the education of many Hispanic and Latino students.

The *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) had a notable impact on Hispanic/Latino students in American schools. NCLB increased national awareness regarding the inequities that exist in the quality of education and funding of minority and poor students in American schools (Casas, 2008). There was a focus on high expectations, accountability, and reform across the education system, with a specific focus on disadvantaged groups. Casas (2008) explained that advancement has been achieved in reducing the achievement gap between white students and students of color because of the NCLB Act. However, the gains are minimal, and there is evidence based on test

results, that increased strategies by schools are needed to positively affect the achievement of Hispanic/Latino students in American schools (Casas, 2008).

### **Increase of Hispanic/Latino Populations in the United States**

Included in the history of Hispanic/Latino students in the education system is a notable increase in the number of Hispanic/Latinos in the United States. According to Bernstein (2003), Hispanics represent the fastest growing demographic in the United States. The Hispanic population grew to 37 million in July 2001, up 4.7 percent from April 2000 (Corbelini, 2005). Within the selected southeastern state, the Hispanic population increased by 44.1 percent from 1990-2000 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). The growth continues as areas such as the Midwest region provide more than enough jobs to attract more Hispanics (Crowley & Lichter, 2009). The 2000 Census data reported that the Hispanic population in one rural southeastern county of North Carolina was 6,477 persons (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). This number represented almost double the growth of the Hispanic population compared with the state's growth. Hispanics represented 10.8 percent of the population in one North Carolina county in 2000, almost three times the state average (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). These numbers nearly doubled in 2015, with one county in North Carolina having a Hispanic and Latino population of nearly 20 percent (United States Census Bureau, 2016). Many experts believe that the Hispanic population was undercounted and is higher than reported by the U. S. Census Bureau (Larson, Stroebel, & Perkey, 2001). However, what the statistics represent is a growing population, which means a growing segment in American schools, particularly in rural counties. This will require a need for increased understanding by school districts on how to meet the various challenges and unique characteristics associated with Hispanic/Latino families.

## **Challenges for Hispanic/Latino Students in Education**

Hispanic/Latino students face various academic challenges in today's schools (Gandara, 2010; Marrero, 2016; Ream, 2003). Whether the challenges are racial, academic, or sociocultural, barriers exist. One challenge is racial prejudice and stereotypes that influence the way that this group is educated. Discrimination has been a factor contributing to the challenges faced by Hispanic/Latino students (Green & Foster, 2004; Schultz & Rubel, 2011). Many are viewed as inferior or less teachable. Deficit thinking or assumptions about the limited knowledge, proficiency, and capabilities of Hispanic/Latino students limits their potential for success (Ream, 2003; Stevens, Hamman, & Olivarez, 2007). Further, teachers become frustrated when students do not speak English, requiring them to have increased skills and training to work with this group of students (Ream, 2003).

In addition to racial stereotypes that present a barrier to Hispanic/Latino students in American schools, there are academic challenges faced by this group. Underachievement is a consequence of sociocultural background (Oakes, 2004; Stevens et al., 2007). Research shows that Hispanic/Latino and reduced income students score lower on educational standardized tests than other non-minority students (Ream, 2003; Stevens et al., 2007). One area where this disparity is greatest is mathematics. Even with No Child Left Behind, there are reports that the improvement in mathematics achievement among Hispanic children has not seen a significant increase in scores or a significant decline in the achievement gap (Corry, 2016; Orfield, 2006). Further, Latino students have a 13 percent drop-out rate (Corry, 2016). These factors highlight the academic challenges of Hispanic/Latino students and the need for increased support for this group.

### **Home-School-Community Support to Address Challenges of Hispanic/Latino Students**

To address the increase of Hispanic/Latino students in American schools and the challenges that are faced with educating these students, partnerships between the home, schools, and the community are needed. The growth in the Hispanic population is creating significant problems, especially when Hispanics need to enroll their children in schools (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). This is the result of various barriers, to include language and cultural barriers that exist between Hispanic homes and schools. Specifically, Villalba et al., (2007) found that rural schools were not equipped to effectively manage the barriers presented by Hispanic/Latino students. Teaching English to the Spanish-speaking populations is a good way to deal with the language barrier and to remain culturally and collaboratively engaged with students (Aurebach, 2009). However, as a solution, that approach has not been very successful. Aurebach (2009) found that lack of quality cultural and school relations affect the engagement of Hispanic/Latino students. Hispanic children enrolled in local schools learn English over time. As they grow up in the United States, a bilingual and bi-cultural generation emerges, reducing the problem for future Hispanic generations (Bernstein, 2003). Nevertheless, that does not help those who immigrate to the United States as adults. Hispanic adult immigrants have limitations related to learning a new language; some even have poor literacy even in Spanish (Mendoza, 2013). This makes learning English an almost impossible alternative for adult Hispanics (Hamman, Wortham, & Murillo, 2002; Mendoza, 2013).

Former President Obama issued a challenge for students to become the most highly prepared and educated working class (Sharpe, 2011). Research by Sepulveda (2010) found that the employment goal would be impossible without the increase of the educational level of

Hispanics. Aurebach (2009) noted that meeting educational goals could be achieved with a combined collaborative effort between communities and schools, which would allow meeting the future employment goals of the population. To make improvement to the educational system, and especially the education of Spanish speaking students, it is important to understand Hispanic culture. Hispanic culture is built upon faith, family and commitment to hard work (Lopez, 2001). Lopez (2001) demonstrated that Hispanic/Latino parents often take the jobs that are difficult, strenuous, and without adequate salary or compensations; they later realize how valuable education is for their children (Lopez, 2001; Ramos, 2014).

Sepulveda (2010) noted that one must listen to understand the struggles of Hispanics. There is a need for forums to understand the needs of the Hispanic/Latino population (Sepulveda, 2010). Alexander et al. (2007) found that Hispanic communities lack understanding of the education system, thereby discouraging Hispanic families from engaging in the educational process. The lack of parental involvement can be a challenge to positive views of education by parents and students (Lopez, 2001; Ramos, 2014). This is an indicator that school systems should work on developing parental involvement programs that not only encourage parental support but that seek support in the communities in which Hispanic/Latino families live. This is possible with increased communication between the home and school.

Continuous family and community support has the potential to change the odds for young learners (Sepulveda, 2010). Alexander et al. (2007) noted that many Hispanic students come from working class families that struggle to provide them with the educational resources that they never obtained. In addition, Sepulveda (2010) found that excellence for schools begins with the establishment of successful communities. Aurebach (2009) noted that the proactivity between schools and the community provides the opportunity to correct educational gaps. The results of

research by Becerra (2012) suggested three major factors contributing to stereotypes about the Hispanic/Latino community to include the following: parent-neglect toward education, fewer teachers, and labeling. Alexander et al. (2007) showed that even with community support, traditional customs and culture emphasize work over education. Based on these findings regarding Hispanic families, schools need to identify the outreach and additional programs necessary for Hispanic/Latino students' future educational success (Alexander et al. 2007). Further, teachers who understand this culture may have the best opportunity to mediate the barriers.

The outcome from Arriaga's and Longoria's (2011) qualitative study of 57 participants revealed the benefit of a correlation between Hispanic/Latino parents and teachers who utilize ample communication for student success. Increasing parent participation and school involvement can improve the quality of school culture and parent-school relations (Aurebach, 2009). Aurebach (2009) proposed the creation of bilingual and bicultural programs that allow the opportunity to increase the social growth of communities and education. These researchers concluded that forming and implementing good intentions allows Hispanic/Latino parents to be more inclined to communicate and to support the education of their children (Arriaga & Longoria, 2011).

Parental and school communication is important to education (Gregory, 2003; Marrero, 2016). Gregory (2003) studied three schools predominantly serving Hispanic/Latino students. The outcome uncovered the need for teachers to promote more hands-on and higher order thinking skills to motivate students to learn. Research by Slate (2009) found that when schools provide local cultural practices to connect students and teachers, students and families make the necessary adjustments for educational success. Slate et al. (2009) suggested more specific

involvement to support children, families, and their communities. The authors concluded that teachers possess understanding, flexibility, communication, caring, and patience with all students to achieve the best educational outcome for Hispanic/Latino students. Thus, there are benefits for having teachers in the school culture who understand Hispanic/Latino students, and this may be best achieved by ensuring that Hispanic/Latino teachers are represented in schools.

### **Hispanic/Latino Presence in Education**

To address challenges associated with Hispanic/Latino students, it is important that teachers in schools understand the dynamics of being Hispanic/Latino. Flores (2007) found that Latino and minority low income students are less probable to have qualified and experienced teachers. Hispanic and Latino students are more likely to have teachers with low expectations, and students are often in schools where funding is not equitable (Flores, 2007; Stevens et al., 2007). Further, the National Education Association (n.d.) found that only 2.5 percent of teachers who instruct English Language Learners (ELLs) have an English as Second Language (ESL) or bilingual education degree. This absence of qualified Hispanic/Latino teachers impacts the achievement of ELL students.

### **Challenges of Hispanic/Latino Presence in Education**

A primary challenge for Hispanic/Latino students is the lack of Hispanic/Latino adults entering in professional occupations. Latinos have yet to penetrate professional and technical professions due to the lack of educational, social, and economic opportunities, as well as other prior negative experiences affecting opportunities for retention (Gleenie & Sterns, 2002; Irizarry & Donaldson, 2012). Four major issues important to academic achievement and college entrance for Hispanics have been identified in the literature: effective teacher professional development, legal status in the country, social discrimination, and family parental connection (Irizarry &



Donaldson, 2012; Wainer, 2004). Achievement scores of underrepresented Latino/Hispanic students within K-12 and local universities continue to remain below other ethnic groups, and they often have the highest dropout rates (North Carolina State Board of Education, 2002). Most Latino students who drop out of school end up working in low skill, low paying jobs such as animal processing plants and all types of manual labor (Clotfelter et al., 2012). Others drop out of school because of current financial status, lack of resources to effectively receive education, or a need to support the family (Clotfelter et al., 2012). Research confirms that other contributing influences on the high Latino dropout rate include negative academic experiences, financial distress, and loss of interest (Burrus & Roberts, 2012; Gleenie & Sterns, 2002). These factors diminish the pool of Hispanic/Latinos entering professions such as teaching.

Greene (2001) questioned what happens to the 38 percent of Latino students who finish high school. It is found that they face at least three barriers to enrolling in colleges and universities: immigration status, discrimination, and family factors (Artze, 2000; Burrus & Roberts, 2012; Villalba et al., 2007; Wainer, 2004). An analysis conducted by Wainer (2004) indicated that engineering, business, and health professions are favorites among Hispanics because they pay well. Others decide on service professions, education, and social services because they appeal to Hispanics' people-oriented personality (Harvey, 2002; Long, 2013; Wainer, 2004). Hispanic/Latino students face the hardships of immigration laws prohibiting their access to higher education opportunities (Vela-Gude et al., 2009). Family pressure is a significant factor when deciding on a future profession. Studies suggest Hispanic parents encourage their children to become doctors, lawyers, dentists, engineers, priests, architects, or choose careers other than teaching (Artze, 2000; Long, 2013; Tornatzky, Pachon & Torres, 2003). Studies revealed that Hispanics/Latinos had less probability of interest to complete

degrees in education, computer, and information sciences, while they were more likely to earn degrees in social sciences, history, and psychology (Llagas, 2003; Long, 2013; Wainer, 2004).

There are a variety of reasons why Hispanic/Latinos have not penetrated the education profession. First, families' lack of respect for the teaching profession is one reason; however, when Hispanic students are provided with continuous mentorship, role models, and guidance in their early years of education, they may be more attracted to teaching careers (Guiffrida, 2006). Also, with any advancement of a group comes the opportunity to acquire better pay and higher status jobs (Guiffrida, 2006). Thus, the lack of competitive pay and benefits in the teaching profession is a barrier to Hispanic/Latinos advancement into the education profession (Guiffrida, 2006).

### **Strategies to Increase Hispanic/Latino Teacher Presence in Education**

An incentive for Hispanic/Latino graduates to go into teaching is a necessary factor to address the challenges of these teachers going into the teaching profession. It is noted that public policy should provide the opportunity for tuition-free education and preparation programs for those who serve the public schools in rural, underserved communities. For example, teachers may receive one year of free tuition for each year of successful teaching in the community (Murnane et al., 1991). Murnane et al. (1991) even suggested offering low interest and low down payment home ownership in these communities for teachers. While this may seem like a costly suggestion, Murnane et al. (1991) explained that the cost is minimal when compared to cost of losing teachers from the classroom because of frustration early in their careers who then seek better-paying and less stressful jobs. Similarly, the United States Department of Education (2012) found that support programs and financial incentives are ways to support minority educators in schools.

Flores et al. (2007) conducted a study with 742 candidates from The Academy for Teacher Excellence at the University of Texas San Antonio on how to hire and retain Hispanic/Latino teachers. Their findings suggested that there is a strong correlation between teachers who work in their own community and their educational preparation programs. Minority rural teachers will also serve as effective models for other Latino/Hispanic children (Flores et al., 2007). Thus, an increased focus on teacher preparation programs that not only attract Latino/Hispanic teachers, but that create a strong cultural and supportive environment can help in attracting and retaining these teachers. The importance of preparation programs is also supported by Villegas (2007), who explained that the pool of Hispanic teachers can be increased and expanded with early identification. The author suggested identifying candidates before they reach their senior year in high school as potential teachers. Early intervention programs would be designed to increase students' interest in the teaching profession and provide early preparation for post-secondary education.

Villegas (2007) also suggested that paraprofessionals are a key demographic to target to increase Hispanic/Latino representation in teacher education programs. In career ladder programs, paraprofessionals would continue their salaried positions, while enrolling in courses to complete requirements for certification. It is even suggested that these courses might be offered at partner school districts or community agencies to make obtaining a teaching degree easier (Villegas, 2007). Finally, Villegas (2007) recommended alternative route to certification programs to recruit minority teachers into the education profession who might have bachelor's degrees in other fields. This includes recruiting retired personnel.

### **Benefits of Hispanic/Latino Teachers for Hispanic/Latino Students**

While it is not argued that only teachers of the same race as the students they teach can be effective, there is research that highlights the benefits of schools employing teachers who represent the demographics of students within their schools (Murnane et al., 1991). Staying in the same schools will help develop teacher expertise, help teachers gain experience, and create a school culture where teachers and families are satisfied and feel a sense of comfort with the school (Murnane et al., 1991). Thus, the fact that so few Hispanic/Latinos successfully obtain college degrees is an obstacle to creating a strong teaching pool in schools where there is a large demographic of Hispanic/Latino students. While Marrero (2016) does not argue that Hispanic/Latino students benefit from Hispanic/Latino teachers, the author does note that cultural diversity is lacking in schools and this may be addressed by hiring educators with backgrounds like the student population.

Villegas (2007) explained that students come to learning with pre-existing knowledge. This knowledge is derived from personal and cultural experiences, and these experiences give students prior exposure to learning. Effective teaching involves student engagement to increase or reconfigure their pre-existing understanding, and teachers use students' experiences and interests as springboards for teaching and learning opportunities (Villegas, 2007). Thus, Villegas (2007) explained that teachers who are knowledgeable with the language and cultural background of students are "better positioned" to assist students and to make learning connections. Despite this claim, Villegas (2007) reaffirmed that this information should not be understood to mean that only Hispanic/Latino teachers and students should be paired with one another, but that classrooms can effectively benefit from the inclusion of knowledge regarding

Hispanic culture and understandings that Hispanic teachers can bring to the classroom and to their colleagues who may not be Hispanic and who work with Hispanic/Latino students.

Rizopoulos and McCarthy (2011) found that Hispanic students needed Latino teachers in the classroom. The authors believed that this dynamic would allow teachers to mirror the culture, experiences, and values of Hispanic/Latino students. Rizopoulos and McCarthy (2011) also found that students need to see the faces of those people they felt they could trust and who had similar backgrounds. Doing this would allow students to retain who they are and ease into the American culture in a seamless fashion (Rizopoulos & McCarthy, 2011; Villegas, 2007). Rizopoulos and McCarthy (2011) strongly argued that the development of Hispanic/Latino learners depends on having some teachers who look like them as a way for these students to make connections, develop community, and feel that they belong and are welcomed. When one ethnicity of teachers is evident in schools, and that ethnicity is not representative of students within the school, opportunities are missed to provide students with cultural support and ease of transition into the dominant culture (Rizopoulos & McCarthy, 2011).

It is worthy to review the research on the benefits of Hispanic/Latino teachers in schools and the benefits these teachers offer students of that race. Researchers seem to highlight that more Hispanic/Latino teachers becomes a benefit in helping students of the same race transition in school and to feel some sense of comfort as they grow as learners (Rizopoulos & McCarthy, 2011; Villegas, 2007). Further, these teachers can be a support to non-Hispanic/Latino teachers regarding details about culture and effective strategies to work with Hispanic/Latino students.

### **Rural School Settings**

Defining rural school settings is an important factor in understanding the challenges and benefits of obtaining Hispanic/Latino teachers in these communities. In the 1990s, The National

Education Association (2007) defined rural as a place with fewer than 2,500 people, which at the time was about half of the nation's public schools. The National Center for Education Statistics (2000) found that populations with 50,000 or more are deemed urban, areas with populations between 2,500 and 50,000 are deemed urban clusters, and rural areas are designative as those areas that do not lie within an urban area or urban cluster. Rural districts are often viewed as remote, small, and lacking in necessary resources to appropriately educate learners. The National Education Association (2007) highlighted the lack of necessary resources, finding that while over 50 percent of public school students are from rural environments, only 22 percent of all federal education funds are used to support this demographic area.

### **Benefits of Education in Rural Communities**

The National Middle School Association conducted a study to analyze the unique benefits inherent to education in rural communities. The study identified four significant benefits (Thomas, 2005). First, rural schools have the benefit of providing less disruptive and traumatic grade transitions. Rural schools provide the opportunity for students to remain stationary along bus routes, allowing for no transition periods for the student. Further, rural schools provide students with better opportunities for extracurricular activities due to the small number of students per grade level. Thomas (2005) added that many of the smaller schools will not need to "cut" students from their team rosters, thus providing more students the opportunity to participate on a school team and eliminating this negative aspect of competitive athletics. Additionally, rural counties' community activities are mostly conducted in rural school buildings. Thomas (2005) added that community members, including clergy, civic leaders, law enforcement officers, emergency personnel, and local businessmen, are well known to the students and staffs of the schools. This creates community schools where many are vested in the school's success. Finally,

rural schools benefit teachers and students with smaller classes. Smaller classes provide more personal and supportive environments in comparison to larger classrooms.

### **Challenges for Students in Rural School Settings**

While there are benefits to students in rural school settings, there are noted challenges (Hill, 2014; Thomas, 2005). Hill (2014) found that students in rural schools are less likely than urban school students to enroll in college, remained enrolled in college to obtain a degree, and have poorer test scores than students in urban schools. The National Education Association (2007) found that over 50 percent of students are from rural school settings and 15 percent of those students live below the poverty threshold. Of students attending rural schools, 45 percent attend poverty schools, based on data from free and reduce-priced lunch programs (National Education Association, 2007). Further test scores and graduation rates of students in rural settings are below those of students in urban settings (National Education Association, 2007). The data on rural students is compelling, especially since it is evident that those students who do not complete the graduation requirements from high school have higher tendencies to make less income than high school graduates and to raise lower income families (Hill, 2014; Rouse, 2005). This creates a cycle of those with lower skills and abilities.

### **Recruitment and Retention of Teachers in Rural School Settings**

Attraction of high quality teachers remains a challenge for rural school districts (Goodpaster et al., 2012). Further, in a school and staffing survey, it was found that many rural public schools cited that they had at least one vacancy in their school, and that it was very difficult to fill teaching positions (National Education Association, 2007). These schools also had more difficulty than urban schools in obtaining English/Language Arts teachers (National Education Association, 2007). This is particularly disturbing for rural schools with high

populations of Hispanic/Latino students, where teachers are needed who have strong skills in English/Language Arts and teaching students who are English Language Learners. Analysis by Maranto & Shuls (2012) suggested that the lack of competitive salaries and funding affect the recruitment of teachers in high need areas, such as rural communities. This challenge may be mediated with incentives for teaching in rural high demand areas or low-income schools (Maranto & Shuls, 2012).

In addition to issues with attraction, there are issues with retention of teachers in rural school settings. Administrators in rural educational institutions have struggled to supply the needed educational personnel (Beesley et al., 2010). Social isolation is a factor in retaining rural teachers (Fry & Anderson, 2011; Proffit et al., 2002). Rural schools that serve disadvantaged, African American, or Hispanic students tend to lose many teachers each year to other districts (Fry & Anderson, 2011; Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 2003). School culture and leadership are factors that impact teacher retention (Fry & Anderson, 2011; Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). Lowe (2006) demonstrated that local community beliefs and values must be an integral part of the school's structure. These factors are those that must be considered by school leaders in addressing best practices to develop strategies to address these issues.

### **Strategies to Address Challenges Faced in Rural School Settings**

As with challenges of obtaining Hispanic/Latino teachers to instruct Hispanic/Latino students, there are also challenges associated with attracting teachers to rural school settings (Fry & Anderson, 2011). Despite these challenges, researchers provide specific strategies that are effective in obtaining and retaining teachers in rural school settings. A study conducted by Certo and Fox (2002) indicated a correlation between school characteristics and organizational school



conditions. The report presented findings that demonstrated the significance of administrative support for teachers and their retention. Strategies included the need for the following:

- Effective support from administration
- Competitive salaries
- Positive student redirection and encouragement
- Effective teacher input on classroom capacity and curriculum preparation
- Ongoing professional growth and development opportunities (Certo & Fox, 2002)

Further, it was noted that strong recruitment needs to be established with attention to diversity (Certo & Fox, 2002). School administrators need to also be recruiters for their own school system and identify the best teachers for their student populations (Certo & Fox, 2002). School leaders also need an integration of professional development, curricula, and classroom placements that engage faculty (Certo & Fox, 2002). Success in teacher recruitment and retention requires the creation of a professional community of stakeholders to share the responsibility of educating, supporting, and retaining teachers (Certo & Fox, 2002). Therefore, teachers remain in the profession primarily because of commitment to the community, commitment and connection to students, benefits of collegial interaction, and quality of school administration (Certo & Fox, 2002). In addition to the importance of community, Mancuso et al. (2011) stated that supportive leadership is a component of transformational leadership that can help guide schools in formulating effective strategies for teacher retention in rural schools. Certo and Fox (2002) also noted the importance of procedures and practices fostered by the administration that supports the recruitment and retention of Hispanic/Latino teachers. Thus, leadership style and what leaders do to establish culture and climate are critical in rural school settings.

## **Human Capital Theory and Retention of Hispanic/Latino Teachers**

Education is a human-intensive profession. Approximately 80 percent of most school districts' budgets are spent on staff salaries and other benefits related to staff (Odden, 2011). The effective education of children is a large component of any school mission, and teachers are a necessary component of that mission being achieved. Thus, for school leaders to address issues of retention in rural schools, it is important that these leaders consider Human Capital Theory. Human Capital Theory can be used to help understand why a teacher may choose to leave a school or to remain. There is a review of how much the educator is invested in the profession or the school (Odden, 2011). Before deciding whether to leave a profession, or even a certain work environment, an individual will weigh the pros and cons of remaining (Ingersoll, 2007). As noted by Greenlee and Brown (2009), teachers look at more than salary when deciding whether to leave a school. These teachers also consider non-monetary factors. One important non-monetary factor that is considered is the work environment or working conditions (Greenlee & Brown, 2009). Other factors may include mentoring programs and job stressors (Oliver, 2009; Wang, 2007). These are important considerations for school leaders who want to look at factors leading to Hispanic/Latino teacher turnover.

Kirby and Grissmer (1993) defined generic and specific human capital. Generic capital, such as salary, is a factor that can be considered in all occupations. However, specific capital is a concept that applies to a specific profession (Sturman, Walsh, & Cheramie, 2008). For example, specific capital in teaching is tenure; this is not found across professions, but is a concept that is specifically found in education. It is important for school leaders to understand these differing types of human capital and that even for experienced teachers, attrition is impacted when there is a change in perspective among teachers' and their initial reasons for entering the field. For

teachers who never enter the field, another set of human capital assumptions may be made and these should be considered among school leaders when attempting to attract Hispanic/Latino educators to the profession. Understanding the monetary, non-monetary, and individual factors that account for shifts in Hispanic/Latinos leaving or never entering the teaching profession can be assessed with a human capital lens.

### **Summary**

The purpose of this research is to determine the reasons so few Hispanic teachers remain employed in rural school districts. In addition, the study will offer suggestions on ways to increase the representation of Hispanic/Latino teachers in these schools. Hispanic/Latino populations across the United States are rapidly growing, and this growth presents schools with challenges. A primary challenge is how to effectively educate this demographic, and it is recommended that maintaining a teacher demographic that is representative of the student demographic is important (Marrero, 2016; Guzman & McConnell, 2002).

There are various reasons why Hispanic/Latino teachers never enter the field of education. Some barriers to Hispanic/Latinos entering the profession include lack of effective teacher professional development programs, legal status in the United States, social discrimination, and college entrance rates (Marrero, 2016; Wainer, 2004). Further, there are barriers for those Hispanic/Latino teachers who do enter the profession in rural schools, and those barriers include teacher isolation, poor school culture, and ineffective school leadership (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). Despite the barriers, Human Capital Theory provides a lens through which school leaders can look to understand factors that impact the attraction to education and retention of Hispanic/Latino educators. Knowledge of this theory and specific strategies to use

with teachers is a way to provide an environment for Hispanic/Latino students that offers cultural support and ease of transition (Rizopoulos & McCarthy, 2011).

Chapter 3 introduces the purpose of the study, the research design, the population, sample frame, sample procedures, instrumentation, the research question, data collection procedures, and data analysis. The chapter also discusses expected outcomes of the research, limitations, validity and reliability, and ethical considerations. The chapter concludes with a summary.

## Chapter III

### Design and Methodology

#### Introduction

The purpose of this research is to determine the reasons so few Hispanic teachers remain employed in rural schools. In the United States, Hispanics represent the fastest growing demographic, and the growing number of students in this demographic result in Hispanic/Latino students' increased representation in America's schools (Bernstein, 2003). Hispanic/Latino students face various academic challenges in American schools (Ream, 2003). Hispanic/Latino students have a 13 percent high school drop-out rate (Corry, 2016). In addition to the academic challenges faced by Hispanic/Latino students, students who live in rural counties experience increased challenges (Villalba et al., 2007). Villalba et al., (2007) recorded that rural schools had poorly equipped personnel to effectively manage the barriers presented by Hispanic/Latino students. Further, test scores and graduation rates of students in rural settings are below those of students in urban settings (National Education Association, 2002). A primary challenge for Hispanic/Latino students is the lack of Hispanic/Latino adults entering in professional occupations (Bernstein, 2003). Hispanic/Latinos do not readily enter the teaching profession (Gleenie & Sterns, 2002). The lack of Hispanic/Latino educators limits available teachers to educate students. Thus, a qualitative review of reasons so few Hispanic teachers remain employed in rural school districts may provide valuable research for school districts on how to acquire and retain Hispanic/Latino teachers in rural schools to benefit student achievement.

Chapter 3 introduces the purpose of the study, the research design, the population, sample frame, sample procedures, instrumentation, the research question, data collection procedures, and

data analysis. The chapter also discusses expected outcomes of the research, limitations, validity and reliability, and ethical considerations. The chapter concludes with a summary.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this research was to determine the reasons so few Hispanic/Latino teachers remain employed in rural schools. There is research that supports the value of Hispanic/Latino teachers in the classroom as instructors for Hispanic/Latino students. Villegas (2007) explained that teachers who are familiar with the linguistic and cultural background of students are “better positioned” to help students make learning connections. In addition to the benefits of students being taught by those who understand their culture and value system, there are also benefits of students being taught in rural school settings. Rural school settings have a focus on community and collaboration (Thomas, 2005). The small community setting fosters community support, and this is of value for minority groups, such as Hispanic/Latino students. The focus on community supports the need for Hispanic/Latino teachers for this demographic, as they represent cultural familiarity for students assimilating to a new environment. Further, Hispanic/Latino teachers can help develop teacher expertise regarding strategies for English Language Learners, and create a school culture where teachers and families are satisfied and feel a sense of comfort with the school (Murnane et al., 1991).

### **Research Design**

The aim of this generic qualitative research study was to explore the reason so few Hispanic/Latino teachers remain employed in rural school settings. An understanding of these reasons may positively influence school leaders’ understanding of effective strategies to impact attrition and retention rates of Latino/Hispanic teachers in rural schools. The results of this research have the potential to inform the practice of school leaders by indicating ways to

encourage Hispanic/Latino teacher presence in rural schools, while increasing Hispanic/Latino students' level of comfort and success in the American education system.

This study employed a qualitative design to explore the lack of Hispanic/Latino teacher presence in rural schools. Researchers conduct qualitative research because of a need to explore a dilemma or concern. Qualitative research focuses on people, their experiences, and how the experiences answer questions about a research topic (Creswell, 2013). Qualitative methods are beneficial in understanding a phenomenon from those who are most closely related to the phenomenon. Qualitative research methods are a way gain an understanding of a phenomenon and to explore its influence in several fields (Creswell, 2008). Further, qualitative research focuses on naturalistic inquiry (Creswell, 2013). This means that real world situations are studied in a natural way. This type of research is emergent in nature, making it adaptable or flexible (Creswell, 2013). Also, the use of the qualitative method bodes well for using the type of sampling method to best study people and their information-rich experiences. Researchers of qualitative studies complete research in a natural setting or a site where the most information can be obtained from those who have experienced the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 2009). The characteristics of qualitative research are useful in studies of people and their experiences, as is the focus of this research on the retention of Hispanic/Latino teachers in rural school settings.

This qualitative research study employed a generic qualitative approach, because of the ability to focus on understanding a phenomenon based on the worldview of the people involved (Merriam, 1988). Percy and Kostere (2008) explained that the generic qualitative study is used when the researcher is interested in the attitudes and beliefs of those involved with a phenomenon and reports participants' subjective beliefs, reflections, opinions, experiences, or attitudes. Caelli, Ray, and Mill (2003) noted that generic qualitative research includes many of

the qualities of qualitative research without a focus or assumption. Because this study is focused on the subjective viewpoints of Hispanic/Latino educators, the qualitative generic approach is a way to obtain data, while allowing the flexibility to learn from participants' experiences and attitudes.

Aspects of phenomenological studies are often confused with the generic design. However, Percy, Kostere, and Kostere (2015) noted that with phenomenology there is a focus on experiencing, as opposed to generic qualitative studies that focus on experiences. Experiencing is a focus on the ongoing and inward act of experiencing and making sense of a phenomenon. The focus is on how one consistently experiences the phenomenon and the cognitive processes of experiencing the phenomenon (Percy et al., 2015). In contrast, with the generic approach, there is a focus on experiences or what was experienced (Percy et al., 2015). When a researcher is interested in the life experiences of participants and less on the structure of participants' experiencing processes, the generic qualitative approach is used (Percy et al., 2015). In this study, there was a focus on the experiences of Hispanic/Latino educators. Understanding what they experienced was more valuable than understanding the cognitive processes of their experience or perceptions. Understanding what educators experienced may have implications for school districts to better understand ways to attract and to retain Hispanic/Latino educators.

### **Target Population and Participant Selection**

Percy et al. (2015) explained that generic qualitative data collection searches for information from a representative sample of people who have experienced the phenomenon being studied. Data collection for generic qualitative studies typically use samples that are larger than those used in other qualitative approaches, because the samples may be more widely



representative (Percy et al., 2015). For this study, a representative sample included a recommendation offered by Creswell (2013) of samples of five and twenty-five participants.

The sample for this study was obtained from the larger population of Hispanic/Latino teachers in a rural school district in the southeastern United States. There were two criteria for participation in this study. First, participants were to be Hispanic/Latino. The race of participants was important, because the study analyzed the experiences of those who are Hispanic/Latino. Further, those in the study were expected to be certified teachers and have taught for at least one year in a rural school setting. It was expected that those with at least one-year employment in the rural school district had the necessary experiences in the rural school district to provide insight on teacher retention.

### **Sampling Frame**

Sampling frames are dependent on factors such as the time available to conduct the study and the type of study. These factors were also considered in determining the sampling frame for this study. Percy et al. (2015) explained that qualitative studies require data from representative samples. Those being studied must have some connection to the research topic or phenomenon being studied. Thus, in this study purposeful sampling was used as a sampling frame. Purposeful sampling is also known as selective sampling. Purposeful sampling allows researchers to choose information-rich cases to obtain information about the phenomenon being studied (Patton, 2001). Creswell (2009) suggested that sample sizes should range from five to 25 participants who have a direct link to the phenomenon to be studied. In this study, 12 participants were included who were directly linked to the phenomenon of retention of Hispanic/Latino teachers in rural schools.

## **Sampling Procedures**

In this generic qualitative study, the sample included Latino/Hispanic teachers from a rural school district in southeastern United States. A letter was written to the school district requesting permission to conduct the study (see Appendix A). With permission, the school district received a letter written by the researcher to be sent to all Hispanic teachers in the district with at least one year experience. The letter requested permission to participate and detailed the specifics of the study. Within the letter, the purpose and significance of the study were outlined. Further, the criteria for participation in the study was detailed, and ways to contact the researcher if interest in participating in the study were noted (see Appendix B). To protect potential participants' privacy, the letter to participate in the study was sent by the school district. Those who responded, either by calling the researcher or via email, were formally contacted by phone and sent a form detailing consent to participate (see Appendix C). The consent form fully explained the purpose of the research study. The consent form also explained informed consent and participants' right to withdraw from the study at any time. The form also contained information on the participant's willingness to be audio recorded. When the consent form was signed, the participant was considered a participant in the research study and the researcher scheduled interviews with the participants. During scheduling, the researcher reiterated the purpose of the study and that interviews would be audio recorded and conducted face-to-face.

## **Instrumentation**

Face-to-face conversations were conducted with participants using semi-structured interview questions. Percy et al. (2015) suggested the use of semi- or fully-structured interviews in generic qualitative studies, with questions being determined based on the pre-knowledge of the researcher. Rugkasa and Kanvin (2011) also suggested the use of the semi-structured

interview question to analyze human interactions and to understand human thought. Semi-structured interview questions allow the researcher to ask set questions, but do not limit the respondent to a set of pre-determined answers (Percy et al., 2015). The interview questions for this study were grouped into four categories (see Appendix D). The categories included background information on the participant, questions to address working with Hispanic/Latino students, questions to address working in rural school districts, and summative questions. The interviews lasted between 30 and 45 minutes. This allowed for flexibility in scheduling and included time for follow-up questions related to the data transcripts.

### **Research Questions**

The questions in this generic qualitative research explored reasons Hispanic/Latino teachers do not remain employed in rural school districts and ways to mediate this problem. The research questions in this study are as follows:

1. What are barriers to Hispanic teachers' remaining employed in rural schools?
2. What are strategies to mediate barriers to Hispanic teachers' remaining employed in rural schools?

### **Data Collection**

Data collection for this study included semi-structured interviews. Interviews were conducted in the fall of 2016. The interviews were scheduled for 30 to 45 minutes, depending on participants' responses. Face-to-face interviews were conducted at places and times agreed upon by participants and the researcher. The use of semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions were used to gather a wealth of information on the phenomenon. Patton (2001) found that open-ended questions allow for a large body of information that provides data to address

research questions. The data was coded into themes that addressed the research questions and to protect participants.

Data collection occurred in two phases. Prior to interviewing participants, the interview questions were reviewed by NNU Dissertation Chair. Providing an initial review of the interview questions helped determine the quality and efficacy of the questions. Also, prior to the interview, the researcher ensured that all participants completed consent forms and that informed consent was properly followed according to HRRC regulations. Interview times were created for the face-to-face interviews, and all equipment was available and tested to ensure that conversations were properly recorded.

Once the interviews began, participants were reminded of the confidentiality of the study and their right to withdraw from the study at any time. It was confirmed that participants consented and signed to being recorded. Finally, the participants were reminded of the purpose of the study. Open-ended questions were used to allow for descriptive information to be obtained on the experiences of participants with the phenomenon of retention in rural school districts. The study included ten questions to explore participants' experiences as Hispanic/Latino teachers working in a rural school district. To obtain valid and reliable data, the same set of questions were asked of each participant.

Once the final interviews were recorded, they were transcribed by a transcription service selected by the researcher. The transcribed notes were sent, via email, to participants, who clarified the interview notes, detailing any areas where information was unclear, incorrect, or where more detail was needed. The interview data was analyzed to generate categories and subcategories. As recommended by Creswell (2009), data-gathering was conducted simultaneously with analysis to develop themes regarding participants' experiences and to help

ensure that data were accurately recorded. This was also necessary because of the large amount of data that was collected with the use of semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions.

### **Data Analysis**

In a generic qualitative design, it is necessary to find themes that appear during data collection; this is thematic analysis (Percy et al., 2015). Braun and Clarke (2006) reported that thematic analysis involves evaluating the data to find repeated patterns. Analyzing themes aided in making sense of the data collected in interviews with Hispanic/Latino educators. Because this study employed the use of 10 interview questions, large amounts of data was garnered. Further, data collection was not a linear process. It was necessary to move back and forth during the process (Braun & Clark, 2006).

### **Inductive Thematic Analysis**

Data analysis in this study was an inductive process. Percy et al. (2015) explained that with the inductive process there is no attempt to fit the data into any pre-existing category. Data were studied individually, and once the data was completely analyzed, patterns and themes were grouped together into a comprehensive report.

There are several steps that researchers should follow when conducting an inductive thematic analysis. In this study, as recommended by Percy et al. (2015), the researcher followed the following steps:

1. Reviewed and became familiar with data collected from each participant during the interview. Key information from the transcript that appears to be important was highlighted and coded.
2. Reviewed the highlighted data to compare it to the research questions to determine if the highlighted information was related to research questions.

3. Eliminated all highlighted data that were not related to the research questions. However, it is necessary to keep in mind that eliminated data may be useful later.
4. Formally coded the data. For this study, the researcher used letter codes to track the various items of the data.
5. Clustered the data based on the relatedness of the coded data. This began the process of developing patterns. Each pattern that was found was described in a phrase or summative statement. Sub-codes of patterns were assigned if found in the data. As recommended by Percy et al. (2015), the words used to describe the clustered data were specific to the field of education.
6. Identified items of data that corresponded to the specific pattern. Then, the researcher referenced the data that corresponded to the assembled cluster data. Direct quotes were taken from the transcribed data and highlighted to support the patterns.
7. Analyzed patterns and looked for emerging overarching themes. As meaningful patterns were found, a more descriptive indicator for the theme was developed. Standard education language was used.
8. Arranged the themes in a matrix with corresponding patterns. The matrix included codes for each data cluster. This made it easy to access information when discussing themes in the final report.
9. Wrote a detailed abstract for each theme.
10. Completed the process for data taken from each participant.
11. Combined the analysis of all participants' data and the patterns and themes found.
12. Synthesized all themes to form a composite synthesis of the data collected regarding the research question.

## **Expected Findings**

This study explored the reason so few Hispanic/Latino teachers remained employed in rural schools. It is noted that there are few Hispanic/Latino teachers in schools, and especially in rural schools (Goodpaster et al., 2012). This is a prevalent occurrence although Hispanic/Latino students can benefit from the presence of Hispanic/Latino teachers in rural school districts (Murname et al., 1991). It is expected that generic and specific human capital factors impact Hispanic/Latino teachers' willingness to remain in rural schools. Also, because of the caring nature of educators and their commitment to students, it is expected that student challenges are less of a reason for retention issues than other factors such as isolation and leadership (Certo & Fox, 2002). Opportunities for advancement are also expected reasons for there being difficulties in retaining Hispanic/Latino teachers in rural school districts.

## **Validity and Reliability**

Qualitative research has been challenged for its rigor, validity, and reliability (Creswell, 2013). Validity and reliability are needed to have a credible study. A research study, to be deemed valid and reliable, must do what it says it aimed to do. Merriam (2009) found that validity involves determining the extent to which researchers' claims relate to reality. Joppe (2000) explained that validity identifies whether research measures what it was intended to measure. Creswell (2010) explained that validity includes how well findings match reality. Reliability is the extent to which results represent an accurate representation of the population studied (Merriam, 2009). To ensure validity in this study, the researcher acknowledged personal bias and thoughts regarding outcomes and beliefs. Lincoln and Guba (1985) acknowledged that it is impossible for author's perceptions to be suspended, which challenges reliability; however, the authors acknowledged that an audit trail can be used to offer transparency in the research

study. An audit trail consists of field notes that include the observations, thoughts, and documented changes as observed by the researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this study, the audit trail included notes and documentation regarding all raw data, data reduction and synthesis processes, and notes from a research journal to include views, predictions, and feelings.

In addition to addressing researcher bias, member checking was used to improve the validity and reliability of the study. During the interview, the researcher restated or summarized information, which also included questioning participants during the interview for accuracy and clarity on points made (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Another aspect of member checking that occurred was the review of transcribed data by participants to clarify points and to authenticate the transcribed data. Further, to focus on the validity and reliability of the study, clearly defined procedures were detailed during data collection and data analysis. The twelve-point process for inductive thematic analysis was followed to highlight specific procedures for analyzing data (Percy et al., 2015). This process was a way to add validity to the research study.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Ethics in all research studies is necessary and monitored during the HRRC process. In this study, ethics will be considered by ensuring that full disclosure is made to all participants regarding the nature of the study and ensuring that consent forms have been signed. Full disclosure ensures that participants are aware of personal risks and benefits of the study (Creswell, 2008). The researcher has the responsibility to anticipate possible risks during data collection (Orb et al., 2001). There were minimal risks in this study. There will be a focus on anonymity. The privacy of participants was achieved by ensuring that each participant received an identification number to protect personal contact information; no names are used in the study. The identification numbers remained confidential throughout the life of the study and remain in



the possession of the researcher who will keep information stored in a locked file cabinet, for which the researcher has the only key. Further, to ensure that confidentiality was maintained, portable hard drives were used to store data. These hard drives were stored in a locked in a file cabinet that can only be accessed by the researcher. Three years after the end of the study, all documents related to the study will be destroyed.

### **Summary**

The aim of this generic qualitative study was to explore the reason Hispanic/Latino teachers do not remain employed in rural schools. The study included the population of Hispanic/Latino teachers who were obtained with the permission of a rural school district in the southeastern United States. A purposive sample was used to obtain 12 Hispanic/Latino teachers who had one or more years of experience teaching and who had at least one year of experience in a rural school district. Semi-structured interviews were conducted using 13 open-ended questions to collect data related to the research questions. Further, inductive thematic analysis was used to code and to find patterns in the data related to the research questions. Further, the researcher focused on validity and reliability of the study by addressing bias, member checking, and using detailed data analysis procedures. Further colleagues in the field were used to review data collection, data analysis, and the final study (Percy et al., 2015).

## Chapter 4

### Results

#### Introduction

A question worthy of study is factors that influence Hispanic/Latino teachers' retention in rural schools. Despite the value of Hispanic/Latino teachers to Hispanic/Latino students' academic achievement, retention of diverse teachers in rural schools is difficult (Villegas, 2007). Teachers who are familiar with the cultural and linguistic background of students have increased success with students and make better connections with the student population (Rizopoulos & McCarthy, 2011; Villegas, 2007). Rural school settings focus on collaboration and community; rural communities are often small and offer community support (Hill, 2014; Thomas, 2005). Thus, Hispanic/Latino students in rural communities have the potential to benefit from Hispanic/Latino educators who share their culture and value systems (Rizopoulos & McCarthy, 2011; Villegas, 2007). Despite the benefits of Hispanic/Latino students in rural communities receiving academic support from those with similar backgrounds who are immersed in the community, the retention of Hispanic/Latino teachers in rural communities is limited. Gardner (2010) found that job satisfaction, poor working conditions, and various school attributes impact teacher job satisfaction. While challenges exist for Hispanic/Latino teachers in rural school settings, school leaders can positively support the growth and needs of teachers by promoting open teacher interaction, appropriate working conditions, supportive working conditions, professional development and growth, and student discipline (Certo & Fox, 2002; Goodpaster et al., 2012). Retention of Hispanic/Latino teachers can also be promoted when school leaders make class sizes attractive, foster genuine personal relationships, and have a high degree of involvement with staff (Malloy & Allen, 2007).

Human Capital Theory was addressed in this study and identified how individuals interpret non-monetary or monetary decisions when determining whether to stay in a profession (Wang, 2007). The use of Human Capital Theory complemented the research question, purpose, and literature review (Green, 2014). Based on the specific concerns noted in Chapter 1 of the study, it was hypothesized that the experiences of Hispanic/Latino teachers in rural communities would be useful in addressing the research questions in this study. The following research questions are: a) What are barriers to Hispanic teachers' remaining employed in rural schools and b) What are strategies to mediate barriers to Hispanic teachers' remaining employed in rural schools? The research questions supported the development of 13 open-ended interview questions to collect quality data from participants. The questions for the study were categorized based on the perspectives and experiences of Hispanic/Latino teachers working in rural schools. Chapter 4 includes a report of research results and analysis conducted in Chapter 3.

The literature supporting the rationale of this study resulted in the selection of the research method and design as outlined in Chapter 3. The resolution of this generic qualitative study was appropriate to explore Hispanic/Latino teachers' perspectives regarding their retention in rural school communities in southeastern United States. Employing the generic qualitative approach unearthed teachers' perspectives on barriers to their retention and strategies that supported their intention to remain in rural school settings. Chapter 4 expands on the important features leading to the quality data collection and analysis phase of the research; key features included identifying participants from the population, ensuring the credibility of the data collection instrument, and utilizing an appropriate data analysis method.

## **Data Collection and Analysis Procedures**

Chapter 4 includes actions taken within the study to analyze data collected from the study participants. The study was conducted in two phases. The first phase of the process included a review of interview questions by the NNU Dissertation Chair to support credibility of the research questions and to promote quality and efficacy of the questions. Prior to interviews, there was also a focus on informed consent, as participants completed consent forms that properly followed HRRC regulations. The second phase included recorded semi-structured interviews of 30-45 minutes; the interview questions were open-ended to allow for a large body of information that provided data to address the research questions. Chapter 4 provides a review of the data collection procedures, to include inductive thematic analysis to evaluate the data and to find repeated patterns in the transcribed data from participant interviews. Participants' demographics and the interview procedures used during the research are described in Chapter 4.

## **Credibility and Dependability**

Prior to administering the instrument, the research questions were analyzed by the dissertation committee. Feedback from the research committee was used to assure alignment of the interview questions with the research questions and the purpose of the study. Additionally, to support trustworthiness of the study and accuracy of responses, the interview transcript was reviewed by an independent transcriber. An analysis of the transcript by the NNU Dissertation Chair revealed that the instrument was trustworthy, consistent, and appropriate for implementation to address the research questions.

**Pilot study.** Pilot studies are a way, prior to a main study, to enhance the likelihood of a main study's success (Percy & Kostere, 2008). The three independent pilot study participants were vital in testing the trustworthiness and consistency of the interview questions to garner the

perspectives and experiences of Hispanic/Latino teachers in rural schools in the southeastern United States. The pilot study commenced upon approval by the university to validate the instrument to collect data to address the purpose and research questions of the study. During the pilot study, three participants, taken from the population of participants for the study, were exposed to the purpose of the study, the research questions, and the study instrument containing the research questions. The pilot study with each participant lasted the 30-45 minutes allotted for actual study participants during the interview process. The process with those in the pilot study followed processes to be used with actual study participants. The pilot study participants did not recommend changes to the interview questions.

### **Interview Protocol**

Twelve participants were exposed to 13 open-ended questions during the interview process. The participants responded to the interview questions based on their experiences and perspectives of retention barriers and strategies needed for retention while working as Hispanic/Latino teachers in rural school settings. Participants answered the interview questions based on personal knowledge of the questions presented and were encouraged to ask clarification questions as needed. Interview questions on the instrument permitted a descriptive experience of thoughtful responses from study participants, and participants answered the research questions without objections. For participation in the study, participants must be Hispanic/Latino. Additionally, those in the study were certified teachers with at least one year of teaching experience at rural school settings. Interviews lasted 30-45 minutes and lasted over a period of one month. Interviews were conducted in schools or coffee shops.

Prior to the interview, participants received information on the purpose of the study. There was also a review of identification protection procedures, confidentiality, the right to

withdraw from the study, even during the interview process, and the fact that participation was voluntary. Study participants were assigned a pseudonym to promote confidentiality and anonymity. Also, prior to the interview, participants received verbal and written information about how to withdraw from the study, whether during the interview or after, and that he or she had a right to do so without a need for reason or justification; there were no consequences for withdrawal. Prior to the interviews, participants were also asked to confirm their consent to be audio taped. The researcher explained to participants how to retrieve the outcome and results of the study, to include requesting an appointment, signing non-disclosure forms, and materials being locked to maintain confidentiality. After all procedures were revisited with participants and they signed the informed consent form, the interview process began.

After completion of the interviews, participants were informed that the interview recording would be transcribed by a transcription service and transcribed notes would be sent, via email, within a week for clarification. Participants were informed that within a week they would be asked to clarify information that was incorrect, unclear, or where they felt additional information was needed. All participants consented to be recorded and all responded to the follow-up email with their transcribed notes. Ten participants responded that all information in the transcribed notes was appropriate without any additions or changes. Two participants indicated a desire to add additional information to one of the interview questions, as each one believed his previous answer did not fully reflect his situation. Information was added through recording the information from a telephone interview. One participant added additional information about the need for trust for leaders, and a second participant added additional information about a need for Professional Learning Communities to mediate the isolation teachers feel in rural schools.

## **Data Analysis Steps**

The first step in the data analysis process required that the protocols were followed for data collection to gain the experiences and perspectives of study participants. The next step in the data analysis process required two to three reviews of transcripts. Reviewing the transcripts was necessary for clarity and to ensure the trustworthiness and the accuracy of collected data. The data analysis included the use of a descriptive framework to interpret data collected from participants, and themes emerged regarding the barriers and strategies for retention recommended by Hispanic/Latino teachers in rural schools in the southeastern United States.

An inductive thematic analysis was used to analyze data. Percy (2015) recommended that the process included the researcher becoming familiar with the data collected. This involved several readings by the researcher of transcribed data. Important information was highlighted and coded. For alignment, the researcher reviewed highlighted data and compared the data to the research questions. Data not related to the research questions were eliminated, but not discarded, as it was possible to be used later. Then, a formal coding process was used for data not discarded. The coded data were clustered based on relatedness, which began the process of developing patterns. The patterns were described by the researcher in phrases and sub-codes developed based on developed patterns. The words used to describe the clustered data were specific to the field of education (Percy et al., 2015). The researcher collected direct quotes from interviews that supported patterns found in the coded data. This led to more descriptive themes being developed and specific educational language to describe patterns found in data. The themes were arranged in a matrix with codes and an abstract written of each theme; this process was completed for each participant. The analysis of each participant's data was combined,

where patterns and themes developed and information was then synthesized to form a composite of the collected data as connected to the research questions.

## **Results**

The findings of data for this study were guided by best practices in collecting and analyzing data for generic qualitative studies. The generic qualitative approach was employed because of its usefulness in unearthing the beliefs and attitudes of those involved with a phenomenon by reporting their subjective experiences, attitudes, and beliefs (Percy & Kostere, 2008). The reported findings express themes developed from the experiences of Hispanic/Latino teachers in rural schools regarding barriers and strategies to their retention.

## **Demographics**

Within the general population of Hispanic/Latino teachers in rural schools, 12 participants met the eligibility of having taught for at least one year in rural school settings. There was an exhaustive search to acquire 12 participants for the study from 32 teachers over six schools in the rural school district. Thirty-two teachers were sent an email invitation to participate in the study. Twelve teachers responded to the study and qualified for the study because they were Hispanic/Latino teachers with at least one year of experience teaching in rural schools.

Study participants provided demographic information as requested during the pre-interview process. Participant's gender, age, years of service as an educator, and years of service in rural schools were collected (see Table 1).



**Table 1***Participants' Demographics*


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| <b>Participant ID</b> | <b>Gender</b> | <b>Age</b> | <b>Yrs. Teaching</b> | <b>Yrs. in Rural Schools</b> |
|-----------------------|---------------|------------|----------------------|------------------------------|
| P1                    | Male          | 50         | 14 years             | 14 years                     |
| P2                    | Male          | 52         | 20 years             | 13 years                     |
| P3                    | Female        | 36         | 15 years             | 8 years                      |
| P4                    | Male          | 22         | 2 years              | 2 years                      |
| P5                    | Male          | 26         | 3 years              | 3 years                      |
| P6                    | Male          | 44         | 12 years             | 12 years                     |
| P7                    | Female        | 34         | 12 years             | 1 year                       |
| P8                    | Female        | 24         | 3 years              | 3 years                      |
| P9                    | Female        | 42         | 18 years             | 14 years                     |
| P10                   | Male          | 42         | 7 years              | 7 years                      |
| P11                   | Male          | 40         | 10 years             | 10 years                     |
| P12                   | Female        | 30         | 3 years              | 3 years                      |

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Participants were numbered in the order they were interviewed. Forty percent of the participants were female and 60 percent were male. All participants were Hispanic/Latino, which was a requirement for participation in the study. Participants' years of experience ranged from two years to 20 years, with 60 percent of participants having 10 or more years as educators and 40 percent having 10 or more teaching experience in rural school settings. Seventy percent of participants were over the age of 30 and 50 percent over the age of 40. Twenty percent were over the age of 50. Seeking a diverse sample of participants provided a broad range of perspectives based on years of teaching experience, gender, and years of experience in rural school settings.

**Summary of Participants' Responses**

Twelve participants responded to 13 open-ended interview questions. Each participant was given the same interview and follow-up questions. Each participant answered all questions and the interview questions produced mixed responses. Four subthemes were generated

regarding barriers in rural schools, five subthemes regarding barriers to Hispanic/Latino teachers' retention in rural schools, and five subthemes regarding strategies to mediate barriers to Hispanic/Latino teachers' retention in rural schools.

**Questions on rural school experiences.** Participants described their experiences in rural school settings. Seven of the 12 participants stated that their experiences in rural school settings were satisfying, using words such as “highly satisfied,” “excellent,” “great,” or “very satisfying.” One participant explained that the experience was challenging, and another used the word “okay.” A third participant believed that learning was still occurring, so assessing satisfaction was difficult. Of the 12 participants, two previously worked in non-rural school settings and ten only had experience working in rural settings. Of the two participants who worked in non-rural or urban settings, one indicated a preference for rural settings and the other noted that rural settings may have limited resources but often have students who are easier to manage than students in urban settings.

Regarding challenges in rural settings, two of the twelve teachers noted students' lack of motivation, stating the difficulty in getting students to care about learning. Overcoming this barrier for teachers involved attempting to incorporate engaging activities for learners and to connect with them outside of academics. Three teachers noted limited resources, such as books, programs, and funding for students with special needs. Teachers noted that they mediated this challenge by collaborating with other teachers, utilizing internet resources, and using personal funds to support the learning environment. Three teachers noted disparities between the pay they received and the work required as rural school teachers being a barrier, citing the low salary compared to urban school settings. Teachers explained that while the salary was comparable, the lack of supplies, the time needed for student preparation, and the financial barriers increased

their work load. One of the three teachers, citing issues with pay, also explained the lack of rewards or incentives for the extra work required to meet standards and requirements. Mediating pay issues, as noted by each participant, was through loving their work and being intrinsically motivated. One teacher mentioned lack of administrative support, and three teachers noted rejection by the community within and without the school of the Hispanic/Latino culture. Each of the three teachers mentioned issues, such as racial assumptions, bullying and lack of acceptance of teachers and students of the Hispanic/Latino culture. Barriers of race, as noted by participants, were mediated with education in the classroom about various cultures and ongoing communication; they also noted attempts to connect with parents in the community.

**Questions on retention in rural school settings.** One teacher mentioned unfair workload for Hispanic/Latino educators working in rural school settings. This was due to the teachers being used as translators in meetings or being asked to support additional efforts to work with the Hispanic/Latino student population. It was suggested that this issue be mediated with increased collaboration among diverse staff and administrators. Three teachers mentioned a lack of support from administrators and parents, recommending that support from administrators through professional development and community programs would enhance internal and external relationship with Hispanic/Latino teachers. Five teachers mentioned that feeling isolated and a lack of diversity led to poor retention. They noted a need for professional development on diversity, the need to recruit diverse teachers in high schools and colleges, the need for increased collaboration among teachers and school leaders, and the need for resources to be allocated to promote diversity. One teacher mentioned the lack of resources as a barrier to retention and the need for school leaders to be creative in their use of resources and the ability to acquire resources to support learning. Finally, two teachers mentioned visa work requirements and limitations as

barriers to retention. Some teachers are in the country temporarily. Both teachers mentioned this barrier as one that could only be solved by the individual teacher and his or her efforts to obtain citizenship or efforts to remain in the country.

Respondents also noted specific strategies school leadership and administrators should employ to support the retention of teachers in schools. Regarding financial barriers, two respondents suggested the need for increased efforts towards finding grants and community supporters. Two respondents suggested increased focus on diversity in the school and the community to help with issues of lack of diversity and teacher isolation. Increased recruitment of minority teacher was also noted to address the issue of lack of diversity. Four teachers mentioned the need for better internal collaboration among teachers to promote diversity, to address the issue of isolation, and to help teachers solve common issues they face in the classroom. Finally, four teachers mentioned that administrators needed to demonstrate increased faith in the abilities, knowledge, skills, and potential of Hispanic/Latino teachers. These teachers should be used as more than translators or those who can work with Hispanic/Latino students, but have the potential to positively contribute to the total school program.

Regarding challenges to retention faced by Hispanic/Latino educators in rural school settings, six of twelve teachers mentioned that the barriers made them self-reflective and question if they were doing all they could to promote student success. Teachers mentioned they felt they were failing students and questioned their abilities. Two teachers mentioned that they found themselves not wanting to go to work and another mentioned believing his quality of delivery was adversely impacted by the barriers. Despite the barriers and occasionally questioning their abilities, teachers also mentioned the desire to push through challenges, to

learn, to collaborate with others, and to work hard to overcome the barriers to give students the best possible education.

When participants were asked if they had additional questions, all twelve responded that they did not. However, eight of 12 respondents noted that they had additional information they wanted to share. One highlighted the value of Hispanic/Latino teachers to rural communities and a need for that value to be respected and appreciated. Another teacher noted that it was challenging for Hispanic/Latino teachers because of language barriers and coming from a different culture, where both language and culture were different. One teacher mentioned that racism and lack of respect for Hispanic/Latino teachers resulted in hurt feelings and poor morale. One respondent suggested that people, namely administrators, teachers, and parents did not realize the difficulty Hispanic/Latino teachers experienced when working in rural communities. While most of the participants' additional comments were about the challenges for Hispanic/Latino teachers in diverse communities, one teacher noted that the experience increased the desire to persevere and to grow personally and professionally. Another teacher noted that the onus is on educators to understand the challenges faced when working in rural school settings and to work as professionals to get beyond the challenges.

### **Thematic Analysis**

Percy et al. (2015) suggested that after researchers become familiar with data collected and highlighted important data, the data should be coded and compared to the research questions. Table 2 highlighted initial codes from the research data, as well as the connection of collected information to the research questions. It was recommended that unnecessary information be eliminated. Irrelevant connections to the research questions are also noted in Table 2. The research questions for the study fall into one of two categories: barriers to rural schools and

teacher retention and strategies to promote retention of Hispanic/Latino teachers in rural school settings. Codes used during the initial analysis of the summarized data included Roman Numerals to indicate the interview question category and a letter to indicate a word associated with the type of response indicated by participants.

**Table 2**

*Coding and Connection to Research Questions*

| <b>Interview Question</b>       | <b>Code</b>   | <b>Research Question</b>  |
|---------------------------------|---|---|
| I. Rural School Experience      | I.P+(positive)<br>I.P-(challenging)   | No connection<br>Barriers in Rural Schools  |
| II. Rural vs. Non-Rural Schools | II.P-(lack of resources)<br>II.P+(behavior management)  | Barriers in Rural Schools<br>No connection  |
| III. Rural School Challenges    | III.M(motivation)<br>III.R(resources)<br>III.S(salary)<br>III.A(administrative support)<br>III.B(bias/race)                                   | Barriers in Rural Schools<br>Barriers in Rural Schools<br>Barriers in Rural Schools<br>Barriers in Rural Schools<br>Barriers in Rural Schools                         |
| IV. Retention Barriers          | IV.W(workload)<br>IV.A(administrative support)<br>IV.P(community support)<br>IV.I(isolation)<br>IV.R(resources)<br>IV.U(U.S. Resident Status) | Barriers to Retention<br>Barriers to Retention<br>Barriers to Retention<br>Barriers to Retention<br>Barriers to Retention<br>Barriers to Retention                    |
| V. Retention Strategies         | V.C(collaboration)<br>V.PD(professional dev.)<br>V.D(diversity training)<br>V.CF(creative funding)<br>V.R(recruitment)<br>V.A(admin. support) | Strategies for Retention<br>Strategies for Retention<br>Strategies for Retention<br>Strategies for Retention<br>Strategies for Retention.<br>Strategies for Retention |
| VI. Additional Information      | VI.V(value of teachers)<br>VI.C (culture)<br>VI.B(bias/racism)<br>VI.E(lack of empathy)<br>VI.P(perseverance)<br>VI.S(self-reflection)        | Strategies for Retention<br>Barriers to Retention<br>Barriers to Retention<br>Barriers to Retention<br>Strategies for Retention<br>Strategies for Retention           |

After the process of coding and making connections to the research questions, similarities found in the data were analyzed for patterns and sub-codes described. As recommended by Percy et al. (2015), as themes developed from clustered data related to the research questions, direct quotes were used to provide evidence.

### **Direct Support of Themes from Interviews**

Three areas of focus developed from the interview process that supported the research questions. Areas of focus included barriers in rural schools, barriers to Hispanic/Latino teachers in rural schools, and strategies to support the retention of Hispanic/Latino teachers in rural schools. The direct statements of researchers provided evidence of their perspectives and experiences as Hispanic/Latino teachers in rural schools.

**Barriers in rural schools.** Four areas of concern were addressed by research participants regarding barriers found in rural schools. Areas included the lack of resources, issues of race and bias, lack of support, and poor student motivation.

**Lack of resources.** A primary concern was the lack of resources, both inside the school and to support teachers' salaries. Regarding teachers' salaries, P2 noted, "The pay is different." P3 stated, "You don't get a lot of help for your, you know, your area that you work with." Concerns for resources were minimal regarding teacher salary barriers and increasingly focused on the lack of resources in schools for students. P3 noted ESL resources as a concern, stating, "Sometimes I think they [administrators] don't pay attention to it. They kind of ignore the program. And you don't receive that much help." P5 mentioned that getting supplies, such as books, is a problem. Thus, there was a need to use personal resources. "I mean, I have to use my own money to order extra books for the kids." P10 also noted the barriers for supplies noting,

“Our students do not have enough of everything. I spend my money to get extra things that go beyond the basics of teaching. I wish we had advanced technology for students and for me to use in the classroom.”

**Race/bias.** Teachers also mentioned issues of race and bias in their experiences and experiences for their students. P1 stated, “I think the main challenge has been the rejection of the natural population of the area, rejecting the Latino population coming from their schools or their community.” The idea of rejection based on race or community bias was further explained by P1, who noted examples among students in the classroom. “It’s difficult; there has been some bullying; you see a student of another race bully a Latino student.” The sentiment of bias was also suggested by P6 who stated a feeling of rejection because of race. “One other thing is that people just don’t want you because you’re Hispanic, and they say, okay, sometimes I don’t want my student in that person’s class because of the language barrier. That person can’t be a good teacher.” Some of the teachers’ experiences equated to feeling racial bias personally and for their Hispanic/Latino students in the school and in the community.

**Lack of support.** The lack of support, as noted by participants, was evident from administrators and those in the community. P1 noted a lack of support from the community, stating, “The people don’t want the Latino population here in this rural area.” P3 noted a lack of administrator support for specific programs, especially for students with special needs. P10 noted the difficulty in communicating with administration, who seemed distance and uninvolved. “I rarely see my school leaders. If they were visible, I would feel they cared. Sometimes their moral support would help.”

**Lack of student motivation.** Two teachers mentioned the specific barrier of working with students in rural schools. P11 stated, “The biggest challenge has been getting the students



to actually care about their grades and their future.” P8 explained, “The kids don’t really want to be at school, so you have to get them motivated to be there and get an education.” Both teachers noted the challenge of student motivation and the need for teachers to develop strategies to negate the lack of motivation.

**Barriers to Hispanic/Latino teacher retention in rural schools.** In addition to barriers in rural schools, participants mentioned barriers to their retention in rural schools. Some barriers to their retention were aligned to barriers in rural schools. For example, resources and support were common barriers to their retention. However, three other barriers developed, to include their feelings of isolation, their workload, and their resident status in the United States.

**Lack of resources.** Teachers mentioned the lack of resources to do their jobs effectively as a reason for the lack of Hispanic/Latino teachers in rural schools. For example, P2 mentioned the lack of Hispanic teachers in schools to speak the language and support the school and the community where language barriers exist. P12 mentioned a myriad of resources lacking in the school, to include money for supplies and salaries; P12 also mentioned the lack of support from other teachers in the school. “Sometimes the other teachers are not that willing to work with you because you know, it’s hard from some teachers to work with Hispanic students.” P5 also noted that while the principal does his best, there are not enough supplies to support learning.

**Lack of support.** In addition to a lack of resources, respondents mentioned the lack of support, which impacted their retention in rural schools. While P5 mentioned that the principal does the best he can, he also noted that more could be done to find necessary resources to support learning. P1 mentioned the lack of support from the school leader and P4 mentioned the lack of relationships and support from students. “It is difficult to make a connection with students.” P3 also noted that other teachers are not only a lack of resource in the school, but a

lack of support, noting that some non-Hispanic/Latino teachers are unwilling to work with Hispanic/Latino teachers because of cultural differences or even language barriers. P9 mentioned the lack of support from students, who can be disrespectful and parents who do not support the school or the teachers.

**Feelings of isolation.** Several teachers mentioned that their feelings of isolation in the school and the community resulted in their lack of desire to remain in rural schools. P2 mentioned the lack of Hispanic teachers in the school and P4 mentioned that there were poor relationships among teachers in the school, which increased feelings of isolation. P7 noted, “I feel really alone.” P9 stated that the issue with isolation is “the lack of colleagues that are like you. In every rural school that I’ve worked, I have been the only Latino teacher employed.” The respondent mentioned that this is very different from experiences in non-rural schools where there were less feelings of isolation because of the diversity.

**Increased workload.** Teachers mentioned that their workloads were heavy in rural schools, because of lack of resources, lack of student abilities, lack of student motivation, and lack of administrative support. For example, P12 noted an overload of classes, especially with Hispanic/Latino teachers working with the same ethnicity of students. This is because of the large number of Hispanic/Latino students in schools. This leads to frustration. P2 also noted this as a concern. When there are limited Hispanic/Latino teachers in the school but a higher population of Hispanic/Latino students, the teachers in the school are overwhelmed and given larger class sizes because of language barriers.

**Resident status in the United States.** One teacher noted that even with a desire to remain in a rural school, visa requirements were a concern. P8 noted that the ability to remain in schools was determined by status. “Many Hispanic teachers may be on a visa and have to renew

it; I have to renew every two years and sponsorship is not available.” While P8 noted that issues of residence were not a concern for all teachers, the respondent noted a barrier that is evident in her experiences and some other Hispanic/Latino teachers in the community.

**Strategies to mediate barriers to Hispanic/Latino teacher retention in rural schools.**

Despite barriers to Hispanic/Latino teachers’ retention in rural schools, respondents offered various suggestions to mediate the barriers. As noted, barriers to retention were lack of resources, lack of support, feelings of isolation, increased workload, and one’s United States residence status. Strategies to mediate the barriers were aligned to the barriers and included the need for effective leadership strategies, the need for programs to promote administrative, teacher, student, and community support, the need for programs to prevent the isolation of Hispanic/Latino teachers, and the need for teachers to self-analyze and focus on perseverance in their work.

**Leadership/support programs.** The development of improved leadership and support programs was suggested by teachers to mediate the issues of a lack of resources and the lack of support for Hispanic/Latino teachers working in rural schools. Financial resources are a barrier mentioned by several participants. Consequently, many mentioned the need for creative funding to be available to support the learning environment. For example, P1 noted the need for ideas from the top down, beginning with the superintendent’s office. P1 also noted a need for a reevaluation of how funds are spent to support rural schools. P3 suggested the development of grants. “I got a grant for my classroom; it was just something I did. But, I mean, the school, the principal, the administration, they aren’t writing grants.” P3 also suggested a reevaluation of funding, noting that the school is a Title I school and yet there is still a lack of resources. Title I schools are those that receive financial assistance from the federal government if it has high

numbers of students from low-income families; the funds are used to help ensure that children meet academic standards (United States Department of Education, 2015).

In addition to the need to address the lack of financial resources, several respondents mentioned ways to combat the issues related to the lack of community support and support within the school. P5 recommended programs to support teachers helping one another so that they would be a resource to one another; the teacher recommended Professional Learning Communities. Professional Learning Communities are a group of educators who work collaboratively and meet to share experience and teaching skills to improve students' academic performance (Dufour, 2004). P5 also mentioned the need to connect with the community, to include parents and businesses to help them become a resource in the school. P7 suggested the need for administrators to self-reflect on their thinking about the abilities of Hispanic/Latino teachers to be more supportive and confident in their abilities.

**Diversity programs.** A noted barrier mentioned by teachers was feelings of isolation. Many teachers mentioned a lack of Hispanic/Latino teachers in schools, as well as a lack of support for diversity in the school and the community. To mediate this issue, P2 recommended specific diversity programs in the school for students. For example, P2 recommended programs to celebrate the various cultures within the school. P12 suggested professional development for teachers on diversity and understanding how to support one another. P9 recommended better recruitment of Hispanic/Latino teachers. "High school students should be recruited to go to college to become teachers." P9 also suggested better incentives for bilingual persons and those of Hispanic/Latino cultures to teach in rural schools.

**Perseverance/self-analysis.** The issues of workload and United States residency issues received few recommendations from respondents. However, a common theme was the need for

teachers to be self-reflective about their choices to teach and to teach in rural communities. P10 suggested that teachers must push through the challenges and do what was best for students. P9 stated, “We have to persevere and think about why we are teaching.” P2 mentioned the challenges making teachers better and offering opportunities to learn, while P3 mentioned the feeling of success when what appeared to be failures become successes. P6 also noted that teachers who decide to work in the United States should reflect on their purpose and the length of time they want to remain in the country, such that residency does not become an issue with proper preparation.

### **Conclusion**

Chapter 4 consisted of using a generic qualitative method for analyzing data from research participants on their experiences and perspectives on barriers to retention of Hispanic/Latino teacher in rural schools and strategies to mediate the challenges. Twelve participants took part in the interview phase of the research. This study included the anticipation of a limited response of participants from the population of Hispanic/Latino teachers at a rural school district. Based on recommendations by Percy et al. (2015) for data analysis in generic qualitative studies, data were collected summarized, compared to the research questions, and coded. Coded data was clustered to assess patterns and analyzed for themes based on supporting data from participants’ responses (Percy et al., 2015).

The structure of this study included the belief that the perspectives of Hispanic/Latino educators would offer a description of barriers to retaining Hispanic/Latino educators in rural schools and offer potential strategies to mediate the barriers. The initial data collected commenced with a pilot study to review the efficacy and trustworthiness of the data collection instrument. Further, the dissertation committee reviewed the data collection instrument to assure

alignment of the interview questions with the research questions and the purpose of the study. Once there was validation from the committee and feedback obtained from the pilot study, the main study began with the collection of the data regarding participants' perspectives on barriers to retention of Hispanic/Latino educators in rural schools and strategies to mediate those barriers.

This generic qualitative study used purposeful sampling, which allows researchers to choose information-rich cases to obtain information about the phenomenon being studied (Patton, 2001). Based on the data collected, three major themes developed with subcategories addressing each (see Table 3). The three themes were as follows: barriers in rural schools, barriers to the retention of Hispanic/Latino teachers, and strategies to support the retention of Hispanic/Latino teachers. Subthemes of barriers in rural schools were the lack of resources, the lack of support, issues of bias and racism, and a lack of student motivation. Subthemes of Hispanic/Latino teachers' retention in rural schools were the lack of resources, the lack of support, teachers' sense of isolation, teachers' unreasonable workload, and teachers' residence status in the United States. Finally, subthemes of strategies to mediate barriers to Hispanic/Latino teachers' retention in rural schools were linked to the barriers. To mediate issues of lack of resources and support, leadership and improved support programs were recommended. This included leaders supporting creative funding and programs within the school and community to promote teacher collaboration and parent involvement. To mediate the issue of teacher isolation, professional development for teachers, a focus on diversity programs, and the promotion of recruitment of more diverse faculty was recommended. Finally, to address barriers of teacher increased workload and residency issues in the United States, Hispanic/Latino educators recommended that teachers are self-reflective about their goals, why they teach, and focus on perseverance despite barriers and obstacles they face.

**Table 3***Themes and Subthemes*

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Barriers in Rural Schools</b>                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimal Resources</li> <li>• Lack of Support</li> <li>• Issues of Bias/Racism</li> <li>• Lack of Student Motivation</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Barriers to the Retention of Hispanic/Latino Teachers</b>           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimal Resources</li> <li>• Lack of Support</li> <li>• Feeling Isolated</li> <li>• Increased Workload</li> <li>• Resident Status in the United States</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Strategies to Support the Retention of Hispanic/Latino Teachers</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Minimal Resources</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Improved Leadership</li> <li>➤ Creative Funding Programs</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Lack of Support</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Improved Leadership</li> <li>➤ Professional Learning Communities</li> <li>➤ Collaboration with Parents/Community</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Feeling Isolated</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Professional Learning Communities</li> <li>➤ Diversity Programs</li> <li>➤ Recruitment of Diverse Faculty</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Increased Workload</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Teacher Self-Reflection</li> <li>➤ Focus on Perseverance</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Resident Status in the United States <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Teacher Self-Reflection and Preparation</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |

Chapter 5 includes the conclusions and recommendations based on data collected in the study. The conclusions are based on an alignment of the purpose of the study, the collected data, and the analysis of the data. Based on the perspectives and experiences of the research

participants, the chapter also includes implications for leadership in rural schools, as well as Hispanic/Latino teachers and limitations of the study. The chapter concludes with a summary of the dissertation.



## Chapter V

### Results

#### Introduction

In the United States, Hispanics represent the fastest growing demographic (Terrazas & Batalova, 2010; Bernstein, 2003). After English, Spanish is the nation's second most common language spoken in the workforce (Slick & Dunn, 2005; Koven, 2012). The diversity in the United States is also represented in its schools, to include rural schools, where challenges exist (Hill, 2014; Ingersoll & Smith, 2004; Thomas, 2005). Teachers working in rural schools face issues of lack of administrative support, lack of student encouragement, lack of teacher input, lack of professional growth, and poor competitive salaries (Goodpaster et al., 2012; Certo & Fox, 2002). For Hispanic/Latino teachers, challenges of teaching in rural schools is increased because of a lack of competitive pay, barriers to advancement in the education profession, and feelings of isolation (Certo & Fox, 2002; Guiffrida, 2006). Maintaining the presence of Hispanic/Latino teachers in rural schools, despite barriers, is important for student achievement, as teachers who are knowledgeable with the language and culture background of students are better positioned to assist students and to make learning connections (Villegas, 2007). Rizopoulos and McCarthy (2011) found that students need to see the faces of those people they felt they could trust and who had similar backgrounds.

Literature exists to indicate the lack of Hispanic/Latino educator presence and retention in rural schools (Clotfelter et al., 2012; Vescio, Bondy, & Poekert, 2009). There are various barriers to Hispanic/Latino teachers in rural schools. Barriers include teachers' initial career commitment and teacher mobility (Chapman & Green, 1986; Clotfelter et al., 2012). Poor wages, poor classroom characteristics, or ineffective leadership practices also present barriers (Feng, 2009). Ashiedu and Scott-Ladd (2012) noted monetary concerns, poor working

conditions, dissatisfaction with the job location, or poor organizational structure as barriers to Hispanic/Latino educator presence and retention in rural schools.

This research aimed to review a specific rural community in the southeastern United States to assess barriers to the retention of Hispanic/Latino teachers. The research questions for the study addressed barriers to Hispanic/Latino teachers' remaining employed in rural schools and strategies to mediate barriers to Hispanic/Latino teachers remaining employed in those schools. The following research questions are: a) What are barriers to Hispanic teachers' remaining employed in rural schools and b) What are strategies to mediate barriers to Hispanic teachers' remaining employed in rural schools? The purpose of this research is to determine the reasons so few Hispanic teachers remain employed in rural school districts. In addition, the study offered suggestions on ways to increase the representation of Hispanic/Latino teachers in rural schools. Hispanic/Latino populations across the United States are rapidly growing, and this growth presents schools with challenges. A primary challenge is how to effectively educate this demographic, and it is recommended that maintaining a teacher demographic that is representative of the student demographic is important (Guzman & McConnell, 2002). Chapter 5 includes a summary of the data collected as presented in Chapter 4, which includes interpretations of the findings. Chapter 5 also includes the researcher's reflection and recommendations for future research based on the findings.

This study employed the generic qualitative research design because of its focus on simply understanding a phenomenon based on the worldview of the people involved (Merriam, 1988). The approach was used to obtain the perspectives of Hispanic/Latino teachers in a rural community regarding barriers to their retention in rural schools and strategies to mediate those challenges. The findings of the study included significant themes and sub-themes based on

participant interviews (see Table 3). Participants responded to 13 open-ended questions in interviews to provide descriptions of their experiences working in rural schools, to include barriers to their retention and strategies to mediate the barriers (see Appendix D). Questions 1-2 explored participants' background in education. Questions 3-7 addressed participants' experiences and perceptions, to include barriers, in working in rural school districts. Questions 8-11 focused on participants' views on strategies to mediate barriers to working in rural school districts. Questions 12-13 provided participants with the opportunity to provide additional feedback or to ask questions. Themes and sub-themes developed to represent participant's views of barriers to their retention in rural schools and strategies to mediate those barriers.

### **Pilot Study Findings**

Pilot studies are a way to enhance the likelihood of a main study's success (Percy & Kostere, 2008). Three independent pilot study participants were used to test the trustworthiness and consistency of the interview questions to garner the perspectives and experiences of Hispanic/Latino teachers in rural schools in a city in the southeastern United States. During the pilot study, three participants, taken from the population of participants for the study, were exposed to the purpose of the study, the research questions, and the study instrument containing the research questions. The pilot study with each participant lasted the 30-45 minutes allotted for actual study participants during the interview process. The process with those in the pilot study followed processes to be used with actual study participants. The pilot study participants did not recommend changes to the interview questions, and they indicated that the interview questions were appropriate.

## Results

The purpose of the study was to explore the reasons so few Hispanic/Latino teachers remain employed in rural school districts, by assessing barriers and strategies to mediate teacher retention. Based on the data collected, the findings developed with subcategories. The following findings were: barriers in rural schools, barriers to the retention of Hispanic/Latino teachers, and strategies to support the retention of Hispanic/Latino teachers. Subthemes of barriers in rural schools were the lack of resources, the lack of support, issues of bias and racism, and a lack of student motivation. Subthemes of Hispanic/Latino teachers' retention in rural schools were the lack of resources, the lack of support, teachers' sense of isolation, teachers' unreasonable workload, and teachers' residence status in the United States. The findings corroborated research indicating the lack of support as barriers to Hispanic/Latino teachers' retention in rural schools (Certo & Fox, 2002; Ingersoll & Smith, 2004; Malloy & Allen, 2007). Another barrier noted by participants and found in research is feelings of isolation, which impacts retention (Fry & Anderson, 2011; Proffit et al., 2002). A heavy work load for teachers was noted by participants as the result of other barriers, such as lack of resources or administrative support, and this was supported in the research of Ingersoll and Smith (2004). The barrier of residency status is not fully addressed in the research; in this study, one participant was on a work Visa, which appeared to be an isolated situation in the population of Hispanic/Latino teachers in the study.

Findings from the study regarding strategies to mediate barriers are also found in research. Strategies to mediate the resource barriers included improved leadership (Certo & Fox, 2002; Clotfelter et al., 2012; Guiffrida, 2006; Maranto & Shuls, 2012). The focus on grant writing in the findings was a specific strategy not fully addressed in review of literature for this

study, but participants viewed grants as valuable to mediate the lack of resources. Mediating the lack of administrative support through improved leadership is found in research, as well as the strategy of collaborating with parents and the community (Certo & Fox, 2002; Clotfelter et al., 2012; Guiffrida, 2006; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Maranto & Shuls, 2012). The focus on Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) in the findings was a specific strategy not fully addressed in the review of literature for this study, but participants viewed PLCs as a positive way to not only address issues of the lack of support, but problems associated with Hispanic/Latino teachers feeling isolated in rural schools.

To address the barrier of isolation, findings in the study addressed recruitment and diversity programs, which corroborates the research of Ingersoll & Smith (2004) and Proffitt et al., (2002). The findings included the need for cultural change, to include diversity training for faculty in schools, a topic not addressed in the literature review of the study. Findings in the study noted the need for teacher self-reflection and perseverance to mediate the barrier of work load. This is a focus not highlighted in the literature review of the study, as the literature focused on administrative changes to mediate work load barriers (Certo & Fox, 2002; Clotfelter et al., 2012; Guiffrida, 2006). Finally, the barrier of resident status is not addressed in the literature review of this study; as such, no strategy for addressing the barrier is noted. However, the finding is that teachers, as with the barrier of work load, must be self-reflective, persevere, and assess the intrinsic rewards of working in rural schools and maintaining residency status.

### **Barrier and Strategies: Hispanic/Latino Teacher Retention in Rural Schools: Resources**

The findings reflect a significant barrier with the lack of resources for Hispanic/Latino teachers in rural school settings. While a major factor of resources was funding, other ideas of resources included supplies or support programs for teachers and students. Colomer and Harklau

(2009) explained that communities in the South and Midwest are experiencing increased growth in Hispanic communities, which is also reflected in the school populations. The increase in Hispanic students is exposing schools for the lack of preparation and resources for effective support for learners, to include resources needed for teaching and learning (Colomer & Harklau, 2009). Mason and Schroeder (2010) also noted that lack of resources, to include finances and classroom materials in rural schools, which impedes teacher retention.

Resources are valuable to Hispanic/Latino students in rural schools. Of students living in rural communities, over 40 percent live in poverty and receive free or reduced-priced lunch (National Education Association, 2007). Further, test scores indicate low graduation rates of students in rural schools (National Education Association, 2007). These barriers are exacerbated for Hispanic/Latino students, where language and cultural barriers exist between home and school or where Hispanic/Latino students have high dropout rates (Corry, 2016; Villalba et al., 2016). Resources are valuable to develop needed programs for Hispanic/Latino students, as well as to provide educators with resources to effectively support teaching and learning. Whether funding for supplies, programs, or educator training, financial resources benefit the teaching and learning process.

The findings reflect mediating the issue of financial barriers with improved school leadership. Leadership personnel, to include principals and school districts, are viewed as the answer to addressing issues of financial limitations. Creative funding sources were found to be an answer to the barriers, with a highlight on the use of grant writing. Grant writing is not an area addressed in the literature review of this study to mediate financial barriers. Noted in the findings is a need to focus on leadership's spending practices of funds made available for minority students. Teachers look to leadership as those who have the power to mediate issues

related to lack of resources. Even when additional funding is not available, educators view leaders as those who have the power to make the best possible decisions with the funds available. While teachers view leaders as those who have the power to make important decisions to eliminate the barrier of the lack of financial resources, the findings also indicate educators' belief in their potential, to include the need for leaders to include teachers in decision-making and for their knowledge to be valued. Collaboration is important for teacher retention, to include valuing teacher knowledge in making important instructional and organizational decisions (Brown & Wynn, 2007; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003).

### **Barrier and Strategies: Hispanic/Latino Teacher Retention in Rural Schools: Support**

The findings reflect a significant barrier with the lack of support for Hispanic/Latino teachers in rural school settings. Lack of support from administrators, colleagues, students, parents, and the community are factors adversely impacting Hispanic/Latino teachers' retention. First, lack of support from leaders was noted as a concern. Whether the concern was with leaders' lack of financial support or a lack of faith in teachers' abilities, school principals were noted for their lack of support for Hispanic/Latino teachers. This is corroborated by research on the value of teachers being respected to promote their retention (Brown & Wynn, 2007).

Further, positive work conditions, to include support, impacts satisfaction and teacher retention (Rizopoulos & McCarthy, 2011; Greenlee & Brown, 2009).

The lack of support from other teachers or colleagues was also noted as a significant barrier to Hispanic/Latino educators' retention in rural schools. Issues of race and bias were considered a major concern for teacher retention. Lack of diversity and difference among colleagues added to feelings of limited support, which led to another barrier or feelings of isolation. Just as educators can help Hispanic/Latino students of the same race transition in

school and to feel some sense of comfort as they grow as learners, educators also need connection to develop and to feel supported as people and as professionals (Rizopoulos & McCarthy, 2011; Villegas, 2007). Hispanic/Latino teachers' experiences with students also contributed to feelings of lack of support. Students' lack of motivation presented a significant barrier to feelings of support and acceptance. Whether students failed to become academically engaged or presented discipline issues for educators, a lack of support was experienced.

A lack of support from parents and the community also impacted Hispanic/Latino teachers' feelings of support and desire to remain employed in rural schools. Issues of race and bias were a significant concern. Parents and those in the community expressed a lack of confidence in Hispanic/Latino teachers' abilities, or found language barriers to influence perceptions about teachers' capabilities. These perceptions impacted parent and school relations, and adversely influenced educators' feelings about their work.

The findings reflect mediating the issue of support barriers with improved school leadership, diversity and collaboration programs for educators, and diversity programs for parents and those in the community. Leaders who develop diversity programs and Professional Learning Communities increase educators' feelings of support. Also, involving educators in decision-making processes increased feelings of support. Educators who feel involved in decision-making processes have increased job satisfaction and willingness to remain on a job (Rizopoulos & McCarthy, 2011; Villegas, 2007). Further, collaboration among educators increased knowledge and feelings of support (Thomas, 2005). With diversity programs for teachers and those in the community, awareness is increased about diverse cultures and multiculturalism is promoted. Thomas (2005) explained that rural school settings focus on



collaboration and community; rural communities are often small and offer community support and this fosters teacher satisfaction.

### **Barrier and Strategies: Hispanic/Latino Teacher Retention in Rural Schools: Isolation**

The findings reflect a barrier with Hispanic/Latino teachers' feelings of isolation in rural school settings. Feelings of isolation are directly attributed to the lack of support teachers experience from school leaders, colleagues, students, and the community. Further, feelings of isolation are attributed to the lack of diversity among teaching staff. Being one of few or the only Hispanic/Latino educator in a rural school may increase one's feelings of distance and loneliness that is exacerbated by being in a small community. Diversity and multiculturalism offers a sense of belonging to students and educators; however, those in rural settings find themselves in the minority, resulting in feelings of loneliness in the school and in community. Thomas (2005) suggested that rural schools promote collaboration and community, which cannot only mediate educators' feeling of lack of support from various stakeholders, but mediate issues of isolation and loneliness in schools and the community.

### **Barrier and Strategies: Hispanic/Latino Teacher Retention in Rural Schools: Work Load**

The barrier of work load was directly linked to other barriers. Experiences of limited resources, lack of student motivation, and being used to translate in the community and school increased normal workloads for Hispanic/Latino educators in rural schools. Teachers experienced increased pressure, which was exacerbated by other barriers, such as lack of resources, lack of support, and feelings of isolation. When making determinations about whether to remain or leave a job, job stressors, to include work load, are factors (Oliver, 2009; Wang, 2007). Thus, educators who feel a sense of overload may experience decreased feelings of job

satisfaction, which may lead to decreased desire to remain, not only in the field of education, but in rural school settings.

Teachers mediate barriers of work load by being self-reflective and analyzing their reasons for entering the field of education, to include a rural school setting. While for other barriers teachers looked to school leaders to mediate barriers, regarding work load, teachers noted the need for a review of intrinsic rewards and perseverance to remain employed in rural school communities. Mediating pay issues or other barriers depended on extrinsic motivation and depended on the actions of others. The reflections indicated that educators should not only look to others to change work load, but they should consider the fact that where change does not or will not occur, educators must reflect upon their reasons for being in the field of education and make necessary modifications to effectively manage their classrooms within rural school settings.

### **Barrier and Strategies: Hispanic/Latino Teacher Retention in Rural Schools: Residency**

The findings reflect a minimal barrier with United States residency status for Hispanic/Latino teachers in rural school settings. The barrier was an isolated circumstance, where Hispanic/Latino teachers operating on a work Visa may find their retention halted in rural schools. Such a situation is unrelated to organizational issues within school systems, but related to teachers and their application for work status in the United States.

Mediating the barrier of residency issues in the United States is a personal issue. It is one that Hispanic/Latino teachers can change through self-reflection and self-analysis regarding their desire to teach in the United States and in rural school districts. Like work load, changes in one's residency status can be changed through reflection upon goals and being intrinsically motivated to reach those goals.

## **Recommendations for Further Research**

This section includes recommendation for leadership and future research regarding Hispanic/Latino teachers' retention in rural school settings. The recommendations are influenced by the research findings, analysis of data, and conclusions drawn from the research study. Recommendations include those for school leaders, namely school principals, and benefits of future research. The recommendations have the potential to improve the retention of Hispanic/Latino teachers in rural schools.

## **Recommendations for School Leaders**

School leaders are encouraged to involve Hispanic/Latino teachers in decision-making processes related to financial barriers and other organizational processes related to teaching and learning. This allows educators to feel valued and capable. Doing so addresses non-monetary factors related to human capital. Promoting collaboration may be useful in informing practices related to teachers' satisfaction and desire to remain employed in work environments, through the development of practices that improve teachers' experiences. It is also recommended that school principals review current practices related to spending, professional development, diversity, community engagement, and organizational processes. Leaders should focus on practices that address the needs of all educators in the school, to include diverse teachers and how they are treated in the school culture. Creating a healthy environment or culture is a top-down process, that should begin with practices by leaders to effect positive change. Finally, because financial barriers are such a significant issue among Hispanic/Latino educators, leaders are encouraged to work on effective strategies for increasing resources within the school for Hispanic/Latino educators and students. Leaders can encourage grant writing and community business partner involvement to address resource barriers.

## **Recommendations for Future Research**

The purpose of this study was to determine the reasons so few Hispanic/Latino teachers remain employed in rural school districts. Identifying barriers to retention of Hispanic/Latino teachers in rural schools and strategies to mediate barriers was accomplished by exploring the experiences of Hispanic/Latino teachers in a rural school district. Despite the perspectives gleaned in the research, the findings are not the final solution to the problem of Hispanic/Latino teachers' retention in rural schools. It is recommended that further study is conducted on specific factors in this research not addressed in the research. For example, an increased focus on the intrinsic variables impacting Hispanic/Latino educators' retention in rural schools is worthy of study. Further, review in other districts may be useful to indicate the transferability of the research to various rural school environments. It is also recommended that comparison studies be conducted to determine if the barriers to retention are regional, such as increased barriers related to race and bias being associated with certain regions compared to others. Finally, recommendations for future study include a quantitative review of strategies implemented to mediate barriers to Hispanic/Latino educators' retention to assess the most effective strategies.

## **Implications**

This research provides significant data for school leaders. Hispanic/Latino educators provided their experiences with retention, to include barriers and strategies. The approval of the research study by leaders in the school district was the first step in obtaining data related to the research questions. Further, allowing volunteer participants speaks to leadership's willingness to contribute to empirical research on issues that may adversely impact student success. Volunteer

participants were needed, as well as the cooperation of the study site, to study the phenomenon of Hispanic/Latino educators' retention. School leaders should take into consideration the responses of participants, such that school districts with similar demographics may improve upon factors related to Hispanic/Latino educators' retention. Because it is concluded that Hispanic/Latino educators have experiences that are valuable to addressing issues in schools, leaders in the institution should begin to understand the connection between teacher satisfaction and student achievement. This study presented only a small-scale version of approaching barriers to Hispanic/Latino educators' retention in rural schools. A close look at barriers indicated the role of school leadership in both creating and mediating the barriers. A review and assessment of barriers and strategies to resolve the barriers may inform practices of leaders in retaining Hispanic/Latino teachers in rural schools.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Participants in this study included three educators in the pilot study and 12 Hispanic/Latino educators from a rural school district in Southeastern United States for the main study. This study included purposeful sampling, which allows researchers to choose information-rich cases to obtain information about the phenomenon being studied (Patton, 2001). The disadvantage of non-probability sampling, such as purposeful sampling, is that it is difficult to defend the representativeness of the sample (Patton, 2001). Further, such a method is known to include researcher bias (Patton, 2001). Further, this study included a specific region and further research is needed to indicate generalizability to other regions.

While this study focused on obtaining concise responses, an expected limitation is that some participants may have not been fully forthcoming with their responses. They may have been distant out of fear of retribution for their responses. There was no belief that respondents

were deceptive; however, there is the possibility that misleading responses were given. Further, the connection educators felt to their school or leadership may have not been fully realized, such that providing honest and open responses made participants feel uncomfortable. A personal connection to the school or leadership may have been a barrier to participants to openly express challenges.

### **Summary and Recommendations**

The purpose explored in this study was barriers to Hispanic/Latino educators' retention in rural schools and strategies to mediate those barriers. Rizopoulos and McCarthy (2011) found that Hispanic students needed Latino teachers in the classroom. The authors believed that this dynamic would allow teachers to mirror the culture, experiences, and values of Hispanic/Latino students. Despite the benefit of Hispanic/Latino educators in rural schools and working with Hispanic/Latino students, their retention is a concern. Whether the issue is recruiting, organizational concerns, poor salaries, or lack of administrative support, Hispanic/Latino educators' presence in rural schools is limited (Ashiedu & Scott-Ladd, 2012; Certo & Fox, 2002; Guiffrida, 2006). To explore the research questions of the study, research was conducted in a rural school district in the southeastern United States. The research questions guiding the study were asked about barriers to Hispanic teachers' remaining employed in rural schools and strategies to mediate barriers to Hispanic teachers' remaining employed in those schools. This qualitative study used generic methods to explore the experiences of Hispanic/Latino educators' thoughts on barriers to their retention in rural schools and strategies to mediate those barriers. The need for this study stemmed from research indicating that immigrants are settling in southern states, with the predominant culture being Hispanic/Latino people from Mexico (Sox, 2009). The research was influenced by the writer's experiences as an educator and Hispanic

educator. The researcher recognized the limited number of Hispanic/Latino educators in his rural school district.

Chapter 1 included a review of the problem related to Hispanic/Latino teachers' retention in rural schools. The chapter also included a theoretical framework, Human Capital Theory, to improve retention based on various factors. Chapter 1 included an introduction and background of the problem, as well as the purpose and research questions.

Chapter 2 contained a review of literature, to include an outline of research-related topics to address the research questions. The review of literature included information on Hispanic/Latino student needs in rural schools, the lack of Hispanic/Latino teachers' presence in rural schools, barriers to their presence, and strategies to mediate barriers.

Chapter 3 included a review of the data collection process used in the study. A description of the methodology was provided for readers to understand the specific steps taken to collect data. The method and design of the study were discussed, to include validation of the method and design. A discussion of informed consent and confidentiality were addressed, as well as data analysis procedures.

Chapter 4 contained the findings and results from the data collection process. The pilot study and interview protocol were addressed, as well as how data were analyzed after open-ended interviews. Chapter 4 included a report of participants' experiences and the thematic approach used to analyze transcribed data. The chapter concluded with how the thematic approach used to analyze data led to the development of themes related to Hispanic/Latino educators' experiences regarding retention in rural school settings.

Chapter 5 included conclusions and recommendations for the dissertation, as well as an introduction regarding the purpose of the study, the problem, the research questions, limitations,

recommendations for leaders, and recommendations for future studies. Chapter 5 also included implications and concluded with a summary of each chapter contained in the dissertation.

### **Reflections**

This qualitative study explored barriers to Hispanic/Latino educators' retention in rural schools and strategies to mediate those barriers. This research provided important qualitative data to reiterate that Hispanic/Latino teacher retention is possible at rural schools. Effective leadership, collaboration, and Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) have the potential to have a powerful impact on the retention of Hispanic/Latino teachers. In addition, the implementation of diversity programs for teachers can change the culture of rural schools' appeal to Hispanic/Latino educators. Also, the retention of Hispanic/Latino teachers can have a positive impact on the communities and the families of the students served in rural school districts. This research provides southeastern rural school administrators ways to increase retention and lower minority teacher attrition rates. Finally, results of the study, support the importance of diversity in educational systems.

Additionally, it was important to reflect on the journey to complete the dissertation. The process of completing the dissertation included assistance from a myriad of stakeholders, and the task was arduous. With the support of others, the researcher's vision and consistent work throughout the process concluded with the effective development of the dissertation. The purpose of this research was to determine the reasons so few Hispanic/Latino teachers remain employed in rural school districts and while barriers exist for educators that are extrinsic and intrinsic, practices by leadership were strong influencers of Hispanic/Latino teachers' satisfaction and willingness to remain in rural school districts.



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**Appendix A.**

## Informed Consent to Conduct Research in a Private Location

Responsible Party's name (Please Print):

████████████████████

I authorize Oscar Rodriguez of the Doctoral Student Education Program, Northwest Nazarene University, Nampa, Idaho, and/or any designated research assistants to request volunteers and gather information from ██████████ Elementary Schools on the topic of the reasons so few Hispanic/Latino teachers remain with rural schools in the Southeastern school district.

I understand that the general purpose of the research is to evaluate the issue of retention and attrition issues among Hispanic/Latino teachers. Interviews that will last approximately 45 minutes will be conducted.

I understand that participants' permission is voluntary and that the participant may refuse to grant permission or discontinue permission at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which he or she is otherwise entitled.

I understand that if the participant has questions about the research, Oscar Rodriguez will be available for consultation. Confidentiality of research results will be maintained by the researcher. The potential benefit of the research study is to increase the benefits for Hispanic/Latino teachers. The study does not present any risk for the participants.

Signature of Responsible Party/Date

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There are two copies of this consent form included. Please sign one and return it to the researcher. The other copy you may keep for your records. Questions and comments may be addressed to Oscar Rodriguez (910) 379-8236 or Dr. Jennifer Hill, Department of Education, Northwest Nazarene University, 623 S. University Blvd, Nampa, ID, 83686, Phone (208) 467-8871

**Appendix B.**

## Invitation to Participate

To: Teacher

From: Oscar Rodriguez

Institution: Northwest Nazarene University, Nampa, Idaho

Date:

***A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF THE RETENTION OF HISPANIC/LATINO TEACHERS IN  
SOUTHEASTERN RURAL ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS***

***Northwest Nazarene University***

My name is Oscar Rodriguez and I am a local educator from Eastern North Carolina and a Doctoral student at Northwest Nazarene University. I would like to take a moment of your day to invite you to take part in my research study, which concerns the retention and attrition of Hispanic/Latino teachers. For this study, I hope to interview 15 Hispanic/Latino teachers currently working in the [REDACTED] School district regarding their teaching experience and job satisfaction. These individual open ended interviews questions will take less than 60 minutes in length and will be conducted at a time and location of your choice. During the interview process am particularly interested in what barriers are present to Hispanic teachers' remaining employed are and what are strategies to mediate barriers to Hispanic teachers' remaining employed in rural schools. This research will allow the opportunity to continue to create awareness of the needs of rural educators.

In order to complete the research study requirements and to protect the confidentiality and integrity of the study a formal consent form will be provided at the time of the interview. During the interview I will audiotape and take notes with your consent in order to properly

record and transcribe the provided answers. All participant names and personal information will be encrypted, secured, and then destroyed after three years in accordance with the Federal wide Assurance Code (45 CRF 46.117). The benefits that may result from the research are the improvements of the issues that present high retention and attrition situations toward Hispanic/Latino teachers. Your participation in this research is completely voluntary and there are no risks or financial costs for you to participate.

If you wish to participate of this study please contact me through email at [oscarrodriguez@nnu.edu](mailto:oscarrodriguez@nnu.edu) or at [910-379-8236](tel:910-379-8236).

If you would like additional information or results from my research please contact me at [\(910\) 379-8236](tel:910-379-8236) or my advisor Dr. Jennifer Hill at [jjhill@nnu.edu](mailto:jjhill@nnu.edu) or Northwest Nazarene University, 623 S. University Blvd, Nampa, ID, 83686

## Appendix C.

### Informed Consent

Participant's name (Please Print): \_\_\_\_\_

I authorize Oscar Rodriguez of the Doctoral Student Education Program, Northwest Nazarene University, Nampa, Idaho, to gather information from me regarding the reasons so few Hispanic/Latino teachers remain employed with rural county public elementary schools in a [REDACTED] School district. The researcher will also explore issues regarding high retention and attrition among Hispanic/Latino teachers, in addition to offering suggestions on ways to increase the representation of Hispanic/Latino teachers in a rural school district.

I understand that the general purpose of the research is to explore issues regarding high retention and attrition among Hispanic/Latino teachers in a rural school district. If I agree to participate, I will be asked to participate in an interview, and the approximate time of the interview will be 45 minutes.

I am aware that I may choose not to answer any questions that I find embarrassing or offensive.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may refuse to participate or discontinue my participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled.

I understand that if, after my participation, I experience any undue anxiety or stress or have questions about the research or my rights as a participant, that may have been provoked by the experience, Oscar Rodriguez will be available for consultation and will also be available to provide direction regarding medical assistance in the unlikely event of injury incurred during participation in the research.

The researcher will maintain confidentiality of research results. My individual results will not be released without my written consent.

The benefits of the research study are to increase the retention rate of Hispanic/Latino teachers. The study does not present any risk for the participants.

Signature of Participant/Date

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There are two copies of this consent form included. Please sign one and return it to the researcher. The other copy you may keep for your records.

Questions and comments may be addressed to Oscar Rodriguez (910) 379-8236 or Dr. Jennifer Hill, Department of Education, Northwest Nazarene University, 623 S. University Blvd, Nampa, ID, 83686, Phone (208) 467-8871

## **Appendix D.**

### Interview Questions

1. How long have you been in education?
2. How long have you been working in the rural school district?
3. How would you describe your satisfaction with your work at this rural school district?
4. Have you worked in non-rural settings?
5. If so, how have your experiences in non-rural settings differed from your experience in the rural setting?
6. What have been challenges with you working in the rural school district?
7. In what ways do you mediate these challenges?
8. What are barriers to Hispanic teachers' remaining employed in rural schools?
9. What are strategies to mediate barriers to Hispanic teachers' remaining employed in rural schools?
10. What administrative support helps mediate these challenges?
11. In what ways do challenges impact your satisfaction with your work?
12. Do you have something else to share that may not have been addressed in the interview questions?
13. Do you have any questions?

Race/Ethnicity:

Age:

Gender: